Encounters with the Virtual

The Experience of Art in Gilles Deleuze’s Philosophy
The topic of my thesis is the notion of existence as an encounter, as developed in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995). What this denotes is a critical stance towards a major current in Western philosophical tradition which Deleuze nominates as representational thinking. Such thinking strives to provide a stable ground for identities by appealing to transcendent structures “behind” the apparent reality and explaining the manifest diversity of the given by such notions as essence, idea, God, or totality of the world. In contrast to this, Deleuze states that abstractions such as these do not explain anything, but rather that they need to be explained.

Yet, Deleuze does not appeal merely to the given. He sees that one must posit a genetic element that accounts for experience, and this element must not be “naïvely” traced from the empirical. Deleuze nominates his philosophy as “transcendental empiricism” and he seeks to bring together the approaches of both empiricism and transcendental philosophy. In chapter one I look into the motivations of Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism and analyse it as an encounter between Deleuze’s readings of David Hume and Immanuel Kant. This encounter regards, first of all, the question of subjectivity. Deleuze takes from Hume an orientation towards the specificity of empirical sensibility, while Kant provides Deleuze a basic framework for an account of the emergence of the empirical. The conditions of experience must be situated within the immanence of the world and, accordingly, understood as changing.

What this amounts to is a conception of identity as non-essential process. A pre-given concept of identity does not explain the nature of things, but the concept itself must be explained. From this point of view, the process of individualization must become the central concern. In chapter two I discuss Deleuze’s concept of the affect as the basis of identity and his affiliation with the theories of Gilbert Simondon and Jakob von Uexküll. From this basis develops a morphogenetic theory of individuation-as-process. In analysing such a process of individuation, the modal category of the virtual becomes of great value, being an open, indeterminate “charge” of potentiality.

As the virtual concerns becoming or the continuous process of actualisation, then time, rather than space, will be the privileged field
of consideration. Chapter three is devoted to the discussion of the temporal aspect of the virtual and difference-without-identity. The work of Bergson regarding the nature of time is especially important to Deleuze. As “pure” time is heterogeneous, the essentially temporal process of subjectification results in a conception of the subject as composition: an assemblage of heterogeneous elements. Therefore art and aesthetic experience is valued by Deleuze because they disclose the construct-like nature of subjectivity in the sensations they produce.

Through the domain of the aesthetic the subject is immersed in the network of affectivity that is the material diversity of the world. Chapter four addresses a phenomenon displaying this diversified identity: the *simulacrum*. Both Deleuze and Jean Baudrillard use the concept in order to emphasise an identity that is not grounded in an essence. However, I see a decisive difference between them. Developed on the basis of the simulacrum, a theory of identity as *assemblage* emerges in chapter five. As the problematic of simulacra concerns perhaps foremost the artistic presentation, I shall look into the identity of a work of art as assemblage. To take an example of a concrete artistic practice and to remain within the problematic of the simulacrum, I shall finally address the question of reproduction – particularly in the case recorded music – and its identity regarding the work of art. In conclusion, I propose that by overturning its initial representational schema, *phonographic* music addresses its own medium and turns it into an inscription of difference, exposing the listener to an encounter with the virtual.
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INTRODUCTION

Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) was one of the central thinkers in the upsurge of contemporary French philosophy, beginning from the 1960s onward. Among colleagues such as Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva, he can be characterised as an exponent of poststructuralism, an intellectual movement reacting to then-prevailing structuralist theories in linguistics, psychology and anthropology, as well as to the philosophical tradition of phenomenology. The effect of poststructuralism can be summarised in very general terms as destabilisation of previous theoretical foundations of knowledge: experience in itself for phenomenology, structures which enable experience for structuralism. A general tendency of thinkers labelled as poststructuralist is, in turn, to insist on the impossibility of achieving any kind of “transparent” medium able to procure us a connection to truth or reality. If the structuralist project was to secure knowledge by providing an account of the differential structures behind every phenomenon, poststructuralism earned its “post“ prefix by criticising this security. For instance, instead of observing the systematicism inherent in cultural practices, as a structuralist would do, the poststructuralist would address the deviances from any systematic phenomena. Therein lie the limits of current knowledge and it is this limit as “pure” difference that we must examine. This approach changes the focus from the structure to its limit as a critical site for knowledge. We cannot begin evaluating the world from a pre-given understanding of truth, knowledge, good or rationality, but must instead seek the boundaries of these concepts in order to understand how they are determined. In short, the focus of poststructuralism shifts from structure to difference.

Accordingly, poststructuralist thinkers addressed the genealogical constitution of notions of deviance such as madness or delinquency (Foucault), the internal limits of language (Derrida) or the limits of sensation in experiences of the sublime (Lyotard). Deleuze’s project can be seen as parallel to these. He works within the tradition of philosophy, but from a critical position. Granted, philosophy is in general a critical inquiry, but Deleuze identifies two different orientations for this criticism. The first, major current of philosophy is
concerned with separating the false from the true, in order to unearth a stable foundation for true knowledge and morality. The second, more radical type of criticism addresses the notion of truth itself. It criticises the dominant “image of thought”, that is, challenges the assumption of what it means to think and what constitutes the notion of truth.¹ Deleuze’s own work belongs decidedly to the latter category of critical thought.

As Deleuze’s critical thinking emphasises the limits of pre-given assumptions of rationality and knowledge, it leads to many approaches. Consequently, when producing a study considering the philosophy of Deleuze, one is at once faced with the question “Which Deleuze?”, for there seem to be many. Deleuze himself produced works under many guises: studies on historic philosophical figures, books and articles on works of art and aesthetic questions, collaborative writings with Félix Guattari and Claire Parnet,² journal and newspaper interviews, open letters and proclamations of a political nature, as well as weighty and technical philosophical monographs. This diversity of texts presents a challenge to a scholar working on Deleuze’s thought. Deleuze does not write systematically, in the sense of the author building up a continuous development of arguments from work to work, but instead he tends to vary his approaches depending on the question at hand. This variation includes the historical and contemporary frame of reference, writing style and even the conceptual apparatus and vocabulary. Still, one gets a sense of coherence in the gradual formation of the œuvre. Despite changing concepts and references, some common concerns and systematisation begin to appear for the patient reader. For instance, Véronique Bergen provides a chart of the development of Deleuze’s conceptual apparatus in her L’Ontologie de Gilles Deleuze.³ Deleuze’s studies on history of philosophy, for example, seem to be highly selective and serve a certain purpose. As Deleuze has commented, when writing about somewhat marginalised or forgotten philosophers

² As Deleuze has written extensively both alone and with Guattari, I will therefore distinguish between the respective writings by applying “Deleuze and Guattari” whenever I am referring to text written jointly by both authors. Otherwise, I will use “Deleuze”.
such as Baruch Spinoza or Henri Bergson, he wanted to uncover a secret lineage in philosophy by focusing on those thinkers he considered critiquing rationalism and rejecting transcendence in thought. Likewise, Deleuze’s works on more established philosophers, such as David Hume, Immanuel Kant or Friedrich Nietzsche, highlight those features that are relevant to Deleuze’s own intuition and interests.

By familiarising oneself with Deleuze’s works, one can begin to fathom certain perpetual points of reference or problems. Throughout his whole career Deleuze was striving to produce an immanent ontology capable of addressing processes and events not as static beings but in their constant unfolding as becoming. For this he employed a great number of conceptualisations, applied when necessary and then switched to new ones as the particular questions changed. In addition to discourse on philosophical concepts and figures, Deleuze takes in terminology and theories from wide-ranging fields such as biology, geology, mathematics and physics, as well as work by literary authors, painters and musicians. All this amounts to quite an assortment of concepts. In fact, Deleuze and Foucault describe theory as “toolbox” when talking about their own work situated between theory and praxis. By this they mean the pragmatic side of philosophy: thought must be utilisable, the question in addressing a problem is not so much about explication but rather application. This is a decidedly inclusive, populist statement, and undoubtedly applies more to the “pop-philosophy” Deleuze produced with Guattari than to the complex philosophic argumentation of Difference and Repetition or The Logic of Sense. Still, the statement gives guidelines to a student of Deleuze, as well. The question for anyone doing theory will be “Where to begin?” One productive, Deleuzean answer to that would be: “Begin where you find your own problems”. This amounts to not just repeating the polemic and gestures of Deleuze but rather locating such a problematic where a Deleuzian theoretical framework might be useful.

