

Which are the Layers of *Difference and Repetition?*

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Although the exegeses on Deleuze are growing in number, one dedicated to the complex and dynamic aspect of transcendental empiricism is yet to be found in Anne Sauvagnargues' *Deleuze, L'empirisme transcendantal* (Paris: PUF, 2010). The author is Maître de Conférences in Art Philosophy at École Normale Supérieure Lyon and is generally recognized as a specialist in Deleuze's work, having published *Deleuze et l'art* at PUF publishing house in 2005.

The formal content of this book could be described as having fifteen chapters without the introduction and conclusion. We will first present the main characteristics of the objectives that compose the exegetic foundation of this book and subsequently we will describe briefly the explicative core of each chapter. The structure and the aims of Souvagnargues' exegesis on Deleuze can be rounded up as a methodic attempt to explain *Différence et répétition* acknowledging that it comprises in a transversal manner all the directions by which Deleuze has constructed the philosophical project of transcendental empiricism from one book to another.

Following this hermeneutic statement, we observe that the elaborated construction of transcendental empiricism implies a double dynamic lecture that explores the theoretical clusters of Kant's philosophy, twisting the transcendental and opening it towards the empirical. This dynamic lecture implies, on the other hand, the cartographic folds concerning the relation that Deleuze establishes between diverse authors as a historic line that grasps the evolution of his thought.

The intensive reform of Kant's project envisages different theoretical cuts that will supply in *Différence et répétition* a veritable analytic of the Difference. These points of departure in respect to Kant's transcendental philosophy reunite: the signs in Nietzsche, the theory of faculties in Kant, Proust and the image of the thought, Bergson with the virtual and the two multiplicities, Spinoza and the etiology with the structural theses on the sense regarded as a surface effect between differentiated series, Maimon and his genetic critique of Kant, Simondon with his intensive theory of the Idea, and last but not least, Blanchot, Foucault and Guattari. (pp. 12-15, 23, 71, 112, 171, 212, 227, 301)

The first chapter deals with the manner in which Deleuze is interpreting Kant and the concrete determination that is announced by transcendental empiricism. First of all, Deleuze's concern in reading Kant is the "crack of time" between the *a priori* syntheses of the 'I Think' and the empirical and psychological self. These two functions of the subject are found disconnected in respect to each other, given that the universal function of 'I Think' doubles and glides the empirical Self as his transcendental condition, making thus "I Think" to oppose and determine the empirical Self. Two consequences can be raised from this: a) the philosophy of difference starts from the subject "cracked" by time b) the Deleuzean philosophy as a continuation of the Kantian subversive adventure formulates a transcendental field cleared of any substantial avatars, reloaded as an impersonal field without subject. With the contributions of Simondon, Deleuze was able to formulate a rationalist theory of impersonal and pre-individual singularities which is able to a.) liberate the individualization of the unitary form of the Self and, b.) break

with the firm ontology of the substance proposing a doctrine of becoming and individualization, thus rejecting an anthropocentric view on philosophy (pp. 23, 26-27).

The second chapter is concerned with the meaning of the “image of thought”. This concept forged by Deleuze intends to clarify the importance of what the thought has to say about itself, its limits and power in the archaeology of the images that expressed it through the history of philosophy, as though representing reality, its natural relation with truth, the common sense as a guarantee of commune and reliable knowledge, etc. A positive assignation of this concept is derived from the creative agenda regarding the dispositions of thought; an image of thought relates to a new modality of straining the language, of linking things one to another, etc. Philosophy means accepting the multiform foundation of thought in respect to itself and to what it historically engenders (pp. 42-44).

The third, fourth and sixth chapter are concentrated upon the analysis of Deleuze's book on Proust. First of all, the analysis tries to specify the distinct interpretations regarding the theme of Proust's novel, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, as a search of truth and as being connected to the tensioned relation with Kant's transcendental use of faculties (pp. 52-53). While in Kant's philosophy each faculty is driven to its superior exercise regarding its a priori legislating status concerning the object, and by this it determines its domain of application, in Deleuze's Proust each faculty is triggered into its transcendental use by the action of the signs. The typology of the faculties commands the plurality of the signs scanned by Deleuze in Proust's novel, *À la recherche du temps perdu*. This typology follows and orchestrates the initiatory itinerary of the narrator passing from a world to another, from the sphere of snobbism to the one of jealousy, from the emotions triggered by the sensible qualities to the experience assumed by art (pp. 74-75). Souvagnargues produces an interesting critique regarding the status of sign in the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Ricoeur, in relation with the problematic of sign raised by Deleuze in his exegesis on Proust (pp. 127-128).

The fifth chapter focuses on the reevaluation of Bergson's main concepts in Deleuze's *Différence et répétition*.

First of all, the three temporal syntheses reveal, up to a point, our profound relation with time: a) the passive synthesis of habit which introduces the actual present continually changing our past, b) the synthesis of memory which concerns the virtual past and the pure being, c) the active synthesis of the future. As Souvagnargues explains, we have to deal here with a concept of becoming that engulfs the three Kantian transcendental syntheses with the temporal *ekstases* of Heidegger (pp. 96-97). The second Bergsonian theme in Deleuze's philosophy is given by the problematic of the two multiplicities. In brief, we are talking about qualitative multiplicities that correspond to duration and virtuality and about quantitative, discrete multiplicities that correspond to material actualization. These two sets of multiplicities corresponding to the distinction between actual matter and virtual duration envisage a new image of thought (pp. 104-105).

