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Sense and Nonsense

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The Expression of Meaning in Deleuze's Ontological Proposition

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Philosophical modernity pivots around the question of meaning: Is the world inherently meaningful, or is meaning projected onto the world by humans? Or to put it another way: Is the world to be explained in terms of meaning, or meaning explained as an aspect – but only one aspect – of the world? Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that this is indeed the fundamental issue at stake in modern philosophy. If so, then perhaps the most profound philosophical divide would be the one between those who insist on taking our experience of meaning as the incontrovertible datum that explains intelligibility, thereby providing the fulcrum for epistemology and ontology; and those who believe that meaning is not co-extensive with intelligibility, but is to be accounted for in terms of processes whose comprehension does not depend upon their being re-inscribed within the realm of meaning. The former are those who hold meaning to be primary, and hence to be the condition for the secondary distinction between the intelligible and the unintelligible; the latter are those convinced that we must first begin by explaining how intelligibility is possible before going on to explain how meaningful phenomena emerge from intelligible yet meaningless processes.

At first sight, it would seem that we have merely reiterated the familiar opposition between idealists and materialists. But in fact, neither position can be straightforwardly mapped onto either term of this alternative. For, just as an idealist may prioritise the intelligible over the sensible without privileging meaning, a materialist may appeal to the intrinsic intelligibility of 'matter' – however the latter be defined – in order to account for the origin of meaning. Consequently, everything

depends on how meaning and intelligibility are articulated. For materialism hardly represents an advance over idealism if it is only able to account for meaning by postulating an originary principle of intelligibility in matter. Thus it is not only meaning's emergence from meaninglessness that must be accounted for; it is also the emergence of the intelligible from the sensible. The first is an ontological problem about what meaning is, the second is an epistemological problem about how intelligibility is possible in a world whose structure does not depend upon thought. It is imperative not to elide these two, on pain of mystifying both the nature of meaning and that of thought.

It is Kant who is supposed to have discredited the metaphysical postulate of an originary isomorphy between thought and being by ruling out appeals to intellectual intuition. In doing so, he carried out a decisive redistribution of the relations between meaning, sensibility, and intuition. The intelligible is neither intuited intellectually nor passively imprinted upon the mind by sensibility. Mediating between reason and sensibility is the understanding as the faculty of judgement, which weds concepts and intuitions into representations whose objectivity is a function of their propositional content or meaning. By placing the power of judgement at the heart of the machinery of cognition, and by construing the objectivity of representations in terms of their propositional content, Kant turns the theory of meaning into the key that demarcates the boundary between the intelligible and the unintelligible.[1] Thus, in *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze credits Kant with discovering a properly transcendental dimension of meaning as that which overturns the metaphysical intuition of 'essence': "It is true to say that meaning [*le sens*] is the discovery proper to transcendental philosophy, replacing the old metaphysical essences."[2]

1 Cf. Robert Hannah, *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

2 Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), p. 128, hereafter *LS*. At this stage, a point of clarification is necessary. It is important to insist that, for much of the time, when Deleuze is talking about '*sens*' he is simply talking about 'meaning'. Granted, the French word '*sens*' can also mean 'direction', a semantic nuance which Deleuze frequently exploits in order to bring out the specifically *topological* aspect of his concept of meaning, as exemplified by the fact that it is deployed upon a 'surface'. And no doubt it is in order to retain this nuance that Deleuze's translators have opted to render '*sens*' systematically as 'sense' rather than as 'meaning'. But this laudable desire to preserve an undeniably important philosophical nuance comes at the cost of occluding the extent to which Deleuze's concern with the logic of sense constitutes an engagement with what we are here calling the fundamental problematic of philosophical modernity: the problem of meaning. Thus, wherever possible, I will translate '*sens*' as 'meaning' in order to emphasise the overlap between Deleuze's concerns and those of the more 'mainstream' – I use the word without endorsement – post-Kantian tradition. It is precisely this overlap which is needlessly obscured by the tendency to fetishize the word 'sense' at the expense of 'meaning' in a way that encourages the widespread perception of Deleuze's work as wilfully eccentric.

Yet, as early as his 1954 review of Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*,[3] Deleuze is already suggesting that the Kantian problematic of representation has not completely revoked the privileges of essence, because the disjunction between phenomenon and noumenon simply reiterates the distinction between being and appearing. In order to consummate the critical displacement of essence by meaning, Deleuze insists, it is necessary to absolutise the immanence of this world in such a way as to dissolve the transcendent disjunction between things as we know them and as they are in themselves, and hence to abandon the representational framework which continues to construe meaning as the key that unlocks the intelligible realm, rather than as that which dispenses with the latter altogether: "To say that this world here is self-sufficient is not only to say that it is sufficient *for us*, but that it is sufficient unto itself, and that it does not relate to being as to an essence beyond appearance, or to another world which would be the realm of the Intelligible, but rather that it relates to it as to the meaning of this world."[4] Consequently, Deleuze continues: "That there is no 'beyond' means that there is no beyond of this world, (because Being is nothing but meaning), and that there is no beyond of thought in the world (because it is being that thinks itself in thought), and lastly, that there is no beyond of language in thought itself."[5]

14 years later, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze will re-assert this interpenetration of thought, being, and meaning in the claim that "[t]here has only ever been one ontological proposition: Being is univocal."[6] Univocity entails that "Being is said [*L'Être se dit*] in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is

3 Jean Hyppolite, *Logique et existence. Essai sur la Logique de Hegel* (Paris: PUF, 1953); *Logic and Existence* Tr. L. Lawlor and A. Sen (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1997).

4 Gilles Deleuze, 'Jean Hyppolite, Logique et existence' in L'île déserte et autres *textes*. Ed. D. Lapoujade (Paris : Minuit, 2002). pp. 18-23, p. 20, hereafter *JH*

5 Ibid.

said differs: it is difference itself."[7] '*L'être se dit*', writes Deleuze, and the accusative '*se*' bears underlining here: it implies not only that 'being is said' but also that 'being *says itself*'. Being says itself because thinking is not exterior to being, as it is for the philosophies of representation: rather, the difference between thinking and being is intrinsic to being insofar as the latter is nothing but difference, or better, *differentiation*. Thus in his review of Hyppolite, Deleuze writes: "The external empirical difference between thought and being gives way to the internal difference of Being thinking itself [...] Thus, in logic, there is no longer what I say on one hand and the meaning of what I say on the other, as there is in the empirical [...] My discourse is logically or properly philosophical [...] when I say the sense of what I say and Being thereby says itself."[8] This is why ontology (from the Greek *on* (gen. *ontos*) 'being' (prp. of *einai* 'to be') + *logia* 'writing about, study of') must take the form of a proposition: it is the discourse *of* being, where the genitive is as much objective as subjective. And this univocal discourse entails a transcendental logic of meaning precisely insofar as being does not say itself as the identity of essence but rather as the difference of sense (i.e. meaning).

But why is sense a function of difference rather than identity? Why is meaning a locus of differentiation rather than identification? To understand why, we must bear in mind the crucial role played by the logic of expression throughout Deleuze's work. A remark from the last page of Deleuze's *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* is particularly illuminating here. Deleuze writes there: "The expressed is *meaning*: deeper than the relation of causality; deeper than the relation of representation."[9] According to Deleuze, it is the triadic structure of expression that provides the key to understanding Spinoza's rationalism: "substance expresses itself, the attributes are expressions, and essence is expressed."[10] The three moments of expression will be articulated in terms of the expressive mode, the attributive expression, and the

6 Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968); *Difference and Repetition.* Tr. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). p. 52/35, hereafter *DR*
7 Ibid., p. 53/36
8 *JH*, p. 21
9 Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris: Minuit, 1968), p. 311, hereafter *SPE.*
10 Ibid., p. 21

expressed essence (substance). But the entire impetus of Deleuze's interpretation of Spinozism consists in insisting that it is substance that orbits around the modes, rather than the reverse[11]. Thus, the critical destitution of substance turns the latter qua expressed into a function of the expressive mode. Moreover, it is because being expresses itself as meaning that it can be grasped without invoking intellectual intuition. This was already hinted at in Deleuze's review of Hyppolite, where he commended Hegel's version of absolute rationalism for dissolving the metaphysical dualism of being and appearing[12]. Accordingly, the dissolution of representation consummates the critical destitution of substance in such a way as to entail that being expresses itself as meaning, but only insofar as meaning qua expressed must be grasped as entity, which is to say, as event rather than as substance. The expressed meaning 'insists' or 'subsists' in the proposition that expresses it, while remaining irreducible to the signifying word or the designated thing. Thus, in *Logic of Sense* we find Deleuze asserting that "meaning is the *expressed of the proposition*, the incorporeal at the surface of things, the irreducible complex entity, the pure event which insists or subsists in the proposition."[13] (1969: 30) By the same token, Deleuze's fundamental ontological proposition in *Difference and Repetition* constitutes a 'complex entity' in which being expresses its 'own' meaning: "In the proposition considered as complex entity we distinguish between meaning, or what is expressed in the proposition; the designated (what expresses itself in the proposition); and the expressive or designating factors, which are numerical modes, that is to say, differential factors characterising the elements endowed with meaning and designation."[14] The expressive factors that differentiate being are its numerically, which is to say, quantitatively distinct modes or individuating differences, while the attributes are expressed as its qualitatively distinct meanings: "The attributes effectively operate as qualitatively different meanings, which relate back to substance as to a single designated; and this substance in turn operates as an ontologically unified meaning relative to the modes which express it, and which subsist within it as individuating factors or inherent intense degrees."[15]

11 Ibid., p. 59
12 *JH*, p. 20
13 *LS*, p. 30
14 *DR*, p. 52/35, tm
15 Ibid., p. 59/40, tm

But why should the auto-expression of being as meaning depend upon the distinction between quantitative difference at the modal level and qualitative difference at the attributive level? There is a fundamental difficulty here: on the one hand, Deleuze assures us that being expresses or thinks itself through thought, while on the other he insists that "meaning is never a principle or origin; it is produced"[16]. How then are we to reconcile the claim that being expresses itself as meaning with the claim that meaning is a consequence rather than a cause, a product rather than a principle? This is the challenge confronting anyone trying to make sense of Deleuze's exceptionally ambitious but also extraordinarily difficult project. But we can begin to see how these apparently conflicting claims may be reconciled by distinguishing between two different levels at which Deleuze's philosophy of difference operates: On the first level, differentiation is *ontic* (in the non-Heideggerian sense of the word as 'pertaining to existence or being', rather than in contrast to 'ontological') and is elaborated in terms of the theory of temporal individuation which lies at the heart of *Difference and Repetition*. This is Deleuze's account of modal difference as quantitative distinction: individuation provides the sufficient reason for actualisation and hence for modal differen*t*/ciation. On the second level, differentiation is *logical* (in the sense of 'pertaining to logos or discourse', rather than a particular technical discipline) and is explained in terms of the transcendental topology of the sense-event provided in *Logic of Sense*. And it is here that Deleuze provides us with an account of the origin of qualitative distinction at the level of attributive expression: it is the production of meaning that explains how symbolic differen*t*iation generates qualitative difference at the attributive level. But it is important to note that both levels of this ontico-logical distinction encompass the distinction between virtual differen*t*iation and actual differenciation: both virtual and actual dimensions are fully operative at the ontic and logical levels. In this regard, the relationship between the ontic and the symbolic, or between time and meaning, suggests that *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense* may be connected in a way that echoes in an odd and entirely unexpected fashion the link between Hegel's *Phenomenology* and his *Logic*. Thus it is necessary to recapitulate Deleuze's account of ontic differentiation in *Difference and Repetition* before considering how it might be connected to the account of logical differentiation proposed in *Logic of Sense*.

16 *LS*, p. 90

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Difference and Repetition proposes an ontology of temporal difference: it is precisely being *as time* that is "said in one and the same sense of all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities"[17]. And it is because those individuating differences or intrinsic modalities express divergent rates or 'tendencies' of duration that being cannot be conceptually comprehended as an intuitable object. Already in 1956's 'Bergson's Conception of Difference', Deleuze is arguing that to conceive of being as pure self-differentiation is to conceive of it in Bergsonian terms as duration: "Duration, tendency, is self-differentiating; and what differs from itself is immediately the unity of substance and subject."[18] *Difference and Repetition* will qualify and complicate this claim that duration is the 'immediate' unity of substance and subject, or being and thought, by suggesting that this unity cannot be represented as an identity; it must be generated through a synthesis which simultaneously joins and disjoins substance and subject, thought and being, via an involution of temporal difference that renders it in and for-itself.

Thus, Deleuze uses the scalpel of a refined Bergsonism to rearrange the body of Kantianism. Representation is subjected to a critique which annuls the mediating function of conceptual understanding vis-à-vis reason and sensibility. In *Difference and Repetition* the tripartite structure of the first Critique ostensibly undergoes an involution which folds the Transcendental Dialectic directly into the Transcendental Aesthetic. The mediating role of the Transcendental Analytic is supplanted by an account of spatio-temporal individuation which provides the sufficient reason for a non-conceptual synthesis of reason and sensibility. With the unifying function of the understanding suspended, the aesthetic manifold need no longer be subjected to conceptual subsumption; it now incarnates the dialectical structures of ideal multiplicity. Rather than being specified via the representational logic of subsumption, wherein the concept is always too 'baggy' to fit the particular object, the individuated entity is the actualisation of a virtual multiplicity; and it is individuation as ultimate determinant of

17 *DR*, p. 53/36

18 Gilles Deleuze, 'La conception de la différence chez Bergon' in L'île déserte et autres *textes*. Ed. D. Lapoujade (Paris : Minuit, 2002). pp. 43-72, p. 52

actualisation which ensures the exact coincidence of the ideal and the real, and hence a precise fit between ideal genesis and empirical actuality. In seeking out the ideal conditions capable of generating the individual entity of actual experience, rather than the particular object of possible experience, Deleuze's 'transcendental empiricism' treats the concept (i.e. the Idea as virtual multiplicity) as the object of an encounter which is no longer governed by the logic of recognition: thus Deleuze declares, "concepts are the things themselves, but things in their free and untamed state, beyond "anthropological predicates"."[19]

Ideas are characterised as both distinct and obscure. They are distinct insofar as they are perfectly differen*t*iated – via the reciprocal determination of relations and the complete determination of points – but obscure because they are not yet differen*c*iated – since all Ideas coexist with one another in a state of virtual perplication. By the same token, intensities are at once clear and confused. They are clear insofar as they are enveloping and confused insofar as they are enveloped. Thus the clarity of enveloping depth is inseparable from the confusion of enveloped distance. Accordingly, in individuation, the perplication of ideas is expressed by the implication of intensities. Enveloping depth clearly expresses distinct relations and points in the Idea, while enveloped distance confusedly expresses their obscure indifferenciation. Moreover, enveloping depth constitutes the field of individuating differences, while enveloped distances constitute the individual differences. Intensity is individuating precisely insofar as it expresses the Idea; but this expression[20] is a function of thinking:-

> "To the distinct-obscure as ideal unity corresponds the clear-confused as individuating intensive unity. The clear-confused is not a characteristic of the Idea but of the thinker who thinks it or expresses it. For the thinker is the individual as such."[21]

19 *DR*, p. 3/xxi-xxii, tm

20 For accounts of the role of 'expression' in Deleuze's thought which differ from the one presented here see Len Lawlor (1998) 'The End of Phenomenology: Expressionism in Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty' in *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 31. No. 1, 15-34; and Simon Duffy (2004) 'The Logic of Expression in Deleuze's *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*: A Strategy of Engagement' in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 47-60.

21 *DR*, p. 325/253, tm

Intensity as spatio-temporal dynamism implies an individual thinker precisely insofar as it is the expression of an Idea. Thus, Deleuze insists, the Idea finds expression in the realm of the sensible because intensity *thinks* and is inseparable from thought; albeit a thought that is no longer a function of representational consciousness:-

> "Every spatio-temporal dynamism marks the emergence of an elementary consciousness which traces directions, doubles movements and migrations, and is born at the threshold of those singularities condensed relative to the body or the object of which it is the consciousness. It is not enough to say that consciousness is consciousness of something; it is the double of this something and each thing is consciousness because it possesses a double, albeit very distant and very foreign to it."[22]

Yet what precisely is the relation between the elementary consciousness that emerges in every spatio-temporal dynamism and the body or object which it 'doubles'? What is the nature of this enigmatic 'doubling'? The answer lies in the correlation between intensity as 'expressing' and the Idea as 'expressed'. The movement of actualisation corresponds to a fork in being between the intensive individual's clear-confused thought as 'expressing' and the distinct-obscure difference in the Idea as 'expressed'[23]. In actualisation, univocal being splits between the expressing thought of the intensive thinker – the 'larval subject' of the spatio-temporal dynamism – and the expressed Idea. This is why the difference between thought and thing, thinking and being, is not a transcendent condition of access to things, as it is for the philosophy of representation, but is rather internal to things themselves. In actualisation, each thing is at once the expression of an Idea and the thought through which that Idea is expressed: "Every body, every thing thinks and is a thought insofar as, reduced to its intensive reasons, it expresses an Idea whose actualisation it determines."[24] Things themselves determine their own actualisation insofar as they are the loci of spatio-temporal dynamisms inhabited by larval subjects whose thought is the clear-confused expression of a distinct-obscure difference in the Idea. The larval subject of spatio-temporal dynamism is the thinker of individuating difference insofar as it clearly expresses a distinction in the Idea. Thus,

22 Ibid., p. 316/220, tm

23 Ibid., p. 326/253

24 Ibid., p. 327/254, tm

individuating difference is the thought that 'makes the difference'[25]. It is the 'differenciator of difference', the 'dark precursor', through which difference in the Idea communicates with difference in intensity[26]. The intensive individual or larval subject is the thinker whose clear expression of distinct relations and points in the Idea generates the individuating difference through which the virtual is actualised.

Ultimately then, individuation determines actualisation, which unfolds according to the fork in being between expressing thought and expressed Idea. This fork is a function of the nature of intensity as enveloping and enveloped. Consequently, the distinction between individuating and individual difference depends upon Deleuze's account of intensity as essentially implicating. Moreover, not only is the larval subject of spatio-temporal dynamism the catalyst for individuation, and hence for actualisation, since it is his clear expression of a distinction in the idea that 'makes the difference'; it is the larval subject that provides the conduit for this fork in actualisation insofar as it is at once the patient of individuation, or the expression of the Idea, and the individuating agent, or the expressing thought.

If time qua duration pertains essentially to mind ('*esprit*'), it is precisely the mind of the larval subject, whose thinking of individuating difference determines the actualisation of the virtual as a contraction of memory. Thus, for Deleuze as for Bergson, matter is to be understood "as the dream of mind or as mind's most dilated past."[27] The larval subject of spatio-temporal synthesis dreams matter into being through the individuating difference of his thought insofar as it clearly expresses a distinction in the Idea.

But actualisation occurs through an individuating difference which is the determination of a differentiation in the Idea; not the specification of a difference in the concept. Thus actualisation is the determination of the difference between two differences: the extrinsic difference between instants contracted in the present and the intrinsic difference between the degrees of contraction of memory. The difference between the past and

25 Ibid., p. 43/28
26 Ibid., p. 154/117
27 Ibid., p. 114/84, tm

the present resides in the difference between these two contractions of difference – between the repetition in extensity of extrinsically related successive instants (*partes extra partes*) and the repetition in intensity of internally related co-existing levels of the past[28].

Moreover, actualisation as determination of the difference between the contraction of habit and the contraction of memory implies a third synthesis; and it is the latter that institutes a correspondence between expressing and expressed, thought and Idea. Between the determination of thought in the passive self of the larval subject and the indetermination (i.e. indifferenciation) of problematic being in the Idea lies the pure and empty form of time as the transcendental condition under which the indeterminate becomes determinable[29]. It is 'pure' because it is the exclusively logical time internal to thinking, rather than the chronological time in which thought unfolds. It is 'empty' because it is devoid of empirical content (the living present of habit), as well as of metaphysical substance (the contractions and dilations of ontological memory). And it is 'transcendental' because it ensures the a priori correspondence between thinking and being as expressing and expressed. Accordingly, it establishes the correlation between the determination of thought as individuating difference borne by the intensive thinker, and the determinability of being as differen*t*iated but undifferenciated pre-individual realm. Thus it is the third synthesis of time which accounts for the genesis of ontological meaning as that which is expressed in thought,[30] and which relates univocal being directly to its individuating difference as the expressed to its expression. In this regard, it is indissociable from the transcendent exercise of the faculties through which the Idea is generated[31]. The third synthesis is the properly ontological synthesis which determines actualisation as the different/ciation that generates the future through the division between past and present. Moreover, as actualisation of the future, it conditions the actualisations comprised in the past and the present because it generates the correspondence between thought and Idea which is already presupposed in them. Thus, the third synthesis not only generates the

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., p. 220/169
30 "Meaning is like the Idea which is developed through sub-representative determinations." (Ibid., p. 201/155, tm)
31 Ibid., p. 251/194

specifically ontological difference between two sorts of difference – the extrinsic difference that separates instants contracted in the present and the intrinsic difference that separates the contractions of memory – it also brings together what it separates since it establishes a correspondence between the larval thought contracted in the present and the Idea embodied in the degrees of contraction of ontological memory. The 'fracture' of pure and empty time conjoins thinking and being even as it separates the past and the present which are retained as degrees of contraction in the Idea: "For just as difference is the immediate gathering and articulation of what it distinguishes, so the fracture retains what it splits, and Ideas also retain their sundered moments."[32]

Accordingly, thinking for Deleuze is never the activity of a constituting consciousness. Likewise, transcendental synthesis is not anchored in the subject of representation. Rather, both thinking and the subject of thought are engendered through the empty form of time that fractures the 'I' which is supposed to lie at the origin of thinking and correlates it with the larval consciousness which crystallises through the contractive contemplation of pre-individual singularities (the un-differenciated 'groundlessness' of the Idea):-

> "It is the empty form of time that introduces and constitutes Difference in thought; the difference on the basis of which thought thinks, as the difference between the indeterminate and determination. It is the empty form of time that distributes along both its sides an I that is fractured by the abstract line [of time – RB], and a passive self that has emerged from the groundlessness which it contemplates. It is the empty form of time that engenders thinking in thought, for thinking only thinks with difference, orbiting around this point of ungrounding."[33]

Between the determination of the passive self and the indetermination of the I fractured by the Idea lies the difference generated by thinking; and it is through the latter that the pure form of time establishes the correlation between expressing intensity and expressed Idea[34]. Thus the key

32 Ibid., p. 220/170, tm
33 Ibid., p. 354/276, tm
34 Ibid., p. 332/259

distinction (though it remains unstated in Deleuze's text) is that between the specifically ontological different/ciation carried out by *thinking* and the clear-confused *thought* of the larval subject who expresses that difference. Yet thinking is an act; precisely "the most intense or most individual act"[35] insofar as it overthrows the identity of the I and the resemblance of the self[36].

Deleuze associates this act with the 'caesura' of pure and empty time. The caesura of time effects a selection wherein repetition in intensity and differentiation in the Idea are separated from the repetition of habit and the difference in the concept. It marks the point at which difference *in* itself is repeated *for* itself. The future as unconditioned or absolute novelty emerges through the fracture of time that allows individuation to rise up to the surface of consciousness in the gap between its specific form and its organised matter. But it is the caesura that generates this fracture in consciousness and hence the act of the thinker that produces the new. Thus it seems that the act through which consciousness is fractured by the form of time in such a way as to introduce novelty into being is a peculiar privilege of complex psychic systems. Only consciousness can be folded back into its own pre-individual dimension; only the psychic individual can become equal to its own intensive individuation. It is the thinker – the philosopher-artist – who is the 'universal individual'.

Ultimately, the caesura of thinking, the fracture of time, the affirmation of recurrence, and the experience of death through which the psychic individual becomes re-implicated in individuation, all point toward a fundamental ontological conversion wherein consciousness frees itself from the strictures of representation to become the catalyst for the eternal repetition of difference-in-itself. For it is through the caesura of thinking that the implication of intensity is finally prised free from its explication in extensity and intensive difference finally becomes liberated from extensive repetition.

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35 Ibid., p. 285/221
36 Ibid., p. 283/219

Deleuze distinguishes between physical, biological, and psychic systems by virtue of the order of Ideas incarnated in them, their rates of individuation, and their figures of actualisation. But they are also distinguished by the fact that they express increasing degrees of complexity. Deleuze defines the latter in terms of what he calls the 'values of implication' or 'centres of envelopment' present within a system as it undergoes individuation and actualisation[37]. These centres of envelopment "are not the intensive individuating factors themselves, but their representatives within a complex system in the process of its explication."[38] They have three characteristics. First, they are signs, flashing between two series of difference in intensity; the latter constituting the 'signal system' which generates the sign[39]. Second, they express the meaning of the Idea incarnated in the system. And third, insofar as they envelop intensity without explicating it, these centres testify to local increases in negentropy, defying the empirical law of entropic explication. Thus what distinguishes complex systems is their incorporation of individuating differences: though the latter are never directly expressed in the extensity whose actualisation they determine and in which they are partially explicated, they are enveloped within it insofar as they subsist in a state of implication in signal-sign systems. The latter constitute the centres of envelopment for intensive difference within an extensive system; or as Deleuze puts it, the phenomenon closest to the intensive noumenon[40].

Accordingly, the complexity of a system in extensity can be measured by the extent to which its individuating factors become discretely segregated from the pre-individual continuum and incorporated within it as signal-sign systems. Where the intensive factors that individuate physical extensity remain extrinsic to the latter, so that the physical qualification and partitioning of a system occurs 'all at once' and only at its edges, those that individuate biological systems are enveloped within the organism (as genetic factors for instance) so that the specification and organisation of the latter occurs in successive stages, through influxes of singularities involving dynamic interaction between

37 Ibid., p. 329/255
38 Ibid., p. 329/256, tm
39 Ibid., p. 286-7/222
40 Ibid., p. 329/256

the organism's internal milieu and its external environment.[41] Thus, Deleuze concludes, "the living pays witness to another order; one that is heterogeneous and of another dimension – as though its individuating factors or atoms considered individually according to their power of mutual communication and fluent instability, benefited from a superior degree of expression in it."[42] For Deleuze, the intensive factors enveloped in living organisms enjoy a 'superior degree of expression' because their biological incorporation implicates them in extensity without exhaustively explicating them. Centres of envelopment harbour an un-explicated residue of implicated intensity. Consequently, Deleuze considers the complexity exhibited by the living to be fundamentally 'heterogeneous' to the inorganic precisely insofar as the former 'expresses' intensity to a higher degree than does the latter. Here as throughout *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze's use of the term 'expression' is quite specific. 'Expression' is explicitly defined as "that relation which essentially comprises a torsion between an expressor and an expressed, such that the expressed does not exist apart from the expressor, even though the latter

41 "Unlike the physico-chemical sphere, where the 'code' that underlies forms or qualities is distributed throughout the three-dimensionality of a structure, in the organic sphere this code becomes detached as a separate one-dimensional structure: the linear sequence of nucleic acids constituting the genetic code." Manuel De Landa, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 163-4. While this is in many ways a very useful gloss, the claim that individuating factors constitute a 'code' is problematic on two counts. First, it seems to ignore Deleuze's distinction between individuating and individual differences, which is the distinction between enveloping intensity as clear expression of a distinct difference in the Idea and enveloped intensity as confused expression of the Idea's obscure perplication: "Two individuating intensities may be abstractly the same by virtue of what they clearly express; they are never the same on account of the order of intensities which they envelop or the relations which they obscurely express." (DR, p. 326/253, tm) This irreducible variability in the correlation between individuating differences and pre-individual singularities would seem to indicate an order of complexity which is difficult to codify in an information-theoretic register. Second, it is not clear how individuating factors could become detached as a 'separate one-dimensional structure' without themselves becoming individuated. Intensive individuation was supposed to provide part of the 'sufficient reason' for actualisation (Ibid., p. 285/221), not its cause in extensity, and if the individuating factors invoked in order to account for actualisation are themselves already individuated then the virtual-actual distinction collapses and an infinite regress looms.
42 Ibid., p. 329/255, tm

relates to the former as to something entirely other than it."[43] (Deleuze 1968: 334, 1994: 260 tm) As we have seen, the expressive torsion between expressor and expressed is articulated in the correlation between individuating intensity and pre-individual Idea generated through the fracture of time. More precisely, the ontologically 'expressive' relation between univocal being and its individuating differences is a function of the correlation between intensity in sensation and meaning in ideation which is effectuated through the caesura of thinking. Thus the 'expression' of intensive difference provides the obverse to its 'explication': where the latter corresponds to its degree of dilation in physical space, the former corresponds to its degree of contraction in psychic time. Accordingly, only in the psychic dimension does the expressive relation between sensible repetition and ideal difference attain its consummate realisation. It is in the psyche, and in psychic individuation more particularly, that intensive difference achieves its fullest expression. The psychic realm not only represents an exponential increase in complexity vis-à-vis the domain of the living, but rather the definitive potentiation of intensive difference precisely insofar as it is in psychic individuation – as exemplified by the third synthesis and the caesura of thinking – that the expressing becomes commensurate with the expressed.

However, though the expression of intensive difference concomitant with ontological repetition emerges from bio-physical repetition as a result of the transcendent exercise of cognitive faculties possessing a well specified empirical function, there is a sense in which this maximal psychic repetition of difference is already latent in the habitual repetitions carried out by the larval subjects of passive synthesis. Thus, although ontological repetition arises out of bio-physical repetition, it ultimately eliminates its bio-physical basis by bringing about a definitive separation between bio-physical explication and the psychic expression of difference. Once again, it is Deleuze's empiricist appeal to the primacy of 'experience' that provides the rationale for this separation between entropic explication and negentropic expression in the third synthesis. Instead of presupposing consciousness as a unitary locus of experience, Deleuze atomises it into a multiplicity of larval subjects. But in so doing, not only does he render an elementary form of consciousness ontologically ubiquitous, thereby endorsing a variety of panpsychism; he

43 Ibid., p. 334/260. tm

also injects intensive duration into physical extensity by making the psychic contraction of difference into the precondition for spatial repetition. Though intensity is implicated in space, its nature is essentially temporal as the multiplicity which cannot divide without changing in nature.[44] Thus Deleuze finesses the Bergsonian dualism of temporal heterogeneity and spatial homogeneity by implicating the former at the heart of the latter in the shape of elementary psychic syntheses which precede constituted individual organisms as well as the individuated subject of consciousness. The claim that intensive difference originates in an elementary form of psychic contraction is the crucial empiricist premise (derived from Deleuze's reading of Hume) which will allow Deleuze to attribute a transcendental function to time understood as intensive difference and to construe the latter as the precondition for space construed as extensive repetition:-

> "In each instance, material repetition is the result of a more profound repetition which unfolds in depth and produces it as a result, like an external envelope or a detachable shell, but one which loses all its sense and all its capacity to reproduce itself once it is no longer animated by its *cause* or by the other repetition. Thus it is the clothed that lies beneath the naked, and that produces or excretes it as the effect of its secretion."[45]

The repetition which unfolds in depth is the intensive repetition between the virtually coexisting degrees of difference in ontological memory. Thus the clothed or intensive repetition of duration inhabits bare or physical repetition as its enabling condition. Accordingly, it is the empiricist premise that time implies the psychic registration of difference, and hence that temporal difference is a function of psychic contraction, that provides the precondition for the transcendental claim according to which the intensive noumenon furnishes the sufficient reason for the extensive phenomenon. Consequently, it seems at least initially that the vitalism which Deleuze will quietly but unequivocally endorse toward the close of *Difference and Repetition* – 'the living bears witness to another order, to a

44 "The indivisibility of the individual pertains exclusively to the property whereby intensive quantities cannot divide without changing in nature." (Ibid., p. 327/254, tm) The latter is precisely Bergson's definition of duration as qualitative multiplicity, which he contrasts to the quantitative multiplicities proper to space.

45 Ibid., p. 370/289, tm

heterogeneous order, and to another dimension' – follows from a panpsychism which is rooted in a form of radical empiricism.

Yet there is a fundamental ambiguity concerning the relation between the organic and the psychic in *Difference and Repetition*. On one hand, Deleuze seems to attribute a fundamental status to the larval thinker as 'universal' intensive individual and to thought itself as ultimate individuating factor: "every body, every thing thinks and is a thought insofar as, reduced to its intensive reasons, it expresses an Idea whose actualisation it determines."[46] To reduce something to its 'intensive reasons' is to reduce it to its constituting spatio-temporal dynamisms, of which the larval subject is at once the patient and the agent whose individuating thought catalyses the actualisation of Ideas[47]. Assuming that not every body or every thing is organic, this would then imply the absolute ubiquity of larval subjectivity and hence the existence of passive syntheses proper to the inorganic realm. Yet this does not seem to be the case, for all the textual evidence indicates that the passive syntheses executed by larval subjectivity are peculiar to the organic domain. Consider the following three passages:-

> "[I]in the order of constituting passivity, perceptual syntheses refer back to organic syntheses as to the sensibility of the senses, to a primary sensibility which we are. We are made of contracted water, earth, and light, not only prior to recognising or representing them, but prior to perceiving them. Every organism is, in its receptive and perceptual elements, but also in its viscera, a sum of contractions, retentions, expectations."[48]

> "What organism is not made up of elements and cases of repetition, of contemplated and contracted water, nitrogen, carbon, chlorides and sulphates, thereby intertwining all the habits of which it is composed? Organisms awake to the sublime words of the third *Ennead*: all is contemplation!"[49]

> "A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to contract a habit. This is no mystical or barbarous hypothesis. On the contrary, habit here manifests its full generality: it concerns not only the sensory-motor habits that we have (psychologically), but also, before these, the primary habits that we are; the thousands of passive synthesis of which we are organically composed [...]

> Underneath the self which acts are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action and the active subject. We speak of our 'self' only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third-party who says 'me'. These contemplative souls must be assigned even to the rat in the labyrinth and to each muscle of the rat."[50]

46 Ibid., p. 327/254, tm
47 Ibid., p. 156/118-9
48 Ibid., p. 99/73, tm
49 Ibid., p. 102/75

These and similar passages, which constantly reiterate the intimate connection between larval subjectivity and the organic domain, strongly suggest that Deleuze's claims concerning the necessary role of passive synthesis in the constitution of the present, and of larval subjectivity in individuation, point not towards their ubiquity across the organic and inorganic realms, but rather toward the much stronger vitalist thesis that it is insofar as everything is ultimately organic and/or 'living' in some suitably enlarged sense that everything 'thinks' in some equally expanded sense. Despite initial appearances, Deleuze does not anchor his endorsement of vitalism in panpsychism; his assertion of panpsychism is rooted in his commitment to vitalism. Deleuze's claim is not, contrary to what one might expect, that some minimal form of consciousness is implicated even in the inorganic realm, and that this provides the precondition for the emergence of organic sentience; the latter being understood as a complexification of this more primitive inorganic 'prehension' (of the sort envisaged by panpsychists like Whitehead, and more recently, David Chalmers).[51] Rather, Deleuze seems to assert 1) that a primitive form of organic time-sentience, understood as the psychic expression of temporal difference – as effectuated in the correlation between thought and Idea – provides the precondition for the actual *experience* of individuated extensity; where 'actual experience' is

50 Ibid., p. 101-3/74-5, tm
51 Cf. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, (London and New York: The Free Press, 1978); David Chalmers 'Is Experience Ubiquitous?' in Chapter 8 of Chalmers' *The Conscious Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

understood as simultaneously comprising an unconscious or sub-representational level and a conscious or representational level, and 'individuated extensity' is construed in terms of the physico-biological explication of intensity; and 2) that the psychic expression of temporal difference concomitant with this time-sentience only attains it ultimate ontological dignity in a specifically psychic dimension of individuation. Within this continuum of experience that runs from the sub-representational to the representational level, organic contraction provides the originary juncture between the virtual dimension of the pre-individual and the actual realm of constituted individuals. Thus the contraction of habit yields the originary organic synthesis from which the two divergent continua of empiria, i.e. ideality and sensibility, derive. More precisely, given the two diagonal axes around which *Difference and Repetition* is structured, ideal-sensible and virtual-actual, organic contraction marks the point of inception of difference in experience from which these two diagonals originally diverge before ultimately converging again in the ontological repetition which generates the transcendental difference that splits experience by separating psychic expression from physical explication.

Nevertheless, Deleuze's insistence on casting psychic expression as the sufficient reason for physical explication puts him in a position where he is constantly equivocating between the claim that he is providing an account of the genesis of actual experience and the claim that he is giving an account of the genesis of actuality *tout court*. The two are not coextensive. In response to Deleuze's claims that the synthesis of the present (organic contraction) constitutes extensity in actual experience, and that the psychic expression of difference determines the physical as well as the biological actualisation of Ideas, it is necessary to point out that, for all its much vaunted audacity, Deleuze's excavation of the sub-representational and unconscious dimensions of experience still leaves vast tracts of actual reality completely unaccounted for. For even if organisms are composed of contracted water, nitrogen, carbon, chloride and sulphates, these elements are not themselves composed of organic contractions – thus the neutrinos, photons, gluons, bosons, and muons which compose physical space-time cannot plausibly be construed as contractions of organic habit. Nor can galaxies, gravitational fields, or dark matter. Whatever their ultimate ontological status – whether they are patronised as useful idealisations or admitted as indispensable

constituents of actuality – these are precisely the sorts of physical entity that cannot but be ignored by the empiricist bias of Deleuze's account of the constitution of space and time. It might be objected that these and other supposedly 'theoretical' entities do enjoy a real generative status for Deleuze as the ideal components of virtual multiplicities.[52] But the only reason for confining them to the domain of ideality – unlike the heart, muscles, nerves, and cells to which Deleuze ascribes a privileged role as the loci of passive syntheses – is the empiricist prejudice that insists on contrasting the putative 'concretion' of experience to the 'abstraction' of cognitive representation. Deleuze radicalises empiricism, widening the ambit of actual experience to include sub-representational and unconscious depths; nevertheless, it is precisely the assumption that experience invariably comprises 'more' than whatever can be cognitively represented and the ensuing contrast between conceptual abstraction and perceptual concretion that encourages him to include muscles and water within the ambit of actual experience, but not galaxies and electrons. It is because the actual extensity whose genesis Deleuze attributes to the operations of passive synthesis has been circumscribed as a domain of experience, and hence necessarily tethered to the organic, that the muscles of rats are deemed more appropriate sites for the larval subjects of spatio-temporal dynamisms than are electrons. And it is Deleuze's empiricist bias toward the genesis of actuality as constituted in experience that explains his restriction of the ambit of passive synthesis to differences that can be organically registered. In this regard, it is important to note how the autonomy Deleuze attributes to the realm of ideality as virtual reservoir of pre-individual singularities is nevertheless anchored in the empiricist claim that temporal difference presupposes psychic contraction and that contraction requires an organic substrate. For it is the organic contraction effected by the larval subject that is responsible for the expression of the Idea: "Larvae bear Ideas in their flesh, while we are still at the stage of the representations of the concept."[53] The speculative audacity with which Deleuze upholds the rights of virtual ideality should not blind us to the curiously conservative nature of this empiricist premise.

52 De Landa (2002) proposes a reading of Deleuze wherein virtuality becomes the preserve of theoretical entities such as phase spaces and dynamic attractors. But, as Alberto Toscano has pointed out, he does so at the cost of eliding Deleuze's fundamental distinction between virtuality and possibility. Cf. Alberto Toscano, *The Theatre of Production*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), p. 184-7.

53 *DR*, p. 203/219, tm

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Ultimately, the vitalism which is endorsed at the close of *Difference and Repetition* is indissociable from the empiricism which is embraced at its opening, and the epistemological shortcomings of the latter are aggravated rather than ameliorated by the considerable conceptual ingenuity displayed in pursuing the ontological ramifications of the former. Vitalism may or may not be compatible with physics; but it behooves the vitalist to make at least some sort of attempt to reconcile them. Yet although discussions of biology abound in *Difference and Repetition* – notably developmental biology – physics is conspicuously under-represented, and where it *is* invoked, albeit metonymically in the form of thermodynamics, this is only in order to be lambasted for consecrating entropy. In this regard, it is important to note that Deleuze's characterisation of entropy as a transcendental illusion presupposes his account of the implication of intensive difference through the synthesis of memory – it is the latter which implicates time as uncancellable difference in actual extensity. But this is based on an account of time as duration which remains vitiated by the empiricist premise that insists on locating the constituting syntheses of time and space at the juncture between the organic and psychic realms.

In the absence of any physicalist corrective to vitalist hubris, biocentrism leads infallibly to noocentrism. Physical qualification and partitioning is determined by the correlation between intensity and Idea, larval thought and ontological memory. Thus Deleuze's account of spatio-temporal synthesis begins by ascribing a privileged role to organic contraction in the 1st synthesis of the present, proceeds to transcendentalise memory as cosmic unconscious in the 2nd synthesis of the past, and ends by turning a form of psychic individuation which is as yet the exclusive prerogative of *homo sapiens* into the fundamental generator of ontological novelty in the 3rd synthesis of the future. Matter is relegated to 'a dream of the mind', whose representation in extensity presupposes its animation by a temporal difference that generates inanimate extensity as its blockage. The empiricist premise that the life of thought must already be implicated in insensate matter insofar as the latter is *experienced* underlies Deleuze's vitalist claim that physical space-time harbours an impetus toward complexification belying the

reign of entropy in actuality. The contrast with which Deleuze presents us, between actuality as an entropic junkyard yoked beneath the iron collar of representation, and an actuality transformed into an inexhaustible reservoir of ontological novelty as the result of what effectively amounts to an idealisation of matter, continues to assume that the experience of time is irreducible to the objectifying representation of space.

Deleuze dissolves the Bergsonian dichotomy of space and time, quantity and quality, at the cost of reabsorbing the former into the latter in what ultimately amounts to an idealist monism. Psychic individuation in the act of thinking defines the point at which experience is transected by pre-individual singularities in the Idea and impersonal individuations in sensibility. Psychic individuation marks the moment wherein time, i.e. being, is folded back into itself. Transcendental access to the meaning of being is internalised within experience through the transcendent exercise of the faculties, which generates Ideas as the correlates of larval thought (albeit a 'meaning' which is indissociable from non-sense).[54] As we have seen, it is the transcendent operation of the faculties, provoked by the encounter with individuating intensity as the unthinkable proper to thought, which gives birth to the act of thinking through which the Idea is generated:-

> "It is nevertheless true that Ideas have a very special relationship to pure thought [...] The para-sense or violence which is transmitted from one faculty to another according to an order assigns a particular place to thought: thought is determined such that it grasps its own *cogitandum* only at the extremity of the fuse of violence which, from one Idea to another, first sets in motion sensibility and its *sentendium*, and so on. This extremity might just as well be regarded as the ultimate origin of Ideas. In what sense, however, should we understand 'ultimate origin'? In the same sense in which Ideas

54 "Meaning is the genesis or production of the true, and truth is merely the empirical result of meaning. [...] Nevertheless, the Idea which traverses all the faculties is not reducible to meaning. For it is just as much non-sense; and there is no difficulty reconciling this double-aspect through which the Idea is constituted by structural elements which have no meaning in themselves, while constituting the meaning of everything it produces (structure and genesis)." (Ibid., p. 200/154, tm)

> must be called 'differentials' of thought, or the 'Unconscious' of pure thought, at the very moment when thought's opposition to all forms of common-sense remains stronger than ever. Ideas, therefore, are related not to a Cogito which functions as ground or as a proposition of consciousness, but to the fractured I of a dissolved Cogito; in other words, to the universal *ungrounding* which characterises thought as a faculty in its transcendent exercise."[55]

Thus the Idea in which the meaning of being is expressed is the unconscious of pure thought understood as ontological memory. The double genesis of thought and being in the encounter with intensity which gives rise to the act of thinking produces the divergent lines of actualisation in the real according to the distinct meanings via which thinking expresses being. Thus Ideas have an attributive status as expressed in actualisation, yet ideal meaning is generated by the act of thinking. Deleuze uses Bergson to reconcile Kant's discovery of the transcendental status of time with Spinoza's monism. While Spinoza cannot deduce the number and nature of fundamental differences in substance, which he calls 'attributes', Kant deduces these differences, which he calls 'categories', by de-substantialising them and yoking them to representation. But the Bergsonian 'method of intuition' offers Deleuze a way of identifying the wellspring of ontological differentiation by characterising differences in nature in terms of divergent series of actualisation. Moreover, these divergences in actualisation are not merely empirically given since they are engendered in and through thinking as expressed meanings of being. Being is said in a single sense of everything that is, yet everything that is differs, and this modal difference in everything that is is a function of divergences in actualisation corresponding to the distinct senses (or meanings) in which being is expressed in thought: the Ideas. Thus, for Deleuze, the key to grasping ontological differentiation, or the real differences in being, lies in seizing the differences in actualisation; but this in turn hinges on grasping the way in which the larval subject of spatio-temporal dynamism is the bearer of individuating differences, clearly enveloping distinct differences in the Idea, as well as individual differences, which confusedly envelop the Ideas' obscure perplication. Yet the individuating expressions of being occur in and as thought: from the germinal thought of the larval subject to

55 Ibid., p. 251/195, tm

the fully potentiated thinking of the fractured I. For Deleuze then, being is nothing apart from its expression in thought; indeed, it simply *is* this expression, which is distilled in the crystallisation of meaning.

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This crystallisation is the focus of *Logic of Sense*. Deleuze distinguishes between three dimensions of the proposition: designation, whereby it refers to some individuated states of affairs; manifestation, indexing the beliefs and desires of the speaking subject; and signification, comprising the system of inferential relations between concepts. Attempts to ground the meaning of the proposition in any one of these dimensions quickly unravel when it becomes apparent to what extent they each presuppose one another: thus designation cannot be carried out independently of the beliefs of the speaking subject; manifestation relies upon the validity of inferential signification between conceptual beliefs; and conceptual inference cannot be dissociated from the designation of some initial premise. Meaning cannot be deduced from any of these aspects of the proposition: rather than being construed as a function of empirical designation, subjective manifestation, or conceptual signification, meaning must be assumed as the ideal element which ensures the real genesis and functioning of each of these three other dimensions. Meaning is the ideal genetic element animating the internal structure of the proposition and securing the correspondence between names and qualities, adjectives and properties, verbs and attributes[56]. Thus it is meaning that establishes the originary correlation between what is expressed by the proposition and the corresponding attribute of the designated state of affairs as the obverse and reverse faces of a single-sided topological surface or Möbius strip continuously twisting around itself. To say that being is univocal is to say that being is the coincidence of what is expressed by propositions and what happens to bodies: "Univocity means that it is the same thing that happens and that is said: the attributable of every body or state of affairs is the expressible of every proposition. Univocity signifies the identity of the noematic attribute and the linguistic expressed, event and meaning."[57]

56 *LS*, p. 30
57 *LS*, p. 211

Yet, how can Deleuze insist both that meaning is constitutively unconscious[58] and that it is a noematic expression? Husserl defined noema as the correlates of intentional consciousness' sense-bestowing noetic acts.[59] But what is noematic sense the correlate *of* if, as Deleuze insists, consciousness is not 'of' something but rather *is* that something? It is not the correlate of a constituting consciousness because, as saw above, 'everything thinks and is a thought', and hence has no need of intentional consciousness to be expressive of thought. But the fact that thought is unconscious does not render the claim that everything is thought less gratuitous. For Deleuze, meaning is something because everything is at once expressive thought and expressed thing so that meaning is the identity-in-difference of thought and thing, thinking and being. This is the veritable meaning of univocity. Thus, when Deleuze describes the production of the surface of incorporeal meaning, he does so precisely in terms of the distribution of ordinary and singular points which he had used to characterise the differentiation of the Idea. The topology of meaning coincides with the internal structure of the Idea. The question then is: Is Deleuze *mathematising meaning* and hence breaking with the doxas of transcendental anthropology; or is he *semanticising mathesis* in a way that ultimately reasserts the transcendental sovereignty of the meaningful over the intelligible and that re-subordinates the Idea to anthropological predicates?

In order to address this question, we must consider Deleuze's 1967 text 'How Does One Recognise Structuralism?'[60] In this text, which can be seen as providing a succinct *précis* of *Logic of Sense* much as 'The Method of Dramatisation' schematises *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze fastens onto the Lacanian triad of real, imaginary, and symbolic, holding up the latter as privileged retainer of the objectivity and autonomy of meaning beyond the proposition's real and imaginary aspects – which is to say, beyond its designation of empirical reality and its signification of imaginary representations. It is because the symbolic is the domain of structure and structure is defined in terms of the primacy of

58 Cf. *LS*, pp. 124-5

59 Cf. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book*. Tr. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1982), esp. p. 214.

60 In *L'île déserte et autres textes*, ed. D. Lapoujade (Paris: Minuit, 2002), pp. 238-269.

differential relations over identical elements that meaning must be understood as an effect of difference. But meaning remains indissociable from meaninglessness, since the differential elements which produce meaning are themselves a-signifying. Consequently, if "[m]eaning is never a principle or origin; it is produced', this is because 'meaning is always the result of a combination of elements which do not themselves signify."[61] The proper remit of transcendental philosophy, Deleuze suggests, is to account for the genesis of meaning by unlocking the workings of a symbolic register governed by a-signifying and non-propositional yet perfectly intelligible processes. Thus the elements of the symbolic and their combination index a dimension of intelligible difference which encompasses and generates meaning: that of differentiation as the reciprocal determination of indeterminate elements: $ydy + xdx = 0$ or $^{dy}/_{dx} = {}^{x}/_{y}$.[62] Ultimately, it is the mathematical conception of the differential and hence the mathematisation of difference that provides the key to grasping the structure of the symbolic: mathesis unlocks the symbolic matrix for the genesis of meaning.[63] And it is the *serial* organisation of reciprocally determining differential elements that constitutes structure. The catalyst of serialisation and the instance that causes divergent series of differences to resonate is a supernumerary signifier or 'paradoxical' element which is at once structure's permanently empty place and its perpetually placeless element. For Deleuze, it is this paradoxical coincidence of structural lack and excess that constitutes non-sense as the 'object=X' that differentiates difference. Thus, not only does non-sense produce sense, it provides the originary dimension of intelligibility within which sense unfolds. This 'object' is the veritable 'subject' of structure in the sense of being the dynamic 'quasi-cause' that transforms one structure into another.

The thesis of the intelligibility of non-sense allows Deleuze to reconcile his acknowledgement of the transcendental status of meaning with his endorsement of Spinozism's most radical thesis, 'the thesis of absolute rationalism', which is founded upon "the adequation between our understanding and absolute knowledge", an adequation that "requires the total intelligibility of God, which is the key to the total intelligibility

61 Ibid., p. 244

62 Cf. Ibid., p. 246

63 Ibid.

of things."[64] This is of course precisely the thesis that the Kantian critique of metaphysics is supposed to have rendered insupportable. The tension between the 'absolute' rationalist thesis according to which being expresses itself as meaning and the transcendental-critical thesis according to which meaning is always an effect is neutralised by converting the intellectual intuition of essence into the production of meaning as event. Hence Deleuze's claim that structuralism necessarily entails a practice since "it is not only inseparable from the works it creates but also from a practice relative to the works it creates. Whether this practice be therapeutic or political, it designates a point of permanent revolution or transference."[65]

By the same token, the dichotomy that pitted mathematised meaning against semanticised mathesis is defused by the claim that being expresses itself as meaning, but meaning is always an effect generated by meaningless yet mathematically intelligible processes. However, this resolution comes at a price. Although he establishes a basis for meaning in an autonomous domain of symbolic intelligibility that transcends the domain of language, Deleuze does not seem to register the need for an account of how the symbolic itself is originally instituted or indeed how thought is able to access it. This would of course be part of the remit of an epistemological agenda which, like Heidegger before him, Deleuze has effectively foresworn. But it is not enough to show how sense is conditioned by non-sense if relativising the autonomy of meaning depends upon absolutising the autonomy of mathematical intelligibility. Deleuze has merely shifted the burden of explanation from that of the origin of meaning to that of the origin of mathesis. The latter cannot be defined independently of thought and the nature of thought cannot be explained without some attentiveness to the evolution of minded creatures. If post-Darwinian modernity entails that neither thought nor mindedness can be taken to be originary, one cannot forego the obligation to explain the emergence of the latter on pain of regressing to some pre-modern paradigm. Curiously, Deleuze's transcendental predilections seem to have blinded him to the binding nature of this intellectual obligation and inadvertently precipitated him back toward the pre-modern myth of an originally intelligible and hence enchanted world. Thus, when Deleuze writes "It is certain that all designation presupposes sense, and that one

64 Ibid., p. 216
65 Ibid., p. 269

must install oneself in sense from the outset in order to carry out every designation"[66], he seems to ignore the possibility that the relation of reference might be founded from the bottom up and the outside in, which is to say, within the element of reality, rather than from the top down and the inside out, which is to say, within the element of ideality. By beginning from the fully-formed proposition and ontologising meaning as *sine qua non* for the proposition's designative dimension, Deleuze continues to operate within the confines of a 'top-down, inside-out' approach to meaning whose veritable alternative is not materialism – a doctrine every bit as liable to transcendentalise the intelligible as idealism – but the methodological naturalism whose refusal to subordinate science to ontology goes hand in hand with its insistence on separating ontology from semantics. Only by upholding this modern separation can one hope to provide a non-mystificatory account of the connection between meaning, mind, and intelligibility.

66 *LS*, p. 28

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Expression and Immanence

MIGUEL DE BEISTEGUI

Initially (and systematically) broached in *Spinoza and the Problem of Expression*, where it characterises the nature of the relation between substance, attributes, and modes, the problem of expression reappears in *Logic of Sense*. Now the focus is on expression as what designates the operation of sense. In both instances, expression enables an immanent conception of its subject matter. Sense is no exception to what we could characterise as the metaphysical, or onto-theological, drive to transcendence. Indeed, too often, sense is represented as a Principle, Reservoir, Reserve or Origin. As a "celestial" or "divine principle," it is understood to be fundamentally forgotten and veiled; as a "subterranean" (or human) principle, it is understood to be erased, hijacked or alienated. It becomes a question, therefore, of re-establishing or recovering sense beneath the erasure and under the veil, either in a God that one would have never sufficiently understood, or in a humanity that one would have never adequately explored. It is in vain that we replace Man with God, however, if we remain ultimately trapped in anthropomorphism. Equally, it is in vain that we replace the true and the false with sense and value, as Nietzsche suggests, if we persist in thinking the latter by means of the former, as if it were a question of discovering or uncovering something essentially hidden. Such is the reason why, for Nietzsche, the problem is primarily that of the overhuman, and not that of humanity. To think sense without transcendence presupposes that we cease to think of it as buried or veiled, and think it instead as the object of an encounter, that is, as something essentially *produced*. But who or what produces sense? How does it occur? We will see that the force by which sense is produced is always anonymous and impersonal, and that it is not legitimate or possible to infer sense from any transcendent entity without installing oneself in paradox. In what follows, I show the extent to which Deleuze's account of sense relates to, and differs from, that of logical empiricism

and Husserl's transcendental logic – in other words, I show how his ambition to construct a transcendental empiricism unfolds with respect to the question of sense and logic.

1. The Logical Positivism of the Vienna Circle

The impact and significance of the so-called linguistic turn which logical empiricism carried out at the beginning of the last century is well known: it consists in the systematic analysis of the propositions of knowledge as defined by the sciences of empirical reality, and in the dissolution of the false or pseudo-problems of metaphysics. In addition, logical empiricism is characterised by its method, the new logic, inherited from Frege and Russell. The task of philosophy is no longer to create theories, but only to clarify the sense and validity of propositions by logical means.[1] In other words, once we've purged what is traditionally called "philosophy" of both pure nonsense and the questions that now belong exclusively to the empirical sciences, we are left with a unique activity (and not a theory) that bears on the *language* of science, and concerns logic. In Russell's own words: "the study of logic becomes the central study of philosophy".[2] In the same text, Russell recommends that the new method of logic be applied to questions that lie outside the mathematical domain and, through the use of specific examples, demonstrates how logical analysis can call into question the meaning and significance of a number of philosophical propositions and problems. For Russell, as for the members of the Vienna Circle inspired by his work, logical analysis was to become the exclusive method of philosophy and, at last, clear the way for a truly scientific philosophy. Yet, insofar it was never meant to be a

1 This is more or less Schlick's position, directly inspired by Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung", in *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*, 1922, n° 14, pp. 185-262; translated into English by C. K. Ogden, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Londres, Kegan Paul Trench Trubner, 1922. Neurath goes further still by refusing to grant philosophy any constructive role, not even that of clarifying the concepts and propositions of science. Such a task, according to him, befalls a science that is entirely devoid of worldviews.

2 Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1914), p. 243. Quoted in Carnap, "Intellectual Autobiography" (1963), in Paul Arthur Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1963), p. 13.

system of propositions, it could not claim to be a science, strictly speaking. Still, given its extraordinary importance, it was destined to be worshiped as "the queen of all sciences"[3] and thus carry out the original dream of philosophy.

A particular feature of modern logic is that it is entirely independent of experience: it is not concerned with the facts or states of affairs designated in the propositions it analyses, but only with the formal character of those propositions. The critical analysis of language, therefore, aims to distinguish between the propositions of science, endowed with sense, and the propositions of metaphysics, devoid of sense, yet without any reference to empirical reality. Such a distinction can be established only on the basis of a criterion of sense, which the neo-positivists of the Vienna Circle believed to have found in Wittgenstein. In their view, it is possible to interpret the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in the following terms: all metaphysical propositions are non- or pseudo-propositions, that is, propositions devoid of sense. "Genuine" or "meaningful" propositions, on the other hand, are derived from the truth of elementary or atomic propositions ("protocolary propositions"), which describe "atomic facts," or facts that can be verified by observation. Hence the close, but not exclusive, relationship between sense, truth and verification.[4] Carnap, for instance, sees the verification principle as an essential criterion of demarcation between scientific propositions and nonsensical propositions. This is a view that virtually all members of the Vienna Circle shared, and one that is most clearly formulated in a famous article by Blumber and Feigl from 1931, which introduced logical positivism to the English speaking world.[5] In the article, the authors claim

3 M. Schlick, "Die Wende der Philosophie" (1930), *Erkenntnis*, 1, p. 8.

4 This is a feature that Frege rejected. Firstly, according to him, the notion of truth precedes that of the correspondence between propositions and facts. Secondly, it is impossible to measure propositions against facts, since facts are only ever presented in propositions. See G. Frege, "Logik [1897]," in *Nachgelassene Schriften*, edited by H. Hermes, F. Kambartel and F. Kaulbach (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1970); translated by P. Lang and R. White, "Logic," in *Posthumous Writings* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979).

5 Albert E. Blumber and Herbert Feigl, "Logical Positivism. A New Movement in European Philosophy", *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. XXVIII, n° 11, 21 May 1931, pp. 281-296. Karl Popper's "critical rationalism," it should be said, constitutes a significant exception to this consensus. Whilst sharing some of the goals and assumptions of logical positivism, Popper refuses to see sense as the

that there is a unique and privileged way to arrive at a general axiomatisation of knowledge indicated by the verification procedure. In order to arrive at the atomic propositions, which constitute the core of the complex propositions of science, the most fertile approach is not to ask, as Descartes did, about what cannot be doubted, but to seek the conditions under which a proposition can be said to be "true." If the conditions cannot be given, then the proposition is meaningless. Now according to Wittgenstein's own definition in paragraph 4.024 of the *Tractatus*, the sense or meaning (*Sinn*) of a proposition is the "what is the case" or the "what is not the case" of the fact it expresses. Thus, to know the meaning of a proposition or statement is to know "what must be the case" in order for the proposition to be true. A proposition is "true" when the fact it affirms "is the case;" a proposition is false when this fact "is not the case." The truth and falsity of a proposition can be established by comparing it with reality. Paragraph 4.06 of the *Tractatus* affirms that "propositions can be true or false only by being a picture of reality."[6] By returning from the complex to the simple, one ultimately reaches those immediate facts, of which the "being the case" constitutes the meaning of the proposition. Given a complex proposition, logical empiricism will always ask how it can be verified.

