



ENCOUNTERS WITH DELEUZE: AN INTERVIEW WITH CONSTANTIN V. BOUNDAS AND DANIEL W. SMITH

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This interview, conducted over the span of several months, tracks the respective journeys of Constantin V. Boundas and Daniel W. Smith with the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. Rather than “becoming Deleuzian,” which is neither desirable nor possible, these exchanges reflect an array of encounters with Deleuze. These include the initial discoveries of Deleuze’s writings by Boundas and Smith, in-person meetings between Boundas and Deleuze, and the wide-ranging and influential philosophical work on Deleuze’s concepts produced by both Boundas and Smith. At stake in this discussion are key contributions by Deleuze to continental philosophy, including the distinction between the virtual and the actual and the very nature of a “concept.” Also at stake is the formative or pedagogical impact of a philosopher, like Deleuze, on those who find and fully engage with his texts, concepts, and project.

Cette interview, menée sur plusieurs mois, suit les parcours respectifs de Constantin V. Boundas et Daniel W. Smith avec la philosophie de Gilles Deleuze. Au lieu de « devenir Deleuzien, » ce qui n’est ni souhaitable ni possible, ces échanges reflètent un éventail de rencontres avec Deleuze. Il s’agit notamment des premières découvertes des écrits de Deleuze par Boundas et Smith, des rencontres en personne entre Boundas et Deleuze, et du travail philosophique vaste et influent sur les concepts de Deleuze produit par Boundas et Smith. L’enjeu ici étant les contributions clés de Deleuze à la philosophie continentale, y compris la distinction entre le virtuel et l’actuel, et la nature même d’un « concept. » Mais il y a aussi l’impact formateur ou pédagogique d’un philosophe, comme Deleuze, sur ceux qui trouvent et s’engagent pleinement dans ses textes, ses concepts et ses projets.

Introduction

Ada S. Jaarsma (ASJ): Thank you for participating in this interview, an exchange carried out asynchronously over email about the turns, perhaps surprising or significant in unexpected ways, by which you each became philosophers of the writings of Gilles Deleuze. I'm hoping that readers of this interview will glimpse insights into the philosophical work itself, especially in terms of the choices that animate and make possible the emergence of new and productive thinking.

I would like to begin with a brief introduction for readers in order to situate your work in the context of contemporary continental philosophy. Constantin V. Boundas, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Trent University, is the philosopher, translator, and editor who, in many ways, introduced the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze to the North American continental philosophical community. Costas's elucidations of Deleuze's philosophy, alongside his edited collections that bring Deleuze into conversation with key historical and contemporary theorists, have been incalculably important to scholars, students, and those seeking to navigate the complexities of Deleuze's work.¹ Daniel W. Smith, Professor of Philosophy at Purdue University, is also a pre-eminent translator, editor, and interlocutor of Deleuze's philosophical writings.² Dan's work has had tremendous impact on the way philosophers understand Deleuze's relationship to the history of philosophy, to systems-thinking and mathematics, and to questions related to methods, reading, and concept-creation.

¹ Examples include Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, (tr.) M. Lester with C. Stivale, (ed.) C. V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, (tr.) C. V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski, eds., *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Constantin V. Boundas, ed., *Schizoanalysis and Ecosophy: Reading Deleuze and Guattari* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

² Examples include Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, (tr.) D. W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Daniel W. Smith, *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

Encountering Deleuze

ASJ: What led you to the writings of Gilles Deleuze? Where were you, geographically and institutionally, when you began to read and study Deleuze's work as the major focus of your intellectual life?

Daniel W. Smith (DWS): I discovered Deleuze's writings largely by chance. I had just started graduate school at the University of Chicago in the early 1980s when Deleuze's book *Nietzsche and Philosophy* was published in English translation.³ I had been reading Nietzsche voraciously, quite apart from my coursework, and I found Deleuze's interpretation of Nietzsche's work as a "system" to be a *tour de force*. I knew of Deleuze's name from books such as Vincent Descombes's *Modern French Philosophy*, which had characterized Deleuze's work as "that remarkable point of modern metaphysics which all preceding discourse had indicated like a flickering compass"—high praise from a largely unsympathetic commentator.⁴ Intrigued, I sought out Deleuze's other writings. Chicago's superb library had almost all Deleuze's books, but only three others had been translated: *Proust and Signs*, *Masochism*, and *Anti-Oedipus*.⁵ I read the first two but found *Anti-Oedipus* opaque. Yet I distinctly recall taking the French edition of *Difference and Repetition* off the shelf, its spine uncracked, and I spent considerable time reading it in the stacks.⁶ My French was rather rudimentary at the time, but I decided then and there that I would work at perfecting my French, in part so I could read *Difference and Repetition*.

Constantin V. Boundas (CVB): I have never become Deleuzian, despite the fact that, like Dan, I spent my life trying to understand and teach his philosophy. There is no becoming Deleuzian; there is becoming minor, becoming woman, becoming imperceptible, but not becoming Deleuzian. Becoming is never imitating. Deleuze once said

³ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, (tr.) H. Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

⁴ See Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 136–90; 136 quoted in the text.

⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, (tr.) R. Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*, (tr.) J. McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1991); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (tr.) R. Hurley, M. Seem, and H. R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, (tr.) P. Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as DR.

that working with Plato's lines of escape can only mean that we make use of these lines that he was the first to trace in order to formulate possible solutions for problems and answers to questions which have never been his own. Encountering Deleuze must only mean encountering "him" in his becoming other than himself. My own encountering takes me back to the late 1970s. I am in Paris on a research sabbatical, struggling to save (for the sake of my own work) the structuralists from the pseudo-reconciliatory stance of Paul Ricœur, but also to find ways to rid myself of the bad habit I had acquired of imitating Jacques Derrida's constant throat clearing, as if I too was braced to say something momentous, but never quite made it. I remember the moment: I was strolling along rue Cujas, next to the Sorbonne, and in the window of the bookstore of a North African with an excellent taste for books neighboring the Grand Hotel Saint Michel, I saw Gilles Deleuze's *Différence et répétition*, lodged among his other texts which had been published by this time. I had not read Deleuze until that moment, but by the end of my stroll I had begun to suspect that I was missing something important—the bookstores of the Quartier latin were all displaying him, in prominence. I returned to rue Cujas and bought a copy. My first reading of it, during the next three days, in my unadorned but history-laden room of the Fondation Deutsch de la Meurthe, was enough to convince me that this book was the perfect remedy to the hiccups coming from the rue d'Ulm. From this first reading, I remember the jolt I received when I reached the wonderful, "*We do not repeat because we repress, we repress because we repeat*" (DR, 16). As strange as this sounds even to me now, this bold statement not only made me see myself in a new light (so, our adult loves do not repeat the love for our mothers nor the envy of the penis), but it also gave me a new perspective on my teaching (it is then possible to discuss a text in our class, without being obliged first to settle the debate as to whether or not meaning could be separated from significance). A little later on, I read this book again and again, with the precious help of François Laruelle (the finest reader of Deleuze at the time), not to mention his books and the Nanterre seminars to which I will remain for ever indebted.⁷ No one seems to remember it anymore, but it was Laruelle who called the theory leaping from the pages of *Différence et répétition* "minor or minoritarian deconstruction," and its amplification in later works "libidinal hermeneutics." And he was correct on both counts—

⁷ François Laruelle, *Le Déclin de l'écriture* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1977) and *Principe de minorité* (Paris: Aubier, 1981).

his, I still think, was the perfect riposte to Derrida's major deconstruction, and to the "beautiful soul" of Ricœur.

Ever since that time, I have maintained that *Différence et répétition* is the key that opens the door to Deleuze's entire work. Any serious investigation of his contribution to epistemology, ethics, the arts, politics, and the political requires a previous grasp of his ontology of difference, of his *sui generis* deconstructive thinking that resonates within this ontology, and of the immanence upon which his deconstructive thinking has been built. A serious reading of this book prevents the temptation to consider Deleuze's encounter with Félix Guattari in the late '60s as the beginning of a "turn" towards the aestheticisation of politics and the glorification of the drive. *Différence et répétition*, besides the deconstruction of the image of thought that dominates the history of philosophy, proposes a thought without image which is not consumed by the recognition of the given, but dares to create the new and the not yet familiar. It makes possible the transcendence of the sterile disputes between idealism and materialism and opts instead for a Spinoza-driven naturalism, casting Ideas in the role of structures/problems and holding matter as the aggregate of intensive forces on their way to being relaxed and creating becoming. It posits a new and challenging theory of time that permits an untimely critique and motivates the creativity of counter-actualisation. The book brings together Hume (habit), Plato (*mnemosyne*), Bergson (*durée*), and Nietzsche (eternal return of the different) and, based as it is on the empty form of time and differentiating repetition proclaims the coming (*à venir*) of the people of difference—a coming that never is but nevertheless subsists on and insists in the virtual side of becoming.⁸

When is Thinking

ASJ: A wonderful collection that Dan co-edited, *Between Deleuze and Foucault*, includes an essay in which Michel Foucault states, "We must think problematically, rather than question and answer dialectically."⁹ What "problems" preoccupied you at that time, such that

⁸ Parts of the above section will appear in an early 2020 special edition of *The Deleuze and Guattari Studies*.