This is the initial orientation of my study, and, as such, its aim is twofold: application and explication. Firstly, the “final” objective is an

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5 Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, “Intellectuals and Power” in Deleuze, Desert Islands, p. 208.
application of a mainly Deleuzean theoretical frame to a question based on concrete cultural practice: the use of recorded media. In the ultimate chapter of this study my objective is to produce a theoretical apparatus capable of conceptualising the ontological independence of forms of art based on mediated content, such as music, film and video art. To focus the question further, I wish to address the role of sound recordings and their relation to music. Is a recording inevitably a derivative instance of some “higher” level of music? That is, does a recording retain the status of a copy in the dialectic of resemblance and representation, or is there rather a way to approach recordings as products in themselves, without a primary reference to a transcendent level of existence? In a wider context, this question leads me also to address art’s particular significance among other types of production, human and non-human, and thus to introduce considerations about the medium of art and why art matters as art.

Secondly, in order to meet this goal, I will need to fashion a theoretical background and for this end I devote a major part of the study to the explication of Deleuze’s ontology. In chapter one I start with the question of subjectivity in Deleuze. In a way reflecting Deleuze’s own starting point with a book on Hume, I consider Deleuze’s “empiricism” and its central concern of problematising the given. The relation between experience and that which remains transcendental to the given is a central question for Deleuze. As I see it, to approach this problem Deleuze begins his published career by staging an encounter between Hume and Kant as regards the question of subjectivity. Deleuze takes from Hume an orientation towards the specificity of empirical sensibility, but cannot concede that it provides a genetic factor of experience. There remains something transcendental to the given, and Kant provides Deleuze a basic framework for an account of the emergence of the empirical. Yet, the Kantian transcendental conditions of experience are posited as unchanging and law-like. Deleuze, in turn, tries to provide an account of the genesis of experience by appealing to transcendental conditioning that is not transcendent. The conditions of experience must be situated within the immanence of the world and, accordingly, understood as changing.

What this amounts to is a conception of identity as non-essential process. There is no transcendent ground upon which identities can
be founded. A pre-given concept of identity does not explain the nature of things, but the concept itself must be explained. From this point of view, the process of individualisation must become the central concern. In chapter two I discuss Deleuze’s concept of the affect as the basis of identity and his affiliation with the theories of Gilbert Simondon and Jakob von Uexküll. From this basis a morphogenetic theory of individuation-as-process develops. This Deleuzean view has its precursors in the philosophies of Spinoza and Nietzsche, who both delineated the subject as a result of interplay between pre-subjective forces. In analysing such a process of individuation, the modal category of the virtual becomes of great value. Virtual is not equivalent to the possible, as possibility includes always a pre-given form for its realisation. Virtual is, rather, an open “charge” of potentiality, which resides in the relationality of every actual thing and imbues it with potential to individuate further, whether due to inner dynamism or by influence of exterior forces. Therefore, as entities are understood as dynamic processes in their becoming, difference comes before identity as the genetic factor of individuation. Further, the dimension of the virtual in cultural systems such as language is considered in this chapter.

As the virtual concerns becoming or the continuous process of actualisation, then time, rather than space, will be the privileged field of consideration. Chapter three is devoted to the discussion of the temporal aspect of the virtual and difference-without-identity. The work of Bergson regarding the nature of time is especially important to Deleuze. In examining time as qualitative multiplicity, it becomes clear that the way to approach difference as fundamental, and thus not subjected to identity, lies within such a temporality. Time as difference is not an absolute, *a priori* form – as for Kant – but rather the co-existence of entities and relations, out of which is formed not homogeneous clock-time, but heterogeneous multiplicity. Further, I shall describe Deleuze’s notion of the temporal synthesis of subjectification in the light of this notion of time. As “pure” time is heterogeneous, the essentially temporal process of subjectification results in a conception of the subject as composition: an assemblage of heterogeneous elements. Therefore art and aesthetic experience is valued by Deleuze because they disclose the construct-like nature of subjectivity in the sensations they produce. I shall conclude the third
chapter by briefly examining Deleuze’s views on cinema and their connections to the question of the subject in relation to time. The practice of art forms an image of an aesthetic subjectivity whose defining modes are transformation, differentiation and individualization.

Through the domain of the aesthetic the subject is immersed in the network of affectivity that constitutes the material diversity of the world. A process of mutual determination between the subject and its milieu – the world – has become apparent, in which difference rather than identity or unity is the generative principle. Such a thought is anti-representational, and Deleuze seeks to unearth the roots of representational thought in antiquity. He highlights the concept of the simulacrum, found in Plato’s dialogues, as a critical concept that is able to topple the representational edifice. A simulacrum – an image so deformed that it possesses no resemblance to the entity it represents – possesses the critical power to cast the whole Platonic system of Ideas, incarnations, copies and simulacra in question. By presenting a possibility of an entity that does not hold an internal similitude to its essential cause, the Form or the Idea, the simulacrum implies its presence in every phenomenon and thus corrupts the status of an essence as the guarantee of true identity. Simulacra’s “powers of the false” are also deployed by Jean Baudrillard, whose conception of the simulacrum I shall compare to that of Deleuze. Both philosophers present the “modern question”: how to affirm the world in its appearing without descending into nihilism of lost foundations of knowledge and truth? Here Deleuze turns to a reading of Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal return as an idea which affirms the world as-it-is, without a final aim to act as a basis of judgment of things. The becoming of the world is understood as eternal repetition of difference, necessitating the act of judgment as aesthetic in the Kantian sense, without a pre-given concept.

In the final chapter of this study I consider the work of art as possessing an identity of an assemblage, proceeding from the basis of Deleuze. If we accept the proposition that the world is immanent, and that identity is not determined by an entity’s internal resemblance to an essence or a category but by relations that are exterior to the entity, identity must be determined as a movement of development. By emphasising its nature as a construction, the work of art is a site that remains open to the emergence of difference. Art-as-assemblage is
composed of many factors, not alone the work, intention of the artist or feelings of the spectator, but rather its effects emerge as qualitative traits from the operation of the whole assemblage. In fact, I nominate the specific taking place of art as \textit{art-function}, which denotes a qualitative transformation of an assemblage in general. This can occur in a multitude of different formations, as can be seen from the diversity of forms, mediums and practices of contemporary art, as well as art-like assemblages construed outside the established art world. To highlight this diversity, my final point of consideration is the work of art in the medium of reproduction, as mentioned above. Recording technology in music enables the creation of novel assemblages in art and effects a new category, \textit{phonographic music}. Its defining characteristic is the thematisation of a tension between an artwork’s tendency to repeat the same and its potential for the emergence of difference. As recordings are a direct material capture of phenomena of the world, they bypass symbolic mediation and work via affectivity, transmitting intensities which are virtual; that is, they can actualise in many different ways in different circumstances. Certain “meta-sounds” within the phonographic media – distortion, feedback, the scratch and the glitch – are “virtual” sounds in the sense that they are phenomena born out of their own conditions of production, the productive medium and that they denaturalise the representational schema of that implement. Phonographic music thus transforms the originally representational function of its medium into a machine which inscribes difference by distorting its own form and exposes the listener to an encounter with the virtual.