Hitherto, and with a few notable exceptions which, following Deleuze, I will emphasise, the question of sense (*Sinn*) emerged in the context of a logic that envisaged it as the condition of what is usually called "denotation" or "reference" (*Bedeutung*), and which designates the relation between a proposition and a state of affairs. Thus, according to Frege, the *Sinn* of a sentence or a word is a distinct and public entity, which belongs to, or is associated with, the proposition, whereas the *Bedeutung* is the reality denoted by the sentence or the word.[7] By

criterion of scientificity. Instead, he opts for "falsifiability" (or "refutability"), which is not a criterion of signification separating meaningful (or scientific) from meaningless (or metaphysical) propositions, but a criterion of "demarcation" between scientific and metaphysical propositions thought to be *equally meaningful*.

6 L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), §4.06

7 G. Frege, "*Über Sinn und Bedeutung.*". *Kleine Schriften*. Edited by Ignacio Angelelli. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967. "On Sense and Meaning." *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy*. Translated by Max Black et al. Edited by Brian McGuinness. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

distinguishing so clearly between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, Frege breaks with the philosophical tradition that determined sense on the basis of certain mental terms, or at least on the basis of pre-linguistic elements. In the process, he recognises *Sinn* as independent from the thinking or speaking subject. He frees sense from denotation as well as from what Deleuze calls "manifestation."[8] In that respect, Deleuze remains indebted to Frege. Wittgenstein, whose *Tractatus* extends and modifies the distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, goes further still: the proposition alone has sense, whereas a name or a primitive sign has a *Bedeutung* and represents an object.[9] Denotation associates words with specific pictures, to which correspond specific states of affairs. From the logical point of view, the criterion and element of denotation is that of the true and the false. A proposition or statement is true when its denotation is actually fulfilled by a state of affairs, or when it is the picture of reality, as Wittgenstein, followed by the Vienna Circle, argued. "False," on the other hand, means that the denotation is not fulfilled, either because the pictures selected are inadequate, or because it is impossible to produce a picture that can be associated with the words in question. By *conditions* of truth, one needs to understand the totality of conditions under which a proposition "would be" true. The conditioned proposition might well be "false," in that it refers to a non-existent or non-verifiable state of affairs. Thus, by grounding truth, sense also makes error possible. Such is the reason why the condition of truth is not opposed to the false, but to that which is deprived of sense, and which can be neither true nor false. This is the very condition that Deleuze calls "signification," and which he equates with the third dimension of the proposition (after "denotation" and "manifestation"). It is now a matter of the relation between words and universal or general concepts, and between syntactical connections and conceptual implications. This, modern logic claims, is the level of sense strictly speaking – the very level at which, as *formal* logic, it is to operate. The elements of a proposition "signify" conceptual implications that can refer to other propositions and serve as premises for the original proposition. Signification is defined according to this order of conceptual implication in which "the proposition under consideration intervenes only as the element of a 'demonstration,' in the most general sense of the

8 G. Deleuze, *Logique du Sens* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), p. 23; *Logic of Sense*, translated by Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (London: Athlone, 1990) , p. 13. Hereafter *LS*, followed by French and English pagination.

9 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, § 3.3.

word, either as premise or as conclusion."[10] The linguistic signifiers are thus of the type "implies" and "therefore." Whereas signification is always to be found in its corresponding indirect process, that is to say, in its relation to other propositions, from which it is inferred, or whose conclusion it renders possible, denotation, on the contrary, refers to a direct process. The logical value of signification thus understood is no longer truth, but the *condition* of truth, that is, the set of conditions under which a proposition *would be* true.

By thinking sense in such a way, however, logic does not manage to reach the genuine condition of denotation or expression. By speaking of a condition of truth, classical logic does indeed move beyond the true and the false, since a false proposition too has a sense or a signification. The problem, however, is that this superior condition defines only the possibility for a proposition to be true. As Russell himself, whom Deleuze quotes, puts it: "We may say that whatever is asserted by a significant sentence has a certain kind of possibility."[11] Thus the possibility for a proposition to be true – its sense – is nothing else than the form of possibility of the proposition itself. Deleuze expresses his dismay before this "odd procedure", which "involves rising from the conditioned to the condition, in order to think of the condition as the simple possibility of the conditioned."[12] Why, Deleuze wonders, move from the conditioned to the condition, if, ultimately, we can think of the condition only as the image of the conditioned, that is, as its mere *form* or its condition of *possibility*? Why model the condition after the conditioned? If the move to the condition or to what some, notably Husserl, would call the foundation of truth statements, is to take place, should we not seek their real, rather than merely possible, condition? Formal logic does indeed reach the level of foundation, but what is founded remains what it was, unaffected by the very operation that grounds it. This is how "denotation remains external to the order that conditions it, and the true and the false remain indifferent to the principle which determines the possibility of the one, by allowing it only to subsist in its former relation to the other."[13] One is therefore perpetually referred

10 *LS*, p. 24/14.

11 Bertrand Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1940), p. 179. Cited by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*, p. 18, footnote 7.

12 *LS*, p. 30/18.

13 *LS*, p. 30/19.

from the conditioned to the condition, and also from the condition to the conditioned, in what amounts to a purely formal back and forth. For the condition of truth to avoid this defect, Deleuze goes on to say, "it ought to have an element of its own, distinct from the form of the conditioned."[14] In other words, it ought to be something *unconditioned* capable of assuring a real genesis (and not a merely possible conditioning) of the other dimensions of the proposition, namely, denotation, manifestation, and signification. The condition of truth would then be defined as genuine sense, and no longer as mere conceptual form of possibility. In that, the "logic of sense" would quite explicitly contravene the imperatives of logical positivism, which saw fit to remain at the level of the form of the proposition, or risk falling back into psychologism. In addition, the logic of sense would no longer aim to be a meta-language, a mathematics, or a *mathesis universalis* of natural and scientific language. Finally, and as Deleuze himself emphasises, it would renew Husserl's ambition to develop a transcendental logic, that is to say, a logic that would aim at extricating the real conditions of experience underlying all meaningful operations, and all statements of truth. Whilst himself raising the question regarding the truth conditions of a proposition, Deleuze rejects the formalist approach. On the one hand, the latter claims to solve the question of sense independently of experience. On the other hand, it is the empirical reality itself, or "what is the case," which in the end guarantees the validity of the atomic proposition. The way logical positivism conceives sense is too formal and its conception of reality is too empirical (insofar as it is determined by the empirical sciences). It is only by developing a logic not of form, but of content, and a conception of the real that is not positivist, but transcendental, that one can overcome the limits—and the limitations—of logical empiricism.

2. Husserl's Transcendental Logic

Husserl's great achievement with respect to the question of sense is to have facilitated the passage from formal to transcendental logic by redirecting the sense of the proposition to the horizon of immanence, or to the antepredicative ground, from which it stems.[15] This transition does not

14 *LS*, p. 30/19.

15 See E. Husserl, *Formale und transzendentale Logik* (1929). Edited by Paul Janssen (Husserliana XVII). (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974). *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. Translated by Dorion Cairns, (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974). References will be to the English translation. In what follows, I have found much inspiration from Suzanne Bachelard's *A Study of Husserl's* Formal and Transcendental Logic. Translated by Lester E. Embree. (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

amount to a mere dismissal of the linguistic procedures of formal logic. Rather, it consists in the demonstration of a layer of sense and experience that precedes such procedures. In short, it is a shift in the order of grounding. For Husserl, it was a matter of extracting the very condition of formal logic and, through such an extraction and its ambition to found the empirical sciences as such, to develop a theory or a pure idea of science. Such a theory, by means of which one would be able to distinguish the *a priori* possibilities to which science itself must conform if it is to be genuinely scientific, must indeed exist, if the ultimate justification for science does not reside solely in its successful organization or its mere factual existence. Yet the entire question is whether *formal* logic can claim to be this science of science. Husserl's answer is clearly negative, and stems from the observation that traditional logic cannot cope with the increasingly complex and differentiated organisation of the sciences, and that modern logic borrows its methods and its style of demonstration from mathematical science itself, which remains a particular science. The science of sciences, or the truly scientific logic, on the other hand, can only be a *universal* science.

Husserl's *Formal and Transcendental Logic* is divided into two parts, which clearly indicate the aim and movement of Husserl's thought with respect to the question of logic. In the first part, he is concerned to analyse the structures and the sphere of objective formal logic, within which he identifies two distinct trends: "apophantic analytics" and "formal ontology." Formal ontology is "an eidetic science of any object whatever."[16] It is a mathematical, *a priori* theory of objects, though a *formal* one, relating to the pure modes of anything whatever, conceived with the emptiest universality. As such, it is an all-embracing science, the forms of which can be conceived without reference to concretely designated objects.[17] Formal ontology is distinguished by its theme from formal apophantics, which itself is the *a priori* formal science of the judgement, more precisely of the predicative judgement, or of what

16 *Ideen...I*, p. 22.

17 E. Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, pp. 77-78.

Aristotle called *apophansis* (assertion). Apophantics is concerned with the categories of signification, such as subject, predicate, concept, and proposition, while formal ontology is concerned with categories of the object, such as thing, set, number, property, quality, relation, identity, unity, equality, and totality. If Husserl qualifies this logic as a whole as *objective* formal logic, it is to draw our attention to the fact that traditional logic (and that includes mathematised, symbolic logic) remains unilaterally focused on the object, that is, oriented towards thought-formations (*Denkgebilde*). Up until the end of the first part of the book, Husserl is concerned to distinguish between formal ontology and formal apophantics, and analyse the close ties between them. By gradually distinguishing the sense belonging to traditional logic, however, Husserl's investigation uncovers the presuppositions of logic, which reveal it to be a "naïve" logic, one that never dreamt of questioning what it declares to be a matter of course, namely, its orientation towards objects or something in general. The specific plan of *Formal and Transcendental Logic* is that of reaching a logic that transcends objective logic by integrating it into a logic able to attain a full understanding of itself: "our chief purpose is to show that a logic directed straightforwardly to its proper thematic sphere, and active exclusively in cognising that, remains stuck fast in a naïveté that shuts itself off from the philosophic merit of radical self-understanding and fundamental self-justification."[18] Thus, in the second part of the book, the investigation into sense is led to criticise the evidences of logic, and hence to return to the constituting subjective activity and to the clarification of this activity. Logic, in other words, becomes reflective, that is, directed towards the specific mode of intending of formal logic. Only with the phenomenon of intentionality, and with the investigation into the manner in which judgements are produced, or "constituted," do we arrive at the condition of meaningful or scientific propositions, and thus at a genuine foundation of science itself. The subjective orientation of this criticism eventually turns out to support the exclusively objective orientation of the theme of traditional logic. Husserl's stroke of genius is not simply to have introduced the pole of subjectivity in matters of sense and logic, that is, to have shifted the terrain of logic from object to subject, but also, and above all, to have avoided the trap of psychologism in the process. It is by wanting to avoid this very trap that logical empiricism had thought it necessary to become a purely formal science. In so doing, however, it had cut off the operation

18 E. Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p. 153.

of sense from that of consciousness, and separated philosophy and psychology absolutely. With the discovery of intentionality, however, it is no longer the empirical consciousness that is sought as the foundation of sense in general, but the transcendental consciousness. In other words, there is no longer any reason to interpret problems referring to subjectivity as problems of *natural* human subjectivity, hence as psychological problems in the empirical sense. The problems that the phenomenological criticism of logic deals with are the problems of *transcendental* subjectivity, that is, of a constitutive or sense-bestowing subjectivity.[19] Thus one comes to a logic that "descends into the depths of transcendental interiority." Only then can the sense of science in its true objectivity be fully understood:-

> "Only a science clarified and justified transcendentally (in the phenomenological sense) can be an ultimate science; only a transcendentally-phenomenologically clarified world can be an ultimately understood world; only a transcendental logic can be an ultimate theory of science, an ultimate, deepest, and most universal, theory of the principles and norms of all the sciences."[20]

Formal logic, even expanded into *mathesis universalis*, can only be an analytic criticism of cognition, a criticism of theories and of ideal processes that result in these theories. Only a transcendental criticism can truly set up a *universal* theory of science, for it is the criticism of the intentional, or subjective, life that itself "constitutes" regions and theories.

Let us look briefly, then, at the task that falls to a transcendental theory of judgement.[21] Its ultimate aim is to rediscover the hidden essential grounds from which traditional logic springs. As such, it is a genetic analysis. Now Husserl's thesis is that all syntactical operations point back to *experience* as to their irreducible origin: his method of

19 This feature is what distinguishes it from the Kantian transcendental subjectivity: aside from the mere form of intentionality, there is nothing that is simply given in the transcendental field: all meaningful acts are constituted, or *generated*. This genetic dimension of the transcendental is also crucial for Deleuze.

20 E. Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, p. 16.

21 Here, I am following Suzanne Bachelard's *A Study of Husserl's* Formal and Transcendental Logic., p. 136 ff.

successive reductions leads us from true judgements of the higher level down to true judgements relating *directly* to the individual objects, which are given through experience. The primordial judgements, then, are judgements of experience: they are the most immediate judgements of the categorial form, where one has the "evidence" that procures the presence of the things "themselves." The basic level of the categorial, the judgement of experience, contains in itself "immediately" the source of experience. Hence we should place ourselves there in order to know what experience is. And by placing ourselves on the lowest level of the judgement, which is the judgement of experience, we come to discover that what one would believe to be pertinent to the predicative sphere, that is, certainty and its modalities, intention and fulfillment, etc., is already pertinent to the intentionality of experience. There is, then, a type of categorial activity, albeit of low-level, which takes place in experience. This is what *Experience and Judgement*, devoted to a genetic theory of judgement, reveals most clearly.[22] Even something like perception, when accompanied with a minimum level of attention (*die betrachende Wahrnehmung*), Husserl claims, is an activity that must be distinguished from a mere passivity. No doubt, at the bottom of it all there is a believing in the existence (*Seinsglauben*) of the *pregiven* that is entirely passive. This is what Merleau-Ponty called perceptual faith (*foi perceptive*). There is, for instance, the barking of a dog that comes from the surrounding world, and which we hear "without our paying the least attention to it."[23] But from the moment we pay attention to it, from the moment we take it as an object of interest, there is an activity – an *antepredicative* activity, but an activity all the same. It is essential, therefore, that we distinguish the antepredicative and the pregiven, the passive synthesis of mere perception (which Hume qualified as *belief*) and the active synthesis of attentive perception. This is how Husserl is able to extend the concept of judging to include this antepredicative activity and not reserve it exclusively for the predicative judging, as traditional logic always does.

In a sense Deleuze is indebted to Husserl for having extracted a layer of sense beneath predicative sense, for having broadened the sphere of sense and judgement and included in it the antepredicative activity, that

22 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*. Edited by Ludwig Landgrebe. (Hamburg: Claassen, 1954). *Experience and Judgement*. Translated by James S. Churchill and Karl Americks. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

23 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, p. 61.

is, the life-world that is the horizon of any relation whatever. The problem, however, from Deleuze's own perspective, is that the life in question is *my* life: Husserl discovers the transcendental field, yet immediately proceeds to tie it to the form of the Ego, or to a synthetic consciousness. In doing so, he perpetuates one of the fundamental postulates of the western image of thought, which seeks to give sense a unique source (the Ego) and a unique destination or direction, namely the form of the object that corresponds to it. That is what *Difference and Repetition* called *good* sense.[24] In addition, the postulate requires that, *qua* origin, sense be essentially shared, and thus able to constitute the ground of science itself and guarantee its objectivity. That is what Deleuze calls *common* sense. Between them, good sense and common sense constitute the two halves of *doxa*, or the unthought of western thought. Ultimately, the genesis of sense in Husserl's logic is nothing more than the genesis of good sense and common sense, that is, of sense as it is from the start subordinated to the imperatives of a synthetic consciousness. Such is the reason why this logic remains a logic of substance, or of the *substratum*: it seeks to delimit judgement in its identity. Sense remains bound to consciousness as the correlate of its intention in experience. In that respect, it cannot be distinguished from the *form* of predicative judgement. It is still modeled after that which it it is supposed to ground (the predicative judgement): the structure of transcendental experience reproduces the form of the propositional structure.

Such is the reason why, ultimately, Deleuze seeks to solve the problem of sense by placing it on a different terrain altogether, that is, one that would be neither pure grammar, understood as a certain method, which Carnap would have described as 'syntactic',[25] nor intentionality,

24 *Difference and Repetition*, p. 175/133-134.

25 Carnap's thesis is most clearly and completely expressed in *The Logical Syntax of Language* (Vienna: Julius Springer, 1934). The language in question is that of science. It is necessary to distinguish, therefore, between the language on which the philosophical analysis bears and the meta-language in which this analysis takes place. According to Carnap, philosophical analysis must henceforth bear on the syntax of scientific language, which alone is meaningful. Specifically, it must bear on the set of rules that determine such a language, and which include, one the one hand, the rules of formation, which determine the expressions of a language that are correctly formed, and, on the other hand, the rules of transformation, which determine the deductive relation between different propositions. "Syntactic" means

understood as a sense-bestowing activity. Sense, Deleuze believes, needs to be wrested from logical positivism as well as transcendental psychology. It must bind its fate neither to the world understood as the set of objects or facts as a whole, nor to the formal conditions under which expressions can denote such facts, nor, finally, to consciousness as the site of their originally constitution. But if sense is produced neither in the proposition as such, nor in the subject from which the proposition emanates, nor, finally, in the objects that it intends, from what horizon does it unfold? The answer can be formulated in a few words, even though such words refer to a complex reality: in order to liberate sense from any intentionality, or horizon of fulfillment, it is necessary to envisage it as a pre-conscious or unconscious surface, a horizon, that is, not of convergence, where each thing would find its place and its focus from a unique luminescent source, but of divergence, populated by differences as yet untamed and unresolved, and thus pregnant with an infinity of virtual worlds. No longer *my* life, but *a* life.[26] The transcendental field to which logic refers, and the genesis of which phenomenology aims to produce, is neither, contrary to what Husserl thought, an individuated consciousness, nor even, as Sartre believed, a pre-individual consciousness, to which sense would be immanent, but an impersonal and pre-individual space, at once structural and genetic.

3. Sense and Expression

This is the point at which structuralism takes over the project of phenomenology, and of a transcendental logic: in order to understand the operation of sense, one needs to envisage it as structure. In the sixth series of *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze argues that a structure must conform to the following minimal conditions. First of all, one needs at least two heterogeneous series, one determined as "signifying" and the other as "signified." A unique series is therefore never sufficient in itself to form a structure. In addition, each series has to be constituted by terms that exist only through their reciprocal relations. To these relations, or

that the definition of such languages and the characterisation of their properties refer only to the *form* and the *order* of the signs that constitute the expressions of the language in question, and not the *signification* of such signs.

26 "Immanence: a Life" is the title of the last text that Deleuze published in his lifetime (*Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006), pp. 384-389).

rather, to the values of these relations, correspond specific "events," that is, "singularities" that can be assigned in the structure. We need to understand "event" in the sense of a mathematical singularity. Structure is indeed quite similar to differential calculus, wherein the distribution of singular points corresponds to the value of differential relations. Thus, as structural linguistics reveals, the differential relationships between phonemes assign singularities to a particular language, and it's in the "vicinity" of those singularities that the characteristic sonorities and significations of the language in question are constituted. As for sense, even though it is embodied in "real" words (or in the real part of the word known as its "sonority") and in "images" or concepts associated with the words, according to determinable series, it is not reducible to them. In fact, it is "older" than them, and more profound than the series it determines.[27] As structuring power, sense is this "symbolic" element that accounts for the genesis of signification, manifestation, and denotation, of the subject as well as the object. It is the genuine transcendental subject, but a subject that cannot be thought so long as it is envisaged in its actuality. Structure is a system of differences that always has a certain reality, an actuality, but one in which what actualises or embodies itself, here and now, are this or that relation, this or that differential, and not the structure or the system as a whole, which can be defined as the totality of its *ideal* differences. It is a kind of ideal reservoir or repertory, where everything coexists in its *virtual* state. This, then, is how the question of sense oscillates between "structure" and "genesis."

We are left with the delicate question of knowing how to recognize the symbolic element, or the structure. Deleuze's answer is: by its 'position'. The position in question, however, is rather unique. Naturally, sense cannot occupy a *real* place, or a position in extension. It cannot even occupy an imaginary place, or the place of a substitute. Such is the reason why it is a space outside space, an empty square, or a 'transcendental' space. The new transcendental philosophy, which Deleuze extracts from structuralism, and with which he wants to link the question of sense, always privileges places over what fills them. This is how we need to understand the work of Foucault, for example: Foucault

27 See Deleuze, "À quoi reconnaît-on le structuralisme ?", in *L'île déserte. Textes et entretiens (1953-1974)* (Paris: Minuit, 2002), pp. 238-269; translated by Michael Taormina, "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" in *Desert Island and other Texts (1953-1974)* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), pp. 170-192.

does not consider death, work, desire, or play as dimensions of empirical human existence, but as places or positions that allow those who occupy them to become mortal, working, desiring, or playing subjects. One finds, therefore, a new distribution of the empirical and the transcendental, the latter being defined as an order of places independent of those who occupy them empirically.[28] This is how empirical psychology, the social sciences as a whole, and empirical logic itself find themselves grounded in, and determined by, a transcendental topology.

A number of consequences derive from this local or positional definition of sense: if symbolic elements are characterised by neither an extrinsic denotation nor an intrinsic signification, but only by a sense of position, we must conclude that *sense or meaning always results from the combination of elements that are themselves not meaningful.* In other word, sense is produced as a result or an effect – akin to an optical, linguistic or surface effect – of non-signifying elements. This is precisely what Deleuze means when he claims that, in order to be a genuine condition, sense cannot be conceived in the *image* of signification, or as its mere condition of *possibility*. There is, therefore, something like a meaninglessness or significationlessness of sense, a nonsense of sense, which we must be careful to distinguish from what is normally referred to as the absurd. From the point of view of the philosophy of the absurd, it is sense that is lacking, essentially. From a structuralist point of view, however, there is always an excess of sense in relation to signification, and any process of signification amounts to a reduction of sense, or to its 'resolution' (in the algebraic sense of the term). Thus nonsense is not mere absurdity, that is, the opposite or negation of sense (as signification), but what gives it a value and what generates it by circulating in the structure.[29] Such is the reason why, throughout *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze draws on various examples of nonsense, especially from Lewis Carroll. Nonsense, in this instance, does not stem from a personal fondness for the absurd, which is only a lack of sense, and desperation in the face of it, but from a surplus of sense that is prior to the signifying procedures, and from which they themselves derive. If, in the end, Lewis Carroll's work is so jolly and humorous, it is because it

28 Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p. 329 sq.

29 In that respect, non-sense is the exact equivalent of the non-being of *Difference and Repetition* (pp. 88-91/63-66), which Deleuze distinguishes from the negative in the Hegelian sense.

invites the reader to pass to the other side of the mirror of sense (which is not its negation, its contrary or its contradiction), where the virtual conditions (distinct from its real and imaginary incarnations) of sense await us. Let us take the example of his 'portmanteau words'. Their role is exactly equivalent to that of Levi-Strauss's 'floating signifier' or that of an 'object=x': a symbolic or 'zero' value that circulates within the structure and enables it to function as such, and which, in a way, is also produced by it, but only as an optical or positional effect. Always displaced or at a distance from itself, this object, like Poe's purloined letter or Carroll's Snark, has the odd characteristic of never actually being where we expect to be, and of being found where it is not. With Lacan, we could say that "it is lacking in its own place" or that "it fails to observe its place".[30] Should we attempt to treat the Snark as sign, we would be met with the following, bewildering explanation: "because the Snark is a Boujoum, you see". In other words, our attempt to differentiate it from another signifier and connect it with a signified, or a signified chain, will always cause it to slide, slip, or float further. The same goes for the Knight who announces the title of the song that he is about to sing in *Through the Looking-Glass*:-

> '"The name of the song is called '*Haddock's Eyes*'" – "Oh, that's the name of the song, is it?" Alice said, trying to feel interested. – No, you don't understand," the Knight said, looking a little vexed. "That's what the name of the song is *called*. The name really is '*The Aged Man*.'" – "Then I ought to have said 'That's what the *song* is called'?" Alice corrected herself. – "No, you oughtn't: that's quite another thing! The song is called '*Ways and Means*': but that's only what it's *called*, you know!" - "Well, what *is* the song then?" said Alice, who was by this time completely bewildered. – "I was coming to that," the Knight said. "The song really *is* '*A-sitting on a Gate*'!..."[31]

On the other hand, as soon as we envisage it as a different kind of signifier, a *floating* signifier, we generate both the signifier and the signified, in one go as it were. The mistake, concerning the Snark, would consist in believing that it consists of two (or more) significations mixed

30 J. Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), p. 25. Quoted by Deleuze *in LS*, p. 55/41.

31 *LS*, p. 42/29.

together. In fact, it does not signify *stricto sensu*; it is otherwise than signifying, or beyond meaning, precisely to the extent that it signifies the operation of sense itself, the way, that is, in which sense is produced: "sense is the Snark."[32] Its nonsense is precisely a function of its sense, or of the fact that it *is* sense (but the sense of being of sense is precisely what is at issue here, and one that we will need to clarify).

According to Deleuze, the Snark, like Lewis Carroll's work as a whole, is traversed by the fundamental alternative, and duality, between eating and speaking, which it reveals and expresses in its constitutive tension. In *Sylvie and Bruno*, for example, "the alternative is between 'bits of things' and 'bits of Shakespeare.'"[33] Similarly, at Alice's coronation dinner, "you either eat what is presented to you, *or* you are introduced to what you eat."[34] More importantly still, the alternative is often between speaking of food or eating words (Alice, for example, is "overwhelmed by nightmares of absorbing and being absorbed" and "she finds that the poems she hears recited are about edible fish"[35]). Ultimately, this duality synthesises that between things and propositions, or between bodies and language, in which the question of sense is played out: is sense produced in the depths of bodies or things, in "their action and passion," and in "the way in which they coexist with one another?"[36] Or is it a movement of the surface, produced in language alone? In fact, it is neither – neither the result of a given proposition nor the effect of a given state of affairs. Yet it is the condition for both, and for their irreducible relation. It is the joint, hinge, or articulation between the two series, which it allows to communicate with one other, without ever reducing the gap that separates them. It is always on the move, always circulating through the series, and thus defining the unity of the structure. The entire structure is propelled and made to function though this originary third term, this intruder that lacks an origin. It distributes differences within the structure, and causes the differential relations to vary through its displacements. In short, it is the differentiator of difference itself, or its 'paradoxical instance': sense manages to bring together the two series it runs through by constantly keeping them apart.

32 *LS*, p. 31/20.
33 *LS*, p. 36/23.
34 *LS*, p. 36/23.
35 *LS*, p. 36/23.
36 *LS*, p. 36/23.

As a word=x, it runs through a determinate series, that of the signifier. But as an object=x, it designates another series, that of the signified. Neither signifier nor signified strictly speaking, it is simultaneously more and less than both. As a word, it is most peculiar, insofar as it designates exactly what it expresses, and expresses what it designates. It expresses what it designates as much as its own sense. In a single operation, it manages to say something and the meaning of what it says: it says its own sense. In that respect, it is utterly unusual. For the law that governs all meaningful words is precisely such that their sense can only be designated by another name. The name that expresses its own sense can only be nonsense.

The logic of Stoicism can be shown to operate in the same way, and to underlie virtually the whole of Lewis Carroll's universe. In fact, the way it introduces and uses the pair *semainon/semainomenon,* or signifier/ signified, prefigures Saussure's own structural linguistics. The pair in question essentially presents two characteristics, which distinguish it from Aristotle's theory of language. Firstly, it doesn't work without the participation of a third term, the *tughkanon*, which functions like a reference point, and which is often compared with Frege's *Bedeutung*, inasmuch as it designates the corresponding external object. Literally, it means 'what's there' or 'lies out there'. Foucault translates it as '*conjoncture*' or 'state of affairs'[37]. It designates the external, corporeal, or physical substrate (the *hupokeimenon,* or what stands beneath), which corresponds to the vocal utterance (the *phone*). This *phone,* which one utters and hears, in its bodily materiality, is the signifier itself. It shows or manifests the signified. In Sextus Empiricus' own words, the latter is "*auto to pragma*, the matter itself as it manifests itself in the vocal utterance, and which we, in turn, understand when it presents itself to our thought, whereas the people who do not understand our language do not understand it, even though they hear the vocal utterance."[38] The second characteristic of this invention is that the signified is not called only *semainomenon,* but also *lekton,* as if the Stoics wanted to mark their invention by creating a neologism. The term in question is a nominalisation of the verbal adjective of the verb *lego,* to say. Diogenes Laertius defines *lekton* as "that which subsists according to," or "in

37 M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, p. 57.
38 Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos,* VIII, 11-12.

conformity with a logical representation."[39] Sextus Empiricus takes up this definition, and refines it: according to the Stoics "what can be expressed or spoken [*lekton*] is what belongs to a discursive representation [*logiken*]; a discursive representation is that in which what is represented can be made manfest in speech [*logos*]."[40] Now what distinguishes the *logos* from the mere *lexis,* essentially defined as "the voice articulated in letters," is that it is necessarily meaningful, precisely as a result of the presence of the *lekton.*

But what sort of presence is at issue here? What kind of thing is the *lekton*? This is the point at which the originality of Stoicism becomes apparent, and its opposition to the Aristotelian theory of language manifest: unlike the *logos,* understood as a collection of signifiers, and the denotation, associated with the state of affairs, the *lekton* is an 'incorporeal' (*asomaton*). Without a given *logos,* of which it is the effect, the *lekton* does not exist. It exists (*huparkhein*) only in the actual uttering of the speech. And yet, it does not simply cease to be outside its utterance; it remains something. It "subsists" (*huphistanai*). The being of sense, therefore, is not existence. Besides existence, which designates the empirical reality, there is at least another sense of being, which belongs to the incorporeal. This amounts to another opposition to Frege and his disciples, for whom the various classical meanings of being can be reduced to that of existence (whether possible or actual).[41] The being of sense is even less equivalent to that of essence, which assumes the reality of an intelligible world, accessible by means other than the propositional. Rather, according to Diogenes Laertius, incorporeality is said of "that which can be occupied by bodies, without actually being so occupied."[42] Besides the *lekton,* the Stoics recognise three incorporeals: time, space,

39 Diogenes Laertius, *The Life and Opinions of Philosophers*, VII, 63.

40 Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos*, VIII, 70.

41 When Quine, for example, asserts that "to be is purely and simply to be the value of a variable," he is actually saying that *to be* is equivalent to being the *possible* instance of a concept. See "On What There Is," in *The Review of Metaphysics,* II [1948], p. 32. Quine modified the wording of his article in *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 13: "To be assumed as an entity is, purely and simply, to be reckoned as the value of a variable." The latter formulation better captures his conviction that semantics can only reveal the ontological commitments of language, but cannot establish definitively what there is (pp. 15-16).

42 Diogenes Laertius, *The Life and Opinions of Philosophers*, VII, 140.

and the void. This distinction between the corporeal and the incorporeal draws on the Stoic theory of causality. Following the Platonic definition of being as power (*dunamis*),[43] the Stoics understand the body as what can act or be acted upon. By contrast, they define the incorporeal as essentially inactive and impassive: "According to them, the incorporeal neither acts on anything, nor is acted upon by anything."[44] This view implies that whilst incorporeals do not interact with bodies, nor bodies with incorporeals, bodies do interact with another. Yet a body can cause an incorporeal effect in another body, such as "being burnt" or "being cut." This is how Émile Bréhier, from whom Deleuze draws his inspiration, puts it:-

> "when the scalpel cuts through the flesh, the first body produces upon the second *not a new property* but a *new attribute*, that of being cut. The *attribute* does not designate any real quality..., it is, to the contrary, always expressed by the verb, which means that it is not a being, but a way of being. ... This way of being finds itself somehow at the limit, at the surface of being, the nature of which it is not able to change: it is, in fact, neither active nor passive, for passivity would presuppose a corporeal nature which undergoes an action. It is purely and simply a result, or an effect which is not to be classified among beings."[45]

It is clear, therefore, that the Stoics draw a radical distinction between two planes of being: on the one hand, real or profound being, force (*dunamis*); on the other, the plane of effects, which take place on the surface of being, and constitute an endless multiplicity of incorporeal beings (attributes).

Following Deleuze, we need to emphasise that the *lekton* is an attribute of the object, and not of the proposition: it is the predicate, for example "green," which is the attribute of the subject of the proposition. It is precisely because of this attribute, which is affirmed of the object, without changing the nature of the object, that the signified object (*to*

43 Plato, *Sophist*, 247e.

44 Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos*, VIII, 263.

45 Émile Bréhier, *La Théorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoïcisme*, 9ème édition (Paris: Vrin, 1997), p. 12. Cited by Deleuze in *LS*, p. 14/5.

semainomenon) differs from the object as a corporeal, physical entity corresponding to the vocal utterance (*to tugkhanon*). In the proposition, the attributes of beings are expressed not by its epithets, which indicate properties, but by its verbs, which indicate acts. But it is the very meaning of the proposition, and of logic itself, which changes, when the emphasis shifts from predicates to attributes. "Green" (*vert*) is certainly the predicate of "tree." But "to green" (*verdoyer*) is its attribute. When I say: "the tree greens," I do two things: on the one hand, I erase the reference to the copula, and with it the delicate question of knowing how subject and predicate relate to one another, or how to connect different classes of objects; in a sense, I place myself before the subject-predicate divide, in order to reach the subject in its being, or rather its becoming. On the other hand, I then erase the predicate itself, and replace it with an attribute, which designates the manner of being of the subject. As a result, this attribute is not that of the proposition itself, but the attribute of the state of things it designates. Thus, the action of a scalpel on the flesh does not produce a new property or quality, but an attribute of the type "being cut." Now an attribute is neither a being, nor a quality (green, or cut), but a way of being, what the Stoics, in their table of categories, called a *pos ekhon*. It is a manner of being that does not affect essences, and is not even an accident in the Aristotelian sense. In a sense, it is a manner of being that leaves the state of things always intact. In short, it is an event which occurs at the surface, an effect which slides alongside substantial beings, affecting neither existences nor essences, neither substances nor accidents, and which, as a result, is a matter for a "logic" other than that of the subject and its predicates. Events are not like deep sea creatures, but like crystals, which form or grow only around the edges. The event is a manner or a mode of being which escapes corporeal reality and its causal connections, its actuality and its chronology: the time of attributes is not that of being, but a parallel time, a pure becoming. From the point of view of this time, or this becoming, it is not impossible to grow and shrink at the same time, as Alice does. We need to distinguish clearly between what chrono-logy excludes, or what, from its own point of view, cannot take place at the same time, and this other time, which always doubles and redoubles the first, at *the same time*. In what amounts to a reversal of the Platonic order, sense no longer designates what is deep, but the surface; it no longer designates the origin, but the effect, no longer

what is given from the start, but what is generated.[46] In every aspect, sense is opposed to the metaphysical essence, which it replaces. This is how sense escapes transcendence.

The attribute absorbs both the copula and the predicate. In other words, a proposition of essence disappears in favour of a proposition of modality, and a logic of substance is replaced with a logic of events. It is no longer the colour "green" that is predicated of the substance "tree," but the tree itself that appears from a primordial "greening." The attribute – the verb – is no longer the expression of a concept (an object or a class of objects), but of an event or a singularity in the vicinity of which both subject and predicate organise their relationship. In their classification of attributes, the Stoics do not distinguish them, as Aristotle did, according to the (more or less accidental) nature of their connection with the subject. On the contrary, in such attributes they see only the many ways in which an event can be expressed. It is by becoming a logic of the event that the logic also becomes a logic of immanence. The logic of predication was a logic of substance and essence, and essence – the transcendent reality – was opposed to becoming. The concept was modeled after such essence. It must now model itself after the event, or after what Deleuze calls pre-individual and impersonal singularities (it is because of this that the operation of sense is no longer indicative of an intuitive and sense-bestowing consciousness). At this level, all events are compatible: they express one another, or are "inter-expressive" (*s'entr'expriment*).[47] Ultimately, the aim is "to attain to the universal communication of events."[48] Incompatibility only emerges with the individuals and the bodies in which events are effectuated. By allowing oneself to penetrate the plane of events, where actualisations through differentiation have not yet taken place, one reaches the point of view of God, for whom everything is compossible. But this God is not that of onto-theology. It is the God of univocal being, the unique substance, which is said in one and the same sense of everything of which it is said. Thus, we see how the Deleuzian theory, inspired by Stoicism, extends his

46 The play of depth and surface in *Alice in Wonderland* is fundamentally Stoic. In the second part of the story, we see surfaces prevail over depths: the animals from the depths give way to playing cards, to figures without depth, and Alice herself returns to the surface and disavows the abyss.

47 *LS*, p. 208/177.

48 *LS*, p. 208/178.

ontology of univocity and immanence, inspired by Spinoza: beings are not the properties of substance, but its manners of being, or its modes; they themselves are not individuals, but becomings.

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From the start, and throughout, Deleuze's concern was to allow singularities to come out from under individuated realities, to surface and speak, and so to extract sense from reality itself. In the end, this conception of philosophy could not be further from that of logical positivism, which envisages philosophy as that which can establish the sense or the nonsense of a proposition, but on no account *produce* it: the aim of philosophy, Wittgenstein affirms, is the logical clarification of propositions, and not the production of philosophical propositions.[49] For Deleuze, on the other hand, "today's task is to allow the empty square to circulate and to allow pre-individual and impersonal singularities to speak – in short, to produce sense."[50] Elsewhere, he describes the structure as "a machine for the production of incorporeal sense."[51] This, however, doesn't signal the reign of arbitrary, random sense. On the contrary, the mistake would be to think that, because it is produced, sense is necessarily produced by an 'I' or a 'self.' Inasmuch as it is pre-individual, 'I' cannot produce it. It is precisely by no longer being myself, that is, by rejoining the world of pre-individual and impersonal singularities, that I gain access to the world in the making, as opposed to the world as the totality of ready-made things. It is signification, not sense, that deals with such things, or, to use the terminology of logical empiricism, with the 'being-the-case' or the 'not-being-the-case' of the fact expressed in a proposition.[52] As soon as they are meaningful, predicative propositions designate states of affairs, or facts. At that level, however, everything has already been decided. One speaks, but not to say anything new. As logical empiricism argues, one speaks only to repeat,

49 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, §4.112.

50 *LS*, p. 91/73.

51 *LS*, p. 88/71.

52 According to Blumber and Feigl, to know the meaning of a proposition is "to know what must be the case if the proposition is true" (1931, p 287). This idea is one that Wittgenstein had already formulated in proposition 4.024 of the *Tractatus*: "To understand a proposition is to know what is the case, if it is true."

albeit in different, logical, terms what has already been said.[53] Yet what really matters is ignored. For what matters lies elsewhere, on the other side of the looking-glass, and not in the sky (whether open or closed) of a Sense given in advance, to which it would be a matter of returning, or which it would be a matter of discovering. But sense is the attribute of a state of affairs, and not the predicate of a substance: it expresses a singularity, or an event, and not a fact, or a quality. The event is not the accident of a substance that would preexist it. Rather, it is the substance itself – or the phenomenon – that is the effect, or the crystallisation, of such a system. To reduce the event to an accident is to fall back into vulgar empiricism. To reduce the event to an essence is to fall back into idealism and dogmaticism. Both vulgar empiricism and idealism fail to understand that true events are transcendental, and that they are singularities. As transcendental, singularities are precisely *not* actual. They are real, yet their reality differs from that of the *things* in which they actualise themselves. As events, they need to be distinguished from the states of affairs in which they both incarnate and resolve themselves. All states of affairs, or individuals, presuppose singularities as their origin. States of affairs are themselves the product of the resolution or the integration of singular points in ordinary facts and stable situations. This is how the real unfolds: from the transcendental events to the empirical subjects, from the singular to the ordinary, and from difference to identity. All too often philosophy seeks to impose another direction onto the real – the very direction or sense which it refers to as "good sense." By doing so, it takes the world back to front: it posits states of affairs as primary, stability as the norm, and subjects the world to the form of identity. Identity, however, whether of the world or of consciousness, is the effect of a sense that is first and foremost differentiated and multi-directional. Inasmuch as they connect singular points and differences of potential with

53 Blumber and Feigl stipulate very clearly that, being concerned only with the internal structure of language, and therefore without relation to experience, logic defines the rules that allow one to repeat entirely or in part what has been said in a different form (1931, p. 283). The propositions of logic are tautological, or analytic. They are not statements, that is, they say nothing regarding the existence or non-existence of a given state of affairs. It is precisely this tautological dimension, or the dimension which, in the eyes of logical positivism, defines philosophy as a whole and as a legitimate enterprise, which Deleuze rejects entirely: it is the sign of a miserable and sad conception of philosophy that is not worthy of philosophy. Not that philosophy ought to concern itself with states of affairs after all: its sole concern, rather, should be for events.

one another, events are not stable. But neither are they simply unstable. Rather, they are "metastable." It is this world of singularities beneath states of affairs, these virtual events folded in individuals, that sense expresses; sense is their voice, or their trace inscribed at the surface of propositions. It is this entire horizon, this infra-individual and impersonal life that *The Logic of Sense* seeks to grasp in this or that statement where it has surfaced. It is this, the bottomless, the Dionysian world of singularities (in opposition to the divine individuation of Apollo, and, naturally, to the human individuation of Socrates), which is the true subject of philosophy:-

> "What is neither individual nor personal are... emissions of singularities insofar as they occur on an unconscious surface and possess a mobile, immanent principle of auto-unification through a *nomadic distribution*, radically distinct from fixed and sedentary distributions as conditions of the syntheses of consciousness. Singularitites are the true transcendental events... Only when the world, teaming with anonymous and nomadic, impersonal and pre-individual singularities, opens up, do we tread at last on the field of the transcendental."[54]

As we can see, logic cannot be separated from ontology. The sense that is at stake always exceeds the place that it is assigned in the proposition. Yet that is where it surfaces. Whilst never where we expect it to be, whilst always missing in its own place, sense alone can bring us to the things themselves, to those things that are precisely not "things," but their virtual conditions of existence – their singularities – which exist (or rather insist) independently of their *actual* existence. In the end, Deleuze's effort consists in displacing the very locus of the question of sense from the proposition, and its criteria of signification (of truth or truthfulness) to the truly eventful horizon that surfaces in, and precedes, the proposition.

Translated by Marjorie Gracieuse and Katrina Mitcheson

54 *LS*, pp. 124-125/102-103.

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Nonsense and Mysticism in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*[1]

ANGELA BREITENBACH

1. The problem of how to read the *Tractatus*

Ludwig Wittgenstein writes in the Preface to his *Tractatus*[2] that:-

> "the aim of the book is to set a limit to thought, or rather – not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to set a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable...
>
> It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be set, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense." (Preface)

Wittgenstein's declared aim in the *Tractatus* is thus to draw the limits of thought by defining the limits of language. In the final proposition of his book Wittgenstein concludes:-

> "What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence." (7)

Thus, at the end of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's aim seems to have been accomplished.

1 This paper developed out of an essay I wrote for my MPhil at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science in Cambridge. I would like to thank Martin Kusch for inspiring discussions about Wittgensteinian nonsense.

2 L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961). References to the numbers of the propositions of the *Tractatus* are given in brackets in the main text.

When examining the text, we find that most of it is concerned with the character of language and its relation to the world. According to Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning in particular, genuine propositions have sense in virtue of picturing states of affairs. Propositions can be either true or false, according to this theory, depending on whether the corresponding states of affairs do or do not obtain. Insofar as it is a contingent matter whether or not certain states of affairs are actual, all genuine propositions, too, are contingent. Tautologies, by contrast, which are ordinarily thought of as necessarily true, are according to Wittgenstein not true at all. Equally, contradictions are not false. For tautologies and contradictions do not represent any particular states of affairs and thus do not say anything about how things stand in the world. According to the picture theory they are therefore *sinnlos* (senseless). Nevertheless, Wittgenstein insists, their mere structure *shows* something about the structure of the world.

Contingent statements about the states of affairs that obtain in the world and senseless tautologies and contradictions do not, however, exhaust the set of all possible propositions. What, then, does Wittgenstein say about statements that claim to deal with necessity? What, in particular, can he say about the propositions of philosophy, metaphysical claims about God or the soul, ethical, aesthetic or religious statements, and propositions about the structure of language? None of these seem to picture possible states of affairs. Their ambition is rather to say something about the necessary conditions or the essential properties of the world and of language. All these propositions, Wittgenstein claims, are mere pseudo-propositions. They do not *say* or *show* anything, but are mere *Unsinn* (nonsense).

In the *Tractatus*, the limits of language are thus drawn by showing that only what can be pictured can be spoken of. All those sentences which are not tautologies but nevertheless fail to picture anything, Wittgenstein argues, are nonsensical pseudo-propositions. Moreover, the limits of language thereby define the limits of thought. For every picture, and thus every genuine proposition, is also what Wittgenstein calls a 'logical picture' (2.182). And a logical picture of a state of affairs is, according to the *Tractatus*, what is more simply called a 'thought' (3). It follows that if and only if something can be presented by a picture, it can

be presented not only by a proposition but also by a thought. By drawing the limits to language Wittgenstein has thereby set the limits to thought.

Wittgenstein's statements from the preface and the final proposition of the *Tractatus* thus seem to be coherently explained by the picture theory of meaning. In the penultimate proposition, however, Wittgenstein says:-

> "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
>
> He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright." (6.54)

The propositions of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein claims here, are themselves nonsense. This is puzzling. For even if this coherently follows from the picture theory, does it not undermine the very argument that leads to the claim of 6.54? If the Tractarian text really is nonsense it presents no picture theory. But then it presents no theory which establishes that, and why, the Tractarian propositions are nonsense. How can we make sense of this puzzle? And thus, how are we to read the *Tractatus*?

This paper is concerned with finding an interpretation of the *Tractatus* that goes some way towards solving this paradox. In particular, the paper is concerned with finding an interpretation that may solve the paradox without damaging the coherence of the Tractarian text on the whole. My suggestion will be that a key to the problem of reading the *Tractatus* is provided by Wittgenstein's notion of the mystical. A clue to understanding this notion, I shall argue further, can be discerned from ideas found in some of the religious writings of Leo Tolstoy.

Before I go down this route, however, I shall consider the two major, competing, approaches to the problem of how to read the *Tractatus* that have been discussed in the recent literature. They have

become known as the 'traditional' and the 'new' readings of the *Tractatus*. As an example of the traditional reading I shall begin by considering P. M. S. Hacker's interpretation in Section 2. Hacker argues that the nonsensical sentences of the *Tractatus* are a special kind of *illuminating* nonsense which attempts to convey certain genuine but ineffable thoughts. The problem with Hacker's approach, I shall show, lies in its failure to account for Wittgenstein's central aim in the *Tractatus* of defining the limits of thought by setting the limits to language. As an example of an alternative to the 'traditional' account, I shall, in Section 3, turn to Cora Diamond's new reading. According to Diamond, all Tractarian nonsense is plain nonsense. It can illuminate the reader, and thus present a form of *transitional* nonsense, only by means of an imaginative activity that the reader has to perform herself. And yet, as I shall argue in Section 4, the notion of a transitional nonsense, if thoroughly thought through, faces difficulties that are at odds both with important Tractarian statements and with some of the central claims of the new reading itself. Following through the implications of the new reading will show that it faces as serious problems as the interpretation it was intended to replace.

Finally, in Section 5, I shall propose that if, with the help of Tolstoy, we take Wittgenstein's notion of the mystical seriously we can find a reading of the *Tractatus* that may overcome some of the difficulties of the traditional and new readings. Rather than understanding Tractarian nonsense either as expressing ineffable truths, or as standing for nothing at all, it may be more fruitful to read it as Wittgenstein's failed attempt to express the non-rational, mystical insights that he took himself to have. The comparison of Wittgenstein with Tolstoy on which this interpretation is based is not entirely new. It is well known that Wittgenstein read and admired Tolstoy and different commentators have emphasised Tolstoy's influence on Wittgenstein's world view and his concept of religion.[3] My

3 Cf. E. V. Thomas, *Wittgenstein and Tolstoy: The Authentic Orientation*, in *Religious Studies*, 33 (1997): pp. 363-77, D. M. High, *Wittgenstein: On Seeing Problems from a Religious Point of View*, in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 28 (1990): pp. 105-117, and W. Baum, *Ludwig Wittgenstein's World View*, in *Ratio*, 22 (1980): pp. 64-74. C. Thompson (*Wittgenstein, Tolstoy and the Meaning of Life' in Philosophical Investigations*, 20 (1997): pp. 97-116) points out parallels between the concepts of philosophy and the meaning of life in Tolstoy's *Confession* and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. On Thompson see also footnote 35 below.

goal here, however, is to make the comparison of Wittgenstein with Tolstoy productive for the specific puzzle of the *Tractatus*. In particular, I aim to show that the striking analogies between Tolstoy's ideas in his *Confession* and the thoughts pronounced by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* may help us in our search for an answer to the question of Tractarian nonsense.[4] In the end, however, it will become clear that the *Tractatus* remains an extremely perplexing and, ultimately, mystical work. The mystical insights that Wittgenstein apparently took himself to have cannot be expressed by meaningful propositions.

2. The 'traditional reading'

In his book *Insight and Illusion*, Hacker argues that the Tractarian propositions should be understood as 'illuminating' nonsense.[5] They are not 'overt' nonsense like incomprehensible sentences such as 'Is the good more or less identical than the beautiful?'. But like the latter, they violate the rules of the logical syntax of language. They do so, Hacker argues, by illegitimately using *formal concepts* in the role of *genuine concepts*.

How is this conception of nonsense to be understood? What, in particular, are we to make of the distinction between formal and genuine concepts? According to the *Tractatus*, simple names are the primitive vocabulary of language. While the meaning of a name determines its *content*, logical syntax determines its *form*. The meanings of simple names, their content, are the simple objects they refer to. The rules of logical syntax, of the form of simple names, are the grammatical rules which determine the possibilities of combining simple names with each other. These logico-syntactical combinatorial possibilities that determine

4 L. Tolstoy, *A Confession, The Gospel in Brief and What I Believe*, trans. A. Maude (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), *A Confession* was first published in 1882.

5 P. M. S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion: Themes in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). Other interpretations that have been classified as 'traditional' include G. E. M. Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (London: Hutchison University Library, 1971); P. Geach, *Saying and Showing in Frege and Wittgenstein*, in J. Hintikka, ed., *Essays on Wittgenstein in Honour of Georg von Wright* (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1976), pp. 54-70; A. Kenny, *Wittgenstein* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), and D. Pears, *The False Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

the form of a name are identical with the metaphysical combinatorial possibilities, the form of the object named. All names with the same form thus belong to the same logico-syntactical category. Their form is the variable, or *formal concept*, of which the names are substitution instances. Examples of such formal concepts are 'object', 'property' and 'number'. As variables they cannot constitute parts of a picture of a particular state of affairs. Hence, neither can they occur in meaningful propositions. It follows that language cannot make any claims about the formal aspect of names or objects. It cannot *say* anything about the essential features of language or the world, it can only *show* it. We cannot, for example, say that A is an object. And yet, what we attempted to say is nevertheless manifest in the logico-syntactical features of the name 'A', a name that plays the role of a *genuine concept* in genuine propositions.

Given this distinction between formal and genuine concepts, and between nonsensical and genuine propositions, Hacker argues that some nonsensensical propositions, including the Tractarian pseudo-propositions, are illuminating in two ways. First, they lead the reader to grasp that they *are* nonsense. And second, they bring the reader to apprehend what genuine propositions do not *say* but *show*. The piece of nonsense 'A is an object' is thus illuminating if it leads the reader to grasp that the sentence itself is illegitimate, and that what the sentence tries but fails to express is shown by genuine sentences like 'A is red and round'. Hacker concludes that "what someone means or intends by a remark can be grasped even though the sentence uttered is strictly speaking nonsense."[6] The *Tractatus*' use of nonsensical pseudo-propositions is therefore justified by its aim of enlightening us about the limits of language and thought. Once this aim is achieved, however, all that is left for us to consider are genuine propositions that represent possible states of affairs in the world.

This interpretation of illuminating nonsense proposed by Hacker faces an obvious problem. For how can nonsense illuminate given that, according to Wittgenstein, it neither shows nor says anything? How can we *grasp* something which is unsayable and thus unthinkable? Hacker's account does not seem to answer these questions and instead appears to

6 Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, p. 26.

explain proposition 6.54 by contradicting Wittgenstein's claim that what cannot be said cannot be thought. And yet, if it is possible to grasp what is meant by the nonsensical sentences of the *Tractatus* then, although they are not supposed to *say* anything, they nevertheless seem to convey *thoughts*. It follows that Hacker's interpretation conflicts with Wittgenstein's main aim in the *Tractatus* as it is pronounced in the Preface: the aim to set the limits to thought by drawing the limits of language. Hacker's account, the investigation seems to suggest, does not fulfill the requirements of an adequate interpretation of the *Tractatus*.[7]

3. The 'new reading'

Diamond presents her new reading as a solution to the problems of the 'traditional' account of Tractarian nonsense.[8] She criticises Hacker as

7 It is not surprising, then, that Hacker does not in fact attempt to provide an interpretation of the Tractarian text as a coherent whole but rather argues against reading the *Tractatus* as a self-consistent work. Cf. P. M. S. Hacker, *Was He Trying to Whistle It?*, in A. Crary and R. Read, eds., *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 353–388, esp. p. 370.

8 C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991); and C. Diamond, *Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, in A. Crary and R. Read, eds., *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 149-173. Followers of Diamond's reading include J. Conant, *Must We Show What We Cannot Say?*, in R. Fleming and M. Payne, eds., *The Senses of Stanley Cavell* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1988), pp. 242-283; J. Conant, *Throwing Away the Top of the Ladder*, in *The Yale Review*, 79 (1991), pp. 328-364; J. Conant, *Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and Nonsense*, in T. Cohen, P. Guyer and H. Putnam, eds., *Pursuits of Reason: Essays in Honour of Stanley Cavell* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 1993), pp. 195-224; J. Conant, *Elucidation and Nonsense in Frege and Early Wittgenstein*, in A. Crary and R. Read, eds., *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 174-217; J. Conant, *Two Conceptions of Die Überwindung der Metaphysik: Carnap and Early Wittgenstein*, in T. McCarthy and S. C. Stidd, eds., *Wittgenstein in America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 13-61; and J. Conant, *The Method of the Tractatus*, in E. H. Reck, ed., *From Frege to Wittgenstein: Perspectives on Early Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 74-470; J. Floyd, *The Uncaptive Eye: Solipsism and Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, in L. S. Rouner, ed., *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, 19, *Loneliness* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), pp. 79-108; W. Goldfarb, *Metaphysics and Nonsense: On Cora Diamond's The Realistic Spirit*, in *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 22 (1997), pp. 57-73; L. Gunnarsson, *Wittgensteins Leiter* (Berlin: Philo, 2000); M.

'chickening out' for arguing that although the Tractarian propositions are nonsense, they nevertheless gesture at some unsayable truth.[9] Diamond contrasts this 'substantial' conception of nonsense with her own 'austere' conception: all nonsense, according to Diamond, is plain nonsense. Or, in Conant's words, "[a]ll the nonsense there is is old-fashioned, straightforward, garden-variety, completely incomprehensible gibberish."[10] This 'austere' conception of Tractarian nonsense is based on the idea that the paragraphs of the preface and the two final propositions cited above constitute the 'frame' of the *Tractatus*. On Diamond's interpretation, this frame contains instructions for reading the book. Apart from it all Tractarian propositions are plain nonsense, including Wittgenstein's apparent claim that there are features of reality that can be shown but cannot be put into words.

The presented distinction between a 'substantial' and an 'austere' conception of nonsense refers to a distinction between two ways of understanding the causes of nonsense. Diamond rejects Hacker's view that, in the *Tractatus*, nonsense results from a violation of logical syntax.[11] A sentence is nonsense, she argues, not because a formal concept is mistakenly used to make a genuine claim but rather because one or more of its constituent words have not been given any meaning. If, however, one or more constituents of a sentence have no sense, Diamond argues, then the sentence as a whole makes no sense, and hence *no* part of it has any meaning.[12] We can therefore identify the contribution that the senses of the parts of a proposition make to the sense of its whole only if the whole *has* a sense. No constituent sign of a nonsensical sentence can

Kremer, *The Purpose of Tractarian Nonsense*, in *Noûs*, 35 (2001), pp. 39-73; and T. Ricketts, *Pictures, Logic, and the Limits of Sense in Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 59-99.

9 Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, p. 181. Similarly, Goldfarb, *Metaphysics and Nonsense* characterises traditional interpretations as 'irresolute'. Cf. Kremer's discussion (in *The Purpose of Tractarian Nonsense*) of the concept of resolution and the critical response in P. M. Sullivan, *On Trying to be Resolute: A Response to Kremer on the Tractatus*, in *European Journal of Philosophy*, 10 (2002), pp. 43-78.

10 Conant, *Must We Show*, p. 253.

11 Diamond *The Realistic Spirit*, pp. 95ff. Cf. the discussion in Conant, *Two Conceptions*, pp. 38ff.

12 Diamond *The Realistic Spirit*, pp. 100ff.

mean what it does in other genuine sentences. And hence, no constituent of a nonsensical sentence can be said, as Hacker wishes to do, to be combined with the wrong sort of signs. The fact that, when hearing the sentence 'Caesar is a prime number', we automatically think of 'Caesar' as meaning a certain person is rather, Diamond claims, a *psychological* fact. It does not follow from this that the sign as it occurs in the nonsensical sentence has the *logical* role of standing for a person. It cannot have this logical role, Diamond argues, because there is no genuine complex in which it could play *any* role. Diamond concludes that the nonsensicality of nonsense sentences like 'Caesar is a prime number' is due to our failure to make certain determinations of meaning.

The new reading thus rejects two 'traditional' theses. It denies, firstly, that there are certain kinds of sentences which are nonsense but nevertheless succeed in gesturing at what they cannot say. And it denies, secondly, that these sentences are nonsense by virtue of violating the rules of logical syntax. Underlying the rejection of these two claims is what Diamond stresses as the correct understanding of Wittgenstein's conception of logic. Logic, according to Wittgenstein, is internal to thought. In the same way as the world that one would see through a pair of 'irremovable glasses' would necessarily have the form it has when seen through these glasses, so all thought necessarily has the form of logic.[13] Just as one could not take off the glasses, so we cannot remove logic and say things from a position outside logic. Since, therefore, there can be no illogical thought, there can be no nonsensical thought either. For something which does not conform to the logic of language is no thought at all. It follows that to say that there is some truth which cannot be said but can nevertheless be grasped, is precisely to imagine that we can take a standpoint outside logic. Since what cannot be said cannot be thought, we would have to be outside logic to be able to grasp what cannot be said. And it follows also that to say that there can be some kind of nonsensical thought which is the result of the violation of logical syntax would be to claim the possibility of illogical thought and would thereby again try to obtain a position outside logic. The underlying accusation of Diamond's criticism against 'traditional' interpreters like Hacker is therefore that they presuppose precisely this position.

13 Ibid., p. 43.

On the new reading, the sentences of the *Tractatus* are thus plain nonsense, strings of words without any meaning that do not convey any hidden thought. But if this is so, how can the Tractarian propositions at all elucidate? How can they help us, as Wittgenstein says, to 'see the world aright'? Without an answer to these questions proposition 6.54, and with it the aim of the *Tractatus*, remain unexplained.

