

**An Obscured Genesis:**  
**Deleuze From the Dialectic to the Problematic**

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## Abstract

This thesis suggests that Deleuze's early philosophy, culminating in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, unfolds as a polemic between two structural positions – the problematic and the dialectic. This polemic sheds light on “political” aspects in Deleuze's work as a student of authors such as Jean Hyppolite, Jean Wahl, Martial Guérout and Ferdinand Alquié, in a period in which he places critical weight on the attempt to escape the constraining influence of their positions. Reading Bergson, Nietzsche, Hume, Kant and Hegel through his teachers, Deleuze seeks to expunge from his thought every trace of their mediation, so as to be able to pose new problems for philosophy. To this end Deleuze puts forward the notion of philosophy as being essentially problematic, irreducible to empiricist, transcendentalist or dialectic dispositions and delineated by unique problems. This notion is established as a calculated move marked by an anti-Hegelian rhetoric, Hegel being the epitome of “old” metaphysical problems that must be overcome. The introduction of Deleuze's critique of his teachers, who could be considered somewhat marginalised authors from the more recent history of French philosophy, and the establishment of the problematic-dialectic dyad as fundamental to Deleuze's development as a philosopher, hopes to bring out critical aspects of his work that remain strategically buried in the text.

Chapter one introduces Deleuze's triangulation of Hyppolite-Guérout-Alquié starting from his confrontation with Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence* and continuing to his early efforts to put forward a satisfying “middle ground” with respect to these authors' disparate positions, from which emerges a unique preoccupation with problems that will persist in Deleuze's work throughout the 1950s and 60s.

Chapter two examines the extent to which *Nietzsche and Philosophy* is a critical response to Hyppolite's renowned interpretation of Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit, Genesis and Structure*, a response which amounts to Deleuze's interpretation of eternal recurrence as an anti-

Hegelian mode of problematization, and which would later be transformed into the Deleuzian project of the overturning of Platonism.

Chapter three is a reading of *Empiricism and Subjectivity* as an anti-Hegelian polemic profoundly inspired by Wahl's vision of empiricism as a problematic and problematizing theory that responds to Hegel's critique of "self-certainty" and of empiricism in general.

Chapter four considers Deleuze's Kantianism a strategic endeavour to shift the tectonics of philosophical rigor from a preoccupation with the Absolute as the ultimate ground for knowledge, to a revival of the problematic Idea as that which incites experimentation with the "thickness" of sensibility demolished in the first moment of the Hegelian dialectic, a shift whose successfulness is placed in question.



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## Introduction

“The philosophical learning of an author is not assessed by numbers of quotations, nor by the always fanciful and conjectural check lists of libraries, but by the apologetic or polemical directions of his work itself”.<sup>1</sup> This quote, taken from Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, while referring to the claim that Nietzsche’s anti-Hegelianism was not backed with a rigorous scholarship of Hegel, might indicate something with respect to Deleuze himself: that while the relationship he maintained with his philosophical allies was straightforward and transparent, the one he kept with his self-proclaimed enemy, Hegel, points to the more discreet yet significant directions to which he carried his work.

Deleuze’s hostility towards Hegelianism is well-known, and has been depicted either by examining the extent to which his reading is misinformed, deliberately or recklessly,<sup>2</sup> or by attempting to bridge between the two authors’ fierce disparity (a third option has often been simply endorsing Deleuze’s position).<sup>3</sup> But these might be the wrong approaches with respect to Hegel’s unique position in Deleuze’s thought, considering the accusations that, like Nietzsche, Deleuze “did not know his Hegel ... [i]n the sense that one does not know one’s opponent well”.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, if we would adopt the same approach Deleuze does concerning Nietzsche, we risk misunderstanding his entire work if “we do not see ‘against whom’ its principle concepts are directed”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NP 168.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Malabou, “The Eternal Return and the Phantom of Difference,” *Parrhesia* 10 (2010): 21-29; Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1986), 1-23.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Houle and Jim Vernon, eds., *Hegel and Deleuze: Together Again for the First Time* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013); Henry Somers-Hall, *Hegel, Deleuze, and the Critique of Representation: Dialectics of Negation and Difference* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> NP 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

But in order to see “against whom” Deleuze positions himself, it might be more productive to first distance ourselves from the “battleground” itself, changing both orientation and scope, as the critical assaults on Hegel that cut through Deleuze’s work give the impression of an unrestrained polemic lacking any systematicity, and therefore appear to be opposed to Deleuze’s most basic philosophical impulses. However, an earlier text reveals a more scrupulous analysis of Hegel. It is through his review of his former teacher Jean Hyppolite’s *Logic and Existence* that one can raise the stakes for a systematic unfolding of the anti-Hegelian thread which runs through Deleuze’s work in the 1950s and ’60s, by focusing on a single concept that upholds its own sense of mystery in Deleuze’s oeuvre: the problem.

Throughout this thesis I intend to bind together two seemingly unrelated issues in Deleuze’s philosophy: namely the problematic and the dialectic as two essential structural positions with no possibility of compromise between them, but whose very positioning as such indicates the critical force that drives the Deleuzian machine of *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*.

Deleuze’s meditations on the idea of “problems” as rigorous and ideal structures that reach far beyond the limitations of “solutions” or of human knowledge in general take up a distinctive place in his early work: while Deleuze himself may not be recognized as a purely “problematic” thinker, but rather an “affirmative” one, given the primacy of this term throughout his work (hence his more expressed affinity with Spinoza and Nietzsche), it is nonetheless absolutely essential for him to demonstrate how this conception of problems belongs to philosophy and to thought by right. This conception of problems is depicted by Deleuze as being constantly suppressed under the dogmatism of certain metaphysics and the banalities of the image of thought, which subordinates problems to a form of solvability, insofar as this form allocates problems with sense and efficacy, a predisposition that goes back to philosophers such as Aristotle and whose avatars can still be found in contemporary philosophy.

Deleuze's extensive use of terms such as "problem", "problematic" and "problematization" is at times somewhat obscure, perhaps because, as we will see, the full scope of their meaning is realized as they are put to use rather than through theoretical refinement. For Deleuze, to put forward a "problematic" vision of philosophy itself is to search for the possibilities it creates, to examine what it does rather than what it says on a propositional level, to paraphrase Deleuze's own words.

It is, however, necessary to make a clear distinction between these terms: throughout this thesis, following Deleuze's thematization in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, the term problem will refer to that which drives and orients a philosophical system (rather than problems being the obstructions or difficulties that this system encounters or raises following its complete deployment), acting as the "ideal horizon" from which this system nourishes, its actions and judgements are made possible, but which often places it in a state of crisis or embarrassment, testifying to its inability to draw back the curtains of its own stage in order to reveal these problems as such. On a more subjective level, problems will also refer to the Ideas that determine the exercise of our faculties (in the Kantian sense) without being able to be recognized or represented as such, this failure of representation giving way to various encounters with the "thickness" of reality.

The adjective "problematic" will characterize what is not simply given as an object of knowledge in the sense that it is not subject to "experience" nor to our "understanding", at least in the narrow sense of the term, suggesting that what is problematic is precisely the ability to make claims about the self or the world. This also implies a Kantian standpoint, which proves to be the case in *Difference and Repetition*. But this position is soon exceeded, insofar as Deleuze puts forward a positive problematic conception of Being itself (rather than this being a limit concept, as in Kant), so that the world of phenomena gives way to particular problems (or problematic Ideas) that take over and envelop the mind, and the "problematic" (adj.) becomes the pathway to "the problematic" (noun), the so-called

objective field of Ideas or problems that awaken thought to the violence of the outside (of the empirical, the sensible and the conceptual). This transition will indicate Deleuze's post-Kantian efforts to go beyond the Kantian limitations, as will be seen with Deleuze's interpretation of Bergson, Nietzsche, Hume and Kant. The revolutionary nature of these authors' work is often pinned by Deleuze to their own unique discovery, perhaps unintentionally and not to their benefit, of "the problematic", at the expense of the dualities of truth/falsehood, subject/object and problems/solutions, inaugurating a world of "sense" in which thought receives its meaning from engaging with problems rather than testifying to the truth of particular given objects. What is argued to be "problematic" is not only the status of empirical claims and propositions, but more widely, morality, science, culture, philosophy etc. (an explicit Nietzschean standpoint that will dominate Deleuze's conceptualization).

The verb "problematization" will therefore refer to a desirable act of thought in which it discards (by first problematizing) false or ready-made problems and discovers or affirms a problematic register in the object of its enquiry which ultimately makes possible a new relationship between thought and being (this is elaborated in Bergson's method of intuition, in the Nietzschean act of critique, and in the Humean and Kantian discovery of the illusions of thought).

It is important to note that unlike philosophers such as Bachelard and perhaps Canguilhem and Lautman, the term "problem" and its variations, while appearing in Deleuze's vocabulary, does not appear to be pushed as such to its maximal critical consequences, insofar as Deleuze himself does not produce a complete "theory of problems". He frequently reiterates the need to discard false problems as well as a false comprehension of problems, placing his critical weight on elaborating what constitutes these falsehoods. At other times rendering the term "problematic" equivalent to more specified



terms such as the “differential”. Together this leaves an open and perhaps unfinished theory.<sup>6</sup> But while later texts such as *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?* produce mature theories of problems, it is in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* that Deleuze’s more fundamental critical apprehensions concerning the nature of problems remain submerged.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, as problems play an ambiguous role in Deleuze’s philosophy, the question that must be asked is: in what sense does Deleuze’s early work indeed foster the notion that philosophy must be a study of problems, problems which, as Deleuze claims, comprise a certain dimension of both reality and thought?

Once again, rather than taking things at face value by simply asking what the concept of the problem in Deleuze is, tracing and explicating select paragraphs from the text,<sup>8</sup> our

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<sup>6</sup> The primacy of condemning “false problems” or similar variations dominates *Bergsonism*, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*, and has to do with the fact that for Deleuze problems become intelligible through the rigor of critique, supporting our suspicion that the question “against whom?” is primary in Deleuze.

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, one finds elaborations of “problems” in Deleuze’s work with Guattari, such as the “problemata” as a “war machine” external to science, that attempts to extricate a “problematic” tendency internal to science from the more “conceptual” and representational doctrines that dominate science. Here Deleuze and Guattari reject the notion that science can construct an accurate representation of an external and independent reality, and criticize the conceptual frameworks that drive this belief and form the image of reality that science claims to represent. Against the “axiomatics” of science, where self-evident truths produce the model for every scientific theory, Deleuze and Guattari find a “problematic” science driven by “events” that can account for the imperceptible yet distinct transformations that comprise “reality”, a reality that can only be expressed by problems that such a “nomad” science fully addresses. See ATP 362.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari claim that philosophy creates concepts exclusively through the discovery of problems: we begin with a problem, for example, “the plurality of subjects, their relationship, and their reciprocal presentation”, but “everything changes if we think that we discover another problem: what is the nature of the other person's position that the other subject comes to ‘occupy’ only when it appears to me as a special object, and that I in turn come to occupy as special object when I appear to the other subject?” (WP 16). Here Deleuze and Guattari suggest that fabrication of concepts (the concept of the I, in this case) is constantly altered and “renegotiated” according to the position of the “other” that problems bring about. This is also a prominent theme in their concepts of Conceptual Persona and Geophilosophy, where the very meaning of philosophy is constantly transformed by the presence of an “outside” that puts forward its own problems.

While this is a long way from the meditations of *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* concerning the nature of problems, we will find many of the themes evoked in the works with Guattari to be already at work in Deleuze’s early thought.

<sup>8</sup> This question has been answered on numerous occasions, by commentators set on disclosing the “origins” of Deleuze’s conception of problems, tracing it to authors such as Lautman, Heidegger

strategy is to illustrate a polemical moment internal to his critical commentaries on the problem, by asking: what is the philosophical (and perhaps political) agenda of this concept? Against whom is this concept levelled, and for what purpose?

The most obvious answers that *Difference and Repetition* and other texts provide, namely the problem contra the dogmatic image and its operatives, will give way to a more latent one. This answer emerges from the divisions and controversies that preoccupied the philosophical milieu of authors such as Hyppolite, Jean Wahl, Ferdinand Alquié and Martial Guérault, who were Deleuze's former teachers and whose explicit presence is all but absent from his work, and from the work of many other of their prominent students, who continued to be troubled by the problems their teachers raised.

This outline will help clarify what Deleuze means when he claims that his philosophy was written in an “anti-Hegelian” atmosphere: philosophy becoming problematic is unfolded as a twisting off of its Hegelian moorings, it is a “political” act more than it is a purely philosophical one, an act by which the internal interests of a particular philosophical milieu can be rendered visible. That Deleuze is not heavily invested in Hegel as he is in other authors, that he holds a second-hand position with respect to Hegel (by way of Hyppolite and Wahl), would perhaps begin to explain Deleuze's distinctive depthless analysis of him, which should be read more as a philosophical rite of passage than a sharp critique, where Hyppolite's philosophical agenda is challenged (and ultimately, replaced) with his wayward son's, in such a manner that recalls Jameson's “vanishing mediator”:

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and Simondon. I believe this approach to be unnecessary and unchallenging insofar as Deleuze evokes these figures often with respect to his theory of problems, at times making no distinction between their “problem” and his own. See for example DR 163-164, 178, 324n9; DI 87-88. For such examinations of the origins of the problem in Deleuze's thought, see for example Knox Peden, *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology: French Rationalism from Cavaillès to Deleuze* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 238-51; Simon Duffy, *Deleuze and the History of Mathematics: In Defense of the 'New'* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), ch. 4; Sean Bowden and Mark G. Kelly, eds., *Angelaki (Problems in Twentieth-Century French Philosophy)* 23, no. 2 (2018).

[T]he Prophet is able to mediate the basic contradiction between the two social forms or moments of religious practice and to provide a historical transition from one to the other by assimilating traits selected from the opposing forms and by repudiating others: he thus serves as the means of liquidating the magician's concern with immediate gain and of preparing a situation in which a bureaucracy may ultimately appear which will eclipse his own historical function as well and render it henceforth unnecessary.<sup>9</sup>

As we will see, Hyppolite would serve as such a mediator between the conflicting demands of Hegel and Deleuze, putting forward new problems and requirements for ontology, under the guise of Hegelianism, which Deleuze would have to both satisfy and overcome, “liquidating” Hyppolite’s philosophical concerns and by the same gesture rendering them obsolete.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that this act is done quite crudely and openly already implies that Deleuze is performing a reading of Hegel that is both mediated by other texts, particularly Hyppolite’s, and highly “politicized”, and any analysis of the Deleuze-Hegel relationship must keep true to the sense that this reading evokes. In turn, this would also allow us to better understand how the notion of problematization takes center stage in all of Deleuze’s early texts: thought is said to have a problematic origin that has become obscured and distorted by dominant philosophical practices (namely Hegelian), and it is his task to elucidate it.

Thus, the problematic-dialectic dyad sharpens the Deleuze-Hegel opposition and helps clarify what exactly is at stake, while also providing access to relatively marginalized territories of 20<sup>th</sup>-century French thought, by taking a step back from the “technical” aspect of this dispute and investing in more quasi-biographical ones. Deleuze’s signature readings of Bergson, Nietzsche, Hume, Kant and others would be understood as pure strategies raised

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<sup>9</sup> Fredric Jameson, “The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber,” *New German Critique* 1 (Winter, 1973): 68.

<sup>10</sup> This is something that Deleuze, perhaps unwittingly, admits to with respect to his own use of the history of philosophy, which he claims to function as an “Oedipus complex”. While he is referring to the history of philosophy in general being a burden to any young thinker, it might be even more appropriate to understand this complex as pertaining specifically to an author’s contemporary philosophical climate. If there is a “father” to be killed off, a “patricide” which Deleuze would come to repress, it is not Kant or Plato but rather Hyppolite, Wahl, etc. See N 5-6.

against the generation that preceded him, as a final act of acknowledgement immediately effaced. It is therefore suggested that one cannot fully appreciate “Bergson’s Conception of Difference” or *Nietzsche and Philosophy* without Hyppolite, *Empiricism and Subjectivity* without Wahl, and *Difference and Repetition* without Alquié and Guérout, without falling into some sort of naiveté concerning the scope of Deleuze’s originality. Without taking too much away from the innovative nature of these texts, I hope to offer a more sober reading of Deleuze, linking him with his most immediate philosophical environment, an environment which often goes unnoticed in secondary literature where he is seen as a “Spinozist”, a “Nietzschean”, a “Bergsonist”, etc., without acknowledging the more subtle yet powerful authorities that mediate and act upon these seemingly unique positions. As Deleuze himself affirms: “Theft is primary in thought”.<sup>11</sup>

As will be shown, Deleuze is not only profoundly influenced by his teachers, but is also actively engaged in a philosophical “synthesis” of their positions from which he would emerge as a fully sovereign thinker. The notion of a “problematic ontology” will act as a signpost for Deleuze’s critical efforts, allowing a dialogue to take place between his distinctive projects, between the authors on which he centers and between the masters from which he takes nourishment.

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<sup>11</sup> DR 200.

## Chapter Outline

The first chapter unfolds the extent to which Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence* was an "event" the effects of which are felt throughout Deleuze's work, situating his review of this book as a key text in which Deleuze both inserts himself within Hegelianism and indicates the direction towards which his own philosophy would advance, against the problems that Hyppolite leaves for ontology and philosophy in general. *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition* are realized as elaborate responses to these problems, particularly with respect to the status of negation, language and sense in *Logic and Existence* as a "logic of sense". As will be demonstrated, Deleuze's critical position in these texts reaches beyond the use of anti-Hegelian rhetoric, and amounts to putting forward a rival ontology based around the importance of "sense" that Hyppolite highlights. In Deleuze's case, however, this is now accomplished as fundamentally "problematic", indicating Deleuze's attempt to distance himself from the proposition as the locus of truth (the signature of Hyppolite's reading of Hegel), and associate himself with the problematic as the element of (non)sense. I continue by situating the Deleuze-Hyppolite confrontation within a wider framework, evoking Foucault's famous dividing line between philosophies of conceptual systems and philosophies of experience, from which two distinctive positions will emerge: those of Guérault and Alquié, whose infamous decades-long conflict is addressed by both Hyppolite and Deleuze, who endeavor to negotiate between their diverging requirements, with Deleuze performing a kind of problematic "triangulation" of the three authors. My intentions in this section are to argue that Deleuze attempts to undermine both the dividing line separating Guérault and Alquié, as well as Hyppolite's own compromise between the two. This is done by an early appeal to Bergson, which I read as Deleuze's very first formulation of philosophy as being fundamentally preoccupied with problems. This posited preoccupation also entails a response to Hyppolite's critique of Bergson, as well as a subversion of the dividing line

insofar as Bergson holds an ambiguous position in it. I end this chapter by evoking Bachelard as an important forerunner of the philosophy of the problem inasmuch as he formulates his own critique of an “image of thought”, or of unchecked empiricism that hinders thought from realizing its problematic nature. This will allow us to better comprehend the use of the term problem and problematic throughout Deleuze’s work.

The second chapter establishes *Nietzsche and Philosophy* as Deleuze’s “prolegomena” to his own problematic, anti-Hegelian thought. For Deleuze, the path to pose new problems in philosophy, and, more radically, to inaugurate philosophy as purely problematic (rather than empiricist, rationalistic, transcendental, dialectical, etc.), passes through the elimination of Hegelianism, it being understood as the epitome of a philosophy crushed by the weight of old problems, corrupted values and warped ontology. *Nietzsche and Philosophy* invests in portraying this Hegelian burden, and offers a way out by putting forward a circumventing ontology of forces which places philosophy within a mode of problematizing, questioning and evaluation, and within which Hegelianism itself is critiqued. Such a critique is completed or “executed” through Deleuze’s “misinterpretation” of eternal recurrence, which attempts to break with a corrosive historicist-dialectical attitude of thought and advance an “untimely” approach in which all historical truths and values are problematized. The second part of the chapter focuses on Deleuze’s reversal of Platonism, understood as an attempt to save the latter from the restraints of the “concept” by linking it with its problematic origins, depicting a so-called “problem of rival claimants” that cuts through the Platonic dialogues. If Platonism can be redeemed, it is only insofar as it demonstrates philosophy’s dangerous obsession with problems, rather than its concern with truth or morality.

The third and fourth chapters follow a line of thought that begins with Hume and ends with Kant, one that both evokes “old” problems common to these authors and demonstrates how Deleuze’s interpretation puts forward a problematic vision of philosophy that forces itself upon these problems. Chapter three is a reading of *Empiricism and Subjectivity*

as an early anti-Hegelian polemic that takes up Hegel's critique of empiricism (which is read through Hyppolite's *Genesis and Structure*) by conjuring Wahl's "existential empiricism", which advances theories of relations and of transcendence. The first of these theories draws on the Anglo-American reactions against Hegel which emphasize that "relations are external to their terms", rather than terms being the non-relational unfolding of the Absolute, so that Being is essentially problematic insofar as it is irreducible to knowledge; the second emphasizes the problematic nature of knowledge itself, since it is formed by going beyond the given and the known. Chapter four examines how Deleuze's investment in Kant's conception of the problematic Idea is key to understanding how he resolves the problems with which *Empiricism and Subjectivity* ends, pushing back against the domination of the Hegelian Concept and finally attempting to move beyond Kant, insofar as Kant embodies the dividing line between a philosophy of experience and that of concepts through his conception of schematism. Eventually, this would lead Deleuze to pose a "fractured" subject whose problems are forced upon him from the "outside", affirming an impasse which *Difference and Repetition* arrives at, inasmuch as it details the extent to which thought is dominated, beyond its own powers, by problems.

## Chapter 1

### Breaking ground: a problematic vision of ontology

#### The question of sense: Deleuze contra Hyppolite

As has been shown in recent literature, Deleuze's conception of the problem is inspired by diverse authors such as Kant,<sup>12</sup> Nietzsche, Bergson,<sup>13</sup> Bachelard,<sup>14</sup> Lautman and Simondon.<sup>15</sup> However, there exist many critical streams that the problem draws from, which give way to new methodological questions: what exactly constitutes a "false problem" that threatens thought with illusions, negativity, baseness and a warped metaphysics, and must be rebutted? In other words, what is the "problem" of the problem itself, other than the "image of thought" in general?

Investing heavily in the notion that problems "organize" solutions, and provide them with truth and sense (insofar as these problems are developed to a certain degree of sophistication), Deleuze attempts to unground truth as origin and ideal, expressing that philosophy must always be an investigation into the question of being as meaning and questioning, and that such meaning is clarified through "sense encounters" that disrupt philosophy's relation with truth, whether it is metaphysical, empirical, etc.

If this is indeed so, then the stakes for Deleuze's philosophy of problems are raised in his reading of Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*, a text which at the time prompted anti-Hegelian responses from figures such as Derrida and Foucault, who, like Deleuze, were

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<sup>12</sup> Audrey Wasser, "How Do We Recognise Problems?," *Deleuze Studies* 11, no. 1 (2017): 48-67.

<sup>13</sup> Elie During, "A History of Problems?: Bergson and the French Epistemological Tradition," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 35, no. 1 (2004): 4-23; Craig Lundy, "Bergson's Method of Problematisation and the Pursuit of Metaphysical Precision," *Angelaki* 23, no. 2 (2018): 31-44.

<sup>14</sup> Patrice Maniglier, "What is a problematic?," *Radical Philosophy* 173 (May/June 2012): 21-23.

<sup>15</sup> Sean Bowden, *The Priority of Events: Deleuze's Logic of Sense* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 102.



students of Hyppolite.<sup>16</sup> In his 1954 review of the book, Deleuze identifies that Hyppolite's central claim is "Philosophy must be ontology, but there is no ontology of essence, there is only an ontology of sense. That, it seems, is the theme of this essential book".<sup>17</sup> Here Deleuze supposedly "congratulates" Hyppolite for his anti-anthropological (and more specifically anti-Kojèvean) reading of Hegel,<sup>18</sup> which emphasizes that philosophy cannot be subordinated to any human condition or historical epoch, demanding that it goes beyond the empirical, the human and the subjective, and make a claim for an ontology of sense. By doing so, Deleuze sets up a common ground for his own thought and Hegel's, indicating the direction for the future work of a young scholar.

As Nathan Widder argues, Deleuze's philosophical gesture is sealed by the critical question that both him and Hyppolite would come to share: "what concept of difference is needed for an ontology of sense to be adequate to a philosophy of immanence?"<sup>19</sup> At this very early stage we can already foreshadow both a Deleuzian acknowledgement of his Hegelian teacher as a kind of "vanishing mediator" who will remain a spectre whose problems will continue to haunt Deleuze's work later on, *and* an attempt to find a way to work around these problems at the very outset.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> As Leonard Lawlor argues, Hyppolite's text, while being a study of Hegel's *Logic*, had opened up a spectrum of philosophical positions such as Derrida's deconstruction, Foucault's genealogy, and Deleuze's difference and repetition, all drawing on the concept of difference that the text had established, and attempted to go beyond its Hegelian trajectory. See Leonard Lawlor, *Thinking Through French Philosophy: The Being of the Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>17</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*," in DI 15.

<sup>18</sup> See Lawlor's translator's preface to *Logic and Existence*, where he notes that Hyppolite's reading of Hegel had "effectively ended" the anthropological readings of Hegel which Kojève had popularized, therefore fuelling the fire of French anti-humanism (Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), viii-ix).

<sup>19</sup> Nathan Widder, "Thought after Dialectics: Deleuze's Ontology of Sense," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* XLI (2003): 451.

<sup>20</sup> In his "Homage à Jean Hyppolite", Foucault had deeply acknowledged Hyppolite as a precursor and master of his own generation: "There is no mistaking it: all the problems which are ours – his pupils of the past time or his pupils of yesterday – all these problems, it is he who has established them for us; it was he who chanted them in this word which was strong, grave, without ceasing to be familiar; it is he who formulated them in this text, *Logic and Existence*, which is one of the great books of our time. In the aftermath of the war, he taught us to think about the relations

For Hyppolite, Hegel marks a “return to things themselves” (following phenomenology’s failure to do so), according to which the purpose of human knowledge is its coincidence with being, so that being is not beyond knowledge but is rather knowledge itself.<sup>21</sup> This requires a new philosophical thought that would replace dogmatic metaphysics and Kantian critique, which remain trapped between the empirical and the essential, the singular and the universal, subjective certainty and objective truth.<sup>22</sup> This thought, claims Hyppolite, is that of speculative logic,<sup>23</sup> which is also the language of being itself, comprised of what he terms “speculative propositions”, as opposed to empirical propositions of ordinary language. As Hegel claims,

dogmatism as a way of thinking, whether in ordinary knowing or in the study of philosophy, is nothing else but the opinion that the True consists in a proposition which is a fixed result, or which is immediately known. To such questions as, When was Caesar born?, or How many feet were there in a stadium?, etc. a clear-cut answer ought to be given, just as it is definitely true that the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides of a right-angled triangle. But the nature of a so-called truth of that kind is different from the nature of philosophical truths.<sup>24</sup>

This distinction between “ordinary” and “ontological” language which Hyppolite centers on already indicates that the very meaning of an “ontology of sense” is drawn from language itself, and that the Hegel presented in *Logic and Existence* is a theorist of language and a proto-

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of violence and discourse; He taught us yesterday to think of the relations of logic and existence; just now, he suggested that we think about the relationship between the content of knowledge and formal necessity. Finally, he taught us that philosophical thought is an incessant practice; that it is a certain way of implementing non-philosophy, but always staying closer to it, where it is tied to existence” (Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire,” in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, eds. Suzanne Bachelard et al. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 135). In his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, Foucault goes as far as to claim that his own work had drawn its very “meaning and possibility” from *Logic and Existence*. See Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge, 1981), 76.

<sup>21</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence* 3, 58.

<sup>22</sup> Widder, “Thought after Dialectics,” 453

<sup>23</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 63.

<sup>24</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977), 23.

structuralist: Hegelian logic becomes a logic of sense. As Bianco notes, this “structuralist turn” which *Logic and Existence* implies has taken place following Hyppolite’s encounter with Heidegger, whose “Letter on Humanism” (the critique of Sartre and of the humanism that underlies his thought, along with humanistic readings of Hegel and Marx) had struck him as a thunderbolt, reverberated among his students as well.<sup>25</sup> In this context, Heidegger’s critique of phenomenology amounts to the substitution of hermeneutical interpretation as a recovery of meaning, with the production of meaning or sense as an effect of language itself.

Like Heidegger, Hyppolite’s notion of sense is the sense of being, but for him sense is not the expression of being, but rather, at the last instance of the dialectic, sense *is* being. Language is the “house of being”,<sup>26</sup> the medium through which truth is disclosed, and silence or nonsense (which amounts to the same thing) is simply the nothingness of being, reflecting the fact that man has yet to master history and discover his freedom.<sup>27</sup> As Hyppolite argues, sense in Hegel remains immanent to our world,<sup>28</sup> but it must not be confused with its immediate appearance, since this would return us to empirical reflection or “sense-certainty”. Here Hyppolite evokes a key passage from Hegel:

Sense [*sinn*] is this wonderful word which is used in two opposite meanings. On the one hand it means the organ of immediate apprehension [i.e., the sense of smell], but on the other hand we mean by it the sense, the significance, the thought, the universal underlying the thing. And so sense is connected on the

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<sup>25</sup> Giuseppe Bianco, “Le Bergson de Deleuze entre existence et structure,” in *Gilles Deleuze. Politiques de la philosophie*, ed. Adnen Jdey (Genève: MétisPresses, 2015), 109.

<sup>26</sup> “Language is the house of being. In its home human-beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of being insofar as they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying. Thinking does not become action only because some effect issues from it or because it is applied. Thinking acts insofar as it thinks. Such action is presumably the simplest and at the same time the highest because it concerns the relation of being to humans. But all working or effecting lies in being and is directed toward beings. Thinking, in contrast, lets itself be claimed by being so that it can say the truth of being. Thinking accomplishes this letting” (Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 193).

<sup>27</sup> Robert Sinnerbrink, *Understanding Hegelianism* (London: Routledge, 2007), 239.

<sup>28</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence* 35, 46, 51, 58-59

one hand with the immediate external aspect of existence, and on the other hand with its inner essence.<sup>29</sup>

Sense is supposed to bridge the sensual and the conceptual, existence and logic, eliciting and enveloping both object and thought and establishing a dialectic between the two meanings of the term: the first indicating sensibility (sense of touch, smell, etc.) and the other signification and direction, both subsisting on a common surface that allows the transition from one to the other.<sup>30</sup> This dialectic of sense which goes unnoticed in simple empirical reflection is revealed in the language of being, which expresses itself “through” man, since “language precedes the thought of which it would be the expression, or, thought precedes itself in this immediacy”.<sup>31</sup>

Language for Hyppolite can become the milieu for dialectical discourse, where on the one hand it precedes thought and presents the transition from sensibility to sense, and on the other hand the understanding can turn language into a tool for its own usage, and language comes to express thought that precedes it. Sense never appears outside language, but rather exists at its surface, as mediation or becoming where the sensible interiorizes itself into thought and thought exteriorizes itself into language, unifying thought and being.<sup>32</sup> It is at the surface that the language of the Absolute and empirical language diverge:

If we say, “The Absolute is being, nothingness, essence, etc.,” we form speculative propositions that are very different from empirical propositions such as “the air is heavy or man is a vertebrate.” When a determination of thought is attributed to the Absolute, that is, when it is an authentically universal predicate, the behaviour of the knowing subject can no longer be the same as in the case of an empirical proposition.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128-29. Cited in Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 24.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

To enunciate a speculative proposition necessarily entails a transformation of the very subject of enunciation, who is no longer an empirical ego but the expression of being, a becoming or a mediation of thought and being.<sup>34</sup> Here Hyppolite puts the movement of negation to work, where the subject is supposed to be transformed by negating the sensible and sublating it to sense, and is revealed as the truth of being: “The proposition should express what the true is; but essentially the true is subject”,<sup>35</sup> meaning that the sublation of the empirical does not take place immediately in its content, but must be expressed, mediated by the subject of the proposition.

Thus, the task for thought in the movement of negation is to reveal sense in the internal channel that it opens up, from the empirical to the Absolute, and from the Absolute to its concrete actualization. But here lies the problem which Deleuze already points out: Hyppolite’s unique distinction between Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and the *Logic* introduces an ambiguity that threatens his entire project.<sup>36</sup>

According to Hyppolite, “the *Phenomenology* studies the anthropological conditions of this reflection [of being in thought]; it starts from human, properly subjective, reflection in order to sublimate it, in order to show that this *Phenomenology*, this human itinerary, leads to absolute knowledge, to an ontological reflection which the *Phenomenology* presupposes”.<sup>37</sup> While the *Phenomenology* circumscribes the domain of human experience and the sensible, the *Logic* explores the Absolute, the intelligible and the concept. *Logic and Existence* takes with all seriousness the itinerary of the Concept which the *Logic* had envisioned, designating it as the basis upon which history and experience will require a new meaning: “Humanity is no longer the hero of a story it is writing itself, it is instead the voice of being. We do not create the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 40.

<sup>36</sup> Deleuze, “Jean Hyppolite’s *Logic and Existence*,” in DI 17-18.

<sup>37</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence* 34.

language we speak but protect it through repetition. Our roles have changed from heroes to prophets, from political actors to shepherds”.<sup>38</sup> Experience and history simply play out the unfolding of the Concept, they are the spatio-temporal determination of the Absolute, and this new positioning should close the gap “between subject and object, between what is said and the sense of what is said”.<sup>39</sup>

This also means that Hyppolite succeeds, to a certain extent, in rendering being itself accessible to thought, not hidden away behind an impenetrable curtain of an intelligible (Kant) or sensible (Plato) world. By introducing being into thought, Hegel makes Being different from itself: it contradicts itself, and by doing so it expresses itself qua sense, revealing that no other world exists and “the secret is that there is no secret”.<sup>40</sup> Ontology is now strictly the explication of the logical movement within the sensible, endowing the latter with sense and meaning, so that *Logic* penetrates *Existence* without leaving a metaphysical essence beyond (or below) this transition.

But Deleuze notes that while “the relation between ontology and empirical man is perfectly determined” (consciousness negates its other and reaches absolute knowledge), the relation “between ontology and historical man” remains indeterminate,<sup>41</sup> so there exists a discrepancy between human history and the Absolute, and no negation internal to history could allow the transition of one to the other: “the moments of *Phenomenology* and the moments of *Logic* are not moments in the same sense”.<sup>42</sup> This is already suggestive of an alternative difference that would depart from the dialectic without running into this impasse.

If the passage from history to the Absolute in the *Logic* were to take place by analogy to that of the *Phenomenology* from consciousness to self-consciousness (rather than the *Logic*

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<sup>38</sup> Michael S. Roth, *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 70.

<sup>39</sup> Widder, “Thought after Dialectics,” 454.

<sup>40</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 90.

<sup>41</sup> Deleuze, “Jean Hyppolite’s *Logic and Existence*,” in DI 18.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

explaining the *Phenomenology*, as Hyppolite claims),<sup>43</sup> this would mean that the anthropological reading is re-introduced, simply at the peak of human history. On the other hand, how can this passage take place other than by moving beyond the human, thereby re-introducing an essence beyond appearance?

Hyppolite's answer is that

[the] truth of the phenomenon which expresses itself in self-consciousness really looks like the essence in relation to appearance. In the Logos, this truth is the essence of nature and finite spirit, the essence, as absolute knowledge, of empirical or phenomenal knowledge. Hegel does not absolutely reject this consequence; he only does not want to be held to this duality, which belongs to the understanding. There would be on the one side essence, on the other existence, on the one side Logos, on the other nature, on the one side absolute knowledge, on the other empirical knowledge. This separation neglects the living relation that posits each term and reflects it into the other. The Absolute is mediation.<sup>44</sup>

According to Hyppolite, Hegel's accomplishment was that by putting "reflection into the Absolute", he was able to "surmount the [subject-object] dualism without suppressing it".<sup>45</sup> With that, Hyppolite admits to an aporia that would remain unsolved at the end of the text: "It is true that the historicity of this absolute knowledge poses at the very heart of Hegelianism new and perhaps unsolvable problems".<sup>46</sup> As he acknowledges, "History is indeed the place of this passage [to the Absolute], but this passage is not itself a historical fact",<sup>47</sup> so only by appealing to a logos over and above history can it acquire sense and direction. As Bianco notes, this problem which Hegelian teleology invokes inaugurates a more crucial one concerning "the differential relation between genesis and ideality, history and logic, becoming and origin"<sup>48</sup> that would come to dominate the philosophical changeover of the 1950s from Hyppolite's generation to Deleuze's.

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<sup>43</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 36.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-61.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 61

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>48</sup> Bianco, "Le Bergson de Deleuze entre existence et structure," 113.

Deleuze argues here, and of course later on, that by reinstating transcendence, Hegel renders difference as contradiction abstract, making it inadequate for the very task which Hyppolite had set out for modern ontology. It is at the end of his review that Deleuze makes an explicit critical intervention which will become the touchstone of his anti-Hegelianism to follow: “can we not construct an ontology of difference which would not have to go up to contradiction, because contradiction would be less than difference and not more? Is not contradiction itself only the phenomenal and anthropological aspect of difference?”<sup>49</sup> What Deleuze suggests here, and will continue to develop in the next two decades, is that, contrary to Hegel’s claim, it is not speculative contradiction that produces sense, creates meaning and identity, but that there is rather a difference that exceeds both empirical difference and contradiction.

Deleuze’s 1956 text on Bergson strongly reflects the critique and demands set by Hegel and Hyppolite, that philosophy must be an ontology of sense and internal difference:

If philosophy is to have a positive and direct relation with things, it is only to the extent that it claims to grasp the thing itself in what it is, in its difference from all that it is not, which is to say its internal difference.<sup>50</sup>

In Hegel, it is opposition that sustains this diversity and distinguishes itself. “Opposition is inevitable”, argues Hyppolite, because within the multiplicity of things each is in relation with all the others, so that each thing’s distinction is a distinction from the whole, and this relation of distinction and opposition is also what reconnects everything to the whole universe.<sup>51</sup> Negation is here a condition of both subject and object, of thought and existence, and only through it can speculative thought become the self-expression of being.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Bergson’s Conception of Difference,” in DI 32.

<sup>51</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 115.



Deleuze argues that difference reduced to contradiction is both too abstract and too general,<sup>52</sup> and his appeal to Bergson is made so as to evoke excessive, positive and immediate difference that is to be greater than mediation, since mediation accommodates difference to the dimensions of identity. But at the same time, this other difference is not to be an affirmative thing-in-itself, thus still satisfying Hyppolite's demand not to leave any indifferent remainder, so that "immanence is complete".<sup>53</sup>

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze would argue that this difference is given problematically, neither as an empirical object nor as a concept of the understanding, and perhaps not even as a Kantian Idea of reason (I will return to this point in the third and fourth chapters). For now, one can already see how *The Logic of Sense* is a critical response to *Logic and Existence*, and possibly a refutation of its main thesis.

By making the distinction between sense and nonsense, along with the more general distinction between the proposition and sense, Deleuze takes a similar position to Hyppolite's, that sense and sensibility have a logic of their own, but one that is obscured by language and must be made explicit. However, in Hegel, the idea of nonsense is also synonymous with contradiction, since both essentially express the same notion that something is and is not itself simultaneously. Thus contradiction, as nonsense, provides for him the mediating surface for the dialectic of sense (where sensibility sublates itself to sense), and it is this ground which Deleuze takes issue with in *The Logic of Sense*.

Similar to Hegel, Deleuze also introduces nonsense as what produces sense and closes the gap between thought and being. However, these relations of production are not ones of contradiction, and the relation between thought and being is not correspondence. Deleuze characterizes them as disjunctive, which itself is

an operation according to which two things or two determinations are affirmed *through* their difference, that is to say, that they are the object of simultaneous

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<sup>52</sup> Deleuze, "Bergson's Conception of Difference," in DI 44.

<sup>53</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 176.

affirmation only insofar as their difference is itself affirmed and is itself affirmative. We are no longer faced with an identity of contraries, which would still be inseparable as such from a movement of the negative and of exclusion. We are rather faced with a positive distance of different elements: no longer to identify two contraries with the same, but to affirm their distance as that which relates one to the other insofar as they are “different”.<sup>54</sup>

For Deleuze, affirmation can set the conditions for a veritable synthesis, and become an alternative to Hegel’s identity of contraries, rebutting negation, limitation, exclusion and reduction, all of which comprise Hegel’s logic of sense.<sup>55</sup> Affirmation must be understood in this context as the act by which nonsense is “discovered” as the secret of sense. For Deleuze, if one is intent on fully examining sense as the question concerning the sense of Being (as Heidegger, Hyppolite and Deleuze are), it is not enough to claim the sense is everything. Conversely, the expressive powers of language with respect to the Absolute are not exhausted by the proposition alone, and its internal processes do not amount to the Absolute’s unfolding, affirming that there is nothing to see behind the curtain.

For Hyppolite, nonsense is the silence that precedes sense and is eventually subjugated to its dialectical procedures, since thought never passes through nonsense but only goes from one determination of sense to the other.<sup>56</sup> As Lawlor notes, Hyppolite’s task is to demonstrate that the non-thought of thought, non-philosophy or the anti-Logos, which all exist by right, are “nothing but the Logos emerging from itself in continuity with itself by means of self-contradiction; the other (nature, for example) is always the other of the Logos, its other. For Hyppolite’s Hegel, there is only sense”.<sup>57</sup> For Deleuze, nonsense is indeed co-present with sense but is constrained by it rather than simply being opposed to it, since sense, being mediated by language, always conforms to the determinations of designation,

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<sup>54</sup> LS 172-173.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>56</sup> “One does not go from a silent intuition to an expression, from an inexpressible to an expressed, any more than from nonsense to sense. The progress of thought, its development, is the very progress of expression.” Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 21.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

manifestation and signification. Nonsense is the secret of sense as a “totalizing” mode of expression, as good and common sense, since what the latter try to conceal is precisely the very presence of nonsense in sense, its ability to productively hold contrary predicates, rather than synthesize them as conceptual opposites.<sup>58</sup>

According to Deleuze, a circulation takes place between the proposition and states of affairs which never reaches equilibrium, and there is a relation of constant displacement and exchange between the two “series”, since what governs their relation is the paradoxical nature of nonsense, acting as their differentiator.<sup>59</sup> Thus, sense itself retains a problematic mode, in which it cannot be comprehended and determined without nonsense, and that one cannot be given without the other. Nonsense is not resolved in sense but circulates through it as an undetermined object or a problem without a solution. Deleuze argues that this residue of nonsense in sense testifies for the former being an “ideational objectivity” or having a

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<sup>58</sup> This is what Deleuze describes as the paradoxical element, the empty square or the supernumerary object, circulating the proposition and traversing the words and objects that inhabit the two sides of its surface. See for example LS 66-73. Deleuze originally theorized the structure of sense as nonsense in his influential text “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?”, which Étienne Balibar claimed to be diagnosing “a first turning point in the structuralist trajectory, indeed, to contribute to that turn” (Étienne Balibar, “Structuralism: A Destitution of the Subject?,” trans. James Swenson. *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2003): 3). For the sixth criterion for recognizing structuralism, Deleuze introduces the empty square or paradoxical object, which is the element of the structure that bestows the characteristics of the structure to itself while being displaced from it, and therefore is never properly expressed as such. Following the formulation of sense and nonsense here and in *The Logic of Sense*, it is clear that they pertain to a fundamentally structuralist problem and framework, situating the concept of the problem not only as an ontology but as a structure (see “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?,” in DI 185-186). In this regard, Balibar adds that structuralism itself is not a school but rather the result of a divergent encounter between problems, and its endeavours reflect this problematic unity. See “Structuralism: A Destitution of the Subject?,” 3-4.

<sup>59</sup> Once again, in “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?”, this anti-dialectical differentiation takes a more structuralist characteristic as the symbolic element (which in *The Logic of Sense* will be termed sense) intervenes in the dialectic between the immediate real and the imaginary as an that which is not sensible, imaginable or essential but can only be structured (DI 171-173). In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze introduces the differentiation/differenciation distinction, the former referring to the determination process of ideal, virtual or “nonsensical” structures comprising of differential relations and singular points, while the latter referring to the expressive process in which “virtual” relations are incarnated in actual phenomena. See DR 206-207.

“minimum of being” which prevents the paradoxical nature of nonsense from being reduced to a “play on words” or a subjective uncertainty.<sup>60</sup>

Sense as problematic becomes a recurring theme in *The Logic of Sense*, where the problem form is said to reveal and develop the productive relations between sense and nonsense, and bring all of their elements into play.<sup>61</sup> Rather than deemed true or false, problems first acquire a sense which allows them to be solved, and at the same time they maintain a nonsense to them that is co-present with the sense they produce in the solution.<sup>62</sup> By giving primacy to sense and nonsense over truth and falsehood in problems (and a unique status to the problematic in sense and nonsense themselves), Deleuze puts forward his well-known argument against the reduction of problems to propositions (and specifically to the proposition’s three dimensions),<sup>63</sup> but more profoundly he is moving towards a more “internal” determination of problems. This movement can be critically understood as an attempt to distance thought from the proposition as the locus of truth, and associate it with the problematic as the more primal element of (non)sense.<sup>64</sup> In this regard, an ontology of sense is played out in Deleuze as an ontology of problems, of revealing sense and nonsense as an internal relation that is developed in problems and determines truth and falsehood.<sup>65</sup> If there is indeed nothing behind the curtain other than the co-presence of sense and nonsense, then language ceases to represent objects of experience, subjects of enunciation and ideal eternal forms, and is instead preoccupied with the problems that language poses for itself, and through which it produces the former as expressions of sense.

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<sup>60</sup> LS 56-57.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 54, 56-57.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 104-105

<sup>64</sup> “Sense is located in the problem itself. Sense is constituted in the complex theme, but the complex theme is that set of problems and questions in relation to which the propositions serve as elements of response and cases of solution” (DR 157).

<sup>65</sup> LS 68, 96.

While *The Logic of Sense* can be seen as a more direct response to *Logic and Existence*, even if its anti-Hegelian position remains concealed, Deleuze's reaction against Hyppolite is not tied up to this particular project. This could be better understood by taking a step back and examining how Deleuze establishes a "problematic" position with respect to a wider and more diverse philosophical milieu.

#### A problematic triangulation: Guérault and Alquié (and Hyppolite)

In his homage to Georges Canguilhem, Foucault famously described "a dividing line" separating "a philosophy of experience, of meaning, of the subject, and a philosophy of knowledge, of rationality, and of the concept".<sup>66</sup> This line, which has been displaced by several authors later on, ran through many philosophical-ideological oppositions in post-war France. On the one side were Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as philosophers who subject everything, including knowledge and rationality, to "experience"; on the other, Bachelard, Cavailles, Koyré, Canguilhem and others, including (implicitly) Foucault himself, as philosophers who explore the internal dynamics of concepts, and privilege "the metaphors of structure as a means of capturing the underlying matrices – linguistic, unconscious, political – that produce the effect of subjectivity".<sup>67</sup>

Throughout the text, Foucault clearly sympathizes with the latter side, celebrating its methodological rigour and noting that these philosophers, following the spirit of Enlightenment, could not dissociate "the question of the basis of rationality ... from an interrogation concerning the current conditions of its existence".<sup>68</sup> While Foucault's dividing

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<sup>66</sup> Michel Foucault, "Life: Experience and Science," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), 466.

<sup>67</sup> Tom Eyers, *Post-Rationalism: Psychoanalysis, Epistemology, and Marxism in Post-War France* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 153.

<sup>68</sup> Foucault, "Life: Experience and Science," 467; see also Giuseppe Bianco, "Experience vs. Concept? The Role of Bergson in Twentieth-Century French Philosophy," *The European Legacy* 16, no. 7 (2011): 856.

line ignored many nuances that existed along this spectrum of philosophical positions, it did reflect the ongoing tension between a philosophical culture that tends to embrace the growing dominance of the natural sciences in academia, conforming to scientific criteria of research, and between one whose objects encompassed properly “human reality” – subjectivity, experience and human existence.<sup>69</sup>

Two exemplars emerging from this dividing line were Ferdinand Alquié and Martial Guérout, who were also significant teachers of Deleuze. Despite their infamous decades long dispute, the two authors agreed on the importance of emphasizing the specificity of philosophy in the face of new academic norms, each formulating his own unique vision: Guérout sought to put forward a method that would discover the “core” of a given philosophical system allowing it to withstand time,<sup>70</sup> while Alquié maintained that philosophy must offer an account of our experiences that would retain a sense of ineffability, since for him the philosopher’s task is to gain a proximity, and perhaps even a convergence, with Being itself, in what he described as an “ontological *démarche*”.<sup>71</sup>

This difference of approaches in preserving an “exceptionalist” conception of philosophy would prove, at the hands of Alquié and Guérout, to become an “epistemological obstacle” for the very exercise of philosophy itself, with their efforts to put forward their individual conceptions of philosophy leading to an impasse, one which Hyppolite himself would attempt to reconcile via Hegel. Later on, Deleuze would take up

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<sup>69</sup> On the meta-philosophical debates in pre- and post-war France that were generated due to the shift in the balance of power between philosophy and the sciences, see Peden, *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology*, 65-95; Jean-Louis Fabiani, *Les philosophes de la République* (Paris: Minuit, 1988).

<sup>70</sup> “Considering philosophies, not as eternal truth, but as temporal and contingent events, [the historian of philosophy] will explain them historically as other historical events, by the conjunction of individual factors and social factors, milieu, etc. ... Pushed to the extreme, this tendency leads to treating the details of the contents as illusory epiphenomena, the techniques of setting up and demonstrating doctrines, to reduce them to a small number of fundamental themes only justiciable by historical-psychological factors” (Martial Guérout, *Leçon inaugurale*, (Paris: Collège de France, 1951), 15).

<sup>71</sup> Ferdinand Alquié, *Qu'est-ce que comprendre un philosophe?* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1956 [Reprint 2005]), 76, 87-90.

Hyppolite's task by offering his own alternative middle ground that attempts to impede Hegelianism's unique status.

Their dispute originated following the publication of Alquié's book on Descartes, *La Découverte métaphysique de l'homme chez Descartes* (1950), culminating in their confrontation at the 1955 colloquium on Descartes in Royaumont, which perpetuated their own unique fracture between "a philosophy which emphasizes the limits of rational thought to the profit of a more primordial, ineffable experience or intuition, and a philosophy which insists upon the capacity of rationalism to transgress the limits of lived experience to articulate conceptual insights of a universal or indeed absolute variety",<sup>72</sup> contributing to several original undertakings in French thought following its encounter with structuralism, but perceived at the time as an ultimate impasse.<sup>73</sup>

As suggested by the titles of Alquié's other works of the period, *Le Désir d'éternité* (1943) and *La Nostalgie de l'Être* (1950), his reading emphasizes separation and absence as the fundamental principles of Descartes' metaphysical discovery of "man" or the cogito following the experience of radical doubt, suggestive of philosophy as a human and affective lived experience, endowed with a particular "existential" temporality. According to Alquié, it is the role of the philosopher to break with the common sense of his time in order to clearly demonstrate that sense itself comes to envelop facts only through a subject who is himself in a relationship with an eternal Being from which he is nonetheless separated.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Knox Peden, "Descartes, Spinoza, and the impasse of French philosophy: Ferdinand Alquié versus Martial Guéroult," *Modern Intellectual History* 8, no. 2 (2011): 365.