As my study is an attempt at both explicating theoretical issues and applying theory to a practical cultural phenomenon, its methodological challenges reflect this twofold construction. Encouraged by Deleuze and Guattari’s toolbox approach, early reception of Deleuze’s work was characterised on one hand by enthusiastic application of Deleuzean concepts to a wide range of subjects but, on the other hand, by somewhat hastily read and poorly understood utilisation of those concepts. Even if this approach remains very much within the spirit of Deleuze’s exhortations to utilise\textsuperscript{6} I would not wish to repeat the eclecticity of those early

\footnotetext[6]{As Brian Massumi, the translator of Deleuze and Guattari’s \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, suggests, one should use the work like one would play a record: to skip to those parts that “work” for}
applications. The problem of uprooting singular Deleuzean concepts and notions in order to put them into use in other contexts is that one runs the risk of losing the internal dynamic of those very concepts. That is, losing the sense of why a certain concept is needed, the sense of what constitutes the problem that has provoked this particular concept.

Mainly, this awareness of an insufficient understanding of Deleuze’s work is due to a later, more forceful strand in the reception of Deleuze that has been increasingly evident in the past few years. What I mean by this are a number of readings which are able to systematise the central strands of Deleuze’s thought, to situate those within the wider context of contemporary philosophy — whether continental or overall developments — and science, as well as to continue the progress of Deleuzean concepts by introducing them to novel environments, theoretical and practical. Recent work of scholars such as Ronald Bogue, Claire Colebrook, Manuel DeLanda, Elizabeth Grosz and Brian Massumi, to name just a few, has been very helpful. They have been able to proceed from competent and lucid Deleuzean exegesis to an original application of that philosophical machinery and I make use of their achievements wherever applicable. However, my main focus will be in Deleuze’s own work and my approach to commentaries is, accordingly, rather selective — the aim being, as mentioned above, explication and application.

1. Encountering Difference: Deleuze’s “Superior Empiricism”

The present chapter addresses Deleuze’s relation to the history of philosophy and attempts, via an illustration of some of his readings of historical figures in philosophy, to elaborate the motivation behind many of Deleuze’s key concerns. As was discussed in the introduction of this study, one of the central aims of Deleuze is to fashion a kind of “counter-tradition” against the prominent mainstream of Western philosophy, which he feels has privileged identity over difference. Starting from identity means the affirmation of what is always already known and subjugating difference to a merely accidental relation between identities. Deleuze’s orientation is the inverse: he wants to establish the thinking of difference as the ontologically fundamental term. Difference in itself – rather than difference between X and Y – is the generative force that fuels the process of the actualisation of the world into discrete individuals. Deleuze suggests, in effect, a step “beyond” representations of the world into their genetic processes. The actual world is a “solution” to a virtual “problem” and in order to give a sufficient account of the actual, we need to address the problematic structure that produces it.

Because of its critical orientation, Deleuze’s philosophy, as well as its concepts taken out of their context, is often seen in terms of a rupture, a violent break with the tradition and an overcoming of previous values. Contrary to this popular belief that results from the initial wave of reception in Anglo-American academia, it has to be stressed that Deleuze’s work is thoroughly immersed in the Western philosophical tradition. There is an image of Deleuze’s thought as an anarchic uprising that first spread to the English-speaking world through departments of literature, concerned at the time with notions such as Jacques Derrida’s deconstructive philosophy, Michel Foucault’s genealogical project and Jean-François Lyotard’s and Jean Baudrillard’s theories of the postmodern era. These very different thinkers and theories became, in reception, fused together as “the great French philosophy of the Sixties”, as Leonard Lawlor formulates it.\footnote{“The great French philosophy of the Sixties” functions as shorthand for theories generally spoken of as “poststructuralism”, “postmodernism”, or “deconstructionism”. Cf. Leonard Lawlor, 
Thinking Through French Philosophy: The Being of the Question (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 2.}
However, Deleuze’s deep-rooted emplacement within the historical tradition of philosophy has been evident to his compatriots and contemporaries, as, for example, Derrida states that Deleuze was the one of their generation to “do” philosophy most innocently.  

What this means is that Deleuze more often than not works within the tradition of canonical Western philosophy and contributes to its development. This happens through the reformulation of its questions and creation of new philosophical concepts. Even though Deleuze has often been connected with such notions as postmodernism or postphilosophical relativism – and Deleuze himself has certainly expressed his troubled stance regarding the main currents in the history of philosophy – the fact remains that in his body of work there emerges a decidedly metaphysical meditation on the nature of reality. As Deleuze and Guattari claim, “the death of metaphysics or the overcoming of philosophy has never been a problem for us”.  

In fact, French contemporary philosopher Alain Badiou characterises Deleuze as a “classical thinker” in the sense that he is not willing to limit metaphysical speculation to correspond with the boundaries of possible experience – a limit that Immanuel Kant imposed on philosophy.  

Quentin Meillassoux has termed such a post-Kantian philosophy adhering to this limit as “correlationist” thinking. Taking its cue from Kant’s division of the world into the phenomenal and the noumenal, the correlationist point of view focuses on the phenomenal field as incorporating a correlation between thinking and being and, accordingly, denounces any access to being as it is in itself. In short, for the correlationist subjects and objects are irrevocably tied together in thinking, and philosophy can only provide an account of their interrelation. The correlationist thesis is that relations between subjects and objects are reflexive. Stated in Kantian terms, the transcendental subject imposes its form unto the world and narrows the scope of epistemology to cover only an

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account of possible experience. Contrary to this, Deleuze seeks to give account to the real that “pre-exists” experience from the point of view of human consciousness and it is in this sense Badiou can claim that Deleuze is a classical – that is pre-Kantian – thinker.

However, in many ways Deleuze’s thought can be seen as a reaction to, and therefore also as a kind of continuation of Kant’s project of critical philosophy. The critical definition of subjectivity was central to Kant and this is an orientation Deleuze shares. As is well known, Kant has laid out the parameters of our knowledge of reality in his three Critiques, where he subjugates metaphysics under the guidance of epistemology. Kant’s “Copernican revolution” in philosophy placed the human subject as the locus of the inquiry concerning the possibilities of knowledge. Our human faculties present the form in which reality can appear to us as phenomena, whereas the objective reality, the noumenal Real that is independent of human senses, is forever unattainable. Therefore, for Kant, the primary task of philosophy is to examine our own means to access reality. This denotes focusing the philosophical inquiry on experience itself.

**DELEUZE’S ENCOUNTERS WITH KANT**

As Deleuze defines his philosophy as empiricism – or to be more exact, transcendental empiricism, of which more in the later sections in this chapter – there seems to be no initial problem in returning to experience as the starting point of any philosophical endeavour. Yet, Deleuze’s attitude towards Kant is decidedly critical: he later characterised his 1963 work on Kant, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*, as “a book about an enemy” whose machinations he sought to expose.\(^\text{12}\)

Even though Deleuze gave a thorough lecture course on Kant at Vincennes University in 1978 where he praised Kant for having set in motion the “tremendous event” of a purely immanent critique of reason which instigated a huge paradigm shift in philosophy – as he states, “we are all Kantians” – he still considers that Kant has failed to fulfil the promise of this immanent critique.\(^\text{13}\)

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\(^\text{12}\) Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p. 6.

