CHAPTER 3

Deleuze and Derrida, Immanence and Transcendence: Two Directions in Recent French Thought

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In a recent essay, Giorgio Agamben has identified two different trajectories in contemporary French philosophy, both of which pass through Heidegger: a trajectory of transcendence, which includes Levinas and Derrida, and goes back through Husserl to Kant; and a trajectory of immanence, which includes Foucault and Deleuze, and goes back through Nietzsche to Spinoza. Deleuze and Levinas are no doubt the most obvious representatives of these two trajectories: Deleuze explicitly describes himself as a philosopher of immanence, while Levinas explicitly claims the mantle of transcendence (the 'Other' being the paradigmatic concept of transcendence). But Derrida clearly belongs to the trajectory of transcendence as well, and Agamben's typology thus provides us with a valuable grid for assessing the relation between Derrida and Deleuze, at least in a preliminary manner. Agamben does not himself develop his insight in detail, and perhaps for good reason. Immanence and transcendence are both highly overdetermined terms in the history of philosophy, and it is not immediately clear what it would mean to be a philosopher of either one. The very term 'transcendence' has theological and spiritual overtones that tend to obscure the wider history and varied philosophical uses of the concept. Moreover, one might be tempted to question the use of such a 'binary opposition' to characterise philosophers like Derrida and Deleuze, given their shared critique of the use of oppositional strategies in philosophy. But such a dismissal would be both hasty and superficial. Immanence and transcendence are relative terms, not opposites, which means that in each case one must ask: Immanent to what? Or transcendent to what? As such, immanence and transcendence can be helpful terms not so much in determining the differing 'positions' of Derrida and Deleuze, but rather as means of charting out their differing philosophical 'trajectories', at least relative to each

other. There are three traditional areas of philosophy, in particular, in which these terms have found a specific use – namely, the fields of subjectivity, ontology and epistemology. Derrida and Deleuze have written on each of these topics, and although these fields certainly do not exhaust the themes of immanence and transcendence, they nonetheless provide points of reference from which we can evaluate the work of Derrida and Deleuze using Agamben's typology. In what follows, then, I would like to consider each of these domains in turn, showing how, in each case, Derrida explicitly aligns himself with the trajectory of transcendence, while Deleuze consistently follows the trajectory of immanence. At best, this is a propadeutic study, a kind of 'vectorial' analysis that seeks to diagram, in a general manner, the divergent directions Derrida and Deleuze have followed in their philosophical careers, despite (or perhaps even because of) their initial interest in a number of shared problematics.

The tradition of subjectivity provides us with a first and obvious model of transcendence. For any philosophy that begins with the subject - that is, much of post-Cartesian philosophy - the concept of immanence refers to the sphere of the subject, while transcendence refers to what lies outside the subject, such as the 'external world' or the 'other'. In this tradition, the term 'transcendence' refers to that which transcends the field of consciousness immanent to the subject. On this score, one has only to think of the problems posed in Husserl's fifth Cartesian Meditation, the theme of 'Being-with-Others' in Sartre, or Levinas' own philosophy of alterity. But one also finds, in the subjectivist tradition, a second, and perhaps more profound, problem of transcendence, which is what Sartre called, in his article of the same name, 'The Transcendence of the Ego'. In Kant, the ego or the 'I think' accompanies all (or most of) my representations – it is precisely what makes them mine. Against Kant, Sartre pushed for a conception of an impersonal transcendental field that was without an ego, much like William James' notion of a 'pure flux of consciousness'.2 In other words, when one says that the field of consciousness is immanent to a transcendental subject, one is already erecting the subject as an element of transcendence that goes beyond the flux of experience.³ Already, then, we find two models of transcendence at work in the subjectivist tradition: the other (or the 'world', in Heidegger) is what transcends the self, but the subject itself is already transcendent in relation to 'experience' (passive syntheses). Consequently, one might say that there are two general means by which one can call into question the status of the transcendental subject (the wellknown theme of the 'death of the subject'): by appealing either to the transcendence of the other or to the immanent flux of experience itself. It would be simplistic to suggest that Derrida simply followed the first path and Deleuze the second, but the 'elective affinities' of the two thinkers seem evident.

Derrida and Deleuze, however, are both critical of the subjectivist tradition, and the more telling differences between them lie elsewhere.

A second model for thinking about the immanence/transcendence distinction is related, not to the question of subjectivity (the field of consciousness) but rather to the question of ontology (the field of Being). Put simply, an immanent or pure ontology would be an ontology in which there is nothing 'beyond' or 'higher than' or 'superior to' Being. By contrast, the fundamental ontological categories of transcendence would include the 'God' of the Christian tradition, the 'Good' in Plato, the 'One' in Plotinus4 - all of which are said to be 'beyond' Being, 'otherwise' than Being ('transcendent' to Being), and are thereby used to 'judge' Being, or at least to account for Being.5 On the question of Being, Derrida and Deleuze - like all contemporary thinkers - are clearly indebted to Heidegger, who inaugurated the renaissance of ontology in twentieth-century thought (which is why Heidegger rightly functions as the lynchpin in Agamben's classification). Yet it is equally clear that Deleuze and Derrida take Heidegger's ontological project in two very different directions: Deleuze attempts to develop an immanent ontology, while Derrida's deconstruction necessarily operates on the basis of a formal structure of transcendence.6 On this score, we can make use of several rubrics to help map the divergent ontological trajectories of Derrida and Deleuze: their respective relation to metaphysics, their different concepts (or 'quasi-concepts') of 'difference', and their contrasting uses of the history of philosophy (using the 'divine names' tradition as an example).