<sup>73</sup> As Victor Goldschmidt noted following the proceedings at Royaumont, "that two interpreters could not come to agree upon the meaning, or even the letter of the Cartesian texts, that's what's disturbing, humiliating even, for any listener who believes in the universality of the intellect" (Victor Goldschmidt, "A propos du 'Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons.'" *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 62, no. 1 (1957): 67. Translated in Peden, *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology*, 78.

<sup>74</sup> "The nostalgia for Being is at the origin of both critical philosophies, that describes it with exactitude and accepts it with courage, and ontologies, that set out to soothe it" (Ferdinand Alquié, *La nostalgie de l'Être* (Paris: PUF, 1950), 56).

Guérout argued that Alquié's *démarche* reduces philosophical work to an ineffable experience which is nothing more than an expression of an "excess of subjectivism" characterizing certain philosophers of the period, including Bergson.<sup>75</sup> He rejected Alquié's reading of Descartes, perhaps most explicitly in the opening pages of his own book on Descartes, *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons* (1954), where he quotes Alquié's statement that "we do not believe there is a system in Descartes," followed by a response that "Descartes thought otherwise".<sup>76</sup> This declaration reflects his own position on the role of philosophy as a rational problem-solving activity that must be separated from the history of philosophy through the reconstruction of what he terms the "architecture" or "monuments" of works, by quasi-scientific means, perhaps reflecting his own embrace of the new standards for academic prestige.

For Guérout a philosophical text must be examined as an independent structure or system endowed with a logical movement, removed from any personal reflections of its author, and made up from concepts indifferent to any psycho-sociological causality, rendering these structures "philosophical monuments insofar as they possess this intrinsic value making them independent of time".<sup>77</sup> Guérout's method, which sought to restore the work's internal coherence through a totalizing, holistic approach that is highly sympathetic to the architectonics of the author's work and argumentation, was taken up in the work on

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<sup>75</sup> Guérout, *Leçon inaugurale*, 22. In a letter he sent to Alquié in 1951, Guérout advised him to abandon his "novelistic philosophy" which employs philosophers of the past as mouthpieces for the transmission of his own philosophical convictions, and choose between "pure philosophy where you express yourself directly, or the history of philosophy, where you will merely serve the thought of a genius, rather than enlisting him, willy-nilly, to your own service" (Christophe Giolito, *Histoires de la philosophie avec Martial Guérout* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), 112n22).

<sup>76</sup> Martial Guérout, *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968), 19.

<sup>77</sup> Guérout, *Leçon inaugurale*, 18. Guérout's emphasis on the self-sufficient nature of the philosophical system clearly evokes Jean Cavailles' "philosophy of the concept", developed in his book *Sur la logique et la théorie de la science* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947), which attempts to account for the autonomous development of concepts irreducible to the intuition of lived experience.



Descartes, in which Guérout reconstructed the former's philosophy according to an "order of reasons" demonstrated in the textual system.

Guérout's analysis of Descartes fulfills his call in his inaugural lesson to "vanquish historicism", meaning that the scholar's conception of philosophy and its history must be conceived simultaneously with his engagement with existing philosophical systems endowed with their own "reality". The reasons or problems of the "order of reasons", as Guérout formulates them, are the nucleus of the philosophical monument emerging from history and expressed within the means of the epoch, while resisting the erosive action of history by demonstrating their own rational consistency. Thus, a philosophical system can only be evaluated on its own terms and cannot be responsible to some "profound truth" which the system is supposed to express, a system that would only be one aspect of this truth.

Guérout's insistence that philosophical monuments are specifically devoted to the solving of problems (rather than presenting themselves as "the expression of the truth and as something timeless and eternally valid", as in Alquié)<sup>78</sup> can be traced to his former master, Emile Bréhier, whose 1948 text, "La notion de problème en philosophie", addresses a transition from a technical sense of the term "problem" to a philosophical sense, and whose starting point is Bergson's conception of the problem depicted in the letters to Floris Delattre (to which I will address shortly). Bréhier, a renowned disciple of Bergson, attempted to single out throughout this text the specificity of philosophy in relation to mathematics and the sciences, arguing that a philosophical problem would be appropriately posed due to its meta-problematic, whose correct explication is made through a progressive, reciprocal movement, which is to say, through a dialectical process (contrary to a mathematical problem whose resolution presupposes an already given set of material). According to Bréhier, only by

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<sup>78</sup> Martial Guérout, "The history of philosophy as a philosophical problem," *The Monist* 53, no. 4 (October 1969): 564.

identifying the appropriate meta-problematic from the false set of opinions can a philosophical problem be solved, affirming his master's assertion that "in philosophy, a well posed problem is a problem solved".<sup>79</sup>

Looking closely at each of these authors' positions, it is possible to detect points of interaction with both Hyppolite and Deleuze, insofar as the latter find themselves situated between the diverging demands of concrete experience and conceptual labor, attempting to find an adequate middle ground, perhaps even implicitly and unknowingly. It is from these radical philosophical disparities that the very meaning of the "problematic against the negative" could expand beyond the confinements of an unrestrained polemic between Deleuze and Hegel, and beyond Deleuze's meditations on the problem system, providing these with a critical milieu. No doubt Deleuze would accept Guérout's position that we must account for problems as the internal ideal structures of the philosophical text itself, providing the latter with an "untimely" attitude and allowing them to thwart the immediate demands of the present and reject the notion that philosophy must account for any external reality or metaphysical truth. In 1969 Deleuze also published a review of the first volume of Guérout's study of Spinoza, and congratulated him for succeeding in "establish[ing] the genuinely scientific study of Spinozism",<sup>80</sup> emphasizing the need to provide philosophical inquiry with a rigorous infrastructure that will not settle with interpretation but would seek to bring about the precise conditions in which the text unfolds as a series of problems.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Emile Bréhier, "La notion de problème en philosophie" in *Études de philosophie antique* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 15. In 1955 Deleuze published a review of a collection of essays by Bréhier, *Études de philosophie antique*, where he locates the core of his work in the search for the specificity of philosophy, identified in the two elements of the problem, irreducible to questions posed by science, and the concept. See Deleuze, "Études de philosophie antique," *Cahiers du sud* 328 (April 1955).

<sup>80</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Guérout's General Method for Spinoza," in DI 155.

<sup>81</sup> As Bianco argues, Guérout's structural reading of philosophical texts is highly evident in Deleuze's early work, particularly the method consisting of "having the nerve to put himself in the place [of the philosopher studied] with modesty" and asking "why did he choose that?" so as to discover the fundamental problems of the text. According to philosopher Olivier Revault d'Allonnes, who was Deleuze's classmate in Guérout's lessons, Deleuze learned this from

On the other hand, Deleuze had also supported Alquié's position, for example in his 1956 review of Alquié's *Descartes, l'homme et l'œuvre*, where Deleuze claims that his Descartes expresses "a conception of philosophy we must preserve, a thought that expresses the very essence of metaphysics",<sup>82</sup> which amounts to exceeding the restraints of scientific and conceptual thought. In Deleuze's account, Alquié's Descartes describes nature as a "spatial, actual and mechanical system" that is deprived of its thickness, potentialities and spontaneity, or in short of Being itself.<sup>83</sup> Descartes' scientific project therefore entails separating the mind from what is most elementary to it in favour of conceptual knowledge, and so a conception of philosophy as the effort to disclose this primordial "thickness" that only sensible encounters can truly render transparent is introduced.

While Deleuze seems to identify with the two approaches, at least to a certain extent, he does not simply accept them at face value, but rather attempts to negotiate between them, insisting on the sensible origin of problems and concepts, an origin which *Difference and Repetition* will attempt to disclose (I will return to this point later on). But once again we can suggest that it is Hyppolite who mediates this problematic to Deleuze. In Hyppolite's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1963, he had addressed his predecessors Guérout and Merleau-Ponty as representing two philosophical extremes. In this context, he declared that "philosophy can renounce neither rigour, demonstrative form in general, nor the relationship with the real, with experience",<sup>84</sup> the first approach pertaining to Guérout,

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Guérout. See Giuseppe Bianco, "Philosophie et histoire de la philosophie pendant les années 1950. Le cas du jeune Gilles Deleuze," in *L'angle mort des années 1950. Philosophie et sciences humaines dans la France d'après-guerre*, eds. Giuseppe Bianco and Frédéric Fruteau de Laclos (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2016), 55.

<sup>82</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Descartes, l'homme et l'œuvre, par Ferdinand Alquié," *Cahiers du sud* 43 (1956): 473.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 474. Here we find the notion of "thickness" (*épaisseur*), which Deleuze borrows from Jean Wahl in his analysis of empiricism, to which we will return in chapters three and four. Wahl spoke of a "cult of reality in its thickness" characterizing an "empiricism in the second degree" that "demands the rights of the immediate" which he attributes to Bergson, among others. See Jean Wahl, *Transcendence and the Concrete: Selected Writings*, eds. Alan D. Schrift and Ian Alexander Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 38.

<sup>84</sup> Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 877.

the other to Merleau-Ponty. Philosophy's aim, following this deadlock, is to form an autonomous system of ideal conceptual structures, but one that should be "a transcendental logic ... a reflection that recovers or attempts to recover, our original relation to lived experience, to existence and to being. It is this original relationship to being, this originally synthetic unity, which has been the theme of contemporary thought [namely, existentialism]".<sup>85</sup> Throughout his address, Hyppolite refers to Hegel as a facilitator for such a project who can articulate a philosophically adequate middle ground between the requirements that concrete experience pose (Merleau-Ponty, Alquié) and those that the problem and the concept put forward (Guérout).<sup>86</sup>

Within this framework, *Logic and Existence* (as well as his previous work on Hegel, *Genesis and Structure*, to which I will refer in the next chapters), can be understood as a conjunction of the two realms of the ideal and the concrete. However, as we have seen, in order to understand *Logic*, it is necessary to reduce man to the unveiling of Being, and only by doing so can we "return to things themselves". Such a return signals for Hyppolite the purpose of philosophy following Hegel: the constitution of a discourse of the absolute, an absolute knowledge irreducible to a phenomenology, an anthropology or an empiricism on the one hand, or to an ineffable absolute on the other. Thus, Hyppolite allocates each side of this conjunction with its lawful moment in the dialectic of Being:

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. In his *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of History* Hyppolite writes that "We find in Hegel ... the prodigious effort of the logician to introduce this living experience within the limits of strict reflection", stressing that his intentions, contrary to the dominant Hegelian tendency of his period, are to solve the problems posed by Hegel within a logic placed in a direct relation to time and temporality. See Jean Hyppolite, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of History*, trans. Bond Harris and Jacqueline B. Spurlock (Gainseville: Florida University Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>86</sup> Bianco argues that the opposition depicted in the inaugural address between Guérout and Merleau-Ponty is essentially rhetorical, as Guérout's work was focused on the history of modern philosophy, while Merleau-Ponty's was on psychology. According to Bianco, Hyppolite's intentions were to reconcile the polemics between the "structuralists" and the "existentialists", whose confrontation was embodied by Guérout and Alquié. See Bianco, "Experience vs. Concept?," 866-867.

Experience and the logos are not opposed. The discourse of experience and the discourse of being, the a-posteriori and the a-priori, correspond to one another and require one another. There would be no possible experience without the presupposition of absolute knowledge, but the path of experience points ahead to absolute knowledge.<sup>87</sup>

The purpose of *Logic and Existence* is to demonstrate that while consciousness always begins with experience or non-knowledge, it cannot find refuge from the demands of the Concept, in the ineffable below or beyond language. Thought must submit to conceptual knowledge if it wants to go beyond empirical reflection or a “subjectivity of knowledge” that would only “drive everything into the mystery of a ‘beyond’ of knowledge, into the mystery of an ineffable Absolute”.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, while Hyppolite seems to take a mediating approach with respect to the dividing line, he eventually sides with Guérault, believing that it is conceptual work that can render experience intelligible without eliminating Being as a “lived experience”, and while a heterogeneity between the two realms is evident at first, the dialectic would inevitably push them into sublation so that, at its very last instance, sensible experience is a conceptual determination.

This conclusion to which Hegel and Hyppolite arrive would be the target of some of Deleuze’s most succinct criticism with respect to Hegelianism: while he admires its attempt to arrive at a genesis of both thought and sensibility beyond the referential and the representational, by unfolding the immanent movement of being as self-differentiating, Deleuze argues that Hegel is unable to provide a properly “logical” account for this “obscured” being in its very thickness (à la Alquié). As he claims in *Difference and Repetition*,

[Hegel] creates movement ... but because he creates it with words and representations it is a false movement, and nothing follows. ... One can always mediate, pass over into the antithesis, combine the synthesis, but the thesis does not follow: it subsists in its immediacy, in its difference which itself constitutes the true movement.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 36.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>89</sup> DR 52.

Hegelianism is incapable of producing the movement of the logic of sense precisely because there is something in the sensible itself that does not simply follow conceptual thought. Deleuze's task with respect to Hegel and Hyppolite would then be to formulate a critical "problematic" ontology, one that is ideal and logical, as in Hyppolite, but impenetrable to the determinations of the negative (and to the demands of the Concept), which, as Deleuze concludes in his review of *Logic and Existence*, is simply not up to the task. As we will see, this "triangulation" of Alquié, Guérault and Hyppolite, will be mapped out onto the problematic of Bergson, Nietzsche, Hume and Kant's philosophies, setting the agenda for a philosophy of problems.

#### Bergson: critique of problems

Bergson's status with respect to Foucault's dividing line is unique, and one can argue that his presence displaces it, perhaps rendering its convictions ineffective and its suppositions obsolete, to the extent that he does not fit on either side. Deleuze would attempt to intensify Bergson's ambivalent position by introducing him as a forerunner of a philosophical revolution equal and perhaps even greater than Kant's Copernican revolution, that of the discovery of the problem as the critical benchmark for a new and rigorous metaphysics.

Having somewhat lost his early philosophical appeal, Bergson was heavily criticized in the French philosophical field from the 1930s until the 1950s, from Bachelard's critique (to which I will refer in the next section), through Lévi-Strauss' intolerance for the "Bergsonian acts of faith and circular arguments which reduced beings and things to a state

of mush, the better to bring out their ineffability”,<sup>90</sup> to Althusser’s brief denunciations of Bergson as bourgeois spiritualism and as exemplary of irrational anti-scientific ideology,<sup>91</sup> and Canguilhem’s critique concerning Bergson’s inability to account for the origin of concepts: the latter are simply “the result of a tactic of life in its relation with the environment”, a “human processing of experience, which itself is selective and artificial”, and therefore “a philosophy of life thus conceived cannot be a philosophy of the concept since the genesis of living forms is not a complete development, is not an integral derivation and is therefore a replica”.<sup>92</sup> Thus, Bergson is placed within a milieu of philosophers “superstitiously treating knowledge as a long-sought revelation and truth as positive dogma”.<sup>93</sup>

Deleuze’s early work on Bergson reflects a first critical attempt to shift the tectonics of philosophical rigor from the preoccupation with concepts, to a development of the problem and the problematic as a “lived experience” that bestows concepts with sense.<sup>94</sup> This is a theme that recurs in several recent papers on Bergson’s theory of problems: Elie During claims that Bergson had in fact made the first step in the French epistemological tradition to develop an anti-positivist conception of problems, by placing them before facts,

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<sup>90</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques*, trans. John Weightman & Doreen Weightman (London: Penguin, 1992), 53.

<sup>91</sup> Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1996), 25.

<sup>92</sup> Georges Canguilhem, “Le concept et la vie,” in *Études d’histoire et de philosophie des sciences concernant les vivants et la vie* (Paris: Vrin, 1983), 341, 348.

<sup>93</sup> Georges Canguilhem, *Knowledge of Life*, trans. Stefanos Geroulanos and Daniela Ginsburg (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 29.

<sup>94</sup> Following Foucault, Badiou traces the dividing line to the dual inheritance of Bergson and Brunschvicg, where we find “on the one hand ... a depreciation of the abstract as a simple instrumental convenience, and, on the other, an apologia of the Idea as the construction in which thought is revealed to itself”. Badiou credits Deleuze with succeeding in “secularizing Bergsonism and ... connecting its concepts to the creations at the forefront of our time”, but claims that he “does not support the real rights of the abstract”, insofar as “it cannot avoid continually depreciating what there is of conceptual stability in the order of theory” (Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 98, 99). Badiou, like Hyppolite to a certain extent, believes that there is a fundamental opposition between the two realms of the concrete and the abstract, which Deleuze would of course attempt to undermine.

an approach which he argues all “philosophers of the concept” share, although implicitly.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, Sean Bowden argues that despite Foucault’s view of Bergson, he nonetheless developed a kind of “philosophy of the concept” equal to Bachelard and Canguilhem’s: “the development of concepts and knowledge takes place not by means of the progressive acquisition and verification of empirical facts as a positivist view of scientific history would maintain but as a response to problems”.<sup>96</sup>

Deleuze’s *Bergsonism* formulates this problematic on the backdrop of a critique of dogmatic metaphysics, and of Bergson’s response to this critique in the form of the method of intuition.<sup>97</sup> Intuition is defined not as feeling or instinct, but as a fully developed and precise intellectual method determined by specific rules: “the first concerns the stating and creating of problems; the second, the discovery of genuine differences in kind; the third, the apprehension of real time”.<sup>98</sup> Intuition as method, as exertion, arranges the reality unfolded by duration with what Deleuze indicates as “scientific” precision, by placing the subject “at once” in the corresponding class of ideas, therefore maintaining the status of “immediacy” and “continuity” identified with ordinary (Kantian) intuition, while avoiding its reduction to “pure perception”.<sup>99</sup> And by situating problems as objects of intuition alongside temporal

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<sup>95</sup> Derrida, “A History of Problems,” 4, 19.

<sup>96</sup> Sean Bowden, “An Anti-Positivist Conception of Problems,” *Angelaki*, 23, no. 2 (2018): 45.

<sup>97</sup> B 13-35.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>99</sup> Simon Duffy highlights the fact that Deleuze’s engagement with Bergson is not simply a return but “an extension of his project today . . . in parallel with the transformations of science” (Simon Duffy, *Deleuze and the History of Mathematics: In Defense of the ‘New’*, 107). This rehabilitation involves reintroducing Bergson’s essential contribution to mathematics via his work on Riemannian space, a concept both “intuitive” and “rigorous” (*Ibid.*, 108), suggesting that the extension of Bergson’s project introduces a middle ground between a philosophy of experience and a philosophy of ideal structures. According to Duffy, Deleuze deploys Riemann’s mathematics in order to discover “the full potential of a concept of the virtual” (*Ibid.*, 112), allowing him to overcome the limitations of the concept of duration, which were raised in the aforementioned critiques. Furthermore, Bergson’s discovery of Riemann’s models of geometry unavailable to Kant, allows Deleuze to find an adequate alternative to the Euclidean (Kantian) perspective, which at the time promoted the development of analytical tools essential for scientific discovery, and of a mode of thought characterized by discontinuity and spatiality. Bergson, Deleuze emphasizes, would offer his own mode of continuity and temporality, giving way to a concept of space which does not predetermine the qualities that occupy it. This form of spatiality will ultimately contribute to



and differential experience (it could be in fact suggested that these are themselves taken to be “problematic”), Deleuze’s Bergson will emphasize that any study of life must be approached in terms of problems that are immanent to its evolution, rather than the mechanical realization of pre-existing goals.

These assertions already appear in Deleuze’s early text, “Bergson’s Conception of Difference” (1956), which can be read as a formative work establishing Bergson’s philosophy as essentially anti-subjective and his concept of difference as anti-dialectical. This is underlined by an early wish to detach Bergson from a philosophy of experience, pushing him to a more “rigorous” philosophy driven by problematic ideal structures, by giving the concept of intuition its proper ontological bearings.

In this text, Deleuze expresses, echoing his master’s motto, a desire to “return to things themselves” (in the late 1940s, Hyppolite had dedicated a course on Bergson’s work, which Deleuze attended, and written a celebrated paper on Bergson, *Aspects divers de la mémoire chez Bergson*, which was a clear influence on Deleuze), and to yield an adequate conception of difference that would facilitate such an effort to account for Being without reducing it to conceptual knowledge or to an empirical experience. Philosophy’s ideal is described as the tailoring of a concept to a single object, expressing the difference the underlies it, and points to the method of intuition as the means through which this philosophical tailoring might take place.<sup>100</sup> Deleuze continues to demonstrate, although without acknowledging this straightforwardly, how the method of intuition critically intervenes in the philosophy of difference in order to re-establish reality as comprised of ideal problems that dogmatic metaphysics and scientific research ignore and neglect, and whose solutions amount to acts

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Deleuze’s notion of a problematic Idea, and later on to concepts of space developed in *A Thousand Plateaus*. For a discussion on Deleuze’s analysis of Kantian vs Bergsonian space, see Henry Somers-Hall, Hegel, *Deleuze, and the Critique of Representation: Dialectics of Negation and Difference*, 74-76.

<sup>100</sup> Deleuze, “Bergson’s Conception of Difference,” in DI 33.

of individuation that express the intensive form (qualitative difference) in which problems are given as such.

In particular, he evokes the aforementioned critique of Bergson, according to which intelligible concepts originate in “need, social life and language ... and space”, so that “we substitute merely utilitarian modes of grouping for articulations of the real”.<sup>101</sup> However, this is not the point for Bergson, according to Deleuze, and “utility cannot ground what makes it possible in the first place”.<sup>102</sup> What grounds the “understanding” in such a way that it could find utilitarian products or results are “tendencies” that dominate objects and differentiate them.<sup>103</sup> Their status can be seen as problematic, because they are not simply given to the intelligence, nor to sensibility, and they are not metaphysical objects since metaphysics only renders these tendencies obscure and opaque behind the impenetrable curtain of concepts, pseudo-ideas and empirical differences, all of which only elicit “impure” mixtures or spectres of reality. As Deleuze argues, “tendency” is rather the underlying unity of concept and object that provides them with specificity and direction. Tendencies comprise the problematic field from which both subjects and objects emerge as solutions to problems that only intuition can track down without obstructing the problems’ autonomous dynamics. This, how to make intuition capture the immanent movement of problems on their path of solvability, is a prominent concern in the later *Bergsonism*, warding off both the old metaphysical concepts that are in the way and the accusations that Bergsonian intuition is an irrational method, a naïve empiricism or a vitalist mysticism.

This also includes Hyppolite’s critique. While in *Aspects divers* Hyppolite sympathizes with Bergson’s concept of duration as pure “intellectual effort”, the “essence of all contemplation”, and not a mere “lived experience”, since, as Hyppolite attempts to

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 34-35.

demonstrate, intuition becomes reflective only once spirit's attention to life is interrupted,<sup>104</sup> in *Logic and Existence* he claims that Bergson fails to discover a "genesis common to intelligence and materiality", and falls into "powerless, abstract immediacy, or being as such", lacking any determination.<sup>105</sup> Bergson's critique of negation as a human illusion, his refusal to recognize the power of the negative, only hinders ontology, and Bergsonism is driven back to subjectivity. As it stresses that while "affirmation is an act of pure intelligence, there enters into negation an extra-intellectual element, and it is precisely to the intrusion of an alien element that negation owes its specific character",<sup>106</sup> Bergsonism testifies to its own inability to internalize negation and therefore to think being as difference. Interestingly, in its critique of the negative as an inept concept of difference, "Bergson's Conception of Difference" employs a particular language that resembles Hyppolite's, strongly suggesting his influence on Deleuze's thought and appearing as an attempt to formulate a Bergsonian correction to Hegelian problems by means of Hegelian terms:

The originality of Bergson's conception resides in showing that internal difference does not go, and is not required to go as far as contradiction [...] and negativity, because these notions are in fact less profound than itself, or they are viewpoints only from the outside. The real sense of Bergson's endeavor is thinking internal difference as such, as pure internal difference, and raising difference up to the absolute.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Jean Hyppolite, "Various Aspects of Memory in Bergson," quoted in Leonard Lawlor, *The Challenge of Bergsonism: Phenomenology, Ontology, Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2003), 126.

<sup>105</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 110.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>107</sup> Deleuze "Bergson's Conception of Difference," in DI 39. Later on, as if following Hyppolite's historical differentiation, Deleuze argues that differences of nature, constituted by way of dissociation, rather than remaining exterior and separate as they are in nature, are increasingly becoming marked in man throughout the course of history. In man, "difference becomes conscious and achieves self-consciousness" (*ibid.*, 41). This particular Hegelian language will all but disappear in *Bergsonism*.

Keith Ansell-Pearson employs similar language when defending Deleuze's interpretation of the method of intuition in Bergson, claiming that intuition "denotes neither a vague feeling or incommunicable experience nor a disordered sympathy", but rather "a plurality of determinations and a variety of mediations" (Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Germinal Life – The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* [London: Routledge, 1999], 22,23). According to Ansell-Pearson, Bergson's strategy is to "take us beyond experience", this beyond amounts to a rediscovery of our freedom in the form of the creation of problems. Ansell-Pearson remains close to Deleuze's text, reflecting the position of several commentaries on Deleuze's Bergson as a philosopher who wishes to distance himself from

In *Bergsonism*, intuition is first introduced as a critical method that discovers false problems and general, abstract and ready-made concepts that cut off thought from its immediate relation with the problems that give rise to it. As Bergson expresses this,

Our intelligence, when it follows its natural inclination, proceeds by solid perceptions on the one hand, and by stable conceptions on the other. It starts from the immobile and conceives and expresses movement only in terms of immobility. It places itself in ready-made concepts and tries to catch in them, as in a net, something of the passing reality. It does not do so in order to obtain an internal and metaphysical knowledge of the real. It is simply to make use of them, each concept (like each sensation) being a practical question which our activity asks of reality and to which reality will answer, as is proper in things, by a yes or a no. But in so doing it allows what is the very essence of the real to escape.<sup>108</sup>

Bergson himself is introduced as a philosopher who rejects the problems of metaphysics, and intuition is presented as a method to determine their falsehood, at the same time as it rids thought of the ready-made concepts that are employed to solve these false problems. But intuition is not only a method for relieving ourselves with the ready-made concepts and clichés of metaphysics, but also a method for opening thought to the outside of these exhausted problems and questions.<sup>109</sup>

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experience on the one hand, and from conceptual thought on the other, and reinvents a conception of “life” as a superior form of creating and solving problems. For Ansell-Pearson, as for Deleuze, this conception of life as problem-posing is first evaluated against the consequences of Hegelian philosophy: “Life proceeds neither via lack nor the power of the negative but through internal self-differentiation along lines of divergence.” (Ibid 25). Ansell-Pearson chooses to endorse Deleuze’s position that the primary obstacle in rethinking life in terms of problems and differentiation, is the negative as the false problem par-excellence, thereby maintaining the critical encounter between Deleuze-Bergson-Hegel at the periphery of Deleuze’s thought, this while emphasizing that “life” in Bergson designates a Nietzschean attitude (a life-form “superior to others” [Ibid]), which leaves the reader with unresolved “Hegelian tension”.

<sup>108</sup> Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Dover, 2007), 159.

<sup>109</sup> Lawlor argues that this opening to the outside has become the basic impulse of all continental philosophy following Bergson: “Starting from a certain inside, it is driven by an impulse to exit” (Leonard Lawlor, *Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 16.). Deleuze and Guattari will make this impulse a central movement of “decoding”, which aims at dismantling the philosophical text and transforming its function so as to “hook thought up directly and immediately to the outside” (DI 255), which for them is the political outside. I will further address the importance of this “outside” as the realm of problems later on.

The requirement set by Bergson to rid ourselves of the ready-made when approaching duration as the realm of problems, or to “go beyond our human state”,<sup>110</sup> creates the first rule of intuition, to “apply the test of true and false to problems themselves. Condemn false problems and reconcile truth and creation at the level of problems”.<sup>111</sup> This rule is a prerequisite for Bergson in *Time and Free Will*, where he condemns the problem of freedom as a dominant false problem of metaphysics, relying on a badly analysed composite, namely the confusion of the two multiplicities of duration and simultaneity.<sup>112</sup> Bergson’s treatment and condemnation of this problem provides for Deleuze the framework to assert intuition as a proper problematic method, linking his demand to bring the true and the false to bear on problems themselves,<sup>113</sup> with Bergson’s effort to free thought from its metaphysical and psychological illusions, these being understood as the negative of thought. Bergson locates the origin of these illusions in what he terms the “retrograde movement of the true growth of truth”:

The examining of this illusion should tell us that it results from the very essence of our understanding. ... If the judgment is true now, it seems to us it must always have been so. It matters not that it had never yet been formulated: it existed by right before existing in fact. To every true affirmation we attribute thus a retroactive effect; or rather, we impart to it a retrograde movement.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> As Keith Ansell-Pearson argues, by appreciating the evolution of life Bergsonian philosophy can help us see how a theory of knowledge and a theory of life are in profound interaction, “bringing the human into contact with other realities, such as the inhuman and the superhuman” (Keith Ansell-Pearson, “Beyond the Human Condition: Bergson and Deleuze,” in *Deleuze and the Non/Human*, eds. Jon Roffe and Hannah Stark (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2015), 82). For our discussion, this amounts to a complete reformulation of problems as what “life” already imposes on us, constraining us to think and act, rather than being a fabrication that entertains the intellect or an absence that knowledge can cover up, thereby also informing us of the limits of knowledge within the context of human evolution (for example, the problem of space which forces the intellect to step out of the geometrical tendency of matter that shapes its spatial habits).

<sup>111</sup> B 15.

<sup>112</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F.L. Pogson (New York: Dover, 2001), 114-16.

<sup>113</sup> B 16.

<sup>114</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 21-22.

When a certain prediction turns out to be true, the truth of this prediction is verified by the corresponding fact. Events therefore play the role of confirmation of an anterior true statement, whose truth value does not depend on the subject matter of its corresponding statement but by virtue of its being true.<sup>115</sup> What is at stake here is the very essence of truth as an essentially problematic element, that is, one that does not exist by right but through an act of invention. This is further emphasized by Bergson's claim that the discovery of problems beneath their solutions does not resemble the act of uncovering what already exists,<sup>116</sup> but is rather a creative act of invention that brings to the fore the "true growth of truth", or truth as a process ("the paradox of today is often only the truth of tomorrow") which productively affirms the simultaneity of being and nonbeing, order and disorder.<sup>117</sup>

The role of intuition here is therefore to organize experience "back" into the problematic structure that generates its truth rather than confirms it, but it can only do so by first providing an immanent determination of what constitutes the "false" in false problems, so that the critical operation already suggests a positive determination of true problems that these false problems obscure. This perhaps explains why Deleuze focuses on the false problems that further contaminate the already "impure" mixtures of representation and does not provide criteria for affirming "true problems" in Bergson's philosophy. These, on the contrary, are only implied under the "articulations of the real".

In *The Creative Mind*, his most detailed meditation on his conception of problems, Bergson argues that problems are often badly posed because they resolve themselves of their

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<sup>115</sup> In this regard, it would be interesting to consider Bergson's debate with William James, where Bergson opposes James' model of truth with a dogmatic, copy based one. Through his analysis of James, Bergson refutes this dogmatic image of truth, arguing that it cannot satisfy the demands of experience and reality, and therefore an originality-based model of truth is called for. According to Bergson, James created the foundation for this model by defining truth in relation to what does not yet exist (rather than in conformity to what already exists), thereby internalizing a component of contingency to it. See *ibid.*, 180-186.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Henri Bergson, *Mélanges* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 1092.

own accord,<sup>118</sup> so truth remains an external criterion, since the problems can only be true according to their solvability. Another false criterion is the consideration of problems as illusions which disappear as soon as the propositions comprising them are more closely examined.<sup>119</sup> These illusions designate the negative in thought, its inability to recognize the logical movement of problems or of sense in the real itself, which instead divides reality into being and nonbeing, order and chaos, the real and the possible, projects its own illusions on these problems and creates a distorted image of a “contaminated” Being. For Deleuze, this theme in Bergson of false problems as illusions of thought “sums up his critique of the negative and of negation, in all its forms as sources of false problems”.<sup>120</sup> This is an obvious response to Hyppolite’s critique of Bergson, where Hyppolite posits that Bergson’s refutations of the illusions of the negative give away his own inability to produce a proper determination of Being. According to Deleuze, the Hegelian conception of Being would only be the expression of a wrongful division of the natural articulation of the real, where nonbeing is the indeterminate abstraction that precedes being, thus creating his own retrograde movement.

Here Deleuze attempts to fulfill his own critical intervention into *Logic and Existence*, to render negation a subjective expression of a more encompassing and profound difference. While problematization is meant to achieve better precision in articulating the rich and intricate relations that belongs to reality by right, the dialectic creates a “false movement”, arranging this richness in an emptiness, a vacuum that gives rise to these illusions that the intellect generates for itself in its neglect of the whole (this Bergsonian notion of a fullness in reality will be contested by Bachelard). Deleuze discloses a kind of Nietzschean position, claiming that by mistaking “the more for the less”, by imagining the notion of a lack of being

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<sup>118</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 77.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> B 18.

or postulating a negative determination of being, we only indicate a “half-willing” or a weakness,<sup>121</sup> once again blocking “problematic” (non)being with a psychological illusion. Rather than being contained as simply a false problem, this illusion is “inseparable from our condition”, carrying us along and immersing us in a state of repression,<sup>122</sup> a formulation that also evokes Kant’s transcendental illusion, and which will become the very signature of critical problematic philosophy, as we will see in chapter four.

At this point, Deleuze subordinates this illusory state to what he considers a superior state of nonbeing, as if implicating that every false problem is already encompassed by a true one, and that what duration does is simply rids thoughts of “impurities” (for example, meaningless concepts such as nothing, emptiness, abstraction or the being of the negative), demonstrating what Deleuze refers to as “an obsession with the pure” in Bergsonian philosophy. In this respect, the problem of existence as a causal problem (of existence emanating from emptiness) is a non-existent problem that itself belongs to a larger problematic of substitution: the substitution of what does not interest us, designated as nothing, with what does interest us – existence, occurring within a single reality divided into a hierarchy of interests, once again demonstrating a clear Nietzscheism.<sup>123</sup> Problems are thus differential elements of a mode of thinking, so that a thought that favors this hierarchy of existence only reflects its own false presuppositions and illusions, employing empty concepts to solve non-existing problems, in order to express a continuous reality that precedes them.<sup>124</sup>

It is worth noting here Richard Gale’s commentary on Bergson, where he criticizes Bergson’s rejection of the concept of nothingness, claiming that Bergson’s theory of existence is redundant, insofar as Bergson posits that every attempt to represent nothingness

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<sup>121</sup> B 19.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>123</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 79-80.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.



in fact represents it as existent, and it is therefore refuted at the outset.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, if nothingness is indeed merely suppression, as Bergson claims, we are led to the conclusion that every negative existential judgement would turn out to be necessarily false, which Gale claims to be absurd. For if he denies the existence of a denial, Bergson is in fact attributing nothingness to it. The concept is therefore a negative element which Bergson employs against annihilating arguments, while it itself is denied in his philosophy, and substituted with the idea of different degrees of existence.<sup>126</sup>

*Difference and Repetition*, however, lingers on the confusion between being and nonbeing, insisting on the ideal and intelligible nature of problems which the dialectic completely disregards:

Being is also non-being, but non-being is not the being of the negative; rather, it is the being of the problematic, the being of problem and question. ... non-being should rather be written (non)-being or, better still, ?-being.<sup>127</sup>

The negative constitutes a false problem to the extent that it misunderstands ?-being and employs this misunderstanding to set up the movement of the dialectic. Being in Bergson is not a simple positivity or affirmation but an objective dimension of problems from which reality emerges as problematic.

What is affirmed here is essentially a replacement of dogmatic metaphysics with a “superior empiricism” as the philosophical system that can reach things in themselves, namely, non-being as the internal difference of being. Metaphysics is understood in this respect as a kind of science that can only ever reach an isolated state of things from which all of its misunderstandings follow, or rather precede (the retrograde movement of the true imposed on this static state). Empiricism would therefore not attempt to reach a state but a

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<sup>125</sup> Richard M. Gale, “Bergson’s Analysis of the Concept of Nothing,” *The Modern Schoolman* 51, no. 4 (May 1974): 272.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>127</sup> DR 64.

tendency of things, to capture them in their movement of problematization.<sup>128</sup> Here and later on, empiricism is unfolded as a selective doctrine, and reality as a state of forces, each thing being nothing more than the expression of a force. In *Bergsonism, Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*, it is a matter of finding the right tendency of forces that discloses the thing's internal difference, the problem that drives, determines and actualizes it. Selection is the act by which thought is "awakened" from the outside, and placed within the logical movement of problems.

It is through this act of selection of tendency and the discovery of its internal difference that intuition proceeds from methodology to ontology, from tendencies to non-being or ?-being as the being of tendencies. "Bergson's Conception of Difference", while still evoking Hyppolite's language, stages a confrontation between selective and dialectical thoughts: "difference becomes conscious and achieves self-consciousness in humanity and only in humanity. ... According to Bergson, more than providing something new, it liberates what is already there. Consciousness was already there, with and in difference".<sup>129</sup> While this formulation is remarkably close to Hegel's, it also, according to Deleuze, points out the difference between Bergson and Hegel: while both authors supposedly share a common concern, of carrying difference into the Absolute, and see man as the unique courier for this unfolding, Bergson sees this differentiation being carried out as a problem-solving activity; for example, life as the expression of a problem of how to preserve itself through time.

For Bergson life is not the sum total of all living organisms, but the differentiating movement of *élan vital*, which pushes the past as "organic memory" into the present. Life's particular forms of organisms are only provisional "solutions" to a single ideal structure, solutions which are themselves a resonance of *élan vital* as the Absolute in which all particular differences come together. With regards to the aforementioned quote, human

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<sup>128</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 159.

<sup>129</sup> Deleuze, "Bergson's Conception of Difference," in DI 41.

consciousness in Bergson is not historical as it is in Hegel, since history is simply one of its relay points, once it had traversed matter, which is its original problem, the primary obstacle in life's path.<sup>130</sup>

If the “three stages [that] define a schematizism in Bergson's philosophy: ... Duration [as] difference from itself; memory [as] coexistence of degrees of difference; and élan vital [as] the differentiation of difference”,<sup>131</sup> strike Deleuze as a productive way to capture the rational movement of sense as life, it is also because it counters Hyppolite's three “pulsations” of logos, that establish an “intellectual” and negative movement of sense: being (as “immediacy of pure thought”),<sup>132</sup> essence (the “instability of the second dialectical moment” where “being is negated”),<sup>133</sup> and concept (which “re-establishes the immediate being of the beginning”).<sup>134</sup> It is these three “moments” of Bergsonism moving from the “abstract” to the “concrete” and back (articulation of pure difference, discovery of differences in degree, and incarnation of pure difference in actual phenomena) that are supposed to break with representational understanding of concepts, allowing the latter to become more “fluid” and “mobile” so as to accommodate the demands of philosophy to tailor concepts to dynamic objects. For Bergson, the difficulty lies in following and capturing this movement by which problems endow concepts with sense:

The relation of a philosophy to earlier and contemporary philosophies is not, then, what a certain conception of history of systems would lead us to assume. The philosopher does not take pre-existing ideas in order to recast them into a superior synthesis or combine them with a new idea. One might as well believe that in order to speak we go hunting for words that we string together afterwards by means of a thought. The truth is that above the word and above the sentence there is something much more simple than a sentence or even a word: the meaning, which is less a thing thought than a movement of thought, less a movement than a direction. And just as the impulsion given to the embryonic life determines the division of an original cell into cells which in turn divide until the complete organism is formed, so the characteristic movement of each act of thought leads this thought, by an increasing sub-

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>132</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 167.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 169.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

division of itself, to spread out more and more over the successive planes of the mind until it reaches that of speech. Once there it expresses itself by means of a sentence, that is, by a group of preexisting elements; but it can almost arbitrarily choose the first elements of the group provided that the others are complementary to them; the same thought is translated just as well into diverse sentences composed of entirely different words, provided these words have the same connection between them. ... Such is the operation ... by which a philosophy is constituted.<sup>135</sup>

Here Bergson is pushing towards a single philosophical system in which problems are an extra-propositional element of thought, whose terms of expression hold less importance than the expressed itself. Once a philosophy establishes its sense, that is, its problem, the mechanisms of its solution are chosen by intuition so as to best express the problem itself as a branching-out of thought. Far from being a task to make things more “concrete”, this is a process by which thought rids itself of its mediating mechanisms so as to render things more abstract:

The true difficulty is to pose the problem, to abstract oneself to this end from language (which was made for conversation, not for philosophy), to carve reality along its natural lines, whereas language and common sense have tailored and distributed it with a view to the convenience of our actions. In this way the problem will be limited, but the effort to resolve it, and above all to pose it, will become unlimited. At bottom, resolving and posing amount to the same thing. The problem, such as I conceive it, is only posed once it is resolved.<sup>136</sup>

The movement of problematization is one that steps out of language to establish a proximity with “life”, only to return to language and delimit it “for our convenience”, solving the problem. (Intuition thus does not actually articulate the problem pure and simple, but rather eliminates the conditions that would set a false problem and replaces them with legitimate ones.)

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<sup>135</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 99-100.

<sup>136</sup> Henri Bergson, “Letter to Floris Delattre,” in *Key Writings*, eds. Keith Ansell-Pearson and John Mullarkey (New York: Continuum, 2002), 370.

We can also see this effort at work in *The Logic of Sense*, where Deleuze attempts to extract sense or the problem from the proposition, which inheres and subsists at its surface as an implicit presupposition that the mechanisms of language cannot express:

As Bergson said, one does not proceed from sounds to images and from images to sense; rather, one is established “from the outset” within sense. ... Sense is always presupposed as soon as I begin to speak; I would not be able to begin without this presupposition. In other words, I never state the sense of what I am saying.<sup>137</sup>

By recovering sense in the act of its production through nonsense, the question of sense shifts from its existence to its production, and, more generally, the question of language shifts from its being to its experimentation. For Bergson, to “state the sense of what one says” in philosophy entails the production of the concept, that on the one hand presupposes sense as ready-at-hand and already produced, expressed through “the problems already stated, the solutions provided, the philosophy and science of the times in which he lived, all these have been for each great thinker the material he was obliged to use to give a concrete form to his thought”.<sup>138</sup> However, on the other hand, these are merely the means of expressing the other sense, indeed of disguising it: “we soon perceive that in the very places where the philosopher seems to be repeating things already said, he is thinking them in his own way”.<sup>139</sup> Bergson argues that this sense does not imply an evolutionary moment in the history of philosophy, since it does not pertain to this history, nor to any other history.<sup>140</sup> As Nietzsche evokes the untimely, the concept as sense makes use of everything that is relative to its actual epoch, though it itself is not:

The philosopher might have come several centuries earlier; he would have had to deal with another philosophy and another science; he would have given himself other problems; he would have expressed himself by other formulas;

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<sup>137</sup> LS 28.

<sup>138</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 90

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

not one chapter perhaps of the books he wrote would have been what it is; and nevertheless he would have said the same thing.<sup>141</sup>

Both Bergson and Deleuze will argue that this “same thing” is both the problem and concept, created in a single movement of this unlimited effort to pose and resolve the problem, and to endow concepts with a “new sense which words assume in the new conception of the problem”.<sup>142</sup>

Deleuze’s treatment of Bergson indicates a direction for a more extensive critique of the problems of metaphysics, from which a new conception of problems can emerge, problems understood as an objectivity rather than a temporal state. More generally, a positive rendition of Being as problematic, unavailable to conceptual thought and overlooked by immediate experience, would later follow. At this point it would be useful to examine Bachelard’s conception of the problematic, which not only provides a critical background against which Bergson’s conception can be further scrutinized, but is also an essential component comprising the conception of problems which Deleuze taps into in *Difference and Repetition*.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>142</sup> Bergson, “Letter to Floris Delattre,” 371.

<sup>143</sup> While Bachelard’s presence is never made explicitly felt throughout *Difference and Repetition*, a short footnote indicates the proximity between the two authors: Deleuze hails Bachelard for opposing “the problem or the object-bearer of problem to Cartesian doubt, and denounces the recognition model in philosophy” (DR 320n9), acknowledging his contribution to formulating a conception of problems which cannot be realized in an empirical encounter. This point will be developed in the following chapters.

## Bachelard and the “problematic”

Deleuze and Bachelard wrote on science and philosophy from two highly different perspectives and with different aims in mind: Bachelard sought to develop a philosophy of science, while Deleuze did so in the context of a wider metaphysics. They were, however, both preoccupied with the idea of a “problematic”, understood as a system of conceptual and ideal liaisons elaborated through a process of learning from scientific and epistemological revolutions.<sup>144</sup>

As Isabelle Stengers had recently commented, Bachelard had introduced the term “problematization” in *Le rationalisme appliqué* as “the very signature of scientific rationality as it escapes the burdening reverence to empirical facts”, marking the difference between science, “which erected itself through the construction of rational problems”, and opinion, “which merely derives its claims from empirical facts”.<sup>145</sup> Hence, problematization, as a “polemical reason”, was to engage in a “critique of the (humanist, ideological, consciousness-centred) presuppositions that call for demystification”.<sup>146</sup> Formulated as such, the problematic in Bachelard is not a theory nor a set of laws, but the very structure of theory itself, the set of relations between concepts and their tendencies, taken from their most immediate sense and placed into a system.<sup>147</sup>

What Bachelard is aiming for, however, is not a metaphysics, but rather a history of the problematic that is unfolded by the examination of the real (historical) conditions of the production of scientific knowledge,<sup>148</sup> which Deleuze has also argued to be necessary in the

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<sup>144</sup> James Williams, “Science and Dialectics in the Philosophies of Deleuze, Bachelard and DeLanda,” *Paragraph* 29, no. 2 (July 2006): 98.

<sup>145</sup> Isabelle Stengers, “Putting Problematization to the Test of Our Present,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 0, no. 0 (2019): 4.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>147</sup> Maniglier, “What is a problematic?,” 23.

<sup>148</sup> Dominique Lecourt, *L'Épistémologie historique de Gaston Bachelard* (Paris: Vrin, 2002).

construction of a problematic.<sup>149</sup> Canguilhem proposed a principle distinction between Bachelard's work and the work of a historian of science:

If the history of science involves enumerating the variants in the successive editions of a treatise, then Bachelard is not a historian of science. If the history of science consists in rendering visible – and intelligible at the same time – the vexed, contradictory, resumed and rectified construction of knowledge, then Bachelard's epistemology is a history of science still in action. Hence his interest in errors, horrors, disorders, everything that represents the fringe of historical history not covered by historical epistemology.<sup>150</sup>

Underlying this distinction is a distinction between two kinds of histories, a progressive history of succession and an adventurous history of the tedious and the contradictory, a history of solutions and empirical facts and a history, perhaps, of systematic problems.

As Bachelard famously claims in *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, this history of problems is characterized by ruptures that cause a discontinuity in time itself. Epistemological ruptures account for real scientific progression that is punctured by epistemological obstacles, which signify the false or badly stated problems that science and epistemology necessarily encounter and pose throughout their tedious progression.<sup>151</sup> These false problems stem from the many prejudices that the “scientific mind” holds when approaching its object of investigation, posing an obstacle that distorts or prevents a clear passage from representation to abstraction, essential for legitimate scientific experimentation.<sup>152</sup>

What Bachelard refers to with the term “epistemological obstacle” is therefore not a false problem as we have come to recognize it so far, but rather a false presupposition or a

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<sup>149</sup> DR 177-178.

<sup>150</sup> Georges Canguilhem, “L'histoire des Sciences dans l'oeuvre épistémologique de Gaston Bachelard,” *Annales de l'Université de Paris* 33, no. 1 (1963): 24-39, reprinted in Georges Canguilhem, *Etudes d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences concernant les vivants et la vie* (Paris: Vrin, 1983), 178.

<sup>151</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, trans. Mary McAllester Jones (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.



false value, akin to those Deleuze would criticize in the image of thought. An epistemological obstacle gives way to a false problematic, that is, to false relations between the concepts of a theory. First and foremost is the obstacle of primary experience, which is the immediate and unreflective experience that constructs “opinions”.<sup>153</sup> This is both an epistemological and pedagogical obstacle, accentuating an urgency to teach science against students’ natural attitudes, since the question of pedagogy is not one of acquiring knowledge but of changing from one set of knowledge to another one, which can only occur by removing the obstacles that everyday life sets *and* those that past knowledge sets.<sup>154</sup> So every complete system of knowledge is already an epistemological obstacle that must be problematized.

What Bachelard suggests with respect to this question is a dialectical pedagogy that reenacts the removal of obstacles by way of a dialogue or negotiation between theory and experience, in which the positions of the subject, object and agent of education are not presupposed but are rather constructed gradually, and can change their nature later on: for example, the teacher can come to represent “old knowledge” and become an obstacle that the student must overcome. Furthermore, this pedagogy implies a rectification rather than a complete removal of our obstacles, which, in light of Bachelard’s renouncement of the search for a secure foundation of the sciences, must be renewed continually in “dialectic generalization”.<sup>155</sup>

However, we should still ask: what is the relation between the history of problems and the so-called punctured nature of time? Why, for Bachelard, is the encounter and removal of an obstacle the origin of a temporal break?

In *L’intuition de l’instant*, Bachelard suggests that the possibilities of reality are enclosed in isolated instants or points, both in time and space, emerging only in ruptures. These

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *La philosophie du non. Essai d’une philosophie du nouvel esprit scientifique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1940), 127.

instants are pre-individual, in that they are immanent both to their subjects and objects, and constitute their temporality: the individual is discontinuous and contingent, merely an incidentally emergent arrangement of triggering instances, a “sum of coincidences”, and even “this sum itself is a coincidence”.<sup>156</sup> The isolated instant itself constitutes the moment in which we depart from ourselves in order to anticipate reality, when we become aware of the lacunae that precede temporality and space, and create the possibility of coincidence. Here Bachelard follows the critique of the traditional concept of causality developed by Eugène Dupréel in his philosophy of the interval, and introduces the possibilities that can enter the interval between cause and effect:

Indeed, it is in the interval of time that impediments, obstacles, and deviations can intervene and these will sometimes shatter causal chains. This possibility of intervention must be wholly regarded as a pure possibility and not as a reality we do not know. It is not because we do not know what will intervene that we fail to predict the absolute effectiveness of a given cause; rather, it is because there is between cause and effect an entirely probable intervention of events which are not in any way at all connected to the causal datum. In particular, we shall never have the right to give ourselves the interval. In science, we can construct certain phenomena, we can protect the interval from certain disturbances, but we cannot get rid of every intervention of unforeseen phenomena in the interval between cause and effect.<sup>157</sup>

An obstacle or an incidental event operates as a trigger for actions, whose intervention in the interval creates an anticipation towards further events. Therefore, the essential question that arises from this analysis is not how a specific concurrence of events comes about, but rather whether or not this synchronicity triggers a temporal agency, that is, an expectation that develops into a duration.

This notion of a repose at the heart of causality is well developed in the metaphysical works of Bachelard, but also in the epistemological ones, under the concepts of the rupture and the no. These concepts establish the moment when an obstacle can intervene and

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<sup>156</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *L'intuition de l'instant* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1932), 70.

