

Of the many philosophical friendships Derrida formed over the course of his career, perhaps the closest was his bond with Jean-Luc Nancy. On the one side, Nancy's writings on Derrida makes it apparent that Nancy considered his own project to be consonant with Derrida's deconstructive tropes of differance, the trace and arche-writing.

Jean-Luc Nancy's rendering of the interweaving of experience is vigilant at unravelling the claim to capture and possess a temporary presence in the event itself. In 'Elliptical Sense' (Research in Phenomenology, pp.175-190) and 'Differance' (Sense of the World, pp.34-36) he thinks Derrida's quasi-transcendental as a being-singular-plural. Differance is passion, the in-between, a being-divided and multiplied, simultaneity itself as the 'with' of origin and destination. Meaning is a "repetition already comprised in the affirmation of the instant, in this affirmation/request seized in the letting go of the instant, affirming the passage of presence and itself passing with it,(BSP4)". We do not have a singular meaning until we have a space between singularities; this spacing is in fact the very essence of the singular. One must think of a point in time-space as a differential; a 'from here to there' that cannot be reduced to either an immanent here or there. That gesture which would institute-affirm a meaning and that which would dislodge-transform it are simultaneous in the structure of an event of meaning.

The law, substance, justice of the event is a summons, "the act of the enchainment of singular sense to every other singular sense, the act of apportioning and interweaving that, as such, has no sense but gives a place to every event of sense (once again, people, country, person, and so forth)(115,SOTW)." "The (k)not: that which involves neither interiority nor exteriority but which, in being tied, ceaselessly makes the inside pass outside, each into (or by way of) the other, the outside inside, turning endlessly back on itself without returning TO itself-the link of ...confrontation and arrangement, need and desire, constraint and obligation, subjection and love, glory and pity, interest and disinterest. The tying of the (k)not is nothing but... the placing-into-relation that presupposes at once proximity and distance, attachment and detachment, intricacy, intrigue, and ambivalence.

Now we must ask, is Nancy's differential communication of events understanding itself as Derridean differance? Nancy himself reminds (Ellipsis34) that while there is a great proximity between his work and Derrida, it is not a complicity. Derrida, however, submitted Nancy's work to a deconstruction in On Touching-Jean-Luc Nancy.

What might Nancy not be apprehending of Derrida's thought? He acknowledges that in the passage from one event to another there must be both effacement and affirmation, expressed in his structure of the 'with' as simultaneously proximity and distance, togetherness and separation. But notice that 'together and separate', 'proximity and distance', all imply modes of plurality. Does not a play of proximity and distance between singulars imply, even though it is not articulated by Nancy, a pre-communicative equivocality of presence-affirmation and negation-effacement within the thinking of the singular itself? Should Nancy not be able to say that the singular event is paradoxical, double before it could ever simply exist as a being-with another event? Is not an 'event' both a yes and a no that puts into question the economy of a singularity in contact with another singularity? Derrida remarks

"For it is in the form of a thinking of the unique, precisely, and not of the plural, as it was too often believed, that a thought of dissemination formerly introduced itself as a folding thought of the fold-and as a folded thought of the fold"(Monolinguisism of the Other,26).

If we say that the single instant or event is two gestures together, the effacement of a previous event and the affirming or presencing of the new, then it precedes a 'being-with', relation or communication between two poles; it simply IS two poles, which is to say that it both IS and IS NOT. Only when presence and negation are allowed to take place or space as thicknesses is their being-simultaneous articulated as 'co-existence' or 'relation between'. Differance is not simply between or with, it intervenes before the extension of a relation, a difference. Nancy offers the singular-plural as transformation, transscription, displacement, movement, change, novelty; in short, the dis and trans of movement is the re-location of a location, place, form, inscription. It is not as if he is claiming that the presence of place exists BEFORE or independent of displacement, as a presence-to-itself. But even as radically co-dependent with its effacement, even as just the positive pole of the bi-polarity of a 'being between something and nothing', are this pole and its other not expected to say too much? Must not 'location', 'inscription', 'place' and 'form' themselves be understood as already bifurcated, doubled before their meeting with a 'trans' could even be justified or necessary? If so, then the mobility that Nancy sees as originary to the event is a repression of a more radical effect prior to relationality.