\(^\text{13}\) Transcriptions of Deleuze’s lectures at Vincennes are available online. These can be accessed at [http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/sommaire.html](http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/sommaire.html) (last accessed 20.5.2010) and most of the texts appear in translations to several languages. In what follows, I shall refer to the English translations of the lectures by the topic of the course and date of the given
The potential of Kant’s philosophy lies in its problematization of the given. For Kant, the diversity manifest in the sensible must be given an account. That is, an organising principle for the diverse must be established. In order to achieve this, one must postulate a transcendental level of the mind’s faculties, bestowing form and order to our experience. The given is then understood as recognition, for cognition is a harmonious functioning of different faculties in response to different representations of a given entity. In the simplest terms, it is this model of thought as recognition that lies at the core of Deleuze’s dissatisfaction with Kant. Recognition only affirms what already is; it conforms to a pre-given “image of thought”, a conception of what it means to think. According to Deleuze this model is present in the majority of thinkers in classical Western philosophy: the image of thought is present whenever we “already” know what the objective of thinking is and what the object proper to thought is. An image of thought follows the form “Everybody knows…” and makes thinking an act of recognition rather than discovery of novelty in the world. This kind of foundation for philosophy makes thought incapable of truly critical endeavour, that of establishing new values.¹⁴

Even though Kant fashions his philosophical apparatus as an all-encompassing critique, Deleuze’s claim is that Kant, ultimately, ends up tracing the transcendental conditions of experience from the empirical – from what we already know – and therefore establishes a limit to thinking in accordance with the model of recognition. As Deleuze states,

of all philosophers, Kant is the one who discovers the prodigious domain of the transcendental. He is the analogue of a great explorer – not of another world, but of the upper or lower reaches of this one. However, what does he do? … [In] the Critique of Pure Reason he describes in detail three syntheses which measure the respective contributions of the thinking faculties, all culminating in the third, that of recognition, which is expressed in the form of the unspecified object as correlate of the ‘I think’ to which all the

lecture, using the pagination of the pdf-format documents in which the lectures are available. For example: Deleuze, Kant 14.03.1978, p. 1.
faculties are related. It is clear that, in this manner, Kant traces the so-called transcendental structures from the empirical acts of a psychological consciousness: the transcendental synthesis of apprehension is directly induced from an empirical apprehension, and so on.¹⁵

Yet, Kant’s critical model of philosophy cannot be simply put aside, and it is evident in Deleuze’s own writings that there are many parallels between him and Kant. Deleuze formulates his own theory of the transcendental conditions of thought, most consistently in his magnum opus of 1968, *Difference and Repetition*, drawing heavily from the Kantian notion of the faculties and their co-operation.¹⁶ There he presents a conception of the initial discordant relation between the faculties, derived from Kant’s concept of the sublime, which frees thought from the classical model of recognition. Thought is not born out of familiarity but from the encounters with the unknown. That is philosophy’s empiricist side. Still, what is given in experience is, indeed, conditioned by our mental faculties. Thus, an analysis concerning the transcendental conditions of experience or knowledge is necessary. However, it is important to avoid formulating the transcendental conditions as “complete”, limiting the scope of thought to that which is already known. Deleuze sometimes terms his own philosophy as “superior empiricism” to denote his stance of not defining beforehand the borders of the realm of what thinking can determine. Deleuze defines the object of “superior empiricism” as the “intense world of differences in which we find the reason behind qualities and the being of the sensible”. Deleuze thus strives to think difference as difference, “before” it is subsumed under the representation of difference from something.¹⁷

**Encounter between Kant and Hume**

In order to bring together the two frontiers that philosophy faces, the empirical and the transcendental, Deleuze stages a kind of encounter between the empiricism of David Hume and the rationalism of Kant in his writings on the history of philosophy. What this encounter

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¹⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 135.
¹⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 57.
attempts to delineate are the strengths and limitations of each approach and the possibilities of developing a solution to combine features from both stances in a new kind of fusion Deleuze terms as “transcendental empiricism”. In short, Deleuze takes from Hume the orientation towards the given or sensibility, but does not propose that they provide the fundamental ground of experience. There must be a Kantian transcendental account for the emergence of the empirical. Yet, the transcendental conditions cannot be transcendent, unchanging and “outside” or “beyond” the immanence of the world. Transcendental empiricism must provide an account of the genesis of both experience and the conditions of experience.

It is worth quoting Deleuze at length in *Difference and Repetition*, where he defines the task of superior or transcendental empiricism:

> It is strange that [transcendental] aesthetics (as the science of the sensible) could be founded on what can be represented. True, the inverse [empiricist] procedure is not much better, consisting of the attempt to withdraw the pure sensible from representation and to determine it as that which remains once representation is removed (a contradictory flux, for example, or a rhapsody of sensations). Empiricism truly becomes transcendental, and aesthetics an apodictic discipline, only when we apprehend directly in the sensible that which can only be sensed, the very being of the sensible: difference, potential difference and difference in intensity as the reason behind qualitative diversity. … The intense world of differences, in which we find the reason behind qualities and the being of the sensible, is precisely the object of a superior empiricism.\(^{18}\)

It is apparent that Deleuze is in the first place interested in providing a description of the genetic conditions of experience, yet without binding that genesis either in the form of an unchanging transcendental subjectivity or onto the foundation of unmediated experience. In what follows in this chapter, I shall examine more closely Deleuze’s reading of Hume and Kant, their relationship and influence in order to provide a basic conception of Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism.

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1.1 Hume and the Problem of the Given

As Deleuze’s own project in general tends to undermine the privileged position traditional philosophy has given to identity – subsuming the different under the pre-existing Same, rather than considering the Same as requiring explanation in itself – and seeks to formulate thinking which could approach the understanding of processes or becoming instead of static being, he places empiricism before rationalism. This tendency can be observed in his philosophical corpus, as well: Deleuze starts his career by publishing a book on the British empiricist David Hume, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, in 1953. In the intellectual climate of his time, dominated by readings of “the three H’s”, Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger, this was at least slightly controversial.

The relationship between Hume and Kant is important to Deleuze, as can be seen in his own formulation of his philosophy as transcendental empiricism, which combines the Humean and Kantian approaches, at least in name, and it warrants closer scrutiny. Stated in general terms, Deleuze seeks to position himself somewhere between the empiricism of Hume and the transcendental subjectivity of Kant. This is to say that Deleuze indeed seeks a way to approach the questions of subjectivity, experience and knowledge, but without taking a last recourse in transcendentality of the mind. There is no transcendent world of “higher” reality, which would pre-form our experiential reality. But, crucially, there is no “direct” experience, either. Every phenomenon appearing to us is a product of various syntheses. There is a hidden genetic component in the phenomenal and it is the task of philosophy to address this genesis. It is from this point of departure that we may approach some of the central questions and problems animating Deleuze’s philosophy. These include some very traditional problems of epistemology and methodology in philosophy: From where should one start one’s inquiry in philosophy? What is the correlation between thinking and the world? Can we even have access to the reality of the world or are we inevitably bound within our own representations of it? How is one able to ascertain the validity of one’s conclusions? Deleuze’s answers to these questions are formulated in terms of his empiricism.
DELEUZE’S EMPIRICISM

Reflecting on his work as a philosopher, Deleuze states: “I have always felt that I am an empiricist, that is, a pluralist”. What this amounts to is, for him, definable by two characteristics. Firstly, “the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained”. Secondly, “the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced”. This formulation seems to place Deleuze squarely in opposition to rationalist philosophies such as those of Kant or Spinoza and Gottfried Leibniz – yet they are major points of reference throughout Deleuze’s work. A philosopher of a rationalist bent would approach the experiential world, the concrete given, as a collection of phenomena that must be explained. For the rationalist, the concrete instances of the world then embody a “higher” order of principles, which Deleuze identifies as appearing under such nominations as God and the Subject, among others.

Empiricism reverses this point of view. An empiricist strives to approach the given as diversity without reducing it to the unity of transcendental laws. Whereas the rationalist will postulate a universal category, such as knowledge, to account for the appearance of the empirical, the empiricist derives such categories from the flux of experience itself. Accordingly, empiricism is commonly defined as a theory which states that the origin of all of our knowledge is sense experience. The mind is a blank slate before we gather experience of the world and, accordingly, increase our knowledge of it. To be sure, this is only a crude definition, but it holds true regarding a very general understanding of empiricism. Any knowledge that we can gain is due to our senses, and is thus a posteriori in relation to experience.

However, as Deleuze states, the “transcendental” empiricism he advocates cannot suffice with simple appeals to lived experience.

