Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenology of Difference: *Difference and Repetition*, Chapter One

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I. Introduction

Today, I want to talk about Deleuze's account of the reversal of Platonism in chapter one of *Difference and Repetition*, tying it together with Merleau-Ponty's work on perception. In *Difference and Repetition*, there are only two references to Merleau-Ponty – one in the note on Heidegger that was added at the insistence of his examiners, and one brief mention in a footnote.[1] Merleau-Ponty is also entirely absent from the extensive bibliographical index of names and topics at the end of the book. Nonetheless, as we shall see, many of the discussions of the origin of representation, as well as the relation of the determinate to the indeterminate in the structure of difference, and the nature of depth, draw heavily on Merleau-Ponty's work. While there has been some recognition of this influence,[2] I want to draw out some specific points where Deleuze draws on Merleau-Ponty within chapter one of *Difference and Repetition*. On the other side, as far as I am aware, there is no sustained discussion of Plato in Merleau-Ponty's work. In showing how Deleuze takes up Merleau-Ponty in his explicit project of reversing Plato, I want to show that the move to a philosophy of the simulacrum is synonymous with Merleau-Ponty's thesis of the primacy of perception. I will begin by talking about Plato and representation, which ends the chapter, before returning to the beginning of the chapter to look at the nature of difference, then turning to the question of how representation covers over difference. I want to conclude by looking at what Deleuze considers to be the limitations of Merleau-Ponty's account.

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II. Plato and Representation

I want to begin by looking at the question of how difference is understood in terms of representation, before turning to why Plato is an important figure. As Deleuze notes, it is Aristotle who reconciles difference with the concept.[3] Within representation, 'difference cease[s] to be a monster' (Deleuze 1994: 29). What is difference? As Deleuze notes, 'difference is the state in which one can speak of determination *as such*' (28). In other words, difference is what prevents existence from falling into a Parmenidean homogeneous form of being without distinction. The classic account of difference in these terms is that of a difference between two concepts, or between two things. Thus, for Aristotle, difference determines species by distinguishing them from other species. Aristotle defines man as a rational animal. Such a definition has two moments to it: first, 'animal' defines the genus of man, the overarching category to which he belongs. Second, the difference, 'rational' serves to distinguish man from other beings that do not have that property. Thus, the species of 'man' is determined by a difference within an overarching identity.

Given the time we have today, I don't want to discuss Deleuze's criticisms of this view in detail at this point, but we can note that they revolve around the limited account of constitution that it provides. Difference is here conceived of as a difference 'between two things' (Deleuze 1994: 28), or in this case, analogues of things. Classes are defined as clear and distinct, and essentially isolable from one another, in the same way that we might understand a fully determinate object as being separable from its environment. At the heart of the limitations of this model of difference is that it 'relate[s] determination to other determinations within a form' (29). The difficulty with such an approach is immediately apparent. If our principle of determination operates within the realm of form – in this case the determinate form of the object – then our principle cannot explain the emergence of form itself. Rather than a *principium individuationis*, we have a *principium comparitionis* (138). Deleuze sets out the consequences of this clearly in relation to Aristotle. If difference operates within the realm of form, then there is no possibility of determining the most universal form of all, *being*, as to determine this form we would need to stand outside of it, but to do so is to go beyond the remit of our principle of difference. As Aristotle recognises, this is the problem of the highest genus, and it is only solved through the introduction of an analogical conception of determination. We could here draw useful parallels

between Aristotle's conception of being, and Kant's formal conception of the transcendental object that provides a similar structuring role in his system. For now, however, let's simply note that for representation, difference, or determination, presupposes a realm of already constituted forms or objects, and as such is only able to explain the determination of objects, rather than their constitution, and is also unable to explain its own grounds, as the notion of ground is here understood within the realm of representation itself.