Early in his career, Derrida took over, in his own manner, the Heideggerian task of 'overcoming metaphysics', while Deleuze, for his part, would later say that 'going beyond metaphysics or the death of philosophy' had never been an issue for him (Deleuze 1995b, 88). It would not be an exaggeration to say that it was their respective adoption and rejection of this Heideggerian problematic which initially set Derrida and Deleuze on their divergent trajectories of transcendence and immanence. In Derrida, metaphysics is determined by its structural 'closure', and deconstruction is a means of disturbing this closure, creating an opening or an interruption. The notion of metaphysical closure itself depends on a movement of transcendence, that is, an 'excess over the totality, without which no totality would appear'.7 Since one cannot transcend metaphysics as such – there is no 'outside' to the metaphysical tradition – one can only destructure or deconstruct metaphysics from within. The project of 'overcoming metaphysics', in other words, is an impossibility, but it is this very impossibility that conditions the possibility of deconstructing the philosophical tradition from within. Rather than trying to get outside metaphysics, one can submit 'the regulated play of philosophemes' in the history of philosophy to a certain slippage or sliding that would allow them to be read as 'symptoms of something that *could not be presented* in the history of philosophy' (Derrida 1981b, 6–7).8 Immanent within metaphysics, there lies a formal structure of transcendence that can never be made present as such, but that nonetheless functions as the condition (the 'quasi-transcendental' condition) of metaphysics itself. Derrida thus situates his work, he says, at 'the *limit* of philosophical discourse', at its margins, its borders or boundary lines (Derrida 1981b, 6). The border he straddles is the border between the closed and immanent totality of metaphysics, with its exhausted concepts and philosophemes, and that which exceeds that totality, that is, a formal structure of transcendence that is, as it were, everywhere at work in metaphysics, though it can never be made present as such.

Derrida attempts to think this formal structure of transcendence through concepts such as differance (which is, then, at best a 'quasi-concept', since the notion of a concept is itself metaphysical). If metaphysics is defined in terms of presence, then différance is that which marks 'the disappearance of any originary presence', that which thereby exceeds or transcends metaphysics, and thereby, at the same time, constantly disrupts and 'destabilises' metaphysics. Commenting on Heidegger's notion of the 'ontological difference', Derrida writes that 'there may be a difference still more unthought than the difference between Being and beings. . . . Beyond Being and beings, this difference, ceaselessly differing from and deferring (itself), would trace (itself) (by itself) - this différance would be the first or last trace if one still could speak, here, of origin and end' (Derrida 1982, 67). The long series of notions developed in Derrida's work – not only différance and the trace, but also text, writing, the hymen, the supplement, the pharmakon, the parergon, justice, messianicity, and so on - are all traces of this formal structure of transcendence, marked by their aporetic or antinomial status, their possibility conditioned by their impossibility, and so on. Deconstruction thus operates in the interval between the closed totality of metaphysics and the formal transcendence of différance (or as Derrida says in 'Force of Law', in the interval between the deconstructibility of law [droit] and the undeconstructibility of justice (1992b, 243).

Deleuze, by contrast, has a very different and non-Heideggerian relation to metaphysics. He described himself candidly as a 'pure metaphysician' in the mould of Bergson and Whitehead. 'I feel myself to be a pure metaphysician', he said in a late interview, 'Bergson says that modern science hasn't found its metaphysics, the metaphysics it would need. It is this metaphysics that interests me' (Villani 1999, 130). He consequently saw himself as 'the most naïve philosopher of our generation. . . . the one who felt the least guilt about "doing philosophy" (Deleuze 1995b, 88–9). If one is critical of traditional metaphysics, or metaphysical concepts such as identity or essence, he suggests, then the philosophical task is not to attempt to 'overcome' metaphysics, but rather to

actively construct a different metaphysics. This is why one does not find, in Deleuze, any general pronouncements concerning the 'nature' of 'Western metaphysics' (as 'logocentric', or as a 'metaphysics of presence'), since, as Derrida notes, the only position from which one could make such a pronouncement is a position of transcendence, which Deleuze rejects. Consequently, there is no concept of closure in Deleuze either (since closure likewise depends on transcendence). From the start, Deleuze defined structures as such whether mathematical, philosophical, or otherwise - as fundamentally 'open', and he saw metaphysics itself as an open structure, which is far from having exhausted its 'possibilities'. This not only means that the 'creation of the new' is possible within metaphysics, but also that one can retrieve or repeat - to use Heidegger's term - avenues of thought in the history of metaphysics that were once opened, only to be quickly closed off again (for instance, the concept of univocity). Deleuze sees his work as being strictly immanent to metaphysics: creation and transformation are possible within metaphysics, and there are virtualities in past metaphysics that are capable of being reactivated, as it were, and inserted into new contexts, and new problematics. Metaphysics itself, in other words, is dynamic and in constant becoming.

Put crudely, then, if Derrida sets out to undo metaphysics, Deleuze sets out simply to do metaphysics. The results can appear to be very similar - after Deleuze died, Derrida wrote, in a short memorial text, of the 'near total affinity' he saw between Deleuze's work and his own - but in fact the context of their work is very different: a horizon of transcendence in Derrida (overcoming or going beyond metaphysics), and a function of immanence in Deleuze (doing metaphysics). 10 This difference may appear to be slight, but its very slightness acts like a butterfly effect that propels Derrida and Deleuze along two divergent trajectories that become increasingly remote from each other, to the point of perhaps being incompatible. Nowhere is this more evident than in Deleuze's own theory of difference. Deleuze and Derrida are both seen rightly - as philosophers of difference. Derrida's essay 'Différance' and Deleuze's book Difference and Repetition both appeared in 1968, and Heidegger's notion of the 'ontological difference' between Being and beings was one of the primary (though not the only) impetuses in their development of a theory of difference. But Derrida moves immediately in the direction of transcendence: what he was seeking, he tells us, is a difference 'beyond Being and beings', and this is precisely how he characterises différance: 'a difference still more unthought than the [ontological] difference between Being and beings' (Derrida 1982, 67).