⁹ Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philosophicum," in *Between Deleuze and Foucault*, (ed.) N. Morar, T. Naill, and D. W. Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 50.

Deleuze proffered salient or generative resources for your thinking and writing?

DWS: Deleuze says that there is always a double reading of philosophical texts: a conceptual reading and an affective reading. From this viewpoint, my initial reading of Deleuze was largely affective. I could not explain Deleuze's concepts, or even the problems they were dealing with, but his books nonetheless produced an affect that they were addressing something important. The concept of "difference" was in the air, for instance, partly because of Derrida's fame; but apart from knowing it was opposed to the principle of identity, I would have been hard pressed to say why it had become a dominant problem. I think there exists something that one might call philosophical taste: one discovers a taste for certain authors or certain problems. It's important to find the authors that one loves, just as it's important to find companions that one loves.

Of all the problems addressed by Deleuze's philosophy, perhaps the one that most captivated me early on was precisely the nature of problems themselves. We usually think of problems as obstacles to be overcome on our way to knowledge. This is how exams work: the teacher poses questions, and students are judged by their ability to find the correct response. But already in his earliest works, Deleuze showed that while it's easy to define truth and falsity in relation to solutions, it is much more difficult to distinguish the true and the false at the level of problems, that is, to distinguish between well-posed and badly-posed questions. Every teacher has the experience of students contesting grades because of an ill-formed question that they understood differently than the teacher intended. The same happens in philosophy. Philosophy is not a series of attempts to answer eternal questions, but rather a posing of new problems, and beyond that, a critique of false and badly formed problems. Kant, for instance, said that the soul, the world, and God were "problems without solutions." Bergson catalogued the false problems derived from the use of negation. Wittgenstein sought to dissolve what he considered to be pseudo-problems in philosophy "like a lump of sugar in water." The list could go on.

The most famous philosophical question is no doubt the one relentlessly posed by Socrates, the "What is...?" question: "What is beauty? What is courage? What is justice?" Plato wanted to oppose this form of questioning to all other forms, such as "Who? When? Where? How? How many? Which one? In which case? From what point of view?" When Socrates asked, "What is beauty?" his interlocutors often responded by pointing to an example of beauty ("a young

virgin”), and Socrates triumphed. You cannot reply to the question “What is beauty?” by noting *who* is beautiful, just as one cannot answer the question “What is justice?” by pointing to *when* or *where* there is justice, and one cannot reach the essence of the dyad by explaining *how* “two” is obtained, and so on. To answer the question “What is beauty?” we must not point to beautiful things, which are only beautiful accidentally, but to Beauty itself, that which is beautiful in its being and essence. The “What is...?” question thus presupposes a particular way of thinking that points us in the direction of essence; it is the only question of discovering an “Idea.”

Deleuze persistently critiqued the “What is...?” question, not necessarily for being a false problem but for giving rise to a false metaphysics. In his book *Proust and Signs*, he contrasted Proust with Socrates. “Who in fact searches for the truth?” Proust asked. Is it the “friend” of wisdom, like Socrates, exercising a natural desire for the truth by exploring a “What is...?” question in conversation with others? Or rather, is not a better model for the seeker after truth to be found in the *jealous lover* who, under the pressure of their beloved’s lies, is involuntarily forced to confront a lived problem? The question the jealous lover asks is not “What is jealousy?” but the very types of minor questions Plato rejected: “What happened? With whom? When? Where? How?” Deleuze goes against an entire tradition in philosophy by saying that these minor questions are in fact the essential questions that philosophy should be posing, even and above all for discovering essences, since it makes essences themselves depend on the spatio-temporal and material coordinates of problems that are immanent to experience. The fact that philosophers continue to pose the “What is...?” question with such persistence makes evident the stubbornness of the metaphysics that very question gave rise to.

In *Difference and Repetition*, this focus on problems takes on a more technical aspect. One of Deleuze’s recurring themes is “to have done with judgment,” that is, to have done with the appeal to judgments or propositions as models for thought. Philosophers are understandably interested in truth, but the only things that have a truth value are declarative judgments or statements. In *Difference and Repetition*, differential equations replace the model of judgment. As Bertrand Russell once said, almost all “laws of nature” are now expressed as differential equations, which thus must be seen as a fundamental means of exploring the nature of reality. Calculus thus provides Deleuze with a completely different approach to metaphysics, and what one discovers in calculus is that one can set up a differential equation without being able to solve it: the problem is inde-

pendent of its solution. Indeed, there are relatively few differential equations that can be solved explicitly, but the equations nonetheless lay out the problem. Calculus, in other words, provides Deleuze with a means of exploring the nature of problems from a mathematical point of view. To give one example: Poincaré, in an 1881 essay that anticipated chaos theory, showed that there are “singularities” (nodes, saddles, foci, centers) that govern in a qualitative manner the conditions of the problem determined by a differential equation. In a very general manner, one could say that Deleuze’s project in *Difference and Repetition* is to replace the categories derived from judgments (substance, property, causality, possibility, etc.) with an entirely different set of metaphysical notions derived from mathematics (and not only calculus, but also other domains such as group theory and non-Euclidian geometry): substance is replaced by multiplicity, causal relations with differential relations, possibility with virtuality, the universal/particular distinction with the singular/regular distinction, and so on.

Deleuze once characterized himself as a “pure metaphysician,” and he had little affinity with the Heideggerian (or positivistic) theme of overcoming metaphysics. If the old metaphysics is a bad one, he said, then we simply need to construct a new metaphysics. Like Bergson and Whitehead before him, Deleuze insisted that one of the perpetual tasks of philosophy is to construct a metaphysics commensurate with contemporary science and mathematics. But this is where payoff occurs, so to speak. For if we asked Deleuze the nature of his metaphysics, or the nature of “Being,” or the nature of ultimate reality, his response would be, “*Being is a problem.*” We do not “know” the nature of reality; rather Being always presents itself to us under a problematic form, as a series of problematizations. In turn, philosophical concepts, scientific functions, and even artistic creations are so many solutions to those problematizations, which themselves generate more problems. It is in this sense that the concept of the problem is one of the “essential” notions in Deleuze’s metaphysics.

CVB: Let us indeed be certain that, in our discussions of Deleuze’s work, we have eliminated the traces of ontology that the “what is x?” question tends to convey; “when is thinking?” and “who is thinking?” would be better starting points. Throughout Deleuze’s writings, the struggle with this question goes on with the same intensity, but it is in the third chapter of his *Différence et répétition* and in many series of his *Logique du sens* that we have a sustained and robust meditation that synthesizes the lessons that his previous libidinal

hermeneutic reading of Hume, Nietzsche, Kant, and Bergson has made available to him. The meditation begins with a disclosure of the circumstances which prevent thinking from being deployed and freezes it in its tracks: whenever thinking is limited to and confused with recognition and representation (as it has been in the traditional image of thought where common sense and good sense prevail), *doxa* is inevitably mistaken for *episteme*. It is when the *sensum*, the souvenir, and the concept, in other words, the data of the normal empirical function of our noetic capacities, constitute the foundation of our thinking, that thinking is betrayed. In a bold appropriation (which is also a critique) of the Kantian doctrine of our mental faculties, Deleuze assigns to all of them, next to their empirical function, a transcendental function. Here, the functions focus not on that which is, but rather on that which ought to be in order for the “is” to be what it is. In the place of the *sensum*, the *sentiendum*, in the place of the souvenir, the *memorandum*, in the place of the *cogitatum*, the *cogitandum*.¹⁰ It is in this transcendental exercise of the faculties, where *gerundiva* stand for the faculties’ objects, in which the answer to the “when is thinking?” question lies. We sense, remember, and conceive extended objects, but in order to account for what makes them possible to be and to become, we must grasp their *sentiendum*—the intensity, that is, of the related forces, the kind of object which is not given to the empirical exercise of our noetic faculties but is (and can only be) the object of their transcendental exercise. This of course presupposes that we do not confuse the transcendental with the transcended. The extended forces responsible for the genesis of the extended world do not subsist in a realm of reality which is separate from it; they exist and act only in our empirical world, without ever being confused with it. Deleuze’s ontology is flat; radical immanence is its *raison d’être*.

Thinking, consequently, is the hunt for the *gerundiva*: it is the attempt to reach that which we ought to sense, we ought to remember, we ought to imagine, we ought to conceive; and this quest for the *gerundiva* is not rudderless, it resembles the fuse of a dynamite stick. It has a direction, it goes from the *sentiendum* to the *cogitandum*. No Idea in the mind without a prior stirring of the senses in their hunt

¹⁰ In Latin grammar, these are all substantive adjectives. The -um endings are passive participles – e.g., *cogitatum*: “that which is thought.” The -ndum endings are gerundives, or *gerundiva* in Latin, which have no direct English counterpart, but are translated as a future passive participle with an implied sense of obligation – e.g., *cogitandum*: “that which ought to be thought” or “that which is to be thought.”

for the *sentendum*. (And we do not have in this primacy of the *sentendum* the return of materialism. If a return it should be, it is the return of naturalism: one substance or better one *chaosmos* [matter or mind], *Deus sive Natura!*) It is worth mentioning that Deleuze does not support the view that thinking represents a natural human inclination. Seldom do we think and when we do, we think as a result of “fundamental (novel and paradoxical) encounters” that wake us up from our doxic slumber, showing us that recognition cannot succeed when representation fails.

