

STIRB UND WERDE
THE CREATION OF THINKING IN GILLES
DELEUZE'S PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT: What does it mean to think? In the following article I will show Gilles Deleuze's answer to this question. According to him 'to think is to create—there is no other creation—but to create is first of all to engender 'thinking' in thought' (Deleuze 1994: 147). To understand what this means, to grasp the radical nature of such an event, we need to see how for Deleuze to engender thinking in thought means a repetition of that genetic process which has brought forth the thinking subject in the first place. In this event that which otherwise subsists beneath normal experience, as life- and consciousness sustaining forces, now become conscious experience. The implication of this is that true thinking means the creation of a new life and consciousness. Via a close-reading of chapter two of *Difference and Repetition* I show how this leads the thinker into a radical metamorphosis of consciousness, a process of *Stirb und Werde* (die and become).

KEYWORDS: Transcendental empiricism; Deleuze; metaphysics

What does it mean to think? In the following article I will show Gilles Deleuze's answer to this question. According to him 'to think is to create—there is no other creation—but to create is first of all to engender 'thinking' in thought' (Deleuze 1994: 147). To understand what this means, to grasp the radical nature of such an event, we need to see how for Deleuze to engender thinking in thought means a repetition of that genetic process which has brought forth the thinking subject in the first place. In this event that which otherwise subsists beneath normal experience, as life- and

consciousness sustaining forces, now become conscious experience. True thinking therefore means the creation of a new life and consciousness. In order to show how this metamorphosis takes place I present a close-reading of the doctrine of the sub-representative syntheses, presented in the second chapter of *Difference and Repetition*. Here Deleuze presents a transcendental genesis, a genesis of thinking and consciousness out of a vital matter. In my reading I show how the engendering of thinking within thought involves a repetition of this genetic process of consciousness in consciousness – something which can only take place via a radical metamorphosis, a death and rebirth of the thinking consciousness. Here Deleuzian philosophy therefore enters into the domain of the esoteric, where vital processes of the universe enters into and transforms human consciousness into a cosmic becoming.

In secondary literature on Deleuze there has been a great deal of work done on clarifying this fundamental doctrine of the passive syntheses.¹ Also the metaphysical and esoteric or hermetic nature of his thought has been much discussed.² But there is still no close-reading which attempts to show how his theory of genesis relates to a possible experience of this sub-representational genetic domain, and what that would mean as the creation of thinking within thought.³ The following essay attempts to do

¹ Thorough discussions of the passive syntheses has been presented in Jay Lampert's *Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy of History*, Keith Faulkner's *Deleuze and the Three Syntheses of Time* as well as in Levi Bryant's *Difference and Givenness*.

² Christian Kerslake's *Deleuze and the Unconscious* is a valuable source for situating Deleuze's oeuvre within the field of esoteric and occult influence on philosophy and psychoanalysis, thus substantiating the claim that Deleuze in his philosophy is occupied with the question of how the thinker can undergo a transmutation. Joshua Ramey's *The Hermetic Deleuze* is another work which takes Deleuze in this direction. Ramey reads Deleuze's philosophy as the expression of a spiritual ordeal or initiation, and sees it as part of a philosophical tradition which goes all the way back to the Renaissance. Yet another reading which (over)stresses the esoteric nature of Deleuze's thought is Peter Hallward's *Out of this World*. Hallward argues that Deleuze's philosophy is to be understood as a mystical enterprise. However, as many reviewers have pointed out, this reading becomes almost a caricature because of its one-sidedness and many half-truths. See for example Henry Somers-Hall's review 'The Politics of Creation' in *Pli* 18, 2007.

³ A number of authors raise this question of experience and of the transformation of the thinker, but more often than not the problematic is mentioned more or less in passing, and not developed along textual close reading. For example says Alberto Toscano in his *The Theatre of Production* 'Deleuze's doctrine is profoundly concerned not just with the determination of the conditions of realization of individuality, but with the experience of the preindividual itself (transcendental empiricism) ... the agonistic transformation of the thinker in the encounter with the domain of the preindividual ... [This is] a speculative praxis that relates to internal difference by interiorizing it, by making 'itself' into nothing but the interior (the fold) of intensive processes of differentiation.' (Toscano 2006: 199f) This statement makes clear the centrality of this question, but Toscano do not more than point at the problem of an experience of the pre-individual. Other studies with focus on this question include *Conditions of Thought* by Daniela Voss and *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy* Christian Kerslake. Voss 'understand the "caesura" or "cut", that constitutes the third synthesis of time, as the moment when the virtual event breaks into the chronological and empirical order of time.' She therefore also 'certainly do bestow an existentialist dimension to the third synthesis of

that. First I present the dogmatic image of thought and its basic model as the structure of recognition. This form of thinking, the representational consciousness, is the result of an unconscious genetic process which Deleuze presents in the second chapter.⁴ I therefore continue to do a close-reading of the second chapter of *Difference and Repetition*. This has its culmination when we come to the third synthesis which is where the genesis that is otherwise unconscious becomes 'experience'. This happens in the encounter with a 'sign' which forces us to think, an idea presented in the third chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, and it is this event which both break out of that form of consciousness and thinking which he variously name as representation, recognition, common sense or the dogmatic image of thought, and which propels us into the genesis depicted with the doctrine of the passive syntheses. I try to show how this metamorphosis is portrayed in relation to the passive syntheses by quoting a number of other books where that same process is depicted. The conclusion of this essay is that for Deleuze in the creation of thinking within thought in the third synthesis of time, a process of *Stirb und Werde* (die and become) takes place.