In *Difference and Repetition*, by contrast, Deleuze proposes an interpretation of the ontological difference that radicalises it in the direction of immanence. 'In accordance with Heidegger's ontological intuition', he writes, 'difference

must be articulation and connection in itself; it must relate different to different without any mediation whatsoever by the identical, the similar, the analogous or the opposed. There must be a differenciation of difference, an in-itself which is like a differenciator [a Sich-unterscheidende] by virtue of which difference is gathered all at once rather than represented on condition of a prior resemblance, identity, analogy, or opposition' (Deleuze 1994, 117). The project of Difference and Repetition, in other words, is to provide an immanent analysis of the ontological difference in which the different is related to the different through difference itself: Being must not only be able to account for the external difference between beings, but also the fact that beings themselves are marked by an 'internal difference'; and the ontological difference must not only refer to the difference between Being and beings, but also the difference of Being from itself, 'an alliance of Being and itself in difference' (Deleuze 1994, 231). The concepts of difference that Deleuze develops in Difference and Repetition - 'difference in intensity, disparity in the phantasm, dissemblance in the form of time, the differential in thought' (Deleuze 1994, 145) - have a very different status than the notion of difference Derrida develops in his essay 'Différance'. For Derrida, différance is a relation that transcends ontology, that differs from ontology, that goes beyond or is more 'originary' than the ontological difference between Being and beings. Deleuze's aim, by contrast, is to show that ontology itself is constituted immanently by a principle of difference (and is thus a 'concept', in the Deleuzian sense of the term, and not merely a 'quasi-concept'). Deleuze is not often thought of as a Heideggerian, but Difference and Repetition can be read as a direct response to Being and Time from the standpoint of immanence: for Deleuze, Being is difference, and time is repetition.

Deleuze has himself provided a way of assessing the status of Derrida's quasi-concept of différance. In What is Philosophy?, Deleuze and Guattari present a rather summary typology of three general strategies by which transcendence has been introduced into philosophy. The first, and no doubt paradigmatic, type is the one found in Platonism and its variants: the field of immanence is a simple field of phenomena or appearances, which only possesses secondarily what is attributed first of all to the anterior unity of the Idea (or in later variants, to the 'One beyond Being' in Plotinus, or to the transcendence of the Christian 'God'). Modern philosophy effected a second type of transcendence: beginning with Descartes, and then with Kant, the cogito made it possible to treat the plane of immanence as a field of consciousness, which was attributed, as we have seen, no longer to the transcendence of the Idea, but rather to the transcendence of the Subject or the Ego. Finally, the third (and contemporary) form of transcendence – which is the one that concerns us – was introduced by phenomenology and its successors. When

immanence becomes immanent to a transcendental subjectivity, it is from within its own field that the mark of transcendence must appear. 'Husserl conceived of immanence as the flux of lived experience within subjectivity', write Deleuze and Guattari, 'but since this lived experience, pure and even primordial, does not belong completely to the self that represents it to itself, it is in the regions of non-belonging that the horizon of something transcendent is reestablished' (DG 1994b, 46). Deleuze and Guattari do not name names here, but one can easily imagine examples. Levinas, for example, founds ethics on the infinite transcendence of the 'Other' which challenges the status of the reflective subject and undoes the primacy of the Same. 12 In a different manner, Habermas attempts to ground ethics on the privileged transcendence of an intersubjective world populated by other selves, and regulated by a 'communicative consensus'. Whatever form it takes, in this contemporary moment of transcendence one no longer thinks of immanence as immanent to something (the Idea, the Subject), but on the contrary 'one seeks to rediscover a transcendence within the heart of immanence itself, as a breach or interruption of its field' (DG 1994b, 46). One seeks, in other words, a transcendence within immanence.

Derrida, in his own manner, clearly belongs to this contemporary (and postphenomenological) tradition of transcendence. This is evidenced, moreover, in his many readings of texts in the history of philosophy, which attempt to uncover, within the immanent and manifest movement of traditional philosophical concepts and their 'binary oppositions', a latent and transcendent movement of différance that is never present as such in the text but constantly serves to disrupt and destabilise it. This way of treating the history of philosophy raises a question that is intrinsically linked to the ontological theme of transcendence and immanence. What Heidegger bequeathed to contemporary philosophy was not only a rejuvenation of ontology, but concomitant with that, a certain treatment of the history of philosophy under the double theme of the 'destruction' of the history of ontology as well as the 'retrieval' or 'repetition' of that history. Indeed, for the generation to which Deleuze and Derrida belonged, the philosophical training one received in the French university was oriented almost exclusively towards the history of philosophy. Deleuze and Derrida's contrasting relation to metaphysics is thus reflected in their contrasting relation to the history of philosophy. In this regard, we can consider, as a precise historical example, an aspect of the medieval philosophical tradition in which Heidegger took a strong interest - the theological tradition of the 'divine names'. Heidegger himself first formulated his ontological question in the context of these medieval debates, and in taking up these debates for their own account, Derrida and Deleuze have each moved in clearly differentiated directions: Derrida in the direction of 'negative theology' (transcendence) and Deleuze in the direction of 'univocity' (immanence).¹³

Heidegger wrote his doctoral thesis on Duns Scotus, who was engaged in a rather lively thirteenth-century debate concerning the nature of Being. Being is said of beings, but in what sense? The Scholastics used three precise terms to designate the various ways of resolving the problem: equivocity, univocity and analogy. To say that Being is equivocal means that the term 'Being' is said of beings in several senses, and that these senses have no common measure: 'God is' does not have the same sense as 'man is', for instance, because God does not have the same type of being as man. By contrast, to say that Being is univocal, as Duns Scotus affirmed, means that Being has only one sense, and is said in one and the same sense of everything of which it is said, whether it be God or man, animal or plant. Since these positions seemed to lead to scandalous conclusions - equivocity denied order in the cosmos, univocity implied pantheism – a third choice was developed between these two extremes: Being is neither equivocal nor univocal but analogical: there is indeed a common measure to the forms of Being, but this measure is analogical, and not univocal. This was the position of Aristotle, which Heidegger discusses in the opening pages of Being and Time: Being is said in several senses, and these senses are the categories, which are related to Being, and to each other, by means of analogy. Christianity famously transposed this ontological problem into a theological problem, which was concerned less with the relation of Being to being than the relation of God to his creatures (hence the Heideggerian thematic of 'onto-theology').