In fact, Diamond admits that we *can* draw a distinction between two types of nonsense.[14] This distinction, however, is not *internal* but *external* to the sentence deemed to be nonsensical. It does not depend on the proposition itself but on the role played by our imagination when trying to understand the proposition. By an imaginative act, Diamond argues, the Tractarian pseudo-propositions can lead us to understand not the *sentences* themselves – since they have no meaning that could be understood – but the *author* of these sentences – the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*. But what is it to understand someone who expresses plain nonsense? Diamond suggests that "to understand a person who utters nonsense is to go as far as one can with the idea that there is [a thought to be understood]".[15] By taking the psychological elements associated with the familiar signs contained in nonsensical sentences for their meaning, Diamond argues, we actively enter an illusion. We imagine that we understand the sentences and, by so doing, we come to understand their author. Precisely this, Diamond claims further, is what the *Tractatus* self-consciously does when presenting nonsensical pseudo-propositions. The aim of the imaginative activity of taking nonsense sentences for sense is, according to Diamond, only *transitional*. By getting into the same position as his metaphysically inclined readers, Wittgenstein aims to lead the readers out of their illusion to see that where they had previously thought to have understanding of meaningful propositions, "there was only false imagination".[16] The *Tractatus* thereby shows them that they cannot obtain a position outside language and its logical structure. The propositions of the *Tractatus* can thus cure its readers of their illusion of seeing sense in the nonsensical pseudo-propositions of philosophy. The *Tractatus* is not self-undermining, Diamond concludes. It is therapeutic if read correctly.

14 Diamond, *Ethics, Imagination and the Method*, pp. 158ff.
15 Ibid., p. 157.
16 Ibid., p. 159.

4. Making sense of transitional nonsense

Diamond's concept of transitional nonsense is central to her therapeutic reading. But how exactly are we to understand this notion? According to Hacker, by distinguishing between transitional nonsense and plain nonsense Diamond reinstates the distinction between two types of nonsense.[17] This, however, does not seem to be quite correct. The distinction Diamond wants to get rid of is a distinction between nonsensical sentences, which somehow manage to convey thoughts, and nonsensical gibberish, with no thought behind it. Her own distinction, by contrast, is compatible with the claim that there are no inexpressible truths behind any kind of nonsense. The difference between transitional and plain nonsense, on her view, is that in the former but not in the latter case the author uses such nonsense with the imagined belief that it really makes sense.[18] But how are we to understand the claim that, by actively imagining a nonsensical pseudo-proposition to be making sense, we can arrive at a different view of the world and language?

Diamond is very explicit about *what* the therapeutic aim of the *Tractatus* is. She is less clear, however, about *how* this aim is supposed to be accomplished. It will therefore be helpful to look at what other proponents of the new reading add in this regard. Thus, James Conant argues that:-

> "Wittgenstein's aim in the *Tractatus* is to lead the philosopher from the original 'disguised' piece of nonsense (to which he is attracted) through this network of (apparent) logical relations to some more patently nonsensical (pseudo-) consequence."[19]

The *Tractatus* elucidates, Conant claims:-

> "by first encouraging me to suppose that I can use language ... [to get outside language], and then enabling me to work

17 Hacker, *Was He Trying*, p. 361.
18 In Floyd's (*The Uncaptive Eye*) words, the difference between these two types of nonsense 'is not a difference between nonsense-with-significance and nonsense-without-significance. Nonsense is nonsense... But nonsense of the sort which interests Wittgenstein can very well be taken for sense' (p. 85).
19 Conant, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and Nonsense, p. 218.

> through the (apparent) consequences of this (pseudo-) supposition, until I reach the point at which my impression of there being a determinate supposition (whose consequences I have throughout been exploring) dissolves on me."[20]

We thus start with the premise that we can meaningfully suppose to take a standpoint outside language. We follow through the *imagined* consequences of this premise until we reach patently nonsensical consequences. We then form the *genuine* conclusion that we were mistaken about our initial supposition. – But how exactly is this conclusion reached? Different answers may be proposed.

First, one might think that the *Tractatus* should be read as giving a *reductio ad absurdum* argument. By starting with the premise that we can meaningfully suppose ourselves to occupy a position outside the logic of our language, we would derive a contradiction: we can both say and not say what is nonsensical. We would then conclude the falsity of the premise: the supposition that we can get outside our language has no meaning. The conclusion would be a genuine one. It would say that our premise was nonsense and would thereby lead us out of the illusion of seeing sense in nonsense. And yet, is this argument really valid? If the premise is plain nonsense, it cannot logically entail *anything*. For the entailment of one sentence by another is dependent on the sense of those sentences. We can thus *imagine* our premise to imply other sentences. But we cannot give a genuine reductio argument for its nonsensicality.[21]

One might reply, secondly, that both the premises and the argumentative steps are meaningful only within our imagination. By going through the imagined argument, we would thus reach at least two apparently contradicting consequences of the premise. In our imagination, it would logically follow that our initial premise was mistaken. We could conclude that it is meaningless to suppose that we can take a position outside language. This conclusion, however, would be part of our imagined argument. It would itself be meaningful only within our imagination. We could then either stay inside the imagined illusion and thereby come to a different, only imaginatively meaningful, view of the

20 Conant, *Elucidation and Nonsense*, p. 196.

21 This problem is discussed by Gunnarsson, *Wittgensteins Leiter*, p. 43.

world. In this case, the *Tractatus* would not have accomplished its therapeutic aim of leading us out of our illusion. Or, we could free ourselves of the illusion and, looking back at what we were doing, realise that we were not thinking anything at all, that there was no argument which led to any conclusion about the limits of thought. Again, we would *not* have arrived at a different view of the world. Either way, we would fail to reach the genuine conclusion that the new reading requires. We would continue to see the world as we did before.

The *Tractatus* thus seems to achieve its therapeutic aim neither by a genuine reductio argument nor by one conducted entirely within our imagination. How, then, can we make sense of Diamond's notion of transitional nonsense? A third way to read the transitional character of Tractarian nonsense would be to argue that the *Tractatus* is not supposed to *convince* the reader of the meaninglessness of its sentences. Rather, the goal of the *Tractatus* should be understood as somehow leading the reader to a point at which she ceases to see meaning in its propositions. By going through the imagined consequences of the premises the reader would reach consequences that were so obviously nonsensical that she could not uphold her imaginative activity of making sense of them. She would, as it were, drop out of her illusion of seeing sense in nonsense and realise that none of the sentences she was considering have any sense. She would not *infer* the nonsensicality of the earlier sentences from the fact that they lead to the later consequences. Rather, understanding the nonsensicality of what she believed to be consequences of the premise, she would realise that she was only caught in an illusion when she thought she was going through a genuine argument with a meaningful premise. The apparent argument of the *Tractatus* could thus be helpful in reaching its goal without offering grounds for any kind of *proof* to the reader.

It is clear, however, that discarding the Tractarian sentences as nonsense in this way means depriving it of the ability to characterise any standpoint which it affirms or denies.[22] Insofar as the Tractarian sentences

22 Lynette Reid (*Wittgenstein's Ladder: The Tractatus and Nonsense*, in *Philosophical Investigations*, 21 (1998), pp. 97-151) therefore points out that the reader who realises that the Tractarian text is nothing but plain nonsense also has to accept that she will not learn anything from the text over and above the fact that it *is* nonsense.

are supposed to lead us to 'see the world aright' they cannot convey any *propositional insights*. Logi Gunnarsson has therefore argued that the *Tractatus* teaches its readers, rather, a *practical skill*: it teaches them to use their already existing, but latent, ability to recognise sentences as nonsensical.[23] By leading its readers into the illusion of taking nonsense sentences for sense, Gunnarson claims, the *Tractatus* makes them realise that they had not given any meaning to the constituents of these sentences. By this method, the book guards its readers against mistaking nonsense for sense in the future.

This interpretation, however, raises a question about the third reading of transitional nonsense. For while it understands the *Tractatus* as training the reader's nonsense-detecting skills *without giving any kind of argument*, the interpretation also seems to ascribe to the *Tractatus* a *clear concept* of the sources of nonsense. Like Diamond, Gunnarsson relies on passage 5.473-5.4733 in which Wittgenstein explains under what conditions a sentence has, or fails to have, a sense. But if this passage is to be taken seriously as underlying the Tractarian teaching, it cannot itself be nonsense. This seems to entail, then, that we need to qualify the new reading's original conception of the *frame* as constituted merely by the preface and the final Tractarian remarks. Thus, according to Gunnarsson the distinction between the frame and the main body of the book is not a distinction between *where* a remark occurs but *how* it occurs. And yet, if this is understood as claiming that the frame is scattered throughout the book, then it seems to entail the following, rather trivial, picture of the *Tractatus*: we have in it a number of sentences some of which have sense while others are nonsense. The meaningful sentences contain instructions for reading the book, including the distinction between sense and nonsense. Equipped with these instructions, the reader knows that a sentence is nonsense if one or more of its parts have not been given any meaning. Possessing this knowledge, however, does not mean that one will never mistake nonsense for sense. As the skill of recognising a sentence as nonsense has to be exercised, this is what the remaining nonsensical sentences are for.

The picture emerging from the notion of transitional nonsense, however, seems to be at odds with central aspects of the new reading

23 Gunnarsson, *Wittgensteins Leiter*, pp. 70ff.

itself. According to the reading just sketched, the main text of the *Tractatus* is claimed to entail a perfectly meaningful account of how it is that we come out with, and thus how we can avoid, nonsense. But this obviously contradicts the core claim of the new reading according to which, in the *Tractatus*, *all nonsense is plain nonsense*. In 6.54 Wittgenstein says that anyone who understands him will recognise his propositions as nonsensical. Wittgenstein does not add that certain Tractarian propositions are excluded from this claim. Why then, should he mislead us by indicating that *all* of his propositions will be recognised as nonsensical if a part of them really contains what has been characterised as the *meaningful frame*? Furthermore, the picture emerging from the concept of transitional nonsense does not seem to account for Wittgenstein's ladder metaphor, again characterised by the new reading as meaningful. For according to the above interpretation, we do not find steps that, like rungs of a ladder, must be climbed in order to arrive at a correct view of the world. Instead, all we get in the *Tractatus* is an explanation of the source of nonsense and an opportunity to train our nonsense-detecting skills.

Gunnarsson's distinction between the frame and the main body of the book as a distinction, not between *where* a remark occurs, but *how* it occurs may also be understood in a different sense. For it might be argued that *how* the distinction occurs may be dependent on whether or not the reader recognises a particular sentence as having a sense.[24] But this second suggestion, too, seems to face difficulties. For it in fact seems to leave little point in the distinction, at the heart of the new reading, between the frame and the body of the Tractarian text. If readers may differ in their attribution of sense to Tractarian sentences, we cannot speak of one determinate distinction between frame and body of the text. Just as the sense of a sentence could depend on each individual reader, so also would the distinction between frame and body of the text. And yet, if there is no determinate distinction between sense and nonsense, and hence no distinction between a correct and an incorrect way of attributing sense, there seems to be no point in the Tractarian aim of training the reader's nonsense-detecting skills and thereby leading them out of their illusion of seeing sense in nonsense.[25] According to the third interpretation just sketched, there can therefore be no progress in the

24 This seems to be implied by some of Conant's claims (*The Method of the Tractatus*, pp. 457f).

reader's ability to recognise meaning. As long as the reader considers a sentence meaningful, it *is* meaningful – it *has* a sense, at least for the reader in question. The Tractarian goal, and hence the ladder image as it is interpreted so far, would lose all significance.

All three interpretations of the concept of transitional nonsense considered thus lead to serious difficulties. And yet, even if these difficulties could be solved for at least one of the alternative accounts the new reading would be faced with a further problem. For a criterion for having recognised certain sentences as part of what Wittgenstein counts as nonsense is, on the new reading, that those sentences are 'thrown away' after one has read the *Tractatus*. Once a sentence is uncovered as a piece of nonsense nothing further can be learnt from it. By citing external evidence, such as published papers, manuscripts, lectures, letters and discussions, Hacker has convincingly shown, however, that Wittgenstein took seriously the idea of things that cannot be said but can be shown – one of the main ideas that he explicitely renounces in the *Tractatus* – even many years after writing the book.[26] Connected with this is Wittgenstein's continued reference to the (thus apparently equally genuine) idea of the 'mystical' as that which cannot be said but can be shown. The fact that Wittgenstein seems to hold on to these ideas which the new reading declares to be plain nonsense thus presents a serious difficulty to all new readers. All they could say with regard to Wittgenstein's notion of the mystical is that under the illusion that there is something which can be shown but not said, we may be in the grip of a mystical feeling towards this something.

The new reading was introduced as an interpretation that would avoid the problems faced by the traditional account. The difficulties just sketched show, however, that the proposed account is in no better position than the approach it was supposed to replace. When its implications are

25 Thomas Wallgren (*Throwing Away the Ladder, and Keeping It Too*, draft, published online: www.helsinki.fi/filosofia/tutkijaseminaari/wallgren.htm, 2000/2001) has pointed out this and similar objections to the new reading.

26 Hacker, *Was He Trying*, pp. 371ff. Further external evidence against the new reading is presented by P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein, Carnap and the New American Wittgensteinians*, in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 53 (2003): pp. 1-23; and J. Proops, *The New Wittgenstein: A Critique*, in *European Journal of Philosophy*, 9 (2001): pp. 375-404.

thought through, the therapeutic interpretation remains rather unconvincing. And yet, it seems that the final problem of how to understand Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing and his idea of the mystical not only points to the inadequacy of the new reading but also hints at a third, alternative, approach to our puzzle about Tractarian nonsense.

5. The role of the 'mystical'

At 6.522, Wittgenstein says:-

> "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical [*das Mystische*]."

Wittgenstein here characterises that of which we cannot speak but which can be shown as the mystical. How exactly should we understand this? Why is this notion important for the project of the *Tractatus*? And how does understanding Wittgenstein's interest in the mystical help us with our original problem of how to read Tractarian nonsense?

It is well known that, at the time of writing the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein was much influenced by the work of Tolstoy.[27] Wittgenstein's favourite book was, for example, Tolstoy's *Gospel in Brief*, a translation and interpretation of the gospels, which Wittgenstein always carried with him as a soldier in the First World War.[28] *A Confession*, an earlier one of Tolstoy's religious writings, describes Tolstoy's struggles with the problem of the meaning of life which ultimately led him to the decision to study the gospels. This latter work characterises the conception of faith as an irrational type of knowledge and is particularly interesting for our investigation of Wittgenstein's notion of nonsense and the mysical in the *Tractatus*. Many of the ideas expressed in the *Tractatus* (as well as in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* which

27 This theme is explored, for instance, by R. Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1990), pp. 115ff. Cf. also B. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life. Young Ludwig 1889-1921* (London: Duckworth, 1988), p. 251.

28 Tolstoy, *A Confession, The Gospel* (*The Gospel* was first published 1896). Cf. Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, pp. 115ff. and 213.

were written during World War One before publishing the *Tractatus*) seem to have been inspired by this book.[29] Taking a closer look at the work can, I believe, give us a clue to Wittgenstein's ideas about the mystical as that which can be shown but not said and may advance our understanding of nonsense in the *Tractatus*.

Tolstoy presents his *Confession* in the form of a temporal narrative about his concern with the problem of the meaning of life. He asks "'Why should I live, why wish for anything, or do anything?' ... 'Is there any meaning in my life that the inevitable death awaiting me does not destroy?'"[30] When first dealing with these questions, Tolstoy tells the reader, the inability to find an answer leads him to despair. Tolstoy has to realise that no branch of knowledge, neither experimental knowledge nor speculative philosophy, can settle his questions. Experimental knowledge on the one hand, including the natural sciences and mathematics, offers precise knowledge but is irrelevant to the question of life. Speculative philosophy on the other hand, though concerned with Tolstoy's question, does not yield secure knowledge. Tolstoy concludes that the only indubitable knowledge attainable is that life is meaningless.

Later, Tolstoy finds his reasoning mistaken: the problem of the meaning of life demands an explanation of finite human life by means of 'the infinite', something that gives meaning to life by going beyond anything there is in the finitude of life itself. The question that torments him thus asks for a meaning to life that is not annihilated by death or any other contingent fact about life. However, Tolstoy reasons, while experimental science is exclusively concerned with finite life, speculative philosophy completely omits any consideration of it. The attempt to combine considerations about the finite and the infinite, to give infinite meaning to finite life, Tolstoy argues, must therefore fail in both branches of knowledge. Tolstoy infers that rational knowledge as such is irrelevant to the question of the meaning of life. And yet, he observes that the majority of mankind lives on, believing in some meaning to the lives they lead. An answer to his question must therefore be provided, Tolstoy

29 L. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe, eds. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961b). Cf. especially 11 June 1916 ff.

30 Tolstoy, *A Confession, The Gospel*, p. 24.

concludes, by some other kind of knowledge, that is, by an *irrational* type of knowledge. This irrational knowledge, according to Tolstoy, is what we understand by 'faith'. It is "a knowledge of the meaning of human life in consequence of which man does not destroy himself but lives."[31]

"[T]he knowledge of faith flows", Tolstoy argues further, "from a mysterious source", which he calls "God".[32] By examining theology, he aims to disentangle the explicable – that which is understandable by reason – from the inexplicable – that which falls outside the realm of reason and belongs to the realm of faith. Tolstoy writes:-

> "I wish to recognise anything that is inexplicable as being so not because the demands of my reason are wrong (they are right, and apart from them I can understand nothing), but because I recognise the limits of my intellect. I wish to understand in such a way that everything that is inexplicable shall present itself to me as being necessarily inexplicable, and not as being something I am under an arbitrary obligation to believe."[33]

For the comparison of Tolstoy's Confession with Wittgenstein's Tractatus three ideas are of particular interest. Firstly, by drawing the limits to reason, or intellect, and thereby to the explicable, Tolstoy argues, we can delimit the realm of what cannot be known rationally. By clarifying what can be known by reason, we can thus determine what cannot be so known. This idea seems reminiscent of Wittgenstein's claim that philosophy "must set limits to what cannot be thought by working outwards through what can be thought" (4.114), and further, that philosophy "will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said" (4.115). In the same way as Tolstoy aims to 'recognise' the 'inexplicable' by determining the limits of his intellect, so also Wittgenstein aims to recognise the unthinkable by determining the limits of thought. We can thus find a parallel between Tolstoy's distinction of what can and what cannot be known rationally and Wittgenstein's distinction of what can and what cannot be thought or said.

31 Ibid., p. 51.

32 Ibid., p. 68.

33 Ibid., pp. 80f.

This first point of agreement refers to a second analogy between Tolstoy's *Confession* and the *Tractatus*. According to Tolstoy, that which cannot be known rationally can nevertheless be known irrationally. On Tolstoy's account, we can thus have an *irrational knowledge*, a type of knowledge that, as he says, contains "the deepest human wisdom"[34]. And, as we have seen, Wittgenstein too argues that that which cannot be thought or said can nevertheless be shown or manifested. Both hold, that the inability to know something rationally or to think or say it, is not the end of the matter. And while, on a third point of agreement, for Tolstoy the source of all irrational knowledge is 'mysterious', so Wittgenstein, too, calls all that which cannot be said but can only be shown the 'mystical'.

The parallels between Tolstoy's *Confession* and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* are striking. If, then, I am right to suggest that this congruence of themes and claims is no coincidence but arises out of a direct influence of Tolstoy's thinking on Wittgenstein's views in the *Tractatus*, if therefore we should understand Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* in the light of Tolstoy's thought, then this suggests that, *pace* the new reading, the mystical, or 'inexpressible', is indeed *'there'* for Wittgenstein.[35] It seems that according to Wittgenstein what cannot be thought but can only be shown is something that we can have some kind of attitude toward. In this sense it seems that, according to Wittgenstein, we *can* have what he calls 'mystical' insights that are not understandable by means of reason and hence inexpressible, but that, like Tolstoy's irrational knowledge, can give us an insight into the character of language and the world. Wittgenstein drops Tolstoy's term 'knowledge' for these insights. And yet, his introductory characterisation of the *Tractatus* as containing *thoughts* combined with his penultimate claim that all Tractarian sentences are *nonsensical* seems to suggest that the insights he understands as mystical constitute inexpressible thoughts in an extraordinary, non-rational, sense of the term.[36]

34 Ibid., p. 53.

35 Contrast Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, ch.6.

36 An earlier attempt to make the comparison between Tolstoy's *Confession* and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* fruitful for an understanding of the latter work can be found in Thompson, *Wittgenstein, Tolstoy*. Thompson concludes that the comparison speaks in favour of the new reading of Tractarian nonsense. His claim according to which Wittgenstein takes from Tolstoy the conviction that an answer to the problem of the meaning of life can only be found in a way of living, and that the philosophical mode of reasoning about this problem has to be replaced by an imaginative one, seems to be at odds with the new reading, however. For if there really is something to be imagined and if, furthermore, we need to change the way we live in order to overcome the problem of the meaning of life, then some kind of insight into, or attitude towards, the meaning of life must be available. Thompson takes the traditional and the new reading as exhausting the space of possible interpretations. Thus, he does not seem to see that there is room for a third alternative, as it is argued here.

It thus seems that Wittgenstein took himself to have certain non-rational thoughts about the essence of language and the world. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein tried to communicate these thoughts. Yet, his attempt to put them into words had to fail: language was inadequate for expressing them. By trying to formulate his insights, Wittgenstein realised that the attempt to express them in the form of propositional statements seemed to leave him only with nonsensical pseudo-propositions. This is why, in 6.54, Wittgenstein concludes that the Tractarian propositions are nonsense. They do not *represent* the insights he had. Through reading them, however, we may nevertheless get a grasp of what Wittgenstein was trying to communicate. This grasp can be no rational understanding of ordinary thoughts. Instead it is reached if, through reading the *Tractatus*, the reader gains the same, or a similar, non-rational insight as Wittgenstein. Once she has grasped what Wittgenstein tried to communicate by means of the Tractarian sentences, she realises that these sentences themselves must be 'transcended'. The *Tractatus* may thus lead the reader to grasp what Wittgenstein was trying to express if she comprehends that Wittgenstein's use of the Tractarian propositions was only an attempt to communicate inexpressible thoughts, and if she arrives at similar non-rational thoughts herself. In this sense the reader can use the Tractarian sentences as rungs of a ladder. She can climb up until she gets a grasp of Wittgenstein's thoughts. Only once she has reached that which Wittgenstein considers the correct view of language and the world, and thus the top of the ladder, can she throw the ladder away.[37]

37 Some commentators (cf. E. Stenius, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Critical Exposition of its Main Lines of Thought* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), pp. 222ff.) have characterised the mystical in the *Tractatus* as limited to thoughts about the ethical, aesthetic and religious. There seems to be no reason, however, to exclude the essence of language and the world more generally from that which Wittgenstein considered as the mystical. I therefore regard both his highly abstract discussion of logic and language as well as his remarks about ethics, aesthetics and religion to be attempts to communicate something that Wittgenstein considered to

The present approach thus agrees with Hacker in saying that there is something that the Tractarian nonsense conveys, or at least attempts to convey. And it agrees with the new reading in saying that the Tractarian nonsense communicates no rational thoughts. Yet, it disagrees with both readings insofar as it takes the Tractarian sentences as an attempt to communicate ineffable, non-rational, and thus mystical, insights.

By taking seriously the notion of the mystical as that which can be shown but not said, the present account may thus avoid some of the problems that face the new reading. For it seems to give an explanation of Wittgenstein's ladder metaphor as well as of Tractarian nonsense as something that does not say but shows. And it can account for the fact that, after having written the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein continued employing the notion of the mystical as that which can be shown but not said precisely because he took this notion seriously. Furthermore, the present account also seems to solve the puzzle with which the traditional account left us. By drawing a distinction between rational thought and non-rational, inexpressible insights, the present approach can account for Wittgenstein's claim, laid out in Section 1, that what cannot be said cannot be thought and vice versa. The nonsensical sentences of the *Tractatus* are not taken to convey ordinary thoughts. Instead, they are recognised as (failed) attempts to express certain inexpressible thoughts. By drawing the limits to language, Wittgenstein can thus be taken to accomplish his aim of drawing the limits to thought – rational thought which can be expressed by language. Beyond this limit is the mystical, graspable only by means of some kind of mystical insight.

An obvious objection may be raised. For the approach to the *Tractatus* that is proposed here might solve our initial puzzle of reading the *Tractatus,* but it leaves us with two equally perplexing problems. First, what are we to make of the notion of an insight into things that cannot be understood rationally? And second, how can sentences that do not represent anything help us to get a grasp of such inexpressible insights? One might reply that the point of my approach was precisely to show that we *cannot* rationally understand irrational insights. We cannot *make sense* of them because they *have* no sense. It is therefore simply impossible to give an account of the notion of a mystical insight over and

be graspable, in the end, only by means of some kind of mystical insight.

above the rough and ultimately unsatisfactory description of it as a kind of spiritual attitude to something, such as the world, thought or language. One might say, further, that the Tractarian nonsense sentences may convey Wittgenstein's insights because these sentences are precisely the kinds of thing that someone who had these insights would say. Wittgenstein's insights might somehow be associated with the sentences he uses. Despite these attempted explanations I agree with the perplexity of the notion of the mystical as it is used here. It seems, moreover, that Wittgenstein is alluding to precisely this problem when he writes in the Preface:-

> "Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it ... Its purpose would be achieved if it gave pleasure to one who read it with understanding."[38]

The *Tractatus* is thus inspired by insights that, as Wittgenstein concludes, are not adequately expressed by its carefully numbered propositions. Wittgenstein's insights can be grasped only by someone who is already prone to have the non-rational thoughts that Wittgenstein is hinting at. In this sense, as Wittgenstein says in the Preface, the *Tractatus* cannot serve as a 'text-book'. Despite its apparently rigid analysis of the structure of language and its relationship with the world, the *Tractatus* remains a deeply mystical book. Even though, according to the *Tractatus*, we must allow for some kind of insight into the *mystical*, we will never be able to ascribe to them a meaning that we can actually *make sense of.*

38 Translation amended.

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Epistemology and the Civil Union of Sense and Self- Contradiction: A Coordinated Solution to the Shared Problems of Political and Mainstream Epistemology

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"I have nothing
Of woman in me: now from head to foot
I am marble-constant: now the fleeting moon
No planet is of mine."
Antony and Cleopatra[1]

1. Two Kinds of Debate in Mainstream Epistemology

There are two types of debate in contemporary mainstream epistemology. The first is between different types of epistemology, and the second between epistemologists and those who reject epistemology itself altogether. I shall argue that a viable politically explicit epistemology needs to take the contradictory insights and results of both into account. I shall focus particularly on feminist epistemology.

Examples of the first type of debate include debates between epistemologies based on coherence and correspondence theories of truth, or between different characterisations of knowledge as a sociological phenomenon and as the context-independent product of objective tests, or

1 W. Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), V, ii, pp. 238-241.

between different notions of the nature and role of objectivity. Feminist epistemology and philosophy of science have generally taken positions in this type of debate, attempting to identify and correct, or make use of or add to, gender characteristics of the various positions. This remains true even when feminists draw, as they often do, on work that is also drawn on in the second type of debate. For example, in the introduction to the fairly representative collection *Feminist Epistemologies*, many of whose contributors draw on work central to anti-epistemology, Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter write, "The authors included in this text are concerned with many of the problems that have vexed traditional epistemology, among them the nature of knowledge itself, epistemic agency, justification, objectivity . . . . But their essays . . . treat these issues in new ways . . . ."[2] These new ways do challenge the possibility of "a general account of knowledge," but still offer particular accounts of knowledge that attend to "the social context and status of knowers". Similarly, the contributors to the collection *Feminism and Science* are concerned with using, modifying the focus of, and adding to existing epistemologies and science.[3]

As I shall try to show, however, mainstream epistemology suffers from intractably unresolved conflicts even before feminist critique arrives on the scene. Feminist attempts to transform the political dimensions of mainstream theories leave these conflicts intact, and are consequently still caught in the same epistemological dilemmas.[4] In particular, I shall sketch some of the ways in which both mainstream epistemology and the feminist critique of it is characterised by unresolved conflicts about whether or not we need epistemological foundations, and whether or not we can find them if we do need them.

2 L. Alcoff and E. Potter, eds., *Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 1-2.

3 N. Tuana, ed., *Feminism and Science* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). See, for example, S. Harding, "Is There a Feminist Method?," p. 29-30.

4 I do not wish to claim that political transformations are not also equally epistemological in the strict sense. It is clear that a sexist bias, being a bias, is a strictly epistemological weakness. In fact I shall argue that a real solution depends on perspectives that only the more marginalised – or explicitly politicised – epistemological work has opened up. But, as I hope to make clear, feminist epistemology has so far taken over conflicts of mainstream epistemology that remain independently of the politically relevant improvements.

I should clarify that the second and third sections below, in which I discuss the conflicts within mainstream and feminist epistemologies, are not an attempt to argue that these epistemologies have failed, or, more particularly, that we need, or do not need, a foundation for knowledge. The same is true of the fourth section on anti-epistemology. My aim is, instead, to rehearse some of the *existing and ongoing debate and reservations* in both mainstream and feminist epistemology, in order to show the extent to which these fields are, understandably, conflicted and troubled by these questions. That is, in these sections my thesis is not that the various critiques of the various epistemologies are right, but that it remains *understandably unresolved* amongst various influential versions and critiques of epistemology whether or not, for example, we need foundations and whether or not we can succeed in establishing them if we do need them.

The framework I propose in the later part of the paper endorses *both* sides of *each* of these irresolutions, and it is by doing so, I believe, that it offers a solution.

These unresolved conflicts within epistemology have led to the second type of debate, between epistemologists and those who argue that epistemology as such is both futile and unnecessary. More extremely, one such claim is that the notion of epistemology has no substantive content at all. Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty are perhaps the most prominent of the anti-epistemologists. Feminists seem to have focused less on this type of debate; but I shall argue that what is crucial to solving the problems that explicitly politicised epistemological efforts have made so urgently visible is a combination of the epistemological and anti-epistemological positions. And more than this, I shall argue that these solutions also help resolve the still intractable conflicts that trouble mainstream positions *within* epistemology. That is, an acknowledgment of the force of anti-epistemology is the basis for establishing a working and politically reasonable epistemology.

It should already be apparent that the logic here will be in some ways paradoxical. It is in fact some of the political perspectives on epistemology that have made the necessity of this kind of paradox most apparent, as well as the need to rework what we think of as logic and

sense themselves. As Donna Haraway writes, for example, feminists need "*simultaneously* an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims . . . *and* a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world," a combination that is "both contradictory and necessary."[5] Andrea Nye argues that logic itself is socially and historically conditioned, and she advocates finding "an understanding that logical analysis bound to consistency and univocality cannot."[6] And in Luce Irigaray's much more nuanced assessment, she argues that although what we understand as logic is all the logic we have, it is nonetheless tied to the functioning of a particular, patriarchal social order. Consequently, it is necessary not take its sense and validity for granted, but to find a way of thinking paradoxically from both "inside" and "outside" logic at the same time.[7]

I shall first discuss the conflicts shared by mainstream and feminist epistemology, then a derivative conflict that is particularly acute for politically oriented approaches. I then sketch the anti-epistemological view. Next I offer an example of the kind of situation to which feminist and other marginalised epistemologies are sensitive. This kind of situation motivates the solution I propose, with which I end.

2. Shared Problems

The perennial problems of infinite regress and ultimate circularity are very well known; so well known, in fact, that for the most part epistemologists seem to take them as irrelevant. There are no widely accepted solutions, yet the work of epistemology proceeds regardless. In a way, the very intractability of these problems cancels them out across all theories: any rival theory will suffer from the same problems, so the choice of the "best theory" is unaffected by the presence of these problems. In fact, as I shall discuss, it is because of these apparently

5 D. J. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 187.

6 A. Nye, *Words of Power: A Feminist Reading of the History of Logic* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 5.

7 L. Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), trans. C. Porter with C. Burke, p. 68-69.

intractable problems that anti-epistemologists have rejected epistemology altogether.

Epistemologies based on correspondence theories of truth face the problem of infinite regress. Whatever given or datum is taken as a piece of the world "out there," to which assertions correspond, we still need a criterion for knowing that and how it "corresponds" with our beliefs and statements about it. This means that our knowledge of the correspondence must, in turn, correspond to some other datum, the fact or confirmation of the correspondence itself. And then we need a criterion for knowing that and how *that* datum "corresponds" with the belief about *it*. The result is an infinite regress. As Davidson expresses the problem, if we take as the link between our beliefs and the world "something self-certifying" like our subjective experiences of observation, "it is so private as to lack connection with the sentences of the public language which alone are capable of expressing scientific, or even objective, claims. But if we start with sentences or beliefs already belonging to the public language (or what can be expressed in it), we find no intelligible way to base it on something self-certifying."[8]

I shall restrict myself, in this section, to these brief comments on mainstream reservations about the epistemological solutions offered by the correspondence theory of truth, as also to the brief comments on the coherence theory that follow, since the discussion of feminist concerns in the following section, and then the discussion of anti-epistemology, will develop these reservations in a variety of ways.

Epistemologies based on coherence theories of truth, for their part, face the problem of circularity. The soundness of an assertion depends on its relation to all of the others in the system or web of relevant assertions. But the soundness of all of the others depends in part on their relations to the first assertion. In the end, the circle closes: each assertion is justified by assertions that are in turn justified by it. Differently put, the whole set of assertions, in their particular relations, is justified by the whole set of assertions in their particular relations, and nothing else. The mediation of

8 D. Davidson, "Empirical Content," in E. Lepore, ed., *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1986), p. 327.

justification through many assertions certainly performs a useful work of organising the world, but the epistemological value of that work still rests on circularity. The weakness is made most visible in that more than one coherent set of assertions is conceivable, and if coherence is one's criterion of knowledge, there is no way to decide between them. As Quine points out, one only needs to adjust other parts of the web to cohere with a new assertion, and the new assertion is then equally justified with old, incompatible ones: "Any statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system."[9]

Given that feminist work has largely consisted in contributions to the first type of debate, that is, in attempts to improve, add to, or transform the way epistemology asks and answers the same questions it has traditionally asked, the same kinds of conflicts can be expected to appear there.

3. A Derivative Problem in Feminist Epistemology

Feminist approaches have focused on identifying and attempting to correct the sexist biases in epistemological theory, or alternatively to make use of the perspectives illuminatingly opened up by gendered interests and standpoints. The possible loci of sexist biases in epistemological theory, to consider those for the moment, are various, ranging from a crude depreciation of women as thinkers and knowers to, as I have mentioned, the structure of logic as such. But while a sexist bias is certainly an epistemological problem, the decision that such a bias is present is itself a claim to knowledge and so itself subject to epistemological constraints. And as feminism itself has often worked to show, all epistemological approaches, including those of feminists, and including claims to knowledge about epistemology and about bias within it, are potentially or perhaps even inescapably subject to the biases of the interests motivating them. Alcoff and Potter, for example, write of "the political commitments and effects implicit in every philosophical position" (*Epistemologies*, p. 3). And as Sandra Harding notes about

9 W. V. O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," in *From a Logical Point of View: Nine Logico-Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 43.

(what I believe is) the analogous case of sociological accounts of knowledge, such explanations, while valuable for what they achieve, "implicitly assume as grounds for their own account precisely the epistemology they so effectively undermine" ("Method," p. 24). These problems of self-reference are exactly what have motivated paradoxical approaches like Irigaray's.

Here the cogent and otherwise enormously helpful insight of various political epistemologists that the particularity of our perspectives is in fact helpful for gaining knowledge, and perhaps even necessary for it, does not resolve the problem. Harding, for example, explaining standpoint approaches, argues that one's social situation not only sets limits on but also *enables* what one can know. Standpoint theorists therefore regard examination of the roots of knowledge claims in specific social situations as a way of "maximising objectivity."[10] But while the acknowledgment and use of our particular "biases" may allow us to avoid many of the weaknesses of a false "neutrality," and so in this respect may produce *better* epistemologies than a commitment to neutrality can, this does not respond to reservations about the ways in which situated epistemologies are still subject to the *negative* features of particularity, to dimensions of *genuine* bias. For example, what, in the end, justifies situated claims to knowledge against *conflicting* situated claims? On this theory, we need another situated standpoint to adjudicate; but this new standpoint can have no privilege against the opposed claims of the standpoints it judges. We are back either to an infinite regress of adjudicating positions, or to circularly taking one standpoint to be the right one on the basis of that standpoint itself (or equally circularly taking both to be right, each on its own basis), or to abandoning the claim to knowledge altogether. As I shall discuss further below in connection with Kuhn's work on paradigms, it is not clear either that we can escape this kind of conflict or, given this kind of framework, that we can resolve it.

Returning to the issue of sexism: the very concept of sexism itself depends on various commitments which themselves are not simply given, but are claims to truth disputed by claims based on other commitments.

10 S. Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity?,'" in *Feminist Epistemologies*, p. 54-55, 69. See also, for example, Haraway's "Situated Knowledges."

As is well known, even the concepts of a "woman" and of "women" are very troublesome to identify as a result of the role of interests in forming these concepts. In Denise Riley's words, the category of "'women' is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change." And she notes that "[f]eminism has intermittently been as vexed with the urgency of disengaging from the category 'women' as it has with laying claim to it."[11]

Feminist critiques, then, have sharpened the relevance of the problems of ultimate circularity and infinite regress. And given these problems, feminist critique faces a dilemma. The very vigilance towards one's own biases that is one of the strengths of feminist epistemology problematises the force of feminist critique. If bias is inescapable (this is not the universal feminist position; I shall explore further shortly), then feminist claims are ultimately no more justified than those of their opponents. But, even if cruder forms of bias are escapable, or even if bias can be taken into account in ways that, for example, enhance objectivity, the problems of circularity and infinite regress ensure that, in the end, feminist claims are still no more justified than those of their opponents when opposing commitments are sufficiently different.

Kuhn's notion of incommensurability is relevant here. As Kuhn argues with respect to science, it is possible for competing scientific frameworks (in his word, paradigms) to differ with respect to their very criteria of evidence and of drawing conclusions, that is, with respect to what counts as evidence and valid inference. Consequently "the choice [between paradigms] is not and cannot be determined merely by the evaluative procedures characteristic of normal science, for these depend in part upon a particular paradigm, and that paradigm is at issue. When paradigms enter, as they must, into a debate about paradigm choice, their role is necessarily circular."[12] Similarly, if logic itself can be put in question, being contextually constituted, if the formal structure of reasoning itself can be subject to accusations of partiality or bias, then conflicting positions need have no genuine criteria by which to legitimate

11 D. Riley, *"Am I That Name?" Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988), p. 1-2, 3-4.

12 T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, 1970), p. 94, my insertion.

their claims against each other. More to the point, in this situation positions cannot legitimate their claims *to themselves* against conflicting claims: they have no non-arbitrary grounds for rejecting the criteria of the conflicting positions, or at least no more grounds than the other positions have for rejecting theirs.

I use the word "legitimate" deliberately: the criteria that are lacking here are not merely criteria of persuasion, but *epistemological* criteria. That is, they are the criteria by which one establishes the truth of one's claims, and it is those criteria that, given incommensurability of reasoning itself, fail to be valid for the other position(s). Consequently one cannot legitimately expect the other position(s) to accept one's claims. In fact the very basis for one's claims, that they meet the criteria for truth, is also the basis for the opposing claims, that they meet (different) criteria for truth. And since these are, precisely, the criteria for truth, they cannot be further justified without circularity: they themselves would have to be invoked in such justification. Given that the opposing claims retain their legitimacy, one cannot simply avow the claims of one's own position either.

Here the political motive is at odds with the epistemological one, and if feminist approaches are to be based on truth and not simply on a dogmatic will to power, this divergence of truth and political concerns must be resolved.

One way to go here is to embrace relativism. Barbara Herrnstein Smith has offered a subtle account of relativism in which not "anything" would "go," because social conventions, our specific, socially given forms of justification, mandate some ways of reaching conclusions and not others.[13] The problem remains, however, that even if there are social constraints on knowledge claims, these are still not adequately *epistemological* constraints. They tell us what "we" allow ourselves to say, but this so far has no bearing on the truth of what we say, only on our conventions, even if, as Smith argues, all we have is our conventions. And, practically speaking, "we" are of course very divided, so we still have no means of establishing which criteria are the decisive ones.[14]

13 B. H. Smith, *Belief and Resistance: Dynamics of Contemporary Intellectual Controversy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 65, 54ff.

An alternative direction is to reject the idea that reasoning as such is gendered. While it is conceivable that feminist purposes would be served by such an approach, a great deal of productive work on the effects of gender-styled modes of enquiry would have to be abandoned. Perhaps more significantly, the problems discussed above would remain unaffected in contexts like cross-cultural, historical and racial comparison: and these contexts are central to feminism itself. As Alcoff and Potter note, ". . . women, per se, do not exist. There exist upper-caste Indian little girls; older, heterosexual Latinas; and white, working-class lesbians" (*Epistemologies*, p. 4). The problem of incommensurability, and hence of ultimate circularity in justifying one's position, if it exists at all, is common to all uses of rationality or to all truth-claiming discourses, even within a single culture.

And even if we could find a way of showing that incommensurability ultimately does not exist, the equivalent problem would still exist for *practical* purposes. Many debates relevant to feminism are practically speaking irresolvable, given, for example, constraints on time and on willingness to engage reasonably or sympathetically with the opposing view. A familiar case would be debates between many pro- and anti-abortion positions. The result is that even if genuine incommensurability does not exist, we would still need a way of negotiating conflicting truth claims each of which has some incorrigible claim to justification.

Before investigating the notion of truth further, a sketch of anti-epistemology will be helpful.

4. Anti-Epistemology

Richard Rorty has argued that epistemology is either an empty concept or a waste of time. The claim that it is an empty or meaningless (pseudo-) concept, having no substantive content, is really a sort of early approximation in his thought, and misleading in that it suggests that he

14 For a critical discussion of "the disappearing 'we'" in connection with Richard Rorty, see M. Kingwell, *A Civil Tongue: Justice, Dialogue and the Politics of Pluralism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), p. 36ff.

could demonstrate something about a concept (its emptiness) once and for all, i.e. that he can rely on a valid epistemology. In fact his thinking later shifts to the claim that epistemology is simply not worth bothering with; there are more productive things to do. Nonetheless, I shall return to the claim of meaninglessness, which is still maintained by others, and is in any event helpful in its own right.

These rigorous rejections of epistemology supply the grounds for social epistemology, which without such grounds is not yet epistemology at all, for the reasons given above. Sandra Harding again: such sociologies "implicitly assume as grounds for their own account precisely the epistemology they so effectively undermine" ("Method," p. 24). As I shall argue after this section, however, the basic epistemological problems remain unless we find a way of coordinating traditional epistemology and anti-epistemology, including in the latter social epistemology.

The later Rorty argues that epistemology is a waste of time because of the type of ultimate circularity I have discussed above. First, "the pragmatist [like Rorty] cannot justify . . . [our cultural] habits without circularity, but then neither can the realist."[15] We cannot escape the limitations of our culture. And second, our criteria for establishing truth are interdependent with many other elements of our culture, including our language and our various conceptual networks. That is, in order to understand and make use of our truth criteria, we need to be part of a culture. "[T]he only criterion we have for applying the word 'true' is justification, and justification is always relative to an audience."[16] It follows that any truth criteria that diverged from our own sufficiently to put them in real question would belong not simply to a different perspective but to an entirely different culture, with a language and conceptual "system" we could not understand. We are, then, restricted to what "people like us" say, and to pretend otherwise is just to spin our wheels making statements which have no purchase on anything we, in our culture and with our language and concepts, might mean by reality – or,

15 R. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume 1* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 28-29, my insertions.

16 R. Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers Volume 3* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 4.

simply, mean at all. Consequently there is no point in trying to ground – or criticise – our knowledge on ultimately justified criteria: we cannot get beyond what we happen to do and say. Any attempt to ground our knowledge ultimately depends circularly on what we happen to find ourselves doing or saying. Even "the pragmatist . . . cannot argue that [metaphysics] is inconsistent with a mass of our other beliefs. . . . All the pragmatist can do is . . . point to the seeming futility of metaphysical activity; . . . In the end we pragmatists have no real arguments against . . . [metaphysical] intuitions . . . " (Rorty, *Truth*, p. 42, my insertions). We have, in our culture, criteria for what, in our culture, we rightly call knowledge (for example, *Truth*, p. 73). But these criteria are not ultimately justified (or unjustified); we simply learn them as part of becoming members of our society and its various subcultures.

Rorty argues earlier, however, for what is in one sense a more extreme position. One of the resources he turns to here is the work of Donald Davidson, notably Davidson's paper "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme."[17] The partial (and extremely simplified) gist of the argument is that, if we cannot meaningfully speak of an alternative framework (or "conceptual scheme") to our own, we cannot meaningfully speak of our own framework either ("Idea," p. 198). Talk of our own framework, which contrasts with no other framework, is just talk about how we are generally: it does not pick out any features of how we are. We cannot meaningfully speak of other frameworks, and consequently talk of our own framework does no work, identifies nothing, does not signify. In other words, the very idea of an ultimately or globally justifiable framework has no content. All there is, as Rorty's later argument also urged, is what we find ourselves doing and saying in particular circumstances. Consequently there is no content to the objection that what we do and say may be ultimately or globally flawed. While Rorty's later position might look like relativism, in this earlier version, as Rorty argues, there is nothing for our "framework" to be relative *to* (*Objectivity*, pp. 25-26), and nothing we can speak of as a framework to be relative to anything.

17 D. Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in *Inquiries*, pp. 183-198.

It follows from this view, then, that epistemology is a mistaken enterprise, at least insofar as it asks foundational questions about the possibility of knowledge as such. Knowledge is an empirical or everyday matter, not a philosophical one. "[T]he situation may be seen . . . as a matter of conditioning people . . . to hold certain sentences true under publicly observable conditions . . . (Davidson, "Empirical Content," p. 330). We have ways of getting knowledge that we have learned as members of our culture. What we need to do is to learn those ways, and they then give us whatever we might mean by knowledge. There are no further meaningful questions to be asked.

I turn now to an example of the kind of situation to which feminist and other marginalised epistemologies are sensitive, in order to illustrate the necessity for both the insights of the anti-epistemological view and the conflicting insights of the pro-epistemological view.

5. An Example

Let us imagine a dialogue concerning contemporary feminists and women in earlier ages. If feminism itself depends on historical conditions (and it must, given the circularity and hence bias of all positions – including gendered bias, which goes both ways), we can ask whether men and women in earlier historical periods were sexist. One immediate response might be: perhaps we can say they were not sexist, while if we did the same things in our own historical period we would be. But, one might say, surely it makes no sense to say that men's dominating women is sexist now but was not so then? Surely it is the same act with the same parties?

A common response is that it is not in fact the same act with the same parties, since social structure constitutes both the parties and the acts as what they are, and in earlier periods both were differently constituted. But then, one might rejoin, what is the force of talking about "truth"? Everything, including *claims about* the social structure, becomes constructed or equally arbitrary. Diana Fuss notes (with the aim of arguing that constructionism in fact depends on essentialism, and vice-versa) that social constructionism avoids this by inconsistently treating

"the social" as in effect an essence, as not itself constructed but as something simply given that explains everything else.[18] But if, as a consistent constructionism must take it, social structure constitutes everything, including claims about social structure, *no* socially intelligible claim is more justified than another, and in fact there is no substance to the notion of *justification* in this context at all. There is only how things happen to be constructed, and everything might as well be constructed arbitrarily one way as much as another. This is a standard complaint against Foucault's reduction of everything to power, that he gives no reason to choose one form of power over another.[19] This outcome leaves no principled or justice-bearing justification for feminism, even in justifying to *itself* that its claims are *true*.

So we could try (and I urge the reader to bear with the following contradictions: I shall shortly try to show that they are not the end of the story): *then* it was not true to say that people were sexist in their consciousness and practice; but *now* it is true to say that even *then* it was true. In other words, truth as stated *in a particular context* remains coherently truth, remains universally constant, while that truth would be negated, equally universally and constantly, in a different context. Here the emphasis is on the constitution of truth by rhetorical context, the context of who is speaking to whom, and when and for what purpose. A shift in rhetorical context would then involve a kind of dividing line on one side of which *everything* under discussion is one way and on the other side of which *everything* under discussion is another, incompatible way. This is a sort of line across which *the whole of truth* under discussion refracts, emerging differently.[20]

18 D. Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 6.

19 Michael Walzer, for example, writes, "Foucault gives us no reason to expect that these [new power formations] will be any better than the ones we now live with. Nor, for that matter, does he give us any way of knowing what 'better' might mean." "The Politics of Michel Foucault," in D. C. Hoy, ed., *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 61, my insertion.

20 Michael Williams has offered an approach to anti-epistemology that goes some way towards the kind of formulation I am attempting. He argues that sceptical doubts are not meaningless, but belong to a unique context, separate from that of our everyday concerns with knowledge. *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), e.g., p. 12.

If this formulation achieves any sense at all (given arguments like Davidson's), it is of course self-contradictory. But before I address this contradiction, let me note something it does imply and something it does not imply. If any sense can be made of this kind of formulation – and it is my aim to show that a sense can be made of it – truth needs to be understood as a shifting (inconstant, fickle) terrain: now absolute, now relative, with, if anything, what Barbara Smith calls a "pidgin" status between (*Belief*, p. 68). The substance of relevant truth itself would shift depending on rhetorical context; logic and sense themselves would alter, in ways made determinate by the specificity of the rhetorical contexts. And this set of formulations about truth is itself located within a specific rhetorical context. That is, there are also rhetorical contexts in which one is comparing *the rhetorical contexts* themselves, and the resulting formulations have their sense and truth only within those meta-contexts. Assuming for the moment, then, that I can succeed in giving a sense to this role of rhetorical context, it would be right in some rhetorical contexts to say, for example, "those opposed to us are simply, exclusively and absolutely wrong"; in other rhetorical contexts, "they are simply, exclusively and absolutely right"; in others, "who is right is relative to the framework, or to the rhetorical context"; in others, "both parties are absolutely (exclusively) right"; and in others, "both parties are absolutely (exclusively) right *and* wrong."

If, again, these formulations can be given a sense at all, the contradictory alternatives are an artefact of the comparison between rhetorical contexts. That is *their* rhetorical context, a meta-rhetorical context, and necessarily requires a contradictory logic. But, as I shall argue, the necessary contradictions are unique to this meta-context, and they *resolve* also as an artefact of shifting appropriately from this meta-context of comparison of rhetorical contexts. So these formulations do not imply that contradiction has free reign. Contradiction would occur only in meta-contexts, and would lose its sense and relation to truth in any other contexts. That is, the role of contradiction here is limited by the very formulations that allow it.

It is worth noting that a description of such an account of truth would draw on a mixture of gender-evocative terms and evaluations. Truth becomes in one sense, as I have very briefly noted, fickle and

inconstant; in another sense truth is simply and stably what it is. More to the point, as will emerge below, its inconstancy is a condition of its constancy and vice-versa. Political oppositions become coordinations, in consequence of the coordination of epistemological oppositions, with interesting results for the gender-evocative presuppositions underlying the political debates.

6. A Proposed Solution

It is well-known, if not necessarily formulated in this way, that rhetorical context alters the political force of an assertion or action. The political signification of a woman's opening a door for another woman is different from that of a man's doing so for a woman. A sexist statement in one context is a feminist, or at least less significantly sexist one in another. Political force, however, is not entirely independent of truth. That a statement has different political force entails that the statement means something different: and if it *truly* has different political force, then it states, at least to an extent, a different truth. So we have precisely the truth of the same statement being different in different rhetorical contexts. Conversely, conflicting statements can have the same or overlapping political force in different rhetorical contexts, with a related kind of result: what would be conflicting truths in the same context can bear the same truth in different contexts.

This opens up the possibility of conceiving truth, taken as the content of true statements, as something which varies (contradictorily) while remaining the same: the same content is conveyed, rightly, by a different content. One could object that the "same" content is in fact simply different in different contexts, since the contexts and not only the wording or significant actions constitute the content as what it is. But we can only state the content by stating the content: our very attempt to assert that the "same" content is different presupposes the same content. The same contradictory variation of truth re-emerges at the meta-level of any arguments we might make *about* it. We need, then, to conceive of truth-content as capable of being the same while being incompatibly different in the same respect at the same time.

I suggest that the idea of incommensurability, or what I shall also call truth-incompatibility, allows such a conception. As I have noted, the idea of truth-incompatibility or differences that affect truth itself is, at one contained level, self-contradictory. But let me stress that this does not immediately constitute grounds for rejecting it as senseless. My argument, like those of some feminist thinkers and, more generally, some postmodern thinkers, is partly that we need to conceive differently how sense itself can function (and I have offered some of the motivations for the need to do so). In which case the different conception of sense I am about to propose needs to be evaluated *before* the limitedly contradictory outcome can be validly rejected, and it needs to be evaluated *independently* of standard rejections of contradiction. To reject this outcome because of its elements of contradiction, before evaluating the different conception of sense on which it depends, and hence to reject it precisely on the basis of the global rejections of contradiction to which it seeks to explore an alternative, is simply circular. One might be tempted to object that, if any contradiction is allowed, then no coherent evaluation of anything is possible.[21] But it is precisely this kind of conclusion that my proposed conception seeks to obviate. It is premature, then, to draw this conclusion right away.

As Rorty acknowledges, despite Davidsonian claims of meaninglessness, the argument for the sense of incommensurability is in fact still a possibility. This is so precisely because the lines of thought for and against the idea of incommensurability are themselves arguably incommensurable – that is, the argument against incommensurability depends on a decision about whether its own grounds are incommensurable with the opposing line of thought or not. In other words, it presupposes that it is arguing effectively with the other position, that it really is dealing with the same conception of the issues. And of course that decision presupposes the conclusion circularly. The argument against the sense of incommensurability, then, is far from conclusive.

21 This is part of a standard argument against the legitimacy of violations of the principle of non-contradiction. In the context of formal logic the argument is that anything at all follows from a contradiction: if one allows a contradiction, one can then say anything about anything. For formal systems that allow contradictions without entailing everything, however, see, for example, G. Priest, *An Introduction to Non-Classical Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Further, as I have mentioned, one of the central arguments against the sense of incommensurability is that, if such a thing applied, the parties involved would not even be able to understand each other. There would be nothing intelligible to have a disagreement about. And part of my own proposal depends on the kind of radical lack of content of incommensurable positions for each other that leads to that anti-epistemological argument. But, while our language would not allow us to grasp the other's language, we could presumably learn that other language as we first learned our own. Language cannot depend on the possibility of translation, otherwise we could not account for our learning a first language in the first place. Rorty himself has noted (although with the aim of undermining the kind of point that is part of my own here) that "untranslatability does not entail unlearnability" (*Objectivity*, p. 48). We can, then, learn to speak more than one language, each with its web of concepts and value commitments, and none of these languages and conceptual webs needs make sense in terms of the others.

These preliminary responses to anti-epistemology do not remove the deeper contradiction of saying that truth itself (for example, truth about the same things in the same respect) is differently constituted in different positions or frameworks or contexts. They only suggest that the objections to the sense of incommensurability are so far inconclusive, and that *if* a sense can be made of the deeper contradiction it will not imply some of the self-refuting consequences that are often drawn in objection to it. I now turn to addressing the deeper contradiction.

My proposed solution is that, if we think of truth-affecting differences in rhetorical context as incommensurabilities of position or grounds, we can establish a way of making (a certain kind) of sense of juxtaposing epistemological with anti-epistemological views. This, in turn, allows us to preserve the crucial insights of both. Again, that these formulations are so far contradictory is not yet grounds for rejecting them. If such grounds emerge, they will do so legitimately – non-circularly – only in consequence of the following exploration of how sense might conceivably function, on which the formulations depend. Now, the guiding type of difference here is that between contexts in which truth-affecting differences are relevant, and those in which they are not relevant at all. Where the disagreeing sides share relevant common grounds – and

this of course is only established in the course of dialogue, not given in advance – truth-affecting differences do not occur. And here, as I shall try to show and as the anti-epistemologists argue, we need no epistemology. But where there are no *relevant* common grounds – that is, grounds or criteria for truth, as opposed to common ground in many other respects, which may allow, for example, mutual understanding – epistemological issues become relevant.

A first advantage of conceiving things in this way is that deep epistemological issues *simply do not exist* for common-grounds situations. As Rorty argues, in talking with those "like us" (in this limited respect of sharing grounds for truth), we need have no doubts about the legitimacy of our criteria for our claims, all else being equal, i.e. if we meet our standards for responsible conclusions. No such deep *epistemological* doubts are relevant within the context of the discussion. As Davidson argues, in this context one cannot even speak meaningfully about one's own position *as a position*, and so no questions can arise about its ultimate grounds.

Second, in talking with those not "like us" in this sense, deep epistemological issues are fully relevant. *But*, the moment they become relevant, they also lose content, because the lack of common grounds for truth describes incommensurability of positions. And, as the anti-epistemologists argue, incommensurability, or its practical equivalents I discussed above, entails that the claims and criteria of the other position are meaningless for or irrelevant to one's own (whichever one's own happens to be). If the reader will again bear with my apparent illogic for a moment, this means that the epistemological issues are not a problem, since the very ideas of circularity and infinite regress lose content the moment they become applicable. I shall discuss in a moment why it is an advantage that epistemological issues appear if they also immediately disappear, but first I want to show – at last – why this self-contradictory statement is not simply an absurdity.

What makes this apparent illogic workable is conceiving it within the grid of truth-incompatible positions. We can, I suggest, apply this grid to the conflicting grounds for asserting the sense of incommensurability versus asserting its non-existence themselves. I have already started to do

this above in discussing the self-reference of this debate, its circular dependence on the decision it aims to support. And if we do apply this grid to this debate, there is a sense to speaking as I have both of the content of statements about a deeply different position, and the emptiness of content of such statements. In other words, we can view the very same phenomenon – the same assertions about the relation of deeply different positions – simultaneously both from the meta-position (with the web of concepts and meanings of that meta-position) that these assertions have content, on one side of the grid, and from the meta-position (with its different web of concepts and meanings) that they do not, on the other side of the grid. The apparent illogic of saying that the fundamental epistemological problems disappear the moment they appear is not, then, unmanageable, though it puts very different constraints and freedoms on logic from those we are traditionally used to. We are not, at this point, occupying a particular position, but occupying more than one simultaneously. The epistemological problems arise as we take into account the meta-position from which incommensurability is conceivable, and that *very same* meta-position entails that the claims and criteria of the other position (since it is incommensurable with it) are contentless for it: the problems disappear. The moment one returns to the rhetorical context of a single shared position, however, the meta-grid of juxtaposed and simultaneous incommensurable positions no longer has bearing, and the self-contradiction is simply a self-contradiction, no longer given even the type of sense allowed by the grid. We can no longer speak with any kind of sense of truth-incompatible positions, and anti-epistemology applies simply exclusively again.

I return now to the proposed advantage that deep epistemological issues become relevant in contexts where incommensurability of truth-criteria is relevant, and *only* become relevant in such contexts. Part of the advantage is that, as I have argued, the recalcitrant problems that mainstream epistemologies have been unable to resolve find a solution. As I have noted, they arise *as epistemological problems*, as we take into account the meta-position from which incommensurability is conceivable, and then they disappear, as that very conception of incommensurability entails their contentlessness. (Again, as Davidson argues, in this context even one's own position cannot be meaningfully considered *as a position*, and consequently there are no questions to be asked about its ultimate grounds.) That is, they do not simply fail to arise as epistemological

problems at all, but they *emerge* and because of the context of that emergence they *also* disappear. Given that process, it is not the case that they were simply falsely understood to arise as conceivable problems, with the result that there is nothing for epistemology to do, but they are *formerly unresolved epistemological problems* for which *a solution has now been established.*

But another part of the advantage is that, in the process of exploring the epistemological issues (which of course will turn out to be contentless or, in a different rhetorical phase, simply senselessly self-contradictory), we establish in concrete ways, *for both or more sides*, the equivalent epistemological justification of *each* (or, in a different rhetorical phase, the equivalent lack of content of the requirement for such justification). This outcome must then transform the nature of the debate. Firstly, we have established a framework within which we can account for the possibility of each side's coming to understand the other, despite the immediate senselessness of each side's claims for the other. Secondly, and consequently, each side is in a position to present its own justifications to the other(s) despite the barrier of immediate senselessness to the other – and, as importantly, to recognise that the other side may have justification despite the barrier of *its* of immediate senselessness. Each side must, by the very principles by which it justifies itself or by which it legitimately rejects the need for such justification, recognise the equivalent status of the other side, and require the other side to do the same. Each side must then, by its own standards – to which the other sides can appeal – recognise the legitimacy of the other positions' conflicting claims, and, again, require the same of the other positions. Each is then required to learn to think in terms of the other positions *simultaneously with its own*, and to find ways of negotiating that are not dependent on denying the truth either of the opposing claims or of its own, except where those claims are in conflict with the epistemological standards of the position from which they are made.