After this brief survey of the nature of representation, we can now turn to Deleuze's account of its origin. Deleuze claims that with Plato, the question of representation is still open. On the surface, Plato appears to operate within the same paradigm as Aristotle, and he frequently uses a method of division much like Aristotle's to define man through a hierarchy of determinations. Yet when we look more closely, we can note that Plato's hierarchy is not stable. In the *Sophist*, Plato divides knowledge into arts of production and arts of acquisition. In the *Statesman*, on the contrary, he begins by dividing knowledge into arts concerned with practical actions, and those concerning theoretical actions. Aristotle himself notices this failure on the part of Plato to provide a systematic account of how to divide a genus into species according to differences:

> Is man an animal or animate? If he assumed animal, he has not deduced it. Again every animal is either terrestrial or aquatic: he assumed terrestrial. And that man is the whole – a terrestrial animal – is not necessary from what he has said, but he assumes this too … For what prevents all this from being true of man yet not making clear what a man is or what it is to be a man? (Aristotle 1984: 91b18–91b27)

As Deleuze notes, however, the aim of Plato's dialectic can best be read not as an attempt to determine species, as it does 'superficially and even ironically, the better to hide under this mask its true secret' (Deleuze 1994: 59). Rather, what Plato is doing is 'dividing a confused species into pure lines of descent' (59–60). Socrates describes this procedure in the *Statesman* in terms of the separation of precious metals from ores:

> I imagine that these craftsmen also begin by separating out earth, and stones, and many different things; and after these, there remain commingled with the gold those things that are akin to it, precious things and only removable with the use of fire: copper, silver, and sometimes adamant, the removal of which through repeated smelting and testing leaves the 'unalloyed' gold that people talk about there for us to see, itself alone by itself. (Plato 1997b: 303d–e)

As Deleuze notes, what we have here is a very different approach than that of Aristotle. Aristotle is concerned with questions of identification: what is the essence of a species? The Socratic question is one of authentication. Rather than determining a species, the question is one of selecting the authentic member of the species from a number of potential suitors. In the *Sophist*, the question is one of selecting between Socrates and the sophist to determine the true philosopher. In the *Statesman*, we develop a definition of statesmanship relatively early as the 'knowledge of the collective rearing of human beings' (Plato 1997b: 267d). Once we have this definition, we are still faced with a difficulty, however, as it appears that there are a large number of people who fulfil this description: 'merchants, farmers, millers and bakers' (267e).

Given the concern here is with clarifying which being properly belongs within the species, rather than defining the species itself, Plato's approach precedes that of Aristotle's.[4] His aim is in a sense to clarify the nature of species so the kind of taxonomical account Aristotle provides becomes possible. If we are seeking to determine which figure is the true claimant within a species itself, we cannot use the method of division, as this functions at the level of determinate species themselves. Plato's solution to this dilemma is the introduction of myth. 'Myth establishes the model of a partial circulation in which appears a suitable ground on which to base the difference, on which to measure the roles of claims' (Deleuze 1994: 61). Myth allows us to relate a figure we encounter in appearance to a ground, principally the realm of forms through the myth of metempsychosis in the *Phaedrus*, or through the ideal of the shepherd-God in the *Statesman*. By showing that what truly exists in the world of appearances has its grounds in an atemporal realm, Plato provides a foundation for the account of difference we find in Aristotle. While in appearance, we might find that the properties of objects change, thus preventing us from characterising the nature of things, by relating objects to an atemporal ground, we are able to avoid the contradictory nature of temporal objects and found a determinate realm, thus meeting the requirements of representation. Reading Platonism in terms of this question of selection radically changes the focus of the Platonic method. Whereas the emphasis in reading Plato has traditionally been placed on the distinction between form and copy, if we view the form as a means to distinguish between images, the key distinction becomes between different kinds of images themselves. An important point to note, however, is that there are two ways in which something can be a copy of, or resemble, something else. The visitor sets out these two ways in the *Sophist*:

> Visitor: One type of imitation I see is the art of likeness-making. That's the one we have whenever someone produces an imitation by keeping to the proportions of length, breadth, and depth of his model, and also by keeping to the appropriate colours of its parts.
>
> Theaetetus: But don't all imitators try to do that?
>
> Visitor: Not the ones who sculpt or draw very large works. If they reproduced the true proportions of their beautiful subjects, you see, the upper parts would appear smaller than they should, and the lower parts would appear larger, because we see the upper parts from further away and the lower parts from closer. (Plato 1997a: 235d–236a)