Medieval theology had developed a syncretic solution to the immanence/ transcendence problem: it insisted on the requirement of immanence, that is, the ontological requirement that the first principle (God) be a being; but it also insisted on the more powerful requirement of transcendence, that is, the requirement that the transcendence of God be maintained as the One beyond Being. What came to be known as the 'divine names' tradition was situated at the nexus of these two requirements. The problem was: How can the traditional divine attributes – such as goodness, love, wisdom, power and so on – which are finite and immanent, be predicated of God, who is infinite and transcendent? It was Thomas Aquinas who, following Aristotle, developed the Christian interpretation of analogy. Positive qualities can indeed belong to God substantially, but only insofar as they are treated 'analogically': either in terms of an ordered relationship between two proportions (for example, the divine goodness is to God as human goodness is to man - the 'analogy of proportionality'); or by reference to a focal meaning or 'prime analogate' (for example, 'Goodness', which God is said to possess eminently and creatures

only derivatively – the 'analogy of proportion').¹⁴ In France, Neo-Thomists such as Etienne Gilson were the great defenders of analogy, which attempted to straddle the immanence/transcendence tension in theology.

It is not difficult to ascertain how Derrida and Deleuze position themselves rather definitively on either side of this orthodox divide. Derrida was early on seen to have a kind of 'elective affinity' with what was known as 'negative theology', which insisted that God in his absolute substance or essence can only be defined negatively, according to strict rules of transcendence. Meister Eckhart, for instance, preferred to say 'God is not' rather than 'God is', because 'x is' is a statement that is said of beings like you and me, whereas God is eminently superior to Being, beyond Being. 15 This allows God to appear in his 'supra-substantial' or 'hyper-essential' eminence, as far from all negation as he is from any affirmation. In negative theology, one goes beyond affirmations (God is good) via negations (God is not good in the human sense of the term), and beyond both affirmations and negations to attain God's eminence (God is good with an 'incomparable' or 'ineffable' Goodness, a goodness that transcends all goodness, that is beyond goodness). Or, as Derrida says, what is 'proper' to God is to have no properties as such, or to 'be' 'nothing'. The logical formula of transcendence is to say that something 'is' neither x nor not-x, because it is beyond them both.16 Derrida, by his own admission, adopts this formula of transcendence in his analyses of différance. Différance, he says,

'is' neither this nor that, neither sensible nor intelligible, neither positive nor negative, neither superior nor inferior, neither active nor passive, neither present nor absent, not even neutral, not even subject to a dialectic with a third moment, without any possible sublation (*Aufhebung*). Despite appearances, then, it [différance] is neither a concept nor even a name; it does lend itself to a series of names, but calls for another syntax, and exceeds even the order and the structure of predicative discourse. It 'is' not and does not say what 'is'. It is written completely otherwise. (Derrida 1992e, 74)

It is true that Derrida is not 'doing' a negative theology, in so far as the latter seems to reserve, 'beyond all positive predication, beyond all negation, even beyond Being, some hyperessentiality, a being beyond Being' which would perhaps be given in some sort of 'intuition or vision' (Derrida 1992e, 77, 79). But although Derrida refuses to assign any content to this transcendence, what he retains from the tradition is its formal structure: différance is that which is never present as such, is absolutely other, discernible only through its trace, whose movement is infinitely deferred, infinitely differing from itself, definable, at best, in terms of what it is not. This is why Derrida can write: 'I trust no text that is not in some way contaminated with negative theology, and even

among those texts that apparently do not have, want, or believe they have any relation with theology in general' (Derrida 1995c, 69). There is no text of the metaphysical tradition that is not 'contaminated' with this formal structure of transcendence, or this movement of différence.

When Deleuze, for his part, injects himself into the divine-names tradition, he is equally critical of both analogy and negative theology, and explicitly aligns himself with the tradition of univocity (first formulated by Duns Scotus, and which Deleuze sees extended in Spinoza and Nietzsche). The reason is clear: the sole raison d'être of negative theology is to preserve transcendence (we have to negate all predicates or properties of God, because God transcends them all), whereas univocity is the position of immanence pushed to its most extreme point. As formulated by Duns Scotus, it says that the term 'Being' is always used univocally, in other words, when I say that 'God is' or 'Man is' or 'a cat is' or 'a flea is', the word 'is' is being used in one and the same sense in all these sentences. In other words, God does not have a different mode of being from other creatures - that is, a transcendent mode of being that could be accessed (or not) only through negation or analogy. The univocity of Being entails the radical denial of any ontological transcendence, and for this reason was a highly heterodox – and often heretical – position because it hinted at pantheism or even atheism. (The English word 'dunce' is derived from the term of disapprobation used to describe the followers of Duns Scotus.) Deleuze suggests that the tradition of univocity was continued in Spinoza, for whom God and Nature are one and the same thing, and then in Nietzsche. In this sense, univocity can be read as the medieval ontological version of the 'death of God'. Difference and Repetition is, among other things, an attempt to follow through on the ontological - and not merely theological - implications of univocity. Tellingly, to my knowledge, Derrida never mentions the tradition of univocity in his writings. This example from the history of philosophy exemplifies the broad differences between the ontologies of Deleuze and Derrida: in Deleuze one finds an ontology that seeks to expunge from Being all remnants of transcendence, whereas in Derrida one finds an ontology that seeks to trace the eruptions and movements of transcendence within Being.

We turn now to the third context in which the immanence-transcendence distinction has played a historically important role, which is found in Kant and is oriented primarily towards epistemology. At one point, Kant describes the entire project of the first critique in terms of the immanence/transcendence distinction: 'We shall entitle the principles whose application is confined entirely within the limits of possible experience, *immanent*, and those, on the other hand, which profess to pass beyond these limits, *transcendent*' (Kant 1929, A295–6/B352). In a famous image, Kant portrays the domain of the understanding as a demarcated 'territory' or island (immanence) surrounded

by a vast ocean of metaphysical illusion (transcendence).¹⁷ When I use a concept such as 'table' or 'chair' to synthesise my intuition or perceptions, I am operating immanently within the bounds of possible experience. But when I use a concept like the 'soul' or the 'world' or 'God', I am going beyond the bounds of possible experience, transcending them. Following Plato, Kant will call these concepts that transcend experience 'Ideas'. The Idea of the world, for example, as the totality of what is, has no intuition or perception that could ever correspond to it. To use the famous Kantian distinction, we can think the World, but we can never know it; strictly speaking, it is not an object of our experience. Hence, we are led into inevitable illusions when we ask questions about the World as if it were an object of experience. For instance: Did it have a beginning in time, or is it eternal? Does it have boundaries in space, or does it go on forever? The same holds for our Ideas of the Soul and God: Soul, World and God are all transcendent Ideas, and in the 'Transcendental Dialectic', the longest section of the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant analyses the nature of the paradoxes or aporias reason is led into because of these illusions: the paralogisms of the Soul, the antinomies of the World, the ideal of God. Kant called his project a transcendental philosophy because it sought immanent criteria that would allow us to distinguish between these legitimate and illegitimate uses of the syntheses of consciousness. In this sense, the 'transcendental' is opposed to the 'transcendent': the aim of Kant's transcendental philosophy is the critique of transcendence, and hence the search for immanent criteria of critique - that is, immanent to reason itself. A transcendental critique is a purely immanent critique.