The political result is a kind of honouring of one's enemy without reducing the force and urgency of the conflict. Where all conflicting parties are doing this, I suggest that a lot of irresolvable debate would be obviated, and a very different type of dialogue, with hopes for surprising and constructive outcomes, made possible.

The rhetoric or language of "rhetorical positions," *as having purchase on the structure or constitution of truth*, itself only has content in rhetorical contexts in which truth-incompatible positions are at issue. The present account itself, then, loses content, becomes literally meaningless, in contexts in which truth-incompatibility is rhetorically irrelevant.

As I have discussed above, there are many situations in which rhetorical context affects the truth of assertions. It follows that there are many, often quite ordinary situations in which incommensurability of grounds obtains. This may go some way to explain why sexists and feminists are so tragically divided from each other and among themselves, beyond mere disagreement, in ways that cut both sides to the existential quick. And it suggests that the kind of problem that this paper tries to address has consequences well beyond engagements with epistemology as such.

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Presuppositionless Scepticism

IOANNIS TRISOKKAS

1. Introduction

The Pyrrhonian sceptics (*c.* 330 BC – *c.* 200 AD)[1] developed an exciting philosophical thought – well documented and maybe[2] further developed

1 I have placed the chronological starting-point of Pyrrhonism at *c.* 330 BC because at that time Pyrrho of Ellis (*c.* 360 – *c.* 270), the founder of this school of scepticism, must have been around thirty years old, and the ending-point at *c.* 200 AD because it must have been around that time when Sextus Empiricus flourished; for more details see D.K. House, 'The life of Sextus Empiricus', *Classical Quarterly* 30, (1980), pp. 227-238, and F. Kudlien, 'Die Datierung des Sextus Empiricus und des Diogenes Laertius', *Rheinisches Museum* 106, (1963) pp. 251-254. The best overall account of Pyrrhonism is given by R.J. Hankinson, *The Sceptics,* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); other important studies include J. Annas and J. Barnes, *The Modes of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), M. Burnyeat and M. Frede, *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy,* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1997), J. Barnes, *The Toils of Scepticism,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), M. Dal Pra, *Lo scetticismo greco,* (Rome and Barri: La Terza, 1975), and C.L. Stough, *Greek Skepticism* (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1969). Hankinson's 'Pyrrhonism' (in E. Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 7 (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 849-854) is a brief but very lucid and informative account of Pyrrhonism. For the immense influence exerted by Pyrrhonism on modern European thought see C.B. Schmitt, 'The rediscovery of ancient scepticism in modern times', in M. Burnyeat, (ed.) *The Skeptical Tradition,* (California: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 225-251 and the majestic study by R. Popkin, *A History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (California, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

2 There is controversy among scholars as to whether Sextus' work contains original thought or it is just a compilation and careful ordering of the teachings of older sceptics. See the discussion and references in J. Barnes, 'Scepticism and the arts', in Hankinson, (ed.) *Method, Medicine and Metaphysics* (Edmonton, Alberta: Academic Printing and Publishing, 1988), pp. 53-77.

by Sextus Empiricus[3] – which aimed at the manifestation of the impossibility of human knowledge of the *true* nature of *any* object or aspect of reality *whatsoever*.[4] In stark contrast to the – then prevailing – heavily dogmatic Aristotelian, Stoic and Epicurean philosophies,[5] but also to modern scepticism,[6] the Pyrrhonists' central concern was to provide such manifestation *without* the employment of *any* dogmatic principles.[7] The term 'dogmatic principle' denotes a judgment (or 'proposition'), syllogism (or 'argument') or whole theory, which gives the impression that it purports to say, directly or indirectly, and certainly voluntarily and

3 We possess two complete works by Sextus (*Outlines of Scepticism* [*Pyrrhoneioi Hypotyposeis*], ed. and trans. by J. Annas and J. Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), hereafter *PH* and *Against the Professors* [*Adversus Mathematicos I-VI*], trans. by R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), hereafter *M* I-VI), as well as the bulk of a third, which is now divided into three books (*Against the Logicians* [*Adversus Mathematicos VII-VIII*], trans. by R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), hereafter *M* VII-VIII, *Against the Physicists* [*Adversus Mathematicos M IX-X*], trans. by R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), hereafter *M* IX-X, and *Against the Ethicists* [*Adversus Mathematicos M XI*], trans. by R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), hereafter *M* XI). For general accounts of Sextus Empiricus' life and work see Hankinson (1995), pp. 6-7; House (1980); W. Heintz, *Studien zu Sextus Empiricus* (Halle: Niemeyer Verlag, 1932); K. Janáček, 'Prolegomena to Sextus Empiricus', in *Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis* 4, (1948), pp. 1-64; K. Janáček, *Sextus Empiricus' Sceptical Methods* (Prague: Universita Karlova, 1972); J.C. Vollgraff, 'La vie de Sextus Empiricus', *Revue de Psychologie* 26, (1902), pp. 195-210.

4 The ultimate goal (τελος) of a Pyrrhonist was to achieve tranquillity (or imperturbability, *αταραξια*): *PH* I, 12, 25; cf. Sedley, 'The motivation of Greek Skepticism', in M. Burnyeat (1983), pp. 9-29, specifically p. 19, 21, 23 n. 16. The means to achieve it is by suspension of judgment (*εποχη*), which in my interpretation signifies or entails or suggests the absence of scientific beliefs (*PH* I, 12-15). The means to achieve this is by opposing to every truth-claim a truth-claim of an equal status (equipollence, *ισοσθενεια*) (*PH* I, 12). For the purposes of the present paper, which considers only the epistemological character and significance of Pyrrhonism, its ultimate goal (tranquillity) does not become an object of reflection. For a very good paper that discusses tranquillity as the ultimate goal of Pyrrhonism and its relation to *εποχη* see Sedley (1983). There are some passages in *PH* which suggest that the Pyrrhonist does not after all oppose scientific inquiries because she cannot explicitly *say* that knowledge is impossible, i.e. that reality *is* unknowable (see, for example, *PH*, 1-4). In the course of the present essay I will show why this claim is a complete fallacy. If one examines the way Pyrrhonism makes *use* of the equipollence of truth-claims, one should have absolutely no doubt that the aim of scepticism is *essentially* the demolition of science (to wit, of the search for knowledge). On this matter see especially the last

with 'strong impulse or inclination', something true of the nature of reality.[8] Thus, Pyrrhonian scepticism is making the strong claim that it destroys any pretensions to knowledge in a totally *presuppositionless* manner.[9] This essay aims to substantiate the Pyrrhonian route to the manifestation of the impossibility of knowledge by taking its claim for presuppositionlessness very seriously. The main textual material for the 'substantiation' is provided by Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*.

sentence in *PH* I, 30. For the *universality* of this demolition see *PH* I, 31: "[...] Tranquillity follows suspension of judgment about everything [...];" *PH* I, 232: "[Arcesilaus] suspends judgment about everything;" M.N. Forster, 'Hegelian vs. Kantian interpretations of Pyrrhonism: revolution or reaction?', http://philosophy.uchicago.edu/faculty/files/forster/BurnyeatFrede2.doc, (2007), pp. 1-24, esp. p. 5: "Is it likely that the Pyrrhonists, who so prided themselves on being at least as radical as the Academic sceptics, would have fallen short of Arcesilaus in his aspiration to do away with all belief? Surely not." See also Sedley (1983) p. 11: "[...] When Arcesilaus advocated suspension of assent about everything, he meant suspension of all belief – refusal to regard any impression whatever, or its contradictory, as true." M. Frede (in his 'Des Skeptikers Meinungen', *Neue Hefte für Philosophie* 15, (1979), pp. 102-129) is against this interpretation; he believes that the Pyrrhonist attacks only a certain category of truth-claims, the ones asserted by those who *Frede* calls 'scientists' and 'philosophers'; the Pyrrhonist does not, in his opinion, attack the truth-claims made by ordinary people. (Note that in the present essay when we are referring to the 'scientists' we mean *each and every* human being who claims to have knowledge of the *true nature* of objects and aspects of the real). A critique of Frede's position can be found in Burnyeat, 'Can the Sceptic live his Scepticism?' (in Burnyeat (1983), pp. 117-148, hereafter Burnyeat (1980a)). Barnes, in 'Ancient scepticism and causation' (in Burnyeat (1983), pp. 149-203, esp. pp. 159-160) claims that Sextus' text does not allow resolution of the Frede-Burnyeat dispute since it supports both. Barnes argues for a modest theory of Pyrrhonism, one that combines elements from both the Fredean and Burnyeatian theories ('The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 208, pp. 1-29). For a critique of Barnes' 'modest theory' see M. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) p. 203. Since the aim of the Pyrrhonists is the complete destruction of scientific inquiry, Pyrrhonian scepticism is fundamentally different from the Cartesian scepticism of the *Meditations* and the Socratic scepticism of the *Meno*, both of which are of a *propaedeutic* nature, clearing the ground for the acquisition of knowledge. See Descartes, 'Meditations on First Philosophy' in J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch (editors and translators), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 6-62; Plato, 'Meno', in Plato, *Protagoras and Meno*, trans. by A. Beresford (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 81-166, 79e-80a, 84a-c.

5 Sextus calls Aristotle and the other dogmatic philosophers "deluded and self-satisfied dogmatists" (*PH* I, 62).

6 See Forster (1989), p. 11ff.

7 This is, according to some, the major difference between Pyrrhonian and Academic sceptics; see *PH* I, 1-4; I, 220-235. Cf. M. Frede, 'The Skeptic's two kinds of assent and the question of the possibility of knowledge', in Frede (1987), pp. 201-222, p. 212ff., hereafter 1987a; G. Striker, 'Über den Unterschied zwischen den Pyrrhoneern und den Akademikern', *Phronesis* 26, (1981), pp. 153-169; Forster (1989), pp. 198-200.

8 Cf. *PH* I, 230.

9 Cf. Forster (1989), p. 11.

10 Note, importantly, that the term 'science' does not limit itself to positivistic conceptions of science, which allow only activities like physics and chemistry to hold that title. The term *science* is here used quite loosely and means each and every human activity that *purports* to say something *true* about the real. Thus, each and every human being (and not just the physicists or the chemists) is potentially a *scientist*. In other words, if a farmer is making a claim to the true nature of reality,

The analysis that follows aspires to do justice to the *genuine spirit* of Pyrrhonism rather than to its letter; and to do that *not* in a philological or historicophilosophical, *but* in a strictly philosophical, *argumentative* manner. Accordingly I set out to provide a *non*-ambiguous, systematic account of Pyrrhonian scepticism that would be attractive to all those philosophers who *strongly* believe that knowledge of the true nature of any aspect of reality is an *impossibility*. For, in my view, it is this *aim* of Pyrrhonism that determines its genuine spirit and, therefore, a genuinely Pyrrhonian argument would only be one which unambiguously fulfils that aim. The single most important challenge one faces in what follows is to reconstruct this genuinely Pyrrhonian argument without charging the Pyrrhonists with the use of even a single dogmatic principle. What will emerge from the forthcoming analysis is a novel and quite radical interpretation of Pyrrhonian scepticism.

2. The universe of discourse

The problematic of the present inquiry – namely what constitutes the object of *our* interest – concerns the possibility of human knowledge of the true nature of reality. The generic name used for the sphere of human activity that is meant to produce, incorporate and expand such knowledge is *science* (*επιστημη*, *Wissenschaft*).[10] The production, incorporation and

expansion of knowledge requires investigation or *inquiry* into the truth of things. Call this activity *scientific inquiry*. The latter is manifested as something *said* or *done*. Anything that is said or done must *appear* and anything that appears must appear *somewhere*. We call the abstract space (the 'somewhere') into which *everything said* appears the *universe of discourse* and the abstract space into which *everything done* appears the *universe of praxis*. Our problematic will focus on the *universe of discourse* (and not on the universe of praxis).

The universe of discourse has been, therefore, disclosed as what must be *minimally thought* in a problematic that concerns itself with the possibility of science-as-something-said.[11] In this universe, now, there appear claims made during the activity of scientific inquiry. A number of those claims relate directly to the nature of things (or of reality) and some of *these* particular claims are (*positive* or *negative*) claims about the *true* nature of things (or of reality). Given their specific character, let us call them *truth-claims*. Narrowing the domain even further, we now postulate that the present problematic deals *only* with truth-claims and the universe of discourse will be thematised *solely* as a space in which truth-claims appear.

Whenever a truth-claim appears in the universe of discourse, it acquires *existence*. The latter is entailed from the fact that the truth-claim is *just* there, has *just* appeared, has *just* been posited in the universe of discourse. Its existence has, therefore, an *immediate* character. This does *not* mean that the truth-claim could not develop or disclose a more elaborate character, for example, through its relations with other truth-claims. Rather, the emphasis here is on the very moment a truth-claim *arises* in the universe of discourse; in that primordial, most minimal modus of its existence, the truth-claim has a character of *immediacy*.

There is, then, a primordial state-of-affairs in which the elements of the universe of discourse, the truth-claims, relate to each other in a *non-*

she obtains at that moment the status of a scientist.

11 All science begins with something said. The universe of discourse represents that space without which what is said could not appear. It is therefore a notion which requires no further grounding or justification (for without it no grounding or justification could appear).

reflective, *indifferent* manner. Exactly at this point the argument becomes distinctively Pyrrhonian; for it is the Pyrrhonist who first pointed out that in such a state of immediacy and indifferent relationality there can be no *privileging* of a truth-claim over any of the others. Indeed, in the universe of discourse there reigns initially a state of *equality* or *equipollence* (*ισοσθενεια*) among the truth-claims.[12] They simply exist in the universe of discourse, standing indifferently next to one another, one being no *truer* than the other.[13]

The equality of the truth-claims matters greatly when a *conflict* appears, when namely the universe of discourse – or part of it – takes the specific form of a *dispute*. This is because in case of conflict the *truth* regarding the nature of the object or aspect of reality being affected *hides* itself and, therefore, cannot be expressed. In such an event the universe of discourse is contaminated (for the expression of truth is, with respect to our problematic, the very reason it exists in the first place), something that calls for the *removal* or *resolution* of the conflict.[14] At this point the second most distinctive feature of Pyrrhonism – after *ισοσθενεια* –, and definitely its most unsettling, enters the picture of our problematic. This is

12 *PH* I, 10.

13 This is a point where my interpretation differs crucially from an alternative, which can be convincingly supported by a number of passages found in the text of *PH* (e.g. I, 29). *My* attempt is to ground the equipollence of the truth-claims on their *simple* existence in the universe of discourse; the *alternative* move would be to ground this equipollence on the equal *force* they have upon the *conviction* of some *audience*. I find the alternative unattractive because, in the case where the force *varies*, it allows for an allegedly *valid* hierarchical ordering of truth-claims based solely upon the subjective opinions of an audience. My approach avoids this danger. Sextus seems to agree with me on this issue in *PH* I, 33-34, where he refuses to allow that universal agreement on an assertion suffices to show that it is true. Cf. Forster (1989), p. 20: "[...] Sextus Empiricus' commitment to the common views of men, although it surfaces at several points in his texts, has the appearance of being more a random accretion from external sources than an essential component of his sceptical position like the equipollence method." Aenesidemus, on the other hand, seems to have accepted the principle that what is commonly believed must also be true; see J.M. Rist, 'The Heracliteanism of Aenesidemus', *Phoenix* 24 (1970), pp. 309-319.

14 *PH* I, 26: "[The] sceptics began to do philosophy in order to *decide* among appearances and to apprehend which are true and which false [...]" (my emphasis).

the *manifestation* that *no* conflict between truth-claims can *ever* be resolved and hence the true nature of the real can never be expressed.[15]

Before the sceptic's argument for the impossibility of the resolution of conflict is examined, let me here point out what, surely, must have already become a source of disquiet. Firstly, the sceptic seems to have moved quite arbitrarily from a universe of discourse in which the truth-claims are related only in an *indifferent* manner to a universe where such relations take the loaded form of *conflict*. The question is this: How does the Pyrrhonist conceive the move from indifferent relations to conflicting relations? Secondly, the sceptic suddenly employed a judgment affirming the *negative* relation between *truth* and *conflicting* truth-claims. How does she, then, understand this negative relation and how does she justify this understanding?

Thus, in what follows I will provide the Pyrrhonist's responses to these three questions:-

(1) How does the Pyrhonist manifest the *impossibility* of the resolution of conflict among truth-claims?

(2) How does the Pyrrhonist conceive a *conflict* between truth-claims on the level of utmost immediacy in the universe of discourse?

(3) How does the Pyrrhonist argue for the *negative* relation between truth and conflicting truth-claims on that level?

3. Criterion of truth

If, then, (a) certain truth-claims conflict with each other and (b) conflict contaminates the universe of discourse, a choice must be made between them so as to resolve the conflict.[16] The decision should not be arbitrary; one has to make sure it *guarantees* that the truth-claim chosen indeed

15 *PH* I, 26: "[B]ut they [i.e. the sceptics] came upon equipollent dispute, and being unable to decide this they suspended judgment." See also *PH* I, 135.

16 This claim is discussed below.

exemplifies the true nature of the relevant object or aspect of reality. Otherwise, why should such decision be accepted? This need for guarantee calls for a *criterion of truth*. To posit a criterion of truth is to *explicitly say* why the one rather than the other truth-claim is true.[17] But in doing so one has to say something further (positive or negative) about the *real*, for a conflict *about* the *truth* of the real can be resolved only if *more* is said about it. Accordingly, the criterion, whatever its peculiar form (a judgment, a syllogism, or a theory), is in turn itself a truth-claim, although one of a special status: it provides the *reason why* an initially posited truth-claim is true (and hence why the truth-claim which conflicts with it is false). Let us call all truth-claims that are *initially* posited in the universe of discourse *first-order truth-claims* and the truth-claims that are posited *in order to resolve conflicts* between first-order truth-claims *second-order truth-claims*.

Recall now that a truth-claim, as soon as it appears, has an *immediate* existence in the universe of discourse, just because it is posited therein. If, in this universe, a truth-claim appears that conflicts with the posited criterion of truth, a decision has to be made concerning the truth of the conflicting second-order truth-claims. But this requires a criterion of truth, which would be nothing else than a *third-order truth-claim*. It is clear that the activity of resolution of conflict in the universe of discourse takes now the form of intolerable *infinite regress*. If, further, at some point during this process a criterion of truth is invoked that has the same content as one of the previously posited criteria, then the whole process takes the more specific form of intolerable *circularity*.[18] Call this whole Pyrrhonian argument *the argument from the criterion of truth*.[19]

17 Cf. Hankinson (1998), p. 852.

18 For Sextus Empiricus' varied formulations of the argument from the criterion see *PH* I, 114-117, 122-123, 166; II, 20, 34ff.; *M* VII, 16. For the specific form of circularity see *PH* I, 116-117, 169; II, 9, 36, 114, 196, 199, 202; *M* VIII, 261, 342, 379-380. A good discussion of the argument from the criterion – which however remains a bit on the surface with respect to the really important philosophical issues connected with it – can be found in Barnes (1990), pp. 36-57, 58-89, 113-144. The reason why Barnes' discussion does not go as deep as it should is that he artificially dissociates the mode of 'infinite regression' from the phenomenon of dispute (which he calls the 'mode of disagreement'), i.e. from the existence of conflicting truth-claims within a universe of discourse.

19 On the notion of *the criterion of truth* see especially J. Brunschwig, 'Sextus Empiricus on the *kriterion*: the Skeptic as conceptual legatee', in J.M. Dillon and

Regress and/or circularity are intolerable because their structure[20] does not allow for the satisfaction of the desideratum at hand, which has been *firmly* determined as the resolution of conflict between *first*-order truth-claims. *Circularity* does not resolve that conflict, because the criterion simply repeats a truth-claim that is *still* in conflict with another truth-claim; the conceptual chain built by an *infinite regress* might impress us due to the elaborate and continuous explanations it produces, but these remain foreign to the *truth* of the initially posited truth-claims, for they lead to no choice between the latter.

Based on the argument from the criterion of truth, the Pyrrhonist maintains that there has been given a *manifestation* of the impossibility of knowledge of the true nature of *any* object or aspect of reality *whatsoever*, and this without the employment of any dogmatic principle. Indeed, if we accept (a) the *presuppositionless* notion of a universe of discourse, the elements of which have initially an immediate, non-reflective existence, (b) the phenomenon of *conflict* emerging in this universe and (c) the *need* for its resolution when it comes down to arriving at knowledge of the true nature of the objects involved, then all the sceptic has done is to exhibit a totally *critical attitude* toward the positing of criteria of truth which purport to resolve the arising disputes.

Now, while it seems clear that the conflicting truth-claims which inhabit the universe of discourse represent no dogmatic principles or claims espoused by the Pyrrhonist *herself*, the same does not seem to be the case with the *conclusion* she draws from the argument from the criterion of truth, namely that it *is* impossible to acquire knowledge of the true nature of any object whatsoever or simply that *nothing can be known*. The claim that the inference is problematic could be based on either one of the two following reasons: It is problematic either (a) because the asserted conclusion can be read as a *positive* truth-claim and represents, therefore, a dogmatic principle or (b) because it *cannot be inferred* from

A.A. Long (eds.), *The Question of Eclecticism: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 145-175; A.A. Long, 'Sextus Empiricus on the criterion of truth', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 25, (1978), pp. 35-49; G. Striker, 'The problem of the criterion', in S. Everson, *Epistemology*, Companions to Ancient Thought I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990), pp.143-160, hereafter 1990a.

20 See the interesting discussion of this point in Barnes (1990), pp. 54-57.

the argument in the first place. I will now examine these two objections in turn.

The *first* objection has it that the Pyrrhonist concludes by *stating* that *nothing can be known* and that this is incompatible with what Pyrrhonism stands for, since it definitely sounds like a firmly posited negative claim about the truth of any object whatsoever. It appears namely as if the sceptic has arrived at the indisputable *knowledge* that such truth can never be obtained. The significance of this can be made more visible if we turn the negative claim into its *positive* equivalent; for the Pyrrhonist would in this case *positively* (and in a *self-contradictory* manner) maintain that any object whatsoever (i.e. reality in general) *is* unknowable. As Hankinson points out, the Pyrrhonist would then accept, in a totally non-Pyrrhonian spirit, that there is a special meta-language which allows higher-order truths to be expressed.[21]

This objection would be valid, and therefore disastrous for Pyrrhonism, only if the conclusion of the argument from the criterion of truth is such as stated above. Fortunately for the sceptic, it is not. The Pyrrhonist is very careful *never* to conclude her argument with a positively formulated proposition.[22] Indeed, the argument from the criterion is constructed in such a way as to be conceived as *literally* either regressing or spinning in a circle forever. There is no need for the argument to close with a positively formulated conclusion in order for it to obtain the significance of a sceptical *attitude*; making us realise that it formally continues up to infinity suffices for prompting all those involved in scientific inquiries to *give* them *up*, a phenomenon referred to by Sextus as *suspension of judgment* (*επoχη*).[23] Thus, the Pyrrhonist aims at a psychological condition or practical behaviour, rather than at a concluding proposition: the feeling of not wanting to go on or the actuality of not going on with scientific inquiry.[24] By showing that the argument from the criterion of truth has an internal structure that leads to

21 Hankinson (1998), p. 851.

22 Cf. *PH* I, 200-201, 326; Plotinus, *Bibliothèque* [*Bibliotheke*], Vol. III, ed. by R. Henry (Paris: Société d' édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1962), 212, 169^{b}, hereafter *Bibl.*

23 *PH* I, 8, 10; II, 7, 18, 196. Cf. Barnes (1990), pp. 42-43. The first champion of *επoχη* was probably Arcesilaus; see Sedley (1983), p. 10.

24 *PH* I, 7.

circularity or infinite regress, the sceptic *positively states* neither the conclusion that 'knowledge is impossible to obtain' nor the conclusion that 'the truth of reality is unknowable'. It is rather the *structure* of a never-concluding argument that imposes a sceptical attitude upon the Pyrrhonist and all those who attend to her argument.[25] As Annas and Barnes put it, suspension of judgment "is something that *happens* to us, not a thing that we are *obliged* or can *choose* rationally to adopt."[26] The sceptic and her attendants are giving up the pursuit of knowledge by finding themselves in a psychological condition (or following a practice) in which they are "unable to say which of the objects presented [they] ought to believe and which [they] ought to disbelieve" (*απορια*).[27] And, according to the Pyrrhonist, such an abandonment of science is immediately followed by tranquillity (*αταραξια*).[28]

25 If my argument is correct, Sextus' description of the sceptical conclusions as *self-destructed* elements is *superfluous*. For this assumes that they *first* acquire existence and *only then* destroy themselves. In contrast, my claim is that such conclusions are *never* formulated *as conclusions*. Cf. Forster (1989), pp. 18-19; 'Verhältnis des Skeptizismus zur Philosophie. Darstellung seiner verschiedenen Modifikationen und Vergleichung des neuesten mit dem alten', in G.W.F. Hegel, in his *Jenaer Schriften (1801-1807)*, ed. by E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 213-272, esp. pp. 231-233, hereafter *VSP*. Hegel seems to have the same wrong idea at VSP, pp. 248-249.

26 Annas and Barnes (1985), p. 49. Cf. Hankinson (1998), p. 854.

27 *PH* I, 196 (my translation). See also *PH* I, 7.

28 See especially the magnificent image of the painter Apelles in *PH* I, 28: "A story told of the painter Apelles applies to the sceptics [i.e. the Pyrrhonists]. They say that he was painting a horse and wanted to represent in his picture the lather of the horse's mouth; but he was so unsuccessful that he gave up, took the sponge on which he had been wiping off the colours from his brush, and flung it at the picture. And when it hit the picture, it produced a perfect representation of the horse's lather." Cf. Hankinson (1998), p. 848: "[...] The result was meant to be suspension of judgment about such matters, which would in turn lead to tranquillity of mind." Clearly, the Pyrrhonian position that the abandonment of science entails tranquillity hits at the heart of our desire for knowledge; see Sedley (1983), p. 10: "There is no suggestion that any of [the] pre-Hellenistic philosophers derived much comfort from his admission of ignorance or thought of it as anything more than a regrettable expedient. Indeed, it is hard to see what comfort it could afford anybody who was not prepared to renounce a rather fundamental human trait, the desire for knowledge." On the Pyrrhonian notion of tranquillity see M. Burnyeat, 'Tranquillity without a stop: Timon frag. 68', *Classical Quarterly* 30, (1980), pp. 86-93; G. Striker, 'Happiness as tranquility', *Monist* 73, (1990), pp. 97-110.

Thus, the Pyrrhonian *manifestation* of the impossibility of knowledge does *not* amount to positing a *truth-claim* in the universe of discourse stating (or, in Frede's terminology, *taking the position*)[29] that *nothing can be known*. But since the Pyrrhonist *does* make a case against scientific inquiry, there must be a concrete difference between (a) positing that *nothing can be known* in the universe of discourse and (b) the content of her stance, namely what her stance *does* amount to. This difference can be described in terms of one's *reaction to the structure of infinite regress or circularity*, which can take two different forms: One might feel that such structure can invalidate scientific inquiry only if it leads to the explicit positing of the truth-claim that *nothing can be known* in the universe of discourse; on the contrary, one might be so *shocked* by the *necessary impression* of a universal-in-scope and formally infinite or circular series of criteria of truth that one just *gives up* scientific inquiry. Simply, *one does not bother any more*. The person does *have a view* (to use, again, Frede's terminology), namely that *nothing can be known*, but she does not take the position or actively assert that *nothing can be known*.[30] In other words, the Pyrrhonist *manifests* that nothing can be known without *assenting* to the truth-claim that *nothing can be known*.

The *only* objection I can think of here is that the claim that nothing can be known would have a force against science *only* if it were posited as a *truth-claim* in the universe of discourse; simply a *state-of-mind* or a *practical behaviour* does not suffice for the demolition of science. The Pyrrhonist's state-of-mind, however, is not *simply* a state-of-mind. It is the *specific* state-of-mind that *has resulted* from the *inherent* and *eternally recurring* structural inability of the universe of discourse to satisfy *its own* demand for a conflict-solving criterion of truth. This inability makes such powerful impression on those who attend to it that they, passively and without pursuing it,[31] abandon the sphere of science;

29 Frede (1987), p. 202ff.

30 Cf. Forster (1989), p. 22: "In response to this apparent problem, one might first point out that people quite often find themselves in a psychological condition which would naturally and probably be described as one of simultaneously believing that p and suspending belief on the question whether p or even denying that p."

31 Cf. Frede (1987), pp. 207-208: "[This is] a passive acquiescence or acceptance of something, in the way in which a people might accept a ruler, not by some act of approval or acknowledgment, but by acquiescence in his rule, by failing to resist, to effectively reject his rule. [...] One might, having considered matters, just

those who are *not impressed* in this way will simply continue their futile infinite or circular journey. Given that this state-of-affairs emerges *actually* from the Pyrrhonian argument, considered in both of its necessary manifestations (namely (a) as a suspension of judgment and (b) as a futile active pursuit of knowledge), one really wonders why the positing of the truth-claim that *nothing can be known* would still be regarded as a prerequisite for admitting the total destruction of scientific inquiry! Each and every human being *who strongly desires to acquire knowledge of the true nature of things* finds him-/herself – as a result of the Pyrrhonian argument – either (a) *not* actively pursuing any scientific inquiry or (b) actively pursuing a *futile* scientific inquiry: Why should anyone need to witness, *in addition* to this image, the *truth-claim* that *nothing can be known* being posited in he universe of discourse in order to judge that scientific inquiry has indeed been annihilated?!

Let us now address the *second* objection, which argues that the conclusion that *nothing can be known* simply does *not follow* from the argument from the criterion of truth. It would seem that our response to the first objection removes this second one as well, because such conclusion is never actually formulated. Nonetheless, those who put the second objection forward would really want to make an altogether different point; they would like to say that the argument from the criterion of truth establishes only *local*, not *global*, doubt. Thus, their problem with the conclusion that *nothing can be known* is that its scope was *universal*, while, for them, the scope of doubt should have included only those *specific* objects and aspects of reality which the truth-claims *actually* considered were referring to. As Sedley puts it, "if [the sceptic] is really an open-minded inquirer, it may be that he has always up to now found every dogmatist argument to be equally balanced by a counterargument, but why should he suppose that the same will hold of theses he has yet to investigate?"[32] Plainly, this line of reasoning holds even after the removal

acquiesce in the impression one is left with, resign oneself to it, accept the fact that this is the impression one is left with, without though taking the step to accept the impression positively by thinking the further thought that the impression is true."

32 Sedley (1983), p. 21. He continues thus: "Some Skeptics responded to this problem by suggesting that in the Skeptic formula 'To every argument an equal argument is opposed' the noncommittal infinitive form of the verb used in the Greek should be thought of as expressing an injunction – to every argument *let us* oppose an equal argument – in order to avoid being misled into dogmatism at some future time. The move is ingenious, for an injunction is not an assertion at all, let

of the notion of a positively posited conclusion, for it goes against the complete denial of the possibility of scientific inquiry. In other words, if this argument were valid, the Pyrrhonist, contrary to *my* interpretation, would *never* stop her examination of truth-claims and, consequently, would *never* enjoy *full* tranquillity, only *moments* of it, interspersed with moments of anxiety and disturbance (*ταραχη*).

But this argument is completely false, since it mistakenly assumes that the argument from the criterion of truth is applied separately and consecutively to specific pairs of truth-claims. This is not the case, however, because it is, deliberately, absolutely formal and its effectiveness is not dependent upon the *content* of the truth-claims. All that matters therein is the *status* or *form* of the truth-claims *as truth-claims*. Whether a truth-claim has an empirical or a non-empirical content, and whether its content is this or that, is absolutely irrelevant to the argument from the criterion.[33] Thence the necessity of an ongoing examination of truth-claims cannot seriously be ascribed to a theory of Pyrrhonian scepticism. When Sedley writes that it is not likely that "the onset of *epoche* signals the cessation of inquiry" and that "resistance to the snares of doctrine must involve lifelong open-minded investigation and reinvestigation of doctrinaire [i.e. dogmatic] arguments,"[34] he has, I

alone a doctrinaire one." In my opinion, this 'solution' is of no value here, exactly because the problem is fictitious. The abandonment of scientific inquiry that follows from a global suspension of judgment does *not* imply a dogmatist attitude.

33 Cf. Forster (2007), p. 3: "[...] The Five Tropes of Agrippa seem quite indifferent as to the nature of the beliefs against which they are directed." (The Five Tropes [or Modes] of Agrippa are at play in *my* reconstruction of the Pyrhonian problematic.)

34 Sedley (1983), p. 22. See also Frede (1987), p. 210: "The skeptic has no stake in the truth of the impression he is left with. He is ever ready to consider the matter further, to change his mind. He has no attachment to the impressions he is left with. He is not responsible for having them, he did not seek them out. He is not out to prove anything, and hence feels no need to defend anything." Although I myself agree with much of what Frede says in his 1987 paper, I disagree completely with the content of this excerpt and especially with the second sentence. For here he suggests that even after the Pyrrhonist has produced his non-concluding argument and received the crucial impression that allows him to abandon scientific inquiries and become tranquil, he will still attend to scientific debates and try to adjudicate between them. But, as far as I can see, this is absurd, since the structure of the argument is *deliberately absolutely formal,* no *content* could ever affect it in such a way so as to stop exemplifying infinite regress or

am afraid, provided us with a completely distorted view of the genuine spirit of Pyrrhonism.

All in all, the argument from the criterion of truth *manifests* that knowledge of the true nature of *any* object or aspect of reality *whatsoever* can *never* be achieved. This manifestation does not emerge from a positively asserted truth-claim that would function as the conclusion of the argument, but from the psychological and practical ramifications of an attendance to the very formal structure of the argument. Given these ramifications, Pyrrhonian scepticism leads necessarily to the *permanent* abandonment of scientific inquiry. (Quite surprisingly, considering that the argument from the criterion of truth is totally formal and the notion of truth-claim that is at play therein is a pure form, Pyrrhonian doubt would still be what William James would call *real doubt*, rather than Descartes' *artificial doubt*, because it aspires to really change the lives of those who

circularity. (Of course, as I point out in the conclusion, there is the intriguing possibility that the *theories and/or assumptions* that support the *relational structures* between the pure *forms* of the examined truth-claims could be totally removed from the universe of discourse. But, as soon as this happens, the Pyrrhonist will no more exist *as Pyrrhonist*, because his whole argumentation, which is pervaded through and through by those structures, will immediately collapse.) Thus, as far as I am concerned, the Pyrrhonist is *not* "ready to consider the matter further, to change his mind." He has made a point and done so *successfully*, which means that scientific inquiry as a whole has *for him* collapsed. How would then be possible for the genuine Pyrrhonist to continue attending scientific debates and arguing against them if science as a whole no more exists? Would Apelles, after flinging his brush at the picture and achieving a *perfect* representation of the horse's lather, tear *this* picture apart and start painting the horse anew?! Compare this with what Timon, the disciple of Pyrrho, says about his master (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. II, books VI-X, trans. by R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), IX, p. 64; my emphasis): "Aged Pyrrho, how and whence did you find escape from slavery to the opinions and empty thought of the sophists, and break the bonds of all deceit and persuasion? *You were not concerned to inquire what winds blow over Greece, and the origin and destination of each thing.*" // Cf. Forster (1989), p. 192: "At first sight this claim seems to involve a total misunderstanding of the ancient skeptic's position, since the ancient skeptic does not seek to *prove* anything, let alone with certainty, and does not seek to show the *untruth* of anything, but instead suspends judgment on all questions. [However, one could say that] the skeptic, in giving up all pretensions to describe reality or state truths, in a sense rejects the notion of truth altogether."

attend to it: its function is to turn them from troubled scientists into tranquil non-scientists.)

4. Conflict

The Pyrrhonian project would, of course, succeed only if there was nothing problematic regarding the move from a universe of discourse inhabited by truth-claims that stand next to each other in relations of *indifference* to a universe of discourse whose inhabitants are *conflicting* truth-claims. This brings us to the second issue in need of clarification: What does it mean for two truth-claims to stand in a relation of *conflict*? Let us initially focus on the truth-claims taken as *judgments*. There are two reasons why we begin with the structure of the judgment rather than with the structure of the syllogism or with the structure of a whole theory. Firstly, both the syllogism and the whole theory are composed of judgments, while the reverse does not hold; therefore, the judgment has a certain priority over the other two possible forms of a truth-claim. Secondly, even if the Pyrrhonist does not ascribe to the reason just given, she certainly applies the argument from the criterion of truth upon pairs of simple judgments or, as most philosophers nowadays call them, 'propositions';[35] this fact alone would suffice to justify our isolation of the notion of judgment from the notions of syllogism and whole theory. Indeed, it seems that for the Pyrrhonist the object of attack does *not* have to have the form of syllogism or theory: it *could* be just a simple judgment.[36] Hence one should be confident that the very character of the

35 *PH* III, 65: "It is assumed by ordinary life and by some philosophers that motion exists, but by Parmenides, Melissus, and certain others that it does not exist; while the sceptics have manifested that it is no more existent than non-existent."

36 Cf. Forster (1989), p. 186: "On the one hand, Sextus Empiricus's method of bringing about a suspension of judgment is almost invariably in practice one of balancing opposed *arguments*, not merely propositions, so that this sense of *logos* must surely be involved in his definition of Pyrrhonist procedure. On the other hand, any opposition of arguments is of course at the same time an opposition of the propositions which are their conclusions, and more important, Sextus does not quite *always* advocate a balancing of opposed arguments. For example, in the fourth type of Agrippa opposed propositions are balanced against one another without any supporting arguments on either side as the means of including a suspension of judgment." (Note that Forster is simply wrong when he writes that "Sextus Empiricus's method of bringing about a suspension of judgment is *almost invariably in practice* one of balancing opposed *arguments*, not merely

Pyrrhonian problematic allows us to isolate the truth-claim as *judgment* and focus on it separately from the other two forms.

Thus, the truth-claim will henceforth be thematised as *judgment* and our question could also have the following form: 'What does it mean for two *judgments* to stand in a relation of *conflict*?' Observation of Sextus' many descriptions of the historically actual disputes of the dogmatists reveals that two truth-claims (considered now as judgments) conflict with one another when (a) they refer to the *same* object or aspect of reality and (b) the *property* or characteristic one of them assigns to this object/aspect cannot *co-exist* with the property or characteristic the second of them assigns to it.[37] This impossibility of co-existence logically takes the specific form of the one of the properties either *being* or being *reducible to* the *negation* of the other.[38] Thus, if (a) a certain truth-claim **tc1** assigns the property **p1** to a certain object or aspect of reality and a certain other truth-claim **tc2** assigns the property **p2** to the same object or aspect of reality and (b) **p2** either is or can be reduced to the negation of **p1**, then **tc1** and **tc2** stand in relation of conflict to each other.

This response makes two fundamental claims: *Firstly*, it is said that if we observe the universe of discourse and see one truth-claim as being the negative of another in the manner just described, then we can immediately judge that they are in conflict. *Secondly*, it is said that if a truth-claim, which assigns a certain property to an object, can be transformed explicitly into the negative of some other truth-claim already inhabiting the universe of discourse, then we can again conclude that they are in conflict.

As far as I can see, however, the second of these fundamental claims (call it 'the reductionist claim') is both (a) a *problematic* and (b) an *unnecessary* addition to the Pyrrhonian argument. It is *problematic* for the following two reasons:-

propositions;" it is rather the opposite that is true.)

37 See e.g. *PH* I, 32-33; II, 55-56; and, of course, the discussion of the so-called Ten Modes of Aenesidemus in *PH* I, 35-164.

38 Cf. *PH* I, 10.

(1) Any property can be seen as the negation of any other property (to wit, it is the property that it is and *not* any other property). But there are properties that despite involving *such* a negation of a certain other property do not conflict with it; for example, *being a man* with *being wise*: John is both a man and wise. So, the idea of reducing certain properties to the negation of others must be qualified if it is to satisfy the notion of *conflict* between truth-claims. Such qualification, however, requires *reflective* consideration of relations among properties and their *taxonomy* into comprehensive categories and systems. These constructions would require the positing of truth-claims affirming the character and interrelations of properties. Given her commitment to argue without using dogmatic principles, namely without making claims about the true nature of reality, the Pyrrhonist would really want to avoid such deliberations in the course of constructing her problematic.

(2) The second reason makes the same point as the first but from a slightly different perspective. That is, even if one admits that a certain property *can* be reduced to the 'proper' (namely conflict-inducing) negation of some other property, we are left in darkness regarding such operations of reduction. What is the mechanism behind such operations? The relations of *indifference* holding among the truth-claims of the universe of discourse do not seem to allow for such reduction; and the explanation for the meaning of a conflicting relation does not seem to matter, since a relation of this kind becomes manifest only after the reduction has taken place. If this reduction is to be possible, certain specific relations among the properties employed in the truth-claims of the universe of discourse must have already been existing and become apparent before the event of the reduction itself, and certainly such relations cannot be indifferent; otherwise, it remains a mystery how some property **p2** has suddenly become the (proper) negation of some property **p1**! Be this correct, however, the Pyrrhonist should respond to the challenge by providing us with an account as to how those non-indifferent relations have been produced in the first place. An enterprise of this sort could be the cause of deep trouble for any scepticism whatsoever and much more for the Pyrrhonian. For while positive and complicated analysis (which is the sign of the involvement of *truth-claims* regarding property-systems) would undoubtedly accompany it, the Pyrrhonist denies the employment of any such analysis in the formulation of her position.

This attempt to show the problematic character of the reductionist claim might be strongly objected by those who read Sextus as saying that the construction of conflict between truth-claims uses 'data' (i.e. premises) offered exclusively by the *dogmatic* theories and debates themselves: The Pyrrhonist just takes truth-claims that she finds here and there in the universe of discourse, which have been posited therein by the 'scientists' (or 'dogmatists'), makes a compilation of them and leaves it up to the 'scientists' to decide whether they are in or can be reduced to conflict. As soon as *they* characterise a relation as conflicting, the sceptic would just make manifest – through the argument from the criterion of truth – the impossibility of resolving it. In this way, the reductionist claim would clearly *not* entail the Pyrrhonist's commitment to a theory of property-categorisation.

Although this suggestion is apparently closer to Sextus' text,[39] it has a major disadvantage, a feature that weakens the *universal appeal* (or *global scope*) of Pyrrhonian scepticism and is, *therefore*, foreign to its *spirit*. For now, whether a relation between truth-claims is conflicting or not depends upon the *arbitrary subjectivity* of the scientists (or 'dogmatists'). It is *they* who will now be deciding whether a truth-claim **tc1** conflicts with a certain truth-claim **tc2**. If that were the case, however, Pyrrhonian scepticism, due to its *universality*, would immediately collapse, since it would allow the possibility of the existence of truth-claims in the universe of discourse that are *not* entangled in conflicting relations and, therefore, it would not be the case that the true nature of *any* object or aspect of reality *whatsoever* can be manifested as being beyond human knowledge. Simply, the sheer *agreement* in a scientific community that **tc1** does not conflict with **tc2** (or any other truth-claim) would entail that **tc1** *indeed* does not conflict with **tc2** (or any other truth-claim) and, therefore, that **tc1** is true. In this way, my argument for the problematic character of the reductionist claim has survived the challenge raised by the above objection.

The reductionist claim, though, is not only problematic but also *unnecessary* for the successful formulation of Pyrrhonian scepticism. This is so because *any* truth-claim in the universe of discourse can be undogmatically brought to a state of conflict by simply using the notion

39 See Annas and Barnes (1985), p. 45.

of *immediate positing*, which renders the idea of *reduction* superfluous: If there is a truth-claim in the universe of discourse that assigns the property **p1** to a certain object or aspect of reality, the Pyrrhonist *herself* will posit another truth-claim in this universe which *denies* the assignment of **p1** to that object or aspect of reality. If, for example, there exists the truth-claim 'the world is governed by providence', the sceptic will posit the truth-claim 'the world *is not* governed by providence'. As soon as the latter truth-claim is posited, it acquires an immediate existence in the universe of discourse and this allows it to have an equal truth-status with the former truth-claim.[40] And as soon as *this* takes place any attempt to adjudicate between them would be entangled in the whirlwind of the argument from the criterion of truth.

This argument could be attacked *only* on the basis that there is something philosophically wrong with the Pyrrhonist *herself* positing a truth-claim in the universe of discourse. There are two points I would like to make here:-

(1) This positing done by the Pyrrhonist in no way implies that she should 'assent' or be committed to the relevant truth-claim; such criticism is trivial, boring and totally irrelevant to the matter at hand. The sceptic could posit a truth-claim only for the sake of argument (as a 'mere thought', in Sextus' words), as much as she could use a truth-claim that is *actually* espoused by a dogmatist.[41]

(2) To *forbid* the Pyrrhonist (who represents in this instance each and every human being) to posit the negation of a truth-claim (that is, *another* truth-claim) in the universe of discourse is to explicitly conceive the universe of discourse as having a despotic, fascistic or terrorising character, to conceive it namely as an element that strips human beings of their *freedom* to say *whatever they want to say* at the beginning of a scientific inquiry. But even for the scientists themselves, who would not really want to be *gagged* by someone who disagrees with them, it is a

40 See *PH* I, 202-205; I, 8-10; I, 31.

41 See *PH* II, 10; I, 31. Cf. Barnes (1990), p. 55; Forster (1989), p. 12: "For the ancient skeptic's strategy of setting up opposing propositions or arguments of equal weight on each issue in order to induce a suspension of belief did not require that they believe any of the propositions or arguments thus deployed."

fundamental feature of the universe of discourse that it exemplifies the freedom of scientific expression, which therefore is a *constituting* feature of its *presuppositionless* character. Thus, in the same way you are free to assign truth to any claim you like in a context of immediacy (to wit, at the very beginning of a discussion or scientific inquiry), so the sceptic is free to deny the truth of your claim (just for the sake of argument, of course). Consequently, unless the 'scientists' are prepared to accept the cancellation of discourse altogether (something that would suit the Pyrrhonist perfectly), any attempt to forbid the sceptic to posit negations of truth-claims in the universe of discourse seems to be doomed to failure.

Given then (a) the proven failure of the reductionist claim to be incorporated in a successful model of Pyrrhonian scepticism and (b) the indisputable right of the Pyrrhonist to posit the negation of any truth-claim in the immediate context of the universe of discourse, let us hold fast that a conflict between two truth-claims (regarded as *judgments*) takes place just when the one is simply negated by the other (in the way described, that is, in terms of properties, characteristics, or predicates). But since the Pyrrhonist is able to show that each and every truth-claim taken as *judgment* is always paired with its negation in the universe of discourse and since she manifests that conflicts between simple *judgments* establish the impossibility of human knowledge of the truth of the real and, consequently, the impossibility of scientific inquiry, the consideration of the other two possible forms of the truth-claim, namely the syllogism and the whole theory, does *not* add any extra effectiveness to Pyrrhonian scepticism. Simply, the first judgment one makes on one's way to construct or expound an argument or a theory will be *immediately* negated in the universe of discourse. We are all familiar with those discussions where a certain speaker is always interrupted by the negative comments of one of his interlocutors and despite the fact that he gets immensely angry, asking that person to 'let him finish', this never happens. The Pyrrhonist represents exactly that interlocutor who always interrupts the flow of scientific talk; but she does that based on her absolute freedom as a human being and her strong desire to allow only an undogmatic way of doing science. Given then that the Pyrrhonist can manifest the *total* annihilation of scientific inquiry by making a case against truth-claims taken as *judgments*, any further attack on the other two forms of the truth-claim would be meaningless. We can therefore now conclude that the construction of *simple negations* and their relation

to positive truth-claims, considered as having the form of a *judgment*, will be here taken as the *only* content of the notion of *conflict* that can be incorporated in the *genuine spirit* of Pyrrhonian scepticism.

This conclusion turns my interpretation into one of the most radical interpretations of Pyrrhonian scepticism ever suggested. While important Pyrrhonism scholars like Sedley, Frede, Hankinson and others, present the Pyrrhonist as someone who spends quite a lot of time trying to *understand* the scientific arguments and theories proposed by the scientists and then come up with a *clever* counterargument or countertheory so as to convince an *audience* of their equal strength, my systematic analysis of Pyrrhonian scepticism has shown (convincingly I hope) that such picture is completely mistaken. The Pyrrhonist, as a philosopher of freedom and presuppositionlessness, simply constructs or acknowledges conflicting relations between simple scientific judgments (truth-claims)[42] and then applies the argument from the criterion of truth to them so as to manifest the impossibility of knowledge of truth. The only way for my argument to collapse is if those scholars could convince us that the Pyrrhonist has something *extra* to gain from making a case not only against truth-claims as judgments (or propositions), but also against truth-claims as syllogisms (or arguments) or whole theories. But, in my opinion (which is based on the previous laborious analysis), this cannot possibly be done.

5. Truth

In the previous section an explanation has been offered as to what it means for truth-claims to be in conflict and how this conflict comes about in the universe of discourse. That explanation, however, does *not* provide an *explicit* characterisation of the asserted negative relation between truth

42 Cf. *PH* I, 9 (my emphasis): "[...] We take the phrase with 'the things which appear and are thought of', to show that we are *not* to investigate *how* what appears appears or *how* what is thought of is thought of, but are simply *to take them for granted*;" *M* IX, 1: "With regard to the physical division of philosophy we shall pursue again the same method of inquiry, and not delay long on particular points as Clitomachus has done and the rest of the Academic troupe (for by plunging into alien subject-matter and framing their arguments on the basis of dogmatic assumptions not their own have unduly prolonged their counterstatement)."

and conflicting truth-claims. The present section attempts to satisfy this demand and thereby respond to the third question raised earlier.

The Pyrrhonian argument, as it has been described in the preceding discussion, can be sustained only if *assent* is given to the claim that conflicting relations between truth-claims cause the true nature of the relevant object or aspect of reality to go, as it were, out of sight. In other words, it seems that for the Pyrrhonist the *conjunction* of *a is p* and *a is not p*, where *a* denotes an object or aspect of reality and *p* a property or characteristic of *a*, cannot possibly exemplify the true nature of *a*. From this it can be derived (a) that *knowledge* of the truth of *a is p* requires that *a is not p* does not exist in the universe of discourse and (b) that the truth of *a is p* excludes the truth of *a is not p*. More generally, (1) knowledge of the true nature of an object or aspect of reality requires that this object or aspect is *not said* to accommodate both a certain property and its negation and (2) the true nature of that object or aspect *does not* include both that property and its negation.

For the Pyrrhonian argument to be sustained, therefore, the Pyrrhonist *herself* must assent to *the law of non-contradiction*, taken here as saying that *it is impossible that a is p and a is not p*. If no assent is given to this law, the simple *description* of a conflicting relation in the universe of discourse has no bearing on the issue of truth and, therefore, cannot be used against scientific inquiry. Indeed, the existence of conflicting truth-claims in the universe of discourse constitutes a *problem* (an 'anomaly in things', as Sextus puts it)[43] *only* if the sceptic accepts that the conflict must be resolved, and the *only* reason that can be given for such demand is the truth of the law of non-contradiction.

If this argument were correct, Pyrrhonian scepticism would immediately collapse: While the programmatic statements of the sceptical project leave no doubt that *absolutely no* dogmatic principles should be employed in its actualisation, the law of non-contradiction *is* a dogmatic principle, for it purports to say something true of the nature of reality. The Pyrrhonist, however, has already a powerful reply up her sleeve: "You've got it all wrong once more," she would say; "the law of non-contradiction

43 *PH* I, 12; I, 29.

is a principle averred by all those who get involved in scientific inquiry and I, the Pyrrhonist, employ that principle only in order to show those 'scientists' that if *they* accept the law, then no knowledge of truth is ever possible. If, on the other hand, *they* do *not* accept the law as true, (a) there remains a picture of the universe of discourse in which any given truth-claim (that is, not only the positive truth-claims but also their *negations*) would be accommodated therein and (b) all these truth-claims would then have to be taken as being true. In other words, *anything said would be true*. And I really do not have a problem with this image because all it pictures is chaos in the sphere of science!"[44]

As far as I can see, this response clears the Pyrrhonist off the accusation that she 'assents' to the law of non-contradiction. It is rather up to the 'scientists' or 'dogmatists' *themselves* whether the law would be asserted as true or false or not be asserted at all. If *they* deny the law of non-contradiction or remain indifferent to its truth, they will get nothing but a scientific framework in which – as often said – 'anything goes', and such state-of-affairs would just prove the Pyrrhonist's point. If, on the other hand, *they* accept the truth of the law, they will allow the involvement of the argument from the criterion of truth, which – as shown – *manifests* that no conflict in the universe of discourse (including the one between the law and *its* negation) can *ever* be resolved.[45]

6. Conclusion

(1) Pyrrhonian or *presuppositionless* scepticism is a philosophy[46] (a) of freedom and (b) of the impossibility of knowledge of truth. It is the first because it *actualises* our freedom as scientists to posit any truth-claim we want in the universe of discourse. It is the second because it *manifests* that no conflict between truth-claims (considered as *judgments*) could

44 Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, vols. I-II, books I-XIV, trans. by H. Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), III.1005b22-35; III.1006a11-b34.

45 On the relation between scepticism and the classical logical laws see the interesting remark in Forster (1989), pp. 195-197.

46 One should not be puzzled by or object to the description of Pyrrhonian scepticism as 'philosophy'. This derives from the innocent fact that Sextus wrote a *book* in which he expounds what the label 'Pyrrhonism' *means*; the word 'philosophy' does not here imply commitment to *dogmatic* beliefs (i.e. truth-claims).

ever be resolved and, consequently, that scientific inquiry is a futile enterprise. The manifestation of the impossibility of knowledge is supported by (a) the belief that a conflict *must* be resolved if truth is to be disclosed (i.e. the belief in the truth of the law of non-contradiction) and (b) the argument from the criterion of truth. This essay has shown (a) how exactly these two pillars of the Pyrrhonian argument support that manifestation and (b) why it is immensely difficult or even maybe impossible to invalidate them.

(2) This form of scepticism is *presuppositionless* because neither the premises nor the conclusion of its argument are dogmatic principles espoused by the Pyrrhonist *herself*. Rather, they are all either (a) dogmatic principles espoused by *the 'dogmatists'* or *'scientists'* or (b) negative truth-claims that are posited in the universe of discourse by the Pyrrhonist *for the sake of argument*. Given this presuppositionless character of Pyrrhonian scepticism, its refutation could be achieved – if at all – *only* through the destruction of those philosophical theories and/or assumptions which are, consciously or unconsciously, espoused by *the scientists* themselves and which, despite the fact that they are *not* truth-claims, i.e. expressions about the true nature of *reality*, still provide premises that the Pyrrhonist uses in order to destroy the knowledge-aspirations of *those* scientists. Such refutation would mean that knowledge of the true nature of reality has been *restored*, *but* in a framework whose character is now determined by some *other* philosophical theories and/or assumptions, which, however, would (*somehow*) manage to escape falling once more into the trap of Pyrrhonism.

(3) The huge difficulty in formulating those 'other' theories lies in that *the problematic itself*, which asks for a *successful* way of grounding or actualising the possibility of scientific inquiry, has a necessary basis, the *universe of discourse*, the revealed fundamental features of which have been shown to be themselves *presuppositionless*, in the sense that their removal would destroy the problematic itself. These were (a) that a *conflict* between truth-claims *must* be resolved for truth to be restored (otherwise, as pointed out, 'anything would go' and, therefore, Pyrrhonian scepticism would not be refuted) and (b) that in a context of immediacy the negations of positive truth-claims will continue to pop up and acquire

equal truth-status to their positive counterparts (and, therefore, contexts of immediacy will *always* be characterised by conflict). Crucially, then, any successful refutation of Pyrrhonian scepticism *must* keep those *presuppositionless* features of the basis of the problematic intact. The challenge, then, seems to be to discover some other principles, *distinct from those two*, which are at play in the formulation of the Pyrrhonian attack against science and whose *removal* would *somehow* force Pyrrhonism to collapse.

(4) Note, finally, that the battle against Pyrrhonian scepticism would necessarily have nothing to do with a scepticism that is grounded on the *dogmatic* assumption that there is a distinction between the *internal* mind and the *external* reality (i.e. that the true nature of reality is that it *is* distinct from human cognition).[47] For, as shown, in her manifestation of the impossibility of knowledge of truth the Pyrrhonist makes *no* use of an alleged *fundamental discrepancy* between what *appears* and what *really*

47 Frede (1987), p. 221, somewhat reluctantly, acknowledges this crucial point: "For all he [i.e. the Pyrrhonist] knows it might be a mistake to distinguish quite generally and globally between how things appear and how they really are. There are some cases where it seems to be useful to make such distinctions, e.g., in the case of illusions, or in the case of deception. But for these cases we have ways to ascertain what really is the case which allow us in the first place to draw, for these cases, a reasonably clear distinction between how things appear and how they really are. But how are we supposed to know what is asked for when we are asked what things are really like in cases where we have not yet found that out? In short, I see no reason why a classical skeptic should accept the global contrast between appearance and reality." This point is also acknowledged by Hegel (*VSP* pp. 225, 247-248). Forster (2007), p. 10, in contrast, seems to, mistakenly, understand the Pyrrhonist as one who accepts the distinction between an internal mind and an external reality: "[...] It is an acceptance by the skeptic that his mental affections are thus and so in him, but without any implication that they represent the external realities correctly, and hence it [sic] does not attain truth or constitute belief." Maybe Forster has been misled by the fact that Sextus himself sometimes succumbs to this *dogma*; see *PH* I, 10 (my emphasis): "When we question whether the *underlying* object is such as it appears, we grant [...] that it appears, and our doubt does not concern the appearance itself;" Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* [*Pyrrhoneioi Hypotyposeis*], trans. by R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), I, 20 (my emphasis): "Honey appears to us to be sweet – and this we grant, for we perceive sweetness through the senses – but whether it is also sweet *in its essence* is for us a matter of doubt [...]." Hopefully the reader agrees with me that these passages are completely *incompatible* with the genuine Pyrrhonist's commitment to *presuppositionlessness*.

is. Her essential worry is rather that in the universe of discourse a positive truth-claim has an equal truth-status to its negation. Thus, the refutation of Kantian, Humean or Cartesian scepticism does *not* entail the refutation of Pyrrhonism. Heed should be paid to this particular point by all those philosophers, who maintain that these forms of scepticism would mean the refutation of any serious philosophical scepticism. Unfortunately for them, the *presuppositionless* scepticism of the Pyrrhonists, which is arguably the most gripping and depressing case against scientific inquiry that has ever appeared in the history of human thought, *persists* even after those dogmatic expressions of scepticism have been removed from the philosophical plane.

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Essay on Transcendental Philosophy:

Short Overview of the Whole Work; On the Categories;

Antinomies. Ideas.

SALOMON MAIMON

This overview may not in fact be so short. Some matters are dealt with in more detail here than in the main work. But conversely, other material will be completely omitted, or only touched on briefly. My aim is here to lay out before the eyes of the reader in suitable order the results of the whole text, so that he can get an overview of the *statum controversiae*.

Short Overview of the Whole Work

Sensation[1] is the modification of the faculty of cognition that only becomes actual in it in a passive manner (without spontaneity). This

1 The given in representation according to Kant can not mean that within [the representation] which has a cause outside of the faculty of representation [*Vorstellungskraft*], for it does not mean that one cannot recognise the thing in itself (*noumenon*) outside of the faculty of representation as cause, in that here the schema of time is lacking; one cannot even think it assertorically, as the faculty of representation itself, as much as the object outside of it, can be the cause of the representation. The given therefore can be nothing other than that in representation of which not only the cause, but also the mode of origination (*Essentia realis*) in us is unknown to us, that is, of which we have only an incomplete [*unvollständig*] consciousness. This incompleteness of consciousness however, can be thought by a determinate consciousness to complete nothingness through an infinite decreasing series of degrees, consequently the mere given (that which is present without any consciousness of the faculty of representation) is a mere idea of the limits of this series, to which (as to an irrational root) one always approaches, but one can never reach.

sensation is, however, simply an idea, to which we continually approach through the attenuation of our consciousness (which we can never reach, as the lack of all consciousness = 0,[2] and consequently cannot be a modification of the faculty of cognition).