time ... since Deleuze insists on its disruptive impact on the identity of the subject and its liberating power with regard to all prior possibilities of life.' (Voss 2013: 250f) In *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy* Christian Kerslake concludes that the completion of the Copernican revolution in philosophy begun by Kant for Deleuze necessitates an experiential drama where 'consciousness and "becoming conscious" is related to the unconscious as the passageway to greater, more encompassing integrations' (Kerslake 2009: 266). Both Voss and Kerslake give weighty arguments for approaching Deleuze as a philosopher in which not only new thoughts but a creative metamorphosis of thinking and experience belongs to it. However, they do so without much explicit discussion of how the metamorphosis of experience is depicted as belonging to the conceptual trajectory of the text.

⁴ Joe Hughes has argued that 'The only way to understand Deleuze's texts is to understand them as a theorization of genesis' (Hughes 2008: 16). In this book he argues that there is a structural scheme underlying all of Deleuze's works. In this narrative we move from an unindividuated matter through passive syntheses to the creation of empirical self-consciousness with its good and common sense. According to Hughes Deleuze thinks this genesis in almost all of his works but with different terminology; from desiring production in the molecular strata to the social production of molar individuated subjects and objects. From microperceptions in the depth of bodies to macroperceptions of the empirical world. From partial objects through surfaces to individuated subjects and objects. In this narrative Deleuze moves from what appears as a given in his system, which for Hughes is an inconsistent evanescent materiality, and from there depicts the genetic constitution of individuals, of representation. The structure of the genesis is given in the three sub-representative passive syntheses which Deleuze presents in the second chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, but which Hughes argues can be found throughout all of Deleuze's work. Whereas Deleuze's texts certainly should be understood 'as a theorization of genesis', my contention is that it is necessary to understand this theorization as a starting point for a praxis which engenders a real genesis.

THE DOGMATIC IMAGE OF THOUGHT

In the beginning of the third chapter of *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze submits the image we have of thought to a harsh and destructive critique 'to see whether this image does not betray the very essence of thought as pure thought' (Deleuze 1994: 133). What does this critique consist of? Deleuze identifies and criticizes eight postulates that belong to it, but these can be brought back to a basic structure or 'model' that underlies this image and predetermines what it means to think:

There is indeed a model, in effect: that of recognition. Recognition may be defined as the harmonious exercise of all the faculties upon a supposed same object: the same object may be seen, touched, remembered, imagined or conceived. (Deleuze 1994: 133)

The act of recognition as the harmonious exercise of the faculties is defined as common sense, and depends upon every faculty to 'relate their given and relate themselves to a form of identity in the object' (133). Thus when we recognize something, each faculty is informed and determined by the others in such a way as to produce one and the same object. Different kinds of sense impressions, memories and previous conceptions are all activated and produce together one identical object.

Even if recognition is given as a general principle of the image of thought, Kant's analysis of the cognitive synthesis expresses its essential structure and is the model which Deleuze uses. It consists of three different interwoven operations.⁵ The first aspect is a successive synthesis as *apprehension* of parts in space and time. Pure sensible intuition is for Kant a pure manifold of space and time, and apprehension consists in a selective synthesis of a spatio-temporal manifold. But in order for such a synthesis to be successful, the preceding parts need to be conserved and contracted into the following ones, for otherwise the whole synthesis would dissolve. Therefore the *reproduction* of parts is the next aspect of the synthesis. This operation belongs, for Kant, not to intuition itself but to the faculty of imagination. The imagination thus has the capacity to preserve and contract. But for this to become perceptual experience we still need the determination in a concept. However, a conceptual determination for Kant requires that we first have the idea of an object. In order to qualify a selected and synthesized sensible manifold as this or that, the pure concept of an object = x is required as an *a priori* condition for conceptual determination to take place. Thus at this point what has been apprehended and reproduced in the imagination from the pure sensible manifold of intuition, finds the pure form of an object in the understanding, and through this, recognition can be effectuated when a concept

⁵Kant discusses this in the first version of the transcendental deduction of the categories in *Critique of Pure Reason*. The following presentation also draws on Deleuze's Lectures on Kant from 28.03.1978.

identifies the object. Therefore what is given in the sensible, what is held fast in imagination and what is determined by understanding converge as the recognition of an object.

At a deeper level, this economy of the faculties and their identity in the object of recognition is grounded in the unity of the thinking subject, i.e. in the *cogito* as ‘the unity of all the faculties’ (133). It is the *cogito* that serves as the principle of identity and the *object x* is the correlate to the transcendental subjectivity that functions as an *a priori* condition for possible experience. The *cogito* therefore occupies a central role and function in the image of thought, by grounding and conserving a predetermined and abstract form of identity. Without ‘I think’ there is no self-consciousness and no thinking, but with this self-identity, also the idea of object is borne, since subject and object presuppose and imply each other. Thus rules from the understanding determine the configuration of the intuitively given manifold to be recognized.