<sup>157</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, trans. Mary McAllester Jones (London: Rowman & Littlefield Press, 2016), 86.

unsettle the whole epistemic landscape through an absolute negation of the erroneousness of the pre-scientific mind, which does not leave room for any further dialectical mediation. This negation that informs the epistemological rupture seems to be opposed to that of Hegelian dialectic: by constituting an absolute rather than dialectical negation, Bachelard's dialectic does not have a speculative closure, but must be temporalized once again, thus remaining open. What is therefore constituted is a provisional epistemology concerned with temporal objects that emerge from the instant (the moment of rupture, the interval, the no).<sup>158</sup>

As mentioned, the concept of the rupture breaks with questions and problems that we encounter in our lives and that arise from our most immediate experience (what Husserl also refers to as "life-world").<sup>159</sup> For Bachelard, scientific disciplines and innovations do not exist because of a pre-established disposition and interest, but on the contrary because of the rupture's ability to substitute these interests and questions with a more clearly defined problem, that these sciences are conceived. Science is not an expression of a more profound "questioning" but a creation of problems that imply a displacement of these questions (this theme of "problematizing problems" will be well developed in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, as we will see in the next chapter).<sup>160</sup>

Therefore, rather than advancing a scientific or philosophical analysis, questions for Bachelard only reinforce an obstacle by reformulating what is already relatively known. Only by following ruptures can we account for the historical conditions of the production of scientific knowledge, thus revealing the reciprocal relations between epistemology and history: "If epistemology is historical, the History of the Sciences is necessarily

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<sup>158</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *Le matérialisme rationnel* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), 82.

<sup>159</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 32, 43, 48-53; see also Maniglier, "What is a problematic?," 22.

<sup>160</sup> Maniglier, "What is a problematic?," 22.

epistemological”,<sup>161</sup> meaning that the history of science needs a unique epistemological perspective to clarify the nature of scientific activity by conforming it to an appropriate set of epistemic values: the problem as privileged over the question.

Similar to Bergson, we see in Bachelard a systematic replacement of false problems with true ones, through which we can also identify the two authors’ points of dispute. Famously, Bachelard criticized Bergson on several points, most notably on the notion of continuity underlying duration: “Of Bergsonism we accept everything but continuity”, he concludes his presentation of Bergson’s philosophy in *The Dialectic of Duration*, implying that he in fact rejects the whole of Bergsonism, since one of the assumptions preceding this text is that Bergson is a philosopher of continuity and all of his major concepts reflect this (duration, élan vital, creative evolution),<sup>162</sup> or the very least that Bachelard believes that continuities can never be complete but must be constructed. What Bachelard is attempting to constitute is therefore already implied in the title, a dialectic that would annihilate Bergson’s duration, which Bachelard believes is devoid of contradiction and negation: a position he had already expressed in *L’intuition de l’instant*. In the context of our debate, we could reevaluate this dispute by confronting the two’s notions of problematizing, namely the method of intuition and the epistemological rupture.

As suggested earlier, intuition for Bergson is the method for extracting duration from discrete time, for tracing tendencies from things, in order to realize their problematic origins. Already on this point Bachelard has criticized Bergson for articulating an intellect relative to the requirements of everyday life, an intellect who is geared into action and whose actions allow him to constitute problems.<sup>163</sup> For Bachelard, this intuition-based intellect reflects the limitations of a philosophy that subordinates and reduces science, and he therefore calls for

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<sup>161</sup> Dominique Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology: Bachelard, Canguilhem and Foucault*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1975), 6.

<sup>162</sup> See Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, 1-11.

<sup>163</sup> Bachelard, *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, 185.

a reversal in their relations. Philosophy must adopt the dialectical method that characterizes scientific analysis, its productive confrontation between new ideas and old ones. Furthermore, Bachelard dismisses Bergson's critique of false problems as an expression of a "psychology of fullness":

Bergson's philosophy is a philosophy of fullness and his psychology is a psychology of plenitude. This psychology is so rich, so multifarious and mobile that it cannot be contradicted; it makes repose active and functions permanent. It can always draw on so many things that the psychological scene will never be empty, and success will also be ensured.<sup>164</sup>

Bachelard's critique of Bergson's claim that the concept of nothingness leads to false problems renders the method of intuition no more than a psychology of instincts and impulses, thus reversing Bergson's critique of psychology back into itself, since the fullness which belongs to reality by right effectively belongs to consciousness. What Bachelard has in mind for *The Dialectic of Duration* is to bridge between duration and the dialectic, between intuition and the instant, to create an intuition of the instant (rather than duration), the instant which is central to Bachelard, and which for Bergson comes to show the limits of science, whose understanding of time is purely quantitative. We are therefore referred back to the claim that the two are in complete oppositional standpoints in regard to their objectives and their presuppositions: Bachelard constructs a dialectics that presupposes a discontinuity in reality which is revealed in science, and accounts for the ways in which problems add the new to what is already relatively known by way of condemning the obstacles of reality and psychology; Bergson constructs an intellectual intuition that presupposes a continuity in reality, which can be revealed by rigorous experience that allows us to rid ourselves of ready-made concepts and pose problems anew.

However, can it really be said that Bergson is a philosopher who cannot think discontinuity? Does he in fact argue for a single indivisible duration from which problems

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<sup>164</sup> Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, 23.

would be promptly deduced, contrary to Bachelard's ruptured history of problems? James Williams has distanced Bachelard and Bergson on this issue, claiming that the divergence between the two stems from their views on the concepts of completeness and continuity.<sup>165</sup> Bachelard is concerned with a demand for completeness in science while arguing for a lack of continuity in scientific revolutions, whereas Bergson (linked with Deleuze here) is tasked with affirming a productive real continuity through a search for completeness (a complete account of the virtual conditions of this production).<sup>166</sup> According to Williams, Deleuze claims that the scientific desire for completeness signifies the abandonment of the richness of continuity in favour of explanation and prediction.<sup>167</sup> Beneath disparity, discontinuity and difference lies "a continuous transcendental condition for actual difference, where actual difference is defined in terms of identity".<sup>168</sup> This rather familiar argument recognized within a certain Deleuzian scholarship reduces every notion of disparity to a Bergsonian continuity that does not give a full account of the essential discontinuities that co-exist along with continuity in Bergson.

As Ansell-Pearson points out,<sup>169</sup> in *Creative Evolution* Bergson places the notion of contingency at the heart of duration, as such allowing discontinuities and ruptures to sustain through evolutionary processes:

We hold that in the domain of life the elements have no real and separate existence. They are manifold mental views of an indivisible process. And for that reason there is radical contingency in progress, incommensurability between what goes before and what follows – in short, duration.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Williams, "Science and Dialectics in the Philosophies of Deleuze, Bachelard and DeLanda," 100.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* 103-104; See also James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 168-171.

<sup>168</sup> James Williams, *The Transversal Thought of Gilles Deleuze: Encounters and Influences* (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2006), 80.

<sup>169</sup> Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual: Bergson and the Time of Life* (London: Routledge, 2002), 74.

<sup>170</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 34.

Here Bergson does not exclude the notion of discontinuity from duration in order to make the latter consistent, as Williams suggests, but rather subordinates it to duration in order to make it intelligible. The misconception which Ansell-Pearson refers to, going from Bachelard to Badiou, refers not to an inability to think discontinuity, but rather to the placing of this concept within the wider conceptualization of continuity and the new.<sup>171</sup> For Deleuze, this is the role of an indetermination that plays out “the unforeseeable, contingency, freedom—these all signify a certain independence with respect to causes: in this sense, Bergson honors the *élan vital* with many contingencies”.<sup>172</sup>

It is not just a matter of deducing problems from duration, but of recognizing the radical contingencies that give rise to these problems and not to different ones. In both Bergson and in Bachelard we find an attempt to do so, and in Bachelard this recognition is transformed into a rectification of the contingent. What separates the act of problematization from universal doubt is the former’s ability to rectify the given rather than simply pulverize and destroy it, as does the latter, giving rise to a fortuitous world through constructive reflection.<sup>173</sup> The reflection on the given as an object or a series of objects must give way to its rigorous construction in a problematic field: “Sooner or later, scientific thought will become the central subject of philosophical controversy; science will show philosophers how

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<sup>171</sup> Ansell-Pearson refers to the dispute between Deleuze and Badiou regarding the nature of the event and of the multiple, which is in fact a reenactment of the previous dispute between Bergson and Bachelard: “For Bachelard and Badiou the new is, almost by definition, that which exceeds prior conditions and which cannot be explained in terms of them. The quarrel with Bergsonism appears to rest on the claim that the new cannot be genuinely new if it is bound up with, in however complicated a fashion, the past” (Ansell-Pearson, *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual*, 71). Here Ansell-Pearson refers to what are perhaps misguided assumptions according to which, in duration, “the present instant is never anything other than the phenomenon of the past” (Gaston Bachelard, “The Instant,” in *Time and the Instant*, ed. Robin Durie (Manchester: Clinamen Press 2000), 24.), and that one must choose between continuity and discontinuity when considering the new, which places both authors in conflict.

<sup>172</sup> Deleuze, “Bergson’s Conception of Difference,” in DI 51.

<sup>173</sup> Gaston Bachelard, “Corrationalism and the problematic,” *Radical Philosophy* 173 (May/June 2012): 27.

to replace intuitive, immediate systems of metaphysics with systems whose principles are debatable and subject to experimental validation”.<sup>174</sup>

In order to evaluate the history of science or the development of scientific thought we must rectify our metaphysical discourse so that this evaluation will not take the form of a reconstructive tracing of the itinerary of discovery. What is needed therefore is an analysis that can take into account justifications for dismissing past theories, modifying existing concepts and consenting to certain presuppositions. There is a sort of technical or applied rationalism to the posing of problems in Bachelard that demands scientific severity, since it entails an operation on the very substance of our ordinary lives.<sup>175</sup> Here the acts of problematization and the tracing of problems are closely related, both negating intuitive or absolute notions and replacing them with functional concepts that refer to one another in a structure. Whatever is given to a problem must be progressively rectified, from the contingent to the necessary, from experience to its rational grounding towards an applied rationalism.

Applied rationalism refers to a scientific mind that does not move from a proposed theory to its empirical examination, but is rather empirically engaged,<sup>176</sup> a reason which is not innate to nor developed by the singular individual, but is rather a technique produced by social and cultural practices, not those of the everyday but another practice of another

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<sup>174</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The New Scientific Spirit*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 2-3.

<sup>175</sup> Maniglier, “What is a problematic?”, 23.

<sup>176</sup> One of the more famous examples that Bachelard employs in this context is the dew point, a saturation temperature to which humid air must be cooled at a constant barometric pressure, so that water vapor will condense into liquid. The empirical question relating to this phenomenon is whether dew comes from inside the plant on which it accumulates, or from outside it, a question that stems from a simple “natural” observation, either conforming to or refuting a given scientific law. However, for Bachelard this questioning and observation does not account for scientific problematization, since it does not express a rationality grounded in experience and only deals with contingent elements. For this grounding to occur, the phenomenon must become a variable in the relation between the mutually determined concepts, rather than simply be determined (as coming from the plant or from the sky), it must be rationalized in a more sustained problematic of the relation between the pressure of vapor and temperature, which gives rise to the law of hygrometry. See Bachelard, “Corrationalism and the problematic.”



culture, which has nothing to do with any “natural” development or environment, but with the creation of an environment internal to this newly found reason. It is this development of a technical, functional rationalism that can replace the external relations of a theory and extra-theoretical elements with the internal relations that constitute the problem pertaining to this theory, and it is implied in Bachelard’s work that our ultimate task is to follow and discover a typology of rationalisms through the problems that define them.

While Deleuze would not simply follow Bachelard’s theory of the problematic, he would embrace certain aspects of it, which would come up in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* and *Difference and Repetition*, in a period in which he found Bachelard useful in formulating a conception of philosophy distinguished from both philosophies of representation and scientific orthodoxy, an effort that would continue and become more radicalized after Deleuze’s encounter with Guattari.

## Conclusion

In Conclusion, I have shown how the problem of ontology raised in *Logic and Existence* comes to play a fundamental role in Deleuze's early philosophy, and how his structuralist notion of sense qua the problem and the problematic attempts to push back the dialectic: Like Hyppolite, Deleuze maintains that philosophy is ontology, although obscured by dogmatism, empiricism and transcendentalism, but rejects that what is required is more conceptual rigor at the expense of "lived experience". Instead, he believes that the movement of sense as differentiation can be disclosed through the form of problems, which already exists in certain philosophical traditions. Hyppolite's strategy is to push thinkers such as Kant, Bergson and Hume into contradiction and negation, while Deleuze believes that these are "problematic" thinkers insofar as the "movement of the sense" as problematization already takes place in them. This was the case with Bergson, who rejected the old problems and concepts of philosophy in order to develop his own notion of problems as the explication of sense and the articulation of the real. Bergson becomes a kind of provisional mediator between the conflicting demands of Guérault and Alquié, by emphasizing that his method of intuition does not trade philosophical rigor for some sort of an "encounter", but rather seeks to enunciate the problematic yet intelligible nature of reality itself.

Finally, Bachelard was introduced as an essential philosopher of the problem through his concept of the "problematic", a thinker whose tactics may fundamentally differ from Deleuze, but which are key to understanding Deleuze as a problematic thinker. This is to the extent that Deleuze does not accept the empirically given at face value, but believes that it can be examined only within the context of a problem, as Bachelard does. This point will continue to develop in the following chapters.

## Chapter 2

### The camel, the lion and the child: Nietzsche as adjudicator of problems

#### Introduction

*Nietzsche and Philosophy* exemplifies Deleuze's relation with Hegel in all its ambivalence: while it sets out to condemn Hegelianism as the only philosophical system lacking any redeeming qualities, it also displays an extraordinary proximity between the two authors. Hegelianism is singled out and attacked to make way for a new philosophical agenda of critique and problematization, but it is often the case that both philosophies are engaged with the same problems. Ultimately, Hegelianism is reconstructed as the epitome of the old problems of philosophy and is rebutted with eternal recurrence, rendering *Nietzsche and Philosophy* as an explication of the path philosophy must chart for itself if it wants to break free from the dialectic, namely a path of embracing Critique (specifically of values) as the only legitimate approach to evaluate problems. Nietzsche's "pluralism" translates this critical approach into a mode of questioning, the purpose of which is a complete reevaluation of metaphysics, from which it could pose problems anew.

With Nietzsche, Deleuze "weighs" the burden that language and doxa carry over thought, a burden hindering thought's access to both the "reality" of the empirical world and that of Ideas, and clarifies that thought is first and foremost entangled with the problems that constitute its own morality, culture and science as fundamentally problematic. This approach is taken up, as we will see in the following chapters, in Deleuze's *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, *Kant's Critical Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*, highlighting Nietzsche's role in Deleuze's philosophy of problems, and therefore allowing us to realize the de facto scope of such a philosophy. In other words, to some extent, it is Nietzsche who takes control over Deleuze's conceptualization of the problem, whether it is under the guise of Bergson, Plato, Hume or Kant, all of whom are realized as "proto-Nietzschean" thinkers in the sense that

they anticipate and welcome his critical project, but lack its radical spirit. Reflecting his own frustration with Hegelian phenomenology or Marxism, Deleuze designates Nietzsche as Hegel's ultimate adjudicator, the one philosopher who can truly evaluate the dialectic without being drawn into its vortex.

*Nietzsche and Philosophy* takes up the mantle of ontology by tackling Hyppolite's earlier text, *Genesis and Structure*, which puts forward the major Hegelian themes which Deleuze highlights as obstructing a true ontological discourse in philosophy by reducing it to anthropological expressions of *ressentiment*. Thus, an encompassing critical ontology of forces is elaborated, the revolutionary purpose of which is to begin philosophy anew by first departing from Hegelianism.

The first section of this chapter examines how *Nietzsche and Philosophy* performs a Nietzschean reconstruction of *Genesis and Structure* and how the two texts are engaged with one another in more ways than a simple hostile confrontation, and how Deleuze's ontology of forces emerges from this engagement, where sense as the problematic element of philosophy receives its concrete meaning. The second section lingers on Deleuze's idiosyncratic interpretation of eternal recurrence, where he moves from adjudication to execution or "transvaluation". Eternal recurrence is introduced as a machine that counters the corrosive nature of history, a mode of placing all questions in question so as to not fall prey to a particular problem or question of a specific epoch. The third section focuses on Deleuze's "overturning of Platonism" as a Nietzschean project the purpose of which is to place Platonism within the purview of problems, namely a problem of "rival-claimants", which demonstrates both the subversive nature of Plato himself as a philosopher fixated with unique problems, and the need to reclaim this radical essence internal to the Platonic text. This will lead me to the final section, where the sophistic concept of the simulacrum is realized as the result of an "encounter" that unfolds as a transvaluation of Platonism as a "moral" metaphysics and as the origin of the idols that Hegelianism would lament. This will

allow for the articulation a concept of non-being as a being of the problematic, which Hegelian critique reduces to nothingness.

### The revaluation of problems: Nietzsche contra Hegel

*Nietzsche and Philosophy* signals two important inclinations with respect to Deleuze's problematic, anti-Hegelian disposition. On the one hand, it constitutes Deleuze's most vicious (and, many claim, unwarranted) attack on Hegelianism. On the other hand, this encounter which the text unfolds between the two authors provides the critical orientation for a more positive enterprise: that of refining the Bergsonian "tendency" that was elaborated in "Bergson's Conception of Difference" into a more pronounced ontology of forces and later of powers (the unreserved and vitalist *puissance*).<sup>177</sup> Hyppolite's task of realizing an internal, genetic difference set against the dangers of finding only external and subjective ones is translated into the disparity between the active and reactive state of forces, posited as the critical terrain in which Hegelianism itself would be evaluated.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Constantin V. Boundas takes things a step further by arguing that Nietzsche eternal recurrence is employed by Deleuze as a response to critics such as Bachelard with respect to Bergsonian duration. Eternal recurrence as "the memory of the future" tackles the shortcomings of Bergson, who, according to Bachelard in Boundas's account, assigns the present with a function to "actualize the past", and as a result, "the present cannot create the new" since the possible "is what we have known once and what we now hope to retrieve" (Constantin V. Boundas, "Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual", in: *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton [Oxford: Blackwell, 1996], 99). According to Boundas, eternal recurrence "dissolves habit[s] and displaces memory for the sake of the ultimate triumph of difference", therefore ramifying Bergsonian repetition in duration. This introduction of eternal recurrence into Bergson's thought brings about a "time of the Idea, no longer the time of the concept, because the concept of is the instrument of recognition and representation, whereas the Idea is the element where problems are formulated" (Ibid 102). I will return to these points in the fourth chapter.

<sup>178</sup> Giovanna Borradori, "The temporalization of difference: Reflections on Deleuze's interpretation of Bergson," *Continental Philosophy Review* 34 (2001): 12.

Here Deleuze's antagonistic relation with Hyppolite is explicated by confronting an earlier text, *Genesis and Structure*, a study of Hegel's *Phenomenology*.<sup>179</sup> As Heckman notes, Hyppolite's text was preceded by an upsurge of Hegelian scholarship in the first years of post-war France, when he was tied with Marxism. The question of whether Hegel paves the way for Marx or is rather his ultimate rebuffing was an expression of a wider question of how Hegel can be determined and put to use.<sup>180</sup> As Kojève had strongly suggested, the name "Hegel" was above all an instrument in various political-intellectual strategies, so that every reading of Hegel would eventually find that which it seeks (the phenomenological Hegel, the existential Hegel, the Marxist Hegel).<sup>181</sup> Like many other Hegelians, Kojève shared what was considered to be an existential understanding of Hegel that was highly anthropological, with the master-slave dialectic at its center and where the absolute is associated with mankind. Hyppolite avoided attending his seminar, "for fear of being influenced",<sup>182</sup> and turned to the phenomenological readings of Jean Wahl and Alexandre Koyré. Deleuze and Foucault would attend his Khâgne classes, where he elaborated his commentary on Hegel's *Phenomenology* which was to become *Genesis and Structure*.

The two central themes of this work are negativity and alienation, which already implies that, while refusing a strictly anthropological reading of Hegel, Hyppolite himself introduced elements of this reading into his own work.<sup>183</sup> His insistence on negativity as a key element in Hegel places him in strict opposition to any kind of spiritualism or idealism and on the side of Hegelian Marxism, which saw Hegel's *Phenomenology* as the natural

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<sup>179</sup> This confrontation between *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Genesis and Structure* is visible by the very fact that when Deleuze criticizes the dialectic, the passages from the *Phenomenology* which he has in mind are the same that are evoked by Hyppolite.

<sup>180</sup> John Heckman, "Introduction to *Genesis and Structure*," in Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), xv.

<sup>181</sup> Alexandre Kojève, "Hegel, Marx et le christianisme," *Critique* 3-4 (December 1946): 366.

<sup>182</sup> Heckman, "Introduction to *Genesis and Structure*," xxvi.

<sup>183</sup> See Henri Niel, "L'Interpretation de Hegel," *Critique* 18 (November 1947): 426-37.

predecessor of the *Capital*, where in the former it is absolute spirit become its own object which raises itself to self-consciousness, and in the latter it is alienated social man who phenomenally himself and offers himself to the consciousness of the proletariat.<sup>184</sup>

As Wahl notes, this interest in negation may indicate a crisis in our time,<sup>185</sup> and Hyppolite's interpretation could be seen as a sign of such period. This may also explain his interest in universal alienation (which must not be reduced to objectification as it is in Marxism), an alienation that exists as a tension inseparable from human existence within the unhappy consciousness. It reflects the "dramatic" turn in Hegel studies after 1945, which focused on the theme of historical becoming through conflict, and is thus compatible with existentialism and Marxism. As Hyppolite argues, Hegel's doctrine that the actualization of spirit requires nature to be transformed according to the demands of reason implies a philosophy of action.<sup>186</sup> *Genesis and Structure* centers on Hegel's question of whether the primary locus of the "pure unrest of difference" is in human existence or within being itself, either culminating in a philosophy of human history or in a philosophy of language and logic.

Unlike *Logic and Existence*, which indeed focuses on logic and anti-human ontology, *Genesis and Structure* still claims that "*Phenomenology* appears as a heroic effort to reduce 'vertical transcendence' to 'horizontal transcendence' (history)",<sup>187</sup> but, at the same time, that "man must necessarily transcend himself," since once he reduces a "beyond" to himself he falls into the human, all too human.<sup>188</sup> The centre of investigation here is still man himself, how he must transcend his own natural, historic and finite being towards absolute spirit, and how

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<sup>184</sup> Jean Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, trans. John O'Neill (New York: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1969), 103.

<sup>185</sup> Jean Wahl, "La Situation présente de la philosophie française," *L'Activité philosophique contemporaine en France et aux États-Unis*, vol. 2, ed. Marvin Farber (Paris: PUF, 1950), 55.

<sup>186</sup> Jean Hyppolite, "La signification de la Révolution française dans la Phénoménologie de Hegel," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 128 (1939): 331-32.

<sup>187</sup> Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 544.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 557. This claim will play a larger part in the next chapter.

his reason must transcend itself in the Logos, which is both human thought and “the absolute's thought of itself,” being thinking itself through the categories in their movement and mutual determination.<sup>189</sup>

The itinerary in *Genesis and Structure* follows the unhappy consciousness, since it is the expression of the I's pure subjectivity<sup>190</sup> and, according to Hyppolite, the fundamental theme of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>191</sup> It is this consciousness' very nature that will put Nietzsche in confrontation with Hegel in Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, undermining the dialectic and replacing it with a critical “problematic” that attempts to problematize and question the corruptive element that drives Hegelianism. For Deleuze, the unhappy consciousness and its adventures reflect the values and culture of *ressentiment* and is essentially a “bad conscience”, internalizing forces against itself and rejecting reality in the name of a transcendent fabrication.<sup>192</sup>

As Hyppolite argued, what is at stake in Hegel is indeed values themselves, the real values of history and human action as such, which for Hyppolite are to be found in the overcoming of alienation and separation towards the unity of substance, and achieved through the unhappy consciousness and its sufferings.<sup>193</sup> Put briefly, the unhappy consciousness in the *Phenomenology* is the awareness that all human advancement is produced by alienation. Any personal development and historical progress take place through the separation of the subject from that which it desires. Although a connection is gradually made between the subject and its other, the unhappy consciousness is always divided and always longing for reconciliation. It is not only the consciousness of the individual, but of society and history itself, and in the *Phenomenology* the dialectic is formed and grounded in the image

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 582-85.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 156-57.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>192</sup> NP 19, 132, 157.

<sup>193</sup> Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 190.



of this consciousness.<sup>194</sup> This leads Deleuze to argue that it is the essence of Hegel's philosophy, and focuses his efforts on denouncing it. Deleuze's claim is not unfounded, as Hyppolite argues in *Logic and Existence* that it exists not only as a human consciousness, individual or collective, but that there is an unhappy consciousness in ontology itself: "Being is a lost sense; it is a forgotten sense, since sense is the interiority of memory taken back into being".<sup>195</sup>

It is this domination of the unhappy consciousness over the dialectic that encourages Deleuze to find a new synthesis of forces that would supersede Hegel's.<sup>196</sup> This is already evident in the very first pages of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, where Deleuze claims that contrary to Hegel's (essentially Hyppolite's) position, there is a plurality of senses that comprise reality,<sup>197</sup> placing his critical weight on the *Phenomenology's* inaugural move, where the sensible immediacy of "this, that, here, now" (what Hegel terms "sense-certainty") is revealed to be general, abstract and empty, and collapses to make way for the next phase of the dialectic and the unfolding of the Concept.<sup>198</sup> The dialectic, claims Deleuze, is far too crass to evaluate and "weight" sense, ignoring the nuances that forces, as the element of plural sense, bring about. More profoundly perhaps, while bringing the death of God to the fore before Nietzsche, Hegel did not realize the full scope of this claim, and the essential "plural" nature

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<sup>194</sup> As Wahl argues, the unhappy consciousness is the protagonist of the *Phenomenology*. See Jean Wahl, *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*, ed. Gérard Monfort (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), 187-88.

<sup>195</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 175, 64; Thus, Hyppolite's ontology of sense can be re-examined through the image of the unhappy consciousness, where, transposed into language, it exhibits a power of the negative within language itself, in which the negative distinction between words is internalized such that each term differs from itself and contradicts itself. See Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 33.

<sup>196</sup> As Deleuze argues, it is Hyppolite's fidelity to the idea of the negative in Hegel that ultimately leaves him at an anthropological understanding of sense and difference. See Deleuze, "Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*," in DI 195.

<sup>197</sup> "There is no event, no phenomenon, word or thought which does not have a multiple sense" (NP 4).

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. This line of argument, which Deleuze draws from Wahl, plays an essential part in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, and will continue to reverberate in *Difference and Repetition*, strengthening the impression that Deleuze's anti-Hegelianism, being quite depthless, is meant to clear the path for a new philosophical agenda after Hyppolite and Wahl. I will return to this point later on.

of this event: it is not God who died but “the Gods” who died “from laughing, on hearing one God claim to be the only one”.<sup>199</sup> This could easily be opposed to the themes evoked by Hegel on the notion of the death of God:

The Unhappy consciousness ... is the tragic fate of the certainty of self that aims to be absolute. It is the consciousness of the loss of all essential being in this certainty of itself, and of the loss even of this knowledge about itself—the loss of substance as well as of the Self, it is the grief which expresses itself in the hard saying that ‘God is dead’.<sup>200</sup>

For Hegel, the death of God takes part in the realization of the emptiness of sense-certainty, the collapse of identity, and the welcoming of contradiction and negation as the only true forms of determination. Nietzsche’s internalization of plurality into the heart of critical philosophy, however, reflects his own “conquest of the true concept, its maturity and not its renunciation or infancy”, which Deleuze claims to be “philosophy’s greatest achievement”.<sup>201</sup> Essentially, this means that Nietzsche had made forces the precondition of sense so that “a thing has as many senses as there are forces capable of taking possession of it”, therefore rejecting the Hegelian notion that sense-certainty is a superficial state (since a sensible object is already a network of forces taking possession of it), so that sense is no longer equal to the concept but to forces. Once again, the efforts to put forward a critical ontology go hand in hand with pushing back the centrality of the negative and the concept.

At this stage, Deleuze finds it necessary to go through Hegel and the dialectic since,<sup>202</sup> as Michael Hardt argues, “one cannot avoid its powerfulness otherwise one would be sucked

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 455.

<sup>201</sup> NP 4.

<sup>202</sup> It is important for Deleuze, for example, to make it clear that for Nietzsche, “the essential relation of one force to another is never conceived of as a negative element in the essence”, but as affirmation (NP 8-9).

into it eventually as into a vortex”.<sup>203</sup> However, what seems interesting here is that Deleuze chooses to employ Nietzsche in his critique of the dialectic and its values, given that Nietzsche’s thought is close to that of Hegel’s in a very fundamental way: both authors view modernity as problematic and despotic, and introduce the death of God as modernity’s constitutive event, and both understand philosophy as an artefact of culture, and believe that it must be a critical response to culture, warding off foundational myths that establish the great philosophies of representation (namely, Cartesian).<sup>204</sup> Deleuze’s own closeness to Hegel is highly evident in the former’s account of the idea of affirmation and its relationship with negation,<sup>205</sup> which is why his true alternative to Hegel is not found in affirmation per se, but rather in the idea of critique, a strategy that would also be deployed in *Difference and Repetition*.

If critique is to be understood as an apparatus that counters the thought of *ressentiment* through the positive task of exposing sense, then sense as a state of forces must also question the legitimacy of Hegel’s position. In other words, if “anti-Hegelianism runs through Nietzsche’s work as its cutting edge”, then every concept that this work produces would surely be in some sense an anti-Hegelian “weapon”: for example, what Hegel (and, more frequently, Hyppolite) innocently term “reflection” (either external or internal) is already a perspective on a state of forces that belongs either to a “slave” or a “master”. But, even more fundamentally, Deleuze traces the Nietzschean task to the rejection of the metaphysical

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<sup>203</sup> Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), x. As François Châtelet notes, Hegel “determined a horizon, a language, a code that we are still at the very heart of today. Hegel, by this fact, is our Plato: the one who delimits – ideologically or scientifically, positively or negatively – the theoretical possibilities of theory” (François Châtelet, *Hegel* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), 2. Quoted in Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, x).

<sup>204</sup> As Foucault famously argued, “our entire epoch is trying to escape from Hegel, but to detach from Hegel requires an understanding of how close he is to us, to know what is still Hegelian in anti-Hegelianism” (Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” 74).

<sup>205</sup> Wahl comments in his review of *Nietzsche and Philosophy* that “Nietzsche’s thought is so often very close, as has frequently been said, to Hegel’s. When one writes, ‘The negative is a product of existence itself?, or that ‘difference is the object of a practical affirmation inseparable from essence and constitutive of existence’, one is not far from Hegelian thought”. See Jean Wahl, “Nietzsche et la philosophie,” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 68, no. 3 (July-September 1963): 353.

duality of appearance and essence and its replacement with the correlation of phenomenon and sense, similar to that made by Hyppolite: logic and existence, genesis and structure, “[u]niversal and singular, changeless and particular, infinite and finite, – what are these? Nothing but symptoms”.<sup>206</sup>

It is Deleuze’s revival of empiricism that distinguishes this correlation from that of Hyppolite’s, where empiricism becomes synonymous with his conception of pluralism.<sup>207</sup> The idea of empiricism as pluralism is employed by Deleuze to counter the dialectic, so that sense is revealed not in language but in the various forces that take possession of a thing, where even language is a symptom. It seems therefore that the task Deleuze inherits from Hyppolite, of articulating a difference that does not go all the way to contradiction, entails a rehabilitation of the empirical itself as well as the very notion of diversity and multiplicity, which in Hyppolite are indifferent as long as they do not involve opposition, which, as already noted, Hyppolite takes to be “inevitable”.<sup>208</sup> By making a Nietzschean distinction between two kinds of negation, an active, aggressive one and a reactive one, Deleuze attempts to “save” empiricism from being reduced to naiveté, internalizing negation to empiricism and claiming there is sort of an enjoyment to an “empirical” difference which has an aggressiveness (or an “active” negation) to it, and which only empiricism can reveal.<sup>209</sup> Thus, affirmation and plurality have nothing to do with the complacent equality or relativism of different truths and values, but with eliminating a “transcendent” hierarchy and replacing it with a multiplicity of “immanent” ones.<sup>210</sup>

As Deleuze argues, only forces and powers exist in Nietzsche, where forces comprise the meaning and sense of the thing they take hold of, and thus must be interpreted, and

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<sup>206</sup> NP 157.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 4, 8.

<sup>208</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 114-115.

<sup>209</sup> NP 9.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 75. As Wahl notes, the notion of a hierarchy as the end game for the multiplicities of wills in struggle is supposed to replace the dialectic. See Wahl, “Nietzsche et la Philosophie,” 23.

powers are the differential element that set the value of forces, and must themselves be evaluated.<sup>211</sup> To interpret forces is essentially to classify them as either active or reactive, where, according to Nietzsche, reactive is the dominant state of forces currently under the influence of *ressentiment* and nihilistic culture, and active is the desired state at the top of the new hierarchy.<sup>212</sup> Critique begins by penetrating the mask of true and false into the realm of sense, where truth is problematized through the interpretation of the forces that condition and differentiate it. Similar to what we find in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, sense as the field of conditions is large enough to accommodate both the true and false, so that a thing or a proposition can be false but still retain a sense to it that must be interpreted. However, here Deleuze argues that one cannot interpret sense without already making a critical claim about it and the truth it bears, so that sense as the condition of possibility for truth is the locus of critique.

To engage in (Nietzschean) critique, to make a claim about a certain truth, is to evaluate this truth, that is to assign a value to it within a larger typology of truths.<sup>213</sup> Deleuze argues that an evaluation is not itself a value but a mode of existence, a certain way of being, a negative or an affirmative one.<sup>214</sup> The negative mode of evaluation corresponds to a reactive state of forces, and thus to begin critique with the reactive (which Nietzsche and Deleuze claim to be fundamental, since it is always the state of forces by default) is more fundamentally to begin with the negative. This correlation between the reactive and the negative persists throughout Deleuze's critique of Hegel in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, with Deleuze asserting that a critical philosophy must always internalize negation in its own unique way, negation being a sign for a devaluation of values. This is evident for example in Deleuze's claim that Nietzsche's concept of bad consciousness is a reimagining of Hegel's

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<sup>211</sup> NP 6.

<sup>212</sup> See for example Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Random House, 1968), 200, 346-47.

<sup>213</sup> NP 75.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

unhappy consciousness, allowing Nietzsche to place the entire dialectic within a synthesis of reactive forces:

The discovery dear to the dialectic is the unhappy consciousness, the deepening, the re-resolution and glorification of the unhappy consciousness and its resources. It is reactive forces that express themselves in opposition, the will to nothingness that expresses itself in the labour of the negative. The dialectic is the natural ideology of *ressentiment* and bad conscience. It is thought in the perspective of nihilism and from the standpoint of reactive forces. It is a fundamentally Christian way of thinking, from one end to the other; powerless to create new ways of thinking and feeling.<sup>215</sup>

The idea of the unhappy consciousness, the master-slave dialectic, and the crowning of the negative as the driving force of thought bring Deleuze to generate the correlation needed between the reactive and the negative. Thus, the dialectic is said to be the culmination of moral, philosophical and religious traditions which Deleuze's Nietzsche would go against, instigating a transmutation within them.

Being the sign of *ressentiment* and bad conscience, the dialectic must be substituted with a method that would exceed its values and eventually eliminate them. This appears to be the most explicit critical program put forward in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, and holds within it a more implicit one: Deleuze recognizes the dialectic as the only system that can replace dogmatic metaphysics and thus must offer one that could replace it, not by simply taking its place but by overriding it.<sup>216</sup> As mentioned, the proximity between the Nietzschean and Hegelian projects is reflected in the proposition "God is dead": it signals Hegel's struggle

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>216</sup> On this point Wahl brings up one of the most polemical moments of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, where Deleuze claims that Hegel is "unaware of the real element from which forces, their qualities and their relations derive; it only knows the inverted image of this element which is reflected in abstractly considered symptoms" (NP 157). Wahl believes that we cannot follow Deleuze in every detail of his critique, and argues that "it is clear how the Hegelian can respond and affirm that it is not really the will to nothingness that is expressed in the labour of the negative. The critique of Deleuze is no less superficial on this point than that of the Marxists, which, moreover, does not mean that Hegelianism was right, or that it is rational" (Wahl, "Nietzsche et la philosophie," 370-71). One can see how Deleuze's claims are not merely a critique (given its implied superficiality), but rather a dramatization of the conflict between Hegel and Nietzsche, in which Deleuze could ground his own synthesis of forces as critical. See also François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event*, trans. Kieran Aarons (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 80-81.

against metaphysics and philosophies of representation, but at the same time it is a culmination of this tradition of philosophical degeneration that Hegel singles out. The dialectic is depicted as the logical movement or explication of this constitutive deterioration, bathed in the spirit of revenge and powerless to exceed its own “symptoms”.

For Deleuze’s Nietzsche it is a matter of levitating being itself beyond the reach of the “weighty” Concept, and this is to be done by transforming it into a mode of questioning and problematizing: for Hegel, the fundamental question is “who is man?”, while Nietzsche asks “who overcomes man?”. This overcoming of the “dialectical man” implied in Hegel’s form of questioning suggests a “new way of feeling” as well as a “new way of thinking” so as to accommodate a problematic form of Being, what Deleuze would term “the Being of the question”.<sup>217</sup> This form of the problematic corresponds to those which we have encountered in the previous chapter: it does not settle for a Heideggerian form of questioning but emphasizes the need for the questioning of questions themselves, or what Deleuze refers to here as a “transvaluation”, which breaks with any current mode of questioning and implies that problems must be posed anew in each act of critique.

As mentioned, it has been argued that Deleuze’s attempt to break with the dialectic is not successful, that what he terms transcendental empiricism or superior empiricism is merely a variant of Hegel’s historic dialectic, and that the very attempt to “break with” the dialectic is itself a central tenet of the dialectic.<sup>218</sup> Similarly to Hegel, Deleuze attempts to account for “actuality” in terms of its historical self-genesis, by making this empirical actuality the basis of the multiplicity that is an *a priori* condition for it, and arguing that the singularity of the actual (what Deleuze and Nietzsche term the will to power, or the evaluative element of forces) is a function of its genesis (which is why the will to power evaluates forces but is

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<sup>217</sup> NP 163.

<sup>218</sup> Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 183-84.

itself also evaluated as affirmative or negative). Bruce Baugh has also claimed that the difference between the two strategies, dialectical and empirical, is not strictly found in their conception of difference (negative vs affirmative), which allowed critics to reduce Deleuze's argument to Hegel's,<sup>219</sup> and instead locates it in their conception of history and historical development.<sup>220</sup>

Following Hyppolite's thesis in *Genesis and Structure*, historical development is the development of a collective human consciousness, therefore an internal one, where each developmental element is internally and logically associated with the others, in order to eventually reach a synthesis where the Absolute is revealed. History is the progressive manifestation of the Absolute, reflecting itself within human consciousness.<sup>221</sup> It is also the actual and necessary realization of freedom, where man gradually acquires his freedom to the extent that he reaches self-consciousness and absolute knowledge and reflects being, where what is reflected is also this very necessity of human freedom, that is, the reflection of the being of human development throughout history.<sup>222</sup> Hegel's understanding of historical development is not a simple causation, but rather follows the goals and ends set by spirit or being, and the three Hegelian moments of human progression (consciousness, self-consciousness and reason) are not successive but are abstractions contrived from within the whole of spirit.<sup>223</sup> Therefore, according to Hyppolite, the problem that the *Phenomenology* poses is not that of world history but the education of the individual and his awakening to the reality of the absolute.<sup>224</sup> Under this framework, the history of the world is finished, and what has become essential is for the individual to discover this by himself:

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<sup>219</sup> See for example Catherine Malabou, "Who's Afraid of Hegelian Wolves?," in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>220</sup> Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Post-Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 155.

<sup>221</sup> Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 29.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-31.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.



The single individual must also pass through the formative stages of universal Spirit so far as their content is concerned, but as shapes which Spirit has already left, as stages on a way that has been made level with toil. Thus, as far as factual information is concerned, we find that what in former ages engaged the attention of men of mature mind, has been reduced to the level of facts, exercises, and even games for children; and in pedagogical process, we shall recognize the history of the cultural development of the world traced, as it were, in a silhouette.<sup>225</sup>

The *Phenomenology* is not a history of the world nor a philosophy of history, but a discovery of Being, a pedagogical process of remembering what is already forgotten and only poorly projected in inferior forms of knowledge, namely, the mutual implication of individual consciousness and consciousness of spirit. The former must be elevated to the latter, so that the latter becomes self-conscious in the former, and the *Phenomenology* is a description of this double process.<sup>226</sup>

However, in order for this process to take place, consciousness must make use of the historical moments immanent to itself, it must become aware of the historical presuppositions of absolute knowledge, that is, it needs to raise itself from the I of the individual to the I of humanity.<sup>227</sup> Once again, this does not entail a simple chronological return to the past, but a cohesion of the past and the present times, allowing entrance to a new stage of history.<sup>228</sup> What is at issue in the *Phenomenology* is the becoming-historical or becoming-dialectical of experience in its broadest sense – theoretical, practical, aesthetic and religious, where being reveals itself through all of these aspects. Experience is what allows the individual to bridge the gap between knowledge and being, certainty and truth, and to participate in a universal consciousness.<sup>229</sup> The history of consciousness is the history of

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<sup>225</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 16.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-44.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 578.

experience and the progressive revelation of spirit to it, and spirit on its side needs history and actuality otherwise it would exist in a lifeless solitude.<sup>230</sup>

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, the critical formulation of empiricism and of the problematic rests on disputing these Hegelian historical values, while keeping in mind the original gap between being and knowledge clearly set out by Hegel. On the one hand, Nietzsche substitutes the logical relations governing history with empirical relations that form a genealogy, where forces are governed by external and contingent causal determinisms rather than being internal and dialectical. On the other hand, he sets the future task for culture to transcend itself in a non-historical or supra-historical manner, particularly during times of crises, “when the wheel of time is turning faster and faster”.<sup>231</sup> For Deleuze, Nietzsche’s critical point of departure concerning the devaluation of all values ultimately begins with Hegelianism because it is the philosophical embodiment of European decay, and a particular philosophical (and political) way of life. Hegel’s historico-cultural dialectic is introduced as a source of nihilism for such “European” thought, providing eternal recurrence with a critical origin.<sup>232</sup>

If Hegelianism strikes Deleuze as the most succinct form of reactive philosophy, what is required is a philosophical apparatus that will eliminate it and prevent its recurrence, so as to not become dialectical itself. Deleuze formulates eternal recurrence therefore as a non-dialectical and supra-historical concept by introducing his own competing concept of difference at its heart, thus going against traditional interpretations of eternal recurrence and siding with commentators such as Pierre Klossowski. In fact, Deleuze’s attempt to break with the dialectic is perhaps his central justification for introducing difference to eternal

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 606.

<sup>231</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Philosopher: Reflections on the Struggle Between Art and Knowledge,” in *Truth and Philosophy: Selections from Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the 1870’s*, trans. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), 24; See also: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. Marianne Cowan (Washington: Regnery, 1962), 11-12.

<sup>232</sup> NP 150.

recurrence, since Nietzsche himself never explicitly did so.<sup>233</sup> Following his encounter with Guattari, Deleuze will term this act of idiosyncratic interpretation “legitimate misinterpretation” or “anti-interpretation”, which refers to what he recognizes as a certain right, uniquely given by Nietzsche,<sup>234</sup> that allows one to undertake a different practice when approaching Nietzsche, different from the act of interpretation.<sup>235</sup> Nietzsche, argues Deleuze, ensured at the outset that his writings will not be made up of codes to decipher or decode, but of a radical *uncoding* of the language, the forces and the powers that are spread throughout his texts.<sup>236</sup> To uncode refers to an act of transmitting something through a system of codes (the text itself) that cannot be encoded by the mechanisms of interpretation.<sup>237</sup> This uncoding exists in Nietzsche at the level of the structure of his aphorismic texts and at the level of their content:

An aphorism is a play of forces, a state of forces which are always exterior to one another. An aphorism doesn't mean anything, it signifies nothing, and no more has a signifier than a signified. Those would be ways of restoring a text's interiority. An aphorism is a state of forces, the last of which, meaning at once the most recent, the most actual, and the provisional-ultimate, is the most external.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> See Wahl, “Nietzsche et la philosophie,” 373.

<sup>234</sup> This “right” to read a text while rejecting an interpretive, text-centric approach is something that Nietzsche alludes to on several occasions, for example in the *Gay Science*, where he asks: “What good is a book that does not even carry us beyond all books?” (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Random House, 1974), 215).

<sup>235</sup> Deleuze, “Nomadic Thought,” in DI 253-54. As mentioned, this text reflects a different stage of Deleuze's thought, where he is no longer concerned with interpretation as an art of thinking but rather with experimentation as a philosophical practice, and therefore reevaluates his own understanding of Nietzsche as a philosopher of the interpretation of sense, so as to conform to a newly discovered power of decoding. I will address this transition shortly.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Here Deleuze is clearly at odds with hermeneutic traditions such as Heidegger's and Freud's, critiquing the enterprise of interpretation as a system of exchanges between lived experiences and signifiers and signifieds that necessarily produce a reduction of the former, and induce a culpability within the object of interpretation. See *ibid.* 254-55; This notion of coding and uncoding is fully developed with Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, where they attempt to break free from the coded and codified functioning of language and of philosophy itself. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

<sup>238</sup> Deleuze, “Nomadic Thought,” in DI 256.

Here we see themes evoked in the previous chapter, where a substitution takes place between the internal “meaning” of a text and its sense as a surface effect. Thus, to approach Nietzsche with the intent to extract a hidden or lost meaning, or make it an object of signification, denotation and manifestation, would constitute an act of “illegitimate misinterpretation”, where one would be forcing the text to perform something that it cannot do by right. Rather than an interiority or a whole maintaining the book as a unit of codes, there exists an exteriority between its parts, an “outside” which precedes the act of their creation and coexists along with the text, passing through it and undoing all of its codes by itself.<sup>239</sup> *Nietzsche and Philosophy* attempts to capture this exteriority by opposing it to the strong sense of interiority Hegelianism produces, provoking Hyppolite’s notion of immanence and sense as being the final avatars of nihilistic thought, indifferent to external forces and overpowered by the internal forces that corrupt it, these forces assumed to be the motor of the dialectic from which alone growth and development will occur.<sup>240</sup>

Thus, in the spirit of Deleuzian philosophy, there is no real problem of interpreting Nietzsche, or, more precisely, of interpreting him correctly or legitimately (Nietzsche the fascist, the misogynist, the revolutionary), and we must not understand the formulation “eternal recurrence of the same” in a literal way, where the recurrence of the same would signify a certain reality that is played out indefinitely. *Genesis and Structure* and *Nietzsche and Philosophy* therefore share a similar question, that of “actuality”, of putting an author to use rather than producing an interpretation. For Deleuze, Nietzsche’s aphorisms must be employed, experimented with and used to serve new ends that will give them a vital existence. It might be argued that by drawing the lines between a legitimate and illegitimate

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<sup>239</sup> As Deleuze indicates, this notion of an outside that coexists with a text is taken from Foucault and Blanchot’s “thought of/from the outside”, whose influence is clear both in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *The Logic of Sense*, and will be further developed later on. See Maurice Blanchot and Michel Foucault, *Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside and Michel Foucault as I Imagine Him*, trans. Brian Massumi and Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: Zone Books, 1987); Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 43-44, 86-87.

<sup>240</sup> NP 132.

“misinterpretation”, he is simply fortifying the conditions that would support his reading of eternal recurrence. However, this sort of critique must take into account Deleuze’s strategic reading of Nietzsche, to render the will to power the internal difference between thought and being, so that being would no longer be burdened by the labor of the dialectic and become problematic, a form of radical evaluation and critique.<sup>241</sup>

### Eternal recurrence as a problematic synthesis

Within the dramatology of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, eternal recurrence appears, as it does in *The Will to Power*, as a point of crisis in values, formulated as “the most extreme form of nihilism”,<sup>242</sup> therefore also suggesting a turning point in this culture of nihilism through its own self destruction.<sup>243</sup> The drama that unfolds in the final part of the book positions the dialectic as the powerless double of critique, that which announces the demise of the Self, God and the World but preserves their identities and therefore perpetuates and intensifies reactive values themselves. While Hegelian dialectic is the most extreme form of philosophical preservation, producing a “a false theatre, a false drama, a false movement”,<sup>244</sup> eternal recurrence is in Deleuze’s mind a more successful attempt to put movement (the movement of time, for instance) itself into thought. As Deleuze will write later in *Difference and Repetition*, Nietzsche wants to “put metaphysics in motion, in action ... to make it act,

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<sup>241</sup> This attempt to put difference within the will to power is explicated through Deleuze’s articulation of power as internal to the will (and not the other way around), and was already taken up by Heidegger, who described it as the intrinsic unity of willing and empowering, and moreover not a psychological condition but the self-transcendence of beings as a whole. See Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, vol. 1 & 2*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 4, 37-41.

<sup>242</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Random House, 1968), 36.

<sup>243</sup> See Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. J. Harvey Lomas (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 56.

<sup>244</sup> DR 10.

and make it carry out immediate acts ... it is a question of producing within the work a movement capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation ... of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind”.<sup>245</sup> Emphasizing the revolutionary nature of Nietzschean philosophy, as bringing forth a new kind of philosophical “intuition”, Deleuze centers on eternal recurrence as the means through which such a new philosophical “style” can materialize, one that would critically break with Hegel’s style, his “problematization” of concepts via mediation, which remains abstract, stagnant and “false” (this implies that what Deleuze rejects in Hegel is not his use of this or that concept, but his philosophical “problematic” in which such concepts are fabricated and communicated). Once again, there is a kind of aggressiveness and violence implied in Nietzsche when it comes to Hegelianism (the explicit need to “touch the mind”), when eternal recurrence is introduced as the forerunner of philosophy purging itself of the epitomes of Hegelianism: “Philosophy since Hegel appears as a bizarre mixture of ontology and anthropology, metaphysics and humanism, theology and atheism, theology of bad conscience and atheism of *ressentiment*”,<sup>246</sup> a formulation that addresses both Kojève’s and Hyppolite’s readings, and reflects Deleuze’s overall philosophical agenda, which stresses the need to put forward a new “image of thought” *at the expense* of Hegel, an image that captures and explicates a “struggle” of one philosophical system with another (“Life struggles with another kind of life”).<sup>247</sup>

This cathartic experience would occur in the hopes of alleviating thought, allowing it to open itself to the forces of outside, in similar fashion to what we have seen with Bergson. Critical philosophy’s aggressions would be followed by a “return to innocence”, insofar as it will be free to learn how to pose problems anew (the final stage of Nietzsche’s “three

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid 8

<sup>246</sup> NP 183.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid 8.

metamorphoses”), while the dialectic’s teleological account of development via negation would still preserve some values in the “camel’s back”, as Nietzsche would phrase it.<sup>248</sup> Thus, the only way to eliminate Hegelianism as an instrument of nihilism is to fulfill it in eternal recurrence: at the peak of nihilistic thought that the negative perpetuates and systematizes, eternal recurrence appears under the guise of “eternal recurrence of the same”, that is, as the nothing, the meaningless, that repeats itself eternally.<sup>249</sup> Eternal recurrence thus achieves ultimate nihilism, making the negation of reactive forces a self-negation, as these forces would necessarily destroy themselves through time.<sup>250</sup>

By making eternal recurrence the active annihilator of what he deems to be “reactive values”, Deleuze is attempting to clear the ground of thought and alter the course of its development, by inducing within it with a non-historical tendency, reflecting the mechanism and the values of his own problematic thought.<sup>251</sup> What Deleuze is confronting and rejecting in his conceptualization of eternal recurrence is its most common understanding as the “great equalizer” of all becomings, a principle of identity or regulation over chance events by means of a continuous cycle.<sup>252</sup> This “childish hypothesis” would reduce it to an agent of stability that

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<sup>248</sup> Raniel SM. Reyes, “Deleuze contra Hegel: The Rupture of the Dialectics towards Non-Conceptual Difference,” *Kritike* 8, no. 2 (December 2014): 126.