Something can therefore resemble the way something is (in which case it is an *icon*), or just in the way in which sculptors may employ tricks of perspective, it can resemble the way something appears (in which case it is a *phantasm*). The true statesman resembles the Idea or form of the statesman in the first of these senses, as the form itself cannot be given in appearance, since it is not spatiotemporal. The pretender only resembles the appearance of the form, not the form itself. The problem, therefore, is to distinguish the candidates who bear a true likeness from those which merely appear to. We can now also see why there is no myth in the *Sophist*. The sophist resembles the forms in the second sense: that is, he presents the appearance of knowledge, which is a resemblance to the philosopher. The philosopher, on the contrary, presents a resemblance to the forms themselves, in that he has knowledge. As the sophist relates himself to appearances, and not to the forms, there is no lineage in him to trace back to the forms, as there is with the statesman. The sophist, rather, is determined by a lesser reality. In this sense, there can be no myth of the sophist, because there is no eternal form that he resembles. Most of the dialogue itself attempts to make this notion of existing but not being a copy of the forms coherent.

It is this distinction between different forms of resemblance that Deleuze takes to be the essential feature of Platonism, and is a key distinction for Deleuze's own early philosophy:

> In Chapter I, we suggested that Plato's thought turned upon a particularly important distinction: that between the original and the image, the model and the copy. The model is supposed to enjoy an originary superior identity (the Idea alone is nothing other than what it is: only Courage is courageous, Piety pious), whereas the copy is judged in terms of a derived internal resemblance … More profoundly, however, the true Platonic distinction lies elsewhere: it is of another nature, not between the original and the image but between two kinds of images [*idoles*], of which copies [*icones*] are

> only the first kind, the other being simulacra [*phantasmes*]. The model–copy distinction is there only in order to found and apply the copy–simulacra distinction, since the copies are selected, justified and saved in the name of the identity of the model and owing to their internal resemblance to this ideal model. The function of the notion of the model is not to oppose the world of images in its entirety but to select the good images, the icons which resemble from within, and eliminate the bad images or simulacra. (Deleuze 1994: 154–5)

As Deleuze notes, there is a difference in kind between copies and simulacra which goes beyond their simply having different referents: 'If we say of a simulacrum that it is a copy of a copy, an infinitely degraded icon, an infinitely loose resemblance, we then miss the essential, that is, the difference in nature between simulacrum and copy' (Deleuze 1990: 257).

If we take this focus on the simulacrum seriously, then one of the key claims Deleuze is making in *Difference and Repetition* is that we have two distinct ways of viewing the world. One sees perspective as essentially an artefact of perception of determinate atemporal objects. This is the model of Platonism, and sees underneath our lived experience of the world what Deleuze calls a 'sedentary distribution' of determinate limitation that constitutes properties and measure (Deleuze 1994: 36). Deleuze claims that 'the task of modern philosophy has been defined: to overturn Platonism' (59). The alternative is to recognise an essential role for perspective in our world. Such an approach instead relates our lived experience to a world of becoming. As we all know, the myth here that grounds our relationship to the world is the eternal return, which performs the same function as the Platonic myth, but instead relates our lived experience to a field of becoming.

III. Difference

How does this move to recognise the perspectival nature of the world affect our notion of difference? As we saw, what makes possible the representational conception of difference was the priority of form over difference, as shown by Aristotle's problem of the highest genus. At this point, I want to introduce Merleau-Ponty's work. While Merleau-Ponty (to my knowledge) has no sustained discussion of Plato,[5] at the heart of his philosophy is the kind of distinction between two models of perception we find in Plato.

We can now return to the question of difference. Deleuze suggests at the opening of the chapter that difference needs to be seen as the

emergence of a determination against an indeterminate ground that itself remains indeterminate. 'Form distinguishes itself from matter or from the ground, but not the converse, since distinction itself is a form' (Deleuze 1994: 28). This is radically different from the model of difference that operates between two determinate objects, as in this latter case, determination is understood as operative between two determined bodies, whereas in seeing difference as the process whereby form is distinguished from a ground, Deleuze is pointing to the origin of form itself. A further consequence is that the ground from which determination emerges is now no longer seen as one already operating in terms of a field of existing objects, but rather in terms of an unformed, indeterminate horizon. In this sense, rather than the sedentary distribution we find in the Platonic model, this reversal of Platonism leads us to see the ground of determination as 'a space which is unlimited – or at least without precise limits' (36).