Intuition[3] is a modification of the faculty of cognition that becomes actual in part in a passive way, but in part through its own action. The former is called the material, the latter, its form.

Appearance[4] is an indeterminate intuition, in so far as it is grounded in this passive manner.

The *a priori*,[5] considered absolutely, is for Kant a form of cognition that is in the mind before all sensation. For me, however, the *a priori* is, considered absolutely, a form of cognition which precedes the cognition of the object itself, i.e. the concept of an object in general, and everything which one can assert about such an object, or where the object is purely

2 I have already demonstrated on various occasions that activity will be required for consciousness [in order to be conscious].

3 The given in intuition (material) emerges in a passive manner, the organisation of it, however, according to a form, through activity.

4 The representation of the colour red, for instance, consists in the sensation of this particular sensible quality whose manifold is ordered according to the forms of intuition (time and space); it is therefore a determinate empirical intuition. Appearance is the concept, however, abstracted from the colour red and all other sensible representations, of a sensible representation in general.

5 *A priori* knowledge in general means knowledge from grounds (*cognitio philosophica*). The predicate is attached to the particular subject therefore, as it is already attached to the general, within which this particular subsists. For instance, I judge that the sum of angles of a right angled triangle of a given size is equal to two right [angles]; why? Because I know in advance that the sum of angles in a triangle in general must be equal to two right angles. The absolute *a priori* requires yet another condition, namely that the last ground of the judgement or the general judgement to which I reduce all particular [judgements], is itself *a priori*. This, however, is not possible so long as the condition of the judgement is a particular determination of the subject (in that it presupposes an infinite series). The condition must therefore be the universal concept of the thing in general. There is however no other judgement of this type than identity and contradiction, where the condition of judgment in not a determinate object but a necessary form.

determined through a relation, as in, for example, the objects of pure arithmetic.

A Priori cognition in the narrowest sense, and considered absolutely, is, therefore, the cognition of a relation between objects before the cognition of the objects themselves, by which this relation is encountered. Its principle is the principle of contradiction (or identity). If, however, the cognition of the object must precede the representation of the relation, it is called, in this sense, *a posteriori*. It follows from this that axioms of mathematics[6] are not known *a priori*. That is to say, although they are *a priori materialiter* (in time and space), they are not, however, *formaliter*. Suppose I have no conception of a straight line, and someone asks me, can a straight line also not be straight? Certainly I would not withhold my judgement (with the assumption that I don't know what a straight line is) until I have a representation of it, but my answer would be right at hand, that this is impossible. If he asked me, however, is a straight line the shortest? I would answer, 'I don't know, perhaps yes, perhaps no,' until I had acquired a representation of a straight line. The ground of this lies in the fact that the principle of identity is the most general form of our knowledge, and consequently it must apply to all objects in general, though they may be as they like in regard to [their] accidents. However, that a straight line is the shortest is merely the form through which we think this determinate object, so that so long as we have no representation of the object, we cannot know if this form inheres in it or not.

The pure is for Kant that where nothing belonging to sensation will be encountered. That is, only a connection or relation (as an operation of the understanding) is pure; for me, however, the pure is that wherein nothing from intuition, in so far as it is an incomplete operation, will be encountered.

6 I mean the axioms which are particular to mathematics, such as, for example, a straight line is the shortest between two points, etc. Not, however, those which are needed in mathematics merely because they are valid in general, such as, the whole is equal to all of its parts taken together, etc. as a whole is (Baumgarten, *Metaphysik* §. 120) one which is completely the same as many taken together, and those which taken together are the same as the one, are the parts of it; consequently, this axiom is based on the principle of contradiction, and is therefore *a priori* in the narrowest sense.

The possibility of a concept can have two senses:-

1) The absence of contradiction, which will be merely used in symbolic knowledge,[7] since when I have knowledge of it from intuition, I don't need to first compare the determinations, in order to see if they contradict each other, as the fact or actuality itself is proof enough of its possibility.

2) A real ground of possibility, and this in turn in two ways; either it means the absence of contradiction, but not merely in the combination of symbols, but also in the object itself.[8] Suppose someone had no concept of a point, and one asked him, is an extended point possible, or not? Here he would, simply looking at the rules of combination, say that it is possible; as from what should he recognise the impossibility, when he does not have a representation of the object? This is not the case when one asks him if an unextended extended point is possible. Here it is not

7 A contradiction can only occur between the symbols of opposed forms (being and not-being), not however between the objects, or between the objects and forms; consequently it is merely used by symbolic knowledge (see the appendix on symbolic knowledge). In this [symbolic knowledge] I can just as easily say: a triangle is possible, or a space can be enclosed in three lines, as a triangle is not possible; in both cases the propositions contain no contradiction. In intuitive knowledge I can only say the first: why? As I really think it so. That is, this apodictic relation of form to determinate objects (that one which is an apodictic relation is a particular determination of the form) presupposes already the possibility of form in itself (absence of contradiction). If one says: a triangle must be possible before I really think it, as I otherwise couldn't think it as such; then I ask, what does it mean that it must be possible before I really think it? Presumably it means this: another thinking being that compares me as something determinable with the triangle as determination, finds that I, determined through the modification triangle, am possible. This however presupposes a third thinking being, and so on to infinity. The further a member of this series comes, the more possibilities it thinks at once. The thinking being *a*, for instance, thinks merely space as possible in relation to three lines. This supposes, however, another thinking being, *b*, that in addition to thinking a triangle as possible, thinks the first in relation to it as possible as well, and so on. One claims therefore that the real possibility should precede the thinking of an object, then one would not come across this possibility in any member of the series. But also not in the last member (when we want to realise this idea); as with this the possibility certainly does not precede the actuality.

8 That is, where those which are thought in a synthesis do not contradict each other in their concepts, but where their consequences cancel each other.

necessary for him to know what a point is in order to be convinced of the impossibility of this concept, as the contradiction is here already to be encountered in the symbolic combination.

Or it means, not only that the symbolic can be realised, but also the comprehensibility of the mode of origination [*Enstehungsart*] of this real thing, or, if I am allowed this expression, the necessity of the possibility. The concept of an equilateral triangle, where I construct a triangle in general and simply think through the equality of the sides, is indeed possible according to the former sense, but this possibility is purely arbitrary. When I construct, however, an equilateral triangle, through two equal circles, where the circumference of each meets the centre of the other, then I see the necessity of the equality of sides, and consequently also the possibility of the concept, and so it is with *a priori* judgements as well.

Herr Kant raises the question, how are synthetic *a priori* propositions possible? The meaning of this question is this: that analytic *a priori* propositions are possible is fully comprehensible, because they depend upon the principle of contradiction, which doesn't refer to a determinate object but instead to an object in general. Consequently, they must be encountered in the understanding prior to the representation of specific objects. Synthetic propositions however refer to a determinate object, so how can they therefore precede the representation of the object itself, that is, be *a priori*?

In order to prevent the objection that one could make against him, namely, why does one need to enquire into the possibility of synthetic propositions when there are in fact none, Herr Kant aims to place the fact itself beyond doubt, in that he cites accepted synthetic propositions both from mathematics and the natural sciences, which express necessity, and consequently must be *a priori*.

I note, however, that when such propositions express necessity, it is not thereby agreed that they embody (objective) necessity. That I, for instance, judge that a straight line is the shortest between two points, can

relate to this, as I have always perceived it so,[9] hence it has become necessary for me subjectively, or once again, this proposition has a high level of probability, but no objective necessity. My previously stated criterion of *a priori* propositions, as containing objective necessity, should also have validity the other way around, that, where it is not encountered, no objective necessity is there either, so not only can the fore-mentioned be merely subjective, but they certainly are, as the criterion is not met. Should it, however, only serve to demonstrate the objective certainty of such [propositions], where it is encountered, here there remains the slightest uncertainty about the fact, and a fact that is uncertain, is not a fact. Pure mathematics will lose nothing through this doubt, as its propositions can be derived hypothetically from its axioms. 'If a straight line is the shortest line, then …' and so on. But applied [mathematics] and natural science probably will. Metaphysics as speculative science will also be none the worse for it. I will always be able to claim, if the soul is simple, then it is indestructible, and so on. One thereby makes the hypothetical propositions of each science absolute, and these propositions work reasonably well in practice. The same can also be the case with metaphysics. The proposition, 'everything has a cause,' is, so I believe, of the same sort of evidence[10] as the proposition, 'a straight line…,' and when Herr Kant also demonstrated that space is an *a priori* form, that is, before the sensible objects themselves, so is this proposition: the straight line, etc. also only in this

9 That is, not in a pure, but in an empirical construction (when I had drawn a straight line on paper, I always found that it was the shortest). For what should then the pure construction of a straight line be, as we can give no definition, consequently no *a priori* rule of construction?

10 That is, in itself, not merely as a condition of experience. I remark here, once and for all, that I take that which Kant calls objective necessity (condition of an objective perception or experience) for a merely subjective necessity, on two grounds. 1. Suppose that a synthetic rule in general in perceptions was necessary for its objective reality. Then, however, no determinate rule is necessary for this. We think, for example, the perceptions *a* and *b* through the form or rule of causality; a different thinking being, however, can think these perceptions according to another rule, consequently this rule is only subjective in relation to determinate perceptions. 2. A synthetic rule is not in general necessary to objective reality in consideration of an unconstrained understanding not affected by sensibility. This understanding thinks all possible objects according to their inner relations to one another, or according to the mode in which they originate from one another, that is, always according to an analytic rule, from which it follows that the forms or synthetic rules only have objective necessity for us (in that we cannot make them synthetic because of our limitations), but not in themselves.

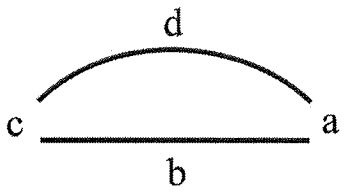
sense *a priori*, that is, *materialiter*, not, however, prior to all objects in general, and not before cognition of the object of judgement itself. Objective necessity can only be added to those propositions which refer to the object in general, such as the principle of contradiction.

But then, one will say, must not this subjective necessity have an objective ground? I answer that, yes, certainly, it must do, but even then, because the ground of the judgement lies in the object, so only an obtained representation of the object itself will be suitable.

If we want to consider the matter more precisely, then we will find that the expression, 'objective necessity,'[11] has no meaning, in that necessity always means a subjective force to accept something as true. In consideration of the evidence in science, we must be aware of the generality of propositions, and this also not in and for itself, as a more general proposition is not truer than a less general one; it depends on the correct application of these propositions. Namely, the more general a proposition is, the less one runs the danger of erring in its application. For suppose that one wanted to apply this same [general proposition] to a particular case, what does this mean? That this particular case is contained in the general? However, if it were merely a particular proposition, then one who wanted to make it general would err greatly, as the general is not contained in the particular. When one is from the start strongly convinced of the comprehensiveness of a proposition, then it is a matter of indifference to us; it may in itself be more or less general. The less determinations a subject can accept, the more general must the appropriate judgement be; of this type are the axioms of mathematics. A straight line is the shortest between two points. A straight line can accept no more determinations than its magnitude, so here the determination of the subject by the predicate can have no influence, as it is the predicate itself. This judgement must, therefore, be universal. One will say, perhaps this proposition is only valid for the distance between the two points

11 Objective necessity can only be attached to the principle of contradiction (in so far as it means an objective relation of a subject in general to an object in general), or to the categories (in so far as through this a real object in general can be thought in relation to our subject), not however to a proposition relating to a particular object. The former necessity is *a priori*, that is, it will be attached to a particular object, because it must be attached to an object in general. The latter, however, is merely *a posteriori*, according to my explanation.

which I have already brought into the predicate in the construction, but not for other distances. So let us first assume[12] that it applies to the distance, *ab*, but not to the doubled length, *ac*.



That is, that the shortest line between *a* and *c* is not the straight line *ac*, but instead *adc*, which is not the shortest, would be straight; now, however, I have assumed that the line *ab* is both straight and the shortest between *a* and *b*, and because the position of the line does not alter its character or magnitude, I can substitute *ab* for *bc*, so that when I position the point *a* at *b*, the point *b* must henceforth become *c*, meaning that *ac*=2*ab*, and must be both the straight and shortest line. One can also alternatively demonstrate that a straight line is also the shortest over a smaller distance. Let us assume that *ac* is (by virtue of the construction) both straight and the shortest line between *a* and *c*. I say from this that half of this line must be straight and the shortest line between *a* and *b* as well, as were it not the shortest line between *a* and *b*, then 2*ab* (which is *ac*), would not be the shortest, contrary to the assumption. It must also be straight, as through the fact that I have cut *ac* in half, I have not altered its position, and therefore its nature. This is present in the words themselves, as when I say that perhaps the straight line with twice the magnitude is not the shortest, I contradict myself, as distance can be defined merely through the shortest line.

12 In a similar manner, Herr Kästner proves the proposition that every power of two is greater than its exponent, in that he shows that when the proposition is valid for a certain power, it must also apply to the next highest power (see *Anfangsgründe Analysis Endliche Größen*, §. 45).

The proposition, 5+7=12[13] (the second example of mathematical synthetic propositions), is also general, namely because it is an individual proposition (which logicians rightly consider universal).

The evidence of mathematics can thus remain fixed even if we do not assume with Herr Kant that space is an *a priori* form of intuition.

I, however, pose the question as follows: given that all knowledge must be analytically *a priori*, and must be derived from the principle of contradiction, how shall we make those propositions, which are synthetic due to the limits of our cognition, analytic? Or, how shall we define the subject so that the predicate is identical with it? Because when we examine all of those propositions, we find that the subject is either not defined (as in the Kantian example, 7+5=12) but simply presented in intuition, or is badly defined, like the example, a straight line is the shortest between two points. How are we to improve matters? I don't want to undertake to develop each of the propositions in this way myself; in order to render my claim sufficiently, it is enough that I have not held it to be impossible.

"Space," says Kant, "is not an empirical concept which has been derived from outer experiences. For in order that certain sensations be referred to something outside me, and similarly in order that I may be able to represent them as outside and alongside one another, the representation of space must be presupposed..." But this only shows that space is a universal,[14] but not on my understanding, an *a priori* concept. I

13 One could pose the question: what is a determinate number? It is not an *a posteriori* object (something given), as it is merely a determinate way to think an object. It is not an *a priori* form, as it is not a condition of an object. It is not an *a posteriori* form, as this has no meaning at all, as each form can be nothing other than an *a priori* condition. What is it then?

14 A form will thereby be thought (as far as I was able to gather from Herr Kant's theory) as that in the representation of an object that has its ground not in the object but in the particular composition of the faculty of representation. The question is, however, through what it is recognised, or through which characteristics one can tell whether some determination of representation has its ground in objects or merely in the faculty of representation? I was not able to find any others than these: 1) generality in relation to the object; 2) particularity in relation to the subject; and that both of these are necessary, namely, if I find a

on the other hand assert that space is as an intuition a schema or picture of the heterogeneity of given objects, or a subjective form of representing this objective heterogeneity, which is a universal form, or necessary condition of thinking of objects in general, without which it would be an empty space, that is, a transcendent representation which would be without any reality (as when I represent to myself a homogenous object, without referring it to something heterogeneous). Consequently, space is indeed, taken by itself, a universal, but not an *a priori* concept, except simply in regard to that which it represents (the difference), as, namely,

representation that is common to many objects, then I recognise from that that they are not a determination of the object itself (as this can merely be that by which each object is distinguished from every other), but of our mode of representation. This is, however, merely a condition through which form can be distinguished from material, and the form of thinking of an object from the objects themselves (the given), not, however, through which that can be recognised which has its ground in a particular mode of representation and not [be recognised] in that which is inherent to every mode of representation in general in relation to just the same object. For example, the material is what it is just the same in relation to each thinking being to whom it is given, as otherwise it would not be merely material, in that the modification, which passively happens to each of them, would belong to form. Further, the material difference of objects is a necessary condition for their perception as particular objects for every subject without difference. One sees from this that the first characteristic is merely a *conditio sine qua non*, that what is not particular to many objects can not belong to form (mode of representation) but instead to material (the given). It can, however, belong to this not only in relation to a particular [faculty of representation] but also to a faculty of representation in general (either as the material itself of as their condition). Space (and also time) is of this type. Space is not, like red, for instance, the given in the object, through which it is recognised and distinguished from all other objects, as it is not a determination in the object, but a relation between multiple objects. Consequently the first requisite is found here, namely the characteristic of a form in opposition to material. The second requisite, however, is lacking here, or the characteristic of subjectivity (that, however, is of greater importance in consideration of the Kantian theory). I hold (since it cannot be accounted for), therefore, space for a form, but not like Herr Kant for a merely subjective [form] (necessary in relation to a particular type of subject), but for an objective (necessary in relation to every subject in general) form. But this (according to my hypothesis), in consideration of space as a concept (of difference in general). However, in consideration of [the concept] as intuition (the image of this difference), I hold space merely for a general concept, not however for a form, as here the second requisite (the characteristic of subjectivity) is lacking. The difference between Herr Kant's theory and mine, therefore, lies herein: According to Herr Kant, space is merely a form of intuition, according to me, however, as concept it is a form of all objects in general, and as intuition an image of this form. For him it is nothing in the

the difference [*Verschiedenheit*] inheres in all things, or all things are different from one another, or must be thought so, as, therefore, they are all things.

Second, he says, "Space is a necessary representation etc." This necessity is, as I have already remarked, purely subjective in relation to space regarded in itself (for in consideration of that which it represents, namely difference, it is certainly objective). That one can think of space without objects is, as I remarked, purely transcendent.

Third: "the apodictic certainty of all geometrical axioms is grounded in *a priori* necessity, etc." This apodictic certainty depends, according to me, simply on its universality; this either needs no demonstration, in that this relation between particular objects of intuition can be seen, as in, for example, the proposition, 5+7=12, as a particular proposition is considered as general; or it can at least be demonstrated that if this proposition is perceived in any single intuition, it must also be perceived in all presented intuitions, as in the proposition, the straight line is the shortest between two points, and similar. This universality certainly must have an objective ground, that is to say, the proposition must be analytic to an infinite understanding, which we, however, cannot comprehend.

Fourth: "Space is not a discursive or universal concept of the relations of things in general." This all has its correctness in consideration of space, as it appears to us, but not however, in consideration of what it presents (the difference of sensible objects in general); as here, the general difference is abstracted from differences in particular, in that things are different in different ways. Red is different from green in a different way than sweet is different from bitter. That this copy is not fully like the original, or that there are not different spaces which would correspond to different kinds of difference, should not astonish us, as little as one can be astonished that on paper, mathematical figures are not exactly equal to their concepts.

object itself, abstracted from our mode of representation; for me however it is always something in relation to some subject in general, indeed a form, which, however, has its ground in objects.

Fifth: "Space is represented as an infinite magnitude." The area of space can never be greater that the area of things which fill it, and as this intuition can be nothing else but finite, space can also not be represented as other than finite. The representation of the infinite magnitude of space is therefore transcendent, and has no objective reality. I am therefore in agreement with Herr Kant, that space, if considered as an intuition in itself (but not as a picture of a relation), merely has a subjective reality, and that things which appear to us in space may not perhaps appear in space to other thinking beings, but I add that these subjective appearances must have an objective ground, of which even, therefore, as it is objective, must be thought the same way by all thinking beings. In relation to Herr Kant's theory of time, I could make the same remarks, in that on my reading time is generally a picture of the differences of mental states.

Herr Kant argues that sensibility and understanding are two wholly different faculties; I argue, however, that, although they must be represented by us as two different faculties, they must in spite of this be thought by an infinite thinking being as one and the same power, and that sensibility is in us the incomplete understanding. We are affected by sensation in three ways: 1) That we are not conscious of the concepts contained within it. 2) That we must also, even in consideration of concepts which we can acquire, rely on sensibility, in order to bring them to consciousness. 3) That we, through this, obtain these concepts themselves, and their relations to one another, often incompletely and in time, in accordance with the laws of sensibility; the infinite thinking being however, thinks all possible concepts at once in their perfection, without any admixture of sensibility.

The table of logical functions of judgement, and following from this, the categories, seem to me to be suspect. 1) The reality of the hypothetical judgement is doubtful. In pure *a priori* sciences, such as mathematics, we never encounter it, as when I can say, if a line is straight, then it is the shortest between two points, etc. this is only a form of speech, that here (where it simply says what a straight line is, etc. through which it is in reality a categorical judgement) means nothing in particular, and so must have been derived from somewhere else, where it appears to mean something, *per analogiam*. We encounter it, however,

nowhere else than in our judgemeasnts about given nature. But if one denies this, in that one claims that we have in fact no judgements of experience (which express objective necessity), but instead purely subjective judgements (which have become objective through habit); then the concept of a hypothetical judgement is and remains simply problematic.

Further, I ask: what are assertoric and apodictic judgements, and through what would these types of judgement be differentiated from one another? If the mathematical axioms are (because following my explanation we don't understand the grounds of their necessity *a priori*) assertoric judgements, then in reality there are indeed no apodictic-categorical judgements. Because these axioms themselves are indeed categorical, but not apodictic, what is derived from assuming them using the principle of contradiction itself, is indeed apodictic in regards to their connection with the axioms, but its reality in-itself cannot be more than the reality of the axioms themselves, that is, it is, like these, simply assertoric. If, however, these axioms are (because they express necessity) apodictic, then I again don't know what a pure assertoric judgement could be. It cannot be a judgement of experience (or perception), for example, a body is heavy, as this is not in reality a judgement; it expresses merely the always perceived conjunction of the predicate and subject in time and space. So one sees that logic can be no guide here.

I argue, however, that the synthetic propositions of mathematics are indeed universally true propositions, but yet not apodictic ones, but instead merely assertoric propositions, not *a priori* (in the sense in which I take the word) or pure propositions.

The concepts of substance and accident are just the logical concepts of subject and predicate in a transcendental sense; namely from two things which are determined through nothing but this relation, that the first can be thought without relation to the other, the latter, however, cannot be thought without relation to the former. Their characteristics must, it is true, freely be given in experience, in order to be able to subsume the objects under this concept. I am, therefore, in agreement with Herr Kant that these concepts, and the judgements grounded therein, are valid merely for objects of experience; I only argue that they are not

valid, as Herr K. assumes, for objects of experience as they appear to us immediately, but hold good purely for the limits of objects of experience (ideas) and through the mediation of these for the objects of experience.

The difference between Herr Kant and my reduction of these concepts is contained herein:-

Herr Kant assumed the following fact as undisputed, that we have propositions of experience (that express necessity), and demonstrates from this their objective validity, therefore he shows that without these, experience would be impossible. Now experience is possible, because following his assumption it is actual, consequently these concepts have objective reality. I, however, dispute the fact itself, that we have propositions of experience, and because of this I cannot their prove objective validity in this way, but instead I prove merely the possibility of their objective validity of objects, not of experience (which is determined in intuition), but their limits, which are determined by reason in relation to the corresponding intuitions of objects, whereby the question, *quid juris*? (by applying pure concepts to ideas) must fall away. The things can, therefore, stand in this relationship to one another; if they in fact stand in these relations to one another is still in question. Herr K. demonstrates, for example, the reality of the concept of cause or the necessity of *b* following *a* but not the inverse, that is, that the sequence follows a rule of succession. The apprehension of the manifold of the appearance (which may be sub- or objective) is always successive. One can therefore only differentiate the objective from the subjective in that one perceives that in the first case the sequence follows a necessary rule, whereas in the latter it is purely arbitrary. Now I say that nowhere in perception does one encounter a sequence which is necessary according to a rule; that is, I deny the fact. For should it be necessary because I cannot during the perception of the one sequence perceive the other, then it cannot be distinguished from a purely arbitrary sequence, since also in the latter case, it is impossible to perceive another during the sequence.

That one represents the succession by the representation of a house, for example, from the ground to the top, as arbitrary, and accordingly the house itself does not originate in this succession of movement; [but one represents] the movement of the ship, however, as real, and consequently

originating during the succession; [this] results from the fact that the house is not simply known through this particular sequence, but is known as an object through other characteristics (which may in turn be perceived through the succession of our apprehension; it is enough that they are not as such observed during the given apprehension). The movement of the ship, however, will be perceived purely through this particular sequence of apprehensions, before and after which there are no criteria which could reveal their being as an object. Therefore in the former case we believe the object originates with the succession in the apprehension, but in the latter, we assume the existence of the object prior to the succession. These two kinds of succession examined in themselves are not distinct from one another, and consequently, when someone asserts that the ship really moves down the stream, he therefore does not know what he wants to express with the word "really".

Herr K. holds the categories or pure concepts of the understanding to be merely forms of thought, which could not be explained without the conditions of intuition, therefore having no use. I however assert that the categories, as pure concepts of the understanding, can and must be explained without any reference to the conditions of intuition. They concern the conceivability of things, the reality of these and their conditions is to them merely arbitrary. Substance, for instance, is that part of a synthesis which can be thought without the other (albeit as a predicate of another), that is, the subject of the synthesis. An accident is that part of the synthesis which cannot be thought without the other, that is, the predicate. We can explicate and clarify these concepts through scientific as well as mathematical examples. Cause is that whose positing must be seen as the ground of the positing of another; again a subject, not of a concept but of a judgement. Effect is that which must necessarily follow (not simultaneously in time) the positing of the former.

I take the understanding merely as a capacity to think, that is, to create pure concepts through making judgements. No real objects are given to it as the material that it should operate on. Its objects are purely logical, and only through thinking do they become real objects. It is an error to believe that the things (real objects) must be prior to their relations. The concepts of number are merely relations, which don't presuppose real objects, as these relations are the objects themselves. The

number 2, for instance, expresses a relation from 2 : 1, and simultaneously the object of this relation, and even if this is necessary for their recognition, it is, however, not necessary to its reality. All mathematical truths also have their reality prior to our consciousness of them.

These pure concepts of the understanding and relations, which always come in pairs, explicate each other reciprocally, that is, in a circle, and they do this totally naturally, as in order for the explication of a concept not to be circular, it must not be wholly pure, that is, it must have some element which cannot be explicated at all, and which is merely given (for the sensibility), but which is not thought by the understanding, or would have to be explicated through an infinite series of predicates. This, however, gives no explication, as when I say, the character of a is b, of b, c, etc. then I can never know what a, b, c, etc. are. There are, therefore, only two ways by which one can explicate a concept or objective synthesis (unity in the manifold). One either grounds it in intuition, which the understanding thinks according to a rule; a concept originates from this, in whose explanation the grounding intuition is the subject and the rule thought by the understanding is the predicate. This produces an impure or mixed concept, as all concepts except relations are. Here the element of the concept must precede the concept itself, that is, its synthesis. Or otherwise, the element of the judgement of the objective synthesis, that it is a possible synthesis, must precede the judgement itself, as in the example of a straight line. Or the understanding thinks merely a rule, which determines a relation between two undetermined logical objects, through which the objects themselves are determined; out of this springs a pure concept with or through the judgement. For example, cause: this concept is not merely a form, like homogeneity, which is not determined through any condition, but it is a real object which does not precede thought, but is instead produced by it. Should, however, the object of thinking merely mean that which precedes thinking, then pure thinking has no other object than the concept of the thing in general (*ens logicum*). The object of applied thinking is, however, not an intuition, (which is not an object of the understanding), but also no mere *ens logicum*, but the *ens reale*, which I have called the idea of the understanding, and which is the element of a particular intuition. It is a limit concept [*Graenzbegriff*] between pure thinking and intuition, through which both are legitimately bound together.

So when it is therefore only true that we have propositions of experience (in the sense which Kant takes it), and that we apply the pure concepts of the understanding to appearance for this purpose, then this can be easily explicated through my theory of possibility or the *quid juris*, in that the elements of appearances, to which according to my theory the concepts of the understanding are applied, are themselves not appearances. If one asks, however, through what does the understanding recognise that these elements inhere in these relations? I answer that it is because the understanding itself makes them through these relations to real objects, and because the appearances themselves always approach (to infinity) these relations. I say, for example, the ego or my thinking being is a substance, or the ultimate subject of all my representations; from where do I know this? Because I always approach something like this through thought,[15] as the more I think or judge, the more general the predicates of the subject of the judgement become in consideration of the subject in the object, and the more general these are, the less they present the object, and the more the subject of my thinking. I judge, for instance, I am a man, man is an animal, an animal is an organised body, an organised body is a thing. In this row of connected judgments the representation of the ego as an object has always diminished, and the representation of it as a subject increased, as the ego is the ultimate subject. Therefore, the more general the predicate becomes, the more it approaches this ultimate subject, until I have at last got to the limit between subject and object (the thinkability of an object in general), and so it is as well when one thinks synthetically, or generates concepts through a synthesis. As although here one appears through continued determination to become closer to the object and further from the subject, it in fact works the other way around, since the abstracting is not

15 One could indeed object that I approach through thought not my subject, but the transcendental subject; what right do I therefore have to determine my subject as substance? One has to consider, however, that when I judge: I am a man, it does not mean, I am an indeterminate [man], but instead, in an individual manner, a determinate man (without really determining him). Consequently, the most general predicate is in fact in judgement of no greater extension than the ultimate subject in judgement, that is, the object itself. So before the judgement my *I* was man through *a*, for instance, perceived determinately, that is, at the furthest remove from the ultimate subject in the object. Through the judgement, however, I think of myself as man through *x*, that is, determined through an unknown determination. Through the substitution of an unknown determination for the known (albeit it refers to the known), I have, therefore, approached not merely a transcendental subject, but my subject.

something easy, I get at the beginning of thinking to a more particular, and hence intelligible, predicate, and think of, for example, the thing in general as determined through man. However, when I examine the determination more precisely, then I find that it is not and cannot be an absolute determination, as it itself is already composed of something determinable and determination. So I take animal as the determination of a thing in general, and proceed as before, that is, I come always closer by thinking to a determination as subject, until I come at last to the I, which is itself determinable and determination. This last step, however, is never made, as the ego which I get to is still always a predicate (of inner sense). I always approach the true ego as to something that indeed in regard to my consciousness is a pure idea, but in itself a pure object, and so thereby, as one can always approach it through a determinate progression, consequently, an infinite understanding must actually be able to think it.

Likewise, I can rightly say, I am simple, as I can always get closer to this simplicity through thinking, in that my representations as my predicates through the same are always more precisely connected, until at last complete simplicity springs from it. One will now say that all this gets its truth merely from the representation of the ego, but not, however, from the object itself. I answer this like so: the representation of a thing is differentiated from the thing itself simply through a lesser completeness; when one takes both in their greater completeness (as is here the case), then they are necessarily one and even the same.

The result of this theory is this. I assert with Kant that the objects of metaphysics are not objects of intuition, which could be given in an experience. I depart from him, however, in that he asserts that they are not objects which can be thought as determined by any form of understanding. I, on the other hand, consider them as real objects, which, although they are just in themselves pure ideas, nonetheless can be determinately thought through the intuitions which derive from them, and through the reduction of intuitions to their elements, we are in the position to determine new relations between them, in order to treat metaphysics as a science, just as we are in the position through the reduction of magnitudes to their differentials and of these once again to their integrals, to discover new relations between the magnitudes themselves.

In consideration of the impossibility of an ontological proof of the existence of God, I am of the same opinion as Kant. I add the following grounds for this impossibility.

The ontological explication of God is a being that contains all possible realities. I will, however, demonstrate, that not only this, but in general any being, when it simply contains multiple realities, is impossible as an object, and is merely an idea. Let us, for example, take a being that exists as two realities, *a* and *b*; we must thus accept the each of these itself exists as two parts, namely one that is common to both, through which they are realities at all, the other however that which is particular to each of them, through which they differentiated from each other. Now, the commonality is certainly a reality, because it is that which makes both into reality; each particular one must also have a reality. Because if one were to assume that in one it is a reality, in the other, however, a negation of this reality, then the other won't be any particular reality, but the universal concept of reality in general, which goes against our assumption. We get, therefore, from these two realities assumed in the thing four. Each of the two realities, which are contained in each of the two, must again exist in two pieces, and so on to infinity; from which follows that this concept can never be thought as a determinate object. Further, it follows from this, that things in general cannot be differentiated through the number of realities that they contain, but merely through the intention of just the same reality.

Now one could object, that given the positing of this proposition in relation to a thing which is thought through a concept, has truth, so it is not quite like this in consideration of the concept itself, as this is necessarily a synthesis of multiple realities. For example, a straight line which [contains] 2 [realities], a right angled triangle or a space enclosed by three lines, right angled, which contains 3 realities, and so on. One objects, however, that in fact here no multiplicity of realities is encountered, as the reality of a concept lies purely in its synthesis. If the parts of reality were themselves separated, no reality (as synthesis) would remain. A right angled triangle contains no more realities than a triangle in general, that is, more unities, but merely a greater reality or unity. And if we don't want to take our inability for objective impossibility, then this idea has its truth, that in the end all concepts must be reduced to one

concept, and all truths to one truth;[16] at least as ideas this cannot be denied, as we ourselves always approach the same. Consequently, if the expression, a being that contains all possible realities, is supposed to have a meaning, then it must mean, a being that contains all possible grades of the same reality, which is in turn a mere idea, to which one approaches through successive syntheses, which can never, however, be thought as an object.

God is either that which grounds all possible concepts, that is, the given, or the embodiment of all possible concepts or realities, that is tied to this given necessity. So when one says, God exists, this proposition is either analytic or synthetic, in the first case, it means so much: the given in all our concepts, that is, the thus synthetically linked existence is existence. In the second case, it means so much: the most real being, or the embodiment of all possible reality is necessarily linked with existence. In both cases, it is an axiom that has no necessary proof. We get through it, however, merely a new name, but not a new concept. As in the first case, it says so much, existence is existence, in the second, however, it says that all realities are merely any reality, and only wants to say, any reality (concept) must have something given as its ground. That, however, all realities can come together in a single synthesis, must first be proved. Because, although I claim that all concepts must be reducible to a particular concept, this is still a mere idea. We can never, therefore, observe the concept of the most real being as an object. I have no need to disprove in the same manner as Kant the ontological through this, that since realities do not as such contradict themselves in concept, they can eliminate each others consequences in the thing. From this it would merely follow that the most perfect effect of God (the best world) cannot be created from this concept, but it cannot follow that he himself has no real synthesis. The first explication of God is a *definitio realis*, which corresponds to the *definitio nominalis*, that God is a necessary being,

16 In regard to the systematic sciences, one will easily agree with me. One will, however, ask, what kind of connection holds between the proposition, air is elastic, and this: the magnet attracts iron, and between this one and the Pythagorean theorem for instance? But what follows from it? Nothing other than that we do not understand this connection; the ground of this, however, is that we do not know the objects themselves in their inner essence; when we are acquainted with all the properties of air, of magnets, etc. so that we will be in a position to define these objects according to their inner essence, then this connection will easily unfold as well.

because the not merely logical, but real necessity, is nothing else than the given, without which nothing can be thought, the second however is that which the *definitio nominalis* corresponds to, God as the most perfect being.

As far as the ontological proof is concerned, then, the world is not contingent in relation to its existence, but in relation to the form of existence. The law of causal connection says so much: *b*, as a thing that is determined according to its form, necessarily presupposes *a*, another thing that is determined according to its form, but *b* as much as *a*, as determinate forms, necessarily presupposes the material (given). One must therefore seek the unconditioned which fits these conditioned forms, but not an unconditioned existence that is already given as condition of all of these forms, not the given in itself (what belongs to existence in the thing), not the thought in itself (which belongs to essence) is necessary or contingent, but merely their relation to one another in a synthesis. The contingency of this, however, leads us merely to dissolve it in an infinite series, but in no way leads us to the unconditioned as object. I am in agreement with Herr Kant that the transcendental object of all appearances, considered in itself, is for us an *x*; I argue, however, that when one receives different appearances, one is forced to accept various objects corresponding to them, which although not in themselves, instead can be determined *per analogium* with the appearances corresponding to them, just as a blind man, while he cannot think every colour in itself, nevertheless, he can think their proprietary refraction through lines (which he can construct in the intuition of sensation), and through these can make them into a determinate object. If one says that appearances can only form analogies with appearances, and not with things in themselves, then thereby one eliminates wholly the concept of intuition, that is, a relation of a determinate object to a determinate subject. But, since it is impossible to demonstrate that the intuitions are effects of something outside of ourselves, so we must, when we merely want to pursue our consciousness, accept transcendental idealism, namely that these intuitions are merely modifications of our ego, which are caused by it itself, as if they were caused by objects which are completely different to us.

One can imagine this illusion in the following way. The representations of the objects of intuition in space and time, are also the images, which, through the transcendental subject of all representations (the pure ego, thought through its pure *a priori* form) are produced in the mirror (the empirical ego); they appear, however, as if they came from somewhere behind the mirror (from objects which are different from us). The empirical (material) of intuitions is really (like the light rays) from something outside of us, i.e. (different from us) given. One must not let oneself fall into error through the expression, 'outside of us', as if this something stood in a spatial relation to us, since space is only a form within us, whereas this being 'outside of us' means only something, in whose representation, we cannot be spontaneously aware, i.e. merely (in consideration of our consciousness) an affect but not an activity in us.

The word, *given*, which Kant very often uses for the material of sensibility, means for him (and also for me) not something in us that has an origin outside of us, as this cannot be immediately perceived, but must be purely inferred. Now, the inference from the given effect to a determinate cause is always uncertain, as the effect can arise from more than one cause, nevertheless in relation to perception of its cause it remains always in doubt, whether these are internal or external, but it is merely a representation, whose mode of origination in us is unknown to us.

An idealist in general is someone who does not downright deny the existence of external objects of sense, (because how could he?), but merely doesn't allow that they can be known through immediate perception, and who infers from this that we can never know their reality through possible experience.

A transcendental idealist asserts that both the material of intuition (the empirical) and its form (time and space) are purely in us, and that things can exist outside of us (things in themselves, or intellectual things, which differ from us or are not us), but that we can never be certain of their existence. Opposed to him is the transcendental realist, who asserts determinate existence outside of our representations, and merely takes the material as their form, time and space as types of our intuition, which outside of our type of intuition, are not encountered in the things

themselves, and in this, he accords with the former. He supposes, however, (because he cannot assert it with certainty) that the material of intuition has its ground in the things themselves, as do their form, in the relations between these things in themselves. If we now accept that no intuited beings exist, then according to the former nothing would exist, i.e. can be determinately posited; according to the latter, however, we always but without certainty hold that something determinate can exist.

As far as I am concerned, I accept (in so far as I must not transcend my immediate perception), that both the material of intuition (the empirical within) and its form are merely in me, and thus far I am in agreement with the former one's opinion. I differentiate myself from this opinion in that it understands (by abstraction from the relationships which order it) the material to be that which belongs to sensation. I hold instead that also that which belongs to sensation, if it is supposed to be perceivable, must be ordered in relations (although I cannot immediately perceive these relations), and that time and space, the forms of this relation, in so far as I can perceive them, exist, and I understand as material no objects, but merely the ideas into which our perceptions must be at last dissolved. I am, therefore, in agreement with the second opinion that intuition regarding both material and form has an objective ground, but depart from it, however, in that it assumes the objects as determined in and of themselves. I, however, take them as merely ideas, or as objects which are indeterminate in themselves, which can only be thought determinately within and through sensation (as the differential is thought through its integrals). Were the mode of my intuition destroyed, then there would be no intuition, and there would be in-itself no given determinate objects of thought. But since my faculty of thought could still remain, this faculty of thought could always produce out of itself its own objects of thought (ideas which become determinate objects through thought), as I hold the connection of thought to be contingent not only to a specific form of intuition, but also to the faculty of intuition in general, and because I believe that the understanding (albeit not according to our present consciousness, considered purely in itself) is a faculty which determines real objects through thought relations that relate to an object in general (*objectum logicum*), as I have already explained on various occasions. Also, I could easily show that this system accords with the Leibnizian one (when this is properly understood), although I hold it to be unnecessary to do so now.

We have here (if I am allowed the expression) a trinity, God, the world, and the human soul; that is to say, if we understand by the world purely the intellectual world, i.e. the sum of all possible objects, which can be produced from all possible relations of the understanding, and if by the soul, an understanding (a cognitive faculty) that refers to these objects, so that all these possible relations can be thought by it, by God an understanding that does really think all these relations (as I don't know what else I should of think as the *ens realissimum*), then these three things are one and the same. When one understands by the world, however, merely the sensible world, as something that can be thought through our faculty of intuition, viewed according to its laws, and can be thought according to the laws of thought (although by a progression *in infinitum*); by the soul, this faculty in so far as it is determined through actual intuition; but by God, however, an infinite understanding, which itself really relates to all that is possible through thinking, then they are really three different things. But since these modes of representation do not come from our absolute faculty of knowledge, but from its limitation, it is not this latter, but rather the former mode of representation which is true. Here, therefore, is the point whereby materialism, idealism, Leibnizianism, Spinozism, even theism and atheism (if these gentlemen only understood themselves, instead of maliciously rousing the rabble against one another) can be united. Freely, it is a *focus imaginarus* - ! How far I am in agreement with Herr Kant here, I leave to the judgement of Herr Kant himself, and to that of every thinking reader.

Herr K. holds the ego as the object of psychology to be in itself, and regarding its empty representation, he holds accordingly all propositions deriving from it to be mere paralogisms.

I, however, hold the ego to be a pure *a priori* intuition which accompanies all our representations, although we can declare no characteristics of this intuition, as it simply is. This presupposed, let us look now at these paralogisms more closely. That whose representation is the absolute subject of our judgement, and hence cannot be used as the determination of another thing, is substance. I, as a thinking being, am the absolute subject of all my possible judgements, and this representation of myself cannot be used as the predicate of another thing, therefore I am as a thinking being (soul), substance.

Herr Kant makes this into a paralogism, because he conceives by the word 'I' in rational psychology the thing in itself (*noumenon*). Consequently, according to his principle, the concept of substance is not applicable to it, as here it lacks an intuition through which one could know it. I however, take the ego for an intuition, even an *a priori* intuition (as it is the condition of all thought in general); therefore, the category of substance can be applied to it, so that the question, *quid juris?* does not apply here. If one asks further, from where do I know that my ego persists through time? So I answer, because it accompanies all of my representations in a time series. From where do I know that it is simple? Because I can perceive no multiplicity in it. From where that it is numerically identical? Because I perceive it to be identical with itself at different times. Herr Kant makes the objection that perhaps all this has its correctness simply from our representation of the ego, but not, however, in relation to the real thing which grounds our representations. I have already clarified that I take the representation or the concept of the thing to be the same as the thing, and that it is only through the completeness of the latter in relation to the former that they can be different. Following from this, where no multiplicity is encountered (as is the case here), the thing itself is the same as its representation, and what applies here must also apply in all cases. Now I must raise a doubt, which Kant has brought up in relation to personality, and one which does not concern the difference between the representation of a thing and the thing itself, but the truth (objectivity) of the representation itself. He says, namely, that the identity in my own consciousness is encountered inevitably; if I however consider the viewpoint of another, (as an object of his outer intuition), then this external observer considers me originally in time, as in the apprehension, time is in fact only represented in me. He will therefore not infer from the 'I', which accompanies all representations, the objectivity of the persistence of myself, as we cannot declare this from a foreign standpoint to be valid, etc. I note however,[17] that at least

17 The perception of a change in the object presupposes the persistence in the subject considered as object, as otherwise the subject can never relate the changing determinations in the object to one another in a consciousness. But this also [presupposes] perception of the persistence in the object, as otherwise the subject cannot consider the various determinations of its own as different determinations of the object. Let us assume two thinking beings, *A* and *B*. To each must therefore be attached identity of consciousness to different times (in relation to his time). One says: perhaps the identity of consciousness of *A* in relation to his time is itself changeable in the consciousness of *B* in relation to his own [time]; that it has, for

this other can perceive in me as an external intuition to him no change, as the change in the relation is the same on both sides. When I assume a third, who observes us both, so will he observe the change of mine in relation to the other, and the change of the other in relation to mine. The persistent and the changing are only relative. Suppose that my position in relation to a body, *a*, is persistent, but not in relation to the body *b*, so I know here only so much that I together with the body *a* have altered my position with respect to body *b*, and that this in turn has changed its position in relation to us. I don't know of any absolute alteration, however, as change in general can only be relative, and the concept of an absolute change contains a contradiction. If I therefore say, I am persistent, I can assert it only in relation to my own time.

On the Categories

The forms of thought, or judgements in general, are relations between indeterminate (logical) objects thought by the understanding. They come through their reciprocal determination into these relations to be real

example, at one time the determination, *a*, at another the determination, *ae*. So one must assume: 1) That *B* as the object of these different representations, *a*, *ae*, must be identical with itself at different times, as otherwise it would not relate these two different representations to itself as just the same subject, that is, it would not even perceive a subjective change. 2) That *A* as the object of *B* under these different determinations in considerations of these latter (in relation to his time) must have something (apart from these changing determinations) identical with itself, that is, something persistent, as otherwise *B* would indeed have perception (subjective) but not experience (objective perception) of a change. The difference between *A* and *B* will therefore merely lie therein, that namely the former would view itself as the persistent subject of *a*, *ae*, the latter, however, would not determine *A* as the ultimate subject, consequently persistent, but instead as something that in turn is determined through predicates. It must, however indeed think, not *A*, but the ultimate subject in this [*A*] as being identical with itself, that is, as persistent. Thus, in order to judge that the change in the identity of consciousness of *A* is not merely subjective in *B*, but has objectively happened in *A*, the subjective identity of consciousness of *B* is not sufficient, but must be considered objectively (in consideration of a third, *C*), since even this is the case, as with *B*, that it follows from that, that no subject in general can think the change in *A* absolutely, without presupposing something persistent in [*B*]. The change of relation, however, or the change of *A* in relation to the time of *B* makes necessary simultaneously the change of *B* in relation to the time of *A* as otherwise the time in both would have to be the same, that is, objective, contrary to the assumption.

objects of thought, not, however, of cognition [*Erkennens*]. Should these forms therefore have objective reality, that is, should they be attached to objects, and be able to be cognise in them, then the objects must already be thought through something as determinate (in that these forms serve simply to connect and not produce the objects). This cannot however occur through *a posteriori* determinations, due to the question, *quid juris?* but instead through *a priori* determinations, and since these in turn can be nothing other than relations of objects to other objects (in that the understanding does not intuit, but merely thinks, that is, can relate objects to one another), so this relation must be of such a type that it can refer to all objects without distinction (also to *a posteriori* objects), in such a way that this relation, in that it refers to objects immediately, [is] as well the material of that which is its form, that is, that which only through the medium of this [relation] can refer to objects. This happens through the concepts of reflection, sameness, difference, and so on. The understanding thinks, for example, objects which are determined through the relation of the *maximum* of similarity, or, which is the same, the *minimum* of difference, in relation to one another. It thinks these in turn in the form of hypothetical judgements, that is, in such relation to one another, that, if one of these is posited as *a*, the other, *b* must be posited. From this emerges the advantage that we do not only think objects through a reciprocal relation to one another, but also recognise this [relation] in perception (of the inner relation, that is thought by the understanding as a condition of externalisation, which is expressed in the form of the hypothetical judgement). If we find that *a* stands to *b*, which immediately follows thereupon, in a relation of the *maximi* of sameness (here the question, *quid juris?* ceases to apply, in that time applies the form of objects to the *a posteriori* given), so we recognise that they also stand in relations of cause and effect. It remains, however, to determine what the cause and effect are (as both have this inner relation in common). This cannot happen through any concept of reflection, in that this doesn't determine any object, but presupposes it as determinate. We must, therefore, for this purpose look to something else; we find, however, nothing as suitable *a priori* as time, as this relates itself immediately to objects, in that it is a necessary form of these, and yet is also *a priori*. We therefore differentiate the cause from the effect through the determination of time, in that the former is always the preceding, and the latter comes afterwards in time, and so it is with all the other categories. The forms of judgements, in so far as they differentiate the

subject from the predicate not merely in all possible objects (through a real relation), but also through a determination of time, are called categories. How far I depart here from Kant's opinion will be made clear by the following.

1) Herr Kant holds the categories to be conditions of experience, that is, he argues that we could have perceptions without these, but yet no experience (necessity of perception); I, however, with Hume, dispute the reality of experience, and hold from this the logical forms and the conditions for their use (given relations of objects to one another) for conditions of perception itself; that of substance and accident for conditions of objects in themselves; cause and effect for the perception of change. Because an object of thought or of consciousness needs unity in multiplicity; this synthesis presupposes that not every element can be thought in itself (as it would otherwise have no ground), that is, at least an element of the multiplicity is impossible without unity, namely, without its relation to the other part, and that in turn the other element itself must also be thought in itself (or else there would be a mere form, but not an object), and these are just the concepts of substance and accident. Further, the perception of change again necessitates unity in multiplicity; that is, the relation of two states of a thing to one another. Were these, then, completely different, then there would be multiplicity, but no possible unity in multiplicity (therefore there would be no reproduction, which depends on the law of association, and consequently no comparison). Were they, however, completely the same, there would be no multiplicity, that is, there would be then not two, but one and the same state; in both cases, there would be no unity in multiplicity, consequently no perception of change, and not even the representation of temporal sequence would be possible. These states, therefore, must be in part the same, in part different, through which by perception of the present the reproduction of the past (through the law of association), and consequently their comparison with one another, becomes possible. This difference, however, must be a *minimum*, as otherwise it would not be the same thing that merely changed, but a thing completely different from the former (as is the case with another reproduction). A green piece of paper is different from a white one (although both have something in common, namely, paper, and through this are suitable for association), as this difference can be perceived. Therefore this difference must be an infinitely small one, through which the thing merely gains a differential to the previous

different state, [and this thing] for this reason cannot be seen as the different thing itself, and just this, as I have already remarked, is the relation that the understanding subsumes under the form of hypothetical propositions.

2) According to Kant, this proposition is expressed like so: if *a* precedes, then *b* must necessarily follow after it, according to a rule. Here the sequence of *a* and *b* after each other is an antecedent, and the determination of this sequence according to a rule the consequent. According to me, however, it would be expressed like so: When *a* and *b* succeed one another, then they must themselves be thought of as in relation to one another according to a rule; the sequence in general is therefore antecedent, and the inner relation consequent. Without Kant's rule, one could not differentiate a merely subjective (perception) from an objective (experience) sequence; without my rule, however, one could not even perceive a subjective sequence, and this is also true in consideration of all other categories.

3) Which is a consequence of the preceding.

According to Kant, the rule determines not merely the form under which the object must be subsumed, but also, in consideration of this form, the objects themselves – (that is, not merely the objects, which can be perceived in a sequence according to a rule, the form of hypothetical propositions; that namely the positing of an indeterminate makes necessary the positing of another indeterminate, must be subsumed, but also, that the foregoing is that which must be posited hypothetically, that is, cause, and the following is that which must necessarily be posited after the first, that is, effect). According to me, however the rule determines merely the relations of objects to one another (the maximum of unity), not, however the object itself in consideration of the relation. According to him, the cause and effect are distinguished in perception, and consequently recognisable. According to me, however, only this relation of objects to one another is recognisable in perception, not, however, the terms of this relation.

That we do in fact distinguish cause from effect, simply rests on the following:-

a) We assume in the objects of this relation more determinations (which are contingently bound up with the essential determinations, by which this relation is found), than that by which this relation is thought, and thereupon the objects can be freely distinguished through these surplus determinations (which are merely *a posteriori* and in consequence are not generally contained *a priori* in this relation). That is, we take the object, in whose contingent synthesis, that, which hereafter is the particular object of comparison, which is situated before the sequence, for the cause; that is, for that whose positing makes necessary the positing of another. The object, however, which has received this object of comparison only in the sequence, [we take] for the effect, that is, for that which must be posited necessarily after the positing of the first. The origin of this error rests on this: we relate the concepts of cause and effect to the existence [*Daseyn*] of the object, that is we believe that the existence of the cause makes the existence of the effect necessary, since these concepts (in so far as they should have their origin in logic, which abstracts from the existence of the object) merely refer to the mode of existence. Thus rather than expressing ourselves like so: if two things, *A* and *B*, follow each other immediately, then they must both stand in a relation of the maximum of similarity to one another; that is, instead of presupposing the existence of objects in a series, and thinking merely the type of existence according to a rule, we should express ourselves as follows: the existence of *A* makes the existence of *B* necessary; we therefore believe from this that we cannot reverse the proposition, as *A* has its existence before the existence of *B*, but not the other way around. In fact, the existence of *A* doesn't concern us before the sequence: this sequence is thought in relation to cause and effect, that is, this sequence of objects, which is determined according to a rule in relation to their relationships to one another, is the origin of the objects themselves, but not of their possible perception.

Now, one would like to believe that not only the existence of the cause must be presupposed by the existence of the effect, but also the type of existence itself (that which in both has the greatest possible similarity). For example, a body *a* moves towards the body *b*, strikes it,

and sets it in motion as well; here the motion of *a* preceded the motion of *b*, from which we can assume that the motion of *a* is the cause (condition of the motion of *b*), and the motion of *b*, the effect. If one bears in mind, however, that in fact whilst the motion of *a* precedes the motion of *b*, it did not precede it as cause, as if the motion of *a* had only begun by its contact with *b*, then the motion of *b* would have had to follow no less than now, where it had begun before this contact; consequently, here the cause (condition of the motion of *b*) has never existed before the effect. In the causation itself, however, there is no medium through which one can recognise cause and effect and can distinguish one from the other. Because *a* and *b* move forth after the contact with the same degree of motion, one can consider each likewise as cause or effect; or more than this, since both constitute a body within the contact, one must consider their general motion as an effect of a cause outside of this motion. In the case of an accelerated movement one could indeed believe that the cause precedes the effect, as here the degree of the effect is determined by the magnitude of the motion that comes before it; as when, for example, a ball is dropped from a given height, and makes a hole in the soft clay, then the depth of this hole stands in relation to the given height; I ask, however, through what would one here differentiate cause from effect, in that one can here assume one attraction (that at every point the distance affects it again, through which a uniform acceleration originates) as well as an impulse according to just the same law?

From all of this, it becomes clear that we can merely recognise the relationship of cause and effect, but not the terms of this relationship (what is cause and what is effect?) in the objects of experience. In order to know something as cause or effect in an action, one must know the nature of the things outside of the action. So we cannot know it immediately in the action, but merely mediately. For example, we see a round body in a round hole; then we cannot know whether the body was already round, and the hole was made round through its impression, or conversely, that the hole was already round, and the body took its shape, until we can work out if the body is harder than the material that the hole is in, or conversely, and so on. In the action itself, however (the resting of the round body in the round hole) either of the bodies, or equally neither of them (if both the body and the hole were previously round), could be cause or effect. The nature of the body before the action however can merely be known through a comparison of its state before the action with

its state after it. If it is found that its state before the action has not been altered through it, while the state of the other has altered, then we judge that the present state of the former is cause, and of the latter is effect, from which it is made clear that in fact not the cause, but merely something through which it is known, must precede the knowledge of the effect.

If we want to look at the matter more exactly, then we will find that the concept of change can not be thought as an inner modification of things, but merely of their relations to one another. One cannot therefore say, the change in the relation of *a* to *b* is the cause of the change of the relation of *b* to *a*, as this latter is the same as the former. We must assume apart from the thought relation of *a* to *b*, and *vice versa*, still another [relation], namely that of both to something outside of them, so that *a* doesn't change this relation, but changes *b*. Thereupon we say, this unchanged relation of *a* to some third is cause of the changed relation of *b* to *a*. For example, the body *A* is in motion, it hits body *B*, and sets it in motion as well, here *A* and *B* have simultaneously changed their relations to one another (in that before they were at distance from one another, now, however, they touch one another) the change of each one is here not the condition (cause) of the change of the other, but it is identical with it. In relation to other bodies, however, *A* has not altered its state (not counting the loss of its motion, i.e. reaction), on the other hand, it alters *B*; we therefore say, the unchanged state of *A*, i.e., it's motion, is the cause of the alteration in the state of *B* (from rest to motion), and through this we are in a position to distinguish cause from effect. Consequently, the existence of an object is not (as one generally believes) the cause of the existence of another object, but that merely the existence of an object is cause of the knowledge of another object as effect, and *vice versa*. Without the motion of *a* – given that *b* (of whatever type it may be) is set in such a motion – we would indeed have a perception of an effect (change in the relation of *b* to other objects), we would not have thereby, however, knowledge of the object of this change (in that this change could be related to *a* as well as other objects); now however we are also in a position to determine the object of this change, *b*, by relating it to *a*. The motion of *b* (change of its relations to other objects) could also have its existence without the motion of *a* (in that, as we have already remarked, existence needs no cause); I would have, however no grounds to attach it to *b* more than other things, that is, some object in general;

now, although the change of *b* in consideration of *a* (from movement to rest) is contrasted with the change of *b* in consideration of other objects (from rest to movement), the former, however, serves as the characteristic for the latter, or rather as condition of the knowledge of it; and should we here posit the other way round (because it is indeed arbitrary) that namely *a* is at absolute rest, and *b* together with the other objects is in movement towards *a*, then we rightly attribute the change after the impact to *b*, not however to *a*, because the state of the former has changed both in consideration of *a* (from movement to rest) and other objects (from rest to movement), the latter however has changed its state merely in consideration of *b* (from movement in rest) not however in consideration of other objects.

Antinomies. Ideas.

According to Kant, ideas are principles of reason, that according to their nature demand the unconditioned of everything conditioned; and since there are three types of syllogisms, namely categorical, hypothetical and disjunctive syllogisms, there are also necessarily three types of ideas, which are nothing other than the three complete categories (ultimate subject, cause, cosmic whole), and these give the grounds to the antinomies (the conflict of reason with itself), which can be solved only according to his system of sensibility and its forms.

I however extend the sphere of ideas and the antinomies originating from it much wider, in that I argue that they are encountered not only in metaphysics, but also in physics, even in the most evident of all sciences, namely mathematics, and that because of this the antinomies require a much more general solution. This solution for me rests on the following, namely that the understanding can and must be considered in two opposed respects. 1) As an absolute [understanding] (unconstrained by sensation and its laws). 2) As our understanding, according to its constraints. It can and must therefore think its object according to two opposed laws.

The theory of infinity in mathematics, and the objects of it in physics, lead us necessarily to such antinomies. The complete series of all

natural numbers is for us not an object which can be given in an intuition, but merely an idea, through which one can consider the successive progress to infinity as an object. Reason here gets into conflict with itself, in that it considers something that according to its conditions can never be given as an object, nonetheless as an object. The dissolution of this antinomy is, however, this. An infinite number can be produced in our case (in that our perception is tied to the form of time) not otherwise than through an infinite temporal succession (which can therefore never be thought of as completed). In the case of an absolute understanding, however, the concept of an infinite number is thought instantaneously without temporal sequence. Thus, that which the understanding, according to its constraints, considered as a mere idea, is a real object according to its absolute existence. And what is more, we are sometimes capable of substituting objects for ideas, or the reverse, to dissolve objects in ideas, as is the case with infinite converging series. We can calculate their value exactly, and in turn transform determinate numbers into [converging series].