<sup>249</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 36. Deleuze will argue that “[a] force would not survive if it did not first of all borrow the feature of the forces with which it struggles” (NP 5). By the same token, a becoming active of eternal return is possible only if it first disguises itself as a reactive force, and by conquering that which it resists. See also Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Horace B. Samuel (New York: Dover, 2003), 76-78.

<sup>250</sup> NP 70.

<sup>251</sup> DR 90-91. Here Deleuze evokes Klossowski’s interpretation of eternal recurrence, where Klossowski argues that it is not a doctrine but a simulacrum of a doctrine, indicating that there is no truth to eternal recurrence other than recurrence itself, and that this recurrence plays out whether one has the strength to affirm it or not, whether the thought of eternal recurrence is meaningful or absurd (Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and The Vicious Circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 93-99). Keith Ansell-Pearson argues that a suspension of morality occurring in eternal recurrence expresses Nietzsche’s breaking of Kant’s union of repetition and the moral law by making repetition itself the only ethical law, thus taking it beyond the human condition. See Keith Ansell-Pearson, “Living the Eternal Return as the Event,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 14 (1997): 65.

<sup>252</sup> Keith Faulkner has argued that the thesis of eternal recurrence as equilibrium of forces evokes a “karmic debt” that will be paid eventually, and a final stage of equilibrium will be achieved, thus implying a moral purpose for eternal recurrence. This would be contradictory to Nietzsche’s

reveals an underlying natural order, an idea which Nietzsche has rejected as well.<sup>253</sup> Deleuze sees eternal recurrence rather as a site of critique and evaluation, an idea already indicated in Nietzsche's formulation of eternal recurrence as the most extreme form of nihilism and the most difficult thought, instigating a sort of test:

The means of enduring [eternal recurrence]: the revaluation of all values. No longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty; no longer "cause and effect" but the continually creative; no longer will to preservation but to power; no longer the humble expression, "everything is merely subjective," but "it is also our work!"<sup>254</sup>

It is through this notion of eternal recurrence as a test for the endurance of values that Deleuze reiterates the idea of an essential hierarchy that Nietzsche's critical project brings about, of the division and selection of all forms of life and of the new distributions of truth and falsity, sense and nonsense, the important and the unimportant, the singular and the ordinary that follow. More profoundly, this test explicates the ambivalent and dual nature of eternal recurrence as both a disruptive and selective agent operating within time, *and* a description of the dissymmetrical structure of time itself.<sup>255</sup>

At the heart of this duality is a problem of passage which Deleuze claims the dialectic does not confront (since, as shown, its idea of progression as movement is not causal or even temporal, and is only abstracted from being), and which is central to eternal recurrence and to problems themselves, and their subsistence through time.<sup>256</sup> While the Hegelian subject

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statement regarding the necessary freedom from morality in eternal recurrence. See Keith Wylie Faulkner, *Deleuze and the Three Syntheses of Time* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 207-08.

<sup>253</sup> Jon Roffe, "Deleuze's Nietzsche," in *Interpreting Nietzsche*, ed. Ashley Woodward (London: Continuum, 2011), 76.

<sup>254</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 545.

<sup>255</sup> Nathan Widder has attempted to "save" Deleuze's reading of eternal recurrence from critics by arguing that "eternal return is not simply the repetition/return of difference within time, a version Deleuze sometimes offers when opposing the standard reading of Nietzsche's doctrine as the endless recurrence of identical events. The eternal return cannot refer to a dissymmetry recurring in time, but instead must designate the dissymmetrical structure of time itself". See Nathan Widder, "Deleuze on Bergsonian Duration and Nietzsche's Eternal Return," in *Time and History in Deleuze and Serres*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (New York: Continuum, 2012), 141.

<sup>256</sup> NP 48.



does not experience the actual passage of time as necessary to its own progression, a Nietzschean subject must do so in order to comprehend eternal recurrence and “pass” its test, since it is not simply a description of time but a synthesis of time.<sup>257</sup> Drawing from Heidegger’s claim regarding the essential unity of the will to power and eternal recurrence as Being qua time,<sup>258</sup> Deleuze transforms eternal recurrence into a temporal expression of the will to power, carrying out its principle of differentiation between arrangements of forces and putting these forces and their powers to the test of time.<sup>259</sup>

There is therefore a kind of clash orchestrated between two perspectives: in Hegel historic truth is revealed to a subject retrospectively (after history has already occurred), while Deleuze directs the gaze of his own Nietzschean subject to the future in order to comprehend truth, evaluating whatever it is that is able to return in actual time, and can therefore speak of eternal recurrence as a synthesis of the future.<sup>260</sup> Thus the solution to the passage of time is found not in the past, which is merely its “condition by default”, nor in the present, which “is no more than an actor, an author, an agent destined to be effaced”,<sup>261</sup> but rather in the future, in the hopes that an unforeseeable and unrecognizable future would guarantee the effacement of the identity of the agent of eternal recurrence and of the condition of its own movement, affirming the autonomy of eternal recurrence as a true “creator of values”.<sup>262</sup> This ungrounding, where the subject is required to overcome his own values, identity and indeed his own humanity, reflects a clear anti-Hegelian sentiment insofar as the dialectic is essentially a rediscovery and elevation of our humanity.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche, vol. 1*, 18-24.

<sup>259</sup> Daniella Voss, *Conditions of Thought: Deleuze and Transcendental Ideas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 86; NP 49.

<sup>260</sup> Widder, “Deleuze on Bergsonian Duration and Nietzsche’s Eternal Return,” 143-144.

<sup>261</sup> NP 90.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 90-91.

<sup>263</sup> Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 20, 40-41.

We find in Deleuze's demand to overcome, or to "move against" the values of the present, of the human, a more refined yet challenging demand from philosophy that is worth quoting at length:

If philosophy's critical task is not actively taken up in every epoch philosophy dies and with it die the images of the philosopher and the free man. Stupidity and baseness are always those of our own time, of our contemporaries, our stupidity and baseness. Unlike the atemporal concept of error, baseness is inseparable from time, that is from this rapture of the present, from this present condition in which it is incarnated and in which it moves. This is why philosophy has an essential relation to time: it is always against its time, critique of the present world. The philosopher creates concepts that are neither eternal nor historical but untimely and not of the present. The opposition in terms of which philosophy is realised is that of present and non-present, of our time and the untimely. And in the untimely there are truths that are more durable than all historical and eternal truths put together: truths of times to come. ... The succession of philosophers is not an eternal sequence of sages, still less a historical sequence, but a broken succession, a succession of comets. ... Eternity, like the historicity of philosophy amounts to this: philosophy always untimely, untimely at every epoch.<sup>264</sup>

Here Deleuze tackles an issue which was already raised in Bergson, and which will reappear in chapters three and four: the problem of stupidity (*bêtise*) as the true form of the negative in philosophy. As Deleuze highlights, stupidity is negation internalized to thought itself (as opposed to error), which above all reflects a state of things with respect to problems: thought's stupidity, its illusions and baseness, signifies its inclination to pose false problems.<sup>265</sup> The negative qua stupidity is the lowest, yet unavoidable, state of thought which must be exceeded, not by way of a dialectic but by critique: thought must become untimely or problematic if it wants to overcome its own stupidity (therefore going beyond doxa and false presuppositions).

Also visible here is Deleuze's own "exceptionalist" conception of philosophy, as we have seen in Guérault and Alquié: philosophy itself can resist the erosive action of its own epoch not by demonstrating an internal logical structure or a sense of ineffability, but by

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<sup>264</sup> NP 107.

<sup>265</sup> DR 159.

providing the means to actively overcome the demands of its time and to “vanquish historicism”, a task which for Nietzsche was rather timely, given the oversaturation of his age with historicity that in his view has distorted the true nature of time, which a philosophy of the future must restore.<sup>266</sup>

Finally, this amounts to an attempt to reverse the relationship between Logos and time (or logic and existence), as envisioned by Hyppolite: “This passage from history to absolute knowledge, the passage from the temporal to the eternal, is Hegelianism's most obscure dialectical synthesis .... The Logos is absolute genesis, and time is the image of this mediation, not the reverse”.<sup>267</sup>

If Deleuze attempts to put forward a conception of eternal recurrence as a problematic and problematizing modality of time (where difference is affirmed rather than carried to the negative), it is to the extent that this conception exceeds Heidegger's subordination of time to Dasein and to the concept, insofar as “time is the concept, but the concept in its immediate Dasein because time is the exstasis of difference, which in the Logos presents itself as the internal movement of determinations”.<sup>268</sup> Heidegger would never allow eternal recurrence to become the thought of being, to become a threat to the world as such and a questioning of all questions, only a moment in which consciousness chooses (or fails) to adhere to the world, under the wider continuum of Dasein's experience.<sup>269</sup> Thus, affirmation and selection in eternal recurrence are deemed merely “phenomenological attunements” for Heidegger, making his interpretation an ideal site of confrontation for

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<sup>266</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 82. What Nietzsche rejects here is not a philosophy of history in general, but a specific neo-Hegelian philosophy of history that brings about an unexamined teleology.

<sup>267</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 188; quoted in Lawlor, *Thinking Through French Philosophy*, 20.

<sup>268</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 188.

<sup>269</sup> Brent Adkins demonstrates how Deleuze uses Klossowski's interpretation of eternal recurrence in order to exceed this Heideggerian approach, by transforming eternal recurrence into a synthesis of “nomadic and polyvocal” subjects. See Brent Adkins, *Death and Desire in Hegel, Heidegger and Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 139-140, 186-187.

Deleuze on his way to establish eternal recurrence as a non-anthropological, absolute system where immanence is to be accomplished.

For Heidegger, the question pertaining to eternal recurrence is still “[i]s he good, or is he evil?”, suggesting that affirmation can only be a fundamentally human decision, rather than the human itself becoming a mode of affirmation (or negation) in eternal recurrence. It is precisely these hermeneutics of Dasein that Deleuze attempts to avoid in order to develop an understanding of being that calls for no reference to univocal interpretation, and therefore explicates the important point that Heidegger neglects: there is in Nietzsche, as already mentioned, a plurality, hierarchy and difference of force, either dominating or dominated. Without a plurality or a difference between active and reactive forces, no force could sustain over time and there could be no selective, critical ontology, only a selective thought. Indeed, this attempt to “save” plurality against totalizing modes of thought is one of Deleuze’s anti-Hegelian traits that would dominate *Difference and Repetition*, where eternal recurrence is taken up again in order to produce an anti-dialectical “logical” movement of sense.

Given that eternal recurrence is the only true synthesis of time, the question that Deleuze sets up and answers is, how is this form of pure becoming to be bestowed with a coherent, consistent sense? The idea of a “pure and empty form of time”, capable of translating ideal problematic structures into temporal and sensible forms forcing themselves on thought, is at the heart of *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, and I will address this issue in the fourth chapter as well. Deleuze refers to eternal recurrence as “the brutal form of the immediate, that of the universal and the singular reunited, which dethrones every general law, dissolves the mediations and annihilates the particulars subjected to the law”,<sup>270</sup> thus thwarting Hegel’s attempt to speak of sense-certainty in terms of the sensible immediacy of pure particularities intended to be effaced as such in the Concept. This position is affirmed

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<sup>270</sup> DR 7.

throughout *Difference and Repetition* when Deleuze highlights the novelty of his own conception of eternal recurrence against Hegelian dialectic: “Our claim is not only that difference in itself is not ‘already’ contradiction, but that it cannot be reduced or traced back to contradiction, since the latter is not more but less profound than difference”, and as a result, “eternal return employs negation like a *Nachfolge* and invents a new formula for the negation of the negation: everything which can be denied is and must be denied”.<sup>271</sup>

We find these formulations, designating the negative as a self-eradicating epiphenomenon within the encompassing mechanisms of eternal recurrence, to be Deleuze’s attempt to consummate his critical intervention in *Logic and Existence*. But does he indeed succeed with these claims, according to which “it is not the negative which is the motor”?<sup>272</sup> It seems that Deleuze’s efforts to prove to the reader that eternal recurrence would not allow for the ghosts of Hegelian dialectic to return falls somewhat short, as Wahl has already indicated in his review of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.<sup>273</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that the relationship between the problematic and the dialectic receive their philosophical coherency when it remains implicit in Deleuze’s text, as we will see in the following chapters.

#### Reaching the pure state: Plato and the problem of claimants

Deleuze’s assertion that his overturning of Platonism is key in understanding his own philosophical motivations might offer a unique viewpoint on our project so far: it is a critical assault on an “enemy” that is meant to put forward his own Nietzschean vision of philosophy, but one which redeems rather than eliminates this enemy, so that the problematic-dialectic dyad is once again completely affirmed once Plato, as a philosopher of

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 51, 55.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>273</sup> Wahl accuses Deleuze for holding a grudge or *ressentiment* against Hegel which affects his judgement and distorts the focus of his project. See Wahl, “Nietzsche et la philosophie,” 353.

problems, is implicitly used to thwart Hegelianism as a philosophy of the dialectic. As Éric Alliez notes, Deleuze's analysis renders Platonism "the primitive scene of a modernity haunted, since Nietzsche, by the rediscovery of the genetic and 'differential' element of the simulacrum".<sup>274</sup> With this truth itself, as a Platonic ideal, is already problematized by this particular Platonic problem, suggesting that rather than being preoccupied with the allocation of truth and falsehood, Platonism is undermined by an obsession with problems that would be its undoing.

Here Deleuze is essentially undertaking a standard Nietzschean critique of Platonism, with all its hallmarks of placing Plato within a "moralistic" framework,<sup>275</sup> but in the hopes of saving Platonism strictly as a philosophy of the problem: the "simulacrum" as the culmination of a reversed Platonism becomes a problematic, and, indeed, useful concept, to the extent that it does not "exist" within the Platonic system, and cannot be designated as true or false, neither sensible nor intelligible (in the Platonic sense), and is only what ungrounds or problematizes Platonism as a philosophy of the Idea, placing it under the authority of problems. This would be in line with Deleuze's analysis of Hume and Kant (as we will see in the next chapters), which advances a vision of philosophy unburdened by the requirements to make claims of the empirical or the ideal world, or to advance a "rational" conception of reality, and instead becomes enclosed with the problems that constitute thought and sensibility, and from which alone philosophy assumes its potency to create concepts.

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<sup>274</sup> Eric Alliez, "Ontology and Logography: The Pharmacy, Plato and the Simulacrum," in *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, eds. Paul Patton and John Protevi (London: Continuum, 2003), 85.

<sup>275</sup> As Nietzsche argues, with the "victory" of the Idea over the agonistic milieu of the agora, the Platonic Idea grows distant, expediting a discourse of the world as "unattainable for the moment, but promised to the wise, the pious, the virtuous man", continuing in this direction until becoming "sublime, pale, northerly, Königsbergian" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. Reginald J. Hollingdale (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968), 78). On the historical-philosophical background of Deleuze's Nietzschean critique of Platonism, see Brent Adkins, *Rethinking Philosophy and Theology with Deleuze: A New Cartography* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 307-323.

Deleuze's "Plato and the Simulacra" is a dramatization of this rather straightforward attempt to release difference from the constraints of the Idea by establishing an external (rather than internal) relation between the two, so that difference does not belong to the Idea by right, but rather to the "problem" that provides it with the freedom which it seeks, as we will see. This is already evident by claims scattered throughout *Difference and Repetition* according to which Plato himself had "defined the dialectic as proceeding by 'problems', by means of which one attains the pure grounding principle – that is, the principle which measures the problems as such and distributes the corresponding solutions",<sup>276</sup> thus affirming the superiority of problems over the dialectic as a rational method. Indeed, Deleuze often claims that any philosophical dialectic proceeds by way of problems, and that its "true nature" as problematic has been distorted and perverted by philosophies of representation, the negative being the culmination of this perversion.<sup>277</sup> While Hegelian dialectic cannot be rehabilitated in principle, the only way to restore the Platonic dialectic to its problematic origins is to exceed it, à la Nietzsche's eternal recurrence, and according to Deleuze the signs for this exceeding are already dispersed throughout the Platonic text itself, most succinctly in the "problem of claimants" that reappears in several Platonic dialogues and holds the key to the future of Platonism.

In *L'abécédaire*, Deleuze claims that philosophers do not speak of abstractions but of highly concrete things, and provides Plato's Idea as such a concrete object. But the Idea can only be understood as "concrete" by linking it to a specific problem that provides it with coherency and "sense", without which any classical definition of the Platonic Idea as a "purity" remains obscured, abstract and ultimately unintelligible.<sup>278</sup> While Deleuze's analysis of Platonism in *Difference and Repetition* claims to "overturn" it, it seems that the more latent

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<sup>276</sup> DR 63.

<sup>277</sup> See for example *ibid.*, 164.

<sup>278</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, "H comme Histoire de la Philosophie," in *Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, DVD, dir. Pierre-André Boutang (Paris: Editions Montparnasse, 2004).

subject of this exercise is to demonstrate that only problems carry the promise for a radical critique of (the image of) thought, a critique that begins by destabilizing concepts themselves (which itself is a somewhat Nietzschean standpoint). No doubt, Deleuze lines up with Guérout's vision of philosophy as a series of problems that can only receive their intelligibility from the "inside" of their respective philosophical system, rather than evaluated according to more general concepts. But we can also argue that Alquié's presence is felt insofar as this vision does not completely saturate Deleuze's philosophy, leaving room for the contingency and ineffability of a fortuitous and forced "encounter" from which problems become the pathway for critique.

While Plato had given a "poisoned gift" to philosophy with the introduction of transcendence,<sup>279</sup> Deleuze nonetheless asserts that the Platonic Idea can be cashed out insofar as it is above the concept and is therefore immune to the determinations of the negative, as Hyppolite himself suggests.<sup>280</sup> By claiming that Platonism is preoccupied with determining a problem of rival claimants, Deleuze is already reading Nietzschean concerns into Plato, tying him to a vested interest in a unique individual standpoint, therefore contaminating and problematizing the purity of the Idea with "political" apprehensions. Thus, the radical spirit of *Nietzsche and Philosophy* somewhat subsides in *Difference and Repetition* and is translated into the project of the reversal of Platonism, but the critical question that runs through the former – concerning the weight of doxa, language and myth over reason – is maintained through the notion that the problem of claimants lurks behind the Idea, as the "curtain" behind which no ideal world exists. Indeed, for Deleuze it is an issue of

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<sup>279</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Plato, the Greeks," in ECC 137.

<sup>280</sup> "Platonic alterity allows for an immobile dialectic, a dialectic that still does not have the self for its driving force. Hegelian dialectic, however, deepens alterity into position and opposition into contradiction. This is why dialectic is not merely the symphony of being, being in its measure and in its harmony; dialectic is the creative movement of the symphony, its absolute genesis, the position of being as self. Thus between Platonic dialectic and Hegelian dialectic, there is the same difference as between a symphony heard and the creation of the symphony" (Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 113).



demonstrating the immanent processes that “unground” Platonism as a philosophy of the ideal, so that it could no longer cover anything up, and what remains is the evaluations of what appears, of appearances.

In *Bergsonism*, Plato is introduced as a precursor to Bergson, since both authors share an “obsession with the pure”, that is, with tracing a concept of internal difference irreducible to both contradiction and arbitrary division, so as to carve nature “in its joints”.<sup>281</sup> However, Plato’s method had failed to produce the systematicity required for such a task, providing an external account inadequate for a philosophy of problems. *Difference and Repetition* and “Plato and the Simulacrum” (an appendix to *The Logic of Sense*) deploy a more intricate account, centred around the idea that division in Plato is a function of a problem of rival claimants, from which follows the very essence of Platonism: the separation between Being and thought, essence and appearance, intelligibility and sensibility.<sup>282</sup> In this sense, the positioning

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<sup>281</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 265e, in: *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).

<sup>282</sup> Deleuze draws the notion of “rival claimants” from the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pierre Vidal-Naquet and Pierre Lévêque, in which the historical phenomenon of claimants in ancient Greece is traced to Cleisthenes’ secular reform and his transformation of Greek civic space during the sixth century BCE. The authors argue that the architectural, social and political distribution of the city originated in a reform governed by a principle of isonomia or equality of law, arranging civic space and public events in a way that facilitates democratic rivalries by privileging the central point and the circle in that they formed the basis of symmetrical, reversible, and egalitarian relationships among the various conflicting elements in the natural or human cosmos (Pierre Lévêque and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Cleisthenes the Athenian: An Essay on the Representation of Space and Time in Greek Political Thought*, trans. David Ames Curtis (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997), xxv; also see Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World*, trans. Andrew Szegedy-Maszak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 257). A Greek citizen could supposedly claim that certain deliberations and decisions that were once the ancient privileges of the king must now be brought to the commons and to the centre, at the middle, as power became depersonalized, socialized and laicized. Rivalries would take place between cities in wars and games, within the city in the political public centre of the agora, and, as Foucault has shown, between individuals in practices such as dietetics and gymnastics, and within the individual itself, through modes of subjectivation or self-relation, where one would claim to govern others by first mastering himself (Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. II: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1990), 75-76, 80, 100; see also F 99). According to Deleuze, what made these relations of rivalry “problematic” for Plato was the fact that anyone could lay claim to anything, therefore carrying the day through sheer rhetoric, a danger which becomes explicit in the *Sophist* dialogue. The solution to such a problem is a criterion (the Idea) that would allow Plato to distinguish and discriminate different types of claims.

of a “problem” at the heart of Platonism is meant to subvert the history of philosophical dialectics as a rational history at its very origin, and in that way reorient its future: according to Deleuze, the Platonic dialectic becomes comprehensible as a solution to a problem that is not particularly “rational” and which at some point exceeds Plato’s ability to maintain it, so that these seemingly essential distinctions that define Platonism itself are made and unmade according to the determinations of a problem, and cannot hold their own.

In *What is Philosophy?* too Deleuze and Guattari highlight the presence of the rival/friend in philosophy as the problematic element that contaminates its ambition to introduce purity into thought, since this element is “hardly Greek, arriving from elsewhere as if [it] had gone through a catastrophe”.<sup>283</sup> As Deleuze claims throughout *Difference and Repetition*, philosophical thought does not simply “commence”, since there is a violence, a “misosophy” or a problem that forces itself upon it, spoiling the possibility for a concept such as “purity” to acquire sense at the very outset.<sup>284</sup> Thus, Plato cannot be said to simply think the Idea, but is rather already engaged in division, in selecting rivals, in solving a problem.

While it is *What is Philosophy?* that radicalizes this notion,<sup>285</sup> *Difference and Repetition* settles for accentuating a “play of difference” that exists in Plato, which the “labour of the dialectic” cannot account for, and which calls the entire notion of a dialectic into question, as Deleuze does in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.<sup>286</sup> The exigencies of division appear, according to Deleuze, in the dialogues of the *Statesman*, *Phaedrus* and *Sophist*, where the Platonic distinction between true and false images give way to a latent one between different kinds of images,

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<sup>283</sup> WP 5.

<sup>284</sup> DR 139.

<sup>285</sup> See for example the concept of Geophilosophy, as an attempt to “deterritorialize” or problematize the Greek origins of philosophy, as well as the notion of a Kantian “pure reason”, since thought always belongs to an outside. See WP 85-113.

<sup>286</sup> “Difference reflects itself and repeats or reproduces itself. The eternal return is this highest power, the synthesis of affirmation which finds its principle in the will. The lightness of that which affirms against the weight of the negative; the games of the will to power against the labour of the dialectic; the affirmation of affirmation against that famous negation of the negation” (NP 197).

particularly between an image and a simulacrum. The method of division embraces a “grounding system” oriented by the Idea, whose purpose is to test and adjudicate between these images according to the Platonic inspiration from the Good. In Deleuze’s analysis, division is characterized by a double movement: on the one hand, it facilitates the efforts of the Idea in maintaining the separation between object and thought, since one can only “lay claim” or participate in the Idea according to different degrees of resemblance to it, while it itself is unparticipated and unthinkable; on the other hand, it keeps the Idea as concept from submitting the world to the requirements of the concept in general, and hence from those of Hegelianism,<sup>287</sup> signalling that the Idea has not completely lost touch with the thickness of sensibility, and is receptive to an “overturning”.

Platonism is essentially reconstructed into this narrative to serve the demands of the problem: the latter loosens the links between being and thought through an external separation based around a grounding process that originates in myth.<sup>288</sup> In this sense, Deleuze once again confronts Heidegger by rejecting his allegation that Plato is a thinker of a “free floating” and abstract Being, demanding the intervention of a philosophical facilitator – Aristotle. According to Heidegger, Aristotle held a better understanding of Plato than Plato had of himself.<sup>289</sup> Deleuze, however, claims that Plato was not a philosopher of an obscured ontology but rather a philosopher of difference, itself suppressed by the dominant practice of reading Plato under Aristotelian interpretation codified by Heidegger, among others.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> As stated earlier, in *Difference and Repetition* this is one of Deleuze’s central points of critique concerning Hegelianism in general, and Hyppolite in particular: by attempting to reconcile “concept” and “sensibility”, the dialectic simply submits the latter, as it appears in sense-certainty, to the demands of the former, thereby presenting an abstract image of the sensible. See DR 51-52.

<sup>288</sup> “Plato establishes difference thanks to the method of division. To the reader’s great surprise, he does so by introducing a ‘myth’. It is as though division, once it abandons the mask of determining species and discloses its true goal, nevertheless renounces the realisation of this goal and is instead relayed by the simple ‘play’ of a myth” (DR 60).

<sup>289</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 7-8

<sup>290</sup> Heidegger’s reading was already preceded by Hegel’s: “The philosophic culture of Plato, like the general culture of his time, was not yet ripe for really scientific work; the Idea was still too fresh and

Difference must be “freed” from Aristotle’s reading, but this can only be realized by putting forward a new logic of sense, of the sensible, that would render this difference meaningful. Thus, the path to line up Plato with Nietzsche is paved: Plato is not strictly a thinker of the dualistic “two-worlds” doctrine, and therefore the distinction between essence and appearance should not be taken at face value. This is already suggested in Deleuze’s review of *Logic and Existence*: “one finds already in Plato the substitution of sense for essence, when he shows us that the second world itself is the subject of a dialectic which turns it into the sense of this world; it is no longer an other world”.<sup>291</sup>

But, unlike Nietzsche, Deleuze does not focus his critical efforts on this subversion, since this “leaves the motivation of Platonism in the shadows”,<sup>292</sup> and, as Deleuze acknowledges, can also be found in Hegel.<sup>293</sup> By disclosing this “motivation” or the problem of claimants, Deleuze fosters a more sympathetic and totalizing reading of Plato, invested in the “internal economy” of a Platonic system, where the Idea as a concept is not fabricated ready-made. It is, as Guérout phrases it, “the solution of a problem and the establishment of a truth considered directly or indirectly demonstrable”.<sup>294</sup> This notion of philosophy

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new; it was only in Aristotle that it attained to a systematic scientific form of representation” (G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, vol. 2: Plato and the Platonists*, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 17). Hegel assimilated the Platonic concept of alterity as a correlate of his concept of negation, thereby eliciting a comparison between the two concepts: “the other ... is other also for itself apart from the something .... [It] is therefore to be taken in isolation, with reference to itself, has to be taken abstractly as the other, the *to heteron* of Plato who opposes it to the one as a moment of totality, and in this way ascribes to the other a nature of its own” (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 91). According to Hegel, Plato had failed to push the notion of alterity to contradiction because of his Ideas, posited as stable forms, thereby blocking the possibility of responding to several pressing problems concerning their nature, which Hegel, according to Hyppolite, would solve: “By recognizing alterity, Plato hopes to discover the eternal measure that allows the different genera to participate with one another in a true order; in his own way, he excludes contradiction from these mutual relations. In contrast, Hegelian dialectic will push this alterity up to contradiction” (Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 113).

<sup>291</sup> Deleuze, “Jean Hyppolite’s *Logic and Existence*,” in DI 193.

<sup>292</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Plato and the Simulacrum,” in LS 253.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> Martial Guérout “La méthode en histoire de la philosophie,” *Philosophiques* 1, no. 1 (April 1974): 17. As Guérout argues, his method of analysis does not settle with “breaking down the element of a system and [showing] how in fact they came together. [It] makes us understand why the assembly

developing the rigor of a problem through a grounding process is introduced in *What is Grounding?* (1956). While the term “problem” is not made explicit, it is the overall intention of these lectures to put forward a ground for knowledge that can be easily pierced through, and what is found on the other side is neither objective truth nor subjective certainty, but only a series of “problems” (the Platonic claim, Humean subjectivity, the Kantian transcendental). As will also be highlighted in *Difference and Repetition*, thought can never guarantee its own ground, but can only appeal to it as an object from which it could derive its own coherency and sense, but which does not belong to it by default.

This is thoroughly emphasized with Plato, who appealed to myth as a sort of “primitive” form of ground: in the *Statesman*, where the object is defining the true statesman, we find the mythological image of the god Cronos who once ruled an ancient humanity and cared for their needs, earning his title as shepherd-king.<sup>295</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, where the definition sought is that of true madness, the myth of the chariot portrays the hectic movement of souls as they follow the gods on the path to enlightenment, prior to their incarnation, and the memory they carry with them of the Ideas that they encountered and contemplated.<sup>296</sup> Deleuze thoroughly emphasizes that these myths cannot provide the probative conceptual force necessary to conceive of definitions via division: “when division gets down to the actual task of selection, it all happens as though division renounces this task, letting itself be carried along by a myth”.<sup>297</sup> *What is Grounding?* adds to this by suggesting that mythology realizes natural ends through a repetition of ritual behavior and “felt cultural

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is done this way and not otherwise ... When one has answered these questions ... one circulates in the philosophical monument with the same ease as the architect in the building whose secrets he has seized ... according to the deepest intentions of the doctrine” (ibid., 13).

<sup>295</sup> Plato, *Statesman*, 271e-272b.

<sup>296</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 251d-252b.

<sup>297</sup> Deleuze, “Plato and the Simulacrum,” in LS 254.

ends”, while philosophy signals a transition from such culture to one that is grounded in “rational ends”.<sup>298</sup>

Being tethered to mythic thought, the Idea essentially remains within the realm of imagination, appearances and natural ends that are merely “felt and lived”.<sup>299</sup> At best we can say that Plato’s approach to myth is “ironic” in that it does not take the natural ends realized in myth at face value, but the point for Deleuze is to relax Plato’s grip from the Idea so that it would no longer “belong” to him but to the problem that dictates the conditions of solvability. The myth, being very much a living power in Plato’s days, rooted in the popular tales of Homer and Hesiod and constituting the accepted religion of the time, provides Deleuze with the background to de-rationalize the Idea so that its sovereignty could be put in question. This is an unusual move, since the history of philosophy has mostly given the Platonic myth external validity.<sup>300</sup>

Deleuze’s insistence that the introduction of myth only confirms that myth and dialectic are not distinct forces, but that rather that the “dialectic discovers its true method in division”,<sup>301</sup> once again makes clear his intention to subordinate the dialectic to individual interests and immanent forms of evaluation, away from the grip of the concept, but at the same time opens it to critique by linking myth to a model of resemblance, according to which the Idea “adjudicates” between different claimants. In the *Statesman* myth, a claim is judged

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<sup>298</sup> WG 13-16. Also see Christian Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy: from Kant to Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 14-15.

<sup>299</sup> WG 15. As Deleuze argues, Plato’s restriction to mythic thought is what keeps him from setting about philosophy’s task to ground and realize reason, a task which only Hume, Kant and the post-Kantians will go about, as we will see in the following chapters.

<sup>300</sup> For example, the Neoplatonists argued that these myths are to be taken allegorically and that a truly philosophical importance is hidden in them; Kantians argue that these stories allow man to both incite transcendental feelings through which he would transgress the limits of his understanding, and regulate them so as to not to succumb to debauchery; and the Romantics argued that Plato had implanted myth to inspire man and allow him to experience the revelation of a higher truth from a divine power. See Ludwig Edelstein, “The Function of the Myth in Plato’s Philosophy.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10, no. 4 (1949): 465.

<sup>301</sup> DR 61.

as founded, ill-founded or unfounded according to its likeness or resemblance to the model of the shepherd-king. In *Phaedrus*, it is judged according to what the soul had contemplated in its mythological prehistory, to the level of intensity of such contemplations, and their resemblance to the Ideas. Thus, for Deleuze, Platonism is marked by a “productive dissymmetry” that also “tends to cancel it”.<sup>302</sup>

### The overturning of Platonism: the escape to non-being

The object of a Deleuzian inverted Platonism, unlike its Nietzschean inspiration, is not only to constitute a philosophy “removed from true being, the purer ... living in semblance”,<sup>303</sup> but specifically to introduce his own interpretation of eternal recurrence as problematic and problematizing into Platonism, finding a moment internal to the Platonic dialogue itself that is both nauseating and difficult to bear, evidence of Plato’s own “vision” of eternal recurrence.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> DR 20.

<sup>303</sup> “All that is real is dissolved in semblance, and behind it the unified nature of the Will manifests itself, completely cloaked in the glory of wisdom and truth and in blinding radiance. Illusion, delusion is at its peak” (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and other texts*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 133).

<sup>304</sup> As Deleuze argues, “This condition of man is of the greatest importance for the eternal return. It seems to compromise or contaminate it so gravely that it becomes an object of anguish, repulsion and disgust. Even if active forces return they will again become reactive, eternally reactive. The eternal return of reactive forces and furthermore the return of the becoming-reactive of forces. Zarathustra not only presents the thought of the eternal return as mysterious and secret but as nauseating and difficult to bear” (NP 65). This description of the conditions necessary for experiencing eternal recurrence are somewhat recreated in Plato: he has “experienced” eternal recurrence but was unwilling to affirm it, and subsequently had attempted to keep it “submerged” beneath the dualities of “intelligible and the sensible, of Idea and matter, or of Ideas and bodies”. See for example LS 1-7.

While the Platonic dialectical path can be said to be obstructed with problems that reorient it, these problems can still be reduced to a “perplexing” or more specifically to an aporia internal to the Platonic dialogue itself rather than being its motor, requiring the intervention of the Idea in the process of division. This is why Deleuze requires a third dialogue in which the problem itself is problematized, leading the way for an immanent reevaluation of Platonism, from which a conception of being as problematic emerges. It is the *Sophist* that might justify Deleuze’s claim that his own overturning seeks to “conserve many Platonic characteristics”,<sup>305</sup> but at the same time, it also clarifies his intentions to put forward an anti-Hegelian ontology:

We are not concerned at the moment with the distinction which should be drawn between the two instances of the problem and the question, but rather with the essential role which both together play in the Platonic dialectic – a role comparable to that which the negative will play later, for example in the Hegelian dialectic. However, it is precisely *not* the negative which plays [the role of the problematic] in Plato – so much so that we must consider whether or not the celebrated thesis of the *Sophist*, despite certain ambiguities, should be understood as follows: “non” in the expression “non-being” expresses something other than the negative.<sup>306</sup>

With his intentions made transparent, namely to render the problematic primary in Plato without neglecting to distance it from the Hegelian dialectic, it is difficult to read Deleuze’s analysis of the *Sophist* as something other than what it ultimately is, without simply remaining within the purview of Deleuze’s critique of Plato.<sup>307</sup> It is because the *Sophist* can be said to make no clear qualitative distinction between being and non-being, therefore designating ontology as “problematic”, that the dialogue is fit to exceed naïve anti-Hegelian claims such

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<sup>305</sup> DR 59.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>307</sup> See for example Daniel Smith, whose useful breakdown of Deleuze’s analysis of the problem of rival claimants in Plato and its consequences is content with simply accepting his narrative, without examining what exactly this narrative serves in Deleuze’s philosophy. See Daniel W. Smith, “The Concept of the Simulacrum: Deleuze and the Overturning of Platonism,” in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 3-27.



as “being is full positive reality which admits no non-being”, and to define the expression “non-being” as “something other than the negative”.<sup>308</sup> In such an analysis, it is Plato who first, inadvertently, claimed that philosophy is a problematic ontology, only to quickly suppress it.

Thus, the concept of the simulacrum as difference, which is unthinkable and “immoral” on Plato’s outlook, receives its full coherency in Deleuze only to the extent that the idea of non-being that supports it can be uttered without falling into contradiction and therefore as prey to the negative. Without this coherency the simulacrum would be nothing more than an empirical difference. In the *Sophist* no myth is invoked, as Deleuze stresses, thereby deepening difference, since no identity model is conjured to subside it. The dialogue’s ultimate end is to define the sophist himself, and the method of division provides one standout definition: an ironic imitator engaging in “appearance-making art”, whose creations only appear to be faithful to their model, which Plato designates as idols (*eidôla*), simulacrum (*phantasmata*) or “bad” copies, as opposed to “good” copies or icons (*eikônes*), certified by the Idea.<sup>309</sup> The latter kinds are affirmed as copies made by the craftsman with reference to the Idea as model, whereas the former are copies made by artists and sophists, which are condemned as twice removed from the idea: a copy of a copy pulling the mind away from the divine. Therefore, in order to capture the sophist, the method of division is employed “paradoxically”, not to capture the “real” pretender, insofar as he resembles the foundation, but the “false” one.

The sophist, claiming to be able to argue on any worldly or heavenly subject, in fact possesses, according to the Eleatic visitor, “a kind of belief knowledge about everything, but

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<sup>308</sup> DR 63.

<sup>309</sup> See Plato, *Republic X*, 597a-598c, where the foundations for this regime of representation are laid down, along with a difference internal to the realm of images which sorts them according to their fidelity or degradation from the Idea.

not truth”,<sup>310</sup> thereby subverting “against the father”, making an unfounded claim without passing through the Idea, and therefore outside the relation between original and copy, placing the entire foundation in question.<sup>311</sup> By laying claim to everything, the sophist gives rise to a contradiction emanating from within the Platonic dialectic itself: the simulacrum, the sophistic image, is not only an infinitely degraded copy whose differences pay heed to the status of the original, but an internal imbalance that underlies the identity model, rendering it impossible to allocate claims with truth and falsehood.

This is the point that Deleuze attempted to make clear in the aforementioned quote: rather than advancing determination, contradiction gives way to a fundamental encounter, an ontological *démarche*, “an unconceptualizable ontological experience, which cannot be replaced by anything that derives from it”,<sup>312</sup> and from which a new conception of ontology can emerge. Of course, Deleuze does not simply embrace Alquié’s position, but such *démarche* can facilitate an anti-Hegelian ontology that breaks with the conceptual system of Platonism (or more generally with “common sense”, as Deleuze stresses all throughout the text), by imposing an encounter on Plato that forces him to re-consider or “problematize” the concept of Being.

This fits into the narrative of the *Sophist*, which, as indicated, enters into *Difference and Repetition* by centring on reforming the participants’ understanding of the predicate “non-being” or “not-being” and rendering it intelligible, supporting Deleuze’s earlier claim that being finds its sense (rather than its opposite) in non-being. Thus, a powerful conceptual tool is developed throughout the dialogue, that would allow Plato to say, in a sense, that

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<sup>310</sup> Plato, *Sophist*, 233c.

<sup>311</sup> Deleuze, “Plato and the Simulacrum,” in LS 257.

<sup>312</sup> Ferdinand Alquié, *Signification de la philosophie* (Paris: Hachette, 1971), 247. Quoted in Peden, *Spinoza contra Phenomenology*, 76; In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze speaks of a violent and contingent “encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think” (DR 139).

falsehoods *are*, or that non-being *is*, without recourse to contradictions.<sup>313</sup> The sophist, as a verbal artist of appearance-making, produces an effect in speech by saying a variation of the formula “that which is not is”. In order to determine the sophist according to this definition that the interlocuters have formulated they must reject Parmenides’ position, specifically that being and non-being are opposed to one another.<sup>314</sup> Although a copy is only *like* the model and is not “really real” as the model is, it is nevertheless “really a likeness” and therefore not its opposite, so “that which is not is woven together with that which is in some way like that – it’s quite bizarre”.<sup>315</sup> Admitting that an imitation, even a false one (that makes that which is not appear to actually be), *really is* as imitation, implies that non-being can, in a sense, be.

Thus, the Platonic text itself becomes the background against which Deleuze demonstrates that philosophy, from early on, is drawn towards problems that undermine it and from which it draws its power. Indeed, this is the culmination of Deleuze’s argument, that “between the eternal return and the simulacrum, there is such a profound link that one cannot be understood except through the other”,<sup>316</sup> so that since Being is simulated, it must be taken anew every time, it “returns” in every philosophical system only to differ from itself, and by doing so it becomes a problem. Deleuze tends to describe Plato’s attempt to allocate sophistic contradiction with the lowest degree of participation in the Idea as “holding back” its true power to “affirm chaos itself”. In a very similar fashion to his treatment of Kant, as we will see in chapter four, while he renounces the phenomenon of Platonism (or Kantianism), Deleuze nonetheless emphasizes that the problematic exists in the Platonic text through and through, albeit under the opacity of representation which always falls short of its true destiny.

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<sup>313</sup> Plato, *Sophist*, 237a. The Interlocuters begin the dialogue by holding a Parmenidean conception of ontology at hand, forbidding them from even thinking “that the things that are not, *are*” (ibid.).

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 240a-c.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 240c.

<sup>316</sup> LS 264.

This is why the *Sophist* is essential with respect to Deleuze's concept of the problem as what disrupts doxa or common sense, since it places the entire domain of truth (a domain which itself was established on very unstable ground) in question once the grounding process is realized as paradoxical. It is because Platonic division "proceed[s] by problems"<sup>317</sup> that it is likely to encounter a problem which it cannot solve, and which will continue to disturb it, and indeed go beyond it. In other words, it is Plato himself who comes to pose the question of being as nothing more than a simulacrum, so that there is no being on one side and non-being on the other, but rather a "(non)-being or ?-being".<sup>318</sup> So by "refusing" to identify this non-being with negation, by "suspending" the non in non-being without reducing it to abstraction that would reach contradiction and therefore dialectical coherence, Plato indicates the direction required to execute a reversal.<sup>319</sup>

The intervention of the sophist in Platonism indicates that the philosopher's agonism is above all circumscribed by doxa, since, as Deleuze emphasizes, one can no longer discern the philosopher from the sophist. Being and non-being are, as Marcel Detienne notes, matters of a doxology rather than ontology: "No one more carefully noted [the sophists'] ambiguous aspects than Plato. He remarked that *Philodoxoi* were people 'who loved and

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<sup>317</sup> DR 63.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>319</sup> "The sophist is not the being (or the non-being) of contradiction, but the one who raises everything to the level of simulacra and maintains them in that state" (DR 68). See also Nathan Widder, "The rights of simulacra: Deleuze and the univocity of being," *Continental Philosophy Review* 34 (2001): 448. Interestingly, Hegel himself has ruled out an "abstract" Parmenidean ontology, rejecting that "Being is and non-Being is not", and embracing Heraclitus' position that "Being and non-being are the same; everything is and yet is not". This, however, would lead him to the dialectic of Being and nothingness, where non-being is real only to the extent that it becomes negative, otherwise it would remain an abstract, undifferentiated abyss: "The truth only is as the unity of distinct opposites and, indeed, of the pure opposition of being and non-being; but with the Eleatics we have the abstract understanding that Being is alone the truth. We say, in place of using the expression of Heraclitus, that the Absolute is the unity of being and non-being. When we understand that proposition as that 'Being is and yet is not,' this does not seem to make much sense, but only to imply complete negation and want of thought" (G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy vol.1*, trans. E S Haldane (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 282).

regarded tones and beautiful colors and the like', people concerned with intermediate things that partook of both Being and Non-Being".<sup>320</sup>

To a certain extent, while Deleuze emphasizes throughout that the notion of non-being as an ontological enigma—an enigma that displaces being from the concerns of the negative and renders it utterly problematic, and from which new concepts of a future philosophy can emerge—must not be confused with Hegel's conception,<sup>321</sup> Deleuze's envisioning of this through the *Sophist* is perhaps not as fully developed as it is in other analyses, as for example in Barbara Cassin's examination of the sophist Gorgias and his infamous treatise. Her conception of philosophy as a "logology" can profoundly contribute to Deleuze's anti-Hegelian efforts to sustain a purely problematic yet fully concrete conception of non-being that the sophist himself unravels. Cassin introduces another "sophistic" critique of Parmenidean ontology, the starting point for which is Heidegger, for whom Parmenidean ontology embodies an "unspoiled" experience of Being or transcendence, while Plato presents a mere investigation of it.<sup>322</sup> Parmenides' Poem is introduced as a founding text of ontology, the sophistic critique of which lies in Gorgias' *On Nature or the Non-Being*, which Cassin reads as a philosophical refutation of Parmenides and a paradigm of sophistry, since its critical endeavor takes place on sophistic ground.<sup>323</sup>

Gorgias addresses Parmenides' imperative to follow the path of being (issued by the goddess who reveals herself to Parmenides), by suggesting three hypotheses in relation to

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<sup>320</sup> Marcel Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1996), 112-13.

<sup>321</sup> See for example DR 39, 107-108, 202-203.

<sup>322</sup> Cassin focuses on Parmenides' Poem and its importance for Heidegger, a text which also serves as the basis of a critique of ontology by sophists such as Gorgias, who demonstrates the inevitable contradictions that follow the Poem's discursive structure. See Barbara Cassin, *L'effet sophistique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 12, 26.

<sup>323</sup> In this regard, *L'effet sophistique* is a continuation of Cassin's philological dissertation on Parmenides' Poem, *Si Parménide*, where she attempts to "defend" Parmenides' thesis by tracing its logological origins rather than adhering to its divine revelation by the goddess. See for example Barbara Cassin, *Si Parménide* (Lille: Presse Universitaire de Lille, 1980), 17-18, 57-62.

being: [1] nothing exists; [2] if something does exist, we cannot know it; and [3] if we can know it, we cannot communicate it in any way. The first thesis addresses Parmenides' attempt to distinguish the path of being from non-being through the use of the infinitive verb, arguing that Parmenides "says that neither to be is [or can be] nor not to be. For if not to be is not to be, non-being would be no less than being, for non-being is non-being and being being, such that things are no less than they are not".<sup>324</sup> Thus, such an attempt to distinguish the two paths through an infinitive results in producing entities the existence of which Parmenides denies, merely by uttering the words 'not to be is not to be' (*le non-être est non-être*). The second thesis accepts Parmenides' legitimate distinguishing of Is and Isn't, but claims that this nevertheless leads to an unfortunate result, as it creates the conditions in which one cannot assert that a chosen path is a truthful one, by giving existence to the object of one's utterance, before deeming it true or false, and by identifying being and thinking. The third thesis consents to a successful demonstration that being is knowable, but maintains that it cannot be communicated, since such a communication can take place only as a divine revelation of logos, and never through the "noisy habits of mortals". If one would take the path of the Isn't, one would necessarily lie, and the recipient of his address would comprehend it as mere sounds.

By focusing on Gorgias' analysis taking the Poem at face value, Cassin's critical path is highly close to that of Deleuze in the *Sophist*, where the interlocutors' attempt to distinguish the false pretender par excellence compels them to provisionally accept that non-being is. But Cassin's ultimate conclusion is also somewhat close to Deleuze's central thesis in *The Logic of Sense*, namely that Being as such is but an effect of a certain use of language.<sup>325</sup> Thus,

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<sup>324</sup> An English translation appears in Andrew Goffey, "If ontology, then politics: The sophist effect," *Radical Philosophy* 107 (May/June 2001): 13. See also Cassin, *L'effet sophistique*, 124–125.

<sup>325</sup> In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze famously appeals to certain interpretations of the Stoics according to which the latter "discovered" a surface of language upon which effects take place, constituting its three primary dimensions of designation, manifestation and signification and expressing a univocal sense of Being. See LS 177-180.

Cassin shows that the negations of Being presented in this thesis originate in the discursive logic of the Poem itself. To a certain extent her critique of Parmenides' also aims to, like Deleuze, reveal ontology as undermined by the "productive machinery" of indetermination, a discursive practice she terms "logology",<sup>326</sup> which Gorgias demonstrates to be at work in Parmenides. Logology is revealed through Gorgias' negations of Being, which are supposedly derived from within the discursive logic of Parmenides' text itself.

This example and others (taken primarily from Protagoras and Antiphon) attempt to elucidate a sophistic structural effect hidden within and excluded from major philosophical and ontological texts, as their by-products, resulting in an unauthorized "history of speech" which Cassin claims to be essentially political.<sup>327</sup> Cassin goes further to argue that rhetoric is a philosophical, and particularly Platonic, invention that constitutes an attempt to tame the Sophist's logos and its effect on philosophy, and that such an attempt to defeat sophistry lies at the very foundation of philosophy as the touchstone of its truth criterion. In other words, it is her intent to demonstrate that sophistic "non-sense", rather than being an incoherent, marginal domain of philosophy that is assimilated into or excluded from it, is in fact an apparatus that determines its logological "sense". Logology undermines the relationship between philosophy and politics, rendering the latter "problematic" to the extent that it is not susceptible to the determination of a specific instance, so that to think politics

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<sup>326</sup> Cassin borrows this term from Novalis, who employed it in order to refer to a discourse primarily concerned with itself.

<sup>327</sup> See Barbara Cassin, "Who's Afraid of the Sophists?" in *Sophistical Practice: Toward a Consistent Relativism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 31. In some respect, Cassin's project follows Foucault's in the first lectures of the *Lectures on the Will to Know*, where he puts forward an analysis distinguished from those whose aim is to "reduce the distance between the sophistic and philosophy" and "reintroduce the Sophists through the little door of historical reevaluation". His basic impulse, as is Cassin's, is to "let the distance stand as it was perceived, let the exclusion stand as it was pronounced by Aristotle, his contemporaries, and his successors", so as to open a space outside the history of philosophy where sophistic discourse could be analyzed within the milieu of the Greek city. See Michel Foucault, *Lectures on the Will to Know: 1970-1971*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 56.

philosophically only points to the limits of philosophical discourse, a limit that the sophists, as the non-philosophers, mark as the unassimilated, agonistic “other” of philosophy.

It is through this struggle against sophistry that Plato and Aristotle delimit a field of thought peculiar to philosophy from which the sophist is excluded at the outset, and what the sophist effectively reveals is this very exclusion, amounting to a self-dissolution of ontology by its logological nature. While philosophy’s exclusion of its logological origins remains a negative foundation, for Cassin Gorgias’ logology demonstrates a positive use, as the sophist elaborates a theory of the linguistic nature of the real and the subsequent impossibility of speech espousing any reality that is not the one that it creates itself through its effects, hence a “pleasure of speaking” that would become the hallmark of sophistry.<sup>328</sup> While this may seem far off from Deleuze’s thesis concerning sense as surface effect and the problem as a ?-being, we can see in both Deleuze and Cassin an attempt to reject a Parmenidean (and ultimately, Heideggerian) ontology as the final word of philosophy concerning the nature of Being, pointing to an extra-propositional element that undermines from within philosophy’s ability to establish a coherent ontology.