Here, I want to turn to the work of Merleau-Ponty. We can note that for Merleau-Ponty, we have the same kind of distinction between two models of perception that we saw Deleuze drawing out from Plato's work. In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty makes the claim that philosophers have traditionally suffered from what he calls the 'experience error' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 5) which sees perception as the product of a world of determinate objects, and hence, as with Plato, sees perception as merely a subordinate form of the true nature of things. Merleau-Ponty therefore argues that there is a tendency to assume that those features of the world that we attribute to the objective world are already present in perception. In effect, we see perception as simply a subordinate form of the object. In the *Meditations*, Descartes argues that once God guarantees that our perceptions correlate with objects, we have a firm foundation for a scientific description of the world. Similarly, Locke holds that impressions are 'signs', and that the relations between impressions within perception correlate with the relations between parts of the objective world. In both of these cases, therefore, we have a strong correlation between the nature of perception and the nature of the object perceived.

We can see the difficulty with this approach immediately. If one accepts the claim that perception is simply a distorted representation of an object, then as an object approaches us, it should appear to become bigger as it takes up more space on the retina. Such an account, based on our understanding of the object and its physical relationship with our senses, fails to accord with our actual experience of objects. Rather, size is something that emerges within a framework of different

phenomena. As such, objects appear with an inherent size, rather than such characteristics being inferred secondarily from appearances. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

> if I hold my fountain pen close to my eyes such that it conceals almost the entire landscape, its real size remains quite modest, because this fountain pen that masks everything is also a fountain pen *seen up close*, and this condition – always noted in my perception – restores the appearance to its modest proportions. (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 313–14)

What is key to Merleau-Ponty's critique of those theories of perception that understand perception on the basis of a presupposed field of objects is that they take for granted that the way our perceptions are determined is the same as the way objects themselves are determined. Hence, the empiricist's talk of a visual field containing patches of colour sees the field as structured as a space of determinate elements, taking as a model for the visual field an objective two-dimensional plane. As Merleau-Ponty notes, the notion of a perspective itself involves introducing the experience error. When Kant claims in the transcendental deduction that the 'I think' must be able to accompany all of my representations (Kant 1929: B131–2), he individuates perspectives effectively as determinate and singular bodies.

What, therefore, is the nature of perception for Merleau-Ponty? As Merleau-Ponty notes, 'a figure against a background is the most basic sensible given we can have' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 4). For Merleau-Ponty, therefore, there is a necessarily complex structure within perception. This is not the structure of a set of objects, but rather the relationship between an indeterminate field, and a determination that arises from it. In this way, rather than presupposing a field of objects, Merleau-Ponty is giving an account of the constitution of forms. In the *Gestalt* structure of the figure and background, we have what Deleuze describes as the process whereby 'both determinations and the indeterminate combine in a single determination which "makes" the difference' (Deleuze 1994: 28). We can therefore read Deleuze's reversal of Platonism in terms of this movement in Merleau-Ponty that recognises perception in itself, rather than seeing perception as an adjunct to a field of objects. Difference is (at least at this point in *Difference and Repetition*), therefore, this process of the constitution of form from a field that lacks formal determination. For Merleau-Ponty, the key discussion is attention. Attention is not a process of surveying a field of determinate entities. Rather, in attending to the world, we draw determinate structures from the indeterminate horizon

of the background: 'To pay attention is not to further clarify some pre-existing givens; rather, it is to realise in them a new articulation by taking them as *figures*' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 32). In fact, Merleau-Ponty goes on to note that 'this passage from the indeterminate to the determinate, this continuous taking up of its own history in the unity of a new sense, is thought itself' (33).