Now, the fundamental encounter alone does not give us the means to reach the kind of *cogitandum* that would not be haphazard and arbitrary. For the encounter to be productive, Deleuze demands that thinking establish a *sui generis* alignment with the “event” and a fidelity to the coordinates of the imbrication of that which he calls “virtual” with that which he calls “actual.” But what is an event and what is the virtual?

I find in Deleuze’s essay, “May ‘68 didn’t happen,” the best answer, and I permit myself to quote a long extract from it:

In historical phenomena such as the revolution of 1789, the Commune, the revolution of 1917, there is always one part of the *event* that is irreducible to any social determinism, or the causal chains. Historians are not very fond of this aspect: they restore causality, after the fact. Yet, the event is itself a splitting off from, or a breaking with causality; it is a bifurcation, a deviation with respect to laws, an unstable condition which opens up a new field of the possible.... In this sense, an event can be turned around, repressed, coopted, betrayed, but there still is something there that cannot be outdated.... May ‘68 is more of the order of a pure event, free of all the normal, or normative causality.... There were a lot of agitations, gesticulations, slogans, idiocies, illusions in 1968, but this is not what counts. What counts is what amounted to a visionary phenomenon, as if society suddenly saw what was intolerable in it and also saw the possibility for something else.... The possible does not pre-exist, it is created by the event. The event creates a new existence, it produces a new subjectivity (new relationship with the body, with time, sexuality, the immediate surroundings, with culture, work...). When a social mutation appears, it is not enough to draw the consequences or effects according to lines of economic or political causality. Society must be capable of forming collective agencies of enunciation that match

the new subjectivity, in such a way that it desires the mutation. That's what it is, a veritable counter-actualization.¹¹

What is at stake in this text is the distinction between states of affairs and events, which is crucial for the answer to the "when is thinking?" question. It is the point where Deleuze's ontology meets his epistemology. States of affairs are assemblages of facts whose proximity and homogeneity are due to the causal relationships that exist among them and to the fact that different states of affairs express, as they materialize it, the same event. A different series of states of affairs will result from the materialization of a different event. An event is something extraordinary, something outside the series, which marks the turning point of a direct line, generated by another event and prolonged through a series of homogeneous states of affairs.

In Deleuze's ontology, the virtual and the actual are two mutually exclusive, yet jointly sufficient, characterizations of the real. States of affairs (bodies, their mixtures and individuals existing in the present) are actual. Events, on the other hand, are virtual. The virtual and the actual are both real. Deleuze writes, that events

can be said to have a double structure. On the one hand, there is necessarily the present moment of its actualization: the event "happens" and gets embodied in a state of affairs and in an individual.... Here the time of the event, its past and future, are evaluated from the perspective of this definitive present and actual embodiment. On the other hand, the event continues to "live on," enjoying its own past and future, haunting each present.¹²

The virtual (which should not be confused with the possible), without being or resembling an actual *x*, has the capacity (the *virtus*) to bring about *x* without, in being actualized, ever coming to coincide or to identify itself with, to be depleted or exhausted in the *x*.

As for the kind of process that characterizes Deleuze's ontology and his becoming, it is not properly captured in the scheme, actual/real → actual/real. Its correct schematization is rather this: virtual/real → actual/real → virtual/real. In other words, becoming, instead of being a linear process from one actual to another, should rather be conceived as the movement from an actual state of affairs,

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze, "May '68 Did Not Take Place," in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995* (New York: Semiotext(e)), 233–34.

¹² Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 151.

through a dynamic field of virtual/real tendencies, to the actualization of this field in a new state of affairs (DR, 208–21). This leap from the actual to the virtual and back to the actual will have to be performed each time that there is thinking understood as the search for the *cogitandum*. Deleuze calls it counter-actualization. One more thing: it is best to think of the virtual in terms of tendencies, provided that we remember also to say that tendencies exist in what is actual. It is important not to confuse the virtuality of tendencies with Plato's ideational Being: the emphasis that Deleuze places on materiality would by itself be a convincing reminder. The virtual can be apprehended only at the end of a chain reaction starting with sensation, affecting all faculties, and orchestrating their resonance in a kind of discordant harmony.

Thinking is the hunt for the gerundivum, originating with the jolt of the fundamental encounter and pursued, from *gerundivum* to *gerundivum*, in a never-ending process that seeks the counter-actualization of the present for the sake of the atemporal events. Thinking is counter-actualizing, searching for the “discordant harmony” of the objects of the *gerundiva*. This process is not spearheaded by phantasms of Reason regulating the understanding (Kant), but by the eternal repetition of the archive of a cosmic memory, being reshaped and differentiated by the impact of novel events, new lines of flight, and new actualizations (Nietzsche and Bergson). However, the tendencies in the virtual retain the irreducibly problematic nature of the Kantian Ideas. Tendencies are problems, indeed, problems waiting to be solved. But, as Dan argues very well, it is the mistake of our traditional image of thought to ground *mathesis* on solutions, to disregard the fact that the ability to solve problems and the truth of the solution depends on the best possible formulation of the problem. It is equally a mistake to disregard that problems often have no final solutions because the partial solution of a problem transforms the problem back again into a tendency.

On Transcendental Stupidity and the Fight against Clichés

ASJ: Are these problems still a source of thinking and work, for you? Foucault's essay that I cited above is a review of the book by Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*; its publication in English, edited by Costas, was instrumental in bringing Deleuze's work into conversation with

North American continental philosophy.¹³ In this review, Foucault points out, “*The Logic of Sense* could have as a subtitle: *What is Thinking?*”¹⁴ Reflecting on your turn to the writings of Deleuze, years ago, what do you notice or discover about what the act or process of *thinking* entails? Is there a description you’d be willing to offer, perhaps related to methodology or pedagogy or other key aspects of philosophical labour, of what thinking has meant in the context of your own work?

DWS: Our usual habit is to associate thinking with consciousness: we are thinking when we are aware of the thoughts passing through our head. But as Nietzsche noted, the most perfect thinkers are those whose thought has been incorporated into their body: typists, pianists, athletes. In these cases, consciousness intervenes only when one *lacks* knowledge, when one has to look at the keypad or consult the score. Thinking, in other words, must be separated from consciousness.

On this score, there’s a fascinating passage in one of Deleuze’s seminars on Leibniz in which he imagines a “universal thought flow” that traverses the universe, and he suggests that a concept is a system of singularities extracted from this flow of thought.¹⁵ This idea is not as strange as it might initially seem. Spinoza famously wrote, in a similar vein, that “there is in Nature an infinite power of thinking.”¹⁶ The fact is that we are neither the origin nor the author of the many thoughts that come and go in our heads. A thought comes when “it” wants, not when “I” want. The thought flow is something anonymous, impersonal, and indeterminate, and “I” am certainly more a spectator than an originator of the movement of thought. Spinoza and Leibniz both suggested that we are “spiritual automatons”—it is not *we* who think, but rather thought that takes place in us.

But what exactly is the usual status of the thought flow? Deleuze has coined a curious concept to describe it: stupidity (*bêtise* in French). *Stupidity is a structure of thought as such*, and to a certain degree it is a basic structure of the universal thought flow. The thoughts that flow through our heads are neither falsehoods nor errors; every one of them may be true, but they are nonetheless

¹³ See Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*.

¹⁴ Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum,” 46.

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Charles J. Stivale, “Vincennes Session of April 15, 1980, Leibniz Seminar,” *Discourse*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1998): 77–97.

¹⁶ See Spinoza, Letter 32, to Oldenburg, November 20, 1665, in *Spinoza: The Complete Works*, (tr.) S. Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 849.

stupidities, inanities. There is obviously a provocation involved in Deleuze's use of the term stupidity, but other philosophers have made a similar point by appealing to different concepts. Heidegger spoke of idle talk or idle chatter, and the fact that, most of the time, our thoughts are the thoughts of what "They" think (*Das Man*). Plato spoke of the reign of the *doxa* or the realm of opinion, and he saw the task of philosophy as the attempt to break with the *doxa*, to extract oneself from opinion.