The Kantian formulation of the distinction between immanence and transcendence is useful to our purposes for two reasons. On the one hand, Kant defines his project in immanent terms as a critique of transcendence, and thus functions as a precursor to Deleuze. On the other hand, Kant nonetheless resurrects the transcendent Ideas, in the second critique, as the necessary postulates of practical reason, thereby assigning to Ideas an important regulative role, and in this respect functioning as a precursor to Derrida. Indeed, the notion of an 'Idea' is an explicit touchstone for both Deleuze and Derrida. Deleuze devotes an entire chapter of his magnum opus Difference and Repetition, as one might expect, to developing a purely immanent theory of Idea (as a multiplicity). Derrida, for his part, repeatedly flags the fact that many of his notions - such as the gift, opening, democracy, etc. - have a status that is 'analogous' to transcendent Ideas 'in the Kantian sense'. 18 For instance, in his analyses of the gift, Derrida says that a pure gift, a pure giving, is an impossibility, because when I say 'Thank you', or even accept the gift, I start cancelling the gift, since, in a movement of reappropriation, I am proposing a kind of equivalence between the giving and my gratitude. The transcendent logic of the pure gift is thereby incorporated into an immanent economy of exchange and debt. But this, says Kant, is the very nature of transcendent Ideas. Whenever we speak of something 'pure' or 'absolute' or 'infinite', as Derrida often does (the 'pure gift', 'absolute responsibility', the 'infinite other'), we are in the realm of transcendence, since we never encounter the pure or the absolute in our experience, it is never something that can be present to our experience. The Idea of a pure mother, for instance, would be the idea of a mother who would not be something other than a mother - not a daughter, not a lover, not a wife. We can think this Idea, but we don't encounter it in experience. (The Christian Idea of the 'Virgin Mary', as the mother of God, might be said to approximate this Idea of a pure mother.) The same holds for the logic of the pure gift, of justice, of democracy and so on. Indeed, in Aporias, Derrida explains that, when he was shopping around for a term to describe the formal status of his concepts - or rather his 'quasiconcepts' - he initially thought of adopting the Kantian term 'antinomy', but finally decided to use the Greek term 'aporia' instead (Derrida 1993a, 16).19 The reason is that he wanted to distance himself from Kant, since their respective problems, as he explains, are analogous but not identical (the difference, in part, lies in their temporal structure). The fundamental aporia or antinomy, for Derrida, is that the 'condition of possibility' for, say, a 'gift' or a 'decision', is its very impossibility, which is why he describes his list of quasiconcepts as 'so many aporetic places or dislocations' (Derrida 1993a, 15).

But if the notion of the 'pure gift' is by definition a transcendent Idea, the immanent concept that corresponds to it is, precisely, debt (since any gift that is given is immediately incorporated into the cycle of exchange and indebtedness). This is in fact what one encounters in Deleuze's work: an immanent analysis of debt, and not a transcendent analysis of the pure gift. In this, Deleuze follows Nietzsche, whose own immanent critique of morality - the Genealogy of Morals - was grounded in an analysis of debt. It was in the debtorcreditor relation, Nietzsche writes, 'that one person first encountered another person, that one person first measured himself against another'.20 In this regard, a certain compatibility exists between Derrida and Deleuze. Deleuze would no doubt agree that the condition of possibility for the 'pure gift' is its impossibility, and that the gift itself has an 'aporetic' status. But this simply points to the transcendence of the concept, and the need for an immanent analysis of gift giving insofar as it is always enmeshed in the immanent relations of exchange and debt. Derrida and Deleuze each modify Kant's notion of 'conditions of possibility' in formulas that sum up their philosophical projects. Derrida defines deconstruction as the experience of the possibility of the impossible that is, the (impossible) possibility of the impossible 'marks an absolute interruption in the regime of the possible' (Coward and Foshay 1992, 290).

Such is the formula of transcendence. Deleuze, for his part, defines his philosophy, not as a search for the conditions of possible experience, but rather the conditions of *real* experience. Such is the formula of immanence.

This distinction between the two different theories of Ideas one finds in Deleuze and Derrida is necessarily carried over into two different theories of desire. Plato had already linked Ideas to the theory of desire (Eros). In Kant, the Critique of Practical Reason is presented as an analysis of a 'higher' faculty of desire that is determined by the representation of a pure form (an Idea) namely, the pure form of a universal legislation, or the moral law. This same linkage is carried over in Deleuze and Derrida. For a certain period of time, Deleuze was characterised (at least in France) as a 'philosopher of desire', in part because one of the aims of Anti-Oedipus (1972) had been to develop a purely immanent conception of desire. For our purposes, however, it is perhaps more useful to examine Deleuze's analysis of the contrasting transcendent conception of desire, since it anticipates, mutatis mutandis, the theory of desire one finds in Derrida. The transcendent theory of desire can be summarised in three distinct moments. First, if I desire something, it is because I lack that something. But whereas need is a relative lack that is satisfied as soon its object is attained, desire has traditionally been defined as an irremediable ontological lack which, by its very nature, is unrealisable - precisely because its object is transcendent, or absolutely other (Good, One, God, Moral Law). From Plato and Augustine to Hegel and Freud, desire has been defined, ontologically, as a function of a field of transcendence, in relation to transcendence (as expressed in an Idea). Desire thus presents us with a 'tragic' vision of humanity: as humans, we are incomplete and riddled with deficiencies, and ontological desire is the sign of our incompleteness, of our 'lack of being'. The 'moral' of this vision, in turn, is that we need to acquire our being: in Plato, for instance, we need to make our desire coincide with the order of the Good, an order which desire itself furthers (Symposium); in St Augustine, desire aims at God, an impossible desire (in this life) which accounts for the perpetual 'restlessness' of the soul (caritas versus cupiditas). Hence, finally, the 'dramatic' dimension of desire as expressed in the theme of the quest, the incessant search: the initial postulate of our lack of Being is pregnant with a series of intermediate postulates that lead to the ultimate postulate of a recovered Being.