IV. Depth

Recognising this parallel between Merleau-Ponty's account of determination in his *Phenomenology of Perception* and Deleuze's concept of difference in chapter one of *Difference and Repetition* allows us to understand the references to depth that are scattered through chapters one and five of *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze gives two accounts of depth: one related to the representational logic of opposition, and the other to a philosophy of difference. The origin of both of these models is once again Merleau-Ponty. The oppositional model of depth is described by Deleuze as follows:

> [I]t represents in turn the second order power, where it is as though things were spread out upon a flat surface, polarised in a single plane, and the synthesis took place only in a false depth – that is, in a fictitious third dimension added to the others that does no more than double the plane. (Deleuze 1994: 50)

This idea, that depth is a dimension that is simply a fictitious addition to the other two dimensions is one made, for instance, by Berkeley, when he notes that we never see depth directly, but only breadth and height. Descartes makes a similar claim when he looks at the nature of engraving in his study of optics:

> Moreover, in accordance with the rules of perspective they often represent circles by ovals better than by other circles, squares by rhombuses better than by other squares, and similarly for other shapes. Thus it often happens that in order to be more perfect as an image and to represent an object better, an engraving ought not to resemble it. (Descartes 1985: 165–6)

As well as noting that engraving operates according to strict determinations of limitation (lines unambiguously determine areas on a plane), we can see that here what is happening is that by a series of rule-governed deformations, a field of depth is constituted on the basis of determinations that exist on the two-dimensional plane of the engraving. These deformations allow us to 'see empty space where there is none'

(Merleau-Ponty 1993b: 172). While, as Deleuze notes, such a model of depth does involve a synthesis on the part of the subject, we do not have here an account of the genesis of the realm of representation. The plane of the engraving is clearly an analogue for the plane of vision, which in turn is modelled on the surface of the retina. This model of vision in fact presupposes the physical realm of entities, returning us to something like the Platonic model of the icon, where perception is ultimately understood as a lesser form of existence of the object itself. As Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze both note, this priority of the object over the perception is made explicit in the fact that depth here is understood as breadth seen from another side:

> By immediately assimilating depth and breadth, both philosophies assume as self-evident the result of a constitutive labour whose phases we must, on the contrary, retrace. In order to treat depth as a breadth considered in profile and to arrive at an isotropic space, the subject must leave his place, his view upon the world, and conceive himself in a sort of ubiquity. For God, who is everywhere, breadth is immediately equivalent to depth. Intellectualism and empiricism do not give us an account of the human experience of the world; they say of human experience what God might think of the world. (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 266–7)

As opposed to the representational model of depth that presupposes a field of objects, Deleuze introduces an intensive model of depth. As he puts it, 'everywhere, the dimension of depth is primary. It is no use rediscovering depth as a third dimension unless it has already been installed at the beginning, enveloping the other two, and enveloping itself as a third' (Deleuze 1994: 51). Depth is here seen as the field that gives rise to the dimensions of space, and hence differs in kind from the structures of representation, while providing the ground for their development. Here Deleuze is borrowing directly from Merleau-Ponty, for whom depth is likewise that which makes possible our objective conception of space, rather than a function of it:

> Once depth is understood in this way, we can no longer call it a third dimension. In the first place, if it were a dimension, it would be the first one; there are forms and definite planes only if it is stipulated how far from me their different parts are. But a *first* dimension that contains all the others is no longer a dimension, at least in the ordinary sense of a *certain relationship* according to which we make measurements. Depth thus understood is, rather, the experience of the reversibility of dimensions, of a global 'locality'—everything in the same place at the same time, a locality from which height, width, and depth are abstracted, of a voluminosity we express when we say that a thing is *there*. (Merleau-Ponty 1993b: 140)

Depth here, therefore, is not some kind of container for things in space, but rather is what makes possible those things. In this regard, Merleau-Ponty takes up the double sense of aesthetics that Deleuze's own thought argues for, citing Paul Klee and Paul Cézanne as figures who, in rejecting the mathematicised perspectivism of Descartes, open the way to exploring depth as the locus of 'how the things become things, how the world becomes world' (Merleau-Ponty 1993b: 141). If we return to the notion of the *Gestalt*, depth here is the horizon of indeterminacy against which the form of the *Gestalt* figure emerges. The centrality for depth for Merleau-Ponty therefore not only signifies the essential role of perspective in his thought, but also a difference in kind in the distribution that underlies perception. In his essay, 'Cézanne's Doubt', Merleau-Ponty argues that it is the 'chaos of sensation' (Merleau-Ponty 1993a: 63) that Cézanne is aiming at in his work, and that it is from this that the stable world of objects emerges. In selecting between the icon and simulacrum, Merleau-Ponty therefore favours the simulacrum, and, with Deleuze, institutes a reversal of Platonism, seeing the ground of perception as a field of indeterminacy, rather than relating it to an eternal archetype of the object, or a pre-existing field of objects.