Yet the point remains the same: the thoughts that pass through our heads are "stupidities" that are determined, often, by the inanity of the culture that surrounds us. Is it not the aim of marketing and advertising to modify the thought flow and to populate it with anonymous thoughts about making one's laundry brighter or one's teeth whiter? For Deleuze, the misadventure that constantly threatens thinking is not error or falsehood, but stupidity, whether in the form of clichés, ready-made ideas, conventions, or opinions. William James said that what prevents the creation of truth are the truths we think we already possess. Heidegger wrote a book entitled *What is Called Thinking?* in which he wrote that "what is most thought provoking in our thought-provoking time is the fact that *we are not yet thinking*."¹⁷

The fundamental problem of thought then becomes: given the fact that we usually only think ready-made banalities, what is the process that might constitute an act of *creation* within the realm of thought? One can already sense Deleuze's response: thinking is always engendered through the fortuitousness of an encounter with a *problem*, under the form of an intensity that does violence to ready-made conventions, and which alone guarantees the necessity of what it forces us to think. If Deleuze always considered himself to be an empiricist, it is because, on the path which leads to that which is to be thought, everything begins with sensibility.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze shows that philosophy has long been content to assume a "dogmatic" image of thought which presupposes that thinking is a voluntary activity; that the thinker has a natural affinity for the truth; that we are led into error by what is foreign to thought (the body, the passions); and thus that what we need to think well is simply a method that will ward off error and bring us back to the truthful nature of thought. Deleuze contests each of these presuppositions: thinking is never the result of a voluntary will, but rather the result of forces that act upon us from the outside; the enemy of thought is not error but convention and opinion; we

¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, (tr.) F. D. Wieck and J. G. Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 64.

search for “truth” and begin to think only when we are compelled to do so, when we undergo a violence that wrests us from our natural stupor. A lazy schoolboy who suddenly becomes good at Latin because he has fallen in love with a classmate is no less an instance of this than the proverbial falling apple that inspired the young Newton.

One can see how Deleuze’s theory of thought derives from his metaphysics. There is a thought flow that traverses the universe, but in its received state it is a realm of stupidity that is determined by ready-made clichés and banalities. What jolts us from our stupor is always a confrontation with a problem—with Being—which allows us to extract singularities from the thought flow and make them function as variables on a plane of creation. Yet this characterization of how we experience the thought flow inverts its ontological status, since it is the thought flow itself that contains singularities. Being is problematic—that is, it is the inexhaustible creation of difference, the constant production of new, the incessant genesis of the heterogeneous. Yet the ontological condition of difference is that, in being produced, singularities become regularized, made ordinary, “normalized” (in Foucault’s sense), or even “stupidized.” This is why the fight against clichés in thought is a battle that must be waged constantly.

CVB: I prefer to handle the question of the cliché and the question of stupidity (*bêtise*) separately, at least as I begin to answer your question. They may both be rooted in the same concern that runs through Deleuze’s entire work: the inability of the representative and cognitive thinking to create the new and the different. However, the problem of the cliché is able to be solved empirically, whereas the solution of the problem of stupidity involves an appeal to the transcendental. I leave open for now the question of whether or not the problem of stupidity is solvable in the first place; and if it is, I leave open the subsequent question, also, as to what kind of relationship there must be between thinking and the *gerundiva* in order for the problem to be solved.

A cliché is an overused expression which betrays absence of original thought. Deleuze confronts the problem of the cliché in his book on Francis Bacon, the Irish painter, and begins his discussion with the claim that the white canvas of the painter is always already filled with clichés even before the first brush stroke is applied:

It is a mistake to think that the painter works on a white surface.... The painter has many things in his head, or around him, or in his studio. Now everything he has in his head or around him is

already in the canvas more or less virtually, more or less actually, before he begins to work.... There are psychic clichés just as there are physical clichés—ready-made perceptions, memories, phantasms. There is a very important experience here for the painter: a whole category of things that could be termed clichés fills the canvas, before the beginning.... The fight against clichés is a terrible thing.... One can only fight against the cliché with much ruse, perseverance and prudence: it is a task perpetually renewed with every painting, with every moment of every painting.¹⁸

I quote from the book extensively because what is said here about the canvas of the painter applies to the wood or the bronze of the sculptor, to the score of the composer, and to the white sheet of paper of the writer before writing begins. In all these cases the ubiquity of clichés and the extraordinary efforts to control them does not necessarily involve the transcendent exercise of our noetic faculties nor the postulation of a transcendental structure of consciousness to be solely responsible for them. No transcendental structure has to be involved in their elimination.

Stupidity, on the other hand, is a transcendental structure, and Deleuze confronts it throughout his work. From his 1956 lecture “What is Grounding,”¹⁹ through *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, to the 1991 *What is Philosophy?*,²⁰ the problem of stupidity continues to preoccupy him alone or him and Guattari. Sometimes he uses the term “stupidity” (*bêtise*), some other times “non-sense” (*non-sens*). Stupidity is his alternative to the traditional representational and recognitive image of thought, which assigns to philosophy the task of distinguishing the true from the false, assumes the good nature of the thinker, and makes the explanation of error depend on external circumstances or the conflict and disharmony of noetic faculties. A thought without image, on the other hand, argues Deleuze, must take seriously factors internal to consciousness, like baseness and vile-ness, which make it easier for us not to think, rather than to think.

The overthrowing of the privilege of the epistemological ground of truth versus falsehood and the substitution of sense and non-

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, (tr.) D. W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 71–72, 73, 79.

¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *What is Grounding?* (From transcribed notes taken by Pierre Lefebvre), (tr.) A. Kleinherenbrink, (ed.) T. Yanick, J. Adams, and M. Salemy (Grand Rapids: &&& Publishing, 2015).

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, (tr.) H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as WP.

sense for it stem from the function that Deleuze assigns to philosophy: philosophy is the continuous creation of concepts capable of turning chaos to *chaosmos*, by giving a little consistency to the flux of becoming. The problem is then not the adequacy of, or the correspondence between, *nomen* and *nominatum*. The problem is rather that of distinguishing sense from nonsense. Concepts may be true, according to the old image of thought, but they may still lack sense. We know stupid thoughts, stupid discourses that are made in their entirety with truths.

What then is stupidity? Stupidity is due, we are told, to a transcendental structure of our noetic faculties, but what is its function? To make a very long story short, stupidity is the unsuccessful attempt to bring the ground of thought to the surface (DR, 151–54). Stupidity is the incapacity to render pure difference cognizable by bringing it under concepts. And, since representation and recognition operate with concepts and achieve their task only through the conceptual in-formation of the given, stupidity is the failure of representative and recognitive thinking to grasp pure difference.

Or better, stupidity is this incapacity which frustrates the demand of our understanding to cognize everything (and consequently, pure difference) by means of concepts. There are similarities here with the handling of the dynamic sublime by Kant (similarities and differences that cannot detain us here) and even more with Schelling's "quantitative differences."²¹ They all highlight that the failure and the incapacity involved in stupidity has a positive outcome. Not only does stupidity dramatize the fact that we have not been thinking yet, but it also makes it possible to think otherwise. The search for the object of the *gerundivum* does not end up in melancholy and depression. It opens the doors to a new and different joyful wisdom.

The ubiquity of clichés may be what thinking becomes as the result of the incapacity of conceptual thinking to "individuate" the ground of pure difference, that is, to affirm its different/ciating process, necessary for the production of the new and the different. But as I argued earlier in my response to the "when is thinking?" question, the transcendental quest for the *gerundivum* does not only reveal "fingers pointing at the moon." Thinking otherwise vibrates to the full glow and the intensity of the moon, even for the span of a

²¹ On this point, and on the problem of transcendental stupidity in general, see the excellent essay by Andrew Polhammer, "Between Natural Stupor and the Thought of Stupefaction: On Gilles Deleuze's Transcendental Stupidity," *Spectrum Research Repository* (Montreal: Concordia University, 2017), [<https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/983013/>].

time “shorter than any other time” before intensity starts being extended, flattened, and covered up (without ever disappearing), according to the law of all things.

Stupidity relates to the relationship between thought and individuation (DR, 151–53). The individuation that Deleuze has in mind is the process by means of which the not-yet-individuated ground acquires an individuated form. Conceptual thinking does not illuminate the workings of transcendental stupidity because it does not make us aware of the problem. The shock of fundamental encounters, the experience of the full blast of paradoxes, and the learning to think in terms of problems are the presuppositions for an appreciation of the negative and of the positive results of the transcendental structure of stupidity. Deleuze’s 1969 *The Logic of Sense* is, in this sense, the alphabet primer for thinking without overlooking the problematics of this structure.

Secularities

ASJ: This interview emerged in part out of an impression that I have, in reflecting on your respective bodies of work (work that includes exegetical close readings of Deleuze and other continental philosophers; creative and original expositions of philosophical concepts; interpretative analyses that bring different thinkers into close conversation), that there is a special shift in each of your trajectories regarding the religious/secular divide. I’m fascinated by this divide, in and of itself, but I’m particularly interested in its importance for how thinkers navigate complex philosophical projects. And so I am interested in whether you agree with this characterization of your work: that Costas, your shift from Paul Ricœur to Gilles Deleuze was also a shift in understanding of the role of religious discourse in philosophy; and that Dan, your shift in graduate studies at the University of Chicago (attaining ABD status in Religious Studies, before beginning doctoral studies again, this time in the discipline of Philosophy, in order to study Friedrich Nietzsche and Deleuze) also reflects a shift in how you conceived of the relations between religion and philosophy. Putting this in overly simple terms, does your decision to take up the work of Deleuze reflect related decisions about the significance of “religion” for philosophy? And has your own understanding of the relations between religion and philosophy changed over time?