But there is a second and third moment to this transcendent theory of desire. If desire aims at a transcendent object that is by nature unattainable, then what is it that comes to satisfy this desire? The answer: what satisfies this transcendent desire, and gives it a kind of immanence, is akin to what we call a state of *pleasure*. But this pleasure is, alas, a false immanence, a pseudo-immanence, a kind of delusion or illusion. Desire is calmed for a moment –

but then begins again. In Freud, for instance, desire is experienced, energetically, as a disagreeable tension, a kind of 'charge'. To get out of this disagreeable state, a discharge is necessary, and this discharge is experienced as a pleasure. Humans will then have peace, their desire will be calmed - but only for a moment, for desire is reborn, and a new discharge becomes necessary. Pleasure, at this level, becomes the only immanent unit capable of measuring desire. The final moment: if desire is an 'intentionality' that aims at what it lacks, and is measured in terms of a unit (pleasure as discharge) that is not its own, then we must say that these states of pleasure - such as orgasm or ecstasy, whether mystical or otherwise - only provide illusory or apparent satisfactions to desire; its 'true' satisfaction is never present, but is infinitely delayed, infinitely deferred. The irreducibility of desire to states of pleasure must be reaffirmed under another mode: it is the relation (as Lacan puts it) between an 'impossible jouissance' and death. In other words, as long as desire is defined as a function of transcendence, as a desire for the other, then the condition of possibility for desire is its very impossibility. In Deleuze's analysis, then, the transcendent theory of desire comprises three moments: (1) desire is the mark of our 'lack' of being, since the object of desire is transcendent; but (2) one can only hope for illusory discharges of desire in acts of pleasure; and thus (3) desire is pursuing a jouissance that is ultimately impossible.21 In this manner, says Deleuze, the theory of desire is completely ensuared in a field of transcendence.

This is a quick summary of the analysis of desire presented in Anti-Oedipus, but it is not difficult to ascertain the degree to which Derrida participates in this tradition, and indeed pushes it to its limit. Not only does Derrida conceptualise a purely formal structure of transcendence under the guise of the 'absolute other' or the tout autre (moreover, if the absolute other is irreducible to a concept, or a word, for example, it is because it transcends the orders of conceptualisation, or language); he also undertakes a persistent exploration of the experience of this transcendence, which he often expresses, in terms almost identical to Deleuze's analysis of desire, as an 'interminable experience', 'the experience of the impossible', a 'double bind'. What does it mean to 'live' the aporias of the gift or justice? Can one 'experience' the impossible? Derrida replies: yes. 'If the gift is another name for the impossible, we still think it, we name it, we desire it. We intend it. And this even if or because or to the extent that we never encounter it, we never know it, we never verify it, we never experience it in its present existence or its phenomenon' (Derrida 1992c, 29).

What then is the nature of this 'experience of the impossible'? Derrida replies: a double bind. The Idea of justice is not deconstructable, for Derrida, because it is an infinitely transcendent Idea that is unknowable: it provides no

knowledge, and is independent of any determinable context.²² This means, on the one hand, that we can only experience the Idea of justice *practically* as a *call*, as a call to justice, as an absolute demand for justice; but it also means, on the other hand, that the Idea of justice provides us no rule for determining when a decision is just or unjust. Hence the double bind of the aporetic experience: the condition of possibility for acting justly is grounded in the impossibility of ever knowing when or if an act is just. And as Derrida comments, 'a double bind cannot be assumed; one can only endure it in a *passion*' (Derrida 1998, 36).²³ What then is the 'passion' or 'desire' specific to the experience of the impossible? It is a desire for the absolute other, and hence a desire that is *infinitely suspended*, whose fulfilment is *infinitely deferred*:

Isn't it proper to desire to carry with it its own proper suspension, the death or the phantom of desire? To go toward the absolute other, isn't that the extreme tension of a desire that tries thereby to renounce its own proper momentum, its own movement of appropriation? . . . And since we do not determine ourselves *before* this desire, since no relation to self can be sure of preceding it, to wit, of preceding a relation to the other, . . . *all* reflection is caught in the genealogy of this genitive (i.e., 'desire of . . .'). (Derrida 1995c, 37)

Thus, for Derrida, the possibility of openness or invention (e.g., the possibility of 'an other justice', 'an other politics', and so on [e.g., Derrida 1997a, 24]) is necessarily linked to the transcendent Idea of the absolutely other. The 'disruptions' Derrida introduces into thought are the movements of this formal structure of transcendence. One can see clearly how Derrida's notion of desire, in relation to, for example, the 'infinite Idea of justice', recapitulates the three moments of the transcendent theory of desire outlined by Deleuze: (1) the 'call' to justice has as its object an 'infinite' Idea that is unrealisable, and that transcends any determinable context; (2) what comes to fulfil the call to justice are 'decisions' (e.g., by judges in a court of law), but these 'decisions' as such cannot be determined to be just, so the call to justice is continually reborn; hence (3) the call to justice can never be fulfilled or satisfied, it is the experience of something that is fundamentally impossible. Derrida not only seeks to disengage a formal structure of transcendence (différance), but to describe the desire or passion of that transcendence (defined as a double bind or experience of the impossible). For his part, Deleuze agrees with Derrida's analyses, and provides variations of his own, but they are always a prelude to eliminating transcendence and providing an immanent account of the same phenomenon: an immanent ontology (univocity), an immanent theory of Ideas (defined in terms of multiplicities and singularities), and an immanent theory of desire (defined as the prolongation or synthesis of singularities).