Why do we tend to reduce the simulacrum to an icon, and hence to institute the realm of representation? Deleuze elucidates this claim in relation to infinite representation, which attempts to incorporate everything into the structure of representation. Deleuze's claim is that 'the reprises or repetitions of the dialectic express only the conservation of the whole, all the forms and all the moments in a gigantic Memory' (Deleuze 1994: 53). Each perspective is retained within a dialectical philosophy, such that reality is constituted as the totality of such perspectives. Infinite representation is only possible on the basis of a forgetfulness of difference, however. This critique derives from Merleau-Ponty's critique of representation in perception in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Merleau-Ponty notes that whenever I see an object against a horizon, other perspectives are implied:

> Each object, then, is the mirror of all the others. When I see the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not merely the qualities that are visible from my location, but also those that the fireplace, the walls and the table can 'see' … Thus, I can see one object insofar as objects form a system or world, and insofar as each of them arranges the others around itself like spectators of its hidden aspects and as the guarantee of their permanence. (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 71)

This gives rise to the illusion that all perspectives could be made present simultaneously.

Nonetheless, as with Deleuze, the perspectival nature of experience means that determinacy of form is only possible in relation to a field of indeterminacy. In constituting a figure by our attention, other moments fall into the background. The result of this is that there is never the possibility of the kind of totalised determinate object that representation takes for granted. The world is an open whole. The error emerges when we fail to recognise this necessary horizontal nature of perspectives, and see each effectively as a possible representation of the object. This is effectively to see these perspectives as individual atoms, the totality of which 'condensed into a strict coexistence' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 72) would give the absolute object. In comparing representations in memory, we have already reached the level of reflection, and prefiguring Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty claims we assume something like an 'immense World-Memory' (73) which is the source of our perspectives. The world is thus seen to contain all perspectives simultaneously. Once we have intellectually constructed the notion of an absolute object, we see this as the basis of our perception of the world, and thus in turn deduce our experience from the relations between objects. Thus for both Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty, it is the retention of perspectives as functions of the object that allows representation, but only on the basis of denying the simulacral nature of perspective.

V. Difference and Spinozism

Despite the centrality of Merleau-Ponty to the foundations of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze's Spinozism introduces a radical expansion and divergence from the perspectivism of Merleau-Ponty. First, we can note that in rejecting a representational theory of perception, Merleau-Ponty also rejects a foundational role for the subject and object (as fully determinate structures) in his account of perception. Merleau-Ponty's 'primacy of perception' means that perspective precedes these structures: 'I would have to say that *one* perceives in me, not that I perceive' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 223). Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty notes that once we recognise that perspectivalism is central to being, all being becomes perspectival:

> Thus, since every conceivable being relates directly or indirectly to the perceived world, and since the perceived world is only grasped through

> orientation, we cannot dissociate being from oriented being; there is no reason to 'ground' space or to ask what is the level of all levels. (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 264)

This claim fits well with Deleuze's Spinozism, and the panpsychism of Spinoza, at least in *Difference and Repetition*, is to be interpreted as seeing the world as a proliferation of simulacra, or a network of decentred perceptions. 'Movement, for its part, implies a plurality of centres, a superposition of perspectives, a tangle of points of view, a coexistence of moments which essentially distort representation' (Deleuze 1994: 56). In its modal aspect, therefore, being is perspectival all the way down, and the differential structure of the *Gestalt* is found in a world where 'difference [has] become the element, the ultimate unity' (56).