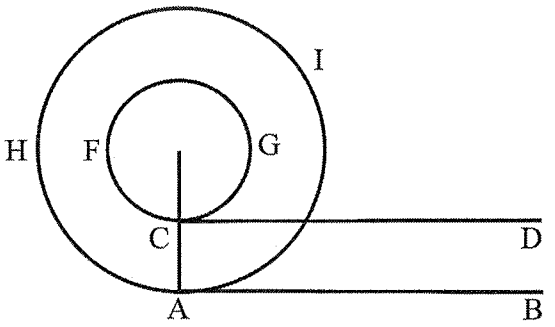
There are also ideas, which, although they always approach determinate objects, still never according to their nature reach them, so that we could substitute these objects for these ideas. Of this type are irrational roots. Through infinite series (according to the binomial theorem, or through the help of a *series recurrens*) we can always approach these, and yet we are convinced *a priori*, that we can never find their exact value, in that they cannot be whole or fractional numbers, and consequently, cannot be any type of number. Here reason finds itself in antinomy, in that it prescribes a rule, through which one must find this number with certainty, and at the same time demonstrates the impossibility of the fulfilment of this rule. These are examples of ideas and the antinomies which originate from them in mathematics.

I also want to show some examples of this type from physics.

1) The movement of a body is the change of its relation to other bodies in space; consequently, we cannot ascribe this merely subjective representation (which is thought between the things, but is not thought in the things themselves) to one body any more than to the other. Should this subjective representation have objective validity (determining an object),

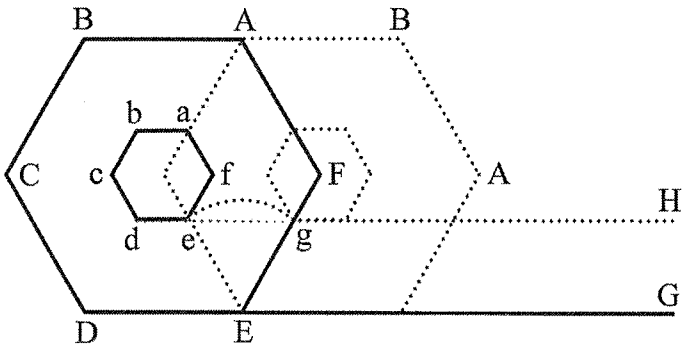
then one must attach to the one body *a*, for example also outside this movement, (change of its relationship with *b*) still another movement which is not in *b*. That is, we attach the movement of *a*, but not to *b*, as *a* has not only altered the relation to *b*, but also to another body, *c*. However, *b* has merely altered its relation to *a*, but not to *c*. But just as *a* has altered its relation to *c*, so *c* has altered its own relation to *a*, and so we have no grounds to think this motion as more truly in *a* rather than in *c*, and so we must assume a body, *d*, and so on to infinity. And since we can thereby never really think the motion as being truly in *a*, but yet feel impelled to suppose it (for the purpose of experience), so we have here an antinomy, namely, reason orders us to assume an absolute motion, but yet we may not do so, as the concept of motion can merely be thought of in relative terms.

2) A wheel moves around its axis, and so all of its parts must move simultaneously. The nearer a part is to the centre, however, the less speed it has (in that in the same time it travels through less space than a further removed part). From which it follows that there is an infinitely small movement in nature. Consequently, there is a movement which is *omni dabili minor*, that is, infinitely small, as the movement is not delimited by a real division. Here again we have an antinomy, in that an infinitely small movement is thought as an object, but at the same time isn't thought as an object of experience.



3) A wheel turns around its axis along the straight line *AB*, from *A* to *B*, so that all parts of its circumference cover all parts of the line *AB*, so that after a full revolution, the described line *AB* is the same length as the total circumference of the circle. Simultaneously, an assumed smaller circle *CFG* within the larger circle *AHI* turns around the same axis from *C* to *D*, so that after a complete revolution the line *CD*, which is parallel with *AB* and equal to it, is described. Here a difficulty arises, namely to explain how it is possible that the line *CD*, which the smaller circle *CFG* describes, should be the same as the line *AB*, which the large circle *AHI* describes. And yet they must be the same, in that the revolutions of both circles (as they make up one and the same body) must happen at the same time. Aristotle had remarked on this difficulty in his questions on mechanics, and since this time the mathematically knowledgeable have endeavoured to answer this question. Herr Hofrath Kästner in his *Anfangsgründe Analysis Endliche Größen*, §601, tried to resolve this problem in the manner of Galileo in the following way. He says, namely, "It depends here on the concept of rolling. If the condition of this is requested, then of all concentric circles, one can roll, and it is arbitrary which one should do so. Of the remaining similar curves, all points cover by and by all points on the lines, which are parallel to *AB* and equal to it, but that doesn't prove their identity, as the lines are not sums of points (G. 5 Erkl.) and similar curves of concentric circles have the same number of points, in that it is possible to draw a radius through any point on the one which then also specifies a point on the other. One can represent regular polygons of a type in order to prove this point, i.e. regular hexagons recorded around a central point with one inside the other. Now, when the outer one rolls along a straight line, so that its sides make contact with the line one after another, then these parts will be connected, and when the entire polygon has rolled around, it will have covered a length of the line equal to its perimeter. But at the same time a smaller concentric polygon will roll along a line parallel to that line in such a way that the parts of this line, which are covered by the sides of the polygon by and by are not connected together; when it has completely rolled around, which has happened simultaneously with the [rolling of the] large polygon, it has gone the same distance along its line parallel to that the outer polygon has rolled along, but it has not covered everything along this length with its sides, but merely parts, which are not joined together; the sum of these parts makes up the perimeter of the small polygon. If one represents such polygons with more and more sides, then they will approach the circle,

and through this, the difficulty is explained."



As this position is somewhat unclear, especially as Herr Kästner has not included any diagrams, I therefore want to clarify it by including a diagram. Namely, the condition of revolution or the rolling of a wheel is that each point on its circumference must by and by touch each point on the line which is thereby described. Another concentric circle describes through its circumference a line, which is parallel and the same as the previous line, but not in such a way that every point of this touches every point of the line, but instead that some [describe] arcs themselves, whose chords are particular parts of the line. This becomes clear when one thinks of, instead of a circle, regular concentric polygons, for example, hexagons. The parts of the outer polygon *ABC...* coincide by and by with the line *DG* continuously. The parts of the inner polygon *abc...* however do not continuously coincide with the line *dH*, in that during the time that the side *DE* of the larger ceases to coincide with the line *DG*, before the side *EF* begins to cover it, the point *e* of the smaller moves in the arc *efg*, before the side *ef* begins to coincide with *dH*. Consequently, the line *dH* is not merely the sum of the sides *ab*, *bc*, *cd*, *de*, etc., but this sum plus the chords of the previously mentioned arcs, which is the difference between the sum of the sides of the smaller and larger polygons. This arc, however, stands in an even relation to the length of the sides, and these with their sum in the reversed relation. If the quantity of the sides is therefore infinitely great (as when the polygon is a circle) and consequently the sides themselves are infinitely small, so this arc is also infinitely small. I say, however, that as long as we posit instead of a circle

a polygon with a finite number of sides, we also don't require this kind of explanation (at the least, as long as it cannot be demonstrated that the circumference of the smaller circle plus the difference between it and the larger's beginning and endpoints, must be smaller than the circumference of the larger). Because the line *dH*, which the smaller polygon *a b c d* coincides with by and by when it rolls, is in fact smaller than the line *DG* that the large polygon *ABCD* covers, in that we have no grounds to begin this coincidence from the middle of the side, and in turn to end it there, as instead the covering must take place at once. When we on the other hand posit the number of sides to be infinite, however, and consequently the sides themselves as infinitely small, then the one sort of explanation as little use to us as the other, as here the coincidence occurs at each moment of time of the rolling at only one point of the line described thereby, consequently both lines begin and end at the same moment, whereby my explanation cannot be applied. But Kästner's approach just as little dissolves the difficulty, as if the sides are infinitely small, then so are the previously mentioned arcs, and consequently these chords, and yet these chords taken infinitely should be the same as a finite line (the difference between the perimeter of the larger and smaller circles). We must therefore admit [*zugeben*] a real infinite (not merely mathematical, that is, the possibility of infinite division), as the element of the finite. From here a true antinomy originates, in that the understanding orders us (through the idea of the infinite divisibility of space), never to stop the division of a finite line, so that we get at last to an infinitely small part, and yet it demonstrates at the same time that we must get to such an infinitely small part. I could cite more of the same examples, both from mathematics and from physics, but for now these should suffice.

From all this, it is clear that the infinite (the ability to produce it) is indeed a mere idea for us; but that it nonetheless can be real in a certain way, and that the antinomies which arise from it can only be resolved according to my method. Also, these antinomies are just as real, and challenge reason just as much to its dissolution as the Kantian antinomies. Thus, even granted that the mathematical antinomies can also be resolved according to Kant's system of sensibility and its form, in that nothing else of space can exist than that which is in our representation, and consequently, the infinite cannot be thought as an already completed object, but merely as an idea, then nevertheless the above mentioned physical antinomies, which are encountered in that which is real outside

of our mode of representation, cannot be resolved in his, but can be instead in my manner.

Translated by Henry Somers-Hall and Merten Reglitz.

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Conflicted Matter: Jacques Lacan and the Challenge of Secularising Materialism

ADRIAN O. JOHNSTON

A succinct set of remarks made by Jacques Lacan in 1970, during the course of his famous seventeenth seminar (*L'envers de la psychanalyse*), point out how certain varieties of materialism, while being apparently atheistic, actually harbor hidden kernels of religiosity. In the context of ongoing discussions and debates regarding materialism today, these remarks now sound like a prophetic warning given that particular strains of post-Lacanian theory, supposedly materialist in orientation, openly flirt with elements of Christianity. Lacan's glosses on these issues can be heard as calling for further labor toward the construction of a fully secularised and genuinely atheistic materialism. The resources for this task, the initiation of which is attempted here, are to be drawn from a philosophically coordinated interfacing of psychoanalytic metapsychology, dialectical materialism, and cognitive neuroscience (with this interfacing itself taking guidance from Catherine Malabou's recent efforts to bring together the neurosciences and select European theoretical traditions). Finally, passing back through an engagement with Lacan's discourse on "the triumph of religion" allows for the axiom of a God-less ontology of material being to be formulated as follows: There is just a weak nature (as conflict-ridden matrices of under-determination), and nothing more.

Emerging Cracks: The Birth of a Truly Atheistic Materialism

Materialism, the brute insistence that there is nothing other than matter, appears to offer no place whatsoever to anything even vaguely intangible

or spiritual. It denies that there are ineffable entities or forms set apart from the immanence of incarnate beings. Alain Badiou characterises this basic position of vehement opposition *vis-à-vis* all varieties of idealism as "a philosophy of assault."[1] More specifically, materialist philosophies throughout history exhibit a common hostility toward religiosity insofar as the latter appeals to the supposed existence of some sort of extra-physical, immaterial dimension of transcendent (ultra-)being. From Lucretius to La Mettrie and beyond, the natural world of the material universe is celebrated, in an anti-Platonic vein, as a self-sufficient sphere independent of ideas or gods.[2] A properly materialist ontology posits matter alone—nothing more, nothing less.

And yet, despite the fundamental clarity and simplicity of this rejection of spirituality in all its guises, a rejection functioning as an essential defining feature of any and every species of materialism, periodic critical reminders seemingly are necessary in order to ward off the recurrent tendency to backslide into idealism through blurring the lines of demarcation between materialism and what it rejects. A century ago, Lenin, in his 1908 text *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, issues just such a reminder. Regardless of the many philosophical shortcomings of this hundred-year-old book, one of its priceless virtues is Lenin's unflinching insistence on the indissoluble, black-and-white border strictly separating materialism from idealism. Lenin tirelessly uncovers, exposes, and critiques a number of subtle and not-so-subtle efforts to disguise and pass off idealist notions as materialist concepts, efforts to soften the stinging anti-spiritualist, irreligious virulence of this ruthlessly combative philosophical stance.[3]

To resuscitate the heart of materialism today, another such Leninist gesture is urgently called for in light of recent philosophical trends seeking to render materialist thinking compatible with such orientations

1 Alain Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982), p. 202

2 Lucretius, *The Nature of the Universe* [trans. Ronald E. Latham], (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1951), p. 92-93, 175-176, 176-177; Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Man, a Machine* [trans. Gertrude C. Bussey; rev. M.W. Calkins], (La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1993), p. 85, 93, 117, 128, 133, 148-149

3 V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), p. 22-23, 33-34, 95, 106, 128-129, 140-141, 142, 145, 167, 188-189, 191, 232, 321, 344, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412-413, 416-417, 431, 434

as Platonism and Judeo-Christianity. Materialism is at risk of, as it were, losing its soul in these confused current circumstances, since it is nothing without its denial of the existence of deities or any other ephemeral pseudo-things utterly unrelated to the realness of the beings of matter. Succinctly stated, a non-atheistic materialism is a contradiction-in-terms. When, for instance, the objects of theology, mathematics, and structuralism are spoken of as though they are equally as "material" as the entities and phenomena addressed by the natural sciences, something is terribly wrong. At a minimum, this muddle-headed situation raises a red flag signaling that the word "matter" has become practically meaningless. Another materialist effort at assault is required once more, a stubborn, unsubtle effort that single-mindedly refuses to be distracted and derailed from its task by engaging with the seductive nuances and intricacies of elaborate systems of spiritualism however honestly displayed or deceptively camouflaged. In light of Lacan's insistence that the truth is sometimes stupid[4]—one easily can miss it and veer off into errors and illusions under the influence of the assumption that it must be profoundly elaborate and obscure—a tactical, healthy dose of pig-headed, close-minded stupidity on behalf of materialism might be warranted nowadays.

Strangely enough, in a session of his famous seventeenth seminar on *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* given during the academic year 1969-1970, Lacan utters some rather cryptic remarks that predict a resurfacing of the need for a new purifying purge of the ranks of materialism enabling the line separating it from idealism to be drawn yet again in a bold, unambiguous fashion. Therein, he advances a surprising thesis—"materialists are the only authentic believers."[5] Of course, what renders this quite counter-intuitive claim initially so odd is the deeply ingrained association between materialism and atheism. At its very core, doesn't materialism constitute a rude, violent attack upon the conceptual foundations of all religions? Don't the diverse manifestations of this

4 Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XV: L'acte psychanalytique, 1967-1968* [unpublished typescript], session of November 22nd, 1967; Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XVI: D'un Autre à l'autre, 1968-1969* [ed. Jacques-Alain Miller], (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006), p. 41; Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XXIII: Le sinthome, 1975-1976* [ed. Jacques-Alain Miller], (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005), p. 72

5 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, 1969-1970* [ed. Jacques-Alain Miller; trans. Russell Grigg], (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007), p. 66

philosophical discipline share an antipathy toward faith in anything above and beyond the de-spiritualised immanence of the material universe? This very last word ("universe"), insofar as it implies a vision of material being as the integrated organic totality of a cosmic One-All, contains the key to decoding productively Lacan's startling assertion that the materialism usually hovering around and informing the natural sciences represents a disguised body of religious belief despite itself.

Through the example of Sade, Lacan explains that the materialists of eighteenth-century France end up making matter into God.[6] Material being becomes something eternal, indestructible, and omnipotent. Lacan views the Sadian flux of nature, with its intense processes of becoming, as the basis for a monotheism-in-bad-faith resting on foundations not so different from those of the enshrined religions spurned by the ostensibly atheist libertine. In the case of Sade *avec* Lacan, the supposedly vanquished divinity of monotheistic religion returns with a vengeance in the guise of a system of nature at one with itself, a cosmos harmoniously constituting the sum total of reality. God is far from dead so long as nature is reduced to being the receptacle for and receiver of his attributes and powers. It isn't much of a leap to propose that the scientism accompanying modern natural science as a whole, up through the present, tends to be inclined to embrace the non-empirical supposition of the ultimate cohesion of the material universe as a self-consistent One-All. In this resides its hidden theosophical nucleus. Lacan's claims regarding Sade and eighteenth-century materialisms (materialisms still alive and well today) imply a challenge to which a novel contemporary constellation involving alliances between factions within philosophy, science, and psychoanalysis can and must rise: the challenge of formulating a fully secularised materialism, a God-less ontology of material being nonetheless able to account for those things whose (apparent) existence repeatedly lures thinkers onto the terrain of idealist metaphysics.

6 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII*, p. 66

Toward a Conflict Ontology: Freud, Mao, and the Ubiquity of Antagonism

On several occasions, Lacan proposes that, whereas the smooth material-temporal continuum of evolutionary theory is a fundamentally theological notion despite its outwardly atheistic appearance,[7] only the originally Christian notion of creation *ex nihilo*, of abrupt emergences that cannot be reduced to or predicted by a prior substantial ground, is appropriate to a thinking that really is done with all things religious. He maintains that, "The creationist perspective is the only one that allows one to glimpse the possibility of the radical elimination of God,"[8] and that, "A strictly atheist thought adopts no other perspective than that of 'creationism.'"[9] At this point, the obvious question to be asked and answered is: What does Lacan see as the essence of atheism proper?

On three particular occasions during the course of his teaching, Lacan provides exemplary explanations for what he, as a psychoanalyst, understands to be the true core of an atheistic position/stance. In a 1963 session of the tenth seminar, he raises the questions of whether practicing analysts should themselves be atheists and whether patients who still believe in God at the end of their analyses can be considered adequately analyzed for the purposes of determining when to terminate treatment.[10] Referring to obsessional neurotics, with their unconscious fantasies of an omniscient Other observing each and every one of their little thoughts and actions, Lacan implies that such analysands would need to move in the direction of atheism in order to be relieved of those symptoms tied to this belief in the "universal eye" of a virtual, God-like observer of their existences.[11] He then immediately goes on to assert that, "Such is the true

7 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960* [ed. Jacques-Alain Miller; trans. Dennis Porter], (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992), pp. 213-214; Lorenzo Chiesa and Alberto Toscano, "Ethics and Capital, *Ex Nihilo*," *Umbr(a): A Journal of the Unconscious—The Dark God* [ed. Andrew Skomra], (Buffalo: State University of New York at Buffalo, 2005), p. 10

8 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, p. 213

9 Ibid., p. 261

10 Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre X: L'angoisse, 1962-1963* [ed. Jacques-Alain Miller], (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004), pg. 357

11 Ibid., p. 357

dimension of atheism. An atheist would be someone who has succeeded at eliminating the fantasy of the All-Powerful."[12] Lacan's version of the experience of analysis involves a "psychoanalytic ascesis"[13] entailing "atheism conceived of as the negation of the dimension of a presence of the all-powerful at the base of the world."[14] That is to say, traversing the fantasy of an omnipotent big Other, whether this Other be conceived of as God, Nature, the analyst, or whatever, is an unavoidable rite of passage in the concluding moments of an analysis seen through to a fitting end.

Lacan articulates these indications regarding atheism even more decisively and forcefully in the sixteenth and seventeenth seminars. In the sixteenth seminar, Lacan alleges that being an atheist requires putting into question the category of the *sujet supposé savoir*, not only as incarnated in the transference-laden figure of the analyst, but also as any Other presumed to vouch for the maintenance of an overarching horizon of final, consistent meaning. The Lacanian concept-phrase "subject supposed to know," although originally characterising the position of the analytic clinician as determined in and by analysands' transferences,[15] ultimately refers to any assumed/fantasised locus of pre-established, lawful knowledge and/or order guaranteeing the coherence and significance of one's being. Without letting fall and enduring the dissipation of the position of the subject supposed to know, one remains, according to Lacan, mired in idealism and theology; he equates belief in such an Other-subject with belief in God.[16] As Lacan succinctly states, "A true atheism, the only one that would merit the name, is that which would result from the putting in question of the subject supposed to know."[17] The following academic year, in the seventeenth seminar, he bluntly asserts that, "The pinnacle of psychoanalysis is well and truly atheism."[18]

12 Ibid., p. 357

13 Ibid., p. 357-358

14 Ibid., p. 358

15 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis, 1964* [ed. Jacques-Alain Miller; trans. Alan Sheridan], (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1977), p. 230, 232-233

16 Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XVI*, p. 280-281

17 Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XVI*, p. 281

18 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII*, p. 119

Apart from clinical practice, what makes psychoanalysis, at the most foundational theoretical level, a God-less discipline? More specifically, how might psychoanalytic theory make a crucial contribution to the formulation of a scientifically-informed materialism that doesn't rest upon an either implicit or explicit set of theosophical-ontological suppositions regarding some sort of internally integrated One-All? The key Lacanian slogan for an atheistic materialism might appear to be his declaration that, "*Le grand Autre n'existe pas*."[19] The non-existence of the big Other is indeed a tenet central to Lacan's above-delineated characterisations of genuine atheism. However, this tenet by itself doesn't guarantee a materialism that would be fully secularised according to Lacan's own criteria for what would count as a thoroughly God-less ontology. Although the void of the big Other precludes imagining an ordering of reality from above, it doesn't foreclose the possibility of hypothesising the return of a mellifluously orchestrated material universe, a unified natural world, through bottom-up dynamics and processes. To support an atheistic materialism, the declaration "The big Other does not exist" requires supplementation by another thesis: In the absence of every version of this Other, what remains lacks any guarantee of consistency right down to the bedrock of ontological fundaments. Strife, potential or actual, reigns supreme as a negativity permeating the layers and strata of material being.

The positing of conflict as ubiquitous and primary is precisely what makes psychoanalysis a God-less discipline. In, for instance, both *The Future of an Illusion* and his *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Freud depicts the anti-religious thrust of analysis as merely of a piece with a larger demystifying scientific *Weltanschauung*.[20] Apart from Lacan's arguments to the contrary sketched above (i.e., the materialisms

19 Adrian Johnston, *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008) [forthcoming]; Adrian Johnston, "From the Spectacular Act to the Vanishing Act: Badiou, Žižek, and the Politics of Lacanian Theory," *Did Somebody Say Ideology?: Slavoj Žižek in a Post-Ideological Universe* [ed. Fabio Vighi and Heiko Feldner], (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008) [forthcoming]

20 Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (24 volumes)*, edited and translated by James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson, (London: The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953-1974), vol. 21: pp. 38, 49-50, 54-55, 55-56; vol. 22: pp. 34, 160-161, 167-168, 169, 172-173, 173-174

of the natural sciences are not automatically atheist, even when presented as such), the subsequent course of socio-cultural history also contains ample evidence that the advancement and coming-to-power of the *Weltanschauung* of the sciences is far from having succeeded at shunting religions to the marginalised fringes of collective life. Nonetheless, what makes psychoanalysis utterly atheistic is not, as per Freud, its allegiance to the Enlightenment world-view of scientific-style ideologies—rather, its placement of antagonisms and oppositions at the very heart of material being, its depiction of nature itself as divided by conflicts rendering it a fragmented, not-whole non-One, is what constitutes the truly irreligious core of psychoanalytic metapsychology as a force for merciless desacralisation.

Conflict is an omnipresent motif/structure in Freud's corpus. However, in some of his later, post-1920 texts, what becomes much clearer and more apparent is that, from a Freudian perspective, irreconcilable discord and clashes arise from antagonistic splits embedded in the material foundations of human being. Although there are numerous problems with the fashions in which Freud biologises psychical life, there is also something invaluable in his naturalisation of conflict in terms of the war between *Eros* and the *Todestrieb* raging within the bodily id,[21] namely, a germinal ontological insight that shouldn't suffer the fate of the proverbial baby thrown out with the bathwater of what strikes many as Freud's scientistic biological reductionism. Freudian psychoanalytic metapsychology here contains the nascent potentials for the formulation, in conjunction with select resources extracted from today's natural sciences, of a conflict ontology, a theory of the immanent-monistic emergence of a disharmonious ontological-material multitude or plurality.

The basic ingredients for creating a new, entirely atheistic materialism are to be drawn not only from Freud's tacit indications pointing in the direction of a possible conflict ontology—Mao's version of the distinction between mechanistic and dialectical materialisms is of great importance in this task too. In his 1937 essay "On Contradiction," Mao illuminates the nature of the distinction between these two materialist orientations:-

21 Ibid., vol. 18: pp. 52-53, 60-61; vol. 19: pp. 40-41, 59, 218, 239; *SE* 21: 118-119, 122, 141

> "...while we recognise that in the general development of history the material determines the mental... we also—and indeed must—recognise the reaction of the mental on material things... This does not go against materialism; on the contrary, it avoids mechanical materialism and firmly upholds dialectical materialism."[22]

Mechanistic materialism is non-dialectical to the extent that it admits solely of a unidirectional flow of causal influence from matter to mind. For a materialist such as La Mettrie or Diderot, mental life and every socio-cultural thing collectively connected with it can be only impotent, ineffective epiphenomena, residual illusions discharged by bio-physical substances seamlessly and inextricably bound up with the world of nature and the encompassing universe of matter. That is to say, matter dictates its laws to mind, and never the other way around. As Mao indicates, dialectical materialism, unlike its mechanistic philosophical predecessor, admits a bi-directional flow of causal influences between matter and mind. In particular, Mao's version of dialectical materialism allows for exceptional circumstances when the mental tail can and does start reciprocally wagging the physical dog, when the determined starts affecting the determinant. The young Maoist Badiou, in his 1975 text *Théorie de la contradiction*, stipulates that one must adhere to two principles in order to be a dialectical materialist: Materialism requires granting that material things usually occupy the determining position in most situations; And, dialectics (as non-mechanistic) requires granting that this default position of material dominance is vulnerable to disruption, negation, or suspension.[23] A key aspect of the Badiouian Mao's ontology is its axiomatic proposition that there is only a conflict-plagued One-that-is-not-One as a plane of material immanence, both natural and historical, fragmented from within by the pervasive negativity of scissions and struggles.[24]

What makes Maoist dialectical materialism particularly useful in the present context is its emphasis on the pervasiveness of kinetic

22 Mao Tse-Tung, "On Contradiction," *Mao: On Practice and Contradiction* [ed. Slavoj Žižek], (London: Verso, 2007), p. 92
23 Alain Badiou, *Théorie de la contradiction*, (Paris: François Maspero, 1975), pp. 77-78
24 Ibid., pp. 61-62

contradiction, even down to the raw flesh and bare bones of nature itself.[25] More specifically, Mao's account of causality in the context of elaborating his form of dialectical materialism can be interpreted as putting in place a foundational requirement to be met by any materialism acknowledging some sort of distinction between matter and mind (i.e., any non-mechanistic, non-eliminative materialism). In *Théorie du sujet*, Badiou demands a materialism that includes, as per the title of this book, "a theory of the subject."[26] Such a materialism would have to be quite distinct from mechanistic or eliminative materialisms, insofar as neither of the latter two leave any space open, the clearing of some breathing room, for subjectivity as something distinguishable from the fleshly stuff of the natural world. However, a materialist theory of the subject, in order to adhere to one of the principle tenets of any truly materialist materialism (i.e., the ontological axiom according to which matter is the sole ground), must be able to explain how subjectivity emerges out of materiality—and, correlative to this, how materiality must be configured in and of itself so that such an emergence is a real possibility.

This explanatory requirement is precisely one of the issues at stake in Mao's discussions of internal and external causes. Mao states:-

> "There is internal contradiction in every single thing, hence its motion and development. Contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development, while its interrelations and interactions with other things are secondary causes. Thus materialist dialectics effectively combats the theory of external causes, or of an external motive force, advanced by metaphysical mechanical materialism and vulgar evolutionism."[27]

Soon after this statement, he further elaborates:-

> "According to materialist dialectics, changes in nature are due chiefly to the development of the internal contradictions in nature. Changes in society are due chiefly to the development of the internal contradictions in society... Does materialist

25 Mao, "On Contradiction," pp. 67, 72, 74, 75-76, 86
26 Badiou, *Théorie du sujet*, p. 198
27 Mao, "On Contradiction," p. 69

> dialectics exclude external causes? Not at all. It holds that external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change, and that external causes become operative through internal causes."[28]

The early Badiou of *Théorie de la contradiction* endorses these assertions made by Mao.[29] And, in resonance with Lacan's above-glossed remarks apropos the religiosity nascent within the linear continuity of evolutionary theory, Badiou highlights, in this same 1975 treatise, the non-evolutionary character of the models of historical-material change offered by Leninist-Maoist dialectical materialism, models centered on discontinuous, sudden "ruptures," leap-like transitions from quantity to quality[30] (interestingly, the neuroscientist Jean-Pierre Changeux uses similar language when talking about the emergence of mind from matter[31]).

Along Maoist lines, constructing a theory of subjectivity entirely compatible with the strictures of a thoroughly materialist ontology necessitates, in the combined lights of psychoanalytic metapsychology and dialectical materialism, two endeavors: first, delineating the materiality of human being as conflicted from within, as a point of condensing intersection for a plethora of incompletely harmonised fragments; second, exploring how the endogenous causes of these conflicts immanent to the materiality of human being can and do interact with exogenous causal influences.[32] As Mao rightly underscores, the latter by themselves (i.e., purely external variables) are ineffective. What makes the kinetics of dialectical materialism possible is an external activation of potentials intrinsic to the internal configurations of certain beings.

28 Ibid., p. 70
29 Badiou, *Théorie de la contradiction*, pp. 41, 51-52
30 Ibid., pp. 32-33
31 Jean-Pierre Changeux, *The Physiology of Truth: Neuroscience and Human Knowledge* [trans. M.B. DeBevoise], (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 210
32 Adrian Johnston, "Ghosts of Substance Past: Schelling, Lacan, and the Denaturalization of Nature," *Lacan: The Silent Partners* [ed. Slavoj Žižek], (London: Verso, 2006), pp. 34-35, 35-36

From Dialectical to Transcendental Materialism: Malabou, Neuroscience, and Images of Matter Transformed

The groundbreaking work of Catherine Malabou brilliantly brings to the fore these very issues through a simultaneous engagement with both dialectical materialism and cognitive neuroscience. Echoes of those aspects of Maoist thought mentioned above can be heard in her insistence, in the context of discussing Hegel's dialectic, Heidegger's destruction, and Derrida's deconstruction, that externally overriding something requires this thing's complicity in terms of its "plastic" inner structure,[33] a structure embodying the "schizoid consistency of the ultra-metaphysical real"[34] as the non-dialectical ontological origin/ground of dialectics.[35] Entities must possess the proper "ontological metabolism" in order to be open to and affected by encounters with alterities.[36] Malabou's 1996 doctoral thesis on Hegel, *L'avenir de Hegel*, concludes with a reference to the life sciences as offering the resources for the development of an ontology ready to meet the explanatory-theoretical demands pronounced by the dialectical materialist tradition in ways that this tradition itself thus far hasn't been able to accomplish on its own.[37]

These 1996 gestures in the direction of natural science come to full fruition in Malabou's revolutionary 2004 book *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, a book centered on a reading of today's cognitive neurosciences as spontaneously generating and substantiating a dialectical materialist ontology[38] (and this whether they realise it or not[39]). Several points made by Malabou deserve to be noted here as stipulations for a thoroughly secularised materialism sensitive to the breakthroughs

33 Catherine Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture: Dialectique, destruction, déconstruction*, (Paris: Éditions Léo Scheer, 2005), pp. 88-89, 94-95
34 Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, p. 74; Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic* [trans. Lisabeth During], (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 162-163
35 Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, p. 72
36 Ibid., p. 93
37 Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, pp. 192-193
38 Catherine Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, (Paris: Bayard, 2004), pp. 161-162, 162-163
39 Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, pp. 27-28, 30-31, 156; Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, p. 19

and insights achieved by the sciences of nature. Focusing on the biological level of human being, she correctly notes that the widespread notion of genetic determinism, according to which the physical body is entirely shaped and controlled by genes, is simply inaccurate, a falsifying distortion of the facts. The truth, rather, is that a "genetic indetermination" (i.e., genes determine human beings not to be entirely determined by genes[40]) and the neural plasticity linked to this indetermination[41] ensure the open-ness of trajectories and logics not anticipated or dictated by the bump-and-grind efficient causality of physical particles alone. In other words, one need not fear that bringing biology into the picture of a materialist theory of the subject leads inexorably to a reductive materialism of a mechanistic and/or eliminative sort; such worries are utterly unwarranted, based exclusively on an unpardonable ignorance of several decades of paradigm-shifting discoveries in the life sciences.[42] No intellectually responsible philosophical materialism can justify ignoring the evidence unearthed in these highly productive fields of adjacent research—unless, of course, what is secretly and/or unconsciously desired is a spiritualist ideology disguising itself in the faded-fashion garb of a now awfully dated anti-reductionism.

A chorus of voices on the empirical side of discussions of the brain speaks as one in support of the basic, fundamental premises underlying the effort underway here to appropriate the resources of the neurosciences for the delineation of a reinvigorated materialist ontology. To begin with, not only do some researchers in the neurosciences see the notorious nature-nurture distinction as dialectical[43]—it even has been suggested that the very distinction itself is invalid due to the utter inextricability of what

40 Daniel C. Dennett, *Freedom Evolves*, (New York: Viking, 2003), pp. 90-91, 93; Joseph LeDoux, *Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), pp. 8-9; François Ansermet, "*Des neurosciences aux logosciences*," *Qui sont vos psychanalystes?* [ed. Nathalie Georges, Jacques-Alain Miller, and Nathalie Marchaison], (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), pp. 377-378, 383; Adrian Johnston, "Lightening Ontology: Slavoj Žižek and the Unbearable Lightness of Being Free," *Lacanian Ink: The Symptom*, no. 8, Spring 2007, http://www.lacan.com/symptom8_articles/johnston8.html

41 Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, p. 112; Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, pp. 21, 31-32

42 Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, p. 84-85

43 Changeux, *The Physiology of Truth*, p. 33

is referred to by these two inadequate terms and the irresolvable undecidability that thereby results.[44] Most of the resistance to having anything to do with the life sciences, a resistance widespread within the worlds of Lacanianism and Continental philosophy, is due to the misperception that embracing these sciences inevitably leads to the crudest forms of reductionism.[45] But, as Benjamin Libet observes, vulgar reductive materialism is scientism, not science.[46]

In fact, these scientists are at pains to stress that their disciplines aren't rigid frameworks within which the natural, on the one hand, and the cultural-historical-social, on the other hand, are to be strictly opposed, with the fixed, frozen essences of the former always trumping the subservient (epi)phenomena of the latter.[47] As Lesley Rogers puts it, "the idea of biology as immutable is largely incorrect."[48] And, as Joseph LeDoux explains, a material-neuronal conception of the subject neither is opposed to nor demands the elimination of theories of non-biological subjectivities.[49] There are numerous arguments for why the neurosciences and the biology on which they rest aren't reductive, only some of which can be outlined briefly in the context of the current discussion. The dialectic between innate nature and acquired nurture, if one can still use these terms, permeates even the level of genetics (and, much reductionism and the opposition it generates lean on a fatally flawed picture of genetics[50]). LeDoux helpfully points out that nature-nurture interaction is operative from the very beginnings of life, given that the developing embryo takes shape in a womb connected to a maternal body that itself is entangled in vast mediating networks of more-than-biological

44 Eric R. Kandel, "A New Intellectual Framework for Psychiatry," *Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and the New Biology of Mind*, (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc., 2005), p. 47; Changeux, *The Physiology of Truth*, p. 207-208; Mark Solms and Oliver Turnbull, *The Brain and the Inner World: An Introduction to the Neuroscience of Subjective Experience*, (New York: Other Press, 2002), p. 218; Lesley Rogers, *Sexing the Brain*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 20, 23-24

45 Kandel, "A New Intellectual Framework for Psychiatry," p. 41

46 Benjamin Libet, *Mind Time: The Temporal Factor in Consciousness*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 5

47 LeDoux, *Synaptic Self*, pg. 20; Rogers, *Sexing the Brain*, pp. 2-3, 68

48 Rogers, *Sexing the Brain*, p. 5

49 LeDoux, *Synaptic Self*, pp. 2-3

50 Rogers, *Sexing the Brain*, pp. 47-48

structures and interactions[51] (not to mention the Lacanian caveat that both conception and what leads up to it are also woven into elaborate, knotted webs of influential factors). Although the genotype sets in place certain loose, broad parameters establishing a wide bandwidth of possibilities and permutations for what the phenotype can actualise/express (what Changeux calls a "genetic envelope"[52]), in no way could it be said in any straightforward manner that anatomy is destiny (to invoke an oft-misinterpreted Freudian one-liner).[53] Especially within the brain, the genetic is significantly modulated by the epigenetic (i.e., experience, learning, socialisation, etc.).[54] Furthermore, such complications aren't confined exclusively to the "nature" half of the nature-nurture distinction —the life sciences are also in the process of calling into question the "nurture" half, a process prompted by a realisation that the notion of "environment" is incredibly hazy, insufficiently precise to serve as a concept for rigorous reflection.[55] Considering these rudimentary, ground-zero truths in the life sciences, no sort of standard reductionism is in the least bit tenable insofar as the mind-bogglingly complex number of variables converging on a multi-determined brain and body render in advance any one-sided depiction of these matters intellectually bankrupt.[56]

Furthermore, particular aspects of genetics properly conceived are crucial for an adequate appreciation of the neurosciences. The link Malabou mobilises between what she accurately describes as "genetic

51 LeDoux, *Synaptic Self*, pp. 66-67

52 Changeux, *The Physiology of Truth*, pp. 152-153

53 LeDoux, *Synaptic Self*, pp. 9, 91, 296; Solms and Turnbull, *The Brain and the Inner World*, p. 220; *SE* 11: 189; *SE* 19: 178; Toril Moi, "Is Anatomy Destiny?: Freud and Biological Determinism," *Whose Freud?: The Place of Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* [ed. Peter Brooks and Alex Woloch], (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 72-73, 74

54 Eric R. Kandel, "Psychotherapy and the Single Synapse: The Impact of Psychiatric Thought on Neurobiologic Research," *Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and the New Biology of Mind*, pg. 21; Kandel, "A New Intellectual Framework for Psychiatry," pg. 42-43, 47; Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain*, (New York: Harcourt), Inc., 2003, pg. 162-163, 164, 173-174

55 Solms and Turnbull, *The Brain and the Inner World*, pg. 221-222; Rogers, *Sexing the Brain*, pg. 35

56 Eric R. Kandel, "Biology and the Future of Psychoanalysis: A New Intellectual Framework for Psychiatry Revisited," *Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and the New Biology of Mind*, p. 94; Rogers, *Sexing the Brain*, pp. 97-98

indetermination" and neural plasticity is indeed empirically well-established. The brain is genetically programmed to be open and receptive to re-programming through learning experiences in relation to the contextual vicissitudes of exogenous contingencies.[57] This determined lack of determination, this pre-programming for re-programming, is an important aspect of what is meant by characterising the brain as "plastic." Neuroplasticity is considered by those working in the life sciences to be an incredibly significant feature in the development and functioning of human brains.[58] LeDoux identifies the plastic synaptic connections of neurons, hard-wired for re-wiring, to be the precise material points where nature and nurture collide, the cross-roads at which genetics and epigenetics are folded into assemblages that are theoretically un-sliceable tangles of hyper-dense complexity.[59]

Malabou describes the "ontological explosion" of the mental out of the neuronal as event-like,[60] a sharp break requiring (as Mao would put it) the "internal causes" of the ontological-material plasticity of the human biological body. More-than-biological "external causes" (again in the Maoist sense) are able to have their mediating effects on individuals thanks not only to bodily plasticity in Malabou's precise sense—for her, the plastic designates, at the same time, both the receptivity of malleability and the resistance of congealing,[61] namely, a literal contradiction in the fragmented flesh[62]—but also because of the antagonisms and discordances materialised in the embodied being of humans. She maintains that, "the historico-cultural shaping of the self is not possible except starting from this natural and primary economy of contradiction."[63] She proceeds to claim that, "There is a *cerebral*

57 Eric R. Kandel, "From Metapsychology to Molecular Biology: Explorations Into the Nature of Anxiety," *Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and the New Biology of Mind*, p. 150; Changeux, *The Physiology of Truth*, pg. 32

58 Kandel, "A New Intellectual Framework for Psychiatry," p. 39; Changeux, *The Physiology of Truth*, pp. 26, 28, 194-195; Rogers, *Sexing the Brain*, p. 105

59 LeDoux, *The Synaptic Self*, pp. 3, 5, 12, 66

60 Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, pp. 22, 81, 147

61 Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, pp. 8-9; Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, pp. 15-16, 17, 29-30, 40, 65-66, 145-146; Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, pp. 25-26, 110-111

62 Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, pg. 145; Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, p. 21

63 Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, p. 146

conflictuality, there is a tension between the neuronal and the mental"[64] (i.e., although the mental emerges out of the neuronal, the former comes to be at odds with the latter). Malabou pleads for a "new materialism,"[65] a "reasonable materialism"[66] that neither indefensibly ignores the sciences of material being (especially the neurosciences as relevant to a materialist theory of subjectivity unafraid of—God forbid—dirtying its hands with actual, factual matter) nor uncritically accepts the ideological distortions of these sciences by those seeking to exaggerate one side of plasticity at the expense of the other. For Malabou, as for this project, "A reasonable materialism seems to us to be one which poses that the natural contradicts itself and that thought is the fruit of this contradiction."[67]

A Weak Nature, and Nothing More: The True Formula of a Fully Secularised Materialism

At this juncture, closely examining Lacan's 1975 interview entitled "*Le triomphe de la religion*" in light of the discussions above concerning the philosophical establishment of an atheistic materialism shaped around the conjunction of metapsychology and the neurosciences would be especially fruitful. Early on in this text, Lacan speaks of a difference between "that which goes" and "that which doesn't go," the former being the "world" (*qua* the normal run of things in familiar Imaginary-Symbolic reality) and the latter being the Real (*qua* excluded from and disruptive of the running of this reality). He notes that psychoanalysts concern themselves with this Real as what doesn't fit into the smooth movements of quotidian reality.[68] The analyst's presence testifies to this Real-that-does-not-go, quietly witnessing and marking those occurrences in which it surfaces. He/she occupies this position and remains there as a "symptom" of that which resists going with the flow of the everyday world. However, a cultural "cure" for psychoanalysis, as itself a symptom of the "discontent of civilisation of which Freud has spoken,"[69] is readily

64 Ibid., p. 159
65 Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, pp. 113-114
66 Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, p. 141
67 Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?*, p. 164
68 Jacques Lacan, "*Le triomphe de la religion*," *Le triomphe de la religion précédé de Discours aux catholiques* [ed. Jacques-Alain Miller], (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005), pp. 76-77
69 Ibid., p. 81

available: religion as a means of repressing the symptoms (including analysis itself) of the un-worldly Real that disrupts worldly reality.[70]

Lacan goes on to warn against equivocating between the symptom and the Real. He argues thus:-

> "The symptom is not yet truly the real. It is the manifestation of the real at the level of living beings. As living beings, we are settled, bitten by the symptom. We are sick, that's all. The speaking being is a sick animal. 'In the beginning was the Word' says the same thing."[71]

By virtue of the human being's irreparable transubstantiation into a speaking being, this "living being" becomes a "sick animal." What begins with the genesis of "the Word"—throughout "*Le triomphe de la religion*," Lacan plays with this Christian notion/motif[72]—are illnesses constitutive of the human condition. Additionally, Lacan's distinction between symptom and Real involves a few nuances worthy of attention. To begin with, the living being's animality is associated with the Real itself. And, this Real not only introduces dysfunctions into the world of Imaginary-Symbolic reality—it comes to be worked and re-worked, written and over-written, by its own manifestations (in the form of symptoms) within this *logos*-inaugurated reality. A Real beyond, beneath, or behind its own symptomatic manifestations is caught up in a dialectical entanglement with these same manifestations. In view of this, Lacan continues:-

> "But the real real, if I can speak thus, the true real, is that which we are able to accede to via an absolutely precise way, which is the scientific way. It is the way of little equations. This real there is the exact one which eludes us completely."[73]

The Real underlying and making possible both the emergence of speaking beings out of living beings as well as the symptoms of these thus-afflicted animals is not some ineffable *je ne sais quoi*, some mysterious noumenal "x." For Lacan, "the real real," this "true real," is precisely what the ways of the sciences enable to be accessed lucidly and rigorously in its truth.

70 Ibid., pp. 82, 87
71 Ibid., p. 93
72 Ibid., pp. 89-90, 91)
73 Ibid., p. 93)

Of course, Lacan's mention of "little equations" in the quotation above hints at a conception of science according to which the hallmark of scientificity is mathematical-style formalisation. But, in addition to the ample evidence scattered throughout his teachings that Lacan sometimes associates the Real with things fleshly and corporeal (and not just mathematical/formal), the quotation preceding the one above associates the Real with the living animality of the human organism, an animality that gets hopelessly entangled with the mediating matrices of symbolic orders. Hence, perhaps the science Lacan is thinking of here is not just the mathematised physics of quantum mechanics, but an adequately formalised science of life. If so, then one of the important consequences entailed by this is that there could be a scientifically-shaped treatment of a genuine Real-in-the-flesh as a pre-condition for the immanent surfacing out of this animal materiality of something different, other, and/or more than this materiality (i.e., the *parlêtre* as a denaturalised, but never quite completely and successfully denaturalised, living being).[74]

Toward the end of "*Le triomphe de la religion*," Lacan pronounces a couple of additional utterances regarding the Real. After denying that he's a philosopher proposing an ontology,[75] he emphatically rejects the suggestion, made by the interviewer, that his register of the Real is akin to Kant's sphere of noumena. Lacan protests:-

> "But this is not at all Kantian. It is even on this that I insist. If there is a notion of the real, it is extremely complex, and on this account it is not perceivable in a manner that would make a totality. It would be an unbelievably presumptuous notion to think that there would be an all of the real."[76]

Lacan dismisses the idea that it would be possible to make an "All" of the Real, to encompass it in the enveloping form of an integrated whole. Presumably, one of Lacan's reasonable assumptions underpinning this denial of Kantianism is that Kant's noumenal realm of things-in-themselves is fantasised by Kant as an ontological domain of entirely consistent being subsisting outside the contradiction-plagued

74 Adrian Johnston, "Ghosts of Substance Past," pp. 34-35, 36; Adrian Johnston, *i ek's Ontology*
75 Jacques Lacan, "*Le triomphe de la religion*," p. 96
76 Ibid., pp. 96-97

epistemological domain of the objects of subjective cognition.[77] What's more, insofar as Lacan contends that scientific thought provides a direct path of entry into the inconsistent, de-totalised, and not-All Real, he, unlike Kant, maintains that one can transgress the purported "limits of possible experience" so as to lay one's hands on material being *an sich*.

In two co-authored articles, Lorenzo Chiesa and Alberto Toscano provide exemplary, superlative readings of some of the crucial subtleties contained in "*Le triomphe de la religion*." In that text, Lacan, despite his openly avowed atheism, perplexingly declares Christianity to be "the one true religion."[78] Chiesa and Toscano helpfully clarify that what this actually means is that, from a Lacanian perspective, the Christian religion is the least false of the various religions.[79] The reason for this has to do with Lacan's earlier assertions to the effect that whereas evolutionary theory unwittingly continues to be theosophical by virtue of its reliance upon an omnipotent, all-encompassing material-historical continuum (i.e., a seamless, uninterrupted One-All of Nature),[80] creationism, especially the Christian notion of creation *ex nihilo*, inadvertently opens the door to the founding of a materialism without God:-

> "...Lacan, a self-professed atheist, repeatedly refers to Christianity as '*la vraie religion*.' To cut a long story short, according to Lacan, Christianity is the 'true religion' insofar as, more than any other religion, it comes nearest to the materialistic truth of the creation *ex nihilo* of the signifier: 'In the beginning was the Word.' The *ex nihilo* of the *logos*, or better, the *logos* itself *as* the *ex nihilo*, is the specific feature that, for Lacan, differentiates Christianity from other monotheistic religions that are also creationist."[81]

Just as a kernel of religiosity resides in the heart of supposedly atheistic evolutionary theory, so too does a kernel of atheism reside within the heart of supposedly religious Christianity. But, one might ask: Given the

77 Adrian Johnston, *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), pp. xxxii-xxxiii, 229-230
78 Lacan, "*Le triomphe de la religion*," pp. 79, 81-82
79 Lorenzo Chiesa and Alberto Toscano, "*Agape* and the Anonymous Religion of Atheism," *Angelaki*, vol. 12, no. 1, April 2007, p. 118
80 Chiesa and Toscano, "Ethics and Capital, *Ex Nihilo*," p. 10
81 Chiesa and Toscano, "*Agape* and the Anonymous Religion of Atheism," p. 118

counter-intuitive ring to this series of propositions, what qualifies the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* as both atheist and materialist? And, what anti-religious advantages does this concept drawn from the inner sanctum of a particular religion have over the desacralising ontology of transcendence-stifling immanence implicit in evolutionism? Chiesa and Toscano offer the following elucidating explanations:-

> "...why would Christian creationism, based as it is on the *logos* as the *ex nihilo*, contain *in nuce* a form of atheistic materialism? Lacan's theory of the emergence of the signifier *ex nihilo* is both materialistic and atheistic since it is grounded on the assumption that language, and the symbolic order, is unnatural rather than supernatural, the contingent product of man's successful *dis*-adaptation to nature. Such an unnatural dis-adaptation, which obviously dominates and perverts nature, can nevertheless only originate immanently from what we name 'nature' and thus contradicts the alleged continuity of any (transcendentally) 'natural' process of evolution."[82]

Elsewhere, they repeat the above almost verbatim,[83] to which is appended the declaration that, "Nature is *per se* not-One"[84]—a declaration rooted in various statements regarding the notion of nature made by Lacan, including ones contemporaneous with "*Le triomphe de la religion*."[85] Chiesa and Toscano, while illuminating how Lacan extracts an atheistic materialism from the *ex nihilo* of Christianity, even describe "the (supposed) primitive 'synthesis' of the primordial real" as having "been broken due to a contingent 'material' change that is immanent to it."[86] The twist the reworked materialism of this project adds to these very insightful comments is the assertion that the "primordial real" of natural matter isn't synthesized, that, insofar as subjects exist in the first place, it is always-already "broken"—with this brokenness, this self-shattered status of a disharmonious nature devoid of any One-All, being a material

82 Chiesa and Toscano, "*Agape* and the Anonymous Religion of Atheism," p. 118
83 Chiesa and Toscano, "Ethics and Capital, *Ex Nihilo*," pp. 10-11
84 Ibid., p. 11
85 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII*, p. 33; Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XXIII*, p. 12; Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XXIV: L'insu que sait de l'une-bévue s'aile à mourre, 1976-1977* [unpublished typescript], session of May 17th, 1977
86 Chiesa and Toscano, "Ethics and Capital, *Ex Nihilo*," p. 14

condition of possibility for the immanent genesis of subjectivity out of the conflict-ridden groundless ground of materiality.

In "*Le triomphe de la religion*," Lacan speaks of various cures for anxiety. Specifically, he suggests that a range of conceptions of humanity function in this capacity.[87] This applies not only to religion (which Lacan has in mind in this context)—it is also relevant to a speciously scientific scientism that genuine science is in the process of demolishing. More specifically, misrepresentations of the "man of science" as either inflexibly determined by the efficient mechanical causes of evolution and genetics or flexibly malleable as an infinitely constructible and re-constructible social, cultural, and linguistic being are often promoted by various contemporary ideologies. A materialism based on science as opposed to scientism and faithful to the furthest-reaching consequences of Lacan's dictum according to which no big Other of any sort exists (including almighty Nature as well as God) has no place in it for the different pseudo-scientific images of humanity advertised by today's reigning bio-politics.

The time has come to pronounce the true formula of atheistic materialism: There is just a weak nature, and nothing more. All that exists are heterogeneous ensembles of less-than-fully synthesized material beings, internally conflicted, hodge-podge jumbles of elements-in-tension —and that's it. What appears to be more-than-material (especially subjectivity and everything associated with it) is, ultimately, an index or symptom of the weakness of nature, this Other-less, un-unified ground of being. The apparently more-than-material consists of phenomena flourishing in the nooks and crannies of the strife-saturated, under-determined matrices of materiality, in the cracks, gaps, and splits of these discrepant material strata.

Fear-driven anti-reductionism, responsible for much of the resistance in Continental philosophy and European psychoanalysis to a sustained engagement with the life sciences, tacitly accepts the notion of a strong nature as Almighty, as an over-determining, omnipotent cosmic Substance. If Lacan is indeed correct that the ostensibly atheistic

87 Lacan, "*Le triomphe de la religion*," p. 70

materialists of eighteenth-century France remain, in reality, religious believers despite themselves, then today's Continental European anti-reductionists and their followers are also, regardless of whatever they might say, adherents of fideism—they have faith in a natural big Other, even if this faith manifests itself through rejections of and rebellions against this Other. Moreover, such anti-reductionists, in accepting the image of a strong nature while simultaneously wanting to preserve the affirmation that there is something in excess of this same nature, are forced to rely upon a spiritualist metaphysics of one sort or another in the form of strict, rigid ontological dualisms however avowed or disavowed. If an atheist, as Lacan claims, is he/she who acknowledges the non-existence of the big Other and the absence of anything all-powerful at the foundation of existence, then anyone accepting an image of natural being as an ultra-powerful One, whether reductionist materialists or their reactive opponents, is, in the end, no different-in-kind than the most fervent of the faithful.

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Alain Badiou: Truth, Mathematics and the Claim of Reason

CHRISTOPHER NORRIS

In this essay I offer a brief account of Alain Badiou's notably original and creative work in philosophy of mathematics, ontology, epistemology, politics, and ethics. One aim is to dispel the kinds of suspicion that might be engendered amongst analytic philosophers when confronted with the claim that any single thinker could possibly (or competently) manage to encompass such a range of topics or subject-areas. Another is to query the likewise typically analytic idea that 'creativity' – or conceptual inventiveness – has no high place on the list of those intellectual virtues that philosophers should seek to cultivate. By way of challenging these dominant assumptions I make the case for Badiou as a keenly analytic as well as philosophically venturesome thinker who has opened up some highly productive new lines of enquiry in the area between mathematics – especially developments in post-Cantorian set theory – and those other above-mentioned fields of thought. I also set out to situate his work in relation to earlier thinkers, among them Plato, Spinoza, Leibniz, Pascal, Kant, Marx, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein. However my essay makes a point of stressing the centrality of mathematics to every aspect of Badiou's thinking, even where – as in the title of his major work – he draws a sharp distinction between 'being' and 'event', that is, between the realm of a mathematically-based ontology and whatever exceeds or escapes that realm through its power to disrupt all existing modes of ontological specification. Thus my essay recommends that analytic philosophers overcome their suspicions, read *Being and Event*, and thereby discover some immensely stimulating work that might point a way beyond the more crampingly orthodox topics and debates that have set their current agenda.

In *Being and Event*, the major work of what might be called his middle period, Badiou puts forward the claim that mathematics is the key to an adequate conceptual grasp of issues across a wide range of disciplines or subject-areas beyond its own, relatively technical or specialist domain.[1] Indeed he makes the case that a decent acquaintance with one particular branch of mathematics – the history of set-theoretical developments from Cantor to the present day – is strictly indispensable for anyone hoping to advance beyond the most rudimentary stage of critical engagement with those other disciplines. That is to say, set theory provides the only means (at any rate the only precise, conceptually rigorous means) of addressing certain basic or foundational issues, not just – as might be expected – in the formal and physical but also in the social and human sciences.[2] Moreover, this is not merely a useful analogy or suggestive *façon de penser*. Rather, he asserts, it is a matter of strict extrapolation from the methods and procedures of set theory such as to allow an otherwise unattainable degree of precision in our thinking about questions of social ontology as well as questions of ethics, political justice, and individual or collective agency.

Such is Badiou's uniquely ambitious and distinctive project in *Being and Event*, along with the large and steadily increasing volume of work that he has devoted to a wide range of philosophical, scientific, political, ethical, artistic, and (by no means remote from these) psychoanalytic issues. It is a project that takes its ontological bearings from advances in the scope and conceptual power of post-Cantorian set theory, advances that have each transpired – along with signal developments in those other domains – in consequence of some decisive event in the history of thought, that is to say, one that eludes or exceeds the grasp of any pre-established ontology.[3] Above all it maintains the absolute necessity of holding two crucial thoughts in mind, that is, the ontological (set-theoretical) thought of inconsistent multiplicity as that

1 Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005).

2 See also Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Norman Madarasz (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999); *Infinite Thought: truth and the return to philosophy*, trans. Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (London: Continuum, 2003); *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2004).

3 For a highly informative survey, see Michael Potter, *Set Theory and its Philosophy: a critical introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

which intrinsically transcends all finite determinations or products of the 'count-as-one', along with a thought of the event as that which unpredictably arrives to disrupt and unsettle every existing situation or state of knowledge. What is perhaps hardest to grasp is the fact that Badiou very firmly maintains the distinction between these dimensions of thought even though his account of inconsistent multiplicity is itself one that would appear to involve a surpassing of all ontologically defined (i.e., consistent) specifications of being in just the same way that events are supposed to exceed the utmost powers of achieved ontological grasp. In order to show why this should be the case – why the event should remain, on Badiou's account, a singularity wholly outside and beyond the compass of ontology in general – one would need to pursue a detailed exegetical path through some of the most densely argued and mathematically demanding sections of *Being and Event*. Suffice it to say that this distinction is based not only on a rigorous thinking-through of the relationship between necessity and chance which plays such a central role in his thought, but also on a subtle and sustained engagement with the many philosophers, mathematicians, and even poets, such as Mallarmé, who have likewise striven to articulate or somehow obliquely convey the nature of that relationship.

All the same, this is a challenge that thinking is able to confront only through a grasp of these issues as they are posed in the context of set-theoretical debate, that is, in terms of the count-as-one and the cardinal distinction between inconsistent and consistent multiplicities, along with those between belonging and inclusion or members and parts.[4] In each case the distinction is one with a crucial bearing not only on intra-mathematical topics but also on matters of political, ethical, and socio-cultural concern. For it is only here – at a point of excess where the resources of ontology are pressed to the limit and beyond – that philosophy finds itself equipped or compelled to conceive of the event as an 'ultra-one' or as a strictly 'supernumerary' item *vis-à-vis* the existing order of things, that is, an occurrence whose advent marks a decisive break with that order. Such would prototypically be instances of – in the proper as distinct from the debased or everyday usage of these terms – *invention* in science, *creation* in art, *revolution* in politics, and *passion* in

4 Badiou, 'Theory of the Pure Multiple: paradoxes and critical decision', in *Being and Event* (op. cit.), pp. 38-48.

love.[5] According to Badiou, each of these has its negative counterpart: *culture* in place of art, *management* in place of politics, *technique* in place of science, and *sex* in place of love. Moreover it is chiefly on the strength of his set-theoretical elaborations – his formal rendering of the process whereby truth-events come about in excess of any prior reckoning, predictive capacity, or power of ontological grasp – that Badiou is able to draw these distinctions and to specify what counts as a genuine event in each of those subject-domains.

Thus, despite his extreme care to distinguish the evental and the ontological, there is still a clear sense in which Badiou's whole project rests on ontological foundations and indeed requires them precisely in order to make that same distinction. More precisely: what he sees as philosophy's proper task is not that of making ontological discoveries or exploring new ontological regions on its own account – since this is a role best left to the mathematicians – but rather that of pursuing a 'meta-ontological' enquiry that expounds, clarifies and draws out the consequences (some of them decidedly extra-mathematical) of any results thus obtained.

I

Set-theory has to do with relationships of membership, inclusion, and exclusion amongst numbers or other entities that are taken as forming a unit of assessment for some given purpose. Thus sets are defined as products of the count-as-one, that is to say, the classificatory procedure that consists in grouping together a certain range of such entities and treating them as co-members of a single assemblage, whatever their otherwise diverse natures or properties. This latter point is crucial, not only in mathematical terms, but also for Badiou's socio-political thinking since it allows the set-theorist to ignore any merely contingent or localised differences and accord all items equal consideration as regards their status as candidate members of this or that set. Ironically enough, as Badiou notes, it was a point not fully taken by Georg Cantor – the founder of this branch of mathematics – when he first enounced his

5 See entries under Note 2, above; also *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (London: Verso, 2005); *Polemics*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London: Verso, 2006); *Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

'theory of the pure multiple' and defined it as follows: "By set what is understood is the grouping into a totality of quite distinct objects of our intuition or of our thought". "Without exaggeration", Badiou responds:-

> "Cantor assembles in this definition every single concept whose decomposition is brought about by set theory: the concept of totality, of the object, of distinction, and that of intuition. What makes up a set is not a totalisation, nor are its elements objects, nor may distinctions be made in some infinite collections of sets (without a special axiom), nor can one possess the slightest intuition of each supposed element of a modestly large set."[6]

Badiou's purpose here is to drive home the point that set theory has now progressed to a stage where it is (or should be) no longer necessary to fall back upon such notions, and moreover that the intervening post-Cantorian sequence of advances – which his book sets forth in great detail – were potentially contained within Cantor's inaugural insight. So it came about, he writes, that "[a] great theory . . . was born, as is customary, in an extreme disparity between the solidity of its reasoning and the precariousness of its central concept" (*Being and Event*, p. 38).