## Conclusion

In Conclusion, I have shown how *Nietzsche and Philosophy* establishes Nietzsche as a turning point in modern philosophy, where the burden of the dialectic is both weighed and disposed of, so as to clear the path for new problems. As a philosopher of the problem, of the primacy of obstinate problems, Nietzsche concerns himself with the sway of perspectives and

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<sup>328</sup> Here Cassin evokes a concept of performance unique to sophistry, demonstrating “the performative power of speech, in a regime of generalized speech acts before Austin – performance or performativity before any thematization of illocutionary acts. What matters is not a being who was supposedly already there, but the being produced by the discourse ... It is here, thanks to the Sophists, that we can arrive at the dimension of the political as agora for an agôn, at polis as a continuous creation of language” (Barbara Cassin, “Rhetorical Turns in Ancient Greece,” in *Sophistical Practice*, 79).



interests over seemingly innocent epistemological reflections. Specifically, the question concerning the relation between logic and existence is superseded by the question of sense as force, so that the philosopher is no longer a dialectician but a symptomatologist, a typologist or a genealogist. Nietzsche's approach gives way to a total reevaluation of philosophy as determined by dialectic or historicist convictions, placing it within the purview of eternal recurrence as the production of appearances or simulacrum of old metaphysical problems whose sense must be reevaluated. This is demonstrated through the case of the problem of rival claimants in Plato, for whom the obsession with the "false rival" par excellence only shows that philosophy is overcome with a problematic conception of being as a simulacrum, where claims concerning reality lose their meaning or become "ungrounded", since there is always an "outside" that prevents thought from establishing any kind of ground to launch its endeavors.

## Chapter 3

### The problem of “subjectivity” in Hume

#### Introduction

In the previous chapters we discussed how Deleuze’s problematic, anti-dialectic thought emerges from his critique of Hyppolite’s Hegelianism, as a response to the challenges that this Hegelianism leaves for modern ontology, as well as from his encounter with Guérout and Alquié concerning the relationship between the philosophies of experience and of the concept, as an alternative negotiation between these than that of Hyppolite. Deleuze’s use of thinkers such as Bergson, Nietzsche, Bachelard and Plato, points to a “problematic” orientation of philosophical inquiry based upon a primacy of problems in relation to experience, knowledge and truth, and at the same time points to the ultimate powerlessness of philosophical thought to break away from these problems.

In this chapter I examine another text which paves the way for a philosophy of the problem in Deleuze, perhaps even more discreetly than in other works examined so far. In Deleuze’s first book, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, we find an oblique critique of Hegelianism under the influence of a problematic being, problematic insofar as it places empiricism in question within a greater ontology of sense. Deleuze here develops, although implicitly, a very early attempt to rid thought of any rational or ideal attitude, such as that which Hyppolite demonstrates, by first overturning the very conception of empiricism as a philosophy of the sensible and as an epistemology, through a new concern for the “concrete richness of the sensible”.<sup>329</sup> Here Deleuze follows a fourth teacher, Jean Wahl, who proposed an empiricist response to Hegel’s critique of empiricism, or a post-Hegelian empiricism

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<sup>329</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature,” in D 54.

driven by a “problematic” ontology which cannot be revealed in sensation, and which, against Hegel’s understanding, is irreducible to knowledge.

In the first section, I demonstrate how Deleuze develops a critique of the image of empiricism that “places in question” the assumptions that drive this image, and puts forward a problematic image of empiricism. This image rejects the notion that empiricism is a simple theory of “how things are” in nature, and is occupied instead with developing the rigor of a problem from which empiricism’s fundamental concerns and its overall vision would emerge. In the second section, I examine how Deleuze, via Wahl, cancels out the possibility of a sovereign Hegelian reason through the notion of the problematic idea and the illusions that it brings forth, so that being itself (as a Hegelian concern) is no longer a problem for thought, a procedure that clearly demonstrates Deleuze’s “Kantian” reading of Hume. In the third section I discuss how a problematic image of culture develops from a “levitated” empirical thought, circumscribing a practical, rather than speculative, field of reason. In the final section I argue that Deleuze’s critique of Hume in *Difference and Repetition* marks his own movement towards Kant as a more productive philosopher of the problem. Throughout I show how with Hume Deleuze first ascertains that philosophy itself is perhaps incapable of providing us with truths concerning the empirical world, and that its true activity is rather a critique of concepts through the enunciation of problems beyond the empirical as such.

“Why would the Empiricist say that?”: subjectivity as an “empiricist” problem

In his 1963 inaugural speech, Hyppolite spoke of the “concrete, existential relationship ... established between the diversity of lived experiences” which was neglected by many philosophers. Such concrete aspects of experience are not only cognitive but also “moral, aesthetic, religious, [and] political”.<sup>330</sup> This was already suggested fifteen years earlier in his *Genesis and Structure*, where he established that Hegelianism was not merely a theory concerning “theoretical experience, knowledge of the object”, in the spirit of neo-Kantianism, but a description of “the whole of experience”, of “all forms ethical, juridical, and religious”, so as to “lead us from empirical to philosophic knowledge, from sensuous certainty to absolute knowledge”.<sup>331</sup> Hyppolite attempted here to take up Kant’s “problem of the problem”, or the problem of pure reason which concerns the possibility of fabricating non-empirical knowledge (through synthetic *a priori* judgements), moving from the transcendental to the absolute.<sup>332</sup> As Hyppolite asserts, “Kant’s problem, ‘how is experience possible?’ is here considered in the most general way”,<sup>333</sup> meaning that “experience” must be seen as the point of departure from which Hegel would overcome Kant’s difficulties. Experience, however, insists Hyppolite, must be evaluated against the benchmark of existential rather than transcendental philosophies or phenomenology.

Both *Genesis and Structure* and *Empiricism and Subjectivity* share a similar vantage point: the dissolving of the subject into more or less objective structures in which the former is nothing more than a relay point between diverging structural relations, therefore foreshadowing the anti-humanistic approach that would characterize Hyppolite and Deleuze’s subsequent work, and the entire structuralist attitude that would become

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<sup>330</sup> Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, 878.

<sup>331</sup> Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 10.

<sup>332</sup> I will address this problem in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

prominent later on in France. For both authors, the search for a quasi-structuralist conception of subjectivity first took the form of a search for the “concrete” from which their projects would draw their critical and ontological bearings, a term which Jean Wahl’s “existential empiricism” had brought to prominence in this context.<sup>334</sup>

In the “Translator Warning” to his French translation of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hyppolite already asserts that the *Phenomenology* “is a conquest of the concrete, which our time, as every time no doubt, seeks to find in philosophy. For Hegel, the concrete is not a feeling or intuition of the concrete opposed to discursive thought: it is the result of an elaboration, of a reflexive reconquest of a content that sensible consciousness, which thinks itself so rich and full, in fact always lets out”.<sup>335</sup> Once again, we can draw from this letter of intent a philosophical program centered on this notion of the “concrete”, within which Deleuze can both insinuate himself and challenge its Hegelian orientation: for him, the search for the concrete begins and ends (in a sense) in sensibility itself, leaving reflection redundant and antithetical to a “pure” expression of the concrete, contrary to Hegel’s position. Already from the very dedication of *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, which reads “To Jean Hyppolite: a sincere and respectful homage”, we notice an anti-Hegelian provocation of a young Deleuze undermining his Hegelian teacher with a thesis admiring the merits of empiricism, a provocation which would continue throughout the book, without Hegelianism itself ever being explicitly targeted as it would be in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*.

Deleuze avoids a direct critique of conceptual understanding via a distinction between concept and experience, or a transcendental use of concepts for experience, as such a strategy would mean burying the “concrete richness of the sensible” in a conceptual or

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<sup>334</sup> Hyppolite praises Wahl’s work on Hegel, which allowed him to “discover with astonishment the concrete genesis of this philosophy, the ‘path of the soul’, traversed by Hegel before even explicitly addressing philosophical problems” (Jean Hyppolite, “Avertissement du traducteur,” in G.W.F. Hegel, *Phénoménologie de l’Esprit*, trans. Jean Hyppolite (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1941), t. I, p. VI).

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, VII.

experiential “abstract first principle”.<sup>336</sup> Instead, he establishes Hume as a philosopher who traces contingent conceptual tools from within experience as its moving horizon, without establishing a monumental philosophical system such as the Kantian synthetic *a priori* or the Hegelian Absolute, and whose intentions are to abolish such pillars in favor of a concrete, yet obscured, being.<sup>337</sup> Later on, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze would argue that Hume’s empiricism is “by no means a reaction against concepts, nor a simple appeal to lived experience. On the contrary, it undertakes the most insane creation of concepts ever seen or heard”,<sup>338</sup> befitting of the post-Hegelian empiricism supported by a “problematic” ontology which Deleuze reconstructs starting from Hume’s philosophy.<sup>339</sup>

For Hyppolite and Deleuze, Wahl’s notion of the “concrete” would serve as a catalyst for their Hegelian and anti-Hegelian efforts, respectively: for Hyppolite, the concrete was a reaction against the alleged abstractions of neo-Kantian philosophers such as Bergson and Brunschvicg, for which Wahl’s *Pluralist Philosophies of England and America* was a revelation and a dominant force in Hyppolite’s *Genesis and Structure*; for Deleuze, Wahl’s 1920 book, which hailed William James and Bertrand Russell’s philosophies as empiricist reactions against English neo-Hegelianism, would function as a principal critical framework from which he would draw out his motto “relations are external to their terms”, which would become a leitmotif of *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (and in subsequent texts as well),

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<sup>336</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature,” in D 54.

<sup>337</sup> For example, Deleuze’s insistence that “the only content that we can give to [Ideas] is that of mediation and transcendence” (ES 85), suggests that while Ideas are “sensible”, they also point to something beyond them that would also “make sense” or mediate them.

<sup>338</sup> DR xx.

<sup>339</sup> As Baugh argues, Deleuze’s empiricism is “meant to meet the challenge of Hegel’s critique of empiricism” and is “above all” post-Hegelian, rather than strictly post-Kantian as many commentators assert (for example, Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, 214-215), since the Hegelian challenge to empiricism (sensible particularity as a moment absorbed into the self-articulation of the concept) is greater than the Kantian one (the sensible as simply accidental). See Bruce Baugh, “Transcendental empiricism: Deleuze’s response to Hegel,” *Man and World* 25, no. 2 (1992): 145; Bruch Baugh, *French Hegel*, 150.

and which was originally coined by Russell and revived by Wahl.<sup>340</sup> As we will see, the externality of relations is evoked by Deleuze in order to reach beyond the empirical, rational and dialectical concrete, and into the problematic.

Wahl's project was to establish an empiricist pluralism that would complement his conception of realism, itself opposed to Hegel's idealist monism in which a totality mediates all relations and therefore renders it the simple non-relational unfolding of the Absolute. If such pluralism insisted on the externality of relations, it was because this made possible Wahl's realist position, according to which the reality of the object of knowledge is freed from any relation to a subject of knowledge:

If we would reach such a theory of knowledge as does not falsify all we know, then we must admit the possibility of knowing certain parts of reality without knowing the whole of it; and if we allow that such knowledge is possible, we must admit likewise that there are parts of reality independent of one another ... The growth of knowledge is "additive". That this growth may be possible, there must be multiplicity and contingency, independence of terms as regards the relations into which they enter.<sup>341</sup>

According to Russell, that relations are external to their terms suggests that subjects simply enter into relations which are independently determined, but which are nevertheless immediately known to these subjects:

The knowledge of a thing is a direct relation between the mind and the thing: there is no corresponding modification in the mind, only a relation; in other words, to know is not to have an idea of what is known. Also, to know does not imply any community of nature between the mind and what it knows.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Deleuze would follow Wahl in an attempt to achieve a concrete notion of reality through empiricism whose opposition is the Hegelian concrete, described as the "one absolute whole". In *Difference and Repetition*, he acknowledges Wahl's contribution to his own anti-Hegelian problematic thought: "All Jean Wahl's work is a profound meditation on difference: on the possibilities within empiricism for expressing its poetic, free and wild nature; on the irreducibility of difference to the simple negative; on the non-Hegelian relations between affirmation and negation" (DR 311).

<sup>341</sup> Jean Wahl, *The Pluralist Philosophies of England and America*, trans. Fred Rothwell (London: The Open Court Company, 1925), 106.

<sup>342</sup> Bertrand Russell, "Le réalisme analytique," *Bulletin de la Société de Philosophie* 23 (March 1911): 5.

These formulations would become particularly valuable for Deleuze's reconstruction of empiricism as the function of a problematic ontology: that knowledge does not imply a corresponding idea means that "what is known ... must subsist, while what subsists can very well not to be known",<sup>343</sup> and a change in relations can occur without a change in their terms, rendering the two instances of "problem" and "solution" necessary for the empirical thesis of the externality of relations: relations are problematic to the extent that they do not depend on a thinking subject existing prior to them, but rather compel him to go beyond what he already knows, therefore problematizing all knowledge to the extent that the latter is supposedly derived from the senses, according to the traditional empirical thesis.

In addition to his theory of relations, it was Wahl's focus on existence that had allowed him to account for a conception of transcendence which rejects the otherworldly and emphasizes an actual and a concrete emptied from "the determinations that the intelligence has woven and coiled together",<sup>344</sup> and which Deleuze would embrace at this early stage of his anti-Hegelianism. Transcendence would become internal to empiricism to the extent that the latter is "defined by its affirmation of the nondeducibility of being",<sup>345</sup> or "the irreducibility of being in relation to knowledge".<sup>346</sup>

Wahl's critique of Hegel is explicitly articulated in relation to *The Phenomenology of Spirit's* inaugural move, whereby "Hegel tells us that what passes for the particular and the concrete is in reality the most abstract and the most general; what the empiricists and the realists attribute the greatest richness to is in reality the poorest thing in the world".<sup>347</sup> This can be seen as the implicit critical starting point of *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, and perhaps one of the central points of this entire endeavour – to refute Hegel's move in relation to the

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Jean Wahl, "Preface to *Towards the Concrete*," in *Transcendence and the Concrete: Selected Writings*, eds. Alan D. Schrift and Ian Alexander Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 35.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 34.



empirical given by showing that the transcendental critique of empiricism simply misses the problem itself, in order to establish new modes of action and thought through empiricism. This in turn is to open up the possibility for a new ontology, a new study of being that discovers the fullness of the sensible in relation to conceptual thought, rather than its emptiness, thus rejecting the speculative identity (and ultimately, the reduction) of thought and being. According to Wahl, Hegel denounces empiricism's notion of the concrete as a mere abstraction or fiction, arguing that the immediacy of the this-here-now of sense-certainty, while appearing as "the richest kind of knowledge",<sup>348</sup> can only truly be designated as a moment in the unfolding of the concept and is therefore destined to collapse.<sup>349</sup> However, by doing so, says Wahl, he subordinates this sensible particularity to the general abstract concept, an argument that Deleuze would pursue in *Difference and Repetition*.<sup>350</sup>

In *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, the notions of the immediate and the concrete are closely tied to the conception of empiricism which Wahl establishes in *Towards the Concrete, Human Existence and Transcendence*, and later on in *The Philosopher's Way*, a "call to arms", directed at his students (among whom was Deleuze), to bring about a philosophical revolution, with empiricism being a possible prospect for such a revolution:

One of the characteristic features of the philosophy of the future will probably be its insistence on the concrete, conceived as a totality in the sense in which Hegel conceived it, but, in opposition to Hegel, as an empirical totality. Thus, it will be opposed both to the rationalists and the empiricists; for the latter insist rather on the particular, and the former on the universal.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 58.

<sup>349</sup> Wahl, "Preface to *Towards the Concrete*," 36. As Hyppolite affirms, "from its beginning, naïve consciousness aims at the entire content of knowledge in all its richness. But it fails to reach it. It must experience its own negativity, which alone allows content to develop in successive affirmations, in particular positions, interconnected by the movement of negation" (Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 15).

<sup>350</sup> DR 52.

<sup>351</sup> Jean Wahl, *The Philosopher's Way* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 154.

The term “concrete” which emerges from this call does not refer to a “synthesis supervening upon separate elements”,<sup>352</sup> but evokes a more radical philosophical transformation that includes a return to a pre-Hegelian immediacy that would “destroy all contradictions”.<sup>353</sup>

Against Hegel’s speculative identity of thought and being, Wahl speaks of two kinds of empiricisms, first and second degree, the first being a naïve empiricism that “takes being as a given”,<sup>354</sup> and is therefore susceptible to Hegel’s critique, the second being one that is motivated by the very question of being, and is therefore “problematic”, posing itself as an ontological problem, as a kind of empirical countermeasure to the Absolute. Following Wahl, Deleuze would argue that Hume is an empiricist of the second degree, designating his own empiricism as problematic, or as a “meta-empirical empiricism” starting from the empirical given.<sup>355</sup> As Wahl stresses, such an empiricism must show how “an irreducible multiplicity underlies [Hegelian] unity, and radical empiricism, which at first appears as the affirmation of identity between thought and being, also appears as the affirmation of an essential multiplicity”, and that any totality à la Hegel that emerges from a “problematic” empiricism must be “an altogether rudimentary one”,<sup>356</sup> a secondary, subjective and fabricated totality, “in which no element is absolutely transcendent to any other”.<sup>357</sup>

We can achieve a competitive notion of the concrete in empiricism only by first problematizing the empirical given itself, which is why Deleuze would distinguish Hume from any definitions of empiricism as naïve, as a theory “according to which knowledge not only begins with experience but is derived from it”.<sup>358</sup> Indeed, this definition of empiricism

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>354</sup> Jean Wahl, “Preface to *Towards the Concrete*,” in *Transcendence and the Concrete: Selected Writings*, eds. Alan D. Schrift and Ian Alexander Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 38.

<sup>355</sup> Deleuze seems to follow Wahl closely on this point, with Wahl arguing that “In Hume ... we discover simultaneously the empiricism of the first degree and the empiricism of the second degree. Hume penetrates his empiricism of the first degree to find that of the second degree” (ibid. 39).

<sup>356</sup> Wahl, *The Pluralist Philosophies of England and America*, 138.

<sup>357</sup> Jean Wahl, *Human Existence and Transcendence*, trans. William C. Hackett (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 10.

<sup>358</sup> ES 107.

had prevailed throughout the history of philosophy, and it is one which motivates Kant and Hegel's critique of empiricism, warranting the latter's dismissal of it as a simple theory of sensation whose assumptions are never really put to the test. But according to Deleuze, Hume himself would reject such a definition, as it leaves its principal object – the human, mind, and body – lacking both coherence and organisation. In fact, Deleuze could hurl Hegel's criticism back at him, insofar as Hegel himself attempts to explain the abstract concepts of empiricism with more abstraction. Here one can evoke Deleuze's allusion to Whitehead's assertion that "the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained", which becomes an Empiricist maxim. That is, as opposed to Kantianism or Hegelianism, it is the empirical that must clarify or "test" the conceptual and the abstract conditions of all possible experience, and not the other way around.

This is consistent with Deleuze's analysis of Bergson which we have seen in the first chapter, that the notion of the possible embedded in the concept is not prior to experience and the real but is rather its "retrograde movement". What empiricism requires is not an absolute concept or an *a priori* principle but rather "the conditions under which something new is produced",<sup>359</sup> conditions that are thoroughly empirical, but which also allow us to go beyond the given itself as the final word of empiricism. Deleuze would embrace Whitehead's position, which attempts to find an adequate middle ground between an "intellectualist" account of experience which stresses reflection and cognition, and a more standard empiricist account in which the given is identical to sense-data inscribed upon the "clean slate" mind. As Keith Robinson notes, for Whitehead, "there is no perception that is not already thoroughly imbued with associations and connections to an indeterminate and

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<sup>359</sup> D vii.

diffuse field of possibilities”.<sup>360</sup> Empiricism’s task is to move from a preliminary series of physical and mental impressions that occupy the mind and account for man’s most fundamental natural animation<sup>361</sup> to a developed and cultivated state of subject and society; that is, it must show how these are constituted “problematically”, as solutions to problems that arise from empiricism itself.

Empiricism, then, is designated as the matrix (or the “problematic”, in Bachelard’s sense) from which inquiry into many problems that naïve empiricism obscures or cannot even render intelligible is made possible. Under such a matrix, the criterion for the reconstruction of the subject must be immanent to experience.<sup>362</sup> Contrary to Hegel’s critique of empiricism in his chapter on Sense-Certainty in the *Phenomenology*, Deleuze argues that sensing and experiencing is not immobilized in Hume, but is rather a dynamic process equal to the dialectic but without its side effects, namely mediation, negativity and separation.<sup>363</sup>

By saying that Hume has pulverized the given, Kant and the post-Kantians simply miss the true problem of empiricism, since for Hume this pulverization is merely a first step that cannot explain by itself how relations between ideas would indeed form once the subject has simply dissolved in the sense-data. Against the Hegelian critique of the ultimate failure of sensible particularity to be grasped immediately in sense-certainty, and its reduction to a moment in the concept (emphasizing that such certainty is not inadequate but rather proves

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<sup>360</sup> Keith Robinson, “The Event and the Occasion: Deleuze, Whitehead, and Creativity,” in *The Lure of Whitehead*, eds. Nicholas Gaskill and A.J. Nocek (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 228n16.

<sup>361</sup> “The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations” (David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1960), 253).

<sup>362</sup> “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. The given is no longer given to a subject; rather, the subject constitutes itself in the given” (ES 87).

<sup>363</sup> “Mediation, Negativity, and Separation” is the title of the second chapter of Wahl’s *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (1929). Wahl’s accentuation of these themes as primary to Hegelianism is felt throughout *Empiricism and Subjectivity* and Deleuze’s anti-Hegelianism in general.

by its own doing to be mediation itself), we notice an ongoing insistence from Deleuze's part that while the empirical itself may not be known as such (as Kant and Hegel claim), it nevertheless must necessarily be thought.

When empiricism for Deleuze is understood as "problematic", subjectivity emerges as its fundamental problem, perhaps because it is the subject who is supposed "makes sense" out of the sensible in Hume, who produces relations. But it is important to note Deleuze is not interested in subjectivity per se but rather in how it can become a philosophical problem within the problematic environment of empiricism, so that one can no longer point to a subject who precedes the given.<sup>364</sup> It is a question of "making a difference" within an undifferentiated mind, one which recalls Hegelian determination, given the fact that Deleuze attempts to designate Hume as an empiricist posing the question of being by way of differentiation, of integrating the dispersal of the given so that it can be thought. If Deleuze, following Wahl, believes that ontological determination in Hegel is achieved solely through negation and mediation by an unhappy consciousness,<sup>365</sup> Hume's empiricism would attempt to dispute these assumptions by traversing the path that Hegel (and Hyppolite) charts, from the constitution of the subject of knowledge from within the ruins of sensual perception, to the formation of culture, society and justice as its structural nodal points.

It is a matter of locating a difference in kind between the problematic instance and its solution which is internal to the given, by demonstrating that the empirical given

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<sup>364</sup> As Jean-Luc Nancy put it, "everything seems to point to the necessity, not of a 'return to the subject' ... but on the contrary, of a move forward toward someone – someone else in its place" (Jean-Luc Nancy, "Introduction," in *Who Comes After The Subject?*, eds. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991), 5). Deleuze's Search for "someone else", something other than thought, which begins with Hume, would culminate with Kant in *Difference and Repetition*, as we will see in the next chapter.

<sup>365</sup> As Wahl emphasizes, in Hegel mediation is the remedy to the contradictions that arise from the subject, and the unhappy consciousness is essentially mediation, through which the individual moves from an "inferior immediate" to a "superior immediate". See Jean Wahl, "Mediation, Negativity, and Separation," in *Hegel and Contemporary Continental Philosophy*, ed. Dennis King Keenan (Albany: Suny Press, 2004), 3.

occupying the mind is grounded in principles that exceed both. In order to push back Hegel's critique of sense-certainty, we must first adhere to the simple fact that "behind or below experience there is nothing but experience itself; experience stands out upon itself, is based upon itself, is self-contained and self-supporting".<sup>366</sup>

For Deleuze, there is an irreducible multiplicity and radical disparity in the empirical given which nothing can transcend, including the mind, and therefore empiricism cannot be discarded as a simple mode of consciousness that takes its object to be the simple impressions received through the senses, as Hegel would have it.<sup>367</sup> A problematic, rather than dialectic, constitution of the subject follows consciousness' immediate qualification in relation to the given, rather than the demise of both the given and the subject in the face of mediation, as it follows a "a beyond by means of which knowledge has a direction [*sens*], toward which it directs itself, from which it draws its nourishment",<sup>368</sup> that is, as it transcends.<sup>369</sup>

One precautionary measure which Deleuze employs in order to prevent the notion of experience from being reduced to sense-certainty is his rejection of any original state of nature that belongs to the subject or the mind itself. Once again, by affirming Wahl's aphorism that "it is not a question of origin that we shall ask ourselves [with respect to the

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<sup>366</sup> Wahl, *The Pluralist Philosophies of England and America*, 138.

<sup>367</sup> For example, Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 58-59.

<sup>368</sup> Wahl, *Transcendence and the Concrete*, 40.

<sup>369</sup> Here Deleuze, following Wahl, also draws from Whitehead's concept of "eternal objects", which are also described as "platonic forms" (Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 44), "universals" (ibid., 48) and "Ideas" (ibid., 52). Such objects, while they must be abstracted from any temporal circumstances, cannot be conceived in themselves and outside the actual empirical constructs in which they invest. Thus, an eternal object, qua Platonic form, does not resemble such a form at all but rather explains how the latter becomes "problematic" insofar as it determines and expresses how "the world of actual entities enters into the constitution of each one of its members" (ibid., 148). For Russell, "universals" or relations such as diversity and causality are also termed "Platonic ideas", which "we must not suppose ... exist in the same sense as individuals; it is better to say that they subsist", as they "do not depend on us in any way" (Russell, "Le réalisme analytique," 6, 7). See also Wahl, *Towards the Concrete* 42.

subject], we shall simply try to determine ... relations”;<sup>370</sup> Deleuze refutes in advance any possibility of assigning Hume’s empiricism with a classical definition of empiricism as a philosophy concerned with the origins of our ideas and knowledge. If Hume’s empiricism were indeed concerned with such origin, it would soon find the ultimate ground for knowledge in simple sense-impressions, beneath which there is nothing that can be known.<sup>371</sup> Such a position would leave Deleuze with a concept of difference indistinguishable from empirical diversity, rendering it exposed to psychological, transcendental and Hegelian critique.<sup>372</sup> Instead, Deleuze constitutes Hume’s philosophy as an attempt to trace the difference by which the given is given as such, as the very genesis of sensibility, therefore going beyond the touchstone of any empirical thesis preoccupied with the origins of knowledge. This is why it is essential for him to assert from the very beginning that sense-impressions are identical to ideas: “Ideas are given, as given; they are experience”.<sup>373</sup>

Since there is nothing more in ideas than empirical content, Deleuze would be able to establish that both qualities of individual ideas and relations between different ideas never hold together so as to become necessary, and that they merely form “a collection of impressions and images, a set of perceptions, the totality of that which appears”.<sup>374</sup> This is

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<sup>370</sup> Wahl, *The Pluralist Philosophies of England and America*, 136.

<sup>371</sup> Hume does confirm this by saying that “all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv’d from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent” (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 4). But Deleuze’s intent here is to refute any positivist interpretation of Hume, which would be focused on the origin of the mind rather than its qualification through affection, and which would be preoccupied with disqualifying ideas that cannot be traced back to their respective impressions. Deleuze’s Hume, on the contrary, emphasizes that ideas are rather derived from impressions of sensation.

<sup>372</sup> According to Deleuze, this position belongs to a “rationalist” tradition that seeks to ground relations in primordial principles, therefore showing that such relations are internal to their terms, but it can certainly pertain to idealist traditions that were predominant at the time, making Deleuze’s choice to explore Hume not only a reaction against the phenomenological priority of the subject, as Foucault argues, but also against these various modes of idealism. See ES 99 and Michel Foucault, “Structuralism and Post-structuralism,” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol. 2*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), 438: “[Deleuze] was interested in empiricism, in Hume, and again in the question: Is the theory of the subject we have in phenomenology a satisfactory one?”

<sup>373</sup> ES 22.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 87

why Deleuze adheres to the dual strategy of atomism (as the disparate, the primordially given which cannot be totalized) and associationism (that which provisionally and habitually constitutes the subject) as the principles of a science of humanity, since it can clearly demonstrate that what Hegel argues to be organic and intrinsic relations between ideas are in fact contingently applied and can therefore become undone.<sup>375</sup> Such a science would follow the problematic origin of the subject, proving that what he himself perceives to be internal and necessary relations are the product of chance encounters between the mind and the given and the following contingent contraction of ideas into external relations, keeping a strict separation between the two realms of ideas and relations, both being two autonomous kingdoms whose independence is unconditional.<sup>376</sup> It is a strategy that follows Wahl's closely: on the one hand, relations are external, and on the other hand, the immediate and the concrete that empiricism encounters cannot be atomic, since "to reduce things to atoms, to elements ... is inevitably to give an inadequate idea".<sup>377</sup>

This recognition of a problematic register in empiricism is highly evident throughout *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, in questions such as: how does the mind become human nature? how does the collection become a system? how must the mind function in order to fabricate a stable entity capable of anticipating, believing and inventing? These are questions whose purpose is to establish Hume's psychology as a system of both dynamism and structure, difference and identity. These could provide a satisfactory account for the active constitution of the subject from within the given, a given into which it had dispersed, without recourse

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<sup>375</sup> Judith Butler has captured Hegel's position on the notion of relations succinctly: "The Hegelian subject only knows itself to the extent that it (re)discovers its metaphysical place; identity and place are coextensive, for Hegelian autonomy depends upon the doctrine of internal relations" (Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, 8). I will return to this point later on.

<sup>376</sup> As Wahl asserts, "we must admit the existence of absolutely simple terms and purely external relations, of terms that contain no relations and of relations that cannot be deduced from the terms", and "relations have an existence superior to that of the terms they connect, that relations are universals ; in radical empiricism, relations are not less real but they are also not less temporary, less contingent or less particular than facts" (Wahl, *The Pluralist Philosophies of England and America*, 243-244, 140).

<sup>377</sup> Wahl, *Transcendence and the Concrete*, 37.



to a transcendental ego or a sovereign reason, and more generally for an account of the obscured (problematic) genesis of concepts (the Self, the World and God), which *Difference and Repetition* would later highlight.

But how does the empirical given become “problematic” for Hume? How does Deleuze show that, *pace* Hegel, immediate experience precedes any form of universal and necessary subject who exceeds it but without justifying this exceeding? Deleuze somewhat forsakes the well-known problem of induction recognized with Hume’s philosophy, which he believes to be inappropriate for a philosophy of the mind, as it gives rise to secondary disciplines such as psychology and transcendentalism which contaminate or obscure the empirical problem in its “purity”.<sup>378</sup> Instead, he begins by assuming that any attempt to account for subjective or natural laws is unjustifiable, and therefore a psychology of the mind is not possible, only a psychology of the mind’s affections.<sup>379</sup> Only by following these affections can one account for the actual transformation of the mind into active subjectivity, from the irreducible pluralism of atomism in the mind, which no simple unity (such as personal identity) underlies, to the associations added externally to the mind by the principles of human nature. It is this transformation, from the psychology of affection to the philosophy of the constituted subject, which Deleuze claims that “rationalism has lost”<sup>380</sup> with its ordered *theatrum mentis*.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> “Hume’s merit lies in the singling out of this empirical problem in its pure state and its separation from the transcendental and the psychological” (ES 87). In *What is Grounding?* Deleuze argues that induction is not the real problem that Hume confronts: “Hume says: I do not dispute the fact [that we make inductions], I am not skeptical of that. It must be said that the sun will rise tomorrow. He is convinced of it. But his problem is where this reason comes from. It is the problem of the ground of induction” (WG 26). I will return to this point shortly.

<sup>379</sup> ES 22.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>381</sup> Here Deleuze is most likely evoking Wahl’s account of the history of the “immediate”, in which he lingers on its rationalistic stage where “what is first, what is immediate, is the perfect. We know we are imperfect because we have in us, prior to all our experiences, the idea of the perfect. In this sense rationalism replaces the sensible immediate by a rational immediate”. Deleuze attempts to overturn this with Hume’s empiricism, affirming Wahl’s position according to which “the

Hume believes that the mind is inaccessible, with no amount of reflection ever granting us access to its processes, and it therefore cannot be the site of true critique. A critique that attempts to reflect on the mind is merely a false psychology that is “incapable of grasping without contradiction the constitutive element of human reality”.<sup>382</sup> By evoking a theory of representation, rationalism became enclosed in its palace of ideas, dispensing with the sensible as the indifferent occasion for their actualization, and therefore losing the essential difference between thought and its other in favor of identity.<sup>383</sup> We are “slaves to our origin”, blind to the processes of the mind, and, in this respect, it remains “problematic” for us, a problem without a solution but one which becomes the conceptual horizon for all possible solutions. The given is not a simple substrate, or a ground from which the subject would arise, nor does it proceed from a transcendental subject, but rather it is something which is reconstructed according to observable passional and social circumstances through which the mind is affected and developed. The mind turns to the given as its being, its point of directionality and, as Wahl stresses, its “nourishment”.

As Deleuze emphasizes throughout, the collection of ideas in flux is not only the mind itself in general but it is also the imagination, and there exists no distinction between the mind, ideas and the imagination, insisting that, like the mind, “nothing is done by the imagination; everything is done in the imagination”.<sup>384</sup> However, Hume’s actual account of the imagination strongly suggests otherwise: while affirming that the mind is indeed a

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immediate has meaning only by virtue of its opposition to the mediate”. See Wahl, *The Philosopher’s Way* 194, 199-200.

<sup>382</sup> ES 29.

<sup>383</sup> As Wahl summarizes the issue, “‘Orthodox’ philosophy introduces us into a world of solitary substances, without communication, at the same time as it brings us to the erroneous theory of representative images. The two schemas: subject-predicate, particular-universal, these two kinds of artificial oppositions have mingled one with the other: both offer us dichotomies of experience which are not in conformity with its real articulations; and mingled, they produce this strange result, infinitely remote from experience, which is the modern philosophy of Descartes to Kant and Hegel” (Jean Wahl, “La philosophie spéculative de Whitehead,” *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Étranger* 111 (January and June 1931): 348.

<sup>384</sup> ES 23.

collection of ideas, he nonetheless argues that the imagination is an active faculty responsible for establishing memory and the understanding, for creating complex ideas and associating them.<sup>385</sup> Furthermore, he makes an explicit distinction between imagination and the mind, the latter contains ideas as perceptions and the former anticipates certain impressions.<sup>386</sup>

This can be squared by understanding why Deleuze chooses to begin with the imagination as he does in the first chapter: it is because the imagination allows one to introspect on experience freed from any philosophical presuppositions and bias concerning its nature. This is why Deleuze regards Hume's method as "experimental", as it forces us to become aware of experience without determining anything specific about it, without assigning it with a static concept or an abstract first principle that would "stifle life".<sup>387</sup> Hume's philosophy is strictly a philosophy of the imagination, without reason, the understanding or belief itself being innate faculties of the mind, and all that belongs to it is both the ability for elements subsumed under it to be connected (as it is indistinguishable from the mind), but also for the contingent principle of human nature to perform a connection within it (as Hume actually argues), revealing underneath the subject a "synthesis without synthetic activity, [a] synthesis that we find already made in experience".<sup>388</sup>

Experience is problematized once it ceases to hold a "univocal and constitutive aspect that we give it",<sup>389</sup> and is given the double role of the collection of discrete perceptions and the conjunction of past objects by the principles. The latter establishes experience itself

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<sup>385</sup> Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 10, 92.

<sup>386</sup> David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 14.

<sup>387</sup> "Empiricism is often defined as a doctrine according to which the intelligible 'comes' from the sensible, everything in the understanding comes from the senses. But that is the standpoint of the history of philosophy ... [which has] the gift of stifling all life in seeking and in positing an abstract first principle" (Deleuze and Parnet, "On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature," in D 54).

<sup>388</sup> Wahl, *Transcendence and the Concrete*, 38.

<sup>389</sup> ES 107-108.

as a principle,<sup>390</sup> and neither role can allocate experience with the dynamism that thought itself gives it. Atomism, as a theory of the sensible, cannot explain thought but only deliver its object, the mind, as an insignificant origin, therefore freeing it from the need to represent things and subordinating it to a principle of difference: “the constitutive principle giving a status to experience, is not that ‘every idea derives from an impression’ ... but rather that ‘everything separable is distinguishable and everything distinguishable is different’”.<sup>391</sup> Since ideas are repeatedly derived or copied from transitory impressions, any idea can relate to any other, and it is within this “space” between ideas, between thinking two separate ideas, that thought can transcend the given and encounter its “outside”.

Deleuze demonstrates that relations between ideas are neither internal in a single idea nor within two of them taken together because of the difference between the instances, so that such relations can change without affecting the terms, whether they are simple ideas or complex ones. By replacing absolute and internal notions with functional, correlative and external ones, the theory of external relations is established as fundamentally problematic: it forces the atom (difference) to move from its immediate place and sense into a relation with others, into irregular, indeed imaginary associations, where above all “the terms distinguished each retain their respective positivity, instead of being defined by opposition, one to another”.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Ibid 67, 108. As Hume puts it, “Experience is a principle, which instructs me in the several conjunctions of objects for the past. Habit is another principle, which determines me to expect the same for the future; and both of them conspiring to operate upon the imagination, make me form certain ideas in a more intense and lively manner, than others, which are not attended with the same advantages” (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 265).

<sup>391</sup> ES 87.

<sup>392</sup> EPS 60.

## Existential and problematic empiricism: the delirium of the mind

If Deleuze does indeed follow Wahl by insisting that “we must begin with *this* experience because it is *the* experience, it does not presuppose anything else and nothing else precedes it”,<sup>393</sup> he will also follow Wahl’s assertion that the given must be transcended, towards a reality that is “not immanent to the idea”.<sup>394</sup> This would realize a “problematic” constitution of the subject, a constitution whose criterion remains immanent to the empirical given while the subject itself surpasses it.

For Deleuze, but also for Wahl, a concrete notion of transcendence was a relief from the “Hegelian malady” to which Wahl had largely contributed with his *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*, a text that had set the tone for many French thinkers who became invested in the notion of unbridgeable differences within a reality divided against itself and moving from opposition to contradiction, with no possibility of reconciliation.<sup>395</sup> Wahl’s interpretation had shifted the unhappy consciousness from being a historical determination of spirit to the very motor of the dialectic itself, reflecting Hegel’s assertion that “the Absolute is subject” in the individual’s own experience of being divided against himself, oscillating between being and nothingness, self and other, until revealing the essence of this Absolute.

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<sup>393</sup> ES 88.

<sup>394</sup> Jean Wahl, “Notes sur l’idée de l’être,” *Recherches Philosophiques* 4 (1934-1935): 63.

<sup>395</sup> The desire for an “absolute” Hegelian concrete was expressed, for example, by Sartre: “We cried out for a philosophy which would account for everything, and we did not perceive that it existed already and that it was precisely this philosophy which provoked in us this demand. At that time one book enjoyed a great success among us – Jean Wahl’s *Towards the Concrete*. Yet we were disappointed by this ‘towards’. The total concrete was what we wanted to leave behind us; the absolute concrete was what we wanted to achieve” (Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1963), 19). Here Sartre implicitly points out the difference between a Hegelian ontology, which, in its impatience to bring about the absolute concrete, reduces being to knowledge, and a problematic ontology which insists on being’s irreducibility in relation to any knowable objects, and therefore only takes part in “a vast movement *towards* the concrete” (Wahl, *Transcendence and the Concrete*, 48).

If transcendence could be seen as a way out of a Hegelian cul de sac, it is because it can replace the dialectic as the genetic element of subjectivity, while rejecting the conflicts and dualisms that a dialectic human progression gives rise to, such as the recognition of an inevitable conflict between sensual impulse and rational burden, between the self and the other, religion and state, etc. Therefore, in Deleuze's account of Hume, subjectivity must prove itself to be not simply subjective but moving outside itself towards its real and unconscious conditions.

It was Wahl's existential interpretation of Hegel that gave rise to a new critique of Hegelianism, with Wahl himself being one of its forerunners, his "existential empiricism" depicting consciousness' effort to transcend itself, to separate and distance itself from itself, and its ultimate failure to coincide with itself. For Wahl, the search for the concrete and the immediate must entail an act of transcendence, of consciousness going outside of itself in a dialectic towards a limit that destroys this dialectic process in the face of the experience of ecstasy. This act is as if the dialectic itself invites us to transcend it after having rejected a discursive strategy (as in Hegel) in favor of a unique vision as the ultimate goal of the philosopher,<sup>396</sup> through which he can grasp the true nature of the real as "an irrational and unthinkable unity".<sup>397</sup>

In his famous lecture *Human Existence and Transcendence*, Wahl takes up the attempt to "secularize" the notions of transcendence and belief, lifting them from their theological bearings in order to elucidate the human condition. Wahl's "problematization", by way of an existential inquiry, begins with the immanent "presence of perception ... below [consciousness]" and transcends to a point "situated beyond consciousness", in which

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<sup>396</sup> "We could imagine an existential dialectic that would go from presence to dialectic, and from dialectic to ecstasy through the play of antitheses that destroy each other in order to cede their place to this ecstasy" (Wahl, *Human Existence and Transcendence*, 5).

<sup>397</sup> Jean Wahl, *Vers Le Concret: Études d'histoire de la philosophie contemporaine* (Paris: Vrin 1932), 238, quoted in Baugh, *French Hegel*, 36.

consciousness becomes aware of this very tension between immanence and transcendence and the dialectic itself points to a “distance, rupture, estrangement” within thought, rather to a resolution.<sup>398</sup> Consciousness therefore takes place strictly “between” these two moments of pure immanence in its self-relation and a pure transcendence to a relation with an unassimilated other, and it is at this point that it encounters the “problematic” ideas of being, of the absolute and transcendence, carrying us “to something that is beyond ideas, or rather, below them”.<sup>399</sup> Wahl insists that only such “felt absolutes” of subjectivity, i.e. the subjective experience and feeling of detachment from the absolute at the heart of this absolute, can give rise to a theory of contingency in empiricism that will prevent it from falling prey to Idealism, as the reality of the irrational concrete cannot be rationally scrutinized.<sup>400</sup>

In this respect, Deleuze indeed follows Wahl in an attempt to establish transcendence as the movement outside the self that is its foundation, but without reaching Wahl’s conclusion that such a transcendence towards subjectivity culminates in failure and an “unhappy consciousness”. According to Deleuze, “[Hume] established the concept of *belief* and put it in the place of knowledge. He laicized belief, turning knowledge into a legitimate belief”.<sup>401</sup> Throughout *Empiricism and Subjectivity* Deleuze attempts to demonstrate how this very act of transcendence, of affirming more than we know in going beyond the given, originates the subject of knowledge, knowledge now being a degree of belief, and belief being placed at the foundation of any system of knowledge as its ultimate problem. Here, the Humean empirical problematic replaces the existential drama, so that, while the subject does indeed have a “gulf to cross between it and reality that will never be crossed”,<sup>402</sup> this

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<sup>398</sup> Wahl, *Human Existence and Transcendence*, 16.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> “The absolute is not the totality (in any case, not the totality that would be an all-encompassing aggregation). It is intensity or density. For me it is a matter of a felt absolute, and which can be felt in every little thing” (ibid., 7).

<sup>401</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Preface to the English-Language Edition,” in ES ix.

<sup>402</sup> Wahl, *Human Existence and Transcendence*, 16.

“existential” formulation acquires an “empiricist” implication, so that “reality” designates the so-called empirical reality that is kept at arm’s length from the subject.

While remaining faithful to Wahl, Deleuze believes that if such “realm of nonconsciousness” which Wahl speaks of does exist in Hume (as Wahl strongly suggests), it must be articulated in Humean terms and affirm Hume’s essential problems. In turn, if consciousness is indeed founded in transcendence, it is without evoking the dynamics of loss and rediscovery, coming to its own realizations and conclusions regarding the human condition.<sup>403</sup> Wahl’s influence on Deleuze’s study is clearly felt when Deleuze argues that in Hume the fact of knowledge “is transcendence or going beyond. I affirm more than I know; my judgement goes beyond the idea. In other words, *I am a subject*”.<sup>404</sup> As mentioned, according to Deleuze, for Hume the mind is not subjected, it has no nature and is merely a collection of atomic perceptions, and therefore it must become a subject by going beyond the given occupying the mind. Only in transcendence does subjectivity find the “absolutely different”, which it must not “as it does in thinking like Hegel’s, assimilate ... or even be assimilated to it”.<sup>405</sup>

There is something radically different that the mind encounters in transcendence and which operates on it externally so that “ideas are connected in the mind – not by the mind”.<sup>406</sup> By associating transcendence with existentialism Wahl’s “empiricism” remains

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<sup>403</sup> Wahl insists that “if we want to get back to paradise lost, we must lose ourselves in paradise regained; this is a condition for finding it. Consciousness occurs between this loss and rediscovery: consciousness is necessarily unhappy” (ibid).

<sup>404</sup> ES 28. Joe Hughes goes as far as to argue that the concept of repetition as a “form of transcendence by virtue of the movement through which the past is affirmed in a new present”, that would dominate both *Empiricism and Subjectivity* and *Difference and Repetition*, is “a formative idea” that Deleuze borrows from Wahl without citing Wahl’s text (Joe Hughes, “Ground, Transcendence and Method in Deleuze’s Fichte”, in: *At the Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian Philosophy*, ed. by Craig Lundy and Daniela Voss [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015], 157). Wahl’s insistence of returning transcendence to immanence, according to Hughes, involves affirming the temporality of transcendence, rather than its reality, which makes possible a synthesis of the present and the past in light of the future, and hence the production of knowledge.

<sup>405</sup> Wahl, *Human Existence and Transcendence*, 31.

<sup>406</sup> ES 24.



fundamentally close to Hegel, while Deleuze's account attempts to defuse the possibility of any such connection by establishing Hume's empiricism as a philosophy of the imagination, hence Deleuze's identification of the mind with the imagination: the latter is a *fanciful* collection of ideas, and is therefore designated a faculty of transcendence. It is the imagination which goes beyond what the mind gives itself and brings it to transcend itself, and it does this by adhering to the principles of human nature, such a principle being "a quality which unifies ideas, not a quality of ideas themselves".<sup>407</sup> The principles by which associations between ideas occur within the imagination, those of contiguity, resemblance and causality, designate these ideas as "problematic" with respect to Hegel's critique: as Deleuze demonstrates for example in chapter four ("God and the World"), any attempt to establish empiricism as a simple thesis according to which the intelligible is derived from the sensible, and, more specifically, to reduce ideas to a corresponding impression, runs aground.

Being merely a "fancy",<sup>408</sup> an expression of the imagination in its initial state only has the capacity to produce ideas or images, to imagine with no organization or coherence, and therefore it lacks "a factor, an agent, or a determining determination".<sup>409</sup> The imagination/mind is irrational, pure delirium, but it must also be receptive to principles that would be directly applied to it and modify the ideas that occupy it. Being radically different from ideas, the principles of human nature naturalize the mind, and reason itself is the natural (rather than human) embodiment and utilization of the latter in the former, therefore rendering Hume's project, a science of man, possible: on the one hand, we cannot designate an empty vessel named "subject" prior to its "activation" by nature itself, but on the other hand we cannot study nature other than via the affects it leaves on the mind. Reason is indeed external, and there is an externality between relations (of association) and terms (ideas), but

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

<sup>408</sup> "Tis plain, that in the course of our thinking, and in the constant revolution of our ideas, our imagination runs easily from one idea to any other that resembles it, and that this quality alone is to the fancy a sufficient bond and association." (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 11).

<sup>409</sup> ES 23.

this is not an extreme externality which would neglect bodily sensations as the possible power for thought and passion.

While the mind in itself has no nature to examine (other than imagination), it is affected (along with the rest of the body) and organized by certain principles that we can follow and would allow us to move beyond simple ideas/impressions, which themselves have no discernible origin, as, according to Hume, they simply “arise in the soul originally, from unknown causes”.<sup>410</sup> Therefore, we can only speak of knowledge in terms of belief, that is in terms of the effects that belief produces in the mind and the imagination: the movement from the abyssal chaos of the fancy to the structured and reasoned mind is registered simply as an “easy transition” from one idea to another by way of association in the imagination. Two ideas can be associated with each other through temporal or spatial proximity and the later experience of one would introduce the other in the imagination, or through a simple resemblance to one another, or more importantly through a causality between them – “causality is *felt*. It is a perception of the mind and not a conclusion of the understanding”.<sup>411</sup>

Deleuze insists that such effects of the principles are internal to the empiricist thesis itself, as an “impression of reflection” that laicizes and subjectivizes transcendence, perhaps as Wahl himself never actually did. We are formed as believing subjects merely by passive contemplations upon the given and by the principles of human nature which “force” us, perhaps unwillingly, to reflect, associate and infer.<sup>412</sup> We never truly go “beyond” the given since transcendence is only “an empirical fact”<sup>413</sup> that pertains to the structural organization of ideas in the mind, rather to a veritable encounter with being. However, by conjuring up this new kind of impression, the theory of external relations evokes a theory of the

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<sup>410</sup> Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 668.

<sup>411</sup> ES 26. See also Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 58.

<sup>412</sup> This argument is key to Deleuze’s presentation of Hume in *Difference and Repetition*, which renders experience itself a principle. I will return to this later.

<sup>413</sup> ES 111.

problematic, of ideal liaisons between impressions/ideas, bringing forward “a world of exteriority, a world where thought itself is in a fundamental relation to the Outside, a world where terms exist like veritable atoms, and relations like veritable external bridges”.<sup>414</sup>

Even when we make this “leap” from the unqualified mind to the qualified subject, the problem that subjectivity introduces subsists, since to transcend the given from the given itself is to find a difference internal to it, a “being of the sensible” that distinguishes “sensation” from “reflection”, the former designating the origin of the mind in the given, the latter its qualification in what can never be given in experience, with no possibility of reconciling the two.<sup>415</sup> Transcendence as the “fact” of the mind is precisely what makes knowledge itself “problematic” – by becoming “subjects of belief”, by inferring, by making unrestrained claims about reality based upon associations within the imagination, we exceed the boundaries of experience and sensation and are in danger of dissipating back into chaos.<sup>416</sup>

As mentioned in previous chapters, *What is Grounding?* raises this question inaugurated by Hume, that of the ground for the validity of knowledge – by what right do we make an inference, a claim for knowledge? Here Deleuze already suggests that Hume’s search for such a ground and his subsequent appeasement with subjective principles hides a more profound effort to establish a pre-individual field of relations, or a problematic ontology:

Hume has brought in something new: the analysis of the structure of subjectivity. As it happens, the word “subject” is very rarely employed by Hume. Perhaps it is not coincidental. Hegel also analyses subjectivity without using the word “subject” ... We must designate it with the essential structure that we have found. When we have defined the subject there is no longer a reason to talk about it. [Hegel] tells us that the subject is self-developing. Hegel

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<sup>414</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Hume,” in DI 163.

<sup>415</sup> ES 31.