The event as 'Being-with' is the tension between forceful sides. The familiar proximity of Betweenness is also disruption, 'surprise', the 'shock of meaning', discord, the 'irreducible strangeness of each one of these touches to the other (BSP6)", 'odd', 'curious', 'disconcerting', 'bizarre', incommensurable, heterogeneous. Com-passion as Being-with is "the disturbance of violent relatedness"(Being Singular Plural xiii). The force of relation modalizes itself as regions of inscription, as the 'many'. There are configurations, ensembles, schemes, masses, tissues, complexes. But how do we know what a mode or grouping is without pitting a way of being-in-common AGAINST another grouping? Even if a mode as singular-plural is a multiplicity of differentiated singularities, even if it can only be thought sequentially and non-abstractively, particular relation after particular relation, is it not unified 'as a whole' via some property absent in an opposing mode? its internal heterogeneity then would be united by degrees of commonality (against that which the mode-as-a-whole differs by kind. Do we not find such named modes in Nancy's analyses: 'the West', 'philosophy', the 'universe', 'humanity', 'animals', 'stones',etc?

Nancy argues that Lyotard allows the presencing of an event to be thought as something potentially applied or derived from another element, rather than as a being-with, an 'ex-nihilo', that is always strictly its own end and measure, an underivable and unassimilable repetition of co-existent singularities. However, even if we grant that the structurality of the structure of eventness is of this non-agential order of the 'ex-nihilo', the singular event remains thought of as minimally patterned or configured. It would be possible to satisfy Nancy's conditions concerning the exorbitancy of an event of meaning while still allowing events to function as irreducible schemes. It would be a matter of thinking the being-with of meaning constituted by the relation of one singular to the next as the relation between configurational structures, each one being non-representable and non-identically reproducible except via its own effacing transformation. In this way, the internally patterned structurality of a singular element, while implied, could never

be analyzed, delineated, or decomposed. Nor could it function as the substrate of an applied or derived product. The following passage from Nancy suggests how his own deconstructive work may begin from such a notion of a non-reproducible schematic play. "From faces to voices, gestures, attitudes, dress, and conduct, whatever the "typical" traits are, everyone distinguishes himself by a sort of sudden and headlong precipitation where the strangeness of a singularity is concentrated...As for singular differences, they are not only "individual", but infraindividual. It is never the case that I have met Pierre or Marie per se, but I have met him or her in such and such a "form", in such and such a "state", in such and such a "mood", and so on(p.8)...""..what is an affect, if not each time a sketch? A comportment, if not each time a pattern? A voice, if not each time a faint outline? What is a singularity, if not each time its "own" clearing, its "own" imminence, the imminence of a "propriety" or propriety itself as imminence, always touched upon, always lightly touched: revealing itself beside, always beside.(BSP7)."

For Nancy, the being-with of meaning would seem to originate with the co-existence of singular 'forms', 'states', 'patterns', 'sketches', 'outlines'. Now, even though, as we have said, Nancy clearly does not want such entities to be thought as anything other than utterly contextual and non-derivable elements-in-relation, we are left puzzled concerning what it is that is supposed to be imminent as the moment of the singular itself, even in its inseparable co-existence with other singulars. Does Nancy think the irreducible double scene of eventness as the differential spacing between momentary paradigmatic fields or programs, as we have represented the minimal condition of these structures? The least we can say is that we find in Nancy's writing a lack of attention given to the sort of inquiry which would allow us to answer this question in the negative. At most, we can suspect that he has failed to unravel a certain self-presencing remnant lurking within the body of the singular as pattern.

Nancy remarks: "The difference between humanity and the rest of being (which is not a concern to be denied, but the nature of which is, nevertheless, not a given), while itself being inseparable from other differences within being (since man is "also" animal, "also" living, "also" physio-chemical), does not distinguish true existence from a sort of subexistence. Instead, this difference forms the concrete condition of singularity. We would not be "humans" if there were not "dogs" and "stones". "...humanity is the exposing of the world; it is neither the end nor the ground of the world; the world is the exposure of humanity; it is neither the environment nor the representation of humanity"(BSP18). "Let us say we for all being, that is, for every being, for all beings one by one, each time in the singular of their essential plural. Language speaks for all and of all:for all, in their place, in their name, including those who may not have a name. Language says what there is of the world, nature, history and humanity, and it also speaks for them as well as in view of them, in order to lead the one who speaks, the one through whom language comes to be and happens ("man"), to all of being, which does not speak but which is nevertheless-stone, fish, fiber, dough, crack, block, and breath. The speaker speaks for the world, which means the speaker speaks to it, on behalf of it, in order to make it a "world". As such, the speaker is "in its place" and "according to its measure"; the speaker occurs as its representative but also, at the same time, in anticipation of it, before it, exposed to it as to its own most intimate consideration. Language says the world; that is, it loses itself in it and exposes how "in itself" it is a question of losing oneself in order to be of it, with it, to be its meaning-which is all meaning.)(BSP3).