He goes on to reinforce this point by describing the process of increasingly advanced and rigorous formalisation whereby set theory was progressively uncoupled from all such naïve or restrictive appeals to a domain of distinct objects and likewise distinct thoughts or intuitions concerning them. Above all, what Badiou seeks to dispel – not only for the benefit of relatively uninformed readers but also in riposte to some philosophers of mathematics who take a contrary view – is the idea of *intuition* as having any role to play in set-theoretical reasoning. Here he is in agreement with the majority of analytic philosophers who likewise adopt an extensionalist rather than intensionalist approach; that is to say, one that defines the conditions for membership solely and strictly with reference to the set of those entities (whatever their nature) that fall within the relevant domain, and not in terms of any qualifying attributes or distinctive features that mark them out as fit for inclusion according to some given (e.g., intuitive) criterion.[7] "What was thought of as an "intuition of objects" was recast such that it could only be thought of as

6 *Being and Event* (op. cit.), p. 38. All further references given by title and page-number in the text.

the extension of a concept, or of a property, itself expressed in a partially (or indeed completely, as in the work of Frege and Russell) formalised language" (*Being and Event*, p. 39). And if the latter project ran into problems with Russell's discovery of certain paradoxes at the conceptual heart of set theory then this was yet another indication that mathematical thinking, once launched on that investigative path, would continue to advance through repeatedly coming up against limits to its present (very often intuitive) and pointers to its future (more conceptually adequate) state of understanding.

The great promise of set-theory as envisaged by Cantor, Frege, Russell and its other early proponents was that of reducing mathematics to a purely logical or axiomatic-deductive structure of entailment-relations that would leave no room for anomaly or paradox. That claim had its first major setback when Russell showed – by purely logical means – that set-theory was intrinsically prone to generate just such problems, namely the kinds of self-reflexive, impredicative or auto-referential paradox that resulted from its dealing with formulas such as 'the set of all sets that are not members of themselves' or 'he who shaves the barber in a town where the barber shaves every man except those who shave themselves'. Yet, as Badiou points out, despite their somewhat contrived appearance such paradoxes all derive from a basic formula – that of the set which is not a member of itself – which, so far from being forced or extraordinary, in fact turns up (quite acceptably so) in each and every possible specification of a set. Thus, "it is obvious that the set of whole numbers is not itself a whole number", and so on for any range of similar instances (*Being and Event*, p. 40). To this extent it is an inbuilt feature of set-theoretical thought, one that emerges whenever it is a question of asserting 'the constitutive power of language over being-multiple', and which therefore cannot be regarded as something pathological or (as Russell and Frege supposed) in need of surgical

7 For a range of views, see Paul Benacerraf and Hilary Putnam (eds.), *The Philosophy of Mathematics: selected essays*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 272-94; W.D. Hart (ed.), *The Philosophy of Mathematics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Jerrold J. Katz, *Realistic Rationalism* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1998); J.R. Lucas, *The Conceptual Roots of* Mathematics (London: Routledge, 2000); Hilary Putnam, *Mathematics, Matter and Method* (Cambridge University Press, 1975); Stewart Shapiro, *Thinking About Mathematics: the philosophy of mathematics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

excision. However it does take on such a negative, subversive or system-threatening aspect when its implications are followed through in the context of an ultra-logicist programme which identifies truth with formal validity and validity in turn with the classical ideals of consistency and total closure under logical implication. For in that context the acceptable face of self-reference – its ubiquitous and therefore unobjectionable presence – undergoes a distinct change of expression and becomes, in effect, the un-doer of that whole optimistic logicist project.

Badiou's work is notable for *not* losing sight of the set-theoretical paradoxes – indeed, for placing them squarely at the centre of its philosophic interests – while regarding them more as an incentive to thought or a spur to renewed intellectual-creative activity than as an obstacle that has to be set aside if further progress is to be made. Thus, although they "went on to weaken mathematical certainty and provoke a crisis which it would be wrong to imagine over [since] it involves the very essence of mathematics", nevertheless – he asserts – the widespread acceptance of Russell's pseudo-solution meant that the problem with this logicist project "was pragmatically abandoned rather than victoriously resolved" (*Being and Event*, p. 38). As for Cantor, Badiou sees an effort to 'force a way through' this looming impasse by resorting to quasi-mystical, even theologically-inspired notions of absolute infinity as opposed to the realm of mathematically specifiable transfinite numbers which he himself had discovered, thereby opening up (in his own famous phrase) a 'mathematicians' paradise'. That is, theology makes its reentry to the otherwise radically de-theologised (since de-transcendentalised) realm of set theory as a result of Cantor's retrograde tendency to equate absolute being "*not* with the (consistent) presentation of the multiple", but rather with "the transcendence through which a divine infinity in-consists, as one, gathering together and numbering any multiple whatsoever" (p. 42). On the other hand Badiou is more than willing to credit Cantor with having grasped more vividly than any of his fellow-pioneers what also drove him to seek refuge in such 'onto-theological' notions, namely the upshot of his own discovery when relieved of its inherited metaphysical baggage and pressed to its ultimate, strictly logical endpoint. Such was the incipient realisation, already legible though not fully acknowledged in Cantor's work, that any resultant (set-theoretically derived) concept of 'being' would resist the best efforts of systematic statement in terms compatible with that whole tradition of thought, whether in its

mathematical, philosophic or (what effectively subtends both of these) its crypto-theological aspect.

In this respect Cantor stands out as the most striking and, for Badiou's purposes, the most intellectually heroic example of a thinking whose special virtue it is to confront the maximum challenge to its powers of coherent or rigorous development and thereby gain all the greater strength to overcome its own attachments and resistances. It is the same pattern that appears repeatedly in varied forms when he engages with strong precursors (such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, and Hegel) certain aspects of whose thinking he finds problematic, unacceptable or retrograde yet whose work he regards as possessing just this same self-resistant or – at their most impressive moments – self-transcending quality. It is worth quoting another passage from his commentary on Cantor since it captures precisely what Badiou so values about those few select thinkers who, in his estimation, achieve that rank. He writes:-

> "Cantor's thought thus wavers between onto-theology – for which the absolute is thought as a supreme infinite being, thus as trans-mathematical, in-numerable, as a form of the one so radical that no multiple can consist therein – and mathematical ontology, in which consistency provides a theory of inconsistency, in that what proves an obstacle to it (paradoxical multiplicity) is its point of impossibility, and thus, quite simply, *is not.*" (p. 42)

What this passage displays most clearly – in his own way of thinking as well as in those aspects of Cantor's thought that he finds so exemplary despite their contradictory character – is the interplay of two terms, 'consistent' and 'inconsistent', as the main source of conceptual leverage or (at risk of sounding too Hegelian) the chief dialectical driving force of Badiou's entire project. Thus he views the history of advances in mathematical knowledge as having most often come about through the process whereby various sorts of problem or paradox eventually gave rise to some new concept or agreed-upon way of proceeding which in turn – when its consequences became clear – could be seen to involve a further, deeper, and yet more thought-provoking challenge. At any rate Badiou is absolutely firm in his belief that although knowledge must be held

distinct from truth – since truth might always transcend the utmost limits of human knowability – nevertheless knowledge is attainable, albeit with the strict fallibilist proviso that all and any present claims in that regard might conceivably be subject to future revision or outright disconfirmation. Indeed, one of the philosophic traits that lifts his work well clear of post-structuralist, postmodernist and other recent Francophile movements of thought is Badiou's unwavering commitment to the existence of language-independent or culture-transcendent truths and his equally strong rejection of the claim that this is in any sense a sign of dogmatism or entrenched doctrinal adherence. On the contrary: it is only by affirming that commitment and hence by conceding the possibility of error in even our most deeply-held theories, truth-claims, or items of belief that we are saved from equating truth *tout court* with what counts as such for ourselves and fellow-members of our own (whether specialised or culture-wide) community.[8]

Badiou makes this point most concisely in the context of describing those advances in the formal development (or axiomatisation) of set theory that were carried through by post-Cantorian thinkers such as Zermelo and Fraenkel, the devisers of that particular version – the ZF system – that he adopts mainly on grounds of conceptual economy and ease of expository treatment. Nevertheless, as he is keen to impress upon the reader, where set theory is at issue "axiomatisation is not an artifice of exposition, but an intrinsic necessity" (p. 43). That is to say – *contra* at least some of the more hard-line (if soft-core) Wittgensteinians, neo-pragmatists, intuitionists, conventionalists, or anti-realists – what is at stake in that process is not just a matter of finding more convenient since compactly expressible means of formal presentation for concepts that might otherwise (and perhaps better) have been expressed in something less drastically divergent from the norms of natural or 'ordinary' language. Rather it is the very possibility of thinking beyond that tenacious since intuitively deep-laid and linguistically ingrained mindset which – if not subject to constant rectification and critique through just

8 For further discussion, see Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Christopher Norris, *Truth Matters: realism, anti-realism and response-dependence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002) and *Philosophy of Language and the Challenge to Scientific Realism* (London: Routledge, 2004); Stathis Psillos, *Scientific Realism: how science tracks truth* (London: Routledge, 1999).

such axiomatic-deductive procedures of thought – will persist in presenting us with 'common-sense' ideas and pseudo-solutions to misconceived problems. Here Badiou stands four-square with the rationalist tradition of thought from Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza to its latter-day progeny amongst both mainstream analytic philosophers who continue the basic programme of Frege and Russell and also those French thinkers – Bachelard, Canguilhem, even the deeply Spinoza-influenced Marxist theoretician Louis Althusser – who stake their projects on the capacity of thought to transcend the deliverances of mere intuition or received (linguistically ensconced) doctrine.[9] By the same token he stands just as squarely opposed to those latter-day 'sophists' – as distinct from the more dialectically challenging company of 'anti-philosophers' – who take refuge in just such sources of false assurance or just such appeals to the delusory idea of a wisdom vested in 'ordinary language' and its associated customary 'forms-of-life'.

Nowhere is the fallacy of this way of thinking more pointedly shown up, so Badiou maintains, than in the context of developments in set theory. It emerges through the problems faced by philosophy of mathematics to the extent that it strives to account for those developments in conceptually adequate (or – given the nature of its topic – rigorously formalised if never fully adequate conceptual) terms. Thus:-

> "being-multiple, if trusted to natural language and to intuition, produces an undivided pseudo-presentation of consistency and inconsistency, thus of being and non-being, because it does not clearly separate itself from the presumption of the being of the one. Yet the one and the multiple do not form a 'unity of contraries', since the first is not while the second is the very form of any presentation of being. Axiomatisation is required such that the multiple, left to the implicitness of its counting

9 See for instance Louis Althusser, '*Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists' and Other Essays*, ed. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 1990); Gaston Bachelard, *La formation de l'esprit scientifique* (Paris: Corti, 1938), *The Philosophy of No: a philosophy of the new scientific mind* (New York: Orion Press, 1968), *The New Scientific Spirit* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); also Dominique Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology: Bachelard, Canguilhem and Foucault* (London: New Left Books, 1975) and Mary Tiles, *Bachelard: science and objectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1984).

> rule, be delivered *without concept*, that is, *without implying the being-of-the-one*." (*Being and Event*, p. 43).

His preference for ZF over rival systems has to do with its pressing so far as possible in this direction, avoiding all forms of premature conceptual (or ontological) commitment, and thereby pursuing what Badiou sees as the path of thought strictly laid down for set-theoretical enquiry. This it does by allowing just one relation between terms – that of *belonging*, represented by the symbol $\in$ – and excluding all reference to other properties that would bring such otiose commitments along with them. The purpose of adopting this austere approach is to avoid the constant temptation (as witness Cantor's 'theological' turn) of regressing to a more intuitively manageable concept of set theory which continues, in the classical manner, to distinguish between objects, multiples, multiples of multiples, and so forth.

Thus "[w]hen I write "α belongs to β, $\alpha \in \beta$, the signs α and β are variables from the same list, and can thus be substituted for by specifically indistinguishable terms" (p. 44). That is to say, on the ZF system it is easier to conceive how thinking can dispense with the intuitively self-evident distinction between 'individual' objects and groups of objects, or particular (discrete) sets and assemblages composed of multiple sets under some higher-level grouping principle. Moreover it leaves no room for what seems – on a more conservative or intuitive account – the self-evident truth that logically there must be a distinction between elements and the sets to which those elements belong or in terms of which they are specified as elements. Indeed it is at just this point that set theory in its more developed forms departs from the 'naïve' or still intuitively-grounded stage that Cantor remained at through his supposition that to think of sets was necessarily to think of them as entities that differed, ontologically and logically speaking, from the elements that made them up. In other words, "[t]he sign $\in$, *unbeing* of any one, determines, in a uniform manner, the presentation of "something" as indexed to the multiple" (p. 44). What set theory most notably – and to some thinkers most disturbingly – conjures up is the prospect of a bad infinity or a multiple that is not composed of so many fixed or definable units but must rather be thought of as a 'uniformly pure multiplicity' without any such clearly specifiable constituent parts.

Here Badiou offers the suggestion that "[i]f one admits, with a grain of salt, Quine's famous formula "to be is to be the value of a bound variable", one can conclude that the ZF system postulates that there is only one type of presentation of being: the multiple" (p. 44). Although it would no doubt bear a good deal of unpacking this remark is best read as conveying a certain sympathy, on Badiou's part, with the 'austere desert landscapes' that Quine famously preferred to the lush vegetation of more ample or profligate ontologies.[10] However the 'grain of salt' serves to indicate – distinctly in tension with that – a clear sense of just how restrictive is Quine's *echt*-analytic desire to prohibit any reckless ontological ventures beyond the safe ('scientifically' validated) ground of a quantified first-order predicate logic coupled with a radically empiricist conception of epistemic warrant. That is to say, Badiou is by no means averse to the formal rigor or the extreme ontological austerity of Quine's approach, accordant as it is with his own professed aims of giving logic precedence in all matters of ontological enquiry and moreover restricting such enquiry to what can be said – consistently maintained – on the basis of a disciplined investigation into the various set-theoretically thinkable modes of being. However, he is sharply at odds with Quine in every other respect, including his commitment to a rationalist conception of ontology that could scarcely be further from Quine's outlook of radical empiricism. Equally un-Quinean – and likewise reflecting his distinctly 'continental' angle of vision – is Badiou's conception of progress in the formal (as well as certain branches of the physical) sciences as typically powered by conflicts, anomalies, or moments of productive friction between the drive for consistency and that which will always elude or subvert any fully consistent methodology or set of results.

II

It is just this idea of a constant dialectical tension intrinsic to the very nature of thought – rather than of problems that crop up periodically and have to be resolved before constructive thinking can once again proceed – that Badiou finds most compellingly enacted in the sequence of set-theoretical advances from Cantor down. He makes the point with reference to Zermelo's principle – a main component of the ZF system –

10 See W.V. Quine, 'On What There Is', in *From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 1-19.

that "a property only determines a multiple under the supposition that there is already a presented multiple" (*Being and Event*, p. 45). That is to say, any imputed feature or attribute pertaining to some given member of some given group, upon which its membership is taken to depend, must itself suppose a pre-existent multiplicity subject to no such selective constraint and therefore – by definition – more numerous or inclusive. Here again, in this idea of what is suppressed or marginalised by any determinate (e.g., 'democratic') instance of the count-as-one, we may glimpse some of the political or socio-critical implications that Badiou will go on to draw from his set-theoretical elaborations. In formal terms, "Zermelo's axiom system subordinates the induction of a multiple by language to the existence, prior to that induction, of an initial multiple" (p. 45). 'Language' here presumably includes not only those varieties of natural language to which, as we have seen, Badiou accords no authority in such matters, but also those formal or regimented languages – like that which he shares with Quine, i.e., the language of the first-order quantified predicate calculus – whose very consistency is such as to ensure that they can serve only in a strictly heuristic, assistive or enabling (though also a strictly indispensable) role. Thus they will always result from the suppression of – and hence, at certain critical junctures, be subject to disruption by – an inconsistent multiplicity that cannot be fully grasped or encompassed but only more-or-less drastically reduced to order by any application of the count-as-one.

Such was the case, Badiou claims, with those paradoxes of self-reference that Russell first enounced and that initially seemed to threaten – if not ruin – the entire set-theoretical enterprise. With benefit of hindsight they can now be understood as involving "an excess of the multiple over the capacity of language to represent it without falling apart" (p. 47). What distinguishes Badiou's approach from any adopted by philosophers in the analytic mainstream is again his characteristically dialectical mode of argument, that is, his way of engaging these issues through a close and rigorous thinking-through – rather than (as with Russell) a pragmatically rationalised setting-aside – of the paradoxes concerned. Indeed it is precisely by way of such arguments sustained throughout the entirety of *Being and Event* (though interspersed with sections on a great range of other topics and thinkers) that Badiou comes to propose his 'subtractive' account of set-theoretical ontology. As I have said, this is an account that stresses the crucial and always potentially

transformative role of whatever is debarred, excluded or discounted by some dominant set of membership conditions. It is at the point of crisis when thought comes up against the blocks created or disturbances induced by such arbitrary acts of exclusion that there emerges the hitherto strictly unthinkable possibility – whether or not taken up – of a decisive advance that will set new parameters for the course of future enquiry.

What occurs at such moments is an especially forceful demonstration of the truth that always applies in matters of ontological import, but which is mostly concealed – repressed or glossed over – by various doctrines or 'commonsense' ideas premised on the plenitude or positivity of being. This has to do with the essentially 'subtractive' character of ontological enquiry and the impossibility that thinking should ever fully coincide with the contents of thought as given either by intuition, by language, or by any supposedly consistent apparatus of formal concepts that fails (or programmatically declines) to make even tentative allowance for that which escapes its systematic grasp. This is why such truths are visible only in the fissures, contradictions, and aporias that mark the great majority of texts in the Western philosophical canon. The exceptions are those very few thinkers – Plato and certain set-theoreticians among them – who pressed the dialectic of being and non-being to its logical conclusion and also those philosophers such as Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, and Hegel who (albeit in radically different ways) bore witness to the limits of a positive ontology through their failure to express or consistently articulate the conditions under which it might be achieved. Thus, according to Badiou:-

> "the whole problem of the subtractive suture of set theory to being qua being... is a problem that language cannot avoid, and to which it leads us by foundering upon its paradoxical dissolution, the result of its own excess. Language – which provides for separations and compositions – cannot, alone, institute the existence of the pure multiple; it cannot ensure that what the theory presents is indeed presentation." (p. 48)

This distinction between 'what the theory presents' and 'presentation' in another (ontologically prior) sense of the term takes us very much to the heart of Badiou's political as well as his 'purely' philosophic thinking. 'What the theory presents' is what finds an accredited, duly

acknowledged place in those various prevailing systems (mathematical, formal, and natural-scientific but also – by more than suggestive analogy – political and socio-cultural) that decide what shall count as a member or constituent part of some given set, group, class, or collectivity. What the term 'presentation' signifies, on the other hand, is the sum total of all those elements that offer themselves as potential candidates for inclusion in the count-as-one, whether or not that potential is realised by their actually being so included.

Hence Badiou's central thesis in the formal (i.e., ontological and set-theoretical) domain: that even though "inconsistency is not actually presented as such since all presentation is under the law of the count", nevertheless, "inconsistency as pure multiple is solely the presupposition that prior to the count the one is not" (p. 52). Or rather, it is *just because* the first of these claims can be shown to hold – shown (that is) by Badiou's elaborate working-through of the set-theoretical paradoxes – that the second claim can also be upheld. His point, to repeat, is that the one is always the *result* of some such counting operation brought to bear in the act or through the process of transforming an inconsistent into a consistent multiplicity, or deciding which elements shall count as members and which be consigned to the limbo of non-belonging. At the same time, this central truth of ontology – the truth of its essentially subtractive character – is concealed from most enquirers simply through the fact that *by very definition* those excluded elements cannot figure within the count-as-one or be perceived as integral or constituent parts of any existent situation. Thus "[n]othing is presentable in a situation otherwise than under the effect of structure, that is, under the form of the one and its composition in consistent multiplicities" (p. 52). From which it follows that only within the discourse of mathematics and the formal sciences – that is, within the ambit of those disciplines most readily amenable to set-theoretic formalisation – can thinking resist the otherwise inevitable tendency to recognise only those elements that that make up some known or recognisable situation and hence to ignore whatever eludes or exceeds the prevalent count-as-one. "Any situation, seized in its immanence, thus reverses the inaugural axiom of our entire procedure. It states that the one is and that the pure multiple – inconsistency – is not" (p. 52). However – and this claim is at the heart of what I would describe as Badiou's realist ontology, although he might well have certain misgivings about accepting that description – the truth of such a situation

is in no way dependent on what we perceive, recognise, believe, or take ourselves to know concerning it.

This conception of truth as always potentially surpassing our best attainable state of knowledge – in the jargon, as 'recognition-transcendent' or 'epistemically unconstrained' – is one that unites Badiou with many realists in the analytic camp, whatever his differences with them in other regards.[11] Moreover, it is one in the absence of which his project would utterly founder since it would lack any means to explain how thought can advance through the process of discovering – rather than inventing – those anomalies and conflicts that previously passed unnoticed but which then at a certain point emerged clearly to view and thereby set the conditions in place for re-thinking the issue at hand. What is also required in order for this to occur is a reversal, however short-lived, of the imperative that governs most thinking at most times in most areas of thought, namely that such thinking be conducted very largely in terms of consistent multiplicity or structured situations so as to gain sufficient purchase on its various object-domains. Thus "[i]n a non-ontological (thus non-mathematical) situation, the multiple is possible only in so far as it is explicitly ordered by the law according to the one of the count". And again: "[i]nside the situation there is no graspable inconsistency which would be subtracted from the count and thus a-structured" (p. 52). However, this restriction may be lifted, to some extent at least, in so far as thinkers in other disciplines acquire the conceptual resources made available by developments in post-Cantorian set theory and thus come to grasp at least the basic point: that if the one is what results from some previous operation, then "of necessity "something" of the multiple does not absolutely coincide with the result" (p. 53).

Indeed it is precisely through the need for such an operation – the inability of thought to achieve any sense of conceptual purchase except

11 See for instance – for defences of realism from a variety of standpoints – William P. Alston, *A Realist Theory of Truth* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); J. Aronson, R. Harré, and E. Way, *Realism Rescued: how scientific progress is possible* (London: Duckworth, 1994); Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Jerrold J. Katz, *Realistic Rationalism* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1998); Jarrett Leplin (ed.), *Scientific Realism* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984); Stathis Psillos, *Scientific Realism: how science tracks truth* (op. cit.).

on condition of reducing inconsistent to consistent multiplicity – that the "something" in question most strongly manifests itself as preceding and exceeding the count-as-one. In other words:-

> "this 'there is' leaves a remainder: the law in which it is deployed is discernible as operation. And although there is never anything other – in a situation – *than* the result (everything, in the situation, is counted), what thereby results marks out, before the operation, a must-be-counted. It is the latter which causes the structured presentation to waver towards the phantom of inconsistency." (p. 53)

This 'wavering toward inconsistency' is something that Badiou detects across a wide range of philosophical texts where the overriding drive for system and method – or (in Heidegger's case) for access to a realm of ontologically authentic Being beyond the merely ontic or quotidian – is allowed to subdue any countervailing sense of that which would otherwise resist such appropriation. This applies especially to programmatic thinkers like Spinoza and Leibniz whose ruling premise is that truth must be expressible in terms of a consistent, logically articulated system of propositions that admits of no internal gaps, discrepancies or other such faults and which thus stands proof against criticism or indeed – by implication – against any further progress beyond its own achieved stage of advance. Nevertheless, as Badiou sets out to show, their projects encounter just the kind of resistance from internal anomalies – most often from unresolved conflicts between the large-scale (purported) logical structure of their argument and its detailed working-out – which is only to be expected given his claim concerning the ultimate predominance of inconsistent over consistent multiplicity, and hence the ubiquitous (no matter how elusive) remainder or reminder of the 'supernumerary' element that haunts all systematic discourse.

So one can see why he lays such stress on the claim, *contra* Wittgenstein and Heidegger, that 'mathematics *thinks*' in so far as it involves a creative, inventive, and truth-disclosing activity of thought that cannot be reduced either (following Wittgenstein) to a mere assemblage of vacuous since purely self-confirming logical tautologies nor again

(following Heidegger) to a mere expression of the techno-scientific-metaphysical will-to-power over nature and humankind alike.[12]

Here it is worth noting the distinction he draws between, on the one hand, latter-day 'sophists' such as Wittgenstein and Richard Rorty whose attitude to philosophy is mainly one of indifference, rejection, or a 'therapeutic' will to talk us down from such self-deluding abstract heights and, on the other, 'anti-philosophers' who measure themselves against the philosophical challenge and against whom philosophy is itself compelled to test its own claims as a putative discourse of reason and truth.[13] Badiou makes the point by contrasting Descartes and Pascal: the one a thinker for whom (purportedly at least) everything proceeded from the application of rational methods and decision-procedures; the other a believer for whom his own achievements in mathematics, logic, and natural science were as nothing compared with the leap of faith – the supposed abandonment of all such rational criteria – that opened the way to authentic religious belief.[14]

Badiou's intention is not for one moment to endorse Pascal's doctrinal stance or the claim that reason should know its proper limits and thereby make room for that leap into the realm of supra-rational paradox and inward, revealed or spiritual truth. Rather, it is to emphasise his point with regard to an age-old, conflictual yet productive relationship – that between reason and faith – which finds one of its most striking expressions in St. Paul's (albeit for the most part mutually baffling) exchanges with the Greek philosophers and has since then re-surfaced in manifold forms wherever there is a question of reason encountering some real or presumptive limit to its proper scope.[15] Thus the 'anti-philosopher' – unlike the sophist – is perpetually engaged in a process of testing that

12 See especially Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953) and *On Certainty*, ed. and trans. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (Blackwell, 1969); also Martin Heidegger, *'The Question Concerning Technology' and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

13 Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy* (op. cit.).

14 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. H. Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

15 Badiou, 'The Concept of Quantity and the Impasse of Ontology', in *Being and Event* (op. cit.), pp. 265-80.

limit, provoking the philosopher who will typically resist any such claim, but also – most importantly as Badiou sees it – showing how the powers of reason may themselves be refined and extended precisely through their coming up against this challenge from an opposed, though at times strangely close, even intimate, quarter. So what Badiou finds exemplary about Pascal is not so much (or not at all) the doctrinal content of his Christian faith, but rather his having staked everything on that same hypothesis as one that could be verified only through some future, as yet inconceivable event that would retroactively confer a determinate truth-value on those hitherto strictly undecidable conjectures.

Of course there is a risk of serious misunderstanding at this point, given Badiou's clear attraction to just those elements in Pascal's thought that will probably strike a non-believer as most open to question on moral as well as on philosophic grounds. Thus it might well seem that he is adopting something like the doctrine of 'eschatological verificationism' advanced by some theologians as a counter to the logical-positivist claim that the only meaningful statements were those that were either verifiable/falsifiable through methods of empirical (e.g., scientific) testing or else self-evidently true (hence tautologous and empirically vacuous) in virtue of their logical form.[16] To this the theologians sometimes respond that the postulates of Christian faith are such as will eventually be verified or falsified although under evidential conditions that at present cannot be clearly envisaged or specified with great accuracy. However, there is all the difference in the world – so to speak – between, on the one hand, a realist ontology (Badiou's) that locates the truth-makers for truth-apt but as yet unverified conjectures or hypotheses in a realm of future discovery that is strictly intra-mundane even if it extends to abstract entities like numbers, sets, and classes and, on the other, a theological position that goes so far beyond anything that counts (on empirically or logically adequate grounds) as proof, knowledge or evidence. That is to say, there is nothing remotely eschatological about Badiou's conception of truth – be it in mathematics, the natural sciences, or politics – as possessing an evental dimension that may always turn out to have surpassed or eluded our best current means of verification or justificatory grounds. On the contrary: what distinguishes the genuine (epochal) event from the run of more-or-less significant occurrences or happenings is the

16 See for instance John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963) and *Faith and Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

fact of its standing in a certain retroactively transformative relationship to previous episodes by which it was obscurely pre-figured, and also – as follows necessarily from this – in a proleptic relationship to later events whereby its truth-content will be further revealed or progressively unfolded. For that content has everything to do with real developments, whether of a natural-scientific, socio-political, or abstract-conceptual (mathematical) kind, and nothing whatsoever to do with hypotheses that by their very nature – *pace* the above-mentioned theologians – lie beyond the utmost reach of verification.

It is important to be clear about this since it bears on one objection that is sometimes raised to Badiou's closely related ideas of the event as that which disrupts any settled or pre-existent situation and the subject as existing – indeed as quite literally brought into being – through his or her 'militant' fidelity to the event. Again there is a risk, not least on account of his taking St. Paul as an exemplary figure in this regard, that Badiou will be interpreted as some kind of crypto-theological or (perhaps more to the point) crypto-Kierkegaardian thinker whose professions of religious unfaith are ultimately in the service of a kindred, even if strongly repressed or sublimated creed. Thus he might be understood as endorsing something very like Pascal's famous wager, that is, his purported proof on probabilistic grounds that we had better place our faith in an omniscient, omnipotent and omni-benevolent deity since even if the chances of his actually existing are close to zero still we are better off believing in him than not since the prospect of eternal salvation is infinitely better than the prospect of eternal damnation. It strikes me that nobody who has read very far into Badiou's work could suppose him to have any sympathy with this line of argument, at least as regards its moral, religious, and (not least) its socio-political implications. After all it is one that goes clean against two main precepts of Badiou's work, namely his commitment to a thoroughly secularised ontology – one that most emphatically leaves no room for the Christian or any other deity – and also his insistence on the absolute necessity of thinking things through with the maximum degree of conceptual and logical rigour. From this point of view he would doubtless be in sympathy with atheists-on-principle like Mill and Russell who have offered the best, intellectually and morally most decisive answer to Pascal: that there is a plain obligation not to acquiesce in any holy paradox that requires belief in an executive god whose supposed

attributes (as listed above) cannot be reconciled one with another or jointly with the facts of human experience.[17]

III

Badiou devotes some of the most taxing but crucial sections of *Being and Event* to the question of how it might be possible for thought to run ahead of its present-best powers of proof, knowledge, or demonstrative reasoning and thus raise issues that would not become clear – not achieve anything like an adequate conceptual form – until the occurrence of precisely such an unforeseeable future advance. Most important here are his closely-related concepts of *forcing*, the *generic*, and *indiscernibility*, all of them derived from the formal resources of post-Cantorian set theory (more specifically: from the work of Paul Cohen) and each of them explained with great care and precision for readers of his work – most likely a majority – who lack sufficient knowledge of the field.[18] Firstly, it is the indiscernible element, as that which eludes the count-as-one in any given state of any given situation, which will always mark the point at which present-best knowledge encounters its limit and where thinking confronts at least the possibility of moving decisively beyond it. That there must be an indiscernible element is shown by the set-theoretically proven excess of parts over members, of inclusion over belonging, or of the 'state of the situation' (i.e., the sum total of all its parts and the internal relationships between them) over the situation as presently conceived according to some dominant or so far definitive count-as-one. This truth is presented in the power-set axiom, wherein it is conclusively shown that the sub-sets of any given set will always exceed the cardinality of the set itself, and, moreover, that the disproportion will exceed any calculable limit where it is a question of infinite or transfinite sets.

17 See for instance J.S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, and of the principal philosophical questions discussed in his writing* (London: Longmans, Green & Dyer, 1878) and Bertrand Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian, and other essays on religion and related subjects*, ed. Paul Edwards (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957).

18 Paul J. Cohen, *Set Theory and the Continuum Hypothesis* (New York: W. Benjamin, 1966).

This is why Badiou adopts a negative or privative terminology by way of describing how progress is achieved not so much through a patient Baconian accumulation of knowledge, nor again (following Kuhn) through drastic but rationally under-motivated switches of allegiance, but rather through the singular capacity of reason to grasp what is absent or lacking in a situation and thereby most effectively motivate and orient its own future projects. Thus he puts the case for a 'subtractive' ontology as that which alone makes room for the occurrence of genuine events, and maintains that such events typically result from the power of thought to 'indiscern' (that is, to perceive as lacking or non-existent) the completeness or consistency of a given situation.[19] It is through the exercise of this subtractive power that thought becomes open to a sharpened sense of yet-to-be-resolved problems or aporias in the currently prevailing state of knowledge, and hence subject to the 'forcing' effect of whatever eludes its comprehension at present yet none the less exerts a transformative pressure on its current methods and techniques.

Moreover, it is here that Badiou introduces his set-theoretical, Cohen-derived conception of the 'generic' as that which distinguishes authentic events from pseudo-events, or those that involve some major advance in the resources of mathematical, scientific, political, or creative-artistic thought from those that assume that epochal aspect only in a short-term, parochial, or ideologically driven perspective. Thus the term 'generic' applies to just those conceptually resistant yet ultimately truth-conducive *topoi* whose effect is to stimulate enquiries or open up paths of thought that would otherwise – according to alternative (e.g., constructivist, intuitionist, or instrumentalist) philosophies – have absolutely no place in mathematical or other kinds of rigorous and disciplined thinking (see *Being and Event*, pp. 391-430). It is on this basis that Badiou develops a number of important distinctions, among them those between the *veridical* and the *true* and – as mentioned above – the *discernible* and the *indiscernible*. Thus: "[t]he discernible is veridical. But the indiscernible alone is true. There is no truth apart from the generic, because only a faithful generic procedure aims at the one of situational being" (*Being and Event*, p. 339). That is to say, what sets the 'veridical' apart from the 'true' is also what distinguishes the positive (knowable) features of this or that existing situation from everything that would, from the standpoint of truth, be assignable to ignorance, error, or

19 Badiou, 'The Subtraction of Truth', in *Theoretical Writings* (op. cit.), pp. 97-160.

the limits of presently attainable knowledge. This is why Badiou takes so strongly against any approach to mathematics – or, for that matter, to the natural sciences, politics, psychoanalysis, or any other discipline of thought – that endorses the anti-realist idea of truth as epistemically constrained, that is to say, as ineluctably subject to those same human, all-too-human cognitive limits. It is also why he comes out firmly opposed to the 'linguistic turn' in its manifold forms and guises except where – as in the line of analytical descent from thinkers like Frege and Russell – it holds language accountable to standards of logical consistency and truth that may well involve (*contra* Wittgenstein and other exponents of the 'language-first' approach) a willingness to claim that everyday usage sometimes stands in need of corrective analysis and clarification.[20]

Thus, Badiou operates a point-for-point reversal of the argument by which philosophers of an anti-realist or constructivist persuasion have started out by conceiving truth as co-extensive with the scope and limits of attainable knowledge, and then moved on – with Wittgenstein's blessing – to conceive knowledge as itself co-extensive with the scope and limits of linguistic representation.[21] This is where his thinking departs so radically from so many schools of present-day philosophic thought, whether in the mainstream analytic tradition or various 'continental' lines of descent. It is why he is so implacably opposed to any notion of truth as subject to constraints of a linguistic, communal, or epistemic nature that would leave us at a loss to explain how truth might at once transcend those restrictions and yet lie within the bounds of conceivability. With regard to mathematics, the natural sciences, politics, and art, what marks out the authentic event is its capacity to point beyond any presently established evidential or probative grounds and to signal the truth of that which will – at a later, more developed stage of understanding – turn out to have provided sufficient warrant for certain theorems, conjectures, or

20 See Note 12, above; also – for a representative sampling – Richard Rorty (ed.), *The Linguistic Turn: essays in contemporary philosophical method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). Badiou's critique of this widespread and multiform movement of thought may be found at various points in his work, notably *Theoretical Writings* and *Manifesto for Philosophy*.

21 See Note 6, above; also Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth, 1978), *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (London: Duckworth, 1991) and *The Seas of Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Neil Tennant, *The Taming of the True* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

hypotheses whose truth-value could not be known at the time. I would hope to have shown that Badiou mounts a powerful set of arguments drawn chiefly, though not exclusively, from set theory by way of bearing out this claim. Essential to them all is the concept of 'forcing' as a means to explain how certain as-yet unknown (even presently unknowable) truths may nevertheless play a crucial transformative role in some presently existing state of knowledge through the very fact of their marking a gap – a definite lack or a falling-short of adequate demonstrative power – as regards that current stage of epistemic or cognitive advance.

This concept of 'forcing', as Badiou understands it, takes rise from some of the basic conditions of all set-theoretical enquiry. That is to say, it involves the triple premise – derived from ancient Greek as well as from modern mathematical thought – that the One is a product of conceptual imposition, that the multiple is ontologically prior, and hence that any product of the count-as-one will always potentially run up against this kind of internal, self-generated challenge to its power of numerical containment or comprehension. In many ways – as regards its detailed exposition of developments in the field from Cantor down – Badiou's is an orthodox, even text-book account of the relevant intra-mathematical issues. Where he does break ranks with the majority of mathematicians – as likewise with mainstream philosophic thinking – is on the question as to how such seemingly 'abstract' concerns can possibly claim any kind of real-world descriptive or explanatory purchase, not only with respect to the natural sciences but also as concerns those other (i.e., social, political, historical, and even artistic) orders of event that Badiou sees as no less susceptible to treatment in these terms. Here also it is a matter of grasping both the scope and the limits of a set-theoretically based ontology, that is to say, its strictly indispensable character as a means of understanding how thought proceeds in the discovery of objective truths but also its inherently restricted nature as that which can account for such discoveries only with rational benefit of hindsight or (quite literally) after the event. Yet, despite this drastic disjunction between the ontological and evental domains, there is absolutely no question of events being shunted off into some realm of ultimate mystery where logic and reason fear to tread. On the contrary: Badiou offers a detailed account of how events – whether mathematical, natural-scientific, historico-political, or cultural-artistic – typically transpire at an

'evental site' which occupies a marginal space *vis-à-vis* the main body of accredited knowledge at some given time. Its precise location in that liminal domain is decided by the localised presence of certain especially sharp and pressing anomalies or, to be more exact, by the absence of certain results, methods, or proof-procedures that would counterfactually serve to resolve those anomalies.

Again, I should stress that Badiou advances this claim on the strength of a rigorously argued mathematical working-through of the relevant issues and also by close, scientifically valid analogy with instances from other disciplines or regions of enquiry. Nor is he lacking vigorous counter-arguments when confronted with the standard range of objections, whether from an anti-realist quarter or from realists who would wish to confine their case to some one or more specific ontological domains and distinguish very firmly what 'realism' entails with respect to each one of them. Badiou is quite aware of the need for such discriminate treatment since of course the kind of reality (or objectivity) that arguably pertains to abstract items such as numbers, sets, or classes cannot be confused with the kind that belongs to physical objects, nor this in turn with the kind that has its proper place in discussions of social ontology, without thereby resurrecting all the problems that have led to various reactive, i.e., sceptical or anti-realist movements of thought. However, he is firmly committed to the view that realism need not entail anything like such a pyrrhic conclusion, and moreover that arguments to this effect – based on the idea that objectivist truth is by very definition beyond the utmost reach of human epistemic or cognitive grasp – derive their apparent logical force from what is in fact a false dilemma. Thus, on Badiou's account, to be a Platonist about mathematics is not to place truth in some *topos ouranos* or realm of transcendent (hence strictly unknowable) forms, but rather – as with Socrates' set-piece demonstration in the *Meno* – to identify those truth-conducive procedures of thought that prove themselves capable of finding out various likewise truth-conducive theorems, hypotheses, conjectures, and so forth.[22]

22 Plato, *Meno*, ed. E. Seymer Thompson (London: Macmillan, 1901); Badiou, 'Platonism and Mathematical Ontology', in *Theoretical Writings* (op. cit.), pp. 49-58.

There is also support for his position, strange to say, from the problem that is epitomised by Eugene Wigner's famously baffled allusion to the 'unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics in the physical sciences'. This suggests that if indeed there is something strange – or persistently hard to account for – about the huge success of mathematical techniques in post-Galilean physics, and if some sort of 'fit' (or structural homology) between mind and world appears the only way to explain that success, then we can have no *a priori* reason to suppose that such enquiries should not possess an equal effectiveness when brought to bear upon other, e.g., political or socio-historical developments. After all, those developments would seem *prima facie* to lend themselves just as well to a way of understanding *more mathematico* which – as Badiou firmly maintains – leaves no room for all the vexing antinomies (subject and object, mind and world, reason and intuition) that have so hobbled the conduct of epistemological debate from Plato to Descartes, Kant, and their present-day progeny. That is to say, if this anti-dualist claim goes through, then there is a clear sense in which the course and conduct of human social, political, and cultural affairs – at least when subject to analysis (as here) from a highly informed trans-disciplinary standpoint – will prove amenable to treatment in terms that incorporate certain kinds of mathematical insight. More specifically, the approach *via* set theory will then become an obvious candidate for raising and clarifying issues with regard to those various collective structures, processes, events, and modes of intervention which themselves – as Badiou strongly maintains – can then be described or expressed in such terms with a high degree of logical and conceptual precision. Badiou has some eloquent passages extolling the sheer richness and creativity of mathematics, most of all during those periods – such as marked the emergence and early development of set theory – when progress can be seen to have come about through the transformation of problems or paradoxes into methods, procedures, and working concepts.[23] Clearly what drew him to it as a source of insights beyond the strictly mathematical or logical domain was its capacity for constant change and renewal, combined with its (by no means incongruous) capacity for producing arguments or proof-procedures of the utmost logical and conceptual rigor.

23 See especially Badiou, 'One, Multiple, Multiplicities', in *Theoretical Writings* (op. cit.), pp. 67-80.

IV

I would hope to have made the case for Badiou in similar terms: as a thinker of quite extraordinary range, versatility and inventiveness, but also one who brings to bear an exceptionally acute and disciplined analytical intelligence. One aspect of his thinking that sets it apart from philosophy of mathematics in the mainstream Anglophone line of descent is precisely this unique synthesis of a speculative project that ranges far beyond anything envisaged by that other tradition with a detailed attention to the technicalities of set-theoretical debate which again makes uncommonly large intellectual demands on the unprepared reader. To put it bluntly, Badiou's discussions of mathematics – let alone his extrapolations from them into other regions of thought – are such as to place a considerable strain on the receptive capacity of readers brought up on Wittgenstein-inspired debates about 'following a rule', or on similar set-piece analytic *topoi* that in truth have more to do with intra-philosophical (e.g., metaphysical or epistemological) concerns than with anything that working mathematicians would recognise as meriting their interest.[24] Thus, he stresses the need for philosophy to take its primary bearings – its guidance in matters of reality and truth – from developments within the mathematical (and chiefly the set-theoretical) domain, rather than allowing its agenda to be set by a prior fixation on issues in ontology, epistemology or philosophy of mind that happen to be raised with particular force by the instance of mathematics.

However, Badiou lays equal stress on philosophy's role as a mediating discourse equipped to draw out those further implications of an ontological (as distinct from purely formal or procedural) character that mathematicians are often disinclined or professionally indisposed to draw. The special relationship between these two disciplines may also help to avert the kinds of risks that ensue when philosophy loses any sense of its distinctive vocation and identifies too closely with one of those 'conditioning' elements – among them politics, science, and art – which jointly constitute its sphere of practical engagement or the realm wherein

24 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1951), Sections 201-292 *passim*; Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: an elementary exposition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982); Alexander Miller and Crispin Wright (eds.), *Rule-Following and Meaning* (Chesham: Acumen, 2002).

it can best exercise its powers of constructive and critical-reflective thought. Examples of that danger in relation to politics begin with Plato and are not hard to find thereafter, while Heidegger offers a cautionary instance with regard to the artistic (more precisely, the poetic) calling of thought and – in Badiou's judgment at least – logical positivism serves to show what happens when philosophy throws in its lot with a reductive, uncritical, and doctrinaire version of natural-scientific method. It is for this reason partly – its resistance to cooption in any such cause – that he looks to set theory and its highly inventive methods and proof-procedures for an antidote to the perils of orthodox doctrinal adherence. What sets mathematics apart is not so much its claim of privileged access to a higher, *a priori* or rationally indubitable order of truth, but rather its singular capacity to show, in exemplary style, how thinking may transform a hitherto insoluble problem or paradox into the means of achieving a hitherto impossible insight or stage of conceptual advance.

With the notable exceptions of David Lewis and Derek Parfit – two very different but in this respect comparable thinkers – analytic philosophy over the past half-century has not been conspicuous for its speculative range, metaphysical ambition, or willingness to fly in the face of established (whether common-sense or specialist) ideas of intellectual propriety.[25] If Badiou's work has so far received rather little attention from analytic philosophers this is, I think, mainly on account of that deep-grained resistance toward any thinking that raises the stakes by asserting philosophy's prerogative to challenge such often scarcely visible since taken-for-granted preconceptions. What he has managed to achieve – improbably enough – is a bringing-together of the two traditions by way of their most disparate component parts, namely the more 'technical' strain in philosophy of mathematics and logic with the more adventurous, metaphysically oriented mode of thought that has characterised much 'continental' philosophy after Kant. What he has managed to avoid – just as importantly – is any version of that widespread latter-day retreat from truth as the object of philosophical enquiry and the concomitant turn toward language as an absolute horizon of knowledge or intelligibility.

25 David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

This development has gone under so many names (among them Wittgenstein, Quine, Rorty, Dummett, late-Putnam, Foucault, Lyotard) and so many broad or generic labels (pragmatist, hermeneutic, post-structuralist, postmodernist, anti-realist, constructivist) that it offers something like a handy conspectus of intellectual trends over the past four decades. Above all, Badiou is keen to assert his distance from the widespread cultural-relativist turn that would assimilate the natural to the human or social sciences very much on terms of the latters' own choosing in order to reject any possibility that truth might exceed the scope of attainable knowledge or knowledge transcend the various currencies of in-place communal belief. Indeed, he has been among the fiercest critics of this trend in its sundry manifestations, from Wittgensteinian philosophy of language to the 'strong' programme in sociology of knowledge.[26] Moreover, as we have seen, Badiou puts up some vigorous arguments against the kind of analytically-oriented (i.e., Dummettian) anti-realism that comes at these issues from a different, mainly logico-semantic angle but can well be seen as ultimately pointing in a similar constructivist or framework-relativist direction.[27] No thinker has done more to contest these various cultural-linguistic-relativist currents of thought or, in positive terms, to put up a strong counter-argument based on altogether different (to my mind altogether more cogent and philosophically compelling) grounds.

26 See especially Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy* (op. cit.).
27 See Footnote 21, above.

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On the Horrors of Realism: An Interview with Graham Harman

TOM SPARROW

Graham Harman is an American expatriate who teaches philosophy at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. He has been making a name for himself with an ambitious metaphysical program that he calls object-oriented philosophy. Harman's first book, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*, inaugurated a new brand of realism with an unorthodox interpretation of Heidegger's tool-analysis in *Being and Time*. In *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*, which serves as a sequel to *Tool-Being*, Harman interrogated a group he termed the "carnal phenomenologists," seeking out traces of realism which he welded together with Kripke, Ortega, and Max Black to build a novel theory of metaphor and refurbished the medieval Arab notion of occasional cause, which plays the pivotal role of "vicarious cause" in Harman's theory of object-relations. Today, Harman is working out a systematic presentation of object-oriented philosophy, and drawing inspiration from the actor-network theory of Bruno Latour, Manuel DeLanda's theory of assemblages, and Alphonso Lingis' notion of "levels." Wielding a luscious prose style and a desire for innovation, Harman seeks nothing less than a renovation of contemporary philosophy, which he sees as possible only through a renaissance of old-fashioned metaphysics and speculative bravado. He is currently Visiting Associate Professor of Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science, University of Amsterdam.

TS: The kernel of your work you refer to as "object-oriented philosophy." It is clear from your books that this approach was provoked by the sedimentation of the linguistic turn in both continental and analytic philosophy, especially in the Anglophone community. We are familiar with the currents of realism in analytic philosophy, its roots in empiricism, but not so much on the continental scene. Is realism dead for continental philosophers?

GH: More likely it was never born. There are numerous ways to define realism, so let's choose one... For me, a philosophy is not yet realist if it grudgingly agrees that there might be something out there independent of us. To be realist, a philosophy needs to treat the relations between rocks and wind or cotton and fire on the same footing as the relation between humans and what they encounter. Otherwise, the human subject is given a special box seat in the world, even if we half-heartedly claim that we sort of believe in reality and never said it wasn't there. Who has the gall to side openly with Berkeley these days? *Of course* everyone is going to claim that they're taking account of a real world, but most of them are not.

This means that Kant is not a realist even if we decide that he believes very strongly in the things-in-themselves. A true realist would have to talk about the relations between these things apart from our surveillance of them, which is precisely what Kant says we can never do again. Husserl, Heidegger, and their successors all bracket the natural world or abandon it to a science that does not think. Philosophy enters the gilded cage of human experience, where it still remains for continentals. This is not realism either, even though I've found some important realist resources in Heidegger's tool-analysis. More recently, Zizek proclaims openly that he is opposed to naive belief in the real world, while Badiou allows entities to be units only if they are *counted* as units— and it is always humans who seem to do the counting!

There is a sense in which none of this is surprising. The whole *raison d'être* of continental philosophy was to fight scientific naturalism. Phenomenology was created in order to wall off philosophy from the growing onslaught of chemicals and billiard balls as explanations for everything. The realism of analytic philosophy to which you refer is often simply a form of naturalism, which increasingly wants to let naturalism

invade the sphere of consciousness and reduce it to physical interactions as well. And one can understand why the continentals fear this scenario: if naturalism were the only kind of realism, I might avoid it too. But it's not the only kind— in fact, I don't think it's realist enough! Naturalism is not crazy enough to be realism, as Niels Bohr might have said. But I suspect we'll get into the topic of "weird realism" a bit later.

Continental philosophy is so anti-realist in its instincts that the more it turns into realism, the more it will have to turn into something else. Here I'll just mention Manuel DeLanda, a wonderful author who is one of the few continentally inclined thinkers to proclaim his realism in public. Notice that he doesn't read like a continental philosopher at all, despite his impeccably hip Francophile readership. DeLanda gives us a strange realism of attractors and virtual topologies, not of dull billiard balls slapping each other around on a numbered grid, but also not a faked realism made up of texts and language games.

TS: You alluded to the fact that continental philosophy got its start by attempting to situate itself beneath the ground of naturalism. This, of course, was Husserl's hope for phenomenology as a rigorous science. You have acknowledged the scant, but undeniable, realist moments in Husserl. You treat these in the second chapter of *Guerrilla Metaphysics*. Could you unpack this for us, and elaborate on how Heidegger helps us to understand this scenario, since he is the impetus for your object-oriented philosophy?

GH: Husserl's fans are always quick to say that he is not an idealist, but that's only because the bar for realism has been set so low these days. For in one sense, Husserl is *obviously* an idealist! There is no way for him to discuss what happens when a fire burns a tree if no humans are nearby, and especially not if humans are extinct or not yet in existence. Husserl tosses these issues to natural science and has nothing more to do with them. So yes, he's clearly an idealist. Let's not lose sight of the obvious.

However, phenomenology does have a certain realist *flavor* that we never find in, say, Fichte or Hegel. One cannot imagine any of the

German Idealists taking the trouble to describe individual mailboxes as Husserl did, or pens, carpets, and milk as Merleau-Ponty did, or all the various exotic objects that Alphonso Lingis describes in his books. Husserl is not a realist— but unlike traditional idealism, Husserl's idealism is *object-oriented*. That's because he allows for tension between intentional objects and their various adumbrations. The British Empiricists (like Russell after them) hold that an object is just a set of qualities bundled together. In many ways, phenomenology begins in *Logical Investigations* II, when Husserl rejects this model and says that consciousness is always object-giving. I perceive the pen, which is always distinct from whichever of its qualities I happen to be witnessing right now, and those qualities are like satellites in orbit around the pen. All of phenomenology adheres to this insight. And it's a major insight in the history of philosophy, a brand new theme. Unfortunately, it is always confused with the realist theme, though it is really something quite different. The pen in my perception is different from its qualities, but it's also not the same thing as the real pen, because it may not even exist outside my mind. That's the whole point of bracketing! We need to think two things at once: Husserl's idealism, but also Husserl's object-oriented model of perception. Husserl gives us a new duality within his merely ideal sphere: intentional objects versus their qualities.

You also asked about Heidegger, and this is where he becomes important. On the one hand, even Heidegger remains an idealist, since human Dasein is too much the star of his show, and Heidegger tell us nothing about avalanches or chemical reactions when no humans are around, despite his later colorful attempts to shift the blame for history to Being itself. Yet there is an important grain of realism in Heidegger, in the famous tool-analysis that is my favorite passage in the history of philosophy. For Heidegger, there are not only objects within the phenomenal world as for Husserl, but also objects in the real world silently doing their work and silently relied upon by Dasein most of the time. And just as intentional objects are more than the sum of their qualities (as Husserl showed), so too are real objects. The same duality is repeated on the real and ideal levels. This is how I interpret Heidegger's mysterious *fourfold*, which first appears under that name in the 1949 Bremen lectures, but which is already there in 1919 in Heidegger's early reading of Husserl. The fourfold is not some elderly mystical turn by a passive old sage, but just a more technically advanced version of

phenomenology. But I leave the fourfold for now; maybe we will return to it later.

TS: Isn't one of the virtues of phenomenology its overcoming of the modern skirmish between idealists and realists? Some might say that the reintroduction of this debate in your work is getting us back into fights we no longer wish to fight.

GH: Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and other members of this family love to talk about how pointless the old realism/idealism dispute is. But they are not neutral in the quarrel: they are basically idealists. It is important to ignore all the rhetoric about realism and idealism and how the opposition "has already been overcome," and focus on a simple litmus test for realism... Namely, we should ask of any philosophy, "Does it allow us to say anything about the interaction of two non-human objects when no humans are monitoring it?" If the answer is no, then we have idealism, period. So it's not very impressive when Heidegger replaces the subject/object dualism with being-in-the-world. Even if you say that world and human cannot exist in isolation but always come together as a pair, why is it that *people* must always be one of the two ingredients of the world?

Someone who explains this point more clearly than I did is Quentin Meillassoux, the bright new star of French philosophy. Meillassoux's book *Après la finitude* was published in French in 2006, and will appear in English in 2008. The book contains numerous highlights, but my favorite is his polemical term "correlationism." Meillassoux favors realism, and he notes that very few people admit to being outright idealists these days. Instead, everyone plays the same old joker from the idealist deck: "we can neither think of world without humans, nor humans without world, but only of a primal correlation or rapport between the two." But why human and world? Why not, instead: "we can neither think of world without neutrons, nor neutrons without world, but only of a primal correlation or rapport between the two." After all, neutrons were probably a lot more necessary in the wider scheme of things than people are. Why not a primal correlate of vegetables and minerals, or of red giant

and white dwarf stars? If someone says something stupid like "these two pieces of wood in my hands are the entire universe," you don't disprove his claim by gluing the pieces together, but by candidly observing that the wood-pieces are only two out of many trillions of entities.

My father is an engineer of sorts. At one point he did troubleshooting work in a highly important and dangerous technical industry. While he was being trained for this career, the first rule he learned was: "when you go to the plant to troubleshoot, ignore everything that everyone tells you, and focus only on what you can see for yourself." The rule is a good one. People have all sorts of good and devious reasons to put rhetorical spin on the problems in the factory. They may be trying to deflect blame from themselves, or may simply be trying to make a rival manager look inept. So, my father learned to ignore all this talk and look for the real source of the problem with his own eyes. This is the method we need in philosophy as well. Heidegger is the greatest philosopher of the past century— but please, let's ignore his empty triumphalism about overcoming the stale old subject/object dualism. He never did overcome it, because whenever Heidegger is talking, Dasein is always somewhere in the picture. The Arab philosophers loved to ask about what happens when fire burns cotton. You already know what Heidegger and his minions would do: they'd immediately transform this into a question about what happens when Dasein *encounters* fire burning cotton, which is not the same thing. Phenomenology is idealism. It makes other contributions as well, but it's definitely idealism, even in Heidegger's hands. Sooner or later, all the possible idealist permutations will have been expended, and then people will suddenly be looking for is a more interesting realism than the ones of the past.

TS: Do you still call yourself a phenomenologist? Are you doing a kind of phenomenology of objects? In any case, could you say something about how the metaphysics of phenomenology both informs and contrasts with your project.

GH: Many friends of my own age group see little of value in phenomenology. They often come from a background steeped in Deleuze

or Badiou or the natural sciences instead of my own Husserl/Heidegger upbringing. Sometimes I ask myself what I like and dislike about their attitude... Well, let's look at bracketing. It does two different things, one of them good and the other bad. On the good side, Husserl's bracketing gives an ontological status to phenomena that they fully deserve. If you hallucinate unicorns and giant squids, this delusion is still a real occurrence that is worthy of description— in that sense, *yes*, it's just as real as the neutrons detected in an experiment. Bracketing allows Husserl to explore all entities in a democratic spirit without angrily exterminating some of them at the outset.

On the bad side, we can say of bracketing what is often said of suicide: it is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Phenomenology brackets the world, and never returns to it. Philosophy is confined to the phenomenal realm. And once this decision is made, all caveats and provisos are useless, because the damage is already done. If you say "I'm not denying that there might be an outside world, I'm just saying that science begins from a phenomenal basis and that's what I'm trying to clarify," then you are losing the principle of democracy and not dealing with real objects in your philosophy on the same footing as human perceptions. Naturalism grants privilege to solid physical things over figments of the imagination, and through bracketing phenomenology merely inverts this apartheid. Merleau-Ponty goes so far as to speak of the "in-itself-for-us" and seems to deny all hope of an in-itself-*wtihout*-us. But that's what a real object is: an in-itself-without-us, and in fact an in-itself-without-*anything*-else! Phenomenology creates a permanent rift between a world of human experience and a possible real world that the scientists are supposed to deal with. There's no point denying it. That's simply what bracketing *is*.

Since we've spoken before, I know we agree that Alphonso Lingis is a more important figure than most people realise. As I see it, Lingis is the first figure in phenomenology to give it a genuinely realist twist. You can see this in *The Imperative* (1998), where Lingis speaks of the levels of the world. There isn't just a real world on one side where scientists try to live, and a phenomenal world on the other side where philosophers live. Instead, we can move up and down in the world to any level we'd like (though we are trapped in human form and can't visit the same sorts

of levels that insects, germs, and asteroids can). Only Lingis frees phenomenology from its tiresome two-world split. To me, one of the strongest indictments of the American continental philosophy scene is that no one really grasps the originality of Lingis. His discussion of the levels of the world, his devastating critique of holism... Lingis attacks the basic dogmas of continental thought, and everything remains as though he had never been born. We continue to be served the same old mediocre Heideggero-Derridean soup, with a bit of Foucauldian pepper thrown in to make sure it tastes politically progressive. But it's still old soup, and I don't want any.

TS: On the one hand, it sounds like you are suggesting that there is a whole trajectory of thought that comes out of Heidegger's modifications of Husserl, but which has been overshadowed by the French adaptations/repudiations of phenomenology. On the other hand, it sounds like you're frankly annoyed by all of the attention paid to deconstruction and poststructuralism. Is it that these approaches are in some way misguided, or have they just worn out their welcome?

GH: Both. For me, Derrida and Foucault were never liberating figures. Having been born (literally) in May of '68, I may belong to the oldest age group for which those two were the established dictators of continental philosophy, not risky outliers or guerrillas. So, as I was coming of age intellectually, it was sanctimonious Derrideans who controlled City Hall. If you weren't in tune with Derrida, the only apparent option was to be an unthreatening reactionary scholar doing respectable but retrograde work on older German figures. Your politics might even be considered suspect, since back then Derrida was also spearheading all the right petitions against bombing raids and lethal injections. The problem was, I didn't have any interest in the sort of philosophy they were doing: all tapestries of words and textual citations. They had nothing to say about coal mines, hammers, dolphins, puppies, binary stars, or any of the other objects that fill this universe. But philosophers are supposed to talk about everything, not just about books.