DWS: I remain deeply interested in theology and religion, though I find that on these topics philosophers fall into two general camps.

Some philosophers see religion as mere superstition, and if they are interested in the topic at all, they look for naturalistic or evolutionary explanations for its existence: why and how did humans get duped by religious illusions? Other philosophers have their own theological convictions and tend to use philosophy to simply justify those convictions. The number of philosophers in between—who take religion seriously but do not have an axe to grind—are few and far between. It was once thought that the world was becoming more “secular” (a complicated concept), but a joke I once heard, saying that the only places in the world that are truly secular are Western Europe and American universities, is largely true. Religion remains a motivating force in much of the world.

Since this is a large topic, let me focus on two issues. The first concerns the existence of god. For me, the question “Do the gods exist?” is parallel to the question “Do automobiles exist?” and the answer to both questions is, yes. Gods and automobiles exist because we have created them. Humans fabricate gods—this is what Bergson called the “fabulating function.” In the *City of God*, which provides precious glimpses into “pagan” thought, Augustine quotes Hermes Trismegistus’s claim that humans “invented the art of creating gods” as well as Marcus Varro’s assertion that “divine matters” were a human institution.²² Augustine rails against both Hermes and Varro, but the book makes it clear that the idea that humans fabricate gods was an ancient presumption, not a modern innovation.

We have become used to what was no doubt one of the most successful crusades in the history of thought, namely, the critique of idolatry. Both the Judaic and Christian traditions critiqued the fabricated gods of paganism, such as the golden calf, for being mere idols, statues whose eyes do not see and whose ears do not hear—a critique that was redoubled in the colonial period with the critique of the primitive fetish (from the Latin *facticius*, “made by art,” “artificial”).

But what replaced the idols were still fabrications. Rather than statues with eyes and ears, the gods became concepts or “idealities” marked by lists of attributes: omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, goodness. The problem of evil arose because we created a

²² See Augustine, Grace Monahan, and Gerald Groveland Walsh, *The City of God, Books VII–XVI (The Fathers of the Church, Volume 14)* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 65; and Augustine, Gerald G. Walsh, Etienne Gilson, and Demetrius B. Zema, *The City of God, Books I–VII (The Fathers of the Church, Volume 8)* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1950), 195.

concept of god as being all-good. If we had created a concept of god as all-red, we would no doubt be talking about the problem of blue: if God is all-red, how could he have created a world with blue? None of the omni-attributes are found in any scriptures; they are later innovations. By contrast, YHWH declares explicitly he is a jealous god in the Ten Commandments, yet few think of jealousy, much less omni-jealousy, as one of the divine attributes. One can of course create the concept of a god that is not fabricated, but instead has fabricated us, thereby transferring the fabricating or fabricating function from the human to the divine—God as creator. But even this is a concept that has been fabricated by us, just as Plato created the concept of the Idea (*εἶδος*) as a form prior to all creation.

Moreover, not only do we fabricate gods, but we also destroy them and kill them off. Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of god" is meant to dramatize this phenomenon. In Christianity, the death of god is simply another name for the "gospel": Jesus *had* to die in order to redeem the world. In Greek myth, the god Dionysus was, in some accounts, torn to pieces and eaten by the titans; Nietzsche will recreate him as his own god. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* presents a humorous fable that explains the transition from polytheism to "monotheism": when one of the gods declared himself to be the only god, the other gods laughed and slapped their knees and rocked in their chairs—until they laughed themselves to death.²³ The gods died of laughter! The "death of god" that most people associate with Nietzsche—the "atheism" produced internally by Christianity itself—is simply another episode in the long drama of divine killings. Idolatry, paganism, fetishism: these are all terms invented by the Judeo-Christian tradition to kill off "other gods."

I suspect most people subscribe to this understanding of the gods, or at least of gods *other than their own*. Take any list of gods: the Babylonian gods Marduk and Tiamat; Wakan Tanka of the Lakota; the Canaanite Ba'al; the Nummo/Nommo twins of the Dogon; Zeus and Hera of the Greeks; Odin and Balder of the Norse; An, Enlil, and Enki of the Sumerians; Osiris and Thoth of the Egyptians, and so on. Most would agree that they were creations of their people and cultures. One of the questions of modernity is: why have we ceased to produce gods? Here again, Nietzsche was prescient: "How many new gods are still possible! As for myself, in whom the religious, that is to say, god-forming instinct becomes active at impossible times—how

²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, (tr.) R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1961), III: "The Apostates."

differently, how variously the divine has revealed itself to me each time!"²⁴

Second, similar comments could be made about the very concept of "religion." I recently read a book by Brent Nongri called *Before Religion* that brilliantly analyzes the history of the concept and summarizes much of the best recent scholarship.²⁵ Though the etymology of the word is obscure, it seems to have been derived from either the Latin *relegere* ("to read again") or *religare* ("to bind"), and most likely referred to the obligations Romans had to their family, to the state, and to the gods. The opposite of being religious was being negligent (*neglegere*), that is, neglecting one's bonds and obligations. In the Middle Ages, the religious-secular distinction was still internal to the Church: "religious" persons were those who had bound themselves to a religious order through vows, whereas clergy who were not in an order were considered "secular."

The dividing of the world into different "religions" seems to have begun during the Reformation, when Protestants, in their effort to condemn Catholicism as perverse, attempted to draw a series of supposed parallels between Catholic and ancient pagan practices ("pagano-papism"). Such polemics eventually contributed to the formation of religions that were distinct from the "true" religion of Christianity and led to a four-part demarcation of religions: Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians. But the colonial period complicated this picture even further. In India, for instance, the term *Hindoo* was derived from the local name of the Indus river and was simply a geographic marker, referring to people or things from India. The term *Hindooism*, indicating the religion of the Hindoos, only appeared in the late eighteenth century.

It was not until the late nineteenth century that the framework for the development of the "world religions" paradigm was established, which presumed that religion was a ubiquitous phenomenon to be found anywhere in the world at any time in history, albeit in a wide variety of forms, including the "great religions" (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto) as well as "little traditions" (shamanism, animism). This eventually led to the current presumption that religion is a kind of universal "experience" of human beings, and the various religions are responses to or manifestations of this experi-

²⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, (tr.) W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), 534.

²⁵ Brent Nongri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

ence. But it is only retrospectively that we apply the category of religion to, say, Greek and Roman practices, and our presumptions about concepts such as “the gods” and “religion” require much re-thinking.

CVB: It is true that I studied Christian Theology as an undergraduate in the University of Athens (together with Law and Jurisprudence) and that I grew up in a Greek Orthodox environment, but by the time I was finishing my studies I had already left the flock. The departure was not peaceful. I adopted a militant atheist posture that lasted well into my graduate and subsequently into my teaching years. Only now, in my old age, can I confess that the Orthodox liturgy with its centuries-old reservoir of hymns and poetry has always brought tears to my eyes. But the fashionable attempt of our days to show that Deleuze and his work, despite appearances to the contrary, do not escape the “naming of God” finds me fundamentally opposed. During my undergraduate days, the subject that I liked the most was the comparative study of religions. But I liked it because it was displaying the phantasmagoric plurality of religions, the creation of gods like the manufacturing of automobiles (sorry, Dan, your irony did not escape me, but I could not resist the opening), describing, informing, and entertaining without pretending to treat any one of them as a form of life and all that this entails ontologically, morally, and ethically. Dan’s response brings back to my mind this garden of differences and, in this garden, I do not find the Deleuze that seduced me. As far as I can tell, Deleuze’s response to the “naming of God” was stated clearly in his early writings on Nietzsche, in the claim that the death of God was not a problem for the loner of Torino; the death of man was, because as long as man, the Ego, and the subject stay alive, God cannot be left alone to die. I have found no revision of this position in Deleuze’s later work.

I used earlier the expression “the naming of God”—an expression used by Daniel Colucciello Barber as a synonym for theology. I take his book, *Deleuze and the Naming of God*,²⁶ to be one of the best attempts to force Deleuze into a dialogue with theology, and this is why I am bringing it up here. Barber confesses that the theology which sustains his argument is the theology of Christianity, and I do not criticize him for having eschewed the garden with the one thousand flowers. I do not, because the dominant cultural force of the sedentaries today continues to be Christianity; and this is why,

²⁶ Daniel Colucciello Barber, *Deleuze and the Naming of God: Post-Secularism and the Future of Immanence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015)

unapologetically, I can hold the view that the letting go of the God and of the judgment of Christianity remains indispensable for the kind of thinking that wants to be without image—without image and also immanent. In fact, come to think of it, I feel entitled to ask as I paraphrase Deleuze, “Which religion has not brought down the tanks against nomads whenever their lines of flight have taken them to the streets?”