20 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, p. 58.
22 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, p. xx.
If we remain within the sensible, we also remain within the boundaries of common sense, what is “already” known to us, and we will thus bracket out any true novelty in the world. Any “new” knowledge we might attain would merely be an unfolding of an always already pre-determined possibility that takes place as a novel combination of experiential instances. No matter how unforeseeable, those combinations would be, in principle, pre-ordained. As stated before, Deleuze formulated two characteristics for empiricism: not only anti-transcendental avoidance of abstractions, but also the impetus to locate the conditions for the production of something new. These two aspects intertwine in the problematic of subjectivity, which Deleuze highlights as central for Hume. In the following I shall consider this in more detail.

**The Problem of the Given: Empiricism and Subjectivity**

In his foreword to the English language edition of *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Deleuze singles out the key concepts Hume has introduced in his philosophy. These are belief, association and relations. By belief, or assent, Hume denotes the conjoining of two or more separate impressions and ideas: “To believe is in this case to feel an immediate impression of the senses, or a repetition of that impression in the memory.” Sense and memory are thus interlinked in producing a belief in the continuity of the world. In discussing the notion of belief Deleuze refers to Hume’s epistemological anti-transcendentalism: if we posit belief, which is based on probabilities deducted from occurrences in experience, instead of knowledge as the guidance for our thinking, we accordingly supplant the category of error by illusion. On the basis of our experience we may have legitimate beliefs or we may fall under illusions or illegitimate beliefs. For instance, we may have very legitimate reasons to maintain the belief that the sun comes up the next morning, once again, as it has been doing during our lifetime. What legitimises the belief of sunrise to come, as well as other beliefs, is the evidence of associations. As Hume’s well-known example of causality goes, we “know” that a billiard ball moves after

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being hit by another ball, but this knowledge is rather a legitimate belief in the occurrence than the truth of the matter. We have no way to ascertain that the billiard ball will respond in a similar manner every time we hit it with another ball. There may come a day when the ball fails to move. Causation is one of the three “principles of connexion” or association Hume mentions, the other two being contiguity and resemblance. Causation is the strongest of these, as it enables us to go beyond the evidence of the immediate perception and fathom certain regularities in the word.26

Without associations, according to Hume, we would be presented with sense impressions merely as singular, unconnected atoms, and would thus be unable to bind them together to make a larger whole and accumulate experience. To account for the coherence of our perception and experience, there must be some kind of organising principle of impressions and Hume attributes that to the associations as our human “nature”. As Deleuze mentions, Hume’s theory of associationism is novel in the way it makes thinking a practical matter and brings together natural and cultural formations, as laid out on the same level of conventions. This exteriorises the associations from the internal property of the human mind into a wider inter-dependent network of nature and culture.27 Reason is thus dethroned from its primal position as the guarantee of truth. It is rather so that cognition or reason results from processes which originate outside of the mind. “[T]he mind is not reason; reason is an affection of the mind [that is, pre-rational sensibility]. In this sense, reason will be called instinct, habit, or nature”.28

For Deleuze the third notable invention of Hume is his theory of relations. What, then, is a relation? Deleuze defines Hume’s idea of relations as that which “allows a passage from a given impression or idea to the idea of something not presently given”.29 Further, what is of especial interest to Deleuze is Hume’s positing of the exteriority of relations. This means that an entity is never fully defined by its circumstances – that is the set of relations it is partial to – and is always displaceable to another set of relations. This is to say that a being is not just a passive product of its environment, as the most

26 Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, p. 11.
27 Deleuze, Empiricism and Subjectivity, pp. 111–112.
28 Deleuze, Empiricism and Subjectivity, p. 30.
29 Deleuze, “Hume” in Desert Islands, p. 164.
stringent schools of Hegelianism or structuralism would argue. But neither is a being an atomistic unit able to subsist in isolationistic solipsism, accountable for the whole of its being. To put it otherwise, in order to understand a certain situation, a “state of affairs”, as Deleuze often phrases it, we must not look for the intrinsic meanings of beings themselves (atomism), or the internal workings of the structures producing the beings (structuralism). Both of these perspectives would correspond to transcendent unities, whether atomistic or structural. As Deleuze considers Hume, along himself, as an anti-transcendentalist, we should approach the question of relation from the perspective of immanence and fathom the world as a “plane” of relations that are not internal to their terms.

As the central concepts of Hume, in Deleuze’s interpretation, concern the question of human nature, it follows that Hume’s empiricism can be seen as working primarily on the problematic of subjectivity. At the heart of the matter is the question of the subject’s constitution in relation to the given. Whereas transcendentalism would start from the subject and ask how it “can give itself the given”, empiricism asks how “a subject can be constituted inside the given”.30 It is true that “naïve” empiricist appeal to nothing but immediate sense data does not get us very far, as it has a tendency to lead to nominalism which cannot explain the connections between particulars.31 We must still account for the manifest continuity of experience and thus presume some kind of organisational process taking place within the formation of experience. This is essentially the starting point of Kant’s critical philosophy.

Yet, in Deleuze’s view, Kant errs on the side of the transcendental by positing the categories as intrinsic to the subject.32 Thus it seems to me that Deleuze beginning with a treatise on Hume acts as a curiously “retro-active” critique on Kant, reversing the chronological order both in the Hume–Kant lineage, as well as in Deleuze’s own œuvre, where he follows the book on Hume by a reading on Kant ten years later in Kant’s Critical Philosophy. By doing this, Deleuze turns Hume into a critic of Kant, in opposition of the “factual” or chronological succession of the two thinkers.

30 Deleuze, Empiricism and Subjectivity, p. 8.
32 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, p. xx.
As mentioned, the central problem of the Hume–Kant encounter is the relationship between the experiencing self and experience. Must not the self be transcendental, as Kant supposes? What else would fuse the singular instances of experience into a unity that has the appearance of continuity? Kant’s criticism of Hume boils down to the question of the operation of the subject. There must be some kind of transcendental procedure in order to make experience possible at all. That is, if the sense data were understood as atomistic instances appearing in the chaotic flux of experience, any kind of coherence would be impossible. Kant’s answer to this is the positing of transcendental categories of knowledge: “Therefore, although the matter of all appearance is given to us only a posteriori, the form of all appearance must altogether lie ready for the sensations a priori in the mind”.

This is as far as Deleuze’s reading of Hume agrees with Kant: “According to Hume, and also Kant, the principles of knowledge are not derived from experience”. They both agree that something transcends the “raw” sense data of impressions. Despite this common ground between Hume and Kant, there is a crucial difference in Hume’s thinking of the formation of knowledge. For Hume, the unifying organising processes of experience and knowledge are not a priori or transcendental, but natural. As we have seen, Hume’s category of association is a principle of nature which operates by establishing a relation between two things. From the repetition of these associations we acquire habits: the mind is merely a system of associations forming tendencies. Accordingly, Deleuze states: “We start with atomic parts, but these atomic parts have transitions, passages, ‘tendencies,’ which circulate from one to another. These tendencies give rise to habits. Isn’t this the answer to the question ‘what are we?’ We are habits, nothing but habits – the habit of saying ‘I.’ Perhaps, there is no more striking answer to the problem of the Self”. This aspect of Deleuze’s reading of Hume can be viewed as one of the central tenets of Deleuze’s later thinking. The Humean–Deleuzean habitual subject has no “pre-formation” in the sense of a

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34 Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. 111.
35 Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. 30. See also the analysis of habit as contraction in *Difference and Repetition*, p. 73.
pre-existing identity. Instead, the subject exists in a constant state of mutation as its generative process acquires and discards habits. Individuation exists in the relations forming an individual.  

Therefore, knowledge is not innate to the subject, as it is for Kant, but rather takes place alongside the formation of subjectivity itself. This corresponds with Hume’s insistence on the externality of relations to their terms. This means that no relation between things is necessary or governed by the essence of things or any kind of transcendental law. Rather, every situation – a set of relations – is localised and historicised. What remain universal or constant in the human mind are not ideas or concepts, but rather the ways of proceeding from one particular idea to another – what is constant is, namely, human nature. As Deleuze sees it, this effects Hume’s destruction of Kantian “limit-ideas” (Grenzbegriffe): the Self, the World and God. None of these ideas encloses and explains the whole of being any longer, and they are in turn inserted among the multitude of ideas produced by human nature.