A problem that haunts this account, and which Deleuze will take up, is how the manifold of intuitions can lend themselves to conceptual determination if they are themselves without any inherent organizing activity. Intuition for Kant is a purely passive faculty, differing in kind from the intelligible. Therefore he consigns to the faculty of imagination the secret operation of configuring the sensible manifold for cognitive apprehension. This imaginative pre-structuring is however determined by the categories of the understanding ‘directing’ the imaginative faculty. Thus between imagination as actively informing and intuition passively receiving there is an abyss, since all rule based activity comes from *one* side.

Further Deleuze claims that in Kant’s analysis of recognition the manner in which the faculties relate and constitute the content of experience is not grasped because his analysis in fact presupposes what it is supposed to explain. Only by abstracting the remembered, the conceived and the perceived after having recognized an object does he come to analyse and determine the transcendental conditions. Thus the faculties are in fact determined by what they are supposed to constitute. In this way the transcendental conditions are traced from the empirical, instead of being able to account for its genesis. In Kant’s critical philosophy there is a reversal of the relationship between the transcendental and the empirical, the conditioning and the given.

But as Deleuze says, we need to fulfill Kant’s project by creating a transcendental genesis, and not only a transcendental conditioning. To do this we must go deeper than the analysis which traces the transcendental conditions for cognitive operations, and find the genetic processes which constitute the basis for these active operations of the mind. In this operation the two poles which are mutually involved in the

constitution of representation – recognition based on all faculties converging on an identical object, and the cogito as the subjective ground of this unity – must be dissolved. This destruction of the dogmatic image means a de-actualization of the structure of recognition and the cogito. These two claws of the lobster-god make us prisoners to a thinking in judgements which gets the world backwards: difference and metamorphosis is subjected to identity and stasis. When this de-actualisation takes place the faculties are liberated from their enslavement to pre-given form of identity, and this liberation means that the faculties go through a transmutation and become transcendent organs that 'grasps that in the world which concerns it exclusively and brings it into the world' (Deleuze 1994: 143). In other words, the faculties understood as capacities belonging to a subject confronting an objective world dissolve and 'grasp' or 'experience' their own genesis on a plane of immanence. And this genesis is the passive syntheses presented in the second chapter of *Difference and Repetition*.

THE FIRST SYNTHESIS OF TIME

The first step in giving a genetic account of thought is to show how prior to any cognitively active apprehension initiated *by* an intentional mind, there occurs 'passive syntheses of contemplation or contraction' that takes place *in* the mind (Deleuze 1994: 98). The argument that attempts to show this is convoluted, drawing upon both empirical transcendental and speculative moments, and therefore only the general thrust of the argument can be discussed here.

When synthetic activity is displaced from the active mind to something happening in the mind, it means that the manifold of intuition is not taken up *a priori* by an active ordering principle. The strict distinction between spontaneity and receptivity that Kant had introduced between intuition and the other faculties made him have to assume 'sensations already formed, then merely relating these to the *a priori* forms of their representation which are determined as space and time' (98). With Deleuze's operation, the faculty of imagination as what organizes sensible intuition in cognitive synthesis is grounded in a passive synthesis of sensibility that lies beneath representational consciousness. This means connecting the perceptive synthesis with the forces composing our senses and bodies, because, as Deleuze says, these passive syntheses 'concerns not only the sensory-motor habits that we have', but extend all the way to that primary sensibility that we *are*; 'The sensed quality is indistinguishable from the contraction of elementary excitations...[but these] perceptual syntheses refer back to organic syntheses which are like the sensibility of the senses' (72f). Underneath our representation of the world and the active syntheses which co-constitute and relate to these representations a sub-representative passive self is at work. And this passive

self 'is not defined simply by receptivity – that is, by means of the capacity to experience sensations – but by virtue of the contractile contemplation which constitutes the organism itself before it constitutes the sensations' (78).

Perception is here not understood within the framework of objects affecting subject, but as what is formed when out of a multiplicity of minute perceptions a differential relation determines some to stand out as conscious experience. We rise out of an ocean of micro-perceptions; out of the differential of the unconscious the world of subject and object is crystalized.

These contractile contemplations which constitute the organism and its sensations are also what Deleuze calls the living now. They belong to the temporal dimension of the actual world; the actual is, temporally speaking, always a present. From this point of view one could say that past and future as such are only abstractions. The future and the past are *in itself* unreal since they do not exist *as* past and *as* future. 'The past and the future do not designate instants distinct from a supposed present instant, but rather the dimensions of the present itself in so far as it is a contraction of instants' (71). Past and future are therefore dimensions inherent to the present, relative to the contractile range of the actual present. Only the present exists, but there are lesser and greater presents. For each present there is always a greater present in which the smaller is an instant. At the limit, everything that exists is a local finite contraction within a network of different levels, implicated in one all-engulfing present actuality, contracting past and future into an eternally changing present. 'The greatest present, the divine present, is the great mixture, the unity of corporeal causes among themselves' (Deleuze 2004: 186).

In this perspective time is displaced from its Kantian status as an *a priori* form of intuition and materialized. 'Inside Chronos, the present is in some manner corporeal' (Deleuze 2004: 162). Time is the life and processes of material beings and events, it is internalized as the morphogenesis of entities and their network of relations. Evolution does not take place in time, evolution is time. And insofar as inorganic matter is temporal, this holds not only for organisms and plants, but for everything. The process is more fundamental than the product which expresses it.