No matter which formulation one considers, then, one finds Derrida and Deleuze following diverging philosophical trajectories, marked by these two vectors of transcendence and immanence. First, in the tradition of subjectivity, transcendence refers to what transcends the self (the other, the world) - or more profoundly, to the subject itself, as that which transcends the pure 'flux of consciousness' or 'flow of experience'. One can critique the status of the subject by appealing to the transcendence of the Other, or by appealing to the conditions of the immanent flux of experience that the subject itself transcends (theory of intensity). Second, with regard to the question of ontology, transcendence refers to that which is 'beyond' or 'otherwise than' Being - or, in its more contemporary form, to relations to the other that 'interrupt' Being, or erupt or intervene within Being. Whereas Deleuze defines both Being and beings immanently in terms of a genetic principle of difference, Derrida defines difference transcendently as 'originary' difference that is beyond both Being and beings. Finally, from the viewpoint of a Kantian (or neo-Kantian) epistemology, transcendence refers to those Ideas of objects that lie outside the immanent realm of possible experience. Deleuze attempts to formulate an immanent theory of Ideas and desire, while Derrida attempts to define a purely formal structure of transcendence and the passion of the double bind that it entails. In each of these areas, Deleuze's and Derrida's projects move in very different directions, despite so many surface similarities and affinities.

But this leads to an obvious final question: How should one assess this difference? Can one say that the trajectory of transcendence or of immanence is 'better' than the other? This is a difficult question, perhaps reducible, in the end, to what one might call philosophical 'taste'. My own view is that the 'philosophy of the future' (to use Nietzsche's phrase) needs to move in the direction of immanence, for at least two reasons. The most obvious reason is that the validity of a critique of transcendence above all stems from the theoretical interest to expose its fictional or illusory status - this has been a constant of philosophy from Hume through Kant to Nietzsche, its 'demystificatory' role. But the more important reason has to do with practical philosophy, with ethics and politics. Kant, Levinas and Derrida, along with many others, while perhaps denying transcendence a constitutive status, are nonetheless willing to assign it a practical role (regulative, imperative, communicative, and so on). For Deleuze, this is equally illegitimate, but it seems to have been a source of genuine perplexity to Deleuze. There is a curious passage in What is Philosophy? where Deleuze and Guattari more or less ask; What is it with immanence? It should be the natural acquisition and milieu of philosophy, yet such is not always the case. Moreover, the arguments brought to bear against immanence are almost always moral arguments. Without transcendence, we are warned, we will fall into a dark of chaos, reduced to a pure 'subjectivism' or 'relativism', living in a world without hope, with no vision of an alternate future. Indeed, the two philosophers who pushed followed the trajectory of immanence the furthest - Spinoza and Nietzsche - were condemned by both their contemporaries and successors, not only for being atheists, but, even worse, for being 'immoralists'. The potent danger that was sensed to be lurking in the Ethics and the Genealogy of Morals was precisely the danger of immanence. 'Immanence', Deleuze writes, 'can be said to be the burning touchstone of all philosophy . . . because it takes upon itself all the dangers that philosophy must confront, all the condemnations, persecutions and repudiations that it undergoes. This at least persuades us that the problem of immanence is not abstract or merely theoretical. At first sight, it is not easy to see why immanence is so dangerous, but it is. It swallows up sages and gods' (DG 1994b, 45; trans. modified).

From this practical point of view, Spinoza poses the most interesting test case of the position of immanence. Heidegger himself wrote notoriously little on Spinoza, which is a surprising omission, since Spinoza's Ethics is a work of pure ontology that explicitly poses the problem of the ontological difference in terms of the difference between the infinite substance (Being) and its finite modes (beings). Derrida too has written little on Spinoza. By contrast, Deleuze's reformulation of ontology in Spinozistic terms not only allows him to push the Heideggerian heritage in an immanent direction (rather than Derrida's transcendent direction), but also to understand that ontology in explicitly ethical terms. Like Spinoza, Deleuze defines beings immanently in terms of their intensity or 'degree of power', a degree which is actualised at every moment in terms of the whole of one's 'affections' (which are nonetheless in constant variation). The fundamental question of ethics is not 'What must I do?' (the question of morality) but rather 'What can I do?' Given my degree of power, what are my capabilities and capacities? How can I come into active possession of my power? How can I go to the limit of what I 'can do'? The political question follows from this, since those in power have an obvious interest in separating us from our capacity to act. But this is what makes transcendence an eminently pragmatic and ethical issue. The ethical themes one finds in transcendent philosophies such as those of Levinas and Derrida an absolute responsibility for the other that I can never assume, or an infinite call to justice that I can never satisfy - are, from the point of view of immanence, imperatives whose effect is to separate me from my capacity to act. From the viewpoint of immanence, in other words, transcendence represents my slavery and impotence reduced to its lowest point: the absolute demand to do

the absolutely impossible is nothing other than the concept of impotence raised to infinity. This is why transcendence itself poses precise and difficult ethical problems for a philosophy of immanence: If transcendence represents my impotence (power = 0), then under what conditions can I have actually been led to desire transcendence? What are the conditions that could have led, in Nietzsche's words, to 'the inversion of the value-positing eye'? How could I actually reach the point where I desire my slavery and subjection as if it were my salvation? (In a similar way, immanence poses a precise and difficult problem for a philosophy of transcendence: How can one bridge the interval that separates the transcendent from the immanent – for instance, the interval between the undeconstructability of justice from the deconstructability of the law?)

In short, the difference between the two philosophical trajectories of immanence and transcendence must be assessed and evaluated, not simply in the theoretical domain, but in the ethico-political domain. In part, this is because the speculative elimination of transcendence does not necessarily lead to its practical elimination, as one can see already in Kant. But more importantly, it is because it is at the ethical level that the difference between transcendence and immanence appears in its most acute and consequential form. On this score, it is perhaps the difference between Deleuze and Levinas that presents this contrast most starkly. For Levinas, ethics precedes ontology because it is derived from an element of transcendence (the Other) that is necessarily 'otherwise' than Being (and hence privileges concepts like absolute responsibility and duty). For Deleuze, ethics is ontology because it is derived from the immanent relation of beings to Being at the level of their existence (and hence privileges concepts such as puissance (power or capacity) and affectivity). This is why Spinoza entitled his pure ontology an Ethics rather than an Ontology: his speculative propositions concerning the univocity of Being can only be judged practically at the level of the ethics they envelop or imply. Put summarily, for Levinas, ethics is derived from transcendence, while for Deleuze, transcendence is what prevents ethics. It seems to me that it is at this level - at the practical and not merely speculative level - that the relative merits of philosophies of immanence and transcendence need to be assessed and decided.²⁴

Notes

1. See Agamben 1999, 239. Edith Wyschogrod (1990, 191, 223, 229) distinguishes between philosophers of difference (Levinas, Derrida, Blanchot) and philosophers of the plenum (Deleuze and Guattari, Genet), but this distinction seems far less germane than Agamben's.