<sup>416</sup> Wahl raises the concern that a truly “problematic” notion of transcendence, one which would reject a dialectic which leads to a vision of totality of the Hegelian variation, would place us before an abyss. See Wahl, *Human Existence and Transcendence*, 4-5.

analyses it dialectically. To self-develop is to self-transform, et cetera. The essence is mediation. ... [In Hume] what grounds knowledge ... can only be a subjective principle .... It is not the object, it is the subject which allows us to find the ground. It is the subject who goes beyond, who evokes the problem of the ground. What grounds knowledge thus cannot be sought on the side of the known object.<sup>417</sup>

Going back to *Genesis and Structure*, it is quite apparent how Hyppolite's unique account of Hegelianism served as a principal focus of critical attention fueling Deleuze's problematization of Hume (and later Kant): as Hyppolite argues, the *Phenomenology* is a study of the experiences of consciousness and its development through doubt, which amounts to "the concrete evolution of a consciousness which progressively learns to doubt what it previously took to be true".<sup>418</sup>

For Hyppolite, the end point of consciousness' development is made possible when it is suggested that consciousness is a "concept of knowledge ... not actually real knowledge",<sup>419</sup> meaning that, while being limited and partial, consciousness is also "properly more than it thinks it is",<sup>420</sup> as it has taken upon itself from the very beginning to be real knowledge. In order to settle this discrepancy between its own subjective certainty that it is indeed more than it thinks it is and this "more" (objective truth), in order to reach a complete overlap of subject and object of knowledge, the former must go beyond itself and transcend itself, transcendence having a negative nature concerning consciousness passing through doubt and despair that would soon be negated on its way to truth. Here Hyppolite plays on similar themes as Wahl does in his existential account of Hegel: "Since it must continually

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<sup>417</sup> WG 24-25. Interestingly, Deleuze would say of the Humean subject that "it is defined by the movement through which it is developed. Subject is that which develops itself. The only content that we can give to the idea of subjectivity is that of mediation and transcendence" (ES 85), a remarkably Hegelian formulation strongly suggesting that what is at issue in his account of the problem of subjectivity in Hume is to distinguish it from Hegel's, as implied in *What is Grounding?*, where a Hegelian self-development of the subject amounts to a dialectic of self-transformation. I will return to this point shortly.

<sup>418</sup> Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 12.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

go beyond itself, [subjective and objective] knowledge is disquieted. And this disquiet, which Hegel describes in existential terms, is unassuaged so long as the end point of the process is not reached”.<sup>421</sup> But while “the movement of transcending ... is typical of consciousness as such”,<sup>422</sup> for Hyppolite here it is not meant to be continuous as it is in Hume’s account, where, lacking an existing identity or a totality, all knowledge remains contingent and problematic, and transcendence itself is nothing more than an empirical fact. For Hegel, “the goal is the point at which knowledge need not go beyond itself, the point at which it discovers itself, and at which concept corresponds to object and object to concept. Hence, the progression toward this goal also has no possible resting place and is not satisfied with stopping prior to the goal”.<sup>423</sup>

In *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Deleuze pursues, although not as fully pronounced as in *Difference and Repetition*, such a problematic field in which the subject constitutes itself and which precedes and traverses any known object with no dialectical appeasement between subject and object. He does this by problematizing Hume’s question through the idea of an illegitimate use of the principles, in the sense that they are used without experience able to justify such usage and without any appeal to existing knowledge. Here we find a useful formulation that foreshadows Deleuze’s approach to Kant as a philosopher preoccupied with the problematic as the horizon for knowledge and specifically for making claims about the world (the horizon as the “sense” of the world), and the dangers of illusions that this horizon entails (since the origin of legitimate and illegitimate belief is identical): The mind, now fixed and naturalized by the principles, soon imposes a unity and purpose on the natural world that does not belong to it:

If it is true that the principles of association determine the mind by imposing on it a nature to discipline its delirium or fictions of the imagination, conversely

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 80, translation from Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 16-17.

the imagination uses these same principles to pass off its fictions and fantasies as real, lending them a surety they would not otherwise have. In this sense, what is proper to fiction is feigning the relations themselves.<sup>424</sup>

Indeed, the mind may give an illegitimate extension to the principles giving rise to illusions, but these may be modified through a “corrective” application of the principles, which limits the production of beliefs to those based upon ideas that past impressions had already spurred. This brings about an elaborate process of calculation in which an existing belief is weighted against an idea that might pose difficulties regarding the former’s legitimacy, since knowledge is now “problematized” as all beliefs, old and new, are equal in terms of their likelihood and validity.

However, as mentioned, Deleuze is not interested in subjectivity per se, its fluctuations of delirium and clarity and its economy of probabilities, but rather in the problems that subjectivity itself produces, as a structure that subtends any particular subject which arises from it. What he is interested in are illegitimate, intricate and highly developed organizations of beliefs that cannot be corrected as they themselves become principles, therefore illustrating the fact that the problematic origin of thought cannot be resolved on thought’s ground, which itself has become delirium. Here Deleuze’s analysis of the ideas of the World and God in Hume comes into play. As is the case with the idea of causality, the ideas of God and the World are occasions in which an illegitimate belief is justified while clearly contradicting the understanding:

Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of [religion’s] veracity: And whoever is moved by Faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Deleuze, “Hume,” in DI 165.

<sup>425</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 131.

Because we can only correct belief by employing probabilities (rather than certainty), there are some beliefs which cannot be amended but whose disposal can never truly be justified, at least according to Deleuze. A belief in God, for example, while being a “false belief”, is also, from the perspective of the imagination and its fanciful use of the principles, a “real miracle”.<sup>426</sup> In the case of the idea of the World in general, Deleuze draws from Hume’s argument concerning the belief in distinct and continuous existence of objects, where the imagination actively confers upon the limited object of perception more than what was already given in experience by affirming a conjunction of an imaginary object (the world) and our perceptions of it, based upon the principle of causality, and whose legitimate exercise is actually limited to a past experience of two objects.<sup>427</sup> This means that the imagination “offers the understanding as a general, elaborate experience, the purely accidental content of an experience that only the senses have registered in chance encounters”.<sup>428</sup> To this extent, the idea of the world is “problematic” since it itself is not an object of our perception or our understanding but rather a fiction of the imagination through which we contingently construct the world as the horizon of all possible objects of perception and understanding.

Here we find a refining of the problematic moment in Hume’s empiricism—of unrestrained conjunctions torn from the senses, and of the multitude of fictions that lie at the base of our ideas (particularly of personal identity, the World and God) resulting from such unlicensed use of subjective principles of human nature—that reaffirms our supposition that Deleuze’s account of Hume is an alternative to the dialectical constitution of the subject, as such illusions and fictions compromise any attempt to construct an objectivity that would validate the non-empirical transcendence of the subject. Deleuze

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<sup>426</sup> ES 76.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-79.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

would describe this empirical move of wild conjunctions as an undermining of being itself as a fully determined, totalizing ontology:

The AND is not even a specific relation or conjunction, it is that which subtends all relations, the path of all relations, which makes relations shoot outside their terms and outside the set of their terms, and outside everything which could be determined as Being, One, or Whole. The AND as extra-being, inter-being.<sup>429</sup>

The logic of AND or external relations not only rejects any philosophical tradition which assumes an independent subject as its ultimate ground for philosophical analysis (Cartesian, rationalistic, Kantian), it also deposes any notion of a final Being which prescribes the fundamental activity of the subject as self-transforming: in Hume, the subject simply follows the movement of ideas, without ever really “transforming” from being a fanciful creature to a reasoned subject, as the problem of subjectivity inheres and subsists throughout its various solutions while being “transcendent” to them. This is what Wahl means when he speaks of Russell’s pluralism as one that not only pushes back Hegel’s monism, but “begins with a refutation of monism”.<sup>430</sup>

No doubt, there is a subtle “Nietzscheism” in Deleuze’s admiration of the empiricism brought to philosophy by Russell and Wahl, a Nietzschean which sees a “levity” in the relationship between thought and being, now that the weight of Being has been lifted, leaving thought free to pursuit external relations. At the same time, this points to an issue that has not yet been fully addressed: the problem of the constitution of the subject cannot be said to be a “Humean” problem in any sense, as Hume acts as a kind of instrument through which Deleuze can put forward his own problematic. This becomes more evident by the clear “Kantianization” of Hume, Kant being not simply Hume’s critic whom Deleuze must surpass, but the touchstone that any philosophy asking to advance beyond sense

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<sup>429</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature,” in D 57.

<sup>430</sup> Wahl, *The Pluralist Philosophies of England and America*, 134.



impressions must confront. As Christian Kerslake notes, Deleuze “discovers” a kind of “prototype of *a priori* synthesis in Hume” in the ideas that qualify the mind, which amounts to an activity of schematism. Thus, one finds in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* a transcendental investigation that is not Hume’s but Deleuze’s, as has already been suggested, so as to prevent Hume’s philosophy from being terminated in naturalism or skepticism, which strike Deleuze as unproductive.<sup>431</sup> This is already acknowledged in *What is Grounding?* when Deleuze claims Hume to be a forerunner for the problem of “right” in philosophy, and that for both Hume and Kant, “the given cannot be the basis by which we go beyond the given”.<sup>432</sup> As will be seen in the next chapter, the transition from Hume to Kant is completed in *Difference and Repetition*, in search of a more fertile ground for an anti-Hegelian empiricism.

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<sup>431</sup> Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, 214. “The idea of subjectivity is from then on the reflection of the affection in the imagination and the general rule itself. The idea is no longer here the object of a thought or the quality of a thing; it is not representational. It is a governing principle, a schema, a rule of construction” (ES 64).

<sup>432</sup> KCP 12.

“Culture is a false experience, but it is also a true experiment”: problems and institutions

Following his construction of the problematic structure that accounts for the transformation of mind (the collection of atoms) to subject (the external effect of the principle of association), and having relieved thought from the problem of Being, Deleuze turns to Hume’s account of how this subject becomes socialized through external cultural forces that this structure generates, perceived as a possible trajectory for this new elevated thought. As mentioned, Deleuze does not believe that knowledge in itself is an empirical concern, reminding us that Hume is first and foremost a moral thinker, sociologist, historian and political philosopher,<sup>433</sup> and that for Hume moral, social and scientific laws are themselves created by natural forces that are determined by his empiricism, such as habit, passion and artifice.

By establishing that the subject of knowledge is in fact a “practical” subject, placing his passions for associations in the service of “concrete” ends, Deleuze’s problematic model of subjectivity can be further matched with Hyppolite’s dialectical model, which exhibits its own practical aspirations (a description of all forms of ethical, juridical and religious experiences), but whose ontology centers around the notion of the subject itself being merely a “puppet” crushed by the weight of Being, as *Logic and Existence* will later emphasize throughout.<sup>434</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, by adhering to Heidegger’s assertion that “language is the abode of being”, Hyppolite dissolves the subject into language where it transcends (sublates) itself, as it is language which reveals the emptiness and generality of

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<sup>433</sup> ES 22.

<sup>434</sup> Stefanos Geroulanos emphasizes that the loss of individuality, of human dignity and social equality implicated in Hyppolite’s analysis, establish man as a “puppet of the Absolute, deprived of any ontological and historical force”, so that human subjectivity “may well be given a role or a positive value”, but one which is “singularly dependent on the organization of logos and being” (Stefanos Geroulanos, “L’ascension et la marionnette : l’homme d’après Jean Hyppolite,” in *Jean Hyppolite, entre structure et existence*, ed. Giuseppe Bianco (Paris: Éditions rue d’Ulm 2013), 102).

sensual experience, while providing it with sense and direction (*sens*) for the subject, who is now a “vector of being” or a “vehicle of logos” through language. But Deleuze is not satisfied with the status of language being the basis upon which a theory of the subject and of human action is developed, as language itself is simply just one more structure which can give rise to illegitimate beliefs, by substituting “observed repetitions with spoken repetitions”.<sup>435</sup> In what seems like an oblique reference to Hyppolite, Deleuze speaks of “the philosopher, having spoken continuously of faculties and occult qualities, ends up believing that these words ‘have a secret meaning, which we might discover by reflection’”,<sup>436</sup> perhaps echoing Wahl’s critique of Hegel, that would reappear in *Difference and Repetition*.

Having established that such phantoms of belief cannot be resolved by theoretical reason, which displays its own delirium, Deleuze believes that the only possible solution to the problematic of the mind is a practical one, and that only a practical solution can give rise to a positive anthropology, rather than a negative one which *Genesis and Structure* advances.<sup>437</sup> To achieve this, Deleuze invests in the two kinds of forces which Hume speaks of in the *Treatise*, the passional and the social, the latter being the indirect means to satisfy the former. For Deleuze, passional and social affections are as much a part of human nature as the understanding and the association of ideas, and in fact, “the real role of the understanding ... is to make the passions sociable and the interests social”.<sup>438</sup> From Deleuze’s materialist standpoint, subjectivity and human nature are positive desire and interest in their process of becoming aware of their physical form and concrete surroundings, and therefore, for him, Hume’s “material” forces can give way to a positive synthesis allowing him to break with the Hegelian demand to establish a self-consciousness.

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<sup>435</sup> ES 70.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

<sup>437</sup> “The only resource and positivity offered to the mind is nature or practice – moral practice and, based on the image of the latter, practice of the understanding” (ibid., 84). See Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 379-380 for Hyppolite’s account of the “the development of culture by means of alienation”.

<sup>438</sup> ES 22.

Judith Butler's position on Hegel's "subject of desire" has demonstrated very well the possibility for a justified critique of Hegel on this issue, of the kind we can also find in Deleuze. By first affirming that in Hegel "desire is established ... as a permanent principle of self-consciousness ... [signifying] the reflexivity of consciousness, the necessity that it become other to itself in order to know itself",<sup>439</sup> Butler emphasizes that desire is constitutive of the structure of mediation that is self-consciousness. While she also rejects the possibility for a pre-existing knowing subject in Hegel, Butler asserts that "the Hegelian subject cannot know itself instantaneously or immediately, but requires mediation to understand its own structure".<sup>440</sup> Therefore, for Hegel knowledge itself is inter-subjective and requires the reflection of the self in an other, while desire is this pursuit of identity in what appears to be different (a "desire-for-reflection"<sup>441</sup>), a pursuit of permanent mediation and the internalization of the outside.<sup>442</sup> For Deleuze, while knowledge is indeed relational, it is not inter-subjective but rather a problematic within which subjects are constituted as such, and while desire motivates knowledge it would not take the form of mediation but rather that of the impersonal.

In *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, the act by which desire and interest are designated as the motor of the subject of knowledge is identical to that which removes the negative from thought. The passionate and social forces which allow Deleuze to designate the principal problem in Hume as sociological and moral rather than psychological are positively determined while parting with any negative determination such as urge and restraint. Deleuze argues that Hume's principles of passions, which frame the subject's responses to feelings such as love, hatred, hope and fear, do not point to any rational ideals or moral values but rather to practical social institutions, and by doing so Hume extends the passionate into the

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<sup>439</sup> Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, 7.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>442</sup> Desire is "satisfied when a relation to something external to consciousness is discovered to be constitutive of the subject itself" (ibid., 8).

social, constituting a subject who not only believes but also invents through social practices aimed to satisfy these passions.

This is a view which Deleuze also establishes in his introduction to *Instincts et institutions: Textes choisis et présentés par G. Deleuze* (1953), a collection of texts edited by Canguilhem and intended for students, and which was published simultaneously to *Empiricism and Subjectivity*: here, the institution is suggested to be the artificial means of satisfying the needs of the organism, in contrast to natural means in which the organism simply extracts something from the external world.<sup>443</sup> Here we can find an echo of a dialectical process by which man is transformed from a primitive natural state to a more refined cultivated subjectivity that reveals nature itself as “rational”, an echo which will haunt *Empiricism and Subjectivity* as well,<sup>444</sup> rendering a disposal of the negative all the more necessary. This is perhaps why Deleuze emphasizes in both texts that the theory of the institution is opposed to theories of law and the contract: “Contrary to theories of law which place the positive outside the social (natural rights), and the social in the negative (contractual limitation), the theory of the institution places the negative outside the social (needs), so as to present society as essentially positive and inventive”.<sup>445</sup>

Hume’s institutions are as such not negatively demarcated in opposition with the subject’s instinctive desires, but it is rather a case of the subject, being affected by both passional and social forces, defining society as the implicit means to fulfill his passions, pointing to a simultaneous affirmation of both. The instinct retains its power in relation to the social, rather than being restricted by it, and both mutually implicate one another through the understanding, which extends the passional into the social and vice versa, thus reflecting the interests that these forces induce in the understanding. That instincts and institutions are

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<sup>443</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Instincts and Institutions,” in DI 19.

<sup>444</sup> “Nature does not reach its ends except by means of culture, and tendency is not satisfied except through the institution. History is in this sense part of human nature. Conversely, nature is encountered at the residue of history” (ES 44).

<sup>445</sup> Deleuze, “Instincts and Institutions,” in DI 19.

affirmed as coexisting means that Deleuze's Hume rejects the notion of a "disinterested contemplation" in the same way that he rejected a "pure reason", indicating instead of a mode of evaluation that is explicitly affirmative and positive: the understanding is invested in a passion which employs the former in order to form an institution, the institution being a mode of evaluation which expresses the process by which an idea is liberated from simple sensation via the understanding, in order to establish a new domain of problems in culture and society.

Lacking a primal ego from which passions follow and whose limitation would become necessary in order to form a theory of law-based justice, passions in Hume are affected by the same principles of subjectivation that affect the mind, and are reflected in the imagination, which extends them beyond their natural limits. A theory of justice for example, is formed by such a sentiment: general rules are created through the affirmation, rather than negation or repressing, of individual and social sympathies, and their integration into an institution, carrying them beyond their natural partiality.<sup>446</sup> But once again, no overarching and totalizing synthesis of these local perspectives of passional investment ever becomes possible, since the institution remains external to them: sympathies are naturally given but they themselves cannot constitute the moral world, or the world of justice, due to them being mutually exclusive.

Here the empirical formulation of the question of the problem is taken up again by Deleuze: of how to justify or to locate the means by which we can proceed from natural interests and desires to an artificial or fabricated totality which is not given in nature, or of how to move from experience to the problem in order to establish the right cases of provisional solutions, without assuming any "community of nature" between experience and problems, or between nature and morality, justice and culture. In Hume's "theory of

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<sup>446</sup> ES 39-40.

practice” the question of the creation of problems is bound up with experimentation, to which I had referred to in previous chapters: Hume provides us with a “box of tools” such as belief, association and the logic of relations, the purpose of which is not the interpretation of the real (which already proved to be utterly problematic for Hume’s brand of empiricism) but rather its experimentation. Deleuze would emphasize this in an interview with Foucault:

A theory is exactly like a box of tools. It has nothing to do with the signifier. It must be useful. It must function. ... a theory does not totalize; it is an instrument for multiplication and it also multiplies itself.<sup>447</sup>

The partialities that make up a society must not be thought of as partial in relation to a totality that holds what these partialities lack, since they prove their own sufficiency. According to Hume’s theory of partial sympathies, man’s pursuit of self-interest becomes tied with his desire to support and invest in his family and immediate circle, so that the familial, rather the individual, comes first,<sup>448</sup> and the restraints of the ego and personal interests through law give way to a positive integration of mutually exclusive sympathies into a system.

For Deleuze, this theory provides a theoretical support to break with a dialectical structure of the social (determined by the self or the other and expressed in oppositions such as freedom vs limitation, individual vs organization, rights vs responsibilities, etc.), and allows him to insert the logic of the AND as the primal apparatus for experimentation and problematization in the social and political sphere: institutions are artifacts that provide solutions to problems that arise from empiricism in its problematic form. This is not only because they deliver the social resolution of a tendency, but, more profoundly, since they

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<sup>447</sup> Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 208.

<sup>448</sup> For Hume, partial sympathies are discriminatory: “so noble an affection, instead of fitting men for large societies, is almost as contrary to them, as the most narrow selfishness” (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 487). Thus, a simple replication of such a behaviour would cause a profound destabilization of society and possessions, requiring the construction of an artificial whole that would allow their integration.

“send us back to a social activity that is constitutive of models of which we are not conscious, and which are not explained either by tendencies or utility, since human utility presupposes tendencies in the first place”.<sup>449</sup> It is because institutions do not resemble the problem which they solve that they are open to experimentation that reimagines the problem by other means. Experimentation means the institutionalization of transcendence, of going beyond the actual, so as to establish more stable relations than those created by the simple habits of the imagination, and to “fill the gap between the principles of the understanding and the new domain where the fancy applies them”, but only to the extent that we do not “transform the powers of culture into real entities”.<sup>450</sup>

In other words, cultural institutions respond to particular circumstances, harness the imagination’s creative and extensive potential in order to experiment with it, and without producing any real entities. This appears to be a more latent motto of *Empiricism and Subjectivity*: “the illusion of the fancy is the reality of culture”, and “culture is a false experience, but it is also a true experiment”,<sup>451</sup> implying that the institution is a problematic object, insofar as it is illegitimate from the perspective of the understanding, while providing maximum unity and extension for the principles of association. Therefore, for rules and institutions, it is a matter of “how to provide [them] with the vividness which [they] lack”,<sup>452</sup> of making social circumstances adequate and immediate to the individual so as to guarantee their effect. These rules and institutions simulate a “neutral” social fact, one which is supposed to replace the contingency of circumstances by rendering these rules “practical” so that their usefulness will be recognized.

Here we recognize Deleuze’s Hume as a kind of proto-Nietzschean thinker of the problem, insofar as for Nietzsche problems are associated with the interests of perspectives.

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<sup>449</sup> Deleuze, “Instincts and Institutions,” in DI 20.

<sup>450</sup> ES 62.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 50.



For Hume, epistemic interests are always subordinated to moral and practical ones, since man's natural condition remains indeterminate and unknown. The only way for him to "finish" his determination in nature is in an "unnatural" way via institutions, therefore the only known human nature is culture, which is a second nature or a "simulacrum" of a nature. If we are to continue this association with Nietzsche, we can say that in Hume the possibility for a positive affirmation of an unknown yet thinkable notion of man and nature becomes possible for Deleuze, an affirmation that would replace the *ressentiment* of reactive laws and restrictions that are created as a result of man's defensive approach against what he perceives to be an ultimately indifferent nature. This is why the institution is only the *oblique* means to satisfy natural instincts, since only such a creative response could render both culture and nature the object of a single affirmation, instead of attempting to overcome what seems to be an irreducible opposition between the two. Thus, Deleuze's approach is that "humans have no instincts, they build institutions", insofar as while nature remains a problem for culture, the former is also the material given of the latter. Again, we find here Deleuze's attempt to distance himself from the empirically given as such, placing it within the context of a more elaborated problem.

## The problem and the problematic from Hume to Kant

Deleuze establishes that in Hume the subject reflects, thinks and subsists to the extent that he goes beyond the empirically given to “problematic” ideas in relation to which he himself does not preexist, and nor do the social, juridical and cultural institutions which are the building blocks of societies, and which receive their full experimental significance insofar as they solve a problem rather than represent things. Thinking in Hume is therefore not the ongoing efforts to account for the truth of a given object, but is recognized solely with questions, problems and ideas to which no appeasing solutions exist.<sup>453</sup> This assertion which emerges from *Empiricism and Subjectivity* and to some extent from *Difference and Repetition* might stand contrary to Hume’s actual position: despite thought’s naturalization, pluralization and pragmatization, Hume still believed that its purpose is indeed truth itself:

Our reason must be considered as a kind of cause, of which *truth* is the natural effect; but such-a-one as by the irruption of other causes, and by the inconstancy of our mental powers, may frequently be prevented. By this means all knowledge degenerates into probability.<sup>454</sup>

In *Difference and Repetition*, this point accounts for Deleuze’s critique of Hume: “What do the empiricists do but invent a new form of possibility: probability or the physical possibility of finding a solution?”<sup>455</sup> At this stage, Deleuze believes that Hume’s empiricism cannot provide an account for the “being of the sensible” as it does not sufficiently explain what it is in the empirical given that stimulates the imagination to form relations, since nothing in his theory of atomism (the flux of disparate impressions) can justify how it services the needs

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<sup>453</sup> This is also true for the mind of Hume himself: As a philosopher, Hume “shows us what things are, or what things should be, on the assumption that the question is good and rigorous” (ibid. 106). Hume’s mind is identified with the principal problems and questions that occupy it, and the vision of nature that this mind provides us with becomes necessary only to the extent that a rigorous problem has been posed. Thus, critique can only take place on this ground, so that “there is no critique of solutions, there are only critiques of problems” (ibid.).

<sup>454</sup> Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 180.

<sup>455</sup> DR 161.

of the imagination. In this regard, *Difference and Repetition* points to the ultimate conclusion that Hume failed to account for the internal difference that renders the “repetition” of atoms necessary, succeeding only in explaining the differences determined solely by associative repetitions. In other words, Hume never asked what exactly the nature of the difference that is concealed behind the impressions whose repetition it brings about is.

According to Hume in the aforementioned quote, thought must protect itself from the external forces that divert it from the truth, since once it loses truth it is reduced to a kind of a “calculus of probabilities” or estimations which presents its own perils, as we have already seen above. That thought can only be “corrected” (rather than carefully grounded) and is under the persistent threat of illusions leads Hume to determine that the function of reason is to estimate estimation itself, that is, the probability of truth in a given proposition. This is why in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze argues that Hume presents a calculus of problems and questions that is inferred from a calculus of propositions, therefore preserving the dogmatic “image of thought” in his own unique style.<sup>456</sup> Hume’s calculus measures concepts according to their probability or their “physical possibility of finding a solution”, and therefore outside of their own conditions of constitution, evaluating the legitimacy of concepts only in relation to a given impression. Since thought never constitutes itself, its truths always remain mere probabilities, but with that Hume still maintains that the value of truth itself as thought’s natural ideal must not be questioned.

But things are more complicated than this: in a sense, Hume was also a precursor to Kant (Kant being credited in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* as being the first philosopher to produce a critical ontology of problems)<sup>457</sup> in that he established an illegitimate use of a faculty which gives rise to illusions internal to thought, and marked a

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<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 168; LS 54.

subterranean philosophical movement from a preoccupation with truth and falsity as the fundamental relation to its external objects to the formation of problems that pertain to the appropriate usage of ideas.<sup>458</sup> With Hume, Deleuze inaugurates his vision that philosophy is not an empirical practice providing us with referential truths about the world, but a critique and a creation of concepts that open up a certain realm of sense in experience, in which claims about the world become possible in the first place.

This was already indicated in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, which accounts for Deleuze's early attempt to constitute an ontology of problems as the motor for a new philosophical system: there is no longer a simple divide between a world with its own ontic spheres that we must learn about on one hand, and a mind that would attempt to map these domains and fill in the voids in its own constitution on the other, but rather a single domain of problems that determine and distribute both the thinking subject and the thought object. Problems are both the subject of processes of individuation and subjectivation and the objects of "sense encounters".<sup>459</sup> In Deleuze's analysis, it was Hume who first centered on that which classical empiricism had overlooked, namely, on the relations which provide the diversity of the sense-data its sense or its being, therefore going beyond the empiricist position which settles for a diversity of the given in which every entity "is what it is regardless of how it stands to other entities" and is "indifferent to all these others".<sup>460</sup> To remain tethered to such a position

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<sup>458</sup> As we will see in the following chapter, in Kant problems or problematic ideas are fictions of reason to the extent that they cannot be said to constitute objects of knowledge, even though they make knowledge possible in a sense. Insofar as they are principles of organization, problems cannot be "authenticated" or verified through denotations, as was the case in Hume and his principles of organization.

<sup>459</sup> Deleuze would refine this position many times over, and particularly in his interpretation of Gilbert Simondon, in which he argues that "individuation emerges like the act of solving a problem" (DR 246) and that "the category of the problematic ... no longer designates a provisional state of our knowledge, an undetermined subjective concept, but a moment of being, the first pre-individual moment. And in Simondon's dialectic, the problematic replaces the negative" (Gilles Deleuze, "On Gilbert Simondon," in DI 88), thus emphasizing that if the category of the problematic indeed receives "tremendous importance" and "an objective sense", it is insofar as it is critically evaluated against the Hegelian negative as its competing ontology.

<sup>460</sup> Levi Bryant, *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 25.

would mean to be exposed to Hegelian critique: as it remains undetermined, the empirical being of the here and now of existence is identical to nothing.

The image that emerges from the analysis in *Difference and Repetition*, however, is not one that is confident with Hume's theory as the substrate upon which Deleuze could organize a fully pronounced empiricist response to Hegel's dialectic, which perhaps partly explains Hume's very limited appearance in the book. Following this interpretation, this is possibly due to Hume's own lack of confidence in his discovery: as Deleuze emphasizes in the final part of *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, the rift between the "naturalistic" production of thought and the speculative criterion of estimation or evaluation leads Hume to a dead end, as he finds it impossible to ground transcendence (the exceeding from the given which constitutes thought). Hume is forced to assume that the principles of human nature mysteriously correspond to the principles of nature in general (the unknown origin of the given). Due to his own critique of estimation he admits to a deep despair which is famously introduced in the final part of the first book of the *Treatise*.<sup>461</sup> While in the *Inquiry* Hume would find a pacifying conception through which his anguish would subside,<sup>462</sup> it seems that

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<sup>461</sup> "The wretched condition, weakness, and disorder of the faculties, I must employ in my enquiries, encrease my apprehensions. And the impossibility of amending or correcting these faculties, reduces me almost to despair ... This sudden view of my danger strikes me with melancholy. ... Nothing is more curiously enquired after by the mind of man, than the causes of every phenomenon ... And how must we be disappointed, when we learn, that this connexion, tie, or energy lies merely in ourselves, and is nothing but that determination of the mind, which is acquired by custom ... Such a discovery not only cuts off all hope of ever attaining satisfaction, but even prevents our very wishes; since it appears, that when we say we desire to know the ultimate and operating principle, as something, which resides in the external object, we either contradict ourselves, or talk without a meaning. .... We have, therefore, no choice left but betwixt a false reason and none at all. For my part, know not what ought to be done in the present case" (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 264, 266-268).

<sup>462</sup> "Here, then, is a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature and the succession of our ideas; and though the powers and forces, by which the former is governed, be wholly unknown to us; yet our thoughts and conceptions have still, we find, gone on in the same train with the other works of nature. [...] As nature has taught us the use of our limbs without giving us the knowledge of the muscles and nerves, by which they are actuated; so has she implanted in us an instinct, which carries forward the thought in a correspondent course to that which she has established among external objects" (Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 54-55).

he would remain imprisoned between a despaired skepticism and an appealing groundless conjecture, and Deleuze will affirm this by arguing that assuming the harmony of the purposiveness of nature with subjective purposiveness is the only way for Hume to speak of an object of thought that is not purely coincidental.<sup>463</sup>

Indeed, while Deleuze can argue that Hume's theory of external relations (or more precisely its Anglo-American maturation) is an appropriate impediment to Hegelianism as it demonstrates how ideas (concepts) come forth through a chance interaction of forces—or, as Deleuze would later put it, through a “throw of the dice” proper to a problematic ontology<sup>464</sup>—he nonetheless confirms that Hume's philosophy remains incomplete insofar as it hinders the unconditional affirmation of such an ontology. This is particularly evident in Hume's expression of anxiety, perhaps akin to that which Wahl describes in the presence of “a transcendence that terrifies and consoles us”, placing us “before an abyss”.<sup>465</sup>

Through Wahl's empiricism, Deleuze begins to articulate this concrete being of the given, which cannot be reduced to conceptual determinations nor to objective knowledge. Hume's theory of external relations provides one possible passage through which Deleuze is able to render such a being rational rather than purely “experiential” as it is in Wahl, but it is not yet the absolutely problematic object, one that is both “absolutely immanent for thought ... and absolutely transcendent to thought”.<sup>466</sup> The well-known transition from Hume to Kant (Kant's response to Hume) should be seen as one that is focused upon accepting and affirming the problematic not as an uncertainty, whether brief or enduring, but as the very object of the Idea as “an indispensable horizon of all that occurs or appears”.<sup>467</sup> It is in Kant

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<sup>463</sup> “Only one device will permit Hume to present the agreement between human nature and nature as something more than an accidental, indeterminate, and contingent agreement: this device will be purposiveness” (ES 112).

<sup>464</sup> “Ontology is the dice throw, the chaosmos from which the cosmos emerges” (DR 199).

<sup>465</sup> Wahl, *Human Existence and Transcendence*, 5.

<sup>466</sup> Wahl, *Transcendence and the Concrete*, 42.

<sup>467</sup> LS 54.

that Deleuze finds a new metaphysical interest that shifts the problematic idea and the being of the problem from its illusory or false state of being, as it eventually becomes in Hume, to a critical and productive one, insofar as its concern is “the sense or non-sense of what appears”.<sup>468</sup> The possibility for an ontology of problems remains open yet uncertain after Hume, and it is from this standpoint that Deleuze would approach Kant as yet another philosopher whose use of the term “problematic” can open a realm of sense beyond the empirical, the transcendental and the dialectical.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I have demonstrated how Deleuze’s analysis of Hume produces an empiricism “immune” to Hegelian critique in that it establishes both an empiricist methodological category of problematization, therefore impeding the possibility of a naïve empiricism in Hume, and a problematic ontology that eases thought from the rigidity of Being in favor of an extra-being irreducible to knowledge, and which itself renders the limitations of thought evident. In this conception of empiricism the Ideas of our mind, while being necessary, do not designate any particular object, but rather point to reason itself as a problem of the production of non-empirical knowledge. In Deleuze’s Hume, problematization qua experimentation replaces the Hegelian mode of immanent critique and speculation with a modality of critical experimentation unencumbered by the negative and moving towards practical fields of thought, where “pure” reason, while being an unsolvable problem, is nevertheless put in the service of moral, cultural and social ends.

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<sup>468</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Cours Vincennes: Synthesis and Time, Cours du 14/03/1978,” <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/66>.

Hume's empiricism and the theory of external relations evokes a possibility for an ontology embedded in the problematic moment of grounding at the heart of the sensible, which is remarkably close to that which Deleuze would fully explicate in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, a "being of the problematic" which provides the given with both sense and meaning, subsisting beyond the thinking subject and its uncertainties, doubts and inadequacies. With Wahl, Deleuze opens the gap between thought and being on the one hand, and solutions and problems on the other, with no possibility of resolution.



## Chapter 4

### Kant and the “problems of reason”

#### Introduction

Seeking to provide his conception of problems with a transcendental position against the dogmatic image of thought that privileges representation over sense, or solutions over problems, Deleuze finds in the notion of Kantian critique the means through which he can distance himself from its commonplace formulation. In *Difference and Repetition*, the Kantian preoccupation with problems that pure reason poses for itself, beyond the possibilities of solutions, and its implied investment in the conditions or sense of thought, provides the background against which the major problems of Kantianism (which are played out by the post-Kantians) as a critical endeavour are addressed. Particularly, Deleuze’s thematic focus on the transcendental illusion can be weighed against the Hegelian Absolute, in what appears to be an attempt to recast thought as an activity of responding to problems, as opposed to the unlimited expression of the Absolute under the auspicious Concept.

Deleuze therefore attempts to push Kantian thought to its critical consequences in order to “remove the blockage” of conceptual labour and of good and common sense, a blockage between thought and being as problematic. This relationship between thought and being as problematic already exists in Kant, although under heavy reservations and restrictions. Hyppolite’s focus on the shift from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to the *Science of Logic*, while is meant to indicate a Hegelian radicalization of Kant’s critical project via the speculative science, only amounts to a further barricade to thought with concepts and mediation, obscuring the problems that constitute thought and placing it within the domain of transcendental illusions. Thus, Hegel is introduced as the enemy of the problem, who ceaselessly foils thought’s ability to realize its problematic origins, as a result of his own philosophical presuppositions and misunderstanding concerning Kantianism as a philosophy

of the problem and of the role that the negative plays in critical philosophy. According to Deleuze, once the threat of Hegelianism is fully recognised, thought can go about solving the difficulties of Kant and his successors by discovering the intelligible and sensible nature of problems, or the domain of the “intensive”. It is in Kant that we find Deleuze’s single most explicit attempt to put forward a philosophy of problems, and if *Difference and Repetition* can be said to be a post-Kantian text, it is to the extent that it elucidates the problematic modality of thought which Kant only insinuates in the first *Critique*.

In the first section of this chapter, I address Deleuze’s unique Kantianism, which above all attempts to provide Kant’s critical project with an explicit “problematic” orientation and ground all of the great Kantian hallmarks under the form of the problem. The second section depicts how this problematic ground tackles Hegel’s critique of Kant by rendering the problem of the thing-in-itself of transcendental dialectic redundant, making the Hegelian problematization of the negative a false one. The third section aligns Deleuze and Hegel on common territory, by introducing the “Other” of the Kantian fractured I, which evokes Hegel’s critique of empiricism that was addressed in chapter three, and which ultimately paves the way for a problematic genesis of both sensibility and thought. The fourth part examines what makes Hegel’s critique false with respect to Deleuze’s philosophy of the problem, how *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* affirm Hyppolite as a “vanishing mediator”, and finally how Deleuze’s problematization may end at an impasse.

## A problematic alignment of Kantian critique

Generally, commentators agree that the critical conceptualization of the problem in *Difference and Repetition* is, to a certain extent, worked around Kant's analysis of the Ideas of reason and their problematic status,<sup>469</sup> and Deleuze praises Kant for demanding "more than anyone ... to apply the test of truth and falsehood to problems and questions",<sup>470</sup> as well as for defining the very act of critique in these terms. Here Deleuze lingers first on the Kantian idea of illusion, internal to reason, which must be distinguished from "formal fallacies" or the idea of external error as an inadequacy between word and object that can be corrected once the error is pointed out. This thus distinguishes the idea of illusion from a relation to truth and falsity altogether.<sup>471</sup> The notion of a transcendental illusion as the signature of critical

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<sup>469</sup> As Bryant notes, for example, "Deleuze's inspiration for this concept of problematicity comes not from Bergson per se, nor from Nietzsche, but rather from Kant" (Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, 157). Henry Somers-Hall argues that while Deleuze highlights Kant's ultimate failure "to properly escape from the image of thought", the Kantian Idea does somewhat "fulfil Deleuze's requirements for a notion of a problem that is real, an 'indispensable condition of all practical employment of reason' (Kant 1929: A328/B385), but is not reliant on the empirical content of experience itself (the field of solutions)." (Henry Somers-Hall, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013], 130). Somers-Hall notes that Kant's inability to make the "ground of appearances express itself within the world of appearance itself" via the Idea, has to do with the fact that Kant understood two of the three "moments" of an Idea (the idea of God, for example), "solely in relation to already existing empirical states of affairs" (Ibid 131). In this respect, Deleuze's rehabilitation of Kantianism amounts to his attempt to internalize the three moments into the Idea itself so that he could "provide an account of how a problem finds expression in empirical solutions without having to understand the problem itself in empirical terms, as the Idea remains indeterminate in relation to that in which it is expressed, while nonetheless determining it" (Ibid 131). This hallmark of Deleuze's anti-Kantianism which Somers-Hall addresses, that the condition is formed in the image of an empirically conditioned, can be traced to Émile Bréhier's critique of the Kantian gap between the transformative aspect of his philosophy and its more conventional one that maintains a status quo of reality. I will return to Bréhier's important commentary later on.

<sup>470</sup> DR 161.

<sup>471</sup> "Our concern here is not to treat of empirical (e.g. optical) illusion, which occurs in the empirical use of otherwise correct rules of the understanding, and through which the faculty of judgment is misled through the influence of the imagination; rather, we have to do only with transcendental illusion, which influences principles whose use is not ever meant for experience, since in that case we would at least have a touchstone for their correctness, but which instead, contrary to all the warnings of criticism, carries us away beyond the empirical use of the categories" (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B352).

philosophy already suggests a Deleuzian assault on Hegel, the former asserting a purely “problematic” formulation of the Absolute, the latter affirming this Absolute as the ultimate true ground for philosophy and thought.<sup>472</sup> Thus, the attempt to escape the stifling embrace of the monolithic Concept to an “outside” is depicted throughout *Difference and Repetition*.

As we have seen, this process by which truth becomes problematic already began with Hume (and, indeed, perhaps already with Plato), and receives its first critical enunciation in Kant. For Kant the problem is incorporated into his philosophical system as its unavoidable consequence: the true objects of Ideas designate the Self, the World and God as our problems, and never as objects of our experience and knowledge. For Kant, the Humean anxiety according to which we have no knowledge of things in themselves is fundamentally dismissed, since we have no real need to know such things in order to constitute a metaphysics (and a science, and a morality), allowing us to move from an essentially false state of problems to a productive one.<sup>473</sup>

Of course, Kant’s diagnosis does not eradicate our appetite for the absolute at all, since he believes this is precisely what constitutes such an illusion, with illusions expressing reason’s own inclination to transcend and surpass its limitations, confusing its own subjective necessity to postulate an unconditioned principle with an objective one. This marks the difference between Hume and Kant on the issue, as Kant argues that this tendency is not the

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<sup>472</sup> Chapter three of *Difference and Repetition* (“The Image of Thought”) evokes the Nietzschean consideration of stupidity as the differential element of thought, rather than as an accidental and external misadventure, which retains maximal expressive content: stupidity as a mode of thought rather than a false or incoherent state. With his discovery of “transcendental illusions”, Kant was, according to Deleuze, first to critically or immanently evaluate this problem of stupidity, and therefore first to internally separate thought and being.

<sup>473</sup> In *What is Grounding?* Deleuze implies that the Kantian problem of schematism (to which I will return later) is inherited to a certain extent from Hume: in Kant “The subject does not just go beyond the given [as in Hume], but the given also abides by this going beyond. . . . What renders cognition possible must render the submission of the given to this same cognition necessary” (WG 27, 29). This also impacts the question of the problem: if the latter is what concerns thought as such (as we have seen so far), then the Kantian innovation is that this question must pass a critical test of legitimacy.

result of a natural drive but of rationality itself, believing that Ideas, rather than being fancies of the imagination, are representations of pure reason.<sup>474</sup> Furthermore, since he believes that any “existential” apprehensions can be put in brackets, Kant turns to what he considers to be pressing concerns internal to reason, such as the relationship between rationalist conceptual thought and empiricist sense impressions, the successful synthesis of which could provide valid judgements, which are the only legitimate objects of critical philosophy.

Generally, we can argue that following Kant, Deleuze attempts to shift the foundation of thought from a speculative ground of being to a practical field of reason, and from the intellectual category of the concept to the problematic category of the idea. Evidence of such a post-Kantian, anti-Hegelian attitude was already suggested in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*.<sup>475</sup> But how exactly does Kant’s philosophy allow this transition, which is clearly evident throughout *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*?

Deleuze can be said to be “Kantian” in the sense that for him philosophy is necessarily critical philosophy, critical in the sense that it must “evaluate” the conditions of thought and sensibility, and that its critique must be immanent. But at the same time, the very phenomenon of “Kantianism” in which Deleuze takes an active role designates something other than the interpretation of Kant: in Kant Deleuze finds both a “miscarry” of thought and its “exceeding”, allowing thoughts other than itself to continue and complete Kantianism’s distinctive identity.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> Melissa McMahon, “Immanuel Kant,” in *Deleuze’s Philosophical Lineage*, eds. Graham Jones and Jon Roffe (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 91.

<sup>475</sup> As Deleuze says, echoing his critique of Hegel in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, “the oppositions, conflicts and contradictions in the concept appear such crude and rough measures by contrast with the fine and differential mechanisms which characterise the Idea – weight in contrast to lightness” (DR 203).

<sup>476</sup> This is already suggested perhaps by Kant himself: the final section of the *Critique* is titled “The history of pure reason”, underneath which Kant writes that “this title stands here only to designate a place that is left open in the system and must be filled in the future” (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A852/B880).

According to Vuillemin, this was the case with Hegel:

Hegel had posed the problem of the meaning of the Copernican Revolution: Kant's philosophy, he had shown, is not one, but two. . . . Perhaps, one could say, it was not the transcendental attitude itself, but only the composite architecture of the Kantian building that was at the origin of this lack of cohesion. Thus was born the hope of suppressing the displacements that the dialectical method had reproached the transcendental method without renouncing it. The interpretations of Kantianism sprang from this ambition: to understand Kant better than Kant himself, to rid the Copernican Revolution of the pieces whose philosophical tradition had entrusted him with the historical expression that Kant gave him, to express it in its purity and eternity, thus rejecting the "historical" conditions of Kantianism, and, to put it bluntly, those external elements that primitively render any philosophical invention inconsistent with itself.<sup>477</sup>

Vuillemin believes that the interest of Kantianism (particularly, Fichte's post-Kantianism, Cohen's neo-Kantianism and Heidegger's existentialism) is not at all historical, that it does not pursue a reconstitution of Kantian thought "with all its elements and, if necessary, all its contradictions".<sup>478</sup> Rather, it is a question of "separating the bark and the core, the exterior and the interior, confident that health is in the latter, and that all disease and decay are able to come out only from the former".<sup>479</sup> As Vuillemin stresses, what Hegel's (and essentially Hyppolite's) critique of Kantianism had attempted to accomplish was not simply to engage with a "dialectical" tradition of Kantianism, but to introduce a sort of untimely component to this tradition,<sup>480</sup> treating the Kantian text as both revolutionary in itself and a precursor to future revolutions in which it would take part. It is from this vantage point that Deleuze's Kantianism takes shape.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> Jules Vuillemin, *L'héritage kantien et la révolution copernicienne: Fichte – Cohen – Heidegger* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), 37-38.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>480</sup> Steven Crowell notes that the name "Kant" governs a "semantic field by no means restricted to an historical figure" (Steven Galt Crowell, "Neo-Kantianism," in *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, eds. Simon Critchley and William Schroeder (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 186).

<sup>481</sup> Indeed, Vuillemin's book was a notable influence on Deleuze, and one can see his Maimonian perspective assimilated into *Bergsonism*, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*. These texts establish, following Vuillemin's demand, the need to go beyond conditioning into a genetic principle of differentiation, by reinventing the transcendental meanings of Kantian terms such as

With his double demand that philosophy can originate only with critique (not of reality and of false opinions but of philosophy or thought itself) and that such critique must take place in principle (*Quid juris?*), Kant appears to be a natural ally to Deleuze's critical program in *Difference and Repetition*: critique must explain how the dogmatic image of thought does not allow philosophy to begin properly (without presuppositions, beyond doxa), and it must address the model of recognition by aiming its arrows to the distribution of the empirical and transcendental that this image presupposes.<sup>482</sup>

Deleuze stresses that Kant was “the first who substitutes the conjunctive couple apparition/sense, sense of the apparition, signification of the apparition. There is no longer the essence behind the appearance, there is the sense or non-sense of what appears”.<sup>483</sup> Kant describes the experiential object as “appearance” or “phenomenon” but rejects its association with representation or a pale copy of an original being, thereby also ruling out a traditional conception of truth and falsehood. An appearance is an object internal to experience and as such it is a real and whole being in its kind and in definition, an empirical actuality in space and time (indeed, two of the categories constituting this empirical being are called “reality” and “existence”, the former addressing the involuntary side of sensuality, an essential quality of empirical beings, and the latter affirming that this being has been categorized and was conjugated with the totality of rules of nature in the world of

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inner sense, finitude and intensive magnitudes. Only by doing so can one complete Kant's Copernican Revolution, according to Vuillemin.

<sup>482</sup> “Of all philosophers, Kant is the one who discovers the prodigious domain of the transcendental. He is the analogue of a great explorer – not of another world, but of the upper or lower reaches of this one. [...Kant] seemed equipped to overturn the Image of thought. For the concept of error, he substituted that of illusion: internal illusions, interior to reason, instead of errors from without which were merely the effects of bodily causes. For the substantial self, he substituted a self profoundly fractured by a line of time; while in the same movement God and the self encountered a speculative death” (DR 135, 136).

<sup>483</sup> Deleuze, “Cours Vincennes: Synthesis and Time.” Lawlor notes that for Deleuze, “to write a logic of sense ... is to write a transcendental philosophy” and that the ground of appearances, “sense or what is expressed by a proposition or a sentence .... cannot be a second world” (Leonard Lawlor, “Phenomenology and Metaphysics, and Chaos: On the Fragility of the Event in Deleuze”, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, ed. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 106).

experience). In other words, it was Kant who truly relieved thought from its efforts to either derive the sensible from the ideal or the ideal from the sensible, and instead instituted the “transcendental” and with it a new category of the “problematic”: while in (Deleuze’s) Hume philosophy becomes enclosed in problems due to its own inability to make claims concerning the external world, in Kant, it is critical philosophy that comes to dictate reason with problems that are generated according to the “phenomenon”.

If Kant is the philosopher who “discovered” the domain of the transcendental, it is because he claimed that every fundamental or *a priori* argument must itself stand the critical test of legitimacy. Kant’s metaphysics is critical precisely because it is a metaphysics of the empirical being, a metaphysics of experience that limits itself to the domain of beings that can be intuited by the senses and the metaphysical principles of which obtain validation and sense only when applied to the appropriate sense-perception. This form of criticality means that Kant’s metaphysics does not designate super-natural beings, but only super-sensible forms immersed within the architecture of natural being. Dogmatic philosophical thought tends to explain the empirical realm with groundless claims concerning super-natural beings, or by determining philosophical truths through the use of *a priori* concepts which demonstrate necessary relations (as we have seen in Hume’s critique). The transcendental, on the other hand, is philosophy’s legitimate sphere because it strictly determines the necessary, *a priori* conditions of the empirically given, what Deleuze asserts as the upper (the categories) and lower (forms of intuitions) reaches of the world.<sup>484</sup>

For Deleuze, this critical exclusion of the thing-in-itself as a theoretical object is closely associated with the notion of thought as active: thought does not simply follow the given, just as it does not seek for the origin of knowledge. As we have seen, this was already highlighted in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* where the subject of knowledge and morality is

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<sup>484</sup> DR 135.



compelled to go beyond the partiality of the given, and where the most fundamental question that empiricism produces is how can a subject constituted within the given go beyond it, a question that launches an “empiricist critique” which amounts to a renunciation of the speculation of the “real”.<sup>485</sup> This point is reiterated in Deleuze’s book on Kant, that the given abides by the same principles as our subjectivity, suggesting that the content of Kant’s philosophy is not a reflection on Nature, but a negotiation between the given and a collection of principles, and the status of nature or the real is secondary with respect to this more primer relationship which constitutes the concerns of critical philosophy.

This characterizes Deleuze’s Kantianism in its broadest sense: while he somewhat identifies with the Neo-Kantian notion that thought is transformative and legislative, it is by no means limited to the scientific domain. To go “beyond experience” to the transcendental conditions of such experience is to discover an indeterminate field of Ideas, it amounts to a rediscovery of the creative nature of thought, both scientific and artistic. This is thoroughly expressed in Deleuze’s “method of dramatization” which attempts to disclose “dramatological” elements of thought that exists within a field of right, without appealing to an existing state of affairs. Again, these Kantian gestures imply the revolutionary impact of Kant’s thought on Deleuze’s, and that for the latter, Kantian philosophy is an “event” in the sense that it has no interest in “eternal questions” but rather in a set of problems that together trace the genesis of a field of investigation located in a specific time, and itself marking a difference within time (modernity).