In this way Deleuze grounds sensible apprehension in a synthesis of time that does not belong to the conscious perceiving mind but to matter as sub-representational sensibility. The formation of cognitive content in recognition depends on previous passive syntheses that constitute the quality and extensity of the world. Both the perceiving mind and the organism in relation to which perception takes place are constituted from the contractile contemplations. There is therefore a material continuum between pre-individual processes of a transcendental sensibility and

individualized and subjectively appropriated perceptions, but a threshold separates the two.

A consequence of this, which is the important point in this context, is that experience is capable in principle of reaching all the way into the pre-subjective processes of sensation, into the intensity that constitute empirical perceptions. There is a differential threshold which defines where minute perceptions contract and constitute definite qualities. Another name for this threshold is the Other-structure. In *Michele Tournier and the World Without Others* Deleuze writes that it is the Other-structure which prevents perception from coinciding with things because of a time-difference in the constitution of objects and subject. 'The Other thus assures the distinction between consciousness and its object as a temporal distinction. ... In the Other's absence, consciousness and its object are one. ... Consciousness ceases to be a light cast upon objects in order to become a pure phosphorescence of things in themselves' (Deleuze 2004: 350). To perceive beyond this threshold is no longer to inform and objectify the world, but to participate in the contractions which constitute us in the first place. And, as we will see further below, it is precisely such a breakthrough which takes place in the break with recognition and common sense.

THE SECOND SYNTHESIS OF TIME

The first synthesis constitutes the living present; any living present (of a rock, plant, animal or human) is a contraction of a number of smaller presents, and past and future are here dimensions of the present, its contractile range being its temporal extension. Once a present is gone, it is no more, and has no past or future. Only to the extent that it belongs as an instant of a greater present does it continue to exist. From this perspective nothing but the present exists, and therefore time would seem to be co-extensive with the present. But this first account is not enough to explain time according to Deleuze. Time is *not* co-extensive with the time of the present. If that were the case, the past would only be a trace of former presents in the actual present. But according to Deleuze, and following Bergson, the past is real *in itself*. The past is not preserved in the present, as something belonging to the actual, but *in itself, as past*.

In order to show us this pure past Deleuze refers us to a paradox belonging to the present *as present*:

What is actual is always a present. But then, precisely, the present changes or passes. We can always say that it becomes past when it no longer is, when a new present replaces it. But this is meaningless. It is clearly necessary for it to pass for the new present to arrive, and it is clearly necessary for it to pass at the same time as it is present, at the moment that it is the present. (Deleuze 1997: 78)

Because the present *passes* it must be both present and past at the same time. Deleuze argues that we must conceive another transcendental time *in which* the first synthesis is grounded, and which *causes* the present to pass. This is a puzzling statement.

We can get a sense of this point if we reflect on our experience of time. Here we can see that we need minimal memory of the past to ground the passing of time, to see the difference. It is the memory of the past that makes a difference between pure presence without consciousness of passing time, and the passing of time that is experienced in the present. However, this memory cannot be based on the empirical faculty of memory or reproduction since that already presupposes a constituted present to retain. The empirical memory comes too late to fulfill the function of establishing the difference between past and present within the present. The present, in order to be passing, has to be, *as present*, different from itself. And this difference lies in the fact that the present is past at the same time as it is present. Time is change. In relation to what? In relation to itself as past. But this past cannot have anything to do with the actual, because the actual is always present. Only within time itself can the difference between present and past lie, and not within two different instants of the actual, a past and a present.

But why can it not be simply the sub-representational first passive synthesis of the living now which is responsible for this doubling of 'now' and 'passing' in experience? Our experience of time would then be lagging behind the contraction of the living now; because I have a liminal experience of the unconscious contractions out of which my conscious experience of now emerges, there is a fraction of time between the actual contractions (process), and my consciousness experiencing the present (product). Thus my experience would be both now and past; now as conscious representational experience, but this now would be past in relation to the living contractions, as already drawn off from the first passive synthesis of the living present. This would eliminate the need for a transcendental time.

Even if this *is* a problem, (and precisely the one we need to unearth and dismantle in order to free ourselves from the prison of representation and introduce real time into thought - we will see how this happens in the third synthesis) we cannot rid ourselves from the need of a contemporaneous past by transposing the problem to lie between living now and represented now. This is because it is also a logical problem. The difference between living and represented now is a psychological difference, has to do with the constitution of human experience, the difference between living now

and pure past is a logical and metaphysical difference. The notion of present, or time – and therefore also any measurements on a time-scale – presuppose this difference.⁶

Thus we must distinguish between two forms of past, and their corresponding memory-faculty. One is the active synthesis of (empirical) memory dependent upon the first synthesis which remembers past presents. But before the first synthesis which constitutes the existing present, there must be another ‘more profound passive synthesis of memory’ (Deleuze 1994: 79). This is a past that is *prior* to the constitution of the present, and which therefore cannot be remembered with the empirical faculty of memory. This is not the past of *Chronos*, it is not past presents, but that which causes the present to pass; it is the pure *a priori* past which, in its contemporaneity with the present, marks the difference inherent to the present as temporal becoming. It is here that we find the transcendental condition for time as *passing*. The representation of a former present can be reproduced and the passing of a present is reflected only on this ground. As the quote from *Cinema 2* shows, the present is contemporary with its own past, but as Deleuze says many places, this past which works as a passive synthesis constituting the passing of time, is never itself present. This is not the time of the actual. This is a virtual, transcendental time. But that does not mean that the virtual time cannot be experienced or lived, although ‘experience’ and ‘lived’ must necessarily mean something radically different in that case.⁷