- 2. See Sartre 1972 as well as Deleuze 1990, 98-9; 343-4. Deleuze will retain the notion of an impersonal transcendental field, but strips it of any determination as a constituting consciousness.
- 3. See DG 1994b, 46: 'Kant discovered the modern way of saving transcendence: this is no longer the transcendence of Something, or of a One higher than everything (contemplation), but that of a Subject to which the field of immanence is only attributed by belonging to a self that necessarily represents such a subject to itself (reflection).'
- 4. See Deleuze 1997, 137: 'The poisoned gift of Platonism was to have reintroduced transcendence into philosophy, to have given transcendence a plausible philosophical meaning.' Deleuze is here referring primarily to ontological transcendence.
- 5. See also Heidegger 1982, 4: "Christian God" also stands for the "transcendent" in general in its various meanings for "ideals" and "norms", "principles" and "rules", "ends" and "values", which are set "above" Being, in order to give Being as a whole a purpose, an order, and as it is succinctly expressed "meaning".'
- 6. In this, Derrida is certainly more faithful to Heidegger, and is attempting, in an explicit manner, to carry forward a trajectory already present in Heidegger's work: the immanent question of being and its transcendental horizon (time), which is posed in *Being and Time*, comes to be progressively displaced by the transcendent themes of *Ereignis* (the 'event') and the *es gibt* (the 'gift' [Gabe] of time and being). The trajectory is continued in the Derridean themes of revelation and promise. See Derrida 1992e, 122-4.
- 7. See Derrida 1978, 117, where history is characterised as 'the very movement of transcendence, of the excess over the totality, without which no totality would appear'.
- 8. See also Derrida 1981b, 10: one must 'borrow the syntaxic and lexical resources of the language of metaphysics . . . at the very moment one deconstructs this language'.
- Derrida 1981a, 168: 'Différance, the disappearance of any originary presence, is at once the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of truth.'
- 10. Significantly, Derrida says the first question he would have asked Deleuze would have concerned the term immanence a term 'on which he always insisted' (Derrida 2001a, 195).
- 11. For Deleuze's interpretation of Platonism, see in particular 'Plato and the Simulacrum' in Deleuze 1990, 253-66 (though the concept of the simulacrum developed there assumes less and less importance in Deleuze's work).
- 12. Levinas 1969. Deleuze never discusses Levinas' work directly, except as an instance of Jewish philosophy (DG 1994b, 233n5). See, however, Badiou 2001.
- For their respective discussion of the divine names traditon, see Deleuze 1992;
 Derrida, 1995c.
- 14. For Thomas Aquinas' formulations of analogy, see *Summa Theologiae* 1.13.5. The great modern proponent of the way of affirmation is Charles Williams (1994).
- 15. See Schürmann 1978, especially 72-192. While recognizing Eckhart's affinities

- with immanence (see 176; 252n56) and with an immanent causality (177), Schürmann attempts to provide a qualified analogical interpretation of his teachings (179).
- 16. Derrida characterises the nature of deconstruction itself in terms derived from the tradition of negative theology. See Derrida 1988a, 5: 'What deconstruction is not? everything of course! What is deconstruction? nothing of course!'
- 17. See Kant 1929, A236-7/B294-5: 'We have now not merely explored the *territory* of pure understanding, and carefully surveyed every part of it, but have also measured its extent, and assigned to everything in it its rightful place. This domain is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth enchanting name! surrounded by a wide and stormy *ocean*, the native home of illusion.'
- 18. Derrida himself draws the analogy between Kantian Ideas and his own concepts at numerous points throughout his work. For instance, the structure or logic of the gift, Derrida tells us, has 'a form analogous to Kant's transcendental dialectic, as relation between thinking and knowing. We are going to give ourselves over to engage in the effort of thinking or rethinking a sort of transcendental illusion of the gift' (Derrida 1992c, 29-30; emphasis added). Similarly, Derrida notes that 'I have on several occasions spoken of "unconditional" affirmation or of "unconditional" "appeal".... Now, the very least that can be said of "unconditionality" (a word that I use not by accident to recall the character of the categorical imperative in its Kantian form) is that it is independent of every determinate context, even of the determination of a context in general. It announces itself as such only in the opening of context' (Derrida 1988b, 152-3). To be sure, Derrida refuses to accommodate his own thought to Kantian formulations: 'Why have I always hesitated to characterize it [deconstruction] in Kantian terms, for example, or more generally in ethical or political terms, when that would have been so easy and would have enabled me to avoid so many critiques, themselves all too facile? Because such characterizations seem to me essentially associated with philosophemes that themselves call for deconstructive questions' (Derrida 1988b, 153).
- 19. See also Derrida 1993e, 84, where he is still hesitating between the two terms: 'The concept of responsibility [would be] paralyzed by what can be called an aporia or an antinomy.'
- 20. Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, Essay II, §8, as quoted at Deleuze 1983, 213-14.
- 21. For a summary of Deleuze's theory of desire, see his seminar of 26 March 1973, available on-line at http://www.webdeleuze.com/sommaire.html, English translation at http://www.usyd.edu.au/contretemps/2may2001/deleuze.pdf.
- 22. For the idea that the deconstruction of the law 'operates on the basis of the infinite "Idea of justice", see Derrida 1992b, 25. That the Idea of justice implies 'non-gathering, dissociation, heterogeneity, non-identity with itself, endless inadequation, *infinite transcendence*' see Derrida 1997b, 17. On the Idea of justice being 'independent of all determinable contexts', see Derrida 1997a, 215–16.
- 23. My thanks to Andrew Montin for this reference.
- 24. An earlier version of this article was presented at the annual meeting of the

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