Commenting on the problem of relations and associations Deleuze admits that at first glance we seem to encounter a circular proposition. For what good is in “explaining relations by principles of human nature, principles of association that appear to be just another name to designate such relations?” If the associations are essentially built upon relations, do they really explain anything about relations themselves? Here we must look into the pragmatism of relations, the functioning of relations and the practical conditions of this functioning.

**THE PRAGMATISM OF RELATIONS**

Causality is Hume’s principal case of associationism. It is the relation that allows for the passage beyond the given. With the relation of cause we are not only able to move from a given term to another that is not immediately being given, but also to move from something

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36 A further reference can be made to Gilbert Simondon’s theory of individuation, which is very influential in Deleuze’s thought. Simondon and the process of individuation will be addressed in chapter two of the present work.

37 For Kant limit-ideas or limit-concepts specify what our knowledge cannot reach: Grenzbegriffe are not objects of possible knowledge.

38 Deleuze, “Hume” in Desert Islands, p. 164.

39 Deleuze, “Hume” in Desert Islands, p. 164.
given to what has not previously been given, or even to something that cannot be given in experience. This is where Hume’s third key concept, belief, as singled out by Deleuze, comes into question. Deleuze gives examples of a few types of belief: given enough evidence in books, I can believe that a certain historical character has lived; given enough observations of the recurrence of a certain phenomenon, I can believe that it will take place again, given similar circumstances – these both are beliefs that we are able to ground in experiential evidence. But when we consider such formulations as “always”, “tomorrow”, “necessarily”, or “never”, we refer to something that is in itself unable to be given in immediate experience. In a certain sense, tomorrow never comes to us: we are able to experience only the present moment of today.\(^{40}\)

By invoking tomorrow, we take a leap from what is given. Deleuze suggests: “In other words, causality is a relation according to which I go beyond what given. I say more than what is given or able to be given”. This “saying more” amounts to belief: “I infer and I believe, I await, I expect”. There, in expectation, is a divisive leap from a priori knowledge to knowledge based on and principled by belief. Whereas in our understanding we can retain a distinction between two separate but co-occurring cases, in our imagination these two occurrences become fused together. “I expect”: the fusion of these occurrences in imagination constitutes habit. Understanding, in turn, accumulates experience based on observed cases and is able to calculate the probability occurrences in relation and the plausibility of belief. Understanding and belief thus work in combination, forming and reinforcing expectations that have proved to be correct and correcting those beliefs that display the evidence of falsehood.\(^{41}\) What comes up as noteworthy here is that the collaborative functioning of understanding and belief is a processual affair of practice wherein the functions constantly influence and adjust each other.

Thought is, then, situated in the midst of things, provoked and re-adjusted by the occurrences of the world as manifested in our experience. Inherent in this idea is the conclusion that completely naturalises thought: Nature thinking itself. Nature is immanent, thus

\(^{40}\) Deleuze, “Hume” in Desert Islands, p. 164.

\(^{41}\) Deleuze, “Hume” in Desert Islands, p. 164.
more like Spinoza’s *Natura naturans* than Hegel’s Absolute.\(^{42}\) Since thought is borne along and amidst the relations of the world, it does not produce the image of man. That is, thinking has not a natural, innate affinity to truth, but rather proceeds in leaps and bounds in conjunction with our experience. This is an epistemological challenge to Hume, as well as Deleuze. Is there any alternative to the total relativism this would imply? Granted, Deleuze describes how for Hume the mind, when left to its own functioning, produces “a delirium” of dream-images, as the mind jumps haphazardly from idea to idea.\(^{43}\) Here the principles of association become a battleground between the irrational production of fictions of imagination and the well-grounded beliefs of understanding, each “side” using the principles of human nature to lend their production the appearance of surety to pass off as real.

This production of images based on the principles of association, whether legitimate beliefs or flights of fantasy, is the process by which we escape the immediate given. It is not only on the basis of tried and true beliefs and predictions that we go beyond our experience in inferring and expecting. Rather, it appears that imagination uses the same machinery of association to produce fictional accounts of causation, correspondence and legitimacy. Deleuze uses the example of a liar beginning to believe his own lies by way of simple repetition of utterances which simulates the repetition of actually observed cases.\(^{44}\) Thus, there is a rivalry and confusion between understanding and imagination, and, accordingly, between science, education, superstition and poetry. How are we to rely on nature in this confusion, since the very same nature provides us the counter-nature of our delusions?

It is because of this mixture of more or less correct ideas that Hume renounces the traditional concept of error and replaces it with illusion or delirium. As Deleuze emphasises, illusions are not false but rather “illegitimate beliefs, illegitimate operations of the faculties, and illegitimate functionings of relations … We’re not threatened by error.


\(^{43}\) Deleuze, “Hume” in *Desert Islands*, p. 165.

\(^{44}\) Deleuze, “Hume” in *Desert Islands*, p. 165.
It’s much worse: we’re swimming in delirium”.\textsuperscript{45} Because of the self-adjusting interplay between relations, the associative principles and beliefs, both legitimate and illegitimate, we end up with the situation where illusion insinuates itself to human nature. Some of our principles of association are based on prior illusions, “tainted” by this and thus impossible to distinguish from legitimate beliefs. What is more, the system of legitimate beliefs becomes dependent on these illegitimate beliefs and roots fiction deeply inside the workings of our subjectivity. We are fabricating creatures, weaving our experience and habits into a mixture of imagination and understanding. This means epistemological immanence: the conditions of experience are not “wider” than the conditioned and do not reside on any “higher” level of reality.

What, then, is the outcome of this? How can we escape total scepticism if we accept the immanent and “fictional” nature of our categories of knowledge or conditions of experience? This is the question Levi R. Bryant addresses when analysing Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism. Beginning with the diversity of given that is not conditioned by transcendental principles, we will ultimately face the problem of radical nominalism where every phenomenon provides its own explanation as singular self-identity. That is, the conditions would be as nominal as the “things” they condition and any experience, let alone knowledge, would be the product of random differences.\textsuperscript{46}

The true challenge for someone beginning philosophical inquiry from an empiricist point of view is, then, to arrive at differences that matter. Even the most nominalistic empiricist must posit some primitive level of self-identity. As Bryant states, even starting from the assumption that there are sensations makes a claim about “the being of being”.\textsuperscript{47} The given is problematic: there is no escape from metaphysics. This is why Kant focuses his critical inquiry on the question of subjectivity and why Deleuze portrays the problem of the subject as Hume’s central concern, too. From Hume we learn, in contrast to Kant, that the categories of knowledge which condition the subject are pragmatic or conventional rather than transcendental.

\textsuperscript{45} Deleuze, “Hume” in \textit{Desert Islands}, p. 165.
\textsuperscript{47} Bryant, \textit{Difference and Givenness}, pp. 24.
principles. This leads to the conclusion that thought is situated within the activity of the world. Thinking is negotiation and experimentation, making or producing sense.

1.2 Kant and the conditions of experience

For Deleuze, a return to Kant is necessary. Hume will get us only so far. As mentioned earlier, Deleuze identifies Kant’s importance in the “tremendous event” of transcendental critique. As Deleuze makes evident in his lecture course on Kant in 1978 at Vincennes University, for him the work of Kant means a shift away from classical philosophy to modern thought. It is clear that in this sense Deleuze considers himself “post-Kantian” – and, indeed, Vincent Descombes characterises Deleuze as such in his work Modern French Philosophy. Descombes formulates three general areas of agreement between Deleuze and Kant. The first point in common is a “post-classical” conviction of the necessity to abandon a transcendent grounding for thought. Classical transcendent entities, such as the soul, the world, or God, do not provide the basis of thought, for no number of instances among the manifold of experience can function as a guarantee for the necessary unity in postulating such a totality. As Descombes states, “every philosophy, in its own way, posits the precedence of the One over the Many. Rare are the philosophies that dispense attributes in an anarchic fashion (in the absence of any hypothetical arche’). Descombes considers Deleuze as belonging to the latter anarchic – or nomadic – category: philosophy is no longer a matter of distributing the sum of being among entities, but rather of examining and describing the way things are dispersed over the expanse of being, like a nomad tribe spreading itself over a territory without dividing it among individuals. As Descombes says, in nomadic philosophy no “supreme principle, no formal basis, no central instance governs this ’distribution of essence’”.