This operation traces the foundation of actual perception back to a virtual dimension, and by way of this grounds the human faculties of sensibility and memory in this pre-individual element. Intuitive sensibility is founded upon the first synthesis that contracts moments into a present. This is matter as contraction-contemplation. But this is further grounded in a transcendental memory of the pure past which is that which causes the present to pass. This means that the corporeal present of *Chronos* is the most contracted state of this virtual pure past:

⁶A lot hinges on how we understand the relation between the pure past and the living present. Joe Hughes (Hughes 2008: 138ff) argues that the pure past must be understood as produced by the first synthesis, and that the paradoxes of the contemporaneity and preexistence of the pure past only holds for the past’s relation to the *represented empirical present* as opposed to the living present. The most common interpretation follows Deleuze’s Bergsonian leanings here, and either sees the first synthesis as grounded and conditioned by the second, or sees them as mutually implicated in each other so that the pure past has a virtual reality which is not only secondarily produced. Related to this question is also whether Ideas are born at the end of a genetic line producing the faculty of thought, or if they subsist in a virtual realm. Daniela Voss has argued convincingly for the latter position in *Conditions of Thought*, see note 73, page 207.

⁷Daniela Voss writes in *Conditions of Thought* ‘As Deleuze contends we have the means to penetrate the realm of the sub-representative (*DI* 115/161), to explore virtual Ideas (*DR* 194/251), to live and to experience the pure past (cf. *B* 122/55, note 16/1) and even to create fragments of the pure past in art (cf. the Proustian example of the in-itself of Combray (*DR* 85/115 and 122/160))’.

The present exists only as an infinitely contracted past which is constituted at the extreme point of the already-there. The present would not pass without this condition. The present would not pass if it were not the most contracted degree of the past. (Deleuze 1997: 130)

What we have seen until now is a reconceptualization of Kant's synthesis of apprehension and reproduction from a genetic point of view. In this analysis Deleuze is taking us deeper and deeper into the unconscious that constitutes empirical consciousness. Intuition was first grounded in a sensibility that composed and traversed the body, and which has the power of synthesis without any transcendental I as its condition. The temporality of this self-organizing intensive matter is seen to be grounded in a virtual temporality, the pure past. In this way Deleuze gives an account of the genesis of the individual out of these sub-conscious temporal processes. Because we are the *product* of this process, but unconscious of the production itself, we experience ourselves to be like a fixed being in relation to which time is experienced and conceptualized. In reality, however, we are time; 'the only subjectivity is time, non-chronological time grasped in its foundation, and it is we who are internal to time, not the other way round' (Deleuze 1997: 82). The account of the passive syntheses makes it clear that we are internal to time. But what does it really mean to *grasp* non-chronological time in its foundation? As we will see below, it is precisely this unconscious foundation that is ungrounded and 'grasped' in the transcendent exercise of the faculties. By reversing, splitting them apart and forcing them into a transcendent exercise, this genetic level of reality that constitutes the empirical faculties will be revealed. The third synthesis *is* the actual entry into this violent territory where the individual faces its own dissolution. Thought here becomes event, it enters and participates in the intensity that pulsates in and as matter, in the sensible as contraction-contemplation, and within this discovers access to the virtual past, that element in relation to which the present differs from itself, or time as becoming.

But for this to take place the other pole in the image of thought, that of the ego, must also be dissolved. The represented ego, or cogito, must be dissolved because it is a structure of thought that fixes and 'crucifies' difference (Deleuze 1994: 138), and the cogito is therefore responsible for upholding the identity of both subject and object. It is this dissolution of the represented ego, which happens in the encounter, which will propel us into the third synthesis in which we regain the temporal syntheses as experience.

The Third Synthesis of Time

In beginning the discussion of the third synthesis Deleuze says that 'Temporally speaking - in other words, from the point of view of the theory of time - nothing is more instructive than the difference between the Kantian and the Cartesian Cogito' (85). For Descartes, the cogito expressed a determination (I think) and an undetermined existence (I am) that *coincided*. What the thinker *is* and what he *does* is one and the same: The 'I think' is a determination that implies existence (I am), and this existence is determined as a thinking existence: I think, therefore I am, and what I am is a thinking thing. This always renewed event of thought constitutes the self for Descartes. (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 24) Kant objected to this logic of implication between determination and existence by introducing time as the essential 'form in which the undetermined is determinable' (Deleuze 1994: 86). As a result he split the subject between its spontaneity and receptivity, between the determination in thinking and what this determination bears upon, by separating them and making that which is to be determined a phenomenon in time. The activity of thought determines the self by synthesizing a manifold in time. The result of this synthesizing determination is my empirical self, but the act which synthesizes can never coincide with this self. The time-lapse between determination and manifold content that is to be determined as existing means that the subject can never fully grasp itself as a spontaneous 'whole'. In other words, the spontaneity does not belong to the subject but begets it, and begets it only insofar as what is so determined is different from what determines. The spontaneity of thought can only be represented by a receptive and passive self, i.e. the product of the process.