However, the main thing is that Deleuze’s ontology is an ontology of immanence; his semantics of Being are grounded on a radicalized Scotist univocity (and Dan has written some very nice pages on this subject).²⁷ No compromise is possible between this immanence and any vestiges of transcendence mobilized for ontological or regulative reasons. The kind of difference that Deleuze champions in his work is going to vanish if transcendence were allowed to encompass it. The “autrement qu’autre” (otherwise other) of the 4th Appendix of *The Logic of Sense* does not re-introduce transcendence; it welcomes heterology after the reduction of good and common sense.²⁸

My reason for bringing up Barber’s book to this interview is that Barber knows very well that, for a chance of a dialogue to exist between Deleuze’s philosophy and Christian or any other theology, the transcendent source of their *credo* must be abandoned. But then, after showing that Milbank’s and Hart’s neo-Orthodoxy is precisely the kind of theology that is incompatible with Deleuze’s work, the fourth chapter of his book invokes John Howard Yoder’s work²⁹ and analyzes it carefully in order to show that there can be (Christian) theology without transcendence and that, therefore, there is no *a priori* reason for excluding the Christian form of life from the creative nomadic forms capable of generating and tracing their own lines of escape. But are Yoder’s and Barber’s “naming of the God” still *Christian* and still *theological*?

To avoid the pitfalls of essentialism is one thing; but our caution does not render us free to baptize fowl the fish we are given. The Christian movement that Yoder envisages may be an ethical and a political assemblage, it may be an assemblage of the poor, by the poor and for the poor, but Christianity, from the *Acts of the Apostles*

²⁷ For example, see Daniel W. Smith, “The Doctrine of Univocity: Deleuze’s Ontology of Immanence,” in *Deleuze and Religion*, (ed.) M. Bryden (New York: Routledge, 2001), 163–79.

²⁸ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 301–20.

²⁹ His references are for the most part to Yoder’s *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) and *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism* (Windsor: Herald Press, 2003).

to its post-Constantinian sedentarism, is unfailingly anchored in a transcendent Other. I still remember a visit of mine to Deleuze's house in the 1980s, when our discussion brought us to his writing (with Guattari) of the *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (WP). Rumours had it, at the time, that Ricœur was also writing a book under the same title and I mentioned it, I do not know now why. Deleuze's response, "Mais Ricœur est un chrétien," cut the discussion short and made it clear that the two men's answers to the question were destined to remain asymptotic.

Possibility

ASJ: Natalie Diaz, a poet and MacArthur award winner, gave an interview recently in which she said, "Lexicon is my possibility."³⁰ She goes on to explain that the term "lexicon" refers to much more than vocabulary: it includes somatic expressions, like the physical ways in which someone animates and expresses their words, and it includes an array of affective expressions that are inseparable from words themselves.

What I hear, in Diaz's declaration that lexicon grants possibility, is an affirmation of the value *of* expression. This equation of lexicon with possibility seems to evoke what Deleuze refers to as virtuality: it exceeds all delineated contents or categorizations, but at the same time, it is the conditions of possibility for any and all expression. Mary Beth Mader describes the virtual as "necessarily excessive."³¹ Like language, structures are excessive systems, Mader explains. Without lexicon, there is no excess to what exists, no hope for launching resistant or creative ways of articulating selves, the world, and ideals like freedom.

Diaz's own poetic writings reflect the import of such excessiveness for the possibility of decolonizing structures and systems: it is a statement of radical hope to lay claim to a "beyond" of what currently exists, but in terms that do not invoke a transcendent beyond. This hope points to an immanent excessiveness, in the here and the now.

³⁰ Natalie Diaz, "Natalie Diaz vs. the Lexicon," *The VS Podcast* (Sept. 5, 2017), podcast, [<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/podcasts/144165/natalie-diaz-vs-the-lexicon>].

³¹ Mary Beth Mader, *Sleights of Reason: Norm, Bisexuality, Development* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 21.

Your own work on the nature of virtuality underscores the importance of its immanent, not transcendent, workings.³²

I'm struck, however, by the riskiness of Diaz's proposition that lexicons yield possibility. When I read Deleuze as a graduate student, first in your seminars at Trent University, Costas, and then a few years later in your courses at Purdue, Dan, it seemed evident from the ways in which classmates spoke, devotedly and excitedly, about Deleuze's texts that a lexicon is what empowers a certain style of "doing" philosophy. What it might mean to be "Deleuzian" in a graduate seminar, for example, as students begin to learn and wield particular concepts, is to echo specific words and references (I remember hearing, with wide eyes, a classmate at Trent explain that he slept with *A Thousand Plateaus* under his mattress).

As someone who has thought about and taught Deleuze for many years, how do you help students engage with concepts in ways that open up, rather than foreclose, possibility? Isabelle Stengers, another contemporary Deleuzian philosopher, repeats Deleuze's claim that learning is not mimicry.³³ The stakes are so high here. In our own settler colonial nation-states, many kinds of mimicry risk re-instantiating truly horrific structures and practices. And yet, if lexicons proffer possibility, then the classroom can be a site of expressivity and excess. How willing are you to look to pedagogy as a practice of resistant or creative possibility?

DWS: This is a wonderful question, posed very elegantly, and I do not think my answer can do justice to the question. Kierkegaard, when told by a doctor who said he needed rest, responded, "No, I need the possible, doctor; if not, I'll suffocate."³⁴ Deleuze, who was strongly influenced by Kierkegaard early in his career, cites this phrase often, and it seems close to Diaz's idea that lexicon yields

³² Constantin V. Boundas, "Exchange, Gift, and Theft," *Angelaki*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2010): 101–12; Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze and Derrida, Immanence and Transcendence: Two Directions in Recent French Thought," in *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, (ed.) P. Patton and J. Protevi (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), 46.

³³ See Isabelle Stengers, "Including Nonhumans in Political Theory: Opening Pandora's Box?," in *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life*, (ed.) B. Braun and S. J. Whatmore (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 12.

³⁴ See Deleuze's seminar lecture of May 31, 1983, transcribed by T. Straub on *La voix de Gilles Deleuze en ligne* [http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/deleuze/article.php3?id_article=252], in which he seems to be citing, loosely, a passage from Kierkegaard. See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, (tr.) H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 38–39.

possibility. Yet Deleuze ultimately wound up being critical of the concept of possibility for two reasons, one logical, the other theological. At the risk of being pedantic, it's perhaps useful to recall why Deleuze wanted to replace possibility with a concept of virtuality, since in a roundabout way it seems relevant to your question.

The logical critique was posed by Bergson in a famous essay called "The Possible and the Real."³⁵ Negation is a logical operator that gives us means to deny existence—an extraordinarily linguistic innovation that allows us to talk about what does *not* exist. But for this reason, it is also the source of metaphysical illusions. Bergson showed that questions such as "Why is there something rather than nothing?" or "Why is there disorder rather than order?" or "Why is there this rather than that (when that was equally possible)?" are all false problems derived from the use of logical negation.

For instance, what is given in the universe is *order*—there is no corner of the universe that is not ordered in some way. But we can apply the logical operation of negation to the idea of order, and produce, in a derived manner, the concept of disorder or chaos. We do this from various motivations: what we call "disorder" generally tends to be an order that we did not expect, or that we do not understand, or that we do not want. I can say my apartment is a chaotic mess, in a state of complete disorder, and yet my clothes are exactly where I dropped them on the floor, the layers of dust have settled in a predictable manner, and the mold has grown on my dirty dishes in a completely orderly fashion. The metaphysical sleight of hand appears when, through a retrograde movement, philosophers pretend that disorder *preceded* order, and they ask the question "Why is there order rather than disorder?" or "How did order arise out of chaos?" In Bergson's analysis, this is a false problem, an ill-formed question, an illusion.

In a similar way, what is given to us is *being*, but we can negate being to produce the idea of non-being, and then retroactively presume that non-being precedes being, turning the existence of "something rather than nothing" into an inexplicable problem.

But the most egregious example, for Bergson, is the idea of the possible. What is given is the real, but I can negate the real and produce the concept of the possible. It is *possible* that I could have *not* given this interview; or having agreed to the interview, it is *possible* I could have *not* given the same responses. But here again, the illusion appears when we project the images of these possibili-

³⁵ Henri Bergson, "The Possible and the Real," in *The Creative Mind*, (tr.) M. L. Anderson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 107–24.

ties back into the past, and presume that all these possibilities *precede* the real, and that this actual interview is the realization of one of an infinite set of possibilities, that my being here today is the realization of one of an infinite set of possibilities, all of which were striving to pass into existence. And this is where the theological illusion appears. Using the same logic, Leibniz argues that God, when he created the world, conceived of an infinite number of possible worlds and brought into existence the “best” of all these possible worlds.

Each of these illusions shares the same logical structure. Being, order, and the real are truth itself; but the negation of these terms produces a “retrograde movement of the true,” as Bergson puts it, in which nonbeing is supposedly more primordial than being, disorder more primordial than order, and possibility more primordial than the real—as if being came to fill in a void, order to organize a preceding disorder, the real to realize a primordial possibility. But these are all illusions, false problems, generated by negation itself.