Thus, Kantian notions such as judgement and schema are treated by Deleuze not as solution to problems but rather as a rearrangement of problems, in a way that would

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<sup>485</sup> “[...] we must restrict ‘our speculation to the *appearance* of objects to our senses, without entering into disquisitions concerning their real nature and operation...’. ... the question of a determinable relation with nature has its own condition: it is not obvious, it is not given, and it can only be posited by a subject questioning the value of the system of his judgements, that is, the legitimacy of the transformation to which he subjects the given, or the legitimacy of the organization which he attributes to it” (ES 88-89).

illuminate any lacuna within the Kantian system, rather than attempt bridge or dismiss them. Synthetic a-priori judgements, for example, are introduced not as impenetrable fundamental elements of knowledge, but as the means through which knowledge becomes action, they constitute “a model of the knowledge-act”.<sup>486</sup> Here Deleuze also distances himself from Hume’s empiricism, where reason was subordinated to the ends of Nature, and the critical “purity” of reason’s interests was placed in question. Knowledge as action or “movement” becomes possible for Deleuze once reason is free from external determinations and establishes the immanence of its own principles, this absence of an absolute giving way to what Deleuze would later describe with Guattari as a “nomadic” milieu of thought. This also applies for Deleuze’s own understanding of Kant’s critical distance from rationalism: according to Deleuze, Kant had reproached Descartes for having “recognized himself” in the Cogito, while in fact, the recognizing-self (the transcendental) cannot be identical to the recognized I, since the former is placed beyond the empirical manifold and more specifically beyond the form of time, time being the internal difference of a ‘before’ and ‘after’, that which opens up a “desert terrain” where the Kantian wanderer searches for a foundation.<sup>487</sup> By the same token, God himself cannot be the object of verified knowledge, since every such object must be given from the forms of intuition (space and time).

For Deleuze, the constitution of a transcendental field of reason, or the realm of sense, defined by its autonomy and self-legislation, is a liberating gesture which renders the knowledge of a thing-in-itself redundant rather than impossible and restrictive, giving way to the distinction of the illusions of reason between knowledge which applies strictly to appearances (the given constituted as phenomenon by the understanding) and thought which

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<sup>486</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Cours Vincennes: Sur Leibniz, Cours du 20/05/1980,” <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/130>.

<sup>487</sup> “Just as for the cognition of an object distinct from me I also need an intuition in addition to the thinking of an object in general (in the category), through which I determine that general concept, so for the cognition of myself I also need in addition to the consciousness, or in addition to that which I think myself, an intuition of the manifold in me, through which I determine this thought” (B158). See also DR 85-86

can apply to the Ideas of reason, a distinction that for Deleuze constitute the very signature of critical philosophy, given its centrality in Kant's investigation:

And precisely in these latter cognitions, which go beyond the world of the senses, where experience can give neither guidance nor correction, lie the investigations of our reason that we hold to be far more preeminent in their importance and sublime in their final aim than everything that the understanding can learn in the field of appearances, in which we would rather venture everything, even at the risk of erring, than give up such important investigations because of any sort of reservation or from contempt and indifference.<sup>488</sup>

The unknown will serve as a practical horizon for our understanding, assigning another direction for reason's appetite for the absolute. It is precisely in this problematic register of Kant's critique, in the problematic as a modality of the Idea in the systematization of knowledge, that Deleuze is interested in, rather than in the construction of concepts in a priori intuition and its application to empirical experience. This is because he believes that a reorientation of the activity of schematism (the rules for construction and application of concepts that render homogenous the heterogeneity of intuition and concept in synthetic a priori judgements) is required, so that it operates as a function of Ideas, expressing a dynamic rather than mathematical process of concepts construction, by way of "spatio-temporal dynamisms".<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B7.

<sup>489</sup> "Producing in space and time, that is the operation of the schema. In other words, the schema does not refer to a rule of recognition, but refers to a rule of production" (Gilles Deleuze, "Cours Vincennes: Sur Kant, Cours du 04/04/1978," <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/65>). Daniel Smith notes that Deleuze draws here on a theme from Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*: "For Heidegger, the great problem in Kant was the relation between thought and being – that is, the relation between concepts and intuitions. Kant himself effected a mediation between the two via the operations of synthesis and schematisation, which are operations of the productive imagination" (Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze, Kant and the Transcendental Field", in: *At the Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian Philosophy*, 37). Deleuze diverges from Kant, however, according to Smith, since he attempts to show that "the secret of the Kantian project does not lie in the imagination, but in the theory of Idea", because its true purpose is to establish that "Ideas appear in Nature itself, in the sensible" (Ibid.).

The notion of concept-production on the basis of spatio-temporal blocks of sensations is tackled according to Deleuze by Kant in the transcendental aesthetic, the science of the sensible,<sup>490</sup> but for Deleuze, “empiricism truly becomes transcendental, and aesthetics an apodictic discipline, only when we apprehend directly in the sensible that which can only be sensed, the very being of the sensible”.<sup>491</sup> While according to Deleuze empiricism settles with an aesthetic where the sensible is what remains after the removal of the forms of representation (this remainder is either a chaotic becoming or a flux of atomic sense-data), and the given is thought negatively without ever reaching the sufficient reason of this manifold as such, Kant had reached the transcendental condition that precedes the given but formulated it in the image of the empirically conditioned, under the empirical condition of the possible, allowing the given as such to re-enter thought.<sup>492</sup> Aesthetics would become this “apodictic discipline” only once it stops asking what can be represented in the senses, and at the same time empiricism would become transcendental only once we immediately

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<sup>490</sup> “I call a science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility the transcendental aesthetic” (ibid., B35).

<sup>491</sup> DR 56-57.

<sup>492</sup> Here Deleuze evokes a tension in Kantianism that was highlighted by Émile Bréhier: “In the justification of values, we find two directions, which, perhaps, are irreconcilable: on the one hand, criticism puts activity, spontaneity, freedom in the foreground: the object of knowledge is not a limit, but a product of the mind; liberty is the sole condition of the moral life; of the free play of imagination depend on art and beauty. But, on the other hand, this activity is somehow below our present life and experience: of the synthetic activity which constituted knowledge, we only grasp the results in our perception; of freedom, we only know the consequences of a timeless decision. Criticism has therefore been, and it remains, under the first aspect, a stimulant of thought, a doctrine that transforms the so-called given into tasks for the activity, a philosophy of spiritual work, and it gave birth, in the nineteenth century, to all doctrines that seek in reality a work to do, more than a thing to see. But, under the second aspect, it appears as an implacable justification of the given; from science, it has a static conception, subjecting it to conditions that sciences have long since passed; morality, a rigorous conception which puts it outside the real conditions of human activity; art, a formalistic conception, which risks emptying it of all its contents; everywhere, thus, the mind is forced to follow already traced paths: the Kantian *a priori* marks at once the domination and the subjugation of the spirit” (Émile Bréhier, *Histoire de la philosophie. Tome II: La philosophie moderne. Vol II: Le Dix-Huitième Siècle* (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1930), 379). As a philosopher of values, Kant seeks to bring about a transformative process through the act of critique and by addressing the problems which reason elicits. On the other hand, these acts remain beyond the grasp of experience itself, their creations are simply imposed as brute “givens”, which maintains a status quo of reality. In a sense, Deleuze’s critique of Kant invokes Bréhier’s critique and attempts to bridge these two issues by demonstrating that the problems that reason evokes, while being ideal in nature, are given to our sensibility without losing their problematic form.

apprehend or intuit the being of the sensible, or the actual transcendental condition of the sensible given itself, bringing about a “transcendental encounter” with “that which can only be sensed”,<sup>493</sup> an encounter that should overcome Hegel’s critique of both empiricism and Kantianism.

Indeed, we have already seen this ambition with Bergson and his method of intuition which eliminates false problems, demonstrating clear Kantian influence, and before with Deleuze’s reconstruction of Hyppolite’s *Logic and Existence*, where he has set the task for any future philosophy: what “being is with respect to the given” is “not essence but sense”.<sup>494</sup> But it is in his Kantianism that the relationship between the “being of the sensible”, or more generally “transcendental empiricism”, and the being of the problem is fully elaborated:

Beneath the platitude of the negative lies the world of “disparateness”. The origin of the illusion which subjects difference to the false power of the negative must therefore be sought, not in the sensible world itself, but in that which acts in depth and is incarnated in the sensible world. We have seen that Ideas are genuine objectivities, made up of differential elements and relations and provided with a specific mode – namely, the “problematic”.<sup>495</sup>

What is suggested here, and developed throughout chapters three, four and five of *Difference and Repetition*, is that what threatens (modern) thought is not strictly the Kantian illusions of reason but rather the enemies of thought (negation, as well as stupidity, opinions, presuppositions, etc.), and that what is required to ward them off is a reconstitution of being itself as problematic, albeit intelligible (hence the irreducibility of problematization in Deleuze to Heideggerian “perplexing”). Here the problems that comprise this being must be transmitted in sensible form, although non-empirically and involuntarily, as the intensive that inflicts violence upon thought and sensibility.<sup>496</sup> This concerns the very heart of Deleuze’s

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<sup>493</sup> DR 57.

<sup>494</sup> Deleuze, “Jean Hyppolite’s *Logic and Existence*,” in DI 16.

<sup>495</sup> DR 267.

<sup>496</sup> The notion of problems given in sensible form, or of the sensible itself having a “problematic” origin, refers to Kant’s “Anticipations of Perception”, in which the intensive magnitudes a

problematic thought following his encounters with Hyppolite, Wahl, Guérout and Alquié: what we see is a philosophical negotiation between a philosophy of the concept and that of experience, which tackles the major problems of Kantianism, Hegelianism and empiricism by placing them under the critical consideration of the problem-system, a system that does not settle for either the ineffability of an encounter nor the elaboration of conceptual determinations.

This realignment of the Kantian Idea in such a way that it involves an activity of schematism as the diffusion of problems, and that such realignment must critically engage with the negative as its illusory or false image, is already foreshadowed in Deleuze's book on Kant, published several years before *Difference and Repetition* – and demonstrates too a kinship with Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, published one year before the book on Kant. As mentioned, in *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, Kant's opposition with empiricism and dogmatic rationalism is unfolded under his supposed discovery of the autonomy of the will with respect to objects of representation. For empiricism, reason is simply “the faculty of organizing indirect, oblique means” whose ends “are always those of nature” (as we have seen in Hume),<sup>497</sup> and while rationalism has indeed affirmed the existence of purely rational ends, the latter are conceived as transcendent instances: “a Being, a Good or a Value, taken as a rule of will”.<sup>498</sup>

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sensation hold, prior to its more “extensive”, conceptual and distinct qualities that are given to it by the intuition and understanding, are “anticipated” at zero degree perception. Each sensation has an intensive multiplicity of “minute perceptions” that can “only be represented through approximation to negation =0” (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B210). For Deleuze, the fact that all we can know *a priori* (before the intervention of schematization) about the qualities of sensations is that they have an intensive magnitude means that the ground of sensation itself cannot be found in the understanding, but can only be experienced as a force. Prior to conceptualization, we are “forced” to sense something about which we know nothing, other than the fact that it “affects” us to a certain degree, so that consciousness grows “in a certain time from nothing=0 to its given measure” (ibid., B208). This will play a role in the introduction of time into the subject as the key, according to Deleuze, to understanding and undermining Kant's Copernican Revolution. I will return to this point later on.

<sup>497</sup> KCP 1.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid., 2.

For Kant, however, the “supreme ends are not only ends of reason, but that in positing them reason posits nothing other than itself”,<sup>499</sup> according to Deleuze. Only reason itself can evaluate or judge its own value and force it to exercise its faculties “superiorly” (or autonomously), while empirical or transcendent critique is ever only external, resulting in a subsequent “inferior” exercise. It is this superior exercise that establishes Kantian reason as the faculty of ideas or of problems in general, one whose very function is to pose or constitute problems that are themselves internal to reason and act as tasks for this reason, and more particularly to criticize these problems and deem them either true or false, or, alternatively, high (active, transcendental) or low (reactive, empirical or transcendent), if we would indeed attempt to read Nietzschean concerns into Kant.<sup>500</sup> Thus, we can already see an attempt to provide problems with a unique status with respect to schematism, by placing reason in direct relation with the will as an element of the world of sensible objects.

Deleuze repeats the Kantian gesture insofar as he employs a rationalist and empiricist critique in an attempt to construct his own transcendental aesthetic (the being of the sensible) and transcendental dialectic (the being of the problem). This is clearly evident in the philosophical thread that unravels throughout *Difference and Repetition*, beginning with Descartes, who, according to Deleuze, assumed a correlation between thought and its object in principle, continuing with Hume, who demonstrated that thought is not the principle which constitutes a correspondence with the object, but that both are constituted within the sense-data through the naturalistic principles that spur relations within the former, and with Leibniz, who argued that sensible data is not atomic but confusedly expressive of the internal

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<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> See also DR 168. As Kant argues, “all the concepts, indeed all the questions that pure reason lays before us, lie not in experience but themselves in turn only in reason, and they must therefore be able to be solved and their validity or nullity must be able to be comprehended” (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B791).

actual relations that constitute it.<sup>501</sup> Finally, Kant had argued that we cannot know the actual constitution of this data (against dogmatic metaphysics), but that, on the other hand, the empirical constitution of thought cannot explain and justify certain facts and ends that concern thought and experience (against empiricism).

Kant was of course the “great mediator” between the empiricist and rationalist positions, affirming on the one hand that thought would have no actuality if it did not evoke the sensual given, and on the other hand that there must be some necessity that would provide thought with its fundamental truth. Thus, under the concept of the transcendental, the subject is split into an empirical and a transcendental subject: dogmatic metaphysics believed that it is possible to prove the immortality of the soul through reason alone,<sup>502</sup> but Kant argues that it has become confused between a logical and an actual subject of thought.

While the I think is “the sole text of rational psychology, from which it is to develop its entire wisdom”,<sup>503</sup> it is an ontologically narrowed text from which we cannot infer any Substance, and Substance ends up being illegitimately smuggled into the consciousness of the “I think”. Kant’s pure I is a logical-mental function which acts as the upper form of images, and each image must be related to it so that we can have experiences and thoughts. As such it is not a being of any kind, neither empirical nor metaphysical, but a pure form of the subject, one that we can examine its actions and patterns but without hypostasizing it, that is, without rendering it sensible. Descartes, Leibniz and Mendelssohn argued that we can derive ontological information from this pure I, information which it does not and

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<sup>501</sup> In Deleuze’s account, Leibniz’s position is placed between dogmatic philosophy and Kant’s critical philosophy, fundamentally establishing him as a philosopher of sense foreshadowing Kant. Leibniz’s principle of sufficient reason becomes a horizon of sense for determining concepts, the latter deployed according to the contingency of a decision or choice. Furthermore, insofar as he follows Maimon’s critique of the Kantian Idea, Deleuze turns to Leibniz in order to establish a fully immanent theory of Idea-problems. As he notes in one of his seminars, in order to do this, that is, “to substitute the viewpoint of genesis for the viewpoint of the condition”, one needs to “return to Leibniz” (Gilles Deleuze, “Cours Vincennes: Sur Leibniz, Cours du 20/05/1980,” <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/130>).

<sup>502</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B402-404.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, A343/B401.



cannot hold, and this unlicensed passage constitutes what Kant refers to as a paralogism, a distorted inference from a “false problem”.

On the other hand, every subject also has an empirical existence, which is a phenomenon in space and time, and which can be intuited in empirical introspection, its circumstances and its history organized according to the laws of experimental psychology. Such investigation employs the category of substance legitimately, as that which unifies a multiplicity of temporal perceptions, but then the object of our consciousness is not the pure I which accompanies every intuition, but a finite individual empirical soul.<sup>504</sup> Thus, critical consciousness cannot answer the (false) rationalistic problem concerning the immortality of the soul. But more importantly, for Deleuze, this means that Kant opens up a positive dimension within the realm of illusion: once illusion is “internalized” to reason it can become the object of critique, and is therefore “transcendental”.

We view this as an important point for both Hyppolite and Deleuze: the fact that the I is split or fractured into two different functions (the pure I with its “spontaneous” or “active” faculty of concept-production and the empirical self with its passive faculty of receptivity, possessing no synthetic power) brings about all sorts of problems, the most serious of which is the possibility of schematization (again, this is the question concerning the conjunction of *logic* and *existence*, or of being and thought in general), for which both authors would offer their dialectic and problematic resolutions.

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<sup>504</sup> “The human being is one of the appearances in the world of sense, and to that extent also one of the natural causes whose causality must stand under empirical laws. As such he must accordingly also have an empirical character, just like all other natural things. ... Yet the human being, who is otherwise acquainted with the whole of nature solely through sense, knows himself also through pure apperception, and indeed in actions and inner determinations which cannot be accounted at all among impressions of sense; he obviously is in one part phenomenon, but in another part, namely in regard to certain faculties, he is a merely intelligible object” (ibid., A546/B574).

## Escaping the grasp of the Concept: the problematic Idea

As noted, Deleuze's Kantianism focuses on two issues: the relationship between sensible and conceptual determinations, or, more precisely, the limitations of Kant's schematism, and the illusions of reason, which give rise to the problematic Idea. These issues however are themselves intertwined in Kant: one constructs the concept in *a priori* intuition and applies it to experience to the extent that this construction is in fact a task ordered by the Idea as a non-intuitable concept which functions as the horizon of our progress and our actions, thus assigning a problematic modality to both our judgements of experience through schematism and our systematization of knowledge (the regulative use of Ideas). Therefore, this "problematic" orientation takes shape in the category of modality as an existential determination of judgements (judgement as a matter of fact, of possibility or impossibility and of necessity or contingency), asserting that concepts have a relation to our understanding first and foremost and that their value must be measured according to this relationship, moving from their mere possibility to their reality and to their necessity.<sup>505</sup>

Here Kant establishes the logical significance of the category of the problematic from which Deleuze would draw his own: "[certain] judgments can be obviously false and yet, if taken problematically, conditions of the cognition of truth",<sup>506</sup> a claim which we have already encountered several times, either explicitly or implicitly. The determination of modality is

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<sup>505</sup> "Now, since everything here is gradually incorporated into the understanding, so that one first judges something problematically, then assumes it assertorically as true, and finally asserts it to be inseparably connected with the understanding, i.e., asserts it as necessary and apodictic, these three functions of modality can also be called so many moments of thinking in general" (ibid., B101/A76).

<sup>506</sup> Ibid. Deleuze would embrace, to a certain extent, Kant's position concerning problematic judgements, but reject his assertion that we must move from the problematic to apodictic: "Suppose we say instead that the movement goes not from the hypothetical to the apodictic but from the problematical to the question ... The assimilation of the problem and the hypothesis is already a betrayal of the problem or Idea, involving the illegitimate reduction of the latter to propositions of consciousness and to representations of knowledge: the problematical is different in kind from the hypothetical" (DR 197).

critically essential because it establishes a clear distinction between what can be thought and what can be known, which gives way to the status of the “problematic” as something that cannot be discarded as a provisional state.<sup>507</sup>

It can also be said that the mode of the problematic in critique is already formulated in the very formation of schematism in general: a concept can be “constructed” only within a medium of pure intuition which translates the content of the category into temporal terms. And if the category itself is to apply to sensible intuition it must do so via schematization, just as the intuited “matter” must be connected and modified according to a temporal schema in order to become categorized. This already presupposes a separation of the content of a concept from the question of its own existence, as the category of modality strongly indicates. For Kant, concepts are never foundational, but must first be understood as problematic, to the extent that without empirical content they can only be thought and not known.

There is an irreducible heterogeneity between the two realms of concepts and sensibility which schematization is supposed to bridge. However, Kant does not provide us with a reason for the schema’s application, stating that the fact of synthesis is a successful occasion, a factual given which cannot be explained by reason, and it remains a “hidden art in the depths of the human soul”.<sup>508</sup> Here Kant underestimates the problem of schematism, perhaps due to his own confidence in the absolute interests of reason. All we can do is discover how and not why, that is, we can only unveil the mediating mechanism by which this successful occasion takes place (since its occurring was already determined by the transcendental deduction). The debate on schematism adds nothing that is fundamental concerning the transcendental deduction, simply enriching our existing appreciation of the

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<sup>507</sup> In the *Prolegomena* Kant states that the transcendental does not mark the limit between thought and beings, but between thought and our ability to think. See Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), §13.

<sup>508</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B181.

faculties and this mediating mechanism between the understanding and sensibility. Deleuze has expressed his own concern regarding schematism:

A schema is indeed a rule of determination for time and of construction for space, but it is conceived and put to work in relation to concepts understood in terms of logical possibility: this is so much part of its nature that it does no more than convert logical possibility into transcendental possibility. It brings spatio-temporal relations into correspondence with the logical relations of the concept. However, since it remains external to the concept, it is not clear how it can ensure the harmony of the understanding and sensibility, since it does not even have the means to ensure its own harmony with the understanding without appeal to a miracle.<sup>509</sup>

Deleuze wonders what this mysterious art of the imagination which evokes hidden harmonies between terms is, that through which pure reason determines the forms of intuition, and argues that the Kantian critique cannot bring itself to explain how the schema precisely makes the spatio-temporal relations of the concept correspond to the logical relations of the concept (other than externally). This difficulty, in turn, has to do with the Kantian gap between the “logical possibility” of the concept and the “transcendental” or “real” possibility which assumes a synthesis that moves towards an a-logical element to construct its object according to a schema.

We have seen that this Kantian problem of bridging the diverging realms of spatio-temporal relations and logical relations was also taken up by Hyppolite following Alquié and Guérout: Hyppolite would attempt to sublimate one to the other, so that, in the last instance, sensible determinations become conceptual determinations via negation.<sup>510</sup> For Hyppolite, Kantian imagination or schematization is “the seed of genuine reason as mediation”,<sup>511</sup> since

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<sup>509</sup> DR 218.

<sup>510</sup> Hegel believes that “it is a mistake to assume that, first of all, there are objects which form the content of our representations, and then our subjective activity comes in afterwards to form concepts of them” (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris (Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991), 241), thus undermining the concept-intuition duality by showing that the Concept comes first.

<sup>511</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 27.

it overcomes external, formal or empirical reflection on sensible diversity ("which abstracts from all content of knowledge")<sup>512</sup> through transcendental critique, which determines its content according to the categories of the understanding. While empirical knowledge perceives the object as "really already constituted", transcendental reflection "ascends back up to the source of this constitution", a source which is not simply "the issue of a psychological source".<sup>513</sup> In short, Kantian phenomenon "is not appearance, but it is inserted in principle into a coherent totality; it thereby acquires an objective value".<sup>514</sup>

By investing in transcendental reflection, Kant had discovered "a logicity of being which replaces the being of logic",<sup>515</sup> that is, by refusing to settle with empirical or psychological reflections, the transcendental indicates a strong attempt to provide an expression of being with its maximal extension. However, as Deleuze himself affirms both in *Difference and Repetition* and in his review of *Logic and Existence*,<sup>516</sup> if Kant is set on expression (rather than representation) of the sensible through the concept or the ideal, the concept still remains too external, leaving a "mysterious thing-in-itself ... that will never be the object of knowledge",<sup>517</sup> which Hyppolite attributes to a certain extent to Kant's famous intention to "leave room for faith", which he states in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique*.<sup>518</sup> The categories of the understanding, being strictly the conditions of the object of experience,

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<sup>512</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>516</sup> "Kant indeed achieves the synthesis of the identity of subject and object – but only an object relative to the subject: the very identity is the synthesis of the imagination and is not posited in being itself. He goes beyond the psychological and the empirical, all the while remaining within the anthropological" (Deleuze, "Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*," in DI 15); "In Kant, therefore, difference remains external and as such empirical and impure, suspended outside the construction 'between' the determinable intuition and the determinant concept" (DR 173).

<sup>517</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 58.

<sup>518</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxx.

and determining its object from outside, therefore “hold only for experience” and “are not categories of the Absolute”.<sup>519</sup>

While *Empiricism and Subjectivity* is focused on disputing Hegel’s inaugural move with respect to the empirical given (sense-certainty), *Difference and Repetition*, while continuing this line of thought, also takes up Hyppolite’s arguments:

Hegelian logic starts with an identification of thought and the thing thought. The thing, being, is not beyond thought, and thought is not a subjective reflection that would be alien to being. This speculative logic extends Kant’s transcendental logic by exorcising the phantom of a thing-in-itself, which would always haunt our reflection and would limit knowledge in favor of faith and non-knowledge. Absolute knowledge means the in principle elimination of this non-knowledge, that is, the elimination of a transcendence essentially irreducible to our knowledge.<sup>520</sup>

For Hyppolite, the elimination of the Kantian thing-in-itself and the overcoming of its transcendental logic indicates Hegel’s highest achievement, the unity of thought and its object that would eventually be incarnated back into empirical reality and elevate it to the Absolute through the movement of history. In this sense, Deleuze does hold a critical position close to Hegel and Hyppolite’s concerning Kant, as Vuillemin’s aforementioned argument implies: Kant was not completely aware of the critical shift which he had brought about, and specifically he was unable to appreciate the full scope of the negative with respect to thought; in Deleuze, this refers to the transcendental illusions.<sup>521</sup> For Hyppolite, Kant was

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<sup>519</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 58. Following his critique of the Kantian categories, Hyppolite introduces Hegel’s categories of the Absolute, which unify form and content, each of them expressing the whole of being. Here Hyppolite evokes Leibniz’s monad, but rids it of its finitude and substantiality: “The category is not a substantial individuality like the monad; it is an expression of the Absolute, a for-itself which resolves itself into the for-itself of all the for-itselfs. The Absolute, however, does not exist outside of these expressions” (ibid., 157). While we can obviously see a theme that would be conjured again by Deleuze (a logic of sense as expressive of the Absolute), we can also recognize Hegel’s own aspiration for infinite mediation that Deleuze’s theory of expression would attempt to restrict (sense is not everything, since it itself conceals non-sense).

<sup>520</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>521</sup> “Kant, according to Hegel, behaves naively in regard to his own critique. He does not reflect on his reflection; he does not see that his critique is at the same time a position; he does not notice in it the new metaphysics as Logic” (ibid., 82).

not able to render expression translucent, leaving its source of power obscured and opaque in the figure of an unknown thing-in-itself. Indeed, the Hegelian concept (and perhaps also the entirety of *Logic and Existence*) is an expression of the internalization of such a critique, leaving nothing outside as it claims to express Being absolutely (hence Hyppolite's claim that a logic of the concept is a logic of sense as absolute mediation).<sup>522</sup>

Thus, for Hegel, Kant's critical revolution must be evaluated against a philosophical-dialectical history striving for the completion of expression or for a philosophy of the Absolute: Kant seems to advance beyond the simple empiricist division between form and content (a formal reflection on what is ultimately alien and abstract content) through the transcendental reflection of the categories determining sensible content. However, it fails in raising itself to the Absolute as it ends up simply realigning the empirical divisions at a transcendental level: a transcendental reflection provides the understanding with a phenomenon (the "sense" of this world, as both Hyppolite and Deleuze emphasize), but remains external as long as it always designates a noumenon that exceeds the understanding, and to which it remains relative. Kant therefore becomes entrapped in the same problem as Hume:

What happens to Kant, according to Hegel, is that for which he himself reproached Hume. He did not see the full scope of his question; he remained at the subjective and external significance of the problem, as if the response could be only found in the relative, ambiguous identity of a self-consciousness and of an experience whose source would remain always in the dark.<sup>523</sup>

Kant was unable to properly think the absolute unconditioned identity of the condition and the conditioned, and this is thoroughly expressed in the transcendental dialectic, in which

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<sup>522</sup> "The subjective logic, or the logic of the concept, is the logic of sense, but this sense is not a subject opposed to the object. It is the being which is its self-consciousness, its sense, and this self-consciousness, in turn, is being itself, the absolute Idea scattered into nature and into history" (ibid., 170).

<sup>523</sup> Ibid., 132.

this identity is “merely an idea condemned to unreality”, a subjective contradiction “that leaves the thing in itself completely outside of it”.<sup>524</sup>

While he embraces some of Hegel’s critique of Kant in his review of *Logic and Existence* as well as later on, Deleuze would no doubt reject its Hegelian solution on the grounds that it ultimately misses the originality of the transcendental, and simply sublates the Kantian heterogeneity rather than “account for the power with which [schematism] acts”.<sup>525</sup> Thus, not only does Deleuze condemn Hegel/Hyppolite’s systematization of “sense” through language (Wahl’s critique), he specifically targets the Hegelian Concept, which was supposed to account for the genesis of sense, with Deleuze employing instead other means to achieve complete expression (or immanence).<sup>526</sup> *Difference and Repetition* is a return to (rather than a “going beyond”) these Kantian limitations, to the problem itself, in order to salvage Kantianism as a critical enterprise, and perhaps even to bring about its completion, by

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<sup>524</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>525</sup> DR 218. Kerslake notes that, from the Hegelian perspective, by appealing to a thing-in-itself beyond appearance and knowledge, Kant fails to “recognise the metacritical status of the notion of the self-critique of reason, and only such a recognition could resolve the problem of how reason can criticise itself without already presupposing its own validity” (Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, 56-57). Only by extending the dialectic of reason to the absolute can the problems of Kantianism be resolved.

<sup>526</sup> Deleuze claims that Hegel fails at the outset in his attempt to fabricate a movement of difference that would supposedly reveal the emptiness and generality of sense-certainty, since he “creates it with words and representations”, while it “remains attached in the depths of its own space, in the here-now of a differential reality” (DR 52), therefore failing himself to go beyond sense-certainty to the extent that the latter is understood as a presupposed empirical image of thought. With respect to Deleuze’s fascination with Kant’s problematic Idea, Dorothea Olkowski notes that in Deleuze’s Kant, while Reason, as the faculty of transcendental Ideas, plays no role in aesthetic sensation, it becomes crucial when it “situates the faculties with respect to Nature’s physical forces”, that is, when we encounter Nature’s “formless chaos” (Dorothea Olkowski, “Deleuze’s aesthetic of sensation”, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, ed. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 268). According to Olkowski, “Deleuze’s aesthetics will abandon the intuition of the totality and turn to the Idea of Reason, the supersensible Ideas governing immanence” (Ibid 269). Confronting with the Kantian problem of schematism, Deleuze turns to the sublime as the realm of Reason, following the imagination and the understanding’s demise. As Olkowski argues, it is in the Ideas of Reason that Deleuze locates the possibility for real experience, distancing himself from the possibility of experience fortified, moving away “from the harmony of free play” and “to the violence of inadequacy, and finally to the stability of its suprasensible destination” (Ibid 270). This lines up with Deleuze’s assertion that the (Kantian) Idea holds a certain objectivity irreducible to experience and to knowledge, but which nevertheless unfolds in certain sensual or “intensive” experiences.



assigning the category of the problematic its unique position, particularly in the resolution of the difficulties of schematism. As Beth Lord notes, while Deleuze criticizes Kant for “reducing determination to the external application of concepts to the given”, his fascination with Kant runs deeper than this (and therefore than Hyppolite’s engagement with Kant), and amounts to “the determination of the being of the self ("I am") by its own thinking activity ("I think" )”.<sup>527</sup> Lord emphasizes that “the very act in which the I thinks its own being requires that being to squirm out of thought's reach”, since the being that is determinable is a problem without a solution, what “is not thought and cannot be thought, and yet it is precisely what is to be thought”,<sup>528</sup> the act of thinking indicates the internal difference of the I and its being. I will return to this point shortly.

Recall that for Deleuze the problematic Idea is the strongest explicit articulation of the being of the problem as both “an objective category of knowledge and a perfectly objective kind of being”, underlining an irreducibility of being to knowing.<sup>529</sup> But how can Kant’s critique in the transcendental dialectic warrant Deleuze’s assertion? Indeed, as we have seen, Kant’s critique of the paralogisms (namely, the immortality of the soul), the antinomies (the world as a totality) and the transcendental ideal (the existence of God) can be seen as exemplary cases of “false problems”. Kant completes the transcendental analytics with his famous distinction between phenomenon, the “natural” being, and noumenon, the domain of reality which can be thought but not “known” (i.e. predicated). For Kant, the noumenon is a problematic concept par excellence because it outlines the limits of the categories, drawing a line between “nature” and that which is beyond it in a sense that failing to obey these limits will ultimately lead reason to unavoidable delusions. On this basis, “the

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<sup>527</sup> Beth Lord, “Deleuze and Kant”, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, ed. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 82.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid

<sup>529</sup> LS 54.

concept of a noumenon is ... merely a boundary concept, in order to limit the pretension of sensibility, and therefore only of negative use. But it is nevertheless not invented arbitrarily, but is rather connected with the limitation of sensibility, yet without being able to posit anything positive outside of the domain of the latter”.<sup>530</sup>

However, while this is Kant’s official position, he is not always faithful to it. On many occasions he finds himself providing this unknown domain which the problematic concept of the noumenon delimits with positive attributes (treating it as an object of non-sensible intuition). In a sense Deleuze’s thesis on the problematic Idea as a reformulation of Being can also be understood as a continuation of this positive undertaking (in the form of ?-being, for instance, scattered through *Difference and Repetition*), without which Being as such would dissipate completely in the dialectic (where such Being is the nothingness indistinguishable from an abstract concept of being),<sup>531</sup> just as Kant himself had begun a rehabilitation of the Ideas of dogmatic metaphysics by giving them an essential and problematic function in the advancement of the sciences.

The Kantian dialectic is thus an attempt to clarify how the noumenon is the object of metaphysical ambition which cannot be eliminated nor satisfied, by assembling dogmatic metaphysics’ questions into the three Ideas of pure reason: the psychological Idea concerning the Soul, the cosmological Idea concerning the World and the theological Idea concerning God. Their origin lies within the tension between the conditioned and the unconditioned, and the structural failure which reason falls into when performing a false yet unavoidable inference which states that once the conditioned itself is given, the entire series which it conditions is also given, since there exists a rational impulse towards such a series which in fact is not given in its entirety, but rather constitutes a problem. Thus, Kant proves that it is

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<sup>530</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A255/B301-311.

<sup>531</sup> “Being is also non-being, *but non-being is not the being of the negative*; rather, it is the being of the problematic, the being of problem and question. Difference is not the negative; on the contrary, non-being is Difference: *heteron*, not *enantion*. For this reason non-being should rather be written (non)-being or, better still, ?-being” (DR 66, emphasis in original). See also WG 33-34.

impossible for reason to found from within itself a rational psychology, cosmology and theology, to the extent that “rational” is understood negatively and uncritically, ultimately producing transcendent and therefore illegitimate Ideas.

The only rational and critical use of these Ideas can be regulative: they are “necessary concept[s] ... to which no congruent object can be given in the senses”, exceeding “the bounds of all experience, in which no object adequate to the transcendental idea can ever occur”, but are “not arbitrarily invented, but given as problems by the nature of reason itself, and hence they relate necessarily to the entire use of the understanding”.<sup>532</sup> While Ideas can never be objects of knowledge, they can be the object of concepts: unable to determine sensible objects, Ideas serve the understanding “as a canon for its extended and self-consistent use, through which it cognizes no more objects than it would cognize through its concepts, yet in this cognition it will be guided better and further”.<sup>533</sup>

Particularly, the concept of totality, fundamental to the dialectic, has a positive use beyond the invalidation of reason’s ability to found its own psychological, cosmological and theological rational theories. The regulative use states that while concepts of totalities cannot participate in the constitution of an “objective” world, they do have a vital role in signifying the infinitely open horizon calling to continue with our empirical examinations and deepen its systematic cohesion indefinitely, serving as ideal focal points outside experience that designate this systematicity and unity as a problem. We cannot know the totality of the world, only special empirical phenomena within it, adding segments of experience and empirical knowledge to one another, but reason that uses the Idea of totality demands that we must not settle for any partial result in our research, always striving to realize new continuous connections between the known laws and species of nature.

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<sup>532</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B384.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, A329/B386.

Thus, while Deleuze will not take this purely Kantian conceptualization of the Idea at face value, what is important at this point is that the metaphysical interest is shifted from its false orientation to a valid, constructive and critical one. The regulative Idea is a sort of internal imperative of science designating for itself a double ideal end: both the expansion of knowledge upon disparate segments of the world, and the intensifying of systematization in existing knowledges.<sup>534</sup> As Bréhier points out in his short but influential text, “La notion de problème en philosophie”,<sup>535</sup> this Kantian formulation of the problem-form dates back to Proclus’ distinction in geometry where a problem is designated by a proposition that sets a certain task, in which something must be done, as opposed to a theorem which is a proposition that must be proved.<sup>536</sup> A theorem involves a deductive process whereby properties are derived from a definition, whereas a problem requires a constructive process which discloses properties that cannot be found in the concept.<sup>537</sup> In Kant, the concept itself

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<sup>534</sup> For example, in the case of the cosmological Ideas: “Since through the cosmological principle of totality no maximum in the series of conditions in a world of sense, as a thing in itself, is given, but rather this maximum can merely be given as a problem in the regress of this series, the principle of pure reason we are thinking of retains its genuine validity only in a corrected significance not indeed as an axiom for thinking the totality in the object as real, but as a problem for the understanding, thus for the subject in initiating and continuing, in accordance with the completeness of the idea, the regress in the series of conditions for a given conditioned. ... [The regulative principle] is not a principle of the possibility of experience and of the empirical cognition of objects of sense, hence not a principle of the understanding, for every experience is enclosed within its boundaries (conforming to the intuition in which it is given); nor is it a constitutive principle of reason for extending the concept of the world of sense beyond all possible experience; rather it is a principle of the greatest possible continuation and extension of experience, in accordance with which no empirical boundary would hold as an absolute boundary” (ibid., A508/B536-A509/B537).

Deleuze would invent his own imperative: “Problems or Ideas emanate from imperatives of adventure or from events which appear in the form of questions. This is why problems are inseparable from a power of decision, a fiat which, when we are infused by it, makes us semi-divine beings ... the imperative is to throw. Ideas are the problematic combinations which result from throws” (DR 197, 198). Here Deleuze offers his own solution to the abyss which Hume and Kant dread: the world as a totality can be thought “problematically” in the form of a dice-throw, affirming the Idea as an object of faith rather than knowledge.

<sup>535</sup> As Bianco notes, while Bréhier’s text was itself philosophically unremarkable, it did have “surprising effects” in France by setting the tone for several philosophers who were developing a “systematic” notion of philosophy. See Giuseppe Bianco, “The Misadventures of the ‘problem’ in ‘philosophy’: from Kant to Deleuze,” *Angelaki* 23, no. 2 (2018): 24.

<sup>536</sup> Bréhier, “La notion de problème en philosophie,” 10.

<sup>537</sup> McMahon, “Immanuel Kant,” 96.

becomes the sign of a greater problem or a task that requires an investigation into the conditions of experience and an examination of the origins of our pure thought, it is an expression of reason's own internal tendency and eagerness that would inevitably set it on a course of asking questions and posing problems it cannot resolve by itself, but at the same time it also assures that acts of solutions would indeed correspond to (real) problems.<sup>538</sup>

The Idea is problematic insofar as it is an organizing principle which is not given in experience, provoking thought with unsolvable problems while demanding some kind of solution through which the problem is also sustained. Deleuze completely affirms Kant's position on the issue:

In what sense, then, does Kantian reason, in so far as it is the faculty of Ideas, pose or constitute problems? The fact is that it alone is capable of drawing together the procedures of the understanding with regard to a set of objects. The understanding by itself would remain entangled in its separate and divided procedures, a prisoner of partial and empirical enquiries or researches in regard to this or that object, never raising itself to the level of a "problem" capable of providing a systematic unity for all its operations. The understanding alone would obtain answers or results here and there, but these would never constitute a "solution".<sup>539</sup>

We have already seen this notion of a problem as an "opaque" element of thought in Wahl's "ontology of sense" and with several other authors, but it is indeed Kant who perhaps provided the most concise foundation for an ontology of problems: they are "transcendent" to experience and therefore present the dangers of illusions, insofar as they are confused with knowable objects that engage in some sort of relation with experience. Once any claim for knowledge is forfeited, once thought is unburdened by a criterion of knowledge with

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<sup>538</sup> As Kant asserts at the preface to the first edition of the *Critique*, "Human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Avii).

<sup>539</sup> DR 168.

respect to problems themselves, they can be used “immanently” and truthfully, dictating the structure, sense and meaning of concepts (rather than experience).<sup>540</sup>

Since according to Kant nature is purposive, it is impossible for us to simply dispense with Ideas as the residue of pure reason, and confine ourselves to the understanding: “Everything grounded in the nature of our powers must be purposive and consistent with their correct use, if only we can guard against a certain misunderstanding and find out their proper direction”.<sup>541</sup> While illusions must be warded off, the fact that they stem from reason must mean that they have “a good and consequently immanent use”,<sup>542</sup> as long as they are not taken as representations derived from the senses. The fact that reason can use these Ideas problematically means that they cannot be taken as objects or as concepts but only as an apparatus of cohesion, of providing a purposive application for the understanding and its ongoing conquests of empirical domains of knowledge, an apparatus through which the understanding consolidates these new domains with old ones. This is the immanent purpose of the scientific mind guided by the idea as a problem:

[The] systematic unity (as mere idea) is only a projected unity, which one must regard not as given in itself, but only as a problem; this unity, however, helps to find a principle for the manifold and particular uses of the understanding, thereby guiding it even in those cases that are not given and making it coherently connected.<sup>543</sup>

Where the understanding fails to provide an empirical rule for the scientific mind, the Idea intervenes, but such an intervention cannot be written off as simply imaginary (as was the case with Hume), although the imagination does play a significant role here, as opposed to

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<sup>540</sup> Of course, Deleuze’s point of dispute with Kant on the issue would be that “[t]he ‘critical’ point, the horizon or focal point at which difference qua difference serves to reunite, has not yet been assigned” (ibid., 170). According to both Deleuze and Hyppolite, Kant himself was unable to push his Ideas to their immanent conclusions through a principle of difference, but for Deleuze this calls for the completion of such theory rather than its dismissal.

<sup>541</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A643/B671.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid., A647/B675.

Hegel, where absolute reason takes its place.<sup>544</sup> Indeed, while Deleuze relies heavily on Kant's conceptualization of the Idea-problem (or ideal problem), he is nonetheless aware of the fact that it also drives the entire Kantian system into a state of crisis,<sup>545</sup> which both Hegel and Deleuze attempt to intensify for their own needs. According to Hyppolite, Kant "sought only to make accessible to knowledge a being which in its foundation escaped from knowledge",<sup>546</sup> a limit which Hegel did not recognize.

Just as, in Hegel's critique of empiricism, empirical reflection maintains abstractions which ultimately establish a fundamental indifference between thought and being, so does transcendental reflection, and by leaving a thing-in-itself outside the reach of knowledge it simply restores a philosophy of essence, rather than establishing a philosophy of sense, which ultimately folds the transcendental back into an "unpassable subjectivity".<sup>547</sup> In response, Deleuze could argue that by dismissing the Idea, Hegel fails to properly evaluate its imperative power, i.e. its ability to transform the subject by disclosing the fact that "in its natural state, [reason] lacks the means to distinguish what is true or false, what is founded or not, in any problem it poses".<sup>548</sup> What Hegel did not realize was that Ideas not only point to our urge to affirm more than we know, but to the fact that what stimulates thought is that

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<sup>544</sup> Théodule Ribot has somewhat captured the fundamental relationship between reason, the imagination and the problem: "It is the imagination that invents, that provides the rational faculties their material, the position and even the solution to their problems. Reasoning is only a means of control and justification; it transforms the work of the imagination into acceptable and logical consequences. If one has not previously imagined, the method is aimless and without employment, because one cannot reason on the pure unknown. Even when a problem seems to be working alone towards the solution with the sole effect of reasoning, the imagination constantly intervenes in the form of a succession of trial and error, tests, conjectures, possibilities which it offers" (Théodule Ribot, *Essai sur l'imagination créatrice* (Paris: Alcan, 1900), 204). Hegel's *Faith and Knowledge* is an early attempt to bring about an immanent knowledge that would not be limited to synthetic *a priori* judgements but would extend to reason itself, identified with both the productive imagination and the transcendental unity of apperception (G.W.F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977).

<sup>545</sup> Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, 192.

<sup>546</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 27.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>548</sup> DR 168.

“we are not yet thinking”. Under the forms of good and common sense, being itself remains confined to dogmatic metaphysics.

### The I is a problem

As mentioned, Deleuze’s critique of Kant, particularly in *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*, somewhat overlaps with the notion of critique he develops in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*:

something appears, tell me what it signifies or, and this amounts to the same thing, tell me what its condition is. ... [T]he very notion of appearance refers to a fundamental defect in the subject. A fundamental defect, namely: appearance is in the end the thing such as it appears to me by virtue of my subjective constitution which deforms it.<sup>549</sup>

This indicates that, before Nietzsche, it was Kant who established the problem of value in philosophy in terms of a subjective position which interprets and evaluates. Rather than truths and essences being responsible “for the limitations of appearance, or the illusions of appearance”, the Kantian phenomenon “ensures a promotion of the subject in so far as the subject constitutes the very conditions of the apparition”.<sup>550</sup>

*What is Grounding?* can be seen as an early attempt to develop a theory of such constitutive finitude, where Ideas of the pure intellect lose their constitutive power in favor of the transcendental imagination, and the Hegelian attempt to make man occupy the place of God is renounced: “[Kant and Heidegger] do not give the human being such powers [of God]. They give finitude a constitutive characteristic and do not elevate the human being to the infinite at all”.<sup>551</sup> Deleuze uses Hyppolite’s analysis of Hegel (that there is no second intelligible world behind the first phenomenal world) against the Hegelian notion that the

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<sup>549</sup> Deleuze, “Cours Vincennes: Synthesis and Time.”

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

<sup>551</sup> WG 151.



dialectic process can play out the unfolding of God's essence: "When Hegel speaks of absolute knowledge, he says us that 'this reveals no other world to us than ours'. Absolute knowledge is knowledge of this world".<sup>552</sup> But it is above all Kant who first recovered the idea of constitutive finitude that would later be played out in the post-Kantians: here "the idea of an infinite understanding loses its sense, it is by no means a constitutive idea", and it is because "[i]t is only a regulative idea" that "human finitude insofar as [it is] finitude will at the same time be established as constitutive principle of consciousness and of the world itself".<sup>553</sup>

It is insofar as the subject is finite and lives "in time" that it constitutes the world. Here Deleuze draws on Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*: "More original than man is the finitude of the Dasein in him".<sup>554</sup> Deleuze equates Heidegger's notion of constitutive finitude with the same one we found in his Hume and Kant: the very act which constitutes us as human is transcendence, but, in Heidegger, "the transcendental is reduced to transcendence, to exceeding".<sup>555</sup> Heidegger, like Hegel, did not attempt to finally realize what Kant meant by the "hidden art" of schematism that is supposed to solve the problem of finitude, of how the subject constitutes the world, and so his notion of subjectivity as transcendence remained enclosed in the constituted frameworks of its finitude.<sup>556</sup> But what Heidegger did introduce into the Kantian subject was time,<sup>557</sup> an idea which Deleuze

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<sup>552</sup> Ibid., 167-168.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., 149-150.

<sup>554</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 160.

<sup>555</sup> WG 40.

<sup>556</sup> Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, 20. In his paper on Alfred Jarry, Deleuze suggests a necessary surpassing of Heidegger by way of a philosophy of sense that would mitigate its thought: Jarry's pataphysics takes its distance from metaphysics by introducing the epiphenomenon as the sense of an object, which is also the "Being ... of all beings, and must be thought by the new thinker, who is an epiphenomenon of humankind" (Gilles Deleuze, "Jarry and pataphysics," in DI 75).

<sup>557</sup> Time as a transcendental determination already appears, however, in the Kantian text itself, as what provides schematization with the model that concepts require: for example, the category of quality is schematized as an intensive magnitude or a "time content".

reiterates on many occasions and which he believes to be a profound realization which stems from the critique of false problems.

As the idea of the infinite intellect is, as stated earlier, the result of a false problem, and regulative Ideas, while evoking the problem of finitude, are ultimately insufficient, being unifying, totalizing and conditioning, what is required is an Idea whose power of synthesis is not derived from the active Cogito. This explains Deleuze's turn to post-Kantians such as Maimon and Cohen in order to determine a pre-individual, differential "genesis" of the faculties. But as already suggested earlier, Deleuze's notion of a problematic individuation is an attempt to reclaim the Kantian project of rehabilitating the dogmatic ideas of reason by providing them with a problematic orientation, one that would differentiate between the ideal and the actual:

Ideas, therefore, present three moments: undetermined with regard to their object, determinable with regard to objects of experience, and bearing the ideal of an infinite determination with regard to concepts of the understanding. It is apparent that Ideas here repeat the three aspects of the Cogito: the I am as an indeterminate existence, time as the form under which this existence is determinable, and the I think as a determination. Ideas are exactly the thoughts of the Cogito, the differentials of thought. Moreover, in so far as the Cogito refers to a fractured I, an I split from end to end by the form of time which runs through it, it must be said that Ideas swarm in the fracture, constantly emerging on its edges, ceaselessly coming out and going back, being composed in a thousand different manners.<sup>558</sup>

While many commentators have argued that Kant in fact does not deliver an appropriate account of how exactly the ideas are supposed to provide reason with a systematic unity,<sup>559</sup> Deleuze's three moments of the Idea can first be understood as both the continuation of such an account and its undermining, moving the solution to the problem of schematism

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<sup>558</sup> DR 169.

<sup>559</sup> See for example P.F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966); W.H. Walsch, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975); Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason,"* 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged (New York: Humanities Press, 1962).

away from the concept-intuition opposition and towards the difference between being and thought (the I is another, or the internal difference that separates thought from existence. I will return to this point shortly).<sup>560</sup>

Kant's report in the Appendix to the *Critique* is primarily a series of general claims concerning the ways in which the scientific investigation into nature must presuppose and affirm unity, driving towards the unification of knowledge into a single ideal system. The three transcendental ideas, having gone through the critical test of legitimacy, are now problems directing what is essentially an empirical inquiry, reflecting the fact that a purely immanent conception of Ideas has yet to be reached. The rather vague programme which Kant offers in the Appendix is open to a Hegelian critique, as we have seen with Hyppolite's claim that transcendental critique remains subjective rather than being raised to the speculative: "The contradiction of this totality thought as object, in the form of the substantial soul, of the world, and of God, is a subjective contradiction that leaves the thing in itself completely outside of it".<sup>561</sup>

Where transcendental critique falters, negation takes its place in order to differentiate the object from everything which it is not. Thus, Deleuze's three moments of the Idea or the problem attempt to unfold a positive differentiation of the I think by introducing time (the third synthesis), expressing a method of genesis where the determinable (pure intuition) and determination (concept) are moments internalized in the Idea.<sup>562</sup> Here Deleuze once again places his own post-Kantian thought and Hegel's on a single terrain:

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<sup>560</sup> As Deleuze writes in his paper "On Four Poetic Formulas That Might Summarize the Kantian Philosophy": "The I is an act (I think) that actively determines my existence (I am), but can only determine it in time, as the existence of a passive, receptive, and changing self, which only represents to itself the activity of its *own* thought (Gilles Deleuze, "On Four Poetic Formulas That Might Summarize the Kantian Philosophy," in ECC 29).

<sup>561</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 82.