This Deleuze says is a 'furtive and explosive moment which is not even continued by Kant... For a brief moment we enter into that schizophrenia in principle which characterizes the highest power of thought' (58). This moment is not continued by Kant because he reintroduced a principle of *a priori* identity by subjecting the process of thought to a *transcendental I*. Kant advances from Descartes by introducing time as a form of intuition and condition under which determination is possible and for a moment time enters directly into the heart of the cogito. But since experience becomes conditioned by the synthetic activity of a transcendental I, this time-difference is subjected to logical conditions of possible experience. Thus Kant opened and immediately closed this possibility again. But at the very moment of introducing time into the cogito, before folding it back into an active synthesis of the I as the condition for possible experience, at this moment time was not an imposition of the subject, but the subject was itself time. Here it is not the subject who thinks, but thought works directly upon the subject.

It is this fissure in the cogito in which the 'I is an Other' (Deleuze 2008: vii) which we must reopen. Here thinking is recognized as not belonging to the subject, thought is not denatured by representation, but lived as a synthesis. The schizophrenia in principle means that the activity of thought is experienced as belonging to an Other; in the third synthesis the activity of thought is brought into contact with the Outside. But how does this happen?

Deleuze says that 'on the path which leads to that which is to be thought, all begins with sensibility' (Deleuze 1994: 144). This beginning is to be understood in two ways that are two sides of the same coin. First, it means that the true point of attack is acquired by breaking out of the image of thought and our normal representational consciousness. This break cannot be generated within thought as a self-reflective and self-initiating capacity. This would simply reiterate the image of thought, as thinking would be the product of a previous cognitive process; a result, whereas this is what needs to be suppressed in order for thought to emerge as an original creation. Therefore, taking up an idea by Plato, Deleuze presents the *encounter* with something that cannot be incorporated into the cognitive system and recognized as that which is capable of forcing thought to awaken within thinking. This is the inverse or other side of the de-actualisation of recognition; the beginning of a fuse that traverses and induces a transcendent exercise of the faculties. Taken together it means a de-actualisation that thereby releases forces that can lead to the creation of thinking.

This process amounts to a suspension and reversal of the cognitive synthesis. As already shown, the three elements that compose the cognitive synthesis are apprehension, reproduction and recognition, and the outcome of this synthesizing process means that the faculties are mixed together on the basis of the empirically given: the apprehended in sensibility, the remembered past in reproduction and the concept in recognition converge to produce a self-identical object. This creates our normal consciousness of representation. Between this mental representation of the world and the process which brings it about there is the time-lapse discussed above between the living now and the represented now, and within this fraction of time is also to be found the threshold between unconscious genetic processes and conscious active cognition. Thus the genetic principles of experience are covered by the self-conscious activity of the mind.⁸ But in the encounter with something that cannot be

⁸Material repetition comes undone even as it occurs, and can be represented only by the active synthesis which projects its elements into a space of conservation and calculation. At the same time, however, once it has become an object of representation, this repetition is subordinated to the identity of the elements or to the resemblance of the conserved and added cases. Spiritual repetition unfolds in the being in itself of the past, whereas representation concerns and reaches only those presents which result from active

recognized, this operation is suppressed and the cognitive activity de-actualised. Through this de-actualisation of the empirical activity, a counter-actualisation of the faculties may follow in reverse order: In the encounter, our reflective determination of the object (recognition and the cogito) hangs in the air, unable to actualise itself as representation of itself and the object, and is thus suppressed. Consequently the next subsequent phases in the synthesis are also undone; since the reproduction is no longer related to identity, it can no longer contribute to the preservation of a past present, and therefore no conceptual determination applies. The thing encountered is no longer implicated and taken up into the synthetic activity of the cogito. As we have seen, Deleuze grounds intuition in a passive *synthesis*, i.e. in the contraction that constitutes the foundation of the living present, and the synthetic activity of this passive self is now no longer covered up by our active cognitive syntheses of recognition. Because of this we reach into the primary act of apprehension as a more or less pure sensation. In the encounter we become caught up in the intensity which is normally explicated as a quality in perception, and the force which is active but normally concealed is revealed. We may begin to live within the elementary excitations of our senses, consciousness becoming coextensive with the contractions of sensations themselves:

At one and the same time I *become* in the sensation and something *happens* through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other. And at the limit, it is the same body which, being both subject and object, gives and receives the sensation... I experience the sensation only ... by reaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed. (Deleuze 2005: 25)

This quote from *Francis Bacon The Logic of Sensation* is a description of how the experience of contemplation-contraction takes place at the threshold where subject and object can no more be clearly distinguished. At this limit consciousness opens up to the life of the world, to the intensities at work in and as the sensible. But this is of course not a simple opening up to what is merely given. Body here does not mean the recognizable organic unity distinct from the rest of the world, but, insofar as the eye itself is contracted light, the world of light and color belongs to 'the body'. The body is here the contracted pre-individual sensations spread out as light, sound, touch etc. But light, sound, touch and so on is of course not the representations we have of these qualities, but the force which lies at the basis of these sensations. At this threshold we merge with the microperceptions that constitute us and the well-defined world of subject and objects. And therefore also the organs are liberated from the organization

synthesis, thereby subordinating all repetition, to the identity of the present present in reflection, or to the resemblance of the former present in reproduction.' (Deleuze 1994: 84)

of the organism. The eye is not a fixed organ any more, but is liberated 'from its adherence to the organism, from its character as a fixed and qualified organ: the eye becomes virtually the polyvalent indeterminate organ that sees the body without organs ... as a pure presence' (Deleuze 2005: 37). In this release of the presence beneath and beyond representation it is the living contraction of time itself that is experienced.⁹ The individualized consciousness confronting objects is brought into contact with its own coming-into-being within the orbit of the first passive synthesis which constitute the living now of sensations.