One can see why Deleuze felt the need to jettison the concept of possibility and replace it with the new modal concept of virtuality, since possibility is fraught with a false metaphysics. The process by which a possibility is “realized” is subject to two rules: resemblance and limitation. The real is supposed to *resemble* the possibility it realizes, but since not every possibility can be realized, the process of realization involves a *limitation* by which some possibilities are thwarted, while others pass into the real. But what this means is that, in the concept of the possible, *everything is already given*, everything has already been conceived—if only in the mind of God, or in a concept—and the possible simply has existence added to it when it becomes real. The movement from the possible to the real is not the production of the new, but merely the realization of something already given and conceptualized.

In the concept of the virtual, by contrast, nothing is given in advance. The virtual is not subject to a process of realization but rather a process of *actualization*, and the rules of actualization are not resemblance and limitation, but rather *difference* and *divergence*. The essence of a problem (a virtual multiplicity) is to actualize or resolve itself; but in being actualized, it diverges from itself and necessarily becomes differentiated—that is, it produces difference, it is the production of the new. The condition (the problem) does not *resemble* the conditioned (the solution), any more than an egg resembles an adult; rather the condition becomes differentiated in the process of actualization. Nor does the virtual proceed by *limitation* but rather must instead actively *create* its own lines of actualization. The virtual

possesses the reality of a task to be performed or a problem to be solved, and the productions of philosophy, science, and art can all be seen as resolutions to problems, actualizations of the virtual—that is, genuine creations or productions of the new.

If this response is a roundabout answer to your question, it's because concepts have an existence of their own, and they serve to orient us within thought. Just as Diaz, as a poet, speaks of lexicon as possibility, one might see Deleuze, as a philosopher, approaching concepts as a reservoir of virtualities. Deleuze defines philosophy as a creation of concepts, but creation has as its correlate the critique of concepts. In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx famously complained that "philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it."³⁶ But to create concepts is to change the world, if only in a minor way, since concepts are things of this world. What I attempt to convey to students when I teach Deleuze is precisely this pedagogy of the concept. Deleuze's critique of "possibility" and creation of "virtuality" is only one example of this pedagogy, and it can be extended to concepts such as "religion," which Deleuze himself never addressed.

CVB: I have nothing else to add to Dan's eloquent distinction between the virtual and the possible. His reminding us of Deleuze's reasons for the substitution of the virtual for the possible is very helpful. Only one clarification may be necessary to his statement that "In the concept of the virtual...nothing is given in advance." The difference between the actualization of the virtual and the realization of the possible is properly stated by him. But having pronounced the virtual, real, and being committed to the paradoxical belief in the contemporaneity of the entire past with every passing present,³⁷ Deleuze, far from thinking that the virtual gives us nothing in advance, must be conceiving it as a gigantic differentiated and differentiating archive of signs past, being preserved in series of inclusive disjunctions. What Dan probably means is that the virtual gives us nothing in advance, destined to be duplicated in its actualization; the actual, after all, does not resemble or imitate the virtual. The virtual is real and this is what permits it to be conceived by Deleuze as the "quasi-cause" of the actual/real.

In a sense, therefore, everything is in a state of transformation in the virtual; and in order to state this very point, Deleuze has decided

³⁶ Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," (tr.) L. D. Easton and K. H. Guddat, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, (ed.) L. H. Simon (London: Hackett, 1994), 98.

³⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 79–85.

to speak of the virtual not as *existing*, but as *subsisting* or *insisting* in the actual. To say that, in the virtual, nothing is given in advance, without qualification, will make the transforming actuality the sole creator of the virtual, and this will reinforce the kind of voluntarism and subjectivism that the introduction and determination of the virtual as one half of reality were meant to discourage. We should not forget that, speaking of our lines of escape and transformation, and in a way reminiscent of Marx, Deleuze says that we are responsible for tracing them, but not in any odd way we fancy because these lines, in a sense, pre-exist our effort to create them. I have often wondered whether Deleuze meets here Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*. (And I am not the only one to wonder: François Zourabishvili, in his wonderful essay "Deleuze et le possible (de l'involontarisme en politique)," seems to be of the same mind with me.³⁸) But if Deleuze does, then just as Heidegger assigns the capacity for freedom to Being and not to *Dasein*, in the same way Deleuze would seem to assign the process of bringing about the new and the different to the process of Becoming, which means to the way the virtual and the actual are articulated and modified together.³⁹

This, and Dan is this time correct again, has implications for the process and the pedagogy of learning. The learner should not be given ready-made concepts and encouraged to stir into the pot the ingredient, existence, in order to jump from the possible to the real. Anselm's "Being than which nothing greater can be conceived" and its existence or non-existence should be held as the paradigm case of an illicit use of the possible. The problem is not so much that existence is not a predicate but rather that the possible should not be treated as if it were the virtual. The hunt for the *gerundivum* in the transcendental exercise of our thinking is the hunt for the virtual, which is already real but not yet *in actu*.

This is why, instead of using the lexicon as a source of possibilities, I prefer to use the code of language (what the structuralists called *la langue*) as an example of the virtual and how it works. Let's think for a minute the presuppositions necessary for us to read these lines and to communicate in our tongue. Every sentence of our interview activates the entire code of the English language, its pho-

³⁸ See Eric Alliez, ed., *Gilles Deleuze. Une vie philosophique* (Le Plessis-Robinson: Les Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond, 1998), 335–57.

³⁹ There is no space here to explain in more detail the process of becoming that the imbrication of the virtual and the actual makes possible. The best concise discussion of this process that I have come across is in the second chapter of Barber, *Deleuze and the Naming of God*.

nology, its morphology, the grammar, the syntax and its semantics. This code is ours, whether we speak or whether we stay silent. It exists written down in our lexicons and our books of grammar and syntax. However, the important thing is not this. The important thing is that this code is present (in-sists and subsists) in every sentence we read. Each part of the code present in each sentence is able to function only because the entire code grants it this function. For example, a sentence expressing a wish is capable of being understood only because the difference of its structure from the structure of a sentence expressing a command or an assertion is known by us. We are therefore obliged to distinguish the code of language from our discursive performances and to observe that our actual speech contains in fact, and not only as a possibility, the linguistic code which gives the matter and the form it displays. This distinction and the imbrication of the code and its actualization are not phenomena only characteristic of language. We could bring up the case of DNA, the family relationships of people inside a society of men and women, the structure of their mythology, the vestimentary and sartorial regulations of a certain time and place, etc. etc. In this way, we will be ready to conclude that everything real has two faces—the actual (*in actu*) and the virtual (*in virtu*). But let us be careful. We do not say that the code of language has the possibility to create speech, the way that the seed of the apple tree has the possibility to create the tree. Our virtual is a real and present productive presupposition for the actual/real, and not a mere presupposition of a simple possibility. It is not the x that could become y, but rather the fact that it is y because it is x. Not a y “with x as a presupposition” but a y “with the power (*in virtu*) of x.”

Conclusion: Future Encounters

ASJ: I’ve been reflecting recently on the ways in which Deleuze’s philosophy remains contemporary, through the readings and generative work of current philosophers. Laura Hengehold’s new book, *Simone de Beauvoir’s Philosophy of Individuation*, is an example that has brought not only Deleuze’s thinking to life for me in new ways but also Beauvoir’s.⁴⁰ In fact, Hengehold’s book made me return to some of Beauvoir’s early writings, like the essay “Pyrrhus and Cineas,” in which Beauvoir poses a marvellous question: “Would Kant

⁴⁰ Laura Hengehold, *Simone de Beauvoir’s Philosophy of Individuation: The Problem of The Second Sex* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

have found himself in Hegel?"⁴¹ I love this question for its anachronistic strangeness, and also because it gestures to something essential about continental philosophy. For Kant to find himself in Hegel, there would have to be a recognizability to the concepts that had travelled from Kant's own work into Hegel's writings. But, as Beauvoir puts it somewhat bluntly in her essay, there's no guarantee that a philosopher's work *will* extend beyond their own writing into the future. It is an open or live aspect of philosophy: whose texts will continue to be read and which concepts will travel? As we conclude this interview, I'm wondering: is there work that you're doing or work that you're reading, currently, that extends (and promises to extend) Deleuze's work into the future?

DWS: Your question raises a host of interesting issues. I often find it odd that I am considered to be a "Deleuze scholar," since in many ways I feel as if I hardly know Deleuze's work. Perhaps I have, nerdily, spent more time reading him than others, but what trumps that, in practical terms, is the need to have an area of specialization, which is an institutional requirement that not only gets you a job and a paycheck, but confers on you a kind of academic identity, like a role one is expected to play. But the real work, the real movements of thought, of course, happen elsewhere. Deleuze said that *Difference and Repetition* was the first book in which he finally began to speak "in his own name," even though he was already a well-known philosopher and had written books on Hume, Nietzsche, Kant, Proust, Bergson, Masoch, and Spinoza. But later, in an interview, he would add,

It's a curious thing to say something in your own name, for that never happens when you take yourself to be an ego, or a person, or a subject. Rather, individuals find a true proper name only through the harshest exercise of depersonalization, by opening themselves up to the multiplicities everywhere within them, to the intensities running through them.⁴²

That seems true to me, and I sometimes wonder if I've ever truly written, philosophically speaking, "in my own name," rather than just

⁴¹ Simone de Beauvoir, "Pyrrhus and Cineas," in *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*, (ed.) M. A. Simons with M. Timmerman and M. B. Mader (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 139.