From this follows a second agreement between Kant and Deleuze concerning the active nature of thought. Thinking is determination rather than representation. In classical philosophy the

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truth of thought is based on thinking’s ability to take on and evaluate the “true” nature of things. Thus, thinking re-presents, or makes explicit, the implicit order of the world. For Kant, however, it is thought that provides the “form” of our experience and the nature of things.49

Deleuze’s and Kant’s third and last point of sympathy, as traced by Descombes, is the refocusing of the problem of difference. Whereas, in general, one would approach difference as a relation between two things – between two identities or two concepts – for Kant and Deleuze the real difference is the difference between conceptual and non-conceptual fields. Thus, the real difference exists between a concept and an intuition, the intelligible and the sensible, the logical and the aesthetic.50 Despite reading Hume as a kind of preemptive critic of Kant, and later characterising Kant’s work as that of an enemy thinker, Deleuze still needs to come back to the great philosopher of Königsberg. “We are returning to Kant”, Deleuze starts his lecture course in 1978,51 and it is worth the effort to briefly trace the reasons for this return and to outline some of the topics raised during the course.

THE KANTIAN FORM OF EXPERIENCE
Deleuze locates the Kantian breaking away from classical thought in Kant’s establishment of the categories in the place of mere predicates. Categories concern the universality and necessity of thought, the a priori conditions of thinking. A priori is, according to Kant and Deleuze, something that is independent of experience. That is to say that it cannot be given in experience. What is not dependent on or given in experience? The universal and the necessary. This is because experience concerns the particular and the contingent. As Deleuze notes, this definition of the non-experiential is well-established in the history of philosophy. Whenever we invoke the notions of universality or necessity – certain uses of the future tense, the expressions

49 Descombes, Modern French Philosophy, p. 155.
51 Deleuze, Kant 14.03.1987, pp. 1–2, trans. Melissa McMahon.
“always,” or “necessarily” – we call upon something that cannot be contained within experience.52

As we have seen, the notions of universality and necessity are the problems addressed by Hume in his concepts of association and belief. How can we provide the grounding for something like the “law” of causality? When I do A, it necessarily follows that B. How is it possible to state such a proposition? There is no access to the “whole” of experience from which we could deduce universality. In the specificity of our phenomenological point of view the indefiniteness of experience is a given, there is no totality of the world to be accessed. Thus, if there is something that can be thought of as a priori, it must be defined both as residing outside experience and as what is universal and necessary.

Here Deleuze raises a question: “How can this universal and necessary be defined?”53 The universal must in any case be encountered in particulars and that which is independent of experience must be applied to experience, and only to it. Deleuze gives the example of boiling water. We know that given certain standard conditions on the surface of the Earth, water always boils at the temperature of 100 degrees Celsius. Yet, we do not know this “always” through experience. The fact that we do not have experience of this necessity does not prevent us from applying “always” to experiential particulars such as water, the event of boiling and the condition of 100 degrees Celsius. It follows that a priori, although independent of experience, is nevertheless applied to objects of experience. The universals and necessaries that are said of objects of experience are in Kantian terminology called categories. Deleuze defines a category as a “universal predicate” or “universal attribute”.54 This is to say that category is attributed to or predicated of any object.

As an example, we can take the statement “the rose is red” and quickly conclude that there is a relation between two concepts, the rose and red. Yet, there is no universality to be found there. It is evident that not all objects are roses, and that not all roses are red. Likewise, not all reds are the colour of roses. Here we are dealing with a particular, contingent, a posteriori experience which concerns a red

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52 Deleuze, Kant 14.03.1987, pp. 1–2.
53 Deleuze, Kant 14.03.1987, p. 2.
54 Deleuze, Kant 14.03.1987, p. 2.
rose. We have two *a posteriori* concepts, the rose and red. These define two sets of objects or properties which overlap in the statement identifying this particular rose as red. Then again, if we state that “this rose has a cause”, we find ourselves immediately outside the sphere of sets of objects. Deleuze states that to “have a cause is a universal predicate which is applied to all objects of possible experience”. Everything that appears before me will possess this predicate and everything that could possibly appear would possess the same predicate. The predicate of cause is of entirely another type than the predicate of red: it applies to every possible object. Therefore the predicate of cause does not define any set of objects “because it is strictly coextensive with the totality of possible experience”.  

Here we have Kant invoking the concept of possible experience and, as Deleuze notes, it is only through universal predicates or categories that the notion of the totality of experience becomes intelligible at all. It must be stressed that this totality is conceptual, not experiential, and concerns only the form of possible experience. Universal predicates, as *a priori*, are the conditions for possible experience. There is a fracture, a scission between actual experience and possible experience. Actual experience is fundamentally fragmented, incomplete and irrevocably alien to totalisation. Within experience there is always something to add, another division to make. We can go from roses to other flowers, to plants in general, to carbon-based life forms, and further *ad infinitum*. Or we can start classifying roses into sub-species, going down that route to the minutest distinctions. In the multifaceted and particular nature of experience there is nothing indicating that the whole has been reached.

Deleuze states that the novelty of Kant is exactly the positing of the totality of experience in the form of possible experience. This is where it makes sense to speak of any totality at all, since possible experience is conditioned by universal predicates, or categories, applying to any object of experience whatsoever. According to Kant, categories concern objects “in general”. Therefore, as we have seen, categories are not classifications, dividing objects into different sets and subsets, but rather the *a priori* conditions for objects to “appear”

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55 Deleuze, *Kant 14.03.1987*, p. 3.
56 *Kant, Critique of Pure Reason*, A79/B105.
at all. Categories are thus applicable only to a totality of objects – to any object whatsoever, to all objects insofar as they are objects – and not to any specific object. This corresponds with the totality of experience, an *a priori* notion, which would be an impossible or even absurd thought from the perspective of actual, empirical experience.

As Deleuze notes, Kant derives the idea of categories largely from Aristotle, who produced a “famous table” of all the things that can be the subject or the predicate of a proposition. Every object in the human experience conforms to the ten categories or “predicaments” formulated by Aristotle. These are substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action and affection. After introducing and outlining the Aristotelian and Kantian categories, Deleuze somewhat mischievously mentions that the idea of a category can be defined in the simplest way as being a predicate of any object whatever and that one can, after that definition, formulate one’s own collection of categories according to one’s mood and character: “To make your list of categories is for you to ask yourselves what is for me predicable to any object whatsoever”. This quip playfully echoes Kant’s criticism of Aristotle’s selection of categories, which Kant deemed as having been gathered “rhapsodically” without any guiding principle, merely collected as they occurred to Aristotle.