Sensation is pure contemplation, for it is through contemplation that one contracts, contemplating oneself to the extent that one contemplates the elements from which one originates. Contemplation is creating, the mystery of passive creation, sensation. (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 212)

At this point sensation apprehends that which can only be sensed, but which is nevertheless insensible from the point of view of 'empirical experience' when sensibility is mixed with the other faculties. Sensibility reaches into the imperceptible basis of the sensible and apprehends 'not a sensible being, but the being *of* the sensible' (Deleuze 1994: 140).

Here the first passive sub-representative synthesis is brought to consciousness and sensibility is raised to its transcendent exercise. We awaken to the living contractions from which our normal consciousness is an epiphenomenon. And that means that we being to live *within* the first passive synthesis of time, rather than building active cognitive syntheses upon it. We stop covering the transcendental domain with our image of thought. We begin to penetrate it, or rather, it begins to penetrate us.

But this is only the beginning of the path which leads to that which is to be thought. This sublime experience where sensibility acts on its own is the beginning of a 'chain of force and fuse' which runs through the faculties, disjoins them from common sense and brings each one 'face to face with its own element' (141). How can we understand this 'fuse' running through the faculties and unhinging them? If we take into account the presentation of the syntheses in the second chapter this question answers itself. Because we have situated ourselves within the contemplative contractions of the living now in sensation, we live within them instead of relating to their contracted qualities in represented perceptions, and because of this we have also moved into the core of the paradox of the first passive synthesis: the passing of the

⁹[*Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense* are] an attempt to jolt, set in motion, something inside me, to treat writing as a flow, not a code. And I like some passages in *Difference and Repetition*, those on tiredness and contemplation, for instance, because in spite of appearances they're living experiences.' (Deleuze 1995: 7)

present. In the intensity of contractile power constituting a present, a limit-experience of time occurs because the present becomes dissimilar to itself. The transcendental time that causes the present to pass awakens. We now experience also the second passive synthesis within which the first takes place. The intensity in sensibility, the intensity in the contractile present of sensations that intuition has become in and as the encounter, provokes and rouses the transcendent exercise of memory so as to grasp that which can only be recalled: the being of the pure past. Entering the contraction of sensibility we also draw nearer to the forgetfulness that constitutes empirical consciousness. We begin to remember the immemorial, that which constitutes the ground of time, which is never present but which causes the present to pass. Transcendental memory awakens and remembers its essential relationship to the being of the past. In *Michel Tournier and the World Without Others* Deleuze describes this continuation from the unearthing of the first to the second synthesis as one where consciousness 'has become not only a phosphorescence internal to things but a fire in their heads, a light over each one, and a "soaring P". In this light, something else appears, an ethereal double of each thing.' This something else, the ethereal double, is the virtual counterpart of the present, the pure past. This is the discovery of the world as image, freed from the Other-structure; 'the new upright image in which the elements are released and renewed, having become celestial and forming a thousand capricious elemental figures' (Deleuze 2004: 351).

As such, because the fuse which unhinges the faculties is one continuous process, this is already at the same time an awakening of thought. The intensity in the sensible is communicated to memory, and from memory to thought, forcing thinking to grasp difference in itself. What is remembered in the transcendent exercise of memory is not similitude, not presents that were ones present, but the pure past. But this pure past is activated inside the intensity of the sensible, in the paradox of the passing present. Therefore the third synthesis is a synthesis of the previous two, but not as a harmonious integration, but as a disjunctive synthesis. It synthesizes the being of the pure past, the pre-individual virtual, and the presence of the sensible intensity that the perceiving body is implicated in. But sensibility as intensity is the actualization of the virtual. The third synthesis of the future is therefore not simply a de-territorialisation, a flight out of the world of actual subjects and objects, but, after the dissolution of the Other-structure has taken place, also the incarnation of the Outside, of a pure element released from the Other-structure, re-territorialised back into the perceptual situation. Another future is created by the metamorphosed thinker, a future which animates the world. As Deleuze and Guattari say in *What is Philosophy?*; becoming is not of history, but falls back into it (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 110).