The seventh chapter is concerned with the boiling points of Deleuze reading Spinoza. Starting with the main theme of Spinoza's philosophy – the fight against the transcendence of Being, we obtain a harsh critique of analogy, eminence and allegory. Through the concept of expression, Deleuze unravels, in the same time, a critique of the theological tradition of analogy and the coherent, immanent and univocal philosophy of Spinoza. In a few words, Being expresses itself through attributes, which, in their own turn, express themselves in modes, which express a change or a modification in substance. Individualization in modes is explained in two ways; firstly, it is effectuated under a regime of differentiation of power in respect to the substance and, secondly, by considering attributes in terms of relation of bodies under certain laws. Another important aspect is given by the theory of effects similar with Nietzsche's genealogy of morals as ground for a comparative, typological characterization of modes of life. Finally, the philosophy of Spinoza is understood by Deleuze through the relation with the structuralism, mainly having in mind the concept of *hecceites*, related to the complex theory of singularity elaborated by Deleuze (pp. 150-151, 162-164, 170).

The eighth chapter is surveying Deleuze's *Logique du sens*. The problem of sense springs from the elaboration of the

concept of structure, understood as multiplicity which ensures to its terms a derivative, random, transitory place on the surface given by their encounter as events. Deleuze emphasizes the differentiating value of the structure that systematically produces its terms and confers them a sense through their own position in this combinatory form of the structure, and not through the analysis of essence conceived as a unity of sign and sense (pp. 174, 192-193).

The ninth chapter is concerned with the problematic of the first two books of Deleuze, on Hume and Nietzsche. What they have in common is the re-thinking of Kant's transcendental project starting from the concern Hume has in the practical roots of the subject and in the logic of relation as opposed to the representational ground of knowledge, and from the Nietzschean problem of value. Nietzsche's genealogy is the genetic method that accounts for the origin of moral evaluation discovering typologies that clarify the specific direction of Kantian axiology. In this direction we can see Nietzsche's philosophical affinities with Solomon Maimon concerning genealogy as genetic method and the relation of forces as a differentiating principle (pp. 213-214, 222-224).

The next three chapters are concerned with the influence of Gilbert Simondon's philosophy of biology in Deleuze's intensive reading of Kant and in the elaboration of transcendental empiricism in *Différence et répétition*. The lines of attack driven by Simondon are directed towards the supposition related to the process of individualization and call to abandon any ontology that would ground the emergence of individuality in the pre-existence of individuated terms – whether we talk about matter and form, sender and receiver. We have the three main principles of individuation that come under Simondon's sustained attack: a) atomism, understood as unit measure which composes the minimal organization and quantifies degrees of order; b) the expression of the unilateral relation between model and copy, which reinstates the Platonic *archetype*; c) finally, as a source of organization which is separated from matter or 'substrate-independent' - the latest heir of the Aristotelian *hylemorphism*. Individuation, in general, can only take place by drawing on a pre-individual

field, a ‘metastable’ domain composed of disparate virtualities. Simondon, drawing on scientific studies of crystallization, rethinks the process of individuation as the result of the introduction of a ‘form’ in the guise of a structural ‘germ’ which catalyses the actualization and reciprocal interaction of some of the virtualities which remained, up to this point, at the pre-individual level. The concept of the “disparate” is particularly important for an understanding of Simondon’s philosophy of interaction, and as a consequence, for Deleuze. Drawn from the physiological term used for the integration of non-superimposable retinal images into unified visual perception, Simondon uses the idea of ‘disparation’ to reflect how individuation implies the emergence of a form of communication between hitherto incommensurable orders or potentials towards actually differentiated beings. The role of Simondon (constantly related to Bergson) and of his theory of individuation is vital in Deleuze’s ontogenetic rethinking of structuralism and of the transcendental, helping him to think through operations that permit the passage from virtually differentiated Ideas to actually differentiated beings. Deleuze, related to Simondon, will reconsider structures as neither immaterial essences, nor formal invariants, but instead as the pre-individual grounds of individuation (pp. 243, 255, 275, 296, 306, 325).

The thirteenth chapter is focused on the elaboration of the concept of “problematic”, first of all regarding Lautman’s heritage and, further, on a broad discussion conjuring the virtual and the actual in terms of the “problematic”. What Deleuze specifically draws from Lautman is a relational logic that designates a process of production or genesis, which has the value of introducing a general theory of relations, theory which unites the structural considerations of the differential calculus with the concept of ‘the generation of quantities’. The process of the genesis of mathematical theories offered as solutions to mathematical problems corresponds to the Deleuzian account of the construction of concepts as solutions to philosophical problems (pp. 335-337, 345).

The final chapters regroup the thematic of the previous ones for a brief contraction opposing hermeneutics to a

transversal dimension that switches the aim of reading from finding a raw sense to experimentation, as we can see in Proust or in Foucault's diagonal analysis. Another procedural tactic coined by Deleuze related to the above mentioned opposition is a practical theory of multiplicity; in this sense we have a problematic enounce that traces the diagrams that phrases put as stake. The virtual problems are not to be found outside the empirical solutions that actualize those problems; however they are not reducible to these solutions, as an Idea is not reducible to a concept, and a problem to its solution (pp. 358, 369, 384).

Despite its "flimsy" bibliography, Sauvagnargues' exegesis grounds the thematic disposition of her inquiry. We can see at work an attentive lecture and clear, pertinent assumptions on the topic of Deleuze's elaboration of transcendental empiricism as a critique and intensive re-elaboration of Kant's transcendental project, incorporating the different topics of each book and author that problematically prepared *Différence et répétition* and more precisely the dynamic hybrid status of transcendental empiricism that sums Deleuze's philosophical project.

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