Do multiplicities emerge within experience such that we can distinguish one group, ensemble 'as a whole' from the other, one variant of humanity from another, the human from the non-human? And on what basis are we to do this other than via the counting of a difference between internal degree and extrinsic kind, an opposing of the universal and the singular? Nancy says "That which does not maintain its distance from the "between" is only immanence collapsed in on itself and deprived of meaning."(5,bsp).If measure is thought via the 'with' of comparison, then measure yields to a deconstruction whereby the distance between singulars is thought more rigorously as the distance of the singular in and as itself, the unitary as irreducibly two BEFORE there could be any notion of dispersion, plurality, contact, difference as a relating to, against, with a something that would act as singular. One can construe the thinking of modalization and numeration in connection with what Derrida has examined under the guise of name, body, self, subject, figure, humanity. He writes "...the discourse on the subject, even if it locates difference, inadequation, the dehiscence within autoaffection, and so forth, continues to link subjectivity with man"(268). And "The origin of the call that comes from nowhere, an origin in any case that is not yet a divine or human "subject", institutes a responsibility that is to be found at the root of all ulterior responsibilities (moral, juridical, political), and of every categorical imperative. To say of this responsibility, and even of this friendship, that it is not "human", no more than it is "divine", does not come down to saying that it is simply inhuman...Something of this call of the other must remain nonreappropriable, nonsubjectivable, and in a certain way nonidentifiable, a sheer supposition, so as to remain other, a singular call to response or to responsibility. This is why the determination of the singular "Who"?-or at least its determination as subject-remains forever problematic"(Points, 276).

As if to illustrate this thinking of subjectivity, Nancy remarks: "The difference between humanity and the rest of being (which is not a concern to be denied, but the nature of which is, nevertheless, not a given), while itself being inseparable from other differences within being (since man is "also" animal, "also" living, "also" physio-chemical), does not distinguish true existence from a sort of subexistence. Instead, this difference forms the concrete condition of singularity. We would not be "humans" if there were not "dogs" and "stones". "...humanity is the exposing of the world; it is neither the end nor the ground of the world; the world is the exposure of humanity; it is neither the environment nor the representation of humanity"(BSP18). Even when denying that he is giving exclusionary privilege to humanness (stones animals, humans would be the same in their heterogeneity), allowing for such calculatively singular modes as humanity and animality sets up the basis for subjectivity as univocal judgement, the ethics of belonging turned against not-belonging, interior-in-common against exterior difference. An animal can only be an animal on the basis of a common denominator which thinks it knows what is common in difference, from one to the next. The ethical as being-with appears and then disappears, justice wants what it wants, counts on it, in opposition to injustice. For Nancy justice is always "the need for justice" as "the objection to and protest against injustice(BSP189)". The just thought in this way opposes itself to the unjust, but it could not oppose the unjust without faith in 'need' (the need for justice) as the in-common (even as relative gathering of heteronymous dispersal of singularities). The ethical basis of need as preference depends on justice OVER AGAINST injustice. A deconstructive justice, instead, would not oppose itself to injustice but be of or as its other already, before ever being able to count a judgement, objection and protest. This reflection on self-reflection discovers that its own

glance is split into a double move both affirming and surpassing, stabilizing and destabilizing which is prior to, and deconstructs, disseminates, the identity of any sense which could be referred back to as itself and which could determine a multiplicity of other senses.

"To risk meaning nothing is to start to play, and first to enter into the play of difference which prevents any word, and concept, any major enumeration from coming to summarize and to govern from the theological presence of a center the movement and textual spacing of differences"(Positions, p.14).

Before a meaning would gather itself as a formidable in-itself presence, it would be already divided and repeated. Derrida says

"The play of differences supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be PRESENT in and of itself, referring only to itself. Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces. "p.26,Positions) "...the subject is not present, nor above all present to itself before difference, that the subject is constituted only in being divided from itself, in becoming space, in temporalizing, in deferral..."p.29, Positions)

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