<sup>562</sup> This is in line with Deleuze's analysis of the "being of the sensible", which draws from Kant's "Anticipations of Perception", in which consciousness grows from the nothing=0 to a given measure, by determining that a sensation has a degree of intensity, which itself presupposes a temporal synthesis. Because this intensity indicates a "differential relation" that has not yet been

It's literally a subject who is fundamentally split, it is traversed by a sort of line which is precisely the line of time. So much so that I would say, as a third point, that in classical philosophy the other of thought was the other of alterity; with Kant something absolutely new begins: the other within thought. It's an other of alienation. Of course Kant does not use this word, but the post-Kantians will produce a fundamental theory of alienation which will be revealed in its most perfect state in Hegel.<sup>563</sup>

By stating that “I is another”,<sup>564</sup> Deleuze returns to the problem which he picked up from Hume, where the latter concludes that relations are unjustifiable beyond a psychological habit. Out of sheer anxiety and melancholy, Hume inferred that the world of appearances, seemingly cohesive and organized, is in fact disintegrated and unstable and therefore cannot produce an “objective” state of affairs. This state of fragmentation is one which Kant addresses in the deduction of the first edition of the *Critique*, where he shows that the stability and constancy of the relations found in objects are conditioned by subjective syntheses, therefore reassuring against the possibility of a disintegrated world evoked by Hume.

In Kant's second synthesis, he demonstrates that the possibility for empirical associations (or “reproductions”) is conditioned by our transcendental faculty of the imagination, which supports the activity of connections through the relations with the concepts of the understanding, rendering phenomena subordinate to stable and constant relations.<sup>565</sup> By fortifying the reciprocity of subject and object, in which the unity of the object

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submitted to pure intuition or the concepts of the understanding, a moment “absent[t] of [extensive] sensation” that would “represent this [moment] as empty” (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A168/B210), Deleuze argues that this synthesis is a “pure and empty form of time” (DR 86), free from both empirical and transcendental remnants, since it pertains to elements “whose difference from one another is always smaller than the difference between the given one and zero, or complete negation” (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A168/B210). Thus, a temporal synthesis as an intensive sequence differentiates between altering conscious states, acting as a transcendental condition of our ability to attribute degrees of reality to the objects of sensation. It is the “third thing” that “mediates” between the undetermined and the determined.

<sup>563</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Cours Vincennes: Sur Kant, Cours du 21/03/1978,”

<https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/67>.

<sup>564</sup> DR 86.

<sup>565</sup> Kant provides us with statements that evoke Hume's anxiety: “It is, to be sure, a merely empirical law in accordance with which representations that have often followed or accompanied one another are finally associated with each other and thereby placed in a connection in accordance

is licensed by the identity of the subject and vice versa, Kant offers a way to manage the possibility of the world's instability. However, by doing so he also creates a situation in which the undermining of this subject-object relation might bring about a return of the metaphysical possibility of such a disintegrated world. Deleuze has expressed his own dissatisfaction with Hume's solution to the problem which he himself poses:

Hume stumbled onto an extraordinary problem. He poses the problem as follows: to know is to go beyond. ... But where does that come from? It is to ask what grounds knowledge. ... Hume's answer can seem extraordinarily disappointing. This comes from his genius in posing the problem in extraordinary fashion. This answer is that it is the principle of human nature which allows for going beyond what is. ... Kant will push the problem to the end and will go beyond this psychological interpretation. For Kant, the ground must be a subjective principle, but it cannot be psychological. It will be a transcendental subjectivity. ... The subject does not just go beyond the given, but the given also abides by this going beyond.<sup>566</sup>

But his apprehensions are not from such a fragmented world but rather from a world whose structures are determined in a way that whatever change they experience is registered within a framework whose existence is impervious to variables, depriving the possibility of such a change and maintaining a status quo (good and common sense), to which Bréhier had referred, where the acts of critique in Kant serve only to justify a static and external conception of reality so that "the mind is forced to follow already traced paths".<sup>567</sup>

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with which, even without the presence of the object, one of these representations brings about a transition of the mind to the other in accordance with a constant rule. This law of reproduction, however, presupposes that the appearances themselves are actually subject to such a rule, and that in the manifold of their representations an accompaniment or succession takes place according to certain rules; for without that our empirical imagination would never get to do anything suitable to its capacity, and would thus remain hidden in the interior of the mind, like a dead and to us unknown faculty. If cinnabar were now red, now black, now light, now heavy, if a human being were now changed into this animal shape, now into that one, if on the longest day the land were covered now with fruits, now with ice and snow, then my empirical imagination would never even get the opportunity to think of heavy cinnabar on the occasion of the representation of the color red; or if a certain word were attributed now to this thing, now to that, or if one and the same thing were sometimes called this, sometimes that, without the governance of a certain rule to which the appearances are already subjected in themselves, then no empirical synthesis of reproduction could take place" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A100-101).

<sup>566</sup> WG 26-27.

<sup>567</sup> Bréhier, *Histoire de la philosophie. Tome II: La philosophie moderne. Vol II: Le Dix-Huitième Siècle*, 379

It is for this reason that Deleuze reproaches both Kant and Hegel: while Kant provides us with a fundamental structure of cognition which simply inheres and subsists through time, as it determines the limits of any kind of change, Hegel's attempt to overcome Kant amounts to a "false movement – in other words, the abstract logical movement of 'mediation'",<sup>568</sup> completely inadequate to erecting a purely immanent theory of Ideas. The introduction of time into the subject, effectively splitting the subject, is not meant of course to return us to a Humean state, even though it is essentially an attempt to problematize the subject-object relation (this already begins to take place in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*), meticulously expressed in the formula "the time is out of joint".<sup>569</sup> By claiming that "Ideas swarm in the fracture [of the subject], constantly emerging on its edges, ceaselessly coming out and going back, being composed in a thousand different manners",<sup>570</sup> Deleuze attempts to transgress the Humean-Kantian dilemma between the determinations of representation and a chaotic undifferentiated abyss, or between a "celestial beyond of a divine understanding inaccessible to our representative thought, or the infernal and unfathomable for us below of an Ocean of dissemblance".<sup>571</sup>

This too refutes its Hegelian sublation – which presents an indeterminate, abstract being indistinguishable from nothingness – by affirming the fact that ontology itself is nothing more than a "dice-throw", an ideal "game" or a "chaosmos" that continues indefinitely and which we must learn how to play, so as to avoid opting for either one of these options.<sup>572</sup> The game preserves the notion of an ideal structure, as in Kant. But unlike Kant, for whom the ultimate end is to secure the unconditioned unity of thought as dictated

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<sup>568</sup> DR 8.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>572</sup> "Ontology is the dice throw, the chaosmos from which the cosmos emerges ... that dice throw capable of affirming the whole of chance, those questions with which we are infused during torrid or glacial hours, those imperatives which dedicate us to the problems they launch" (*ibid.*, 199, 200).

by reason, such an ideality does not reside within the subject, and its characteristics are not her own – the I is something else, it is another.

Here Deleuze and Hegel once again remain close, hence Deleuze's insistence that this "other" is not a subjective alienation but a problem: time as a form of self-affection endlessly separates the undetermined from the determined, thereby constituting a problematic field of individuation where Ideas "enter and leave through the fracture and the I".<sup>573</sup> This already suggests an inadequacy and incapacity of the self, as nothing guarantees that thinking would be free of distortions and "impurities" (since no latent stratum of thought exists as its own, as has also been shown in Plato), other than the ideal problems which it encounters.

It is from this critical viewpoint that Deleuze constructs a problematic subject that confronts the difficulties of the transcendental dialectic: a true post-Kantianism undermines both sides of the dilemma by pointing to the domain of unconscious and passive synthesis that precede and condition the activity of the I think, where Ideas determine both the object of thought and of sensibility, without pointing to a metaphysical reality beyond the senses and without themselves being given in experience.<sup>574</sup> The fractured I marks a subversive movement internal to Kantianism, whereby the speculative interest of reason (the will to know the true), which applies the categories to the forms of intuition and performs judgement, is placed in question, giving rise to the domain of problems as the new domain of the imperatives of thought: "that imperative transmutation which takes powerlessness itself as an object (be cowardly, lazy or obedient if you wish! on condition that ...) – that dice

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<sup>573</sup> Ibid., 277. "In the field of power as problem, thinking involves the transmission of particular features: it is a dice-throw. What the dice-throw represents is that thinking always comes from the outside" (F 117); "far from being the properties or attributes of a thinking substance, the Ideas which derive from imperatives enter and leave only by that fracture in the I, which means that another always thinks in me, another who must also be thought" (DR 199-200).

<sup>574</sup> Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze's theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality," in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 37-38.

throw capable of affirming the whole of chance, those questions with which we are infused during torrid or glacial hours, those imperatives which dedicate us to the problems they launch”.<sup>575</sup>

Hegel rejected the notion that Ideas of reason are “mere possibilities of thought and transcendent concepts lacking all reality” or the objects of “faith, that is, something beyond all knowledge”, and emphasized that the Idea is the “only sole authentic reality”.<sup>576</sup> Both Hegel and Hyppolite praise the Kantian productive imagination as such a speculative Idea which is supposed to express the logicity of being, where Kant makes the distinction between an “abstract Ego or the abstract identity of the understanding” (equal to an abstract and empty identity which empirical reflection locates) and “the true Ego, the absolute, original synthetic identity”,<sup>577</sup> and they affirm the superiority of the latter over the former. This true ego, they suggest, is what enforces identity over the heterogeneity of experience, but while ultimately remaining relative. Hyppolite recognizes this moment in Kantianism as a missed opportunity to articulate an absolute identity, an opportunity that is quickly “exiled into the transcendental dialectic”.<sup>578</sup>

Chapter four of *Difference and Repetition* refines Deleuze’s anti-Hegelian approach, providing an account of the ideal and logical nature of problems (*pace* Hyppolite) that constitute being itself, and acknowledging Kantian reason as the faculty of such problems where the determination of Ideas give rise to the fractured subject. While Hyppolite wanted to push *Logic* (the Concept and the principle of non-contradiction) so that it would penetrate

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<sup>575</sup> DR 200. Isabelle Stengers suggests that Deleuzian Ideas are “imperatives that force thinking, that turn thinkers into larvae because they demand radical cerebral torsions which stable judgements and categories are unable to accommodate. Ideas are questioning imperatives and, when they are actualized as problems, these problems cannot be separated from the imperative that generated them – they are creations issued from the problematizing power of the idea which selects and mobilizes what the problem needs in order to determine itself and to receive the solution it deserves” (Stengers, “Putting Problematization to the Test of Our Present,” 7).

<sup>576</sup> Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, 67,68.

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72.

<sup>578</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 82.



*Existence*, Deleuze was set on an infinite displacement of the two: the pure forms of the understanding can only be foisted onto the passive I from the “outside”, and the form of determinability (time, existence) only marks thought’s inability to ground itself, forcing it to think what it cannot (the being of problems and of the sensible).

Deleuze attempts to demonstrate how the Kantian Idea can be salvaged, against those post-Kantians who claimed that “Kant held fast to the point of view of conditioning without attaining that of genesis”, by providing it with “an internal problematic objective unity of the undetermined, the determinable and determination”, which itself “does not appear sufficiently clearly in Kant”.<sup>579</sup> It therefore marks a return to the transcendental dialectic, which was quickly discarded by Hyppolite for the reason that Kant could not arrive at a genesis of thought as finite. This is why Deleuze insists that we must “not forget the genesis. It is like the auto-formation of the system, Hegel says”, while, at the same time, rejecting the Hegelian assumption that such a system implies “that the human being puts himself in the place of God”.<sup>580</sup>

In the wake of the fractured I, the fundamental absence of God is marked by the productive power of indeterminacy found in the “pure and empty form of time”, a formulation that establishes Deleuze’s affiliation with post-Kantians such as Fichte, Maimon and Hölderlin, among others, so as to affirm the fact that he is attempting solve the vulnerabilities of Kantianism (as the latter have claimed to do) rather than dismiss them altogether, as the Hegelian and Hyppolitian texts do. This is the paradox of “inner sense”, which affirms the emptiness and purity of time as a form that deflects any determination of the subject in relation to the self: in Kant, the I think fully expresses the act of determining

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<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

<sup>580</sup> WG 159.

my existence, “but the way in which I am to determine it ... is not yet thereby given”.<sup>581</sup> As long as this “paradox” is maintained, that is, as long as the relation between the active subject and the passive self is not resolved and the subjective ground remains “ungrounded” (since I have no knowledge of myself as a determining subject), Deleuze can reclaim the Kantian Idea from both Kant himself and Hegel: like Hegel, Deleuze agrees that Kantian subject’s inability to penetrate into its own thought must become the focus of post-Kantian critique, but the answer is not further conceptual labor, since this is precisely what constitutes the transcendental illusion of the dogmatic image.

Deleuze first lingers on thought’s fundamental inability to think its own foundation, which for him must mean that it is forced from the outside as a problem. This marks his attempt to provide the negative in thought with a problematic foundation that would supersede the negative: according to Deleuze, while Descartes only provided an account of the negative qua extrinsic error, Kant takes a step forward by substituting error with illusion, but fails to provide this innovative move with the critical role it deserves. For Deleuze, illusions mark the negative capacity of thought, a thought which can be profoundly and radically unhinged, and requires a genetic method that would account for the possibility of its own calamity at its origin. The negative is not a general principle of thought, and there are rather specific cases of negation that must be accounted for (which we have seen in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*), each rendering thought “problematic” in its own unique way.

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<sup>581</sup> “The I think expresses the act of determining my existence. The existence is thereby already given, but the way in which I am to determine it, i.e., the manifold that I am to posit in myself as belonging to it, is not yet thereby given. For that self-intuition is required, which is grounded in an *a priori* given form, i.e., time, which is sensible and belongs to the receptivity of the determinable” (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B157). This is a key paragraph for Deleuze, whose analysis relies heavily on Kant’s suggestion that existence cannot immediately be determined, even though the I think is given with it. Thus, time is introduced into determination as the internal difference between undetermined existence and a determining Cogito, or between being and thought, therefore establishing being as a fundamental and ongoing problem for thought, with no possibility of overlap between the two.

In his refutations of the dogmatic idea of the soul, Kant criticizes Descartes for having positioned God as what assures the continuing existence of the identity of the Cogito. Deleuze however, criticizes Kant on the same ground as Kant's critique of Descartes: instead of God, Kant ends up placing a receptive self as a form of prior identity in the image of the divine.<sup>582</sup> Since I am not simply given to myself as a unified thought but rather as a series of appearances scattered throughout time, I must perform a synthesis or unify these appearances if I wish to think myself, so that by consummating the I think in the manifold of experience, the self also affirms its own identity, therefore rejecting the notion of the mind being a "theatre without a stage" as in Hume.<sup>583</sup> So, while the Cogito is now in fact split (the I that thinks is different from the self that intuits, even it is one and the same I), the form of time which Kant introduces is not "pure and empty". This is why Deleuze turns to Klossowski's interpretation of eternal recurrence as what introduces into thought a radical Other which both dissolves any external reference to a passive self or God and, and as a consequence, does not allow an enduring determination of things in time (hence the third synthesis as the image of the future). At the same time that the I is dissolved, the problems that comprise it are rendered more and more intelligible.

While Deleuze notes that "there is still too much empiricism in the *Critique*",<sup>584</sup> pointing to the external separation between thought and object, this Hegelian critique is ultimately directed against Hegel himself: while the negative would only consider this separation a failed attempt to mediate identity and difference into a dialectical unity (by demonstrating how the mind, being discursive, does not intuit its content immediately but is itself rather a "mediation" performing the necessary links between different contents), for

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<sup>582</sup> DR 86.

<sup>583</sup> Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 253

<sup>584</sup> DR 170. Deleuze would of course continue this line of argument, found already in *Logic and Existence*, when evoking the post-Kantian argument that the transcendental syntheses of the first edition of the *Critique* are traced from the empirical and the psychological which the former are supposed to ground, producing a vicious cycle which had Maimon addressed in his critique of Kant. See for example *ibid.*, 135.

Deleuze it presents an obscured moment of difference within the problematic Idea, which places the entire Kantian system of recognition in question (since Ideas, by raising problems in general, are concerned with the conditions of experience that maintain the unity, correspondence and necessity of the world of phenomena). This opens the possibility to place thought in uninterrupted correspondence with problems.

In “pure time” Deleuze discovers a genetic principle of determinability that overcomes the Kantian weaknesses and also diverges from the post-Kantians such as Maimon, from whom, as mentioned, Deleuze takes his cue on the question of genesis that the Kantian Idea shelves. In Deleuze’s employment of Maimon, we find the indirect means through which Deleuze addresses the problems that Hegelianism leaves off for thought following Maimon’s own resolution to the dualism of schematism.<sup>585</sup> Recall Deleuze’s distaste in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* for simple questions of origin which are usually reduced to psychologism: this would have a lasting effect in *Difference and Repetition*, where the notion of genesis is modified to accommodate a “transcendental encounter” of thought with its Other or with the outside. While Deleuze had internalized Maimon’s lesson of how to shift thought from a simple conditioning to a genesis (overcoming the duality of schematism with a principle of difference), he would not accept his solution in the form of the “infinite understanding”. This solution essentially attempts to nullify the Kantian dualism between the understanding and sensibility by, following Leibniz’s rationalism, “intellectualizing the senses”, therefore giving primacy to the understanding as the origin of both the form and content of experience. However, by doing so, Maimon reduces spatio-temporal determinations to conceptual determinations, giving rise to a subject who is essentially transparent to itself.

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<sup>585</sup> Smith notes that with respect to Deleuze’s anti-Hegelianism “it would be hard to overemphasize the role played in Deleuze’s thought by the eighteenth-century philosopher Salomon Maimon”, since his attack on Hegel is indirect and goes back “to the polemics that generated the post-Kantian tradition in the first place” (Daniel W. Smith, “Hegel,” in *Essays on Deleuze*, 65, 66).

But Deleuze maintains that the subject is fractured “from end to end”, and it is precisely within this fracture that “Ideas swarm”. This insistence on a fracture which opens thought to what is unthought marks his deviation from the post-Kantian tradition which affirms the unity of thought and being within the concept.<sup>586</sup> It is for this same reason that he undermines Hegel’s affirmation of the Absolute as the supreme object and subject of thought, suggesting once again that the issue with Deleuze’s anti-Hegelianism is not simply an unchecked offence on negation for its own sake, but that such an attack concerns the aims and interests of the critical project itself: the Hegelian affirmation descends into delusions precisely because it loses sight of its own demands, those raised by Hyppolite and overlapping with Deleuze’s: namely, to achieve a philosophy of sense.

Deleuze’s method of “dramatization” embodies this clash, and attempts to exacerbate it, by first suggesting that the this-here-now of sense-certainty which collapses in Hegel must be taken anew within the context of an underlying problem (as he strongly suggests in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*), a problem which provides it with sense, undermining the activity of concepts in favor of sensibility. “The Method of Dramatization” is a descriptive account of thought, having pushed back the Hegelian illusions, unencumbered by conceptual thought, and free to rediscover the idea as what renders the relationship between sensibility and concepts coherent. Conversely, for as long as we do not “dramatize” an Idea with spatio-temporal dynamisms that fall outside the concept, thought remains obscured, impoverished and susceptible to a Hegelian dialectic, retreating from drama to logos. Thus, the most notable aspects of Deleuze’s polemical anti-

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<sup>586</sup> “The Cogito incorporates all the power of a differential unconscious, an unconscious of pure thought which internalizes the difference between the determinable Self and the determining I, and injects into thought as such something unthought, without which its operation would always remain impossible and empty” (DR 174).

Hegelianism comes to light, the so-called “creation” of concepts set against their simple representation.<sup>587</sup>

Deleuze condemns Hegel for “prematurely judg[ing] the Idea as simplicity of the essence”, an essence that itself remains “empty and abstract”, and instead offers his own “discovery of the Idea” as “an ‘objectality’ that corresponds, as such, to a certain way of asking questions ... [that] sketch the genuine spatio-temporal coordinates of the Idea”.<sup>588</sup> These are questions that all point to thought being an addition, an act of unilateral determination indicating the fundamental lack of common measure between thought and the outside as a problem. These questions (when, who, where, etc.) are meant to designate a determination process of the concept itself, which would otherwise be pure “here-now”, affirming Hegel’s critique of the emptiness of sensible determinations which are unable to differentiate one “this” from another, rendering it a meaningless universal. But according to Deleuze, this conclusion concerning sensible determinations is merely the result of a “false question” or a false approach to questioning, fixed on a speculative ideal.<sup>589</sup> It is essentially what stands between the possibility of a creation of concepts and their actual production

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<sup>587</sup> “Hegel substitutes the abstract relation of the particular to the concept in general for the true relation of the singular and the universal in the Idea. He thus remains in the reflected element of ‘representation’, within simple generality. He represents concepts instead of dramatizing Ideas: he creates a false theatre, a false drama, a false movement. We must see how Hegel betrays and distorts the immediate in order to ground his dialectic in that incomprehension, and to introduce mediation in a movement which is no more than that of his own thought and its generalities” (ibid., 10). In “The Method of Dramatization” Deleuze claims that “given any concept, we can always discover its drama, and the concept would never be divided or specified in the world of representation without the dramatic dynamisms that thus determine it in a material system beneath all possible representation” (Gilles Deleuze, “The Method of Dramatization,” in DI 98).

<sup>588</sup> Ibid., 95, 96.

<sup>589</sup> As Deleuze notes, “If we now ask ‘What are these objects?’, we can see immediately that to reply ‘things in themselves’ would be contradictory. How could a thing, *such as it is in itself*, be subject to our faculty of knowledge and be governed by it? In principle, this can only happen to objects as they appear, that is to say, to ‘phenomena’. ... Thus we can see that the speculative interest of reason bears naturally on phenomena, and only on them. Kant did not need lengthy arguments to reach this result: it is a starting point for the Critique; the real problem of the *Critique of Pure Reason* begins here. If there were only the speculative interest, it would be very doubtful whether reason would ever consider things in themselves” (KCP 6, emphasis in original). This suggests that philosophy is caught up in the succession of problems which displace rather than contradict one another, and that by restricting ourselves to speculative questions (what is x?) we remain within a false and dogmatic understanding of this practice.

process by the spatio-temporal dramatization of the Idea, so that, once again, the Idea comes before the concept, to the extent that the sensible milieu itself presents its own richness or “thickness” that exceeds conceptual determinations.

We have seen this line of argument in Wahl’s critique of Hegel, where the reduction of reality in its thickness to the determination of conceptual thought only reveals the latter’s own emptiness and generality. Indeed, Deleuze’s task with respect to Hegel and the problem is to go beyond these apprehensions by providing this concrete richness with a “logic of sense”, one which does not reduce the determinations of being to those of thinking. More generally, he must move from a problematic orientation of critique (which according to Deleuze is diminished by the categories to a “simple mediation in the world of representation”)<sup>590</sup> to a problematic ontology, if he wants to prove that Ideas as problems are real, not fictions of the imagination.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> DR 285.

<sup>591</sup> In his lectures on Kant in the 1970s, Deleuze argues that the synthetic operation by which a correspondence between sensual and conceptual determinations takes place is an “act of the imagination. Obviously, imagination no longer means making up ideas or imagining something, since Kant gives a fundamentally new meaning to the act of imagination, since it is the act by which spatio-temporal determinations will be put into correspondence with conceptual determinations” (Gilles Deleuze, “Cours Vincennes: Sur Kant, Cours du 04/04/1978,” <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/65>).

## False problems and their discontents

Christian Kerslake notes that Deleuze attempts to distance himself from Kantian critique insofar as it is recognized as reflection on scientific knowledge, and instead cultivates a critique that seeks to “establish, or rather restore, an other relationship to things, and therefore an other knowledge, a knowledge and a relationship that precisely science hides from us”.<sup>592</sup> This formulation of critique, which we have already seen in Bergson, is realized in *Difference and Repetition* insofar as “a new set of synthetic *a priori* connections emerges between intensive matter and problematic Ideas”.<sup>593</sup>

If the dangers of transcendental illusions, among which is the Hegelian negative, are marked by thought’s employment of concepts outside the dynamic spatio-temporal milieu which take their form after the ideal problems that give rise to them, it is insofar as these illusions originate in a distorted conception of being that keeps the sensible away from conceptual thought. Deleuze’s critique of Kant in *Difference and Repetition* points to the faculties’ inclination for a discordant transcendent exercise, seeking autonomy and therefore in need of a regulative ideal to keep them in check, but also providing them with the unity they fundamentally lack, and without forcing upon them an affinity to truth (good or common sense) to which they are estranged.<sup>594</sup> This operation is essentially an attempt to

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<sup>592</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Bergson 1859-1941,” in DI 23, quoted in Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, 82.

<sup>593</sup> Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, 83.

<sup>594</sup> “Ideas are problems, but problems only furnish the conditions under which the faculties attain their superior exercise. Considered in this light, Ideas, far from having as their milieu a good sense or a common sense, refer to a para-sense which determines only the communication between disjointed faculties. Neither are they illuminated by a natural light: rather, they shine like differential flashes which leap and metamorphose” (DR 146). Such claims also appear in Deleuze’s “Idea of Genesis in Kant’s Esthetics”, published in the same year as his *Kant’s Critical Philosophy: the imagination schematizes and reason reasons simply because they are forced to do so by the schema and the understanding, and when “left to [their] own devices” the imagination and reason would do anything but schematize and reason. This already suggests that while speculative and practical purposes are forced on them from the outside, the faculties themselves are purely “problematic”,*



twist critical thought off its dogmatic moorings concerning the nature of being as the origin of truth, by demonstrating that Kant's conceptual work only serves to set limits on the immediate exchange thought has with problems, or more generally with the problematic nature of being.<sup>595</sup> Likewise, intensity as the sensible origin of problems is said to be covered or reduced to extensive quantities in Kant. Deleuze's critique of extensity is set on locating the internal problematic difference that was "lost" when Kant made the form-matter distinction of sensibility. With this move Kant is said to give primacy to space and time as an ideal extensive whole, over the actuality of the sensible as marked by intensive magnitudes.<sup>596</sup>

The fractured self, the discordant functioning of the faculties, the intensive field of individuation, all amount to an attempt to account for a genesis of Ideas qua problems in themselves, not in relation to objects of experience nor in relation to concepts of the understanding.<sup>597</sup> This endeavor is made obvious throughout *Difference and Repetition*, in statements such as: "that which can only be sensed (the *sentendum* or the being of the sensible) moves the soul, 'perplexes' it – in other words, forces it to pose a problem".<sup>598</sup> This establishes a fundamental problematic genesis of thought and sensibility as a reformed Kantianism: as the *Critique* clearly demonstrates, we move from a "problematic" operation

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revealing the underlying contingency of sensible object and thinking subject to which they are indifferent. See Gilles Deleuze, "The Idea of Genesis in Kant's Esthetics," in DI 57-58.

<sup>595</sup> As Kerslake argues, "For Deleuze (in a way similar to Hegel), 'experience' is never a given but is generated through developing and responding to problems. Experience has a problematic ground, and should always be seen as emerging from a problematic field. Thus, when Deleuze writes that 'the condition must be a condition of real experience, not of possible experience. It forms an intrinsic genesis, not an extrinsic conditioning', this 'real experience' should be understood as referring to experience considered as responding to (and generated from) a set of problems that are in themselves ideal" (Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, 83).

<sup>596</sup> See for example DR 230-231.

<sup>597</sup> Deleuze argues for example that in the wake of the experience of the sublime, "I rediscover my syntheses, but for a moment the horizon of knowledge will have been traversed by something which came from elsewhere, it was the eruption of the sublime which is not an object of knowledge" (Deleuze, "Cours Vincennes: Sur Kant, Cours du 04/04/1978"). Here Deleuze describes a discordant accord between the powers of imagination and the demands of reason bringing forward problems that cannot be thought nor imagined.

<sup>598</sup> DR 140.

of schematism and synthesis (constructing a concept in *a priori* intuition and applying it to an empirical state of affairs) to forming a problematic horizon for the exercise and activities of thought itself.

However, in Deleuze this shift is introduced as an incomplete one. Already in the problematic modality of the proposition, while it is effectively an extra-propositional characteristic of judgement – problematic, followed by assertoric and apodictic, are not different kinds of judgement, but rather different ways of judging an identically structured propositional content – it nevertheless involves “the illegitimate reduction of the [problem] to propositions of consciousness and to representations of knowledge”.<sup>599</sup> For Kant, a problematic modality of judgement is ultimately epistemically inferior, indicating the lowest level of the actuality of judgement and expressing the logical possibility of the proposition, while the assertoric expresses logical actuality and the apodictic expresses logical necessity. While these actualities affirm or negate the logical act of judgement rather than the truth of the object of judgement, they themselves have different modes of “truth”: opining, believing and knowing, respectively.

However, if “the object of an Idea, Kant reminds us, is neither fiction nor hypothesis nor object of reason” and is rather “an object which can be neither given nor known, but must be represented without being able to be directly determined”,<sup>600</sup> it must find another way of determination, and not simply as a modality of the concept. If the Idea can provide a systematic unity to the understanding, it does so in Kant through the similarity of appearances, in such a way that the Idea is determined by way of analogy to these appearances and their relations. As Deleuze argues, Kant’s determination of the Idea is essentially extrinsic and relative to the objects of experience, amounting to an unsatisfactory account of problems: the Idea as analogous possesses “the ideal of a complete and infinite

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<sup>599</sup> Ibid., 197

<sup>600</sup> Ibid., 169.

determination, since it ensures a specification of the concepts of the understanding, by means of which the latter comprise more and more differences on the basis of a properly infinite field of continuity”.<sup>601</sup>

Thus, we find here the same critique that Deleuze acquires from Hyppolite and Bréhier, that the Kantian transcendental operates under the empirical forms of representation. Here, this means for Deleuze that not only do we find a legitimate use of ideas in relation to concepts of the understanding, but that, conversely, these concepts “find the ground of their (maximum) experimental use only in the degree to which they are related to problematic Ideas”.<sup>602</sup> An “experimental” characteristic of problems (being both immanent and transcendent, creators of concepts, transmitted through a discordant accord of the faculties) cannot be shown strictly on the basis of Kantianism itself, and it is not an issue of proposing an “unrestrained” Kantianism, as already demonstrated. Deleuze once again aligns with Hyppolite: internal difference must be thought, even if it cannot be recognized in appearance, or in other words, the Kantian Idea must be determined in order to circumvent representation. Instead of an apodictic principle, Deleuze, as already mentioned, introduces the origin of ideas and problems as “throws of the dice, imperatives and questions of chance”, an answer which seems “disappointing”,<sup>603</sup> perhaps because it does not designate “speculative acts” but is rather a call for action (“living acts”).<sup>604</sup> Yet it amounts to an attempt to dissolve the “complicity of the negative and the hypothetical ... in favor of

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<sup>601</sup> Ibid.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid., 106. The very idea of a problematic unconscious being invested in living acts of questioning and throws of dice evokes the revolutionary impact of Kantianism itself. Finitude becomes constitutive at the same time that critique is understood as a positive enterprise in which their limitations are understood not as metaphysical, empirical or psychological but as preserving the field of reason from becoming relative to these domains. Thus, the act of critique is made in the name of reason, and its purpose is not to renounce all claims to external truths and knowledge of the world, nor is it a mere shift of the problem to other directions, but a turning back to the very formulations of problems and an attempt to make it the focus of investigation.

a more profound link between difference and the problematic”,<sup>605</sup> marking the difference between problematic and dialectic approaches: the dice-throw or “divine game” affirms the problem-Idea as an object of faith rather than knowledge and reason in general. We must believe that “the world is neither finite nor infinite”, but is rather both “completed and unlimited”.<sup>606</sup> Indeed, this can be seen as unsatisfactory, since Deleuze’s ambitions are to constitute a genesis of sensibility and thought through an ontology of a “dice-throw”.

Chapters four and five of *Difference and Repetition* elaborate a complex theme of the Hegelian negative as a “shadow of a problem” and later as the “false problem par excellence”,<sup>607</sup> establishing it as an “illusion of consciousness” against which “we must guard”, as it obscures problems and threatens thought from within.<sup>608</sup> As we have shown repeatedly, Deleuze attempts to demonstrate that the negative cannot be primary in philosophy and that it cannot comprise the ground for any philosophical position. With respect to the act of critique, this means that the very question of the unlimited accessibility of the thing-in-itself is made redundant, amounting to a false problem, hence the rise in the status of phenomena as the basis upon which knowledge is formed and endowed with sense. Deleuze recognizes as “the element of the Copernican Revolution”,<sup>609</sup> a revolution that would not be complete without reversing the relationship between problems and conceptual toil.<sup>610</sup>

Not for nothing, Deleuze provides an example of a “linguistic Idea” so as to demonstrate how the differential relations that comprise a problem are “more profound” than relations of negation. Language itself has a problematic nature which “objectively

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<sup>605</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>610</sup> “[S]olvability’ must depend upon an internal characteristic: it must be determined by the conditions of the problem, engendered in and by the problem along with the real solutions. Without this reversal, the famous Copernican Revolution amounts to nothing” (ibid., 162).

represents the set of problems which the language poses for itself, and solves in the constitution of significations”.<sup>611</sup> These efforts to debunk the negative and condemn its inadequacy to think difference once again affirm Hyppolite and his philosophy of sense as a “vanishing mediator” whose problems trouble his own thought, in the same manner as the dogmatic problems that Kant inherits from metaphysics continue to haunt him following the critique of the transcendental dialectic.

Recall that, for Hyppolite, spirit cannot overcome its contradictions and realize itself through the dialectic outside the proposition itself, where the synthesis of oppositions takes place. The Absolute expresses itself fully through the dialectical processes of language, and its sense amounts to the former’s self-constitution, sense being the “curtain” behind which there is nothing to see. Deleuze would agree with Hyppolite’s post-Heideggerian position, namely that sense is not only phenomenal or meaningful but ontological as well, that being is not only unveiled through its sense (as Heidegger argues) but that, in the last instance, being *is* sense. But he would of course reject the Hegelian mechanisms through which this conclusion is drawn and “immanence is complete”.<sup>612</sup>

Deleuze’s attempt to discredit this thesis unfolds in *The Logic of Sense* and in *Difference and Repetition*, which should be considered as Deleuze’s critical response to his teacher: in the notion of a “linguistic idea” Deleuze doubts, for example, linguistic theories that support the power of negative determinations, such as Saussure’s, which only finds differences that are “‘without positive terms’ and ‘eternally negative’”,<sup>613</sup> with Deleuze claiming that such a position deprives the “peculiar thickness in which [language’s] positivity is affirmed”,<sup>614</sup> echoing his own question at the end of his review of *Logic and Existence*: “is it the same thing

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<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 203-204. *The Logic of Sense* itself can be read as the unfolding of such problems that language itself poses for itself, discovering that sense itself (insofar as the term is borrowed from Hyppolite, with all its conceptual gravity) conceals its own secret in nonsense.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid., 205.

to say that Being expresses itself and that Being contradicts itself”,<sup>615</sup> which is itself suggestive of an irreducible equivocality of sense that endures in Hegel behind its apparent univocity. Since if contradiction is necessary to determine an identity from everything that it is not, the identity produced by this process of determination cannot express this “everything”, and therefore contradiction is not expressive difference.

Deleuze’s key departure from Hyppolite is marked in *The Logic of Sense* by the “discovery” of the thickness of non-sense. To claim that sense is everything, and that “the secret is that there is no secret”,<sup>616</sup> is unsatisfactory (just as Kant’s supposed discovery of sense as a transcendental condition is insufficient) because sense itself conceals its own secret in non-sense, which coexists along with sense.<sup>617</sup> This implicit critical argument against Hyppolite’s thesis is interwoven in both texts: beyond the forms of good and common sense which dictate the “direction” of sense and establishes it as an object of recognition (this constitutes Deleuze’s most explicit line of argument) there is non-sense which is the “ontological secret” of sense, ontological to the extent that it conforms to the form of an objective problem that good and common sense incessantly thwart.

The secret is that sense itself is nonsensical, but nonsense is problematic, since it is only by discovering the “real” problems (of language, for example) that we can disclose the illusions of reason which Hegelian metaphysics brings about, replacing them with a so-called actual “genesis” of thought: “the translation of difference into opposition seems to us to concern not a simple question of terminology or convention, but rather the essence of

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<sup>615</sup> Deleuze, “Jean Hyppolite’s *Logic and Existence*,” in DI 18.

<sup>616</sup> Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 90.

<sup>617</sup> Stephen Houlgate, for example, who is an avid critic of Deleuze’s critique of Hegel, is in complete agreement with Hyppolite concerning the status of sense in Hegel: “The structure of our thought and language is the structure of our world, and we have no standard of reference by which to judge the truth of the ontology to which our concepts commit us which does not itself rely on those concepts or which cannot at least itself be adequately stated in terms of those concepts” (Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 120).

language and the linguistic Idea. When difference is read as opposition, it is deprived of the peculiar thickness in which its positivity is affirmed”.<sup>618</sup> While the Idea itself “knows nothing of negation” as it is “identical with the description of a pure positivity, in the form of a problem ... which excludes all negative determination and find [its] source in the genetic or productive elements of affirmation”, every such problem “is always reflected in *false problems* while it is being solved, so that the solution is generally perverted by an inseparable falsity”.<sup>619</sup> Within this Deleuzian framework, the Hegelian negative produces false problems or a false understanding of problems because it corresponds to the actual instances of Being, to a phenomenal expression of Nature, God or the Absolute, and can only encounter a lesser degree of existence of Being as such.

But this only returns us back to thought’s natural stupor, its inability to think Being other than through acts of violence brought about by “signs”, “events” or “singularities”: “there is only involuntary thought, aroused but constrained within thought, and all the more absolutely necessary for being born, illegitimately, of fortuitousness in the world”.<sup>620</sup> As we have seen so far, Deleuze places his faith in this forced encounter as that which gives rise to both thought and sensibility, indicating that the “problematic” is not an isolable theory of an indeterminate, chaotic Being but is rather an orientation or position of thought. This is true for his analysis of Bergson, Nietzsche, Hume and particularly Kant, for whom the problematic is a horizon for thought, for judgement and for action. In this sense, we might say that Deleuze himself remains trapped in a similar problem to Kant’s: he is unable to render transparent problems as the origin of sensibility and thought, other than by appealing to an “outside” as the “miracle” that would allow thought to break with the model of recognition (good and common sense). Deleuze essentially reproduces Kant’s problem of

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<sup>618</sup> DR 205.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid., 207-208. “Negation appears alongside affirmation like a powerless double, albeit one which testifies to the existence of another power, that of the effective and persistent problem” (ibid., 267).

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., 139.

schematism by acknowledging the heterogeneity between two transcendental registers, the first aesthetic and intensive, accounting for the individuation of phenomena, the second “dialectic”, accounting for the ideal determination of phenomena.

As mentioned, Kant claimed that reason establishes Ideas as its inevitable problems, because its nature is to reach for the unconditioned condition (the noumenon) that can explain the conditioned. Kant, according to Deleuze, assigns a “will to know” (to know the unconditioned) to the transcendental I, a will that is fundamentally “good” as long as critique uncovers the illusions in which reason becomes entangled. When it does so, it evades illusions and remains “good” by accepting Ideas as the necessary horizon to expand and systematize empirical knowledge. However, Deleuze believes that Kant’s notion of problems is derived from a hypothetical proposition or a syllogism that cannot be proven in intuition, and that this position is misconstrued since propositions and syllogisms are merely the form of solutions for problems that are already conceived as given (the problem of the immortality of the soul, for example). This amounts to Deleuze’s principle thesis on the “problem”: that it must be defined separately from the solutions it yields, specifically from the form of the proposition.

While crediting Kant for being the first to provide problems with a transcendental position, Deleuze claims that Kant ended up subordinating it to representation, simply “analogous” to the unification of judgement.<sup>621</sup> What does a non-representational form of determination of the problematic Idea look like? Deleuze believes that since the true object of the Idea, the problem, is indeterminate and transcendent to its solutions, thought’s new

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<sup>621</sup> “What is strange about these principles [of the regulative use of Ideas], and what alone concerns us, is this: that they seem to be transcendental, and even though they contain mere ideas to be followed in the empirical use of reason, which reason can follow only asymptotically, as it were, i.e., merely by approximation, without ever reaching them, yet these principles, as synthetic propositions *a priori*, nevertheless have objective but indeterminate validity, and serve as a rule of possible experience, and can even be used with good success, as heuristic principles, in actually elaborating it; and yet one cannot bring about a transcendental deduction of them, which, as has been proved above, is always impossible in regard to ideas” (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B691-B692).



ideal is not knowledge (as Kant claims, an ideal that forces thought into illusions), but an indefinite process of “learning”:

In fact, the Idea is not the element of knowledge but that of an infinite “learning”, which is of a different nature to knowledge. ... [R]epresentation and knowledge are modelled entirely upon propositions of consciousness which designate cases of solution, but those propositions by themselves give a completely inaccurate notion of the instance which engenders them as cases, and which they resolve or conclude. By contrast, the Idea and “learning” express that extra-propositional or subrepresentative problematic instance: the presentation of the unconscious, not the representation of consciousness.<sup>622</sup>

The indeterminate nature of the object of learning does not indicate an inaccessibility, as Kant’s noumenon, but a “pure” difference that this object embodies (the difference between thought and the act of thinking). Thus, “infinite learning” in Deleuze becomes the process of thinking eternal recurrence: it is not an infinite progress towards a self-identical object that functions as an external limit (the good, the thing-in-itself), but an act that fulfills its own ideal every time it occurs (learning “for its own sake”), even though it must also repeat itself in order to affirm its object (the problem). As long as thought activates its “will to know” we cannot say it is thinking (rather, according to Deleuze, it is “recognizing”). However, if thought encounters an “unrecognizable” object, then this might afford an opportunity for it to forcibly think.

The fortuitous encounter that disappoints consciousness’ pre-reflexive empirical expectations becomes a sign that awakens thought, since the empirical failure of recognition uncovers the transcendental necessity to pose a problem. The “collapse” of the empirical conditions activates the transcendental conditions of thought, provided that such an “encounter” contains “intensive differences”. A sensible “sign” becomes the aesthetic element that forces thought, against its own will, to commence. But does this “infinite learning” amount to a satisfying solution to Kant’s noumenon that could compete with

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<sup>622</sup> DR 192.

Hegel's solution? Perhaps not, since the sign itself, the object of encounter, is not the problem itself, only an empirical phenomenon that points to the intensive difference that produces it. The sign only refers us again to an "outside" from which we draw our ability to think.

While the positive conception of problems might strike us as inadequate in *Difference and Repetition*, it is perhaps in his work with Guattari, particularly in *A Thousand Plateaus*, that we might find a more satisfying encounter with the "outside", insofar as its scope is far more ambitious than in Deleuze's early work: after Guattari, the outside is no longer simply "metaphysical", since it undermines territorial structures, regimes of signification and social classifications, stretching beyond the reach of such systems and placing them in question.

## Conclusion

We have traced a line of thought that began to unfold following Deleuze's critical encounter with his former teacher, Jean Hyppolite, an encounter that established the primary coordinates of Deleuze's intellectual trajectory. Deleuze set up the notion of philosophy as being essentially "problematic", with any ideal, empirical, transcendental or dialectical position being simply the expression of an extra-propositional element from which every such position derives its "sense", an extra-being that functions as the internal difference between being and thinking. This notion was introduced as a strategic attempt to foil Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence* as the final word of philosophy being a foundation or ontology of sense. Thus, any claim for absolute knowledge via dialectical processes was ruled out at the very outset – whether through Nietzsche's eternal recurrence, the overturning of Plato, Hume's theory of relations or the Kantian problematic Idea.

We have also demonstrated how the "problematic" was a point of tension between two opposing philosophical positions, namely of Guérault's quasi-scientific approach to philosophy that privileges the autonomy of conceptual systems and sees the philosopher as the "technologist" of such monumental systems and of Alquié's model driven by the ontological experience of an "encounter" that retains its own sense of ineffability with respect to conceptual thought. A problem is thus an "untimely" and ideal structure, which emerges from a particular epoch, but undermines its erosive effect by demonstrating its own evaluative qualities. And it is also the object of a "sense encounter" that breaks with any conceptual system in order to constitute a new relationship with (sensible) Being. Deleuze rejects the identification of problems both with questions posed by science, and with Heideggerian-style "questioning", and his ensuing compromise between the disparities of a "system" or "structure" and an "encounter" or an "experience", namely the idea of concepts themselves having a "sensible" origin, and, more radically, that both concepts and sensibility

can only be given “problematically”, is established all throughout his early work: In Bergson’s method of intuition, where a bespoke concept is tailored to accommodate the dimensions of a sensible object’s internal “tendency” or its being; in the problematization of empiricism via Hume, where the concepts of causality, of the world and the self are formed by going beyond the given and the known; and in the development of the “intensive” in Kant, in which minute perceptions give rise to the “being of the sensible”, which becomes the horizon for all concept formation.

Lastly, we have shown how Deleuze have picked up Wahl’s philosophical projects: the empirical reaction to Hegel, the notions of the “concrete” and of “transcendence”, and his existential empiricism. Following Wahl, Deleuze develops a “meta-empirical empiricism” that places empiricism in question in the attempt to save it from Hegelian critique, by following a philosophical thread that attempts to “deny ... the intelligibility of being”.<sup>623</sup> Being becomes an obscured problem, at the same time that empiricism discovers a “thickness” of sensibility that does not simply follow the determinations of the concept.

But instead of affirming Deleuze’s ultimate triumph in departing from the dialectic and basking in the possibilities of a post-Hegelian thought, all of these attempts at a renegotiation of the stakes for a new philosophical generation point to the limitations of Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism, i.e. the “transcendental encounter” as a reformed Kantianism that is supposed to overcome the limitations of Kant’s critical project and more generally the discrepancies between experience and concepts. Furthermore, the very nature of Deleuze’s engagement with Hegel, Nietzsche, Bergson, Hume and Kant, and the original philosophy he formulates from these engagements, should be reconsidered in light of these strains in Deleuze’s thought: the question concerning the historical and existential genesis of the philosophical act, whether via Alquié’s “chronological” reading of certain philosophers,

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<sup>623</sup> Wahl, *Transcendence and the Concrete*, 39.

establishing a time comprised of ontological experiences and encounters with signs that force the philosopher to rethink being, or Guérault's preoccupation with the history of philosophy as the succession of systems, covers Deleuze's early work as a whole, yet largely remains obscured by questions concerning Deleuze's status as a Kantian, a Bergsonian, a Nietzschean, etc., leaving us within the purview of what is essentially a Deleuzian discourse (the rejection of transcendence, the displacement of identity from the center of thought, the rediscovery of the freedom and vitality of thought).

Hyppolite's presence in Deleuze's thought provides us with an extensive critical overture through which we have attempted to render explicit the more refined and implicit strategic gestures in Deleuze's text, before the leap was made from critical apprehensions to "new possibilities of existence" or "thought as action" that *Difference and Repetition* celebrates and concludes with. If his texts can be read strategically, it is to the extent that they remain close to Hyppolite in that they attempt to account for the journey from the concrete to the ideal (and back) and by doing so to close the gap between the two (the extraction of sense or the event from the proposition in *The Logic of Sense*, the process of ideal synthesis of difference and the intensive synthesis of the sensible in *Difference and Repetition*), a journey made possible by first distancing philosophy from the empirical, the psychological and the subjective. A "problematic" approach to philosophy, one which embraces the notion that philosophy is ontology, but rejects that this would amount to an isolable theory of being, resolves the difficulties with which Hyppolite's work ends (the unresolved tensions between logic and existence, genesis and structure) into a problem or an Idea. What comes before sensual or conceptual determinations is a position from which such determinations may ensue, a problem that associates active determinations of thought and sensibility, with their indeterminacy, the indeterminate serving as the limit of determination, the outside of thought necessary for its freedom. The problem of logic and existence is posed by Deleuze in terms of what it presupposes and what provides it with sense, so that we can only speak of thought

and being in those instances where they confront their own limits and separations, the unthought and the non-actual that become a site of transformation for the very meaning of both sides of the dividing line. But once again, by refusing to choose a side, Deleuze finds himself designating the problem as the object of belief.

These realizations, however, also provide new possibilities of future inquiry: while Alquié, Guérout and Hyppolite's importance has been acknowledged in the French speaking world,<sup>624</sup> very little of their work has been translated into English, and therefore a lacuna has developed in understanding the formation of twentieth-century French thought within the English-speaking world. As mentioned, this lacuna has allowed the widespread conception according to which Deleuze's reading of Bergson, Hume and Kant, was strictly his own, supposedly reflecting an immediate exchange between Deleuze and the objects of his analysis, a conception we have attempted to challenge.

This could be further elaborated by turning to Deleuze's *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, originally a secondary thesis of Deleuze's PhD, supervised by Alquié (titled *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*). On the one hand, Deleuze is deeply affected by his advisor, and acknowledges how Alquié's diachronic method had allowed him to understand the importance of Spinoza's "common notions",<sup>625</sup> and to realize the "virtuality or potentiality" in Nature which Descartes had devalued, two essential themes that run throughout the book.<sup>626</sup> On the other hand, Deleuze is also set on realizing the "genetic" and "synthetic" nature of Spinoza's concepts of Substance and Attributes. This idea is thoroughly developed in Guérout's *Spinoza I: Dieu*, a book released almost simultaneously to Deleuze's book on Spinoza, and which was chiefly motivated by an attempt to correct various misreadings of Spinoza, particularly the one made by Hegel.

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<sup>624</sup> See for example the recent *Jean Hyppolite, entre structure et existence*, that credits Hyppolite with forming an "intellectual constellation" (Giuseppe Bianco, ed. *Jean Hyppolite, entre structure et existence* (Paris: Éditions rue d'Ulm 2013)).

<sup>625</sup> EPS 292.

<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

Meanwhile, *Expressionism in Philosophy* can also be seen as yet another Deleuzian response to *Logic and Existence*, by suggesting that the term “expression” is an alternative to Hegel’s Concept, as the means through which a fully immanent ontology can be achieved, where every aspect of being is transparently expressed, a consideration that has already been endorsed by several commentators.<sup>627</sup> Without a doubt, there is much evidence still buried in Deleuze’s texts that points to the work of his contemporaries, and to these discreet problems with which he is engaged. By uncovering these problems, we find the names “Spinoza”, “Hegel” and “Kant” to be subservient to various strategies of philosophizing and critique, all of which can give way to new methodological questions.

As Deleuze chose to go back to “modern philosophy”, to Descartes, Hume, Leibniz, Spinoza and Kant – an unlikely and somewhat “anachronistic” choice, given the fact that *Difference and Repetition* is considered a direct response to Heidegger and to phenomenology in general – so can a return to Hyppolite’s generation be made today, for similar reasons. One can identify an “event” taking place in both of these distinct periods, the relevance of which has yet to die out. This relevance has been demonstrated in the ongoing preoccupation with Foucault’s “dividing line”, with the question of where precisely to place this line still being debated today, by both philosophers and commentators. With respect to Deleuze, however, this question can be understood as “a turning away, a certain tiredness, a certain distress between friends”,<sup>628</sup> a little *ressentiment* towards his teachers that underlies the pleasure of concept-production and the joyous paths that *Difference and Repetition* pave, an event where the problems these authors left for philosophy are decomposed and created anew.

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<sup>627</sup> Kerslake, for example, believes that in *Expressionism in Philosophy* is where the “fullest flowering of an alternative model of immanent self-differentiation can be found, one that fulfils [Hyppolite’s] criteria ... while transforming it through a notion of difference without contradiction” (Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, 34). Similar to what we have suggested, Kerslake argues that since Deleuze sees (Hyppolite’s) Hegel as his only philosophical rival, he finds it more productive to “enact a philosophical construction of absolute immanence” (ibid.) through Spinoza’s text, rather than discuss Hegel with respect to Spinoza.

<sup>628</sup> WP 5

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**[KCP]**

- *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. **[NP]**

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