⁴² Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, (tr.) M. Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 6; trans. mod.

writing about Deleuze. Academia is subject to fashion, like everything else, and at a certain point—and even now—I recall colleagues looking for the next “big thing” in philosophy.

But your question points in a different direction, where the future can be found in the past, and where time is—as Deleuze himself insisted—not succession but coexistence. It is here that one can imagine Kant interpreting Hegel, as you suggest, or indeed Duns Scotus interpreting Spinoza, or Riemann interpreting Bergson—which is what Deleuze makes happen in his own monographs. It is a kind of topological fold, but in time. Michel Serres, one of France’s greatest thinkers, who died last year, would similarly, in his book *Statues*, fold together the Challenger disaster with Carthaginian rituals of sacrifice.⁴³ For my part, many of the works that have marked me recently are books referred to by Deleuze, but which I had not read on their own terms. André Leroi-Gourhan’s *Gesture and Speech* deeply changed my understanding of both human evolution and the importance of technology.⁴⁴ Two of Raymond Ruyer’s books have recently been translated, *Neofinalism* and *The Genesis of Living Forms*, and they have profound implications for our understanding of science.⁴⁵ And indeed, I believe Michel Serres has bequeathed to us one of the most significant philosophical oeuvres of our “time,” one that never ceases to inspire me. But it is up to each of us to discover the works we love, and that carry us forward.

CVB: Between 1995, the year Deleuze died, and now, we have witnessed an avalanche of commentaries, dissertations, lectures, symposia, and texts riding Deleuze’s own lines of escape that leave no stone unturned, explicating what was left implicated, elucidating the seemingly obscure, throwing bridges of their own over the sharp edges of the writerly Deleuzian style—some would say in excess and not with the necessary discretion expected by those who still try to understand what exactly Deleuze meant when he suggested that we should perhaps refrain from too much explication of ourselves (*ne pas s’expliquer trop*).

⁴³ Michel Serres, *Statues: The Second Book of Foundations*, (tr.) R. Burks (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015).

⁴⁴ André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, (tr.) A. B. Berger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

⁴⁵ Raymond Ruyer, *Neofinalism*, (tr.) A. Edlebi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016); Raymond Ruyer, *The Genesis of Living Forms*, (tr.) J. Roffe and N. B. de Weydenthal (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).

This avalanche (to the bulging of which Dan and I have also contributed) is bound to stop somewhere. Becoming is unfolding, sustained by the co-presence and the joint action of events and states of affairs; the genesis of new events and the law of the eternal repetition of the different alter the archive. It would be foolish to think that writing is exempt from the law of becoming (differentiation, heterogenesis).

Soon, Deleuze will turn into someone's conceptual persona (*personnage conceptuel*), the way that Leibnitz, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Hume, and so many others stood for Deleuze's own conceptual personae, his "intercessors, the real subjects of his philosophy" (WP, 64). In fact, he doesn't have to wait for someone to pick him up as his or her "heteronym": he turned into a conceptual persona the moment that he dressed up others to be his personae. "The destiny of the philosopher," he wrote, "is to become his conceptual persona or personae, at the same time that these personae themselves become something other than what they are historically, mythologically, or commonly" (WP, 64).

But then, if that is what destiny holds for Deleuze—to become an intercessor in the hands of others—then our love for him dictates that, in our own musings and writings, we assist him in his becoming-other-than-himself, every time and everywhere. For preserving, conserving, prolonging, and recognizing are promises of the majoritarian, not of the libidinal hermeneutics that looks for the differential. Masks on top of other masks and caves within caves is what the Deleuzian scribe discovers as he or she searches for the sense of his work.

I guess, therefore, that the question you chose to make the last one of our interview can be read the way we read the last question that seems to have tantalized Derrida: is there a limit to deconstruction?⁴⁶ After all, with Laruelle, I read Deleuze's work as a minoritarian deconstruction. Can the demise of its animators be prevented? And if it can, how? The later Derrida, as we know, raised justice to the pedestal of the limit. What about Deleuze? I am inclined to look again in the direction of the *gerundiva* for an answer. And here, I find one *gerundivum*/problem which demands special attention: Deleuze is in the process of giving examples of our noetic faculties (sensation,

⁴⁶ For example, see Jacques Derrida, "A Discussion with Jacques Derrida," *Theory & Event*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2001), [<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/32615>]. See also Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority," in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, (ed.) D. Cornell, M. Rosenfield, and D. G. Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992).

understanding, memory, imagination, speech) and suddenly, instead of letting the series open and suspend by means of an etcetera, he goes on to add a couple of further examples, one of which is *sociality*:⁴⁷ the *gerundivum* of sociality spells “anarchy” and “revolution.”

I have always maintained that Deleuze’s work is thoroughly political—yes, *Difference and Repetition* is itself thoroughly political. The political, not politics, underwrites the whole. It makes sense therefore to hold the *gerundivum* of sociality to be the limit of minor deconstruction and the joyful wisdom of libidinal hermeneutics. And this limit, in order to be understood, demands that it be discussed in the context of the *à venir*, of what is coming, and of the missing people of difference.

Let us return briefly to Derrida. Remember, the universalization of justice (the limit of his deconstruction) leads to an aporia: the singularity and non-coercive nature of justice, in being made into a law, is asked to assume the universality, plurality, and violence of the latter, without abandoning the characteristics of the former. Justice therefore, you would think, has no *poros*, no passage to pass through and be realized. However, precisely because of its impossibility, this limit renders the struggle for its implementation more intense and never ending. It therefore makes sense for Peter the Apostle to ask the Messiah whom he sees walking towards Rome whether he has come. The surprise found in the question, that is, the fulfillment of the messianic promise, would mark an *hors* text, and the *hors* text does not exist for the majoritarian deconstruction.

But, as we turn our attention to the *gerundiva* of anarchy and revolution, we see that in the case of Deleuze, there is no question of a non-existing *poros*, but rather of the fate of all intensive affects to be dimmed in their realizations and flattened in their becoming extended. Nevertheless, the in-sistence and the subsistence of the real, virtual event inside the real, actual world of bodies and their relations allows the grasping of the *gerundivum* by our noetic faculties in their transcendental (not to be confused with the transcendent) exercise.

This is the completion of the time of the *gerundivum*. New forms of life become possible, the clichés are sponged away, and the belief in this world that we had lost gets a new life. If I am allowed to express this in terms which belong to a different cultural era, Derrida is docetic; Deleuze is not. To the “*kata dokesin esarkothei*” (His incarnation is a mere semblance) of Derrida, the atheist Deleuze, faced

⁴⁷ See chapter three in Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

with the *gerundivum*, dances with the “My Lord and my God!” of Mary of Magdala.

At this point, our readers are going to ask, “What is the point of repeating so many times, as Deleuze does, that the people of difference are missing, that the *à venir* is always already past and future but never present? Does this not mark the return of the old aporia?” I do not think so. It marks rather the pragmatist underpinning of Deleuze’s work. The *gerundivum* invites us to draw our lines of escape and transformation, and reminds us that we should not forget that Deleuze, just like Marx before him, adds that these lines should not be drawn in any haphazard and odd way because, in some sense, the lines pre-exist our having to draw them. I agree then with Francois Zourabichvili⁴⁸ and William James:⁴⁹ pragmatism and conditionality are both essential characteristics of the ontology of Deleuze. If you want the form of life, the implementation of which is the object of the *gerundivum* of sociality, *then....* The problem is that the imperative that will follow this “then” will pit the struggle for the diligent creation of institutions worthy of the intensity of the event against the haze of stupidity, the transcendental structure that we spoke about earlier—and the outcome of this struggle is never certain.

There will be those of us who find the conditionality and the inclusive disjunctions of Deleuze’s ontology not solid enough foundations for the credibility of the *gerundiva*. To these, Deleuze has this to say: “The question of the future of the revolution is a bad question, because as long as we raise it, there are people who do not *become* revolutionaries. It has been made precisely for this, to impede the becoming revolutionary of people, at every level and every place.”⁵⁰ And again:

Instead of betting on the eternal impossibility of revolution, and a generalized fascist return of a war machine everywhere, why not think that *a new type of revolution* is in the process of becoming possible, and that all sorts of mutating, living machines conduct wars, are joined in couples, and trace a plane of consistency which mines the plane of organization of the World and of the States?⁵¹

⁴⁸ Francois Zourabichvili, Anne Sauvagnargues, and Paola Marrati, *La Philosophie de Deleuze* (Paris: PUF, 2004), 5–12.

⁴⁹ William James, *Gilles Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 202.

⁵⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (London: Athlone Press, 1997), 47.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

The labour that this question demands is enough to fill our classrooms, our social and political assemblages, and our research and writing projects. *A chacun(e) son poste!* Mine, for the time being, is the translation of *Différence et répétition* in Greek (just released in Athens) and the completion of the Greek translation of the *Logique du sens*.

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