If modal existence is characterised by a decentred superposition of Merleau-Pontean perspectives, substance is characterised by depth. As Deleuze notes in his genealogy of a univocal theory of being in chapter one, there is a fundamental problem with Spinoza's formulation of univocity, namely that 'modes are dependent on substance, but as though on something other than themselves' (Deleuze 1994: 40). Thus, Spinoza privileges substance over individual modes. Instead, 'substance must be said *of* the modes and only *of* the modes' (40). While Nietzsche is key to this movement through the introduction of the eternal return, we can also see Merleau-Ponty's analysis of depth plays a central role. As we know, Deleuze takes the ground (or 'unground') of the world of representation to be a field of intensive difference. In this regard, Deleuze's return to the theme of depth in chapter five of *Difference and Repetition* is especially noteworthy. As he writes, 'the original depth, by contrast, is indeed space as a whole, but space as an intensive quantity: the pure *spatium*' (230). If substance is a field of intensities, then in what sense is it also an 'original depth'? While Deleuze follows Merleau-Ponty in noting that depth is a condition for the emergence of difference into experience, he argues that if depth is different in kind from the dimensions of breadth and height that it gives rise to, then it should be possible to analyse depth aside from its instantiation within modes. 'Extensity can emerge from the depths only if depth is definable independently of extensity' (230). Thus, Deleuze claims that it is possible to explore the field of indeterminate depth apart from the differential structures of the *Gestalt* to which it gives rise.[6] This is the project of the rest of *Difference and Repetition*, and working through the implications of it introduces the novel account of determination borrowed from the

calculus, the critique of the image of thought, and the characterisation of intensity apart from the categories of metric space. To the extent that this project amounts to an attempt to provide the grounds for perception, Deleuze's project, at least in *Difference and Repetition*, amounts to a completion of a metaphysics of perception.

Notes

1. While this footnote simply refers us to the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Deleuze here notes that key elements of his critique of representation – the analysis of 'common sense and the persistence of the model of recognition' (Deleuze 1994: 320) – are already present in Merleau-Ponty's work.
2. See, for instance, Somers-Hall 2009, which explores this connection in terms of aesthetics. Lawlor 2012: 142 notes that we can see the project of an immanent approach to consciousness already prefigured in Merleau-Ponty. Shores 2012 provides an analysis of the differences and affinities between Deleuze's and Merleau-Ponty's conceptions of the body. Reynolds and Roffe 2006 argue convincingly that Deleuze is closer to Merleau-Ponty than his ostensive statements make him appear. Bell 1998 shows how both Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty are concerned with the problem of difference. None of these texts address the affinity of depth in *Difference and Repetition* with the same concept in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, however.
3. For a more detailed analysis of Deleuze's relationship to Aristotle, see De Beistegui 2004: 29–76. See also Somers-Hall 2012: 41–54; 2013: 23–30.
4. On Deleuze, Plato, and Aristotle, see Smith 2012, particularly pp. 6–8.
5. While there is little direct discussion of Plato, as Dillon notes, Meno's paradox, which shows the impossibility of learning, is a central, if implicit, touchstone of the *Phenomenology of Perception*. See Dillon 1988: 1–8.
6. This difficulty of exploring the nature of the *Gestalt* prior to its instantiation is related to an issue Bell 1998: 134–43 raises with Merleau-Ponty's conception of the body as both a condition of experience and an object of experience. As he puts it, 'the body is always already *identified*, and this in turn makes identification possible. In short, Merleau-Ponty presupposes the paradoxical nature of identification (i.e., paradox of perception as *conditioned* by the body-subject) and unwittingly uses it to explain the paradox of the lived body that is its *condition* (i.e., the body-subject as an *identified*, already-given object). The nature of identification is thus used to explain the nature of the already identified (i.e., paradox)' (139). Here, we have a similar inability to explain identity because it is presupposed as we find with the *Gestalt*. This is also at the heart of Deleuze and Guattari's 1994's claim that despite Merleau-Ponty's successes in developing a philosophy of difference, he ultimately relies on an *urdoxa* (our faith in the perceived world) as guarantor for these successes. The reason for this is that Merleau-Ponty 'mak[es] immanence an immanence to a subject' (150) which thus preserves the priority of a moment of identity over difference.

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