As for Foucault, I was never very interested. Sure, one can read *Discipline and Punish* and be interested in some of the facts in it. But I tend to read a lot of history in my spare time, and you know... there have been so many great historians who know how to tell a story and bring a past world to life. Often I will finish a good work of history late at night, and then simply wander the streets in a daze, glad to be alive in a world where such things have happened and have found such gifted spokespersons to remind us. And Foucault simply is not one of those historians for me. I find it hard to be impressed by his books after reading Thucydides, Gibbon, Braudel, or Parkman. So, Foucault never interested me much as a historian, and as a philosopher even less so— absolutely nothing to say about non-human objects except insofar as they are the correlate of human discipline. Materialism? Give me a break: there's nothing in Foucault about the interior of the sun before humans existed. It's not materialism! It's just a historicist account of the human subject.

Continental philosophy was becoming an intellectually sloppy social clique, as I fear it still is today. To use a geographical image, it was all second-growth Heideggerian woodland. I had spent far too much time working seriously on Heidegger to think that these sorts of twigs and sticks could build bridges to the superman.

TS: Is continental philosophy so enamored by the complex and the esoteric that it hastily judges realism as dull and uninteresting, or is it not still trying to cope with the Kantian aftermath? Your criterion for realism seems a tall order for sympathisers of German idealism, which is nearly everyone working in the continental tradition! It might be said that you risk lapsing back into a pre-critical or "naïve" mode of operation with your counter-Kantian revolution. You mentioned DeLanda. He and Bruno Latour have played a significant part in your recent research. Is there something about their philosophical style that allows them to escape the exigencies of Kantianism without reverting to naturalism?

GH: These are slightly different cases... Latour has been important for me since the first time I read him, which was in early 1998. DeLanda is a more recent favorite. Here too I feel an instinctive kinship, though intellectually I am much closer to Latour.

The similarity is that both authors deal with what I would call "objects." They are not fixated on human access to the world, but talk about extremely concrete things. Latour writes about the Paris metro and the price of apricots, and his students write about every possible topic. This summer I met a very nice young woman, Soraya Hosni, who will apply Latour's actor-network theory to the study of volcanoes. Volcanoes! What could Derrida do with volcanoes except make clever puns and dig up obscure references to Vesuvius and Dutch colonialism?

DeLanda's books are a breath of fresh air. The stratification of human societies can be compared to that of rocks in a stream; the processes are similar. Deleuze can be discussed in the same way as nonlinear physics. A whole ontology is unearthed from a discussion of medieval mills and renaissance anti-markets. With DeLanda too, I get the same feeling of childlike delight at wandering in the real world again. It's been a long time coming.

But there are differences between these two authors, and they're big enough that I doubt they would like each other's books very much. In the first place, DeLanda constantly shouts aloud that he is a realist. The term is very important to him, whereas Latour uses it extensively only in one major book (*Pandora's Hope*) and even then mostly for rhetorical purposes against his science war enemies. If you told Latour that he is not a realist, he might be willing to bend a bit, whereas DeLanda would have to knock your head off, since that's the key to his whole position. Ultimately, Latour thinks the reality of a thing is defined entirely by its relations to other things. He's not an idealist, but what I call a "relationist," like Whitehead. You can't speak of the reality of a thing outside of its relations to other things, because that's what Whitehead calls "vacuous actuality." But personally, I think vacuous actuality is precisely what philosophy needs to talk about and explore: the reality of things *in vacuo*, apart from their relations. I doubt DeLanda would endorse that particular formula, but we would certainly agree that a thing cannot be reduced to its effects on other things. You know... if American continental philosophy were suddenly to undergo a giant phase of

Latour/DeLanda debate, think of how much more interesting it would be. These are real philosophical issues!

TS: What about the other speculative realists? In April 2007 you were a participant at a symposium on speculative realism at Goldsmiths College, University of London. The transcript of this workshop has been printed in *Collapse* III. Earlier you brought up Quentin Meillassoux, who was one of the participants. Could you say a bit more about "correlationism" and how Meillassoux's work complements your own?

GH: I'll start with a brief history of the Speculative Realism group, since many people have asked. Meillassoux's book appeared early in 2006. I'd already known Ray Brassier for about a year, and he returned from a trip to Paris saying "I found a book that's right up your alley." I ordered the book immediately, and took it to Iceland in April as bedtime reading. It only took a few pages to know that I really liked what Meillassoux was doing. I kept e-mailing Ray from a hotel lobby in Akureyri on the northern coast, thanking him for telling me about this book. At some point during this exchange, Ray bemoaned the fact that we were all working in isolation, and he also mentioned Iain Hamilton Grant of Bristol, whose work I did not yet know. And there you have the group. Exactly one year later, we had our inaugural event at Goldsmiths, and I'd say we all hit it off very well. We'll have a follow-up meeting in Bristol very soon, and another possibly in Paris.

Let me point out the differences between us, because they make the larger agreement all the more interesting... Meillassoux's writing style is lucid and economical in the manner of Descartes. He is also the most daring person I know in his willingness to make *a priori* philosophical deductions: for example, he simply rejects the principle of sufficient reason! Even those who dislike his conclusions will be influenced by his methods of arguing, as I certainly have been. He's a warm, generous, modest sort of person who commands instant respect even from people who think his entire project is crazy. Sometimes I hear comments along the lines of: "I didn't believe a word of his lecture, but he was brilliant!"

Better yet, Meillassoux could probably walk into a den of analytic orthodoxy and get exactly the same reaction.

As for Brassier, he calls himself a nihilist. Badiou and François Laruelle are important figures for him, and cognitive science is equally important. He's the first person I ever met in continental philosophy who said nice things about the Churchlands. I often call him "the eye of the hurricane," because he is somewhat subdued in groups (despite a fiery personality in private), but nonetheless he always triggers a storm of activity in those around him. It's no wonder he's the one who set this off, despite his nonexistent level of showboating tendencies. We disagree about phenomenology, but it doesn't seem to matter very much.

Iain Grant's ambient background music sounds to me like Deleuze, but his specialisation is German Idealism, especially Schelling. There have been a number of attempts to revive Schelling in the past fifteen years, but most were false starts by tedious Heideggerian poseurs, and hence Grant's treatment is the first one that impressed me deeply. He also does very appealing things with Plato, reading Platonism as a physics of matter rather than a metaphysics of the otherworld.

The differences between us are big. What, then, is the link? The phrase "speculative realism" says it all. First, we are all realists. We are all completely sick of the hand-wringing quarantine of philosophy amidst questions of human access to the world. Please, let's get back to talking about the world itself. Philosophy *does* have the right to deal with the real world. Second, our realism is a speculative one because it's not commonsensical like most other realism. Brassier's realism is a nihilistic vision in which stars burn out into empty brown husks and the science of cognition makes a shambles of how we usually view our emotions. Grant's realism is a one-world physics of unified matter from which individual entities surge up into existence, a lot like Giordano Bruno, who is one of his heroes. Meillassoux's realism is one in which the laws of nature are absolutely contingent, and in which God does not exist— but might exist in the future! And my realism is devoid of matter, and allows no direct physical contact between things or direct relations of any kind: a world of resonant concealed entities linked only on the interior of a third. These are weird realisms indeed.

TS: Let's talk about the weird. In your writings, you often refer to this "weird" or "speculative" realism. You distinguish the weird and speculative from the kind of realism that is associated with the natural sciences, on the one hand, and stodgy armchair empiricism, on the other. Who are the great realists for you, and how would you situate your brand of realism vis-à-vis the tradition? What's weird about it?

GH: In a sense I have two major enemies, and not all of the Speculative Realists share both of them. The one we all share is what I call "the philosophy of access" or what Meillassoux calls "correlationism" (the terms are not identical, but similar enough). Philosophy deals directly with the world. This is the realist part, as just discussed.

The "weird" part of my realism is aimed at scientific naturalism. When people hear that I reject the focus on human existence and want to place the relation between inanimate objects on the same footing as that between humans and what they perceive, they often ask "isn't that what science does? Why don't you just do science instead of philosophy?" And it's not a stupid question. But there's an answer. The reason I don't renounce philosophy and become a scientist is because the sciences do not tell us enough about causation. Yes, I know there are many debates surrounding causality in cases such as quantum theory, or statistical causation, or the tiny little butterfly destroying New Orleans with its wings. But these don't really get to the heart of the issue. They merely argue over whether causation is purely mechanical, whether it can be known, whether small causes can have big effects, and so forth. They tell us nothing at all about how causation *works*. In other words, at whatever scale you think causality happens, or how often you think it happens, exactly *how* does it happen? And this means giving a good philosophical account of relationality more generally. And it also means not treating relations between physical masses differently from the relations between two cartoon characters. There needs to be a general science of objects and relations, and we don't get that from the natural sciences at all. The sciences deal only with a few underlying layers of the universe. Since I'm an anti-reductionist, I want General Sherman's influence on the 1864 election and a love letter's influence on my mood to be treated in the same way as a magnetic field's influence on a particle.

And this is why I adore Bruno Latour! Whitehead had already made it possible to speak uniformly of many different types of relations between many different types of things. But then Whitehead spoiled it with an unfortunate pistol shot—his claim that relations happen via eternal objects (i.e., universal qualities) that are contained in God. While this 17th century retro style is refreshing compared with its nonrealist alternatives, very few people in the West today sincerely believe, deep down, that God is the medium for all relations between all things at all moments. It's certainly not a view that will make any headway in scientific circles. To most people it will seem just as capricious as all the previous occasionalisms. Though I am second to none in my respect for occasionalism from the Arabs onward, why pretend that there aren't obvious problems with it? Well, Latour is what I would call the first *secular* occasionalist. Despite being a practicing Catholic, he doesn't even believe that God is a substance, let alone some sort of universal causal medium. For Latour, any two objects are linked only by a third. That's what he calls translation.

The sole difference between me and Latour is the "weird" element. I wouldn't call Latour's philosophy weird in this technical sense, because he defines things purely by their relations. Everything is immanent in the world, with nothing held in reserve. His philosophy is completely secular. But for me, a thing always withdraws from its relations, which never grasp or exhaust it. This is surely a result of my Heideggerian background: veiling, concealing, withdrawing... This makes causal relations something like science fiction or horror for me, because it's no longer as simple as two billiard balls smacking into each other. These balls will never fathom each other's full reality, and even a human observer will never grasp the full reality of the balls. So where and what is that reality? I contend that it's sealed away in a kind of hermetic vacuum. For me, all metaphysics comes from balancing the tension between hidden objects and their undeniable relations, which can occur only on the inside of another object. Each time I write a book, I try to make this model a bit clearer and more convincing.

You ask who the great realists are for me. Aristotle of course, but Leibniz is even dearer to me. Though I know Heidegger much better, Leibniz is my favorite philosopher. The current fashions all prefer

Spinoza, but Leibniz is the one I would save if there were only one seat remaining in the lifeboat. I like almost everything he does, but there are some basic problems that have to be remedied. First, there is his classical distinction between substance and aggregate, which does not allow us to deal with different levels of the world on equal terms. Second, there is his strange anti-Aristotelian view that substance must be eternal. This restricts realism by implying that things can *only* be real if they are eternal, and since it would be absurd to claim that banks and handshakes are everlasting, it then falsely seems absurd that they could be as real as diamonds. Finally, Leibniz's recourse to God is the wrong way to handle the question of relations, and other than Latour I don't think there is anyone in the history of philosophy who simultaneously sees that the translation between objects is a problem and *also* thinks that the problem needs to be solved locally, rather than through a deity or a human mind. I think Latour really is that important... It took me nine years of reading him, until this summer, to see that his philosophy is the first local occasionalism ever developed, but now it is clear to me that this is the key to Latour's career. But to go back to an earlier point, Latour's philosophy isn't quite weird enough for me. His actors have nowhere to hide from each other, and whereas he proclaims this as a great virtue, I think it subverts the principle of true realism.

Someone who is almost weird enough for me is Xavier Zubiri, the great Basque student of Heidegger and Ortega y Gasset, whose major work is called *On Essence*. Fans of Zubiri sometimes say that he unified substance and relation, but that's like saying that Bergson unified flux and stability— every philosopher has to claim that they unified everything, because that's our job. But the initial, one-sided exaggeration is usually more interesting than the watery universal reconciliation that everyone feels the need to end up with. In Zubiri's case, there is the familiar notion that essence belongs to each individual thing and does not lie outside them in some Platonic realm. But then he adds the unfamiliar twist that this essence must be subtracted from *all possible relations*. The essence of the knife is different from every *possible* use of it! That was a conversion experience for me. It was one of those "I see it but I don't believe it" moments, when you feel a tingling sensation all over and realise that it's going to take months for the implications of an idea to sink in. We don't have so many of those moments in a lifetime. I've kept meticulous records of mine: they usually occur in four-year intervals,

though they sometimes come in pairs... This was one of the pairs. Zubiri's non-relational essence reached me at the same time as a deepened interest in Whitehead, who blew apart the whole Heideggerian framework for me: Dasein is no more relevant to metaphysics than a beetle or a wisp of vapor. But Whitehead also isn't weird, in my technical sense of the term, because like his successor Latour he defines entities by their relational prehensions of other entities. Zubiri's music needs to be added to the mix to save us from Whitehead's relational excesses.

For the past two years I have ceaselessly reread the great tales of H.P. Lovecraft, the American "weird fiction" writer, with his hidden monstrosities who smash New England houses and devour heretics in Damascus in broad daylight. Lovecraft's career was strongly associated with the periodical *Weird Tales*. I wish I could edit a journal called *Weird Realism*, *Weird Metaphysics*, *Weird Causation*, something like that. Maybe this makes it clear why I can't drop philosophy and become a scientist!

TS: Yes, it's definitely the clash of physics and fiction that keeps you out of the science camp. And the reference to Lovecraft certainly ramifies the distinctly metaphysical charge of your thinking. So, is Lovecraft an object-oriented philosopher? Continental philosophers are always invoking and co-opting literary figures for their campaigns, presumably because they can paint a better picture of the world described by the philosopher. It's always Hölderlin and Rilke, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, Borges or Woolf. What is it about Lovecraft that makes him the best possible expression of your philosophy?

GH: The starting point was a surprising brute fact... The speculative realists all turned out to be Lovecraft fans, completely independent from one another. There must be something "in the air," as they say. Lovecraft was a recent discovery for me, not a hero of adolescence as for so many others. Shortly thereafter I was visiting London, and noticed that Ray Brassier had a great deal of Lovecraft on his shelf, though for some reason we didn't discuss that coincidence much at first. But later we were

astonished to learn that our Parisian friend, Meillassoux, was also a Lovecraft fan and had considered writing about him.

Even during my decade as a convinced Heideggerian (from 1988-1997) I was never convinced by Heidegger's pious adoration of Hölderlin. I found that this combination weakened the appeal of both authors, just as fresh coffee and fresh onion powder would be a revolting mixture, despite the two ingredients being so excellent in isolation. It's time for a new literary hero.

Lovecraft's general theme is the utter insignificance of humanity, dwarfed by a nearly unfathomable cosmic history. We are surrounded invisibly by loathsome creatures— dragons with octopus-heads, fungi in the shape of crabs, frozen Antarctic plant/jellyfish creatures that thaw out and kill everyone in sight. These creatures have existed and will continue to exist millions of years longer than humans, and are vastly superior in intelligence. We are like insects to them. They crush us whenever we stand in their way, or if they simply happen to feel like killing us. Once in awhile they brainwash humans into spies, or impregnate some woman with a repugnant half-breed child. Humans lose their central role, just as ought to be happening in philosophy. As Brassier once put it, "we are bit players." Humans are a tiny, frail species among millions of others and our planet is one blue speck among billions of other possibly life-bearing specks. In Lovecraft's world, the human *cogito* is not very high on the pecking order. If you're faced with fungoid lobsters who want to remove the brain from your skull and take you to Pluto in a metal cannister, Hölderlin's hymns to the Greeks start to seem a bit parochial.

What I also love is Lovecraft's destruction of common sense, the bane of all philosophy. The most pointless Vermont town houses strange minerals that draw the creatures of Yuggoth to our planet, where they harass a farmer and an academic who try to study them. A decadent seaport town is home to demi-frog priests wearing sickly tiaras... The irony of Kant's Copernican Revolution is that for all the supposed mystery of the things in themselves, the world of phenomena was stripped of nearly all mystery, governed by a small number of perfectly deduced and itemised categories. Lovecraft puts the human and the non-human back on the same plane, in the most violent fashion. His monsters

are not even supernatural, but perfectly material. After Kant we at least thought we knew the *experienced* world, but Lovecraft shows that we didn't! The most deviant monsters in Lovecraft's pantheon are still made of electrons, as Michel Houllebecq has observed. This not only destroys supernatural gullibility, it also takes our safe, respectable science and turns it into a window onto possible horror. Lutheran church services exist in the same universe as the unspeakable thing that bubbles and blasphemes mindlessly at the center of all creation.

So, Lovecraft ends human-centered pathos and makes us just one object among many. He also suggests that horror, not wonder, is the true *Grundstimmung* of philosophy. To stand at a distance and wonder about things can be a fairly safe exercise, and always earns pious praise from observers. But this is not what Lovecraft's narrators do. Instead, they observe the gradual decomposition of common sense, and in so doing lose their sanity altogether. In a sense, philosophy ought to be an all-out flirtation with insanity. It is already quite abnormal to think of the world, in pre-Socratic fashion, as made of water, or atoms, or a duel of love and hate. The further you travel in philosophy, the fewer allies you will have, and the more your visions will start to seem like private paranoid episodes. Unless your philosophy unlocks some new squid-like or fungoid monster, then you do not yet sufficiently realise that the world is a very weird place.

TS: I'm getting the impression that what you find most significant about a writer is not their ability to isolate the essential trait of some phenomenon or unify the diverse content of the physical and metaphysical realms, but their knack for proliferating the dimensions of the real. Does this idea begin to describe your method for reading and/or writing philosophy? You said once that you like to read philosophers "hyperbolically." Does a hyperbolic reading yield the most authentic account of reality, from your perspective?

GH: That's a nice phrase, "proliferating the dimensions of the real." Yes, I like that, and will start to use it! The first thing that comes to mind is Latour's principle that thinking should make things *more* real, not less

real. For several centuries, intellectuals have been stuck in the "critical" rut. The road to brilliance is supposed to require bursting ever more bubbles, debunking ever more gullible pieties, deflating ever more institutions, transgressing ever more oppressive boundaries. "I am a radical critic of all." This has been the slogan of the mainstream intellectual, and everyone else is supposed to be merely a reactionary. Well, a few of them may be reactionaries. But I don't know too many reactionaries, while I've been swarmed throughout my life by dozens of pompous radical critics of all. What I've found is that they don't just critique, they also stand somewhere, as everyone must. And where they stand usually isn't very interesting... It's usually a sort of mediocre relativist position that shoots spitwads at both Church and State while striking a vaguely libertine pose in private life. It's a position defined entirely by what it bemoans. By contrast, my position is that everything has already been subjected to countless radical critiques, at least in principle. What we must now do is build things up, making them more real— but they must be strange and unexpected things. Has the term "reconstructionism" already been coined? It should be, since it gets right to the point, and is even politically respectable with its post-Civil War overtones: nothing "reactionary" about it. I don't wish to reconstruct the decrepit realist tower of yesteryear, but something far stranger than old-fashioned realists ever knew.

You made me think of someone else besides Latour... When we had the first Lovecraft event in London last year, China Miéville joined us on the panel. He's one of the outstanding young writers these days in the science fiction/fantasy "steampunk" mold. Fantasy fiction was a genre I stopped reading at an early age, having grown tired of arbitrary postulations of other worlds and other creatures with boring new superpowers. Lovecraft changed that and drew me back into these alternate worlds, so suggestive of what philosophy ought to be. Now I'm reading Miéville's novels as well, and I'm hooked. "Proliferating new dimensions of the real" is exactly what he does so well. His first novel, *King Rat*, puts the famous Pied Piper in 1990's London, where he penetrates the drum 'n bass culture, commits a brutal murder in an abandoned Tube station, brainwashes a multi-ethnic d.j. chick, and persecutes actual rats and spiders. There is no irony here, no cynical observation of the hypocrisies of the human psyche— no mannered, lead-footed belaboring of our jaded distance from the world. One cannot

imagine China Miéville rolling his eyes, exhaling loudly, and saying "I've seen it all." He knows he hasn't seen it all, and he's going to *prove* it, by ceaselessly creating new things that no one else has ever seen, and which presumably surprise him as much as his readers. I expect he'll keep on doing it for the rest of his life, because there is no greater pleasure than exercising a fertile imagination, and Miéville knows he has one.

You also asked about "hyperbolic readings." When we summarise the work of an author, we are always supposed to be "critical" at the end, just to prove that we are not hero-worshipping bootlicks. It occurred to me, now that I'm a published book author myself, that this is always a bit of a demoralising response once you've worked so hard to produce something new. Look at everyday life... Who would dare "critique" a party to its host, or a household meal to its cook? So, why is it assumed that we ought to "critique" books? There must be a better method of intelellectual disagreement than this. The term "hyperbolic reading" first came to mind earlier this year when I gave the talk in London about DeLanda. As mentioned earlier, I really like DeLanda. His books make me happy to be alive, and I know he'd be pleased to hear any reader say that. Of course, we do disagree on a few important points. But the value of DeLanda, or any writer we enjoy, is not reflected in a statement such as: "in this book DeLanda makes fifteen true propositions before marring them slightly with three false propositions that I shall now publicly denounce." Instead, the reason I like DeLanda is because he sees the world with his own eyes, gives me a new way of looking at things that was somewhat unexpected. The important authors all take us by surprise. The problem is not that DeLanda makes mistakes. The problem is that his vision, like mine or anyone else's, is not infinite. Even the luscious Shakespeare trims reality to a much smaller size than it really has. Shakespeare doesn't do the things that Baudelaire can do— or that Heidegger, Van Gogh, and Chico Marx can do. This may be a truism, but it has never been turned into a critical method, which is what I want to do. So what I did in the DeLanda lecture, and did even more recently in my forthcoming Latour book, is begin by conceding *everything* to both of them. I imagine a complete triumph for each author. Let him have his moment in the sun. Imagine a future of total hegemony for the author in question, celebrate all the features of that coming world, and praise them for having brought it about. And then... I try to feel my way into that world, and wonder "what would still be missing under this scenario?" If

DeLanda were the crushingly dominant figure in world philosophy in 2030, would I really stop doing philosophy and say: "hey, it's all been solved by DeLanda, let's do something else"? No. I'd still keep working in philosophy, because there will still be some big parts of the forest that he never saw. This completely changes the relationship between author and critic.

I'm sure you can see the difference: critique is replaced by gratitude, but not of an "uncritical" kind, whatever that's supposed to mean. DeLanda is no longer presented as a glitchy prototype who perhaps could have risen to the heights of All-Powerful Critical Thinker Me if he'd just avoided a couple of key fallacies. Instead, DeLanda is the guy who took me to a new forest and decided to go in a specific direction, and I simply wondered why he wasn't more interested in the waterfall and extra caves that I found. And also, he seemed strangely indifferent to those weird green birds that I tried to follow. But we still have that shared interest in the forest, and maybe we can be friends and share stories about it, and invite other people the next time... Which doesn't mean that negative remarks should completely disappear— there will still be authors I dislike a great deal, and in those cases it may be possible to give hyperbolic condemnation, a genre I've not tried to develop yet.

TS: Where does object-oriented philosophy go once it has demonstrated the subterranean life of objects? Isn't this demonstration a conversation stopper? Once you've shown that objects reside in a world all their own, quite distinct from human access, it would seem that we must remain silent about them.

GH: On the contrary! It is the philosophy of human access that remains silent about reality. It thinks we can speak only about what is visible to humans— or even worse, what can be spoken about in language. Such philosophers can still say "we're not idealists, because we respect scientists" (not all of them respect scientists, but the good ones do). And in fact, I believe that science itself is object-oriented, and I tend to be more inspired by contemporary science than by contemporary philosophy. This seems to be true of most of my friends in philosophy as well.

However, I chose to go into philosophy, and I did not do so out of a masochistic wish to be a handmaid of the scientists. As mentioned earlier, there is one major respect in which science does not leave me satisfied... Only metaphysics leaves me completely satisfied, because only metaphysics addresses the fact, first of all, that we have objects of perception that emanate a diversity of qualities without being reducible to them. And furthermore, rocks and chairs themselves are not accessible to me, and they are also not accessible to *other inanimate entities*, because they are not fully expressible in terms of relations. Objects essentially hide, not just from us but from each other as well. Yet those hiding objects also have qualities, since otherwise they would all be alike, as Leibniz lucidly observed in the *Monadology*. And just like the objects of the senses, real objects are not reducible to their qualities, which merely emanate from them in a way that is hard to clarify in an interview. And here we have the fourfold structure that comes from Heidegger, and from McLuhan's underrated media theory... Each object is a resonant interval between four zones of reality whose mechanics must be explained. This is true of atoms, and even true of Popeye— a personage that physics can never illuminate.

Far from a conversation-stopper, objects are the ultimate conversation-*starter*. We are no longer stuck in the ghetto of human access while scientists have all the fun with black holes and plate tectonics. Instead, metaphysics is headed for China Miéville's mythical New Crobuzon with Lovecraft, Lingis, Leibniz, and Latour. Philosophy will no longer be a dull theory of science (as some observers still miserably hope), but a theory of science fiction. And we can do it with an almost crippling intellectual rigor. That is the aspiration of weird realism.

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Earth Aesthesis: Sallis' *Topographies* and the Aesthetics of the Earth

BOBBY GEORGE

The *topos*, or topic, of this elemental composition is, as the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze once said about *Difference and Repetition*[1], 'manifestly in the air'. But, in this particular case, the contours of the future, of philosophy itself, are to be traced in the lines of the Earth. Always taken in conjunction, or, as Derrida claims in *Of Grammatology*[2], always already inscribed from the start, the *graphia*, or writing of the text, is salty and learned, remarkably 'evocative' in its depiction of place. "Writing, then, as topography."[3] The text itself harks back to Homer and an ancient Greek conception of the Earth that is as primordial as it is refined, and yet, it also postures in the direction of an Earth still to come, cautiously and optimistically. "This book is about certain places," informs Sallis and more precisely, *Topographies* is about the current state and orientation, or sense, of philosophy, as such.[4]

Comprised of thirty-two separate chapters, or philosophical vignettes, that aspire to approach place, not in the manner of the 'accelerated distraction of tourism', but rather, in the mode of perennial concentration, Sallis attempts to 'install himself differently', in his destinations.[5] He poses the thesis, not purely as a hypothesis, that a

1 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. xvi
2 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998)
3 John Sallis, *Topographies*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 136
4 Ibid., p. 1
5 Ibid., p. 3

particular location has a certain set of precise questions and problems that are as unique to the place itself as they are ubiquitous to the concept of place, and he sets out to map these inquiries. Or, at least, this is the claim that he pursues, adamantly and passionately. Sallis ponders: "Not all thoughts are alien to places. Not all are such that thinking them requires disregarding the particular place where one happens to be at that moment. Not all thoughts can be thought just as readily in one place as in another. Not all are such that they can be thought – indeed with the same clarity and intensity – anywhere."[6]

Each topic which Sallis inquires into, and this is the main theme of the entire landscape presented, has a different *topos*. The topics addressed are almost as distinct as the places frequented and discussed. Their specific altitudes, climates, temperatures and terrains are all pertinent to the fabulations and stretch to include time, place, history and aesthetics. For instance, Sallis explores: the birth of the term 'philosopher' near Samos and the thalassic surface of the sea; the nature of Heraclitus and his claim that the 'cosmos is fire', in a trip to Alsace, France, at the time of the summer solstice; Kant and the 'riddle of the sublime' in the face of the Grand Canyon; the inception of the eternal return of the same in the lithic mountains of Sils Maria; shelter and domestication in the thick woods of Pennsylvania; and finally, the nature of the 'beyond' in Newfoundland. Thus, Sallis traces these paths, and numerous others, in an attempt to rethink the nature of thought and its relations to the Earth.

From before Thales to after Nietzsche, then, the *graphia* is not only a description of place, but also a part of the rumination process: the line of thinking that escapes stratification. Traditionally, topography is understood as the study of the earth's surface, an examination that offers a detailed classification of space; but here, it is understood as the exploration of a thought, the opening of thought, or, a thought, upon the Earth. Sallis intimates that this is the necessary, and perhaps only, direction that philosophy must take. A new set of coordinates must be enacted, or just the same, constructed, and he offers the determinations needed to do so, immanent and oriented to life.

6 Ibid., p. 70

Historically, there have been a number of different connotations associated with topography, such as the military and mathematical. In this case, the military undertones are understated, but present the real and immediate sense of the fulmination required to embrace the resistance to transcendence and support the terrestrial faith, in a survey, not of ordnance, but of philosophy. Sallis inspires the reader to remain adherent to the principles of the Earth, in all their beautiful, monstrous and parlous forms and entertains the notion of an *ontology of the Earth*.

Sallis imparts one important caveat that the reader must heed: "While this book is thus about places, it is not about place in general, not about the concept of place. For place is not primarily conceptual; whenever one comes to frame a concept of place, one does so always on the basis of place experienced in its intuitive singularity."[7] Therefore, before the composition unfolds, place as a concept is qualified and another conception of place is quietly proffered. This admonition of the concept of place, here at the start, helps to set the tone and pace of the entire meditation, and in particular, it desires to establish a fresh tempo in reference to his destinations.

Often, these destinations are chosen, such as Naxos and Delos. On the islands of his ancestors Sallis breathes the life of nature and feels the rhythms of the sea. "Here," Sallis postulates, "sense exceeds thought."[8] He describes the trip, and his reflections on the location, as such: "The experience began to dawn on us there that evening, the experience of elemental immediacy; and it left us almost silent, as we listened to the gentle waves and looked up at the brilliant nocturnal sky."[9] Sometimes, these destinations are chanced upon, and not destinations at all, such as a conference in Japan. At this site, the time of the seasons and the time the bare elements of nature conjoin (tempestuous time) are considered and discussed in detail. "Time can adhere to a place," states Sallis, and he reflects on the forms and presentations of time, in this supposition, as presented in the dry landscapes of Kyoto.[10]

7 Ibid., p. 3
8 Ibid., p. 117
9 Ibid., p. 118
10 Ibid., p. 43

Each time that he enters another location there is a profound and resilient, if not beautiful, sense of the purposelessness that can be found in the often disparate places, as in a film of Abbas Kiarostami: the camera traipses through the barren terrain. That is, and perhaps this is of the most interest here, as it corresponds to the thesis, each location seems to solicit a distinct, unique response. The Earth replies to questions posed and poses questions itself. For instance, in a discussion of Nietzsche and the birth of the eternal return, Sallis probes into the nature of the 'arrival of a thought', as if in personal correspondence with Zarathustra.

"How is it that thoughts arrive, that they come as if from nowhere and yet arrive precisely as one comes to a certain place? How is it that their arrival is linked to a certain place? Even granted that thoughts do come – that they are not merely produced – is their coming pertinent to what is thought thereby?"[11] And, perhaps more decisively, or at least, poignantly: "Can the significance of thoughts coming at a certain place be rigorously determined? How would thought come to carry out such determination? Or does happening of thought remain always elusive?"[12] Further still, "Nothing is more thoroughly put into question in Nietzsche's thought than origins and the return to origins. The interrogation is radical: it is a question of the very sense of origin, of the sense (direction) of the return to origins, and inseparable form these, a question of the origin of sense."[13] The recondite nature of these questions does not only indicate the broad scope of the discussions but also reflects the heart of the treatment: the contention that thought takes place in a direct relationship with the Earth. It is in this sense that Sallis thinks of aesthetics, understood in terms of its Greek roots, aesthesis: 'making visible'.

Sallis pioneers an entirely different aesthetic. Not a transcendental aesthetic, a la the Kantian tradition, but an aesthetics that could most aptly be termed, *an aesthetics of the Earth*. This aesthetics is predicated on difference and creation, rather than identity and sameness. Pushing Kant to the limits of the critical project, Sallis takes seriously Schelling's enunciation of a 'superior empiricism'. He charts a course in the middle of Deleuze and Derrida: amidst the conception of a 'GeoPhilosophy' that

11 Ibid., p. 71
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., p 72

Deleuze promotes in his last collaboration with Felix Guattari; and, in addition, the messianic notion of an Earth to come that is furthered in the late Derrida. That is, Sallis complicates the notion of the Earth that is nurtured in the Christian and Platonic tradition, the concept of the Earth that starts in the last sentences of Socrates, but at the same time, posits another, more optimistic conception of the Earth. His philosophy of nature, it could be said, is akin to his philosophy of art. As in a Richard Serra piece, his departures are precipitated by intensities, and the same could be said for his entrances. "The way out and the way in are the same," explains Sallis.[14]

In the penultimate chapter, on the shores of St. John's, the 'oldest city in North America', as Sallis reminds us, his companion notes the path 'from the harbor to the open sea', known as the narrow straight, and comments: "Beyond that, the next land you come to is Ireland."[15] As in a typical mode of peregrination, Sallis sets out to explore this statement and open it up further, as in his *Force of Imagination: The Sense of the Elemental*[16]: "I lingered in the imagining, somewhat as one lingers in the contemplation of something beautiful; yet I continued, almost spontaneously, to librate between looking beyond as if to the coast of Ireland and drawing my vision back to the visible scene there across the harbor, just beyond the narrows. In all of this play of imaging there was no need to form an image, no need for a mental picture of the coast of Ireland. The imagining proceeded entirely without any images; it took place entirely within and around the visible spectacle, there beyond the narrows."[17]

The taste of the sea can be read in the cusps of his sentences. One can almost discern Foucault's famous quote in reference to the end of man: a face traced in the sand. In this case, it is not man so much that is of concern. "The Earth is almost all that matters," conjectures Sallis.[18] There is another *Order of Things*, an order, or logic, of the Earth that demands that philosophy, and thought more specifically, must once more

14 Ibid., p. 145
15 Ibid., p. 155
16 John Sallis, *Force of Imagination: The Sense of the* Elemental, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000)
17 *Topographies*, p. 157
18 Ibid., 77

be placed into a direct relationship with the Earth, and in *Topographies*, Sallis has affirmed this motion…

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The Natural History of the Unthinged: Iain Grant's *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling*

JAMES TRAFFORD

> "Naturephilosophy... pursues nature beyond the merely analogical relation established by the third *Critique* between nature and intellection. In more contemporary terms, naturephilosophy, that is, disputes the logico-linguistic or phenomenal determination of nature,"[1]

Philosophies of nature after Schelling is a remarkable and important work, mobilising Schelling's naturephilosophy against those strictures of Kant's critical philosophy that continue to determine and limit philosophical speculation. This is the foundational claim of Iain Grant's book, which is the manifestation of a substantial period of work, and is deserving of great attention beyond the purview of Schellingian studies. Indeed, Grant's thorough and dense argument issues a challenge as broad as it is deep, marking an attempt to formulate a contemporary philosophy of nature, for which Schelling is "a precursor of philosophical solutions... yet to come."[2] Challenging the exegetical consensus, Grant argues for the primacy of Schelling's naturephilosophy, which has been submerged by the hegemonic reading of Schelling as purely concerned with reflection and freedom.[3] Grant's Schelling refuses the transcendental practicism of

1 I. Grant, *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling*, (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 19

2 Ibid., p. 205

3 For example, the naturephilosophie is rather anxiously dismissed in works such as Andrew Bowie's, c.f. A. Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993)

Kant and Fichte, arguing for a one-world physics that radically undermines the elision of nature in the name of freedom. Hence, Grant demonstrates the contemporary requirement for a "non-eliminative idealism"[4] which refuses to think metaphysics in isolation from physics.

In order to extricate philosophy from a malignant Idealism, in which nature is logico-linguistically or phenomenally determined, Grant argues for a maximally extensional approach, where philosophy is nothing other than physics. The excision of nature from the domain of philosophy leaves both Continental and Analytic philosophy in the shadow of Kantian subjectivism.[5] Grant reopens questions that Kant had appeared to have conclusively addressed, in order to provide a radically non-anthropomorphic place for cognition, for which even recent, naturalised epistemologies, such as Paul Churchland's, cannot suffice. Philosophy and thought are immersed within the productive matrices of nature, which is both prior to, and in excess of, both representation and phenomenal experience. History no longer belongs to subjective reflection, but only to the depths of nature itself; "natural history consists in maps of becoming that exceed phenomenal or sensible nature."[6]

Rather than confront contemporary philosophy directly, through, for example, attention to Slavoj Zizek's utilisation of Schelling, Grant suggests that the work of Gilles Deleuze haunts his own, as both the impetus for interest in naturephilosophy, and its contemporary failure. Hence, Deleuze's work emerges throughout, as a way of defining and refining naturephilosophy. Indeed, it is the dichotomy of Alain Badiou's logocentrism and Deleuze's biocentrism that articulates the exacting problematic facing Schelling's philosophy as "caught within the infinitely reciprocating circuit of Fichtean *life*, 'wavering' on the thresholds of *physis* and *ethos*."[7] The two poles within which the philosophy of nature has been caught are the reduction to formalism and the reduction to

4 Grant, (2006), p. viii

5 Lee Braver offers an excellent study of the prevalent anti-realism traced from Kant through both Analytic and Continental philosophy, c.f. L. Braver, *A Thing of this World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007)

6 Grant, (2006), p. 55

7 I. Grant, The "Eternal and Necessary Bond Between Philosophy and Physics", *Angelaki* vol.10,1 (April 2005), 43-59, p. 51

organicism, both of which, according to Grant, result in the stultification of philosophy in so far as it remains within the 'cul-de-sac' of the organism. By this, Grant means that the philosophy of nature is laid open to charges of anthropocentrism to the extent that nature is intellectually determined and subordinated to ethico-practical ends.

In a startling reading of the *Timaeus*, Grant reverses the Nietzschean-Deleuzian attempt to overturn Platonism on the basis of Plato's hylomorphism, which grounds a supposed two-world metaphysics. On the contrary, for Grant, it is Aristotle's somatic materiality that emerges as the stumbling block for any philosophy of nature that seeks to surpass Kant's insurmountable gulf between nature and freedom. The trajectory of Kant-Blumenbach, which unequivocally associates life and death with purpose and mechanism respectively, can be traced to the Aristotelian taxonomy of physics, which deals with nothing other than the body. It is Aristotle, rather than Plato, who necessitates a two-world philosophy, in which the science of being *qua* being is irrevocably disassociated from the natural sciences - whose domain is the body. The science of being *qua* being operates as first philosophy, for which *physis* does not exist. Criticising Plato's Pythagoreanism, Aristotle denies the Idea any part in Physics by reducing matter to the logic of extension. In contrast, Grant's reading of Schelling's Platonism argues that the intelligible world can not be considered to be the substrate of appearances. Rather, there must be a physics of ideation; "not only must the Idea *include the physical universe*, it must do so on condition that this same physical universe be capable of ideation."[8] Consequently, Schelling's problem is not how appearances conform to laws, but how Ideas are expressed in material becomings. The primary principle of Plato's one world philosophy is productivity - the becoming of being, which overturns Parmenidean logic by theorising the "participation of the Ideas in nature by *physics*."[9] Grant's reading not only offers a corrective against current attempts both to 'overturn Platonism' in Deleuze, or to 'return to a Platonic mathesis' in Badiou, it also operates a materialist inversion of Kant's transcendentalism, which implants an organic ground within matter.

8 *Philosophies of Nature*, p. 27
9 Grant, (2006), p. 38

It is the question of the grounds of nature and freedom that Grant takes as primary to naturephilosophy. Against Kant's organicism, Schelling refuses to condone the gulf between organic and inorganic nature that typified late eighteenth century 'teleomechanism'. Grant argues that philosophy has misconstrued Schelling's naturephilosophy as organicism. However, it is the case that organicism remains within the grip of the analogical resemblance of nature and intellection promoted in Kant's third critique. In this sense, organicism is indicative of how "a *phenomenology* of nature turns back from nature itself, through 'life' and towards the consciousness that life vehiculates."[10] The grounds of nature and freedom can thus be articulated in terms of a contemporary choice – Deleuze or Badiou, messy life *or* arid formalisation.[11] Grant argues that it is generative nature itself that becomes the *natural* transcendental (*Scheinprodukt*), and hence, the reciprocal presupposition of nature and freedom is displaced by this natural transcendental; "anything whose conditions cannot be given in nature must simply be impossible."[12] Phenomenal experience and sensible nature are limited crystallisations of productivity, so that, in contrast to Kant's assertion of phenomenal illusion, phenomenality, for Schelling, is a natural production. Thus, Grant expertly deals with the problem of the stasis of both transcendental philosophy and naturephilosophy, as highlighted by Hegel, by grounding transcendental philosophy within nature philosophy. In dynamising the transcendental, Grant is able to reformulate Schelling's naturalisation of ideality from within the fold of physics – the idea is, quite literally, a "phase-space attractor."[13] So, the productivity of intelligence is no more special than the self-organisation of geology - nature 'mountains', nature 'rivers', nature thinks.

10 I. Grant, The "Eternal and Necessary Bond Between Philosophy and Physics", p. 51
11 Grant incisively indicates the primacy of the somatic for Deleuze as the point at which Deleuze's nature departs from science, and grounds nature in life. For example, Deleuze's account of primary synthesis; "perceptual syntheses refer back to organic syntheses.. we are made of contracted water, earth, light and air.. every organism, in its receptive and perceptual elements, but also in its viscera, is a sum of contractions.. At the level of primary sensibility, the lived present constitutes a past and a future in time," G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum, 2004), p93.
12 F. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), p. 186
13 Grant, (2006), p.109

Grant's reclaiming of naturephilosophy is, therefore, supremely radical in its assertion that cognition is no more 'special', than digestion, magnetism, or bacterial symbiosis. Hence, whilst positing the universal dynamics of the World-Soul will surely be a stumbling block for scientific rationalism, Grant indicates that Schelling was extraordinarily prescient with regard to contemporary science itself. For example, the evolutionary discontinuity of Stephen J. Gould, which unbinds evolution from any teleological presupposition, is foreshadowed by Schelling's reading of Carl Kielmeyer. Similarly, Einstein-Minkowski space-time is a clear descendent of the kind of theoretical physics Schelling entertains in his transcendental naturalism.

The key to Grant's exposition of naturephilosophy seems to be in maintaining that "everything thinks,"[14] together with the absolute indifference of nature to the phenomenal. As Schelling has abjured the transcendental distinction between thinking and being, at the same time as promoting the inevitable excess of nature over thought, Grant is given the problem of preserving the autonomy of nature without regionalising matter with respect to ideation. In response to this Grant attempts to develop what he terms a non-eliminative idealism.[15] It is through the excellent notion of the 'unthinged' that Grant develops the solution to this problem, by explicating naturephilosophy as the refusal to return to the Kantian totality of objects.[16] Hence, there is no object *of* the idea; rather it is the 'unthinged' that is the objective *for* the Idea. This formulation again rests upon Grant's rigorously physical reading of Schelling's metaphysics, that it is natural organisation that thinks the freedom of nature through "idea-attractors."[17] Consequently, the sensory dynamics of nature ensure that thought is always determined from the outside, such that experience is extended beyond what is merely phenomenologically accessible. The 'unthinged' allows Grant to posit the autonomy of nature whilst not

14 Grant, (2006), p. 193

15 It is the regionalisation of matter with respect to idealisation that Grant charges Deleuze for maintaining the antithesis of nature and freedom, risking the elision of nature altogether, c.f. Grant, (2006), p. 202

16 That the fixed totality of objects is a contemporary problem in the Analytic tradition is argued by Hilary Putnam in the context of the philosophical realism of Donald Davidson and Saul Kripke; c.f. H. Putnam, Sense, Nonsense, and the Senses: An Inquiry into the Powers of the Human Mind, *The Journal of Philosophy* 91 no.9 (September 1994), pp. 445- 517

17 Grant, (2006), p. 109

simply claiming that everything is objective, which would put him in danger of deflationary regionalism. However, in doing so, it is not clear how the epistemology of Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* is worked out within the overarching naturephilosophy. It is unclear if Grant is able to alleviate what is probably a problem internal to Schelling's own work: that of the primacy of the Absolute Idea in relation to regional thought. That is, whilst Grant will not regionalise ideality, by arguing that thought is but a derivation of the inexhaustible Idea,[18] epistemology becomes secondary to ontology.

Grant's construal of naturalised epistemology is particularly illuminating on this problem. Since nature grounds *all* ideation, it would be impossible to eliminate elements of human psychology on the grounds that they cannot be naturalised, as this would be to drive a wedge within nature itself. Accordingly, Grant resolutely promotes the primacy of Schelling's naturephilosophy; nature is *a priori* to, and in excess of, thought. It is through nature's dynamic self-construction that the physics of ideation is produced; "nature is too large for finite reflective consciousness precisely because it is nature that generates it anew."[19] Therefore, psychology can only be judged in terms of its "physicalist imagination, rather than any missing physical grounds".[20] Grant's construal of the physical structure of ideation removes the formalism of the Kantian conception of thought, but the contingency of thought within the cosmic time scale surely disturbs the naturalist dictum that intelligibility is always already part of nature.[21] Hence, whilst Grant dislodges the autonomy and parochialism of thought from nature, he is at risk of obscuring the conditions of the production of epistemology itself, from within a pre-circumscribed field of naturalised ontology. For example, if the principle of conceptual aptitude is taken to be the naturalist imagination, and the originary conceptual tools of productivity and dynamism are taken to underlie the metaphysics of nature, isn't there a risk of reinstating precisely the Kantian 'first philosophy' that Schelling has sworn to abjure? Thus, it may be that a dialogue between

18 C.f. Grant, (2006), p. 142-3

19 Ibid., p. 162

20 Ibid., p. 197n2

21 On the latter point, Quentin Meillassoux's work is particularly instructive, c.f. Q. Meillassoux, *Après la finitude: Essai sur la nécessité de la contingence*, (Pais: Seuil, 2006)

naturephilosophy and the critical sciences is required to rebalance the relationship of ontology and epistemology, forcing naturephilosophy to constantly review even its most originary conceptual tools.

These issues notwithstanding, Grant's exposition and critique of the contours of post-Kantian philosophy is highly important for any philosophy that wishes to move beyond a somatic practicism that disregards the irreducible dynamic forces that exceed the situated subject and object. Grant's chemical empiricism offers daunting new grounds for a contemporary philosophy of nature, which elides both the hypostatised nature of mechanist science, and the priority of reflection in contemporary philosophy. This is a work which emphasises the need for a speculative (meta)physics extending beyond Kant's anxious prophylactic in order to renew and redefine the relation of reality and intelligence. In this way, philosophy might eventually find itself maximally extensive, able to think the chiasmic relation of nature-culture whose extra-phenomenological reality supersedes anthropic interest.

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Jay Lampert's *Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy of History*

GIOVANNA GIOLI and MATTHEW DENNIS

A new and ambitious study that explores Deleuze and Guattari's relationship to the philosophy of history has recently been published. The investigation of the role played by history in Deleuze's thought is still almost uncharted in English speaking Deleuzian scholarship and this study breaks new ground[1]. As Lampert concedes, his book assumes a level of familiarity with Deleuze's own work and his later work with Guattari and we should be clear that the study does not aim to constitute an introduction but is a partisan attempt to link Deleuze's theory of time (mainly the three syntheses of *Difference and Repetition*) with the scattered references to history and the theory of the historical date that appears in the co-authored work.

Lampert acknowledges that even the title of the study is bound to provoke controversy, but maintains that objections to it can be countered by a careful analysis which shows that Deleuze and Guattari do indeed have a philosophy of history, albeit one that is disguised. While not referring to any specific philosophical tradition, Lampert does offer us five criteria which cover what he believes a philosophy of history should be about. These criteria range from the very general to the extremely particular and readers who are familiar with what is conventionally called 'the philosophy of history' may find them puzzling. Lampert opens with a sound tautology claiming that 'a philosophy of history must distinguish

1 The only forerunner in this field is Luis Ferrero Carracedo's *Claves filosóficas para una teoría de la Historia en Gilles Deleuze* [*Philosophical Keys for a Theory of History in Gilles Deleuze*], (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2000).

events that are historical' from events that are not, then follows this up with the innocuous claim that there are two sorts of non-historical events: "natural occurrences and everyday social occurrences"[2]. There can be little to complain about in this. However, this is followed by a seemingly compelling reference to Kant (relegated to a footnote) which seems to indicate a close parallelism between the Deleuzian and the Kantian project. Lampert notes:-

> "A philosophy of history should also apply Kant's four schematisms of time: time-series, time fullness, time-order and time-scope. For Deleuze and Guattari, these are covered by theories of pure past, events, dates and quasi-causes respectively."[3]

This surprising claim is not developed despite the fact that it is not at all clear that the four schematisms can be successfully mapped onto the concepts that Lampert cites. In fact, as the reference to Kant attempts to provide the premise for Lampert's entire study it is strange that it receives so little attention, particularly as the claim is not at all self-evident. Lampert does give us a provocative and stimulating comparison between Deleuze and Hegel in chapter 5 touching on the problem of destiny, the historical date and repetition, but a sustained comparison with Kant on this issue is simply missing.

Despite this omission Lampert is to be congratulated for raising the question of Deleuze and Guattari's relationship to history. Deleuze's conception of history is important yet ultimately ambiguous and this difficult issue has generally been avoided by the secondary literature. Deleuze was always particularly careful to prevent his project (and other author's projects he considered aligned with his) from falling into a philosophy of history[4]. This is demonstrated in his theory of virtual-actual

2 J. Lampert, *Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy of History*, (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 11, hereafter *DGPH*

3 *DGPH*, p.11

4 It is beyond the scope of this review to list the times that this occurs explicitly but let us provide just a couple of examples: In his *Cours on the third chapter of the Creative Evolution*. Deleuze analyzes the élan vital as process of differentiation. He clearly states: "In the field of History, dialectic philosophers substitute a simple opposition to a differentiation. In *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson eschews to do a philosophy of history, because the movement which passes through history is of the same kind of differentiation" (*Annales Bergsoniennes*, edited by F. Worms, Tome 2, (Paris: PUF, 2002), p. 169) And again, talking about Foucault: "Foucault says that he does "historical studies" but not "an historian's work". He does work in philosophy which, nevertheless, is not a philosophy of history" G. Deleuze, *Foucault*, (London: Continuum, 2006, p43, hereafter *F*.

exchange, developed as an alternative to the teleological, deterministic and genealogical tendencies built into the 'dogmatic image of thought' referred to in *Difference and Repetition*, and associated with an excess of history in philosophy. This is a struggle against the dominant tradition of the West; a tradition which aims to make human history congruent with a divine teleology. Deleuze's conception of historical temporality aims to question any apparent parity between the nature of time and human history in order to prevent history from becoming a form of diachronic anthropology which implicitly substitutes the transcendence of God for the transcendence of Man.

For Deleuze, philosophy is opposed to history because it is 'untimely'. At least ostensibly, Deleuze presents his commitment to the 'untimely' as a conceptual replacement of historical analysis. The 'untimely', as presented in *What is Philosophy?*[5], is a mode of resistance to the inevitable tendency of thought to fall into *doxa* as it undergoes a double incarnation: first becoming common sense, then good sense. Resistance is thought's proper stance and posture: resistance to chaos at one pole and *doxa* at the other[6]. For Deleuze, this is an essential feature of philosophy and one which stops thought slipping towards the disguised anthropology indicated above, a charge which is directed at Kant and Hegel. Lampert does not confer any prominent role to the untimely, and, because of the gravity this concept has for Deleuze, this seems to us to be another omission.

We must be aware of the extent to which Deleuze's commitment to the problem of history is guided by his Nietzschean ambition to liberate thought from an 'excess' of history. Deleuze discusses this in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, as he traces the role played by history in culture and shows that history causes culture to degenerate into a reactive power. Here the conception of history is based on passages from *The Untimely*

5 G. Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?*, (London: Verso, 1994), hereafter *WIP*.

6 *WIP*, p. 145.

Meditations and *The Genealogy of Morals* and becomes linked in the strange succession of subchapters: *Culture considered from the Pre-Historic Point of View*, *Culture Considered from a Post-Historic Point of View* and *Culture Considered from the Historical Point of View.* At the beginning of this sequence Deleuze states that the genealogist must distinguish between two elements in history: that which is "historical, arbitrary, grotesque, stupid and limited" and that which is transhistorical, "the form of the law" which is active.[7]

For Deleuze, the historical event *par excellence* is revolution. This can never be understood from the plane on which history operates, as viewing revolution from the historical perspective inevitably results in its ossification. This is because it is judged solely in terms of its concrete historical actualisation. For history all revolution is necessarily a failure as, only being able to judge it in terms of actual states of affairs, history considers this genuine event as merely another part in the causal-chain[8] However, for Deleuze, revolution cannot be analyzed according to its results but only in terms of its virtual pattern of becoming and the extent it leads to new forms and new possibilities for life.

Deleuze's position on revolution can be better understood by his reawakening of the problem of utopia. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze states:-

> "Utopia is not a good concept, since even while it is opposed to history, it still refers to it and it is inscribed in it as an ideal or a motivation"[9]

For Deleuze, the ordinary concept of utopia is merely a historical incarnation of theological and teleological prejudices. This makes it immediately suspect and associates it with a state of dreaming, of unreality. However, the concept of utopia does still have a great value for

7 G. Deleuze *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, (London: Atholone Press, 1986), p. 138, hereafter *NP*.

8 "[To] say that revolution is itself utopia of immanence is not to say that it is a dream, something that is not realised by betraying itself. On the contrary, it is to posit revolution as a plane of immanence, infinite movement and absolute survey" (*WIP*, p. 100).

9 Ibid., p. 106

Deleuze as it "defines the conjunction of philosophy or of the concept, with the present milieu: political philosophy".[10] For Deleuze, the political charge of the concept of utopia needs to be reinvented. Deleuze refers to some previous attempts in this direction, such as those of Adorno and Ernst Bloch, and suggests a conception of the virtual should be inserted into the political framework as a means of disconnecting the problem of utopia from any form of transcendence. This means trying to develop a relation between thought and history in which history could be actively appropriated by thought and not be channelled via a naïve concept of utopia towards a perfect city or a perfect state.

The theory of Aiônic time and Bergson's conception of the coexistence of the pure past with the present give Deleuze the resources to discover the virtual double of actual states of affairs and to clearly define his ontology as one of becoming. Becoming is not an actual state, neither identifiable with its origin or its result. Thinking in terms of becoming is not simply a redundant metaphor, but is a means to diagnose the forces which affect the present. This is untimely philosophy as it is the movement of thought as it tears itself away from the dogmatic image. In this sense, the concept of the virtual attaches itself to the problem of 'believing in the world' and amplifies Nietzsche's entreaty to be 'true to the earth'. Therefore, Deleuze's utopia has nothing to do with an imagined future state but is the conception of the untimely itself.

However, whether or not we buy Lampert's claim that Deleuze and Guattari do have a philosophy of history (as he defines it) it is to his credit that he seeks to support it by offering a comprehensive analysis of the three syntheses of time (chapters 2 to 4). This is unusual[11], but proves highly fertile and constitutes the book's most successful part. Deleuze maintains the traditional tripartite schema, but his aim is to change the model of time based on protensions and retentions (the Husserlian model and the model generally adopted by French phenomenology) in order to show that subjectivity is not pre-constituted and does not need to be bound by an individual consciousness. Lampert's analysis of the three

10 Ibid., p. 107

11 See K. Faulkner *Deleuze and the Three Syntheses of Time*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), and F. Zourabichvili *Deleuze, une philosophie de l'événement*, (Paris: P.U.F, 1994)

syntheses is impressive but sometimes this clarity comes at the price of failing to identify all the philosophical enemies that the three syntheses are targeted against. The French phenomenological movement is definitely such an enemy that Deleuze explicitly wrestles with in an attempt to rethink the relationship between time and subjectivity. Lampert ignores this in addition to downplaying the importance that the stoic theory of time has both in *Difference and Repetition* and in *The Logic of Sense*.[12]

In the second part (chapters 5 -6) Lampert tries to amalgamate Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the historical date with that of the quasi-cause in order to produce a model for evaluating historical events. Here, the distinction between Aiôn and Chronos is pivotal in understanding Deleuze's account of a causality, which is not grounded in empirical states of affairs but in virtual singularity. For Deleuze, the key question to ask is: 'What happened?'. The historical response to this is a description of the actual content: the states of affairs that took place at this time. This is contrasted with the role of philosophy, which operates by producing a portrait of the event's virtual singularities. Virtual singularities determine the new problems that the event instigates (and those problems it relinquishes), singularities that it creates and destroys and forces that become rearranged. For Deleuze, such analysis is shown by the diagram[13] and not by the timeline.

Lampert devotes Chapters 7, 8 and 9 to the 'why this now' problem and this is the most interesting and original part of the book. Lampert attempts to show how the 'why this now' question plays a major role in the co-authored work and how it is a new incarnation of the question raised by the historian Fernand Braudel about the birth of capitalism: why did it develop when it did in the West and not develop previously in China? Braudel's geohistory is certainly one of the sources of Deleuze

12 The stoic theory of time provides Deleuze with the pivotal distinction between the time of Chronos and Aiôn, a distinction that Deleuze gains from *La théorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoïcisme* by Émile Bréhier and *Le système stoïcien et l'idée de temps* by Victor Goldschmidt, sources clearly referenced in *The Logic of Sense*.

13 It seems significant that the main explication of the diagram occurs in Deleuze's book on Foucault. Here Deleuze argues that Foucault's analysis of historical practices is not an attempt to construct timelines but to construct diagrams.

and Guattari analysis but Lampert uses this slogan as a *fil rouge* to pose the question of "how multi-levelled historicity creates a problem for diagnosing events"[14]. Lampert attempts to articulate a Deleuzian strategy for the evaluation of historical events in terms of a coexistence of different levels of temporality modelled on the Bergson model of a conical temporality. Whilst this is not always entirely convincing Lampert is to be credited for tackling the problem of how an event can be evaluated on Deleuze's own terms.

What is unquestionably refreshing about Lampert's study is his refusal to use a Deleuzian vocabulary to explain Deleuze's own work. Additionally, at a time when English speaking Deleuze literature (for all its merits) is dominated by the 'Deleuze and x' formula, Lampert's formal and at times austere approach shows the resilience of Deleuze's conceptual vocabulary as it faces unfamiliar terrain. Finally, Lampert's account has highlighted one of the most important issues in Deleuze's thought: history. From the beginning of his academic life Deleuze cultivated a close relationship with history both by his construction of an alternative history of philosophy (Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson) and in the importance that temporality gains in his own, and in the later co-authored work. Deleuze constantly utilises the history of philosophy to try and dismiss the postulate that philosophical thought *evolves*. Lampert's study opens up this problematic but struggles to completely answer the questions it raises. However, this interrogation of Deleuze's position on history is stimulating and challenges the naïve interpretation of Deleuze's position as being simply anti-historical.

14 *DGPH*, p. 258.

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- Submissions should be sent to *Pli*, Department of Philosophy, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL, UK.
- They should be printed in double line spacing and be accompanied with a copy on disk in rich text format or word document format. If possible, an e-mail address should be included for any further correspondence.
- Accepted submissions will be printed from the electronic copy supplied. Footnotes will be printed at the bottom of the page. Italics and other typographical features (such as accents and text in Greek) will be printed as they appear in the electronic copy (so do not underline items that will eventually appear in italics, such as titles of books, for example). All submissions should be supplied in and will be printed in Times New Roman font.
- Footnote references should conform to the style of the following examples:

  I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), hereafter *CPR*.
  G. Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), p. 24.
  D. W. Conway, 'Genealogy and Critical Method', in R. Schacht, ed., *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 318-33, esp. p. 320.
  D. Sedley, 'Epicurus, On Nature Book 28', *Cronache Ercolanesi* 3 (1973), 5-83, p. 56.

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