METAMORPHOSIS: STIRB UND WERDE

If the third synthesis of time is a metamorphosis as presented above, this means a simultaneous death and re-birth of consciousness. Deleuze indicates that a *Stirb und Werde* process belongs to the transformation of thinking when he writes that ‘there is an experience of death which corresponds to the third synthesis of time’ (Deleuze 1994: 114). But how could death be experienced? It could only be experienced if the impersonal death of the third synthesis is in truth a metamorphosis in which the individuated consciousness dies in the face of a different kind of experience or consciousness. If the dissolution of the cogito as centre and identity of thought belongs to the beginning of an unhinging liberation of the faculties from their mutual co-dependence, then the creation of thought consummates what was begun in the encounter. It is not I who encounter the intensity in the sensible, or remembers the immemorial being of the past, but ‘I’ am being generated in and as this event. The cogito is truly dissolved because it is replaced and substituted by the event of thinking: ‘I am no longer myself but thought’s aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 64). Here a paradoxical de-individuation takes place through dissolving our already well-constituted individuality as consciousness plunges into the pre-individual. ‘The subject is this free, anonymous, and nomadic singularity which traverses men as well as plants and animals independently of the matter of their individuation and the forms of their personality’ (Deleuze 2004: 123). This working of death within life in service of a greater life also has another name: the crack. The crack is the death instinct, the great instinct which condition all the other instincts of conservation and destruction, but in Deleuze’s rewriting of the death instinct the last to be said about this is not the wish for a return to inanimate matter, but an impersonal death where death turns against itself and transforms the instincts: ‘Is it possible since it absorbs every instinct that it could also enact the transmutation of the instincts, turning death against itself? Would it thereby not create instincts which would be evolutive rather than alcoholic, erotic, or financial, that is, either conserving or destroying?’ (Deleuze 2004: 369)

The impersonal death of the the third synthesis is therefore a metamorphosis, and a kind of rebirth. Genesis is here practically realized, and the *immanence* of this transcendental empiricism can be measured when Deleuze states that each faculty is ‘borne to the extreme point of its dissolution [where] it grasps that in the world which concerns it exclusively and brings it into the world’ (Deleuze 1994: 143). At this point the eternal return is not only thought and affirmed, but effectively realized. The thinker lives (and dies) through a becoming, genesis is lived through.¹⁰

¹⁰Sjoerd Van Tuinen writes that for Deleuze ‘the death drive constitutes a creative power of self-reinvention and transfiguration. When the individual body cracks up, all sorts of nonhuman forces rise up

This is the point where the fulfilment of the critical project – the by now well-known point of view of *Difference and Repetition* as Deleuze’s rewriting of Kant’s critique – as a transcendental genesis as opposed to a transcendental conditioning is accomplished, an accomplishment that cannot simply be theoretical but must be a grounding metamorphosis of the thinker. ‘To ground is to metamorphose’ (Deleuze 1994: 154).¹¹ And this accomplishment leads consequently into Deleuze’s vitalism, his ontology of life. The conscious individual life is a life begotten by an imprisonment and conservation of life – ‘the organism is not life, it is what imprisons life’ (Deleuze 2005: 33). This imprisonment is the process of individuation, and the death of the individuated consciousness initiates the birth of a non-organic life; a crack extended just enough so that the event is inscribed in the flesh (Deleuze 2004: 179-182). In Deleuze’s vitalism conscious psychic life is therefore a kind of death because it is constituted by an imprisonment, a fold which closes in upon itself, with the cogito as the knot on whose four branches ‘difference is crucified’ (Deleuze 1994: 138). When we break out of the dogmatic image of thought and liberate thinking, this sub-representational life underlying and creating representational consciousness is released. The experience of death in the third synthesis of time is therefore also a birth.¹² This metamorphosis is that experience which belongs with necessity to Deleuze’s transcendental genesis. Only when the non-organic life of the world is accessed can we think genesis from a plane of immanence.

to its crystalline surface, such that the consistency of our immediate relations to the environment may be redistributed. On the fractured surface of the body without organs, a breakdown of good and common sense is also the breakthrough by which the thinker learns to relate to death, which, even if he “returns” from it with “bloodshot eyes”, is no longer his death but the neutral energy of any death whatsoever. He is substituted by a singular becoming that is equally his authentic being, a strange vitality at the limit: “imperceptible, incorporeal and ideational”. Thus life’s pathological intensities constitute both the origin of sense or onto-logy and the risks of a speculative life which converts organic life into a spiritual and critical force. Materialism does not mean the priority or anteriority of the body over thought, but the expressive power of the body to pass from silence to the production of sense beyond the established image of thought: being as voice and vital clamor.’ Van Tuinen, Sjoerd, ‘Deleuze: Speculative and Practical Philosophy’, forthcoming in Armen Avanessian & Suhail Malik (eds.), *Genealogies of Speculation. Materialism and Subjectivity since Structuralism*. London/New York: Bloomsbury.)

¹¹Christian Kerslake writes about this: ‘Maybe the central problem with the notion of immanence is that it cannot be a purely theoretical problem. In order to conduct a successful ‘metacritic’ – where one is able to produce a self-grounding movement of consciousness – one must unground oneself and enter a ‘psychic repetition’ that involves encountering and accounting for one’s own singularities.’ (Kerslake 2009: 41)

¹² This reversal of life and death is consistent with Deleuze’s reference to Fichte in his last piece, *Immanence; a Life...* (Deleuze: 2002) In a footnote Deleuze refers to Fichte’s *Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben* for the concept of life. In this book Fichte speaks about the blessed life as the true life, as opposed to the semblance of life in which we are normally involved. Whereas our conscious life is in truth a spiritual death, the true life is for us death.

In light of this interpretation the real question for engaging with Deleuze's oeuvre must be how to put philosophy into practice, how to make it work and to engender productive metamorphoses. For this to be created, we need find a way of engender thinking within thought, which means to move beyond the limits of empirical consciousness, to be affected by the Event, and to research it.

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