Kant’s own categories have as their guiding principle of selection the use of language. The categories are essentially a list of what can be *said* of every object. Here Kant equates knowledge and language: the capacity to pronounce a judgment about an object amounts to knowledge about the same object. A judgment is the knowledge of a thing’s possession of certain attributes. To be able to say “A is B”, as in “the rose is red”, is to make a judgment. Kant provides a table of the forms such judgments can take:

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57 Deleuze, *Kant 14.03.1987*, p. 2.
59 Deleuze, *Kant 14.03.1987*, p. 3.
61 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A70/B95.
The list of judgments functions as the basis for Kant’s further table of categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>QUALITY</th>
<th>RELATION</th>
<th>MODALITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>Affirmative</td>
<td>Categorical</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Hypothetical</td>
<td>Assertoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Infinite</td>
<td>Disjunctive</td>
<td>Apodictic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An object, if it is to be encountered as an object in experience, appears under the categories listed above. A thing has to be conceived as distinct, as possessing a unity, in order to register as an object. Still, it has a plurality as well, since it is composed of a multiplicity of parts. This multiplicity-in-oneness produces a totality, which forms the reality of the thing. Yet, it excludes everything it is not and possesses thus the category of negation: A is not B, not C, not D… On the basis of this negation, the object has limits or limitation. All objects possess substance, have a cause and function themselves as causes of other things. (When discussing Kant’s categories in his lecture, Deleuze does not go into the categories under the subset “modalities”).

Kant further distinguishes two other a priori – universal and necessary – forms of experience and knowledge: space and time. Every object is in space, or at least in time. As Deleuze says, Kant is very careful to distinguish the predicates of space and time from the categories. Even though they all are a priori elements, space and time differ from the categories in the way that categories are concepts and thus representations, whereas space and time are sensuous presentations. Thus, the realm of a priori contains both presentations and representations.

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63 Deleuze, Kant 14.03.1987, p. 4; Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A23–24/B38–39.
Kant’s division of the two *a priori* elements on the basis of their irreducibility to one another is very important for Deleuze. Here is, once again for Kant, a decisive break from tradition. By dividing on the one hand the “pure” concepts of the categories and, on the other hand, the pure forms of sensibility – time and space – Kant situates himself between rationalist and empiricist philosophies. One cannot start from the rationalist perspective and try to deduce any truths about experience or existence by analysing concepts alone. Likewise, the empiricist mode of beginning from the contingency of experience itself does not yield any necessary, universal truths. What is novel in Kant is the denial of both empiricist and rationalist approaches considered in isolation: “Without sensibility no object would be given to us; and without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind”.

Yet, how to find the method of communication between the empirical and the conceptual? We must remember that these are two separate orders that differ in nature, one conceptual and *a priori*, the other sensible and *a posteriori*.

**The “Phenomenology” of Kant**

When considering the possibility of interplay between the fields of *a priori* and *a posteriori*, we must highlight another notion of Kant’s that breaks with the tradition of classical thought. Deleuze identifies this notion as that of *phenomenon*. Whereas in classical thought a phenomenon can be defined as appearance, in Kant phenomena are “apparitions”, as Deleuze calls them. In pre-Kantian thinking the notion of phenomenon as appearance distinguished it from intelligibility. A phenomenon was something appearing in sensibility, something particular given in experience, *a posteriori*. Appearance was thus removed from the realm of intelligible essences, things in their “eternal” state as things-in-themselves. Deleuze states: “the whole of classical philosophy from Plato onward seemed to develop itself within the frame of a duality between sensible appearances and intelligible essences”.

This dualistic model posits a fundamental division between the illusory, fleeting world of experience with its appearances and the true

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64 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A51/B75.
65 Deleuze, *Kant 14.03.1987*, p. 4.
reality with its concepts or ideas. Subjectivity, in this classical schema, possesses an inherent epistemological flaw. The possibility of knowing the true reality is distorted by defective and deceptive appearances. Therefore, if one is to strive for truth, one must fight the constitutive infirmity of illusions and seek to leave behind the misleading veils-behind-veils of the phenomenal world.

Kant’s thinking, in the light of the classical epistemological model, appears novel to Deleuze: “like a bolt of lightning”66. According to Kant, we should no longer approach phenomena as deceptive appearances. Here the focus shifts completely and fundamentally: phenomena shall from Kant onward be considered as apparitions. This change in the point of view considering the problem of phenomena means, Deleuze states, that Kant can be established as the founder of phenomenology. The appearance of things in experience shall now be considered not as faulty representations of a higher reality of essences, but as things appearing in themselves, as apparitions – no further questions asked: “The apparition is what appears in so far as it appears. Full stop.”67

Kant’s “modern” way of fathoming the phenomenal world lays out the basic guidelines for later phenomenology. The question is no longer “what is outside or beyond appearances?”, but rather “what can be said about the very fact that things appear to me?” As Deleuze formulates it, the disjunctive relation between appearances and essences – one is either appearance or essence – is replaced by another kind of relation: one that binds apparitions to the conditions of their appearing. Thinking of the phenomenal field in terms of apparitions is reached in conjunction with the decline of Christian thought, according to Deleuze. The duality between appearances and essences implies a lapsed, degraded world, a fall from grace, the original sin of man. Apparitions, on the contrary, excite further questioning about the sense of the appearing phenomena. In this sense, claims Deleuze, figures such as Freud represent modern, Kantian thinkers.68 We have something that appears: what does that mean, what is its sense, what are the conditions of its appearance? Here we have the same “problematic” conception of the given as that which Hume upholds

66 Deleuze, *Kant 14.03.1987*, p. 5.
67 Deleuze, *Kant 14.03.1987*, p. 5.
68 Deleuze, *Kant 14.03.1987*, p. 5.
and which Deleuze develops further in his readings on Nietzsche and Proust, who Deleuze considers as great symptomatologists.  

Instead of a fallen creature, lost amidst the deceptive appearances of the experiential world, trying to devise a suitable and infallible method to reach the surety of essences, the post-Kantian subject is seen by Deleuze as constructive or constitutive. This means that the subject inhabits the same “plane” as the process that produces the given. The subject “is constitutive of the conditions under what appears to it appears to it”. Instead of a disjunctive couple of appearances and essences Kant proposes a conjunctive subjectivity, which incorporates both sides of the apparition/phenomenon – conditions/sense schema. However, this subject is not the empirical subject that is prone to sensory illusions, but the transcendental subject. This kind of subject, much in the way of the Kantian object in general, denotes the unity of those conditions under which something appears to each and every empirical subject. Deleuze states: “the formal conditions of all apparition must be determined as the dimensions of a subject which conditions the appearing of the apparition to an empirical self, this subject cannot itself be an empirical self, it will be a universal and necessary self … the transcendental subject”. The conditions of appearing are, as I have presented them above, the Kantian categories and the forms of space and time.

The Kantian Syntheses
After introducing Kant’s transcendental subject, Deleuze turns to Kantian synthesis and highlights the notion of the synthetic *a priori* as the third feature distinguishing Kant from classical thinkers. It is in the problematic of the synthesis in relation to the transcendental subject that the core of Deleuze’s reading of Kant is exposed as that of the establishing the difference between the sensuous and the conceptual as the site of “true” difference. Correspondingly, subjectivity is defined as the site of unification of that difference.

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70 Deleuze, *Kant 14.03.1987*, p. 6.

71 Deleuze, *Kant 14.03.1987*, p. 7.

The operation of judgments in the subject is made partially via synthesis. Deleuze distinguishes two types of judgments in Kant: analytic and synthetic. An analytic judgment “expresses a predicate which is already contained in the subject, i.e. there will be an analytic relationship between two concepts when one of these concepts is contained in the other.” A clear example of this is the principle of identity, “A is A”. A similar case is the statement “bodies are extended”, since extension is already contained in the term “body.” Analytic judgments are therefore a priori, independent of experience.

On the contrary, synthetic judgments depend on the a posteriori experience. These judgments bring together concepts that are not contained within each other. The statement “the rose is red”, as mentioned earlier when discussing the universal and necessary in contrast to the contingent, connects or synthesises two heterogeneous concepts. A synthetic judgment is of the form “A is B”. As Deleuze mentions, here we are still entirely within the classical framework which links the two types of judgment into the appearance – essence duality. Either a judgment is analytic and a priori or it is synthetic and a posteriori. One can consider a major portion of classical philosophy as trying to measure the respective proportions of analytic and synthetic judgments as well as the possibility or impossibility of reducing one into the other.

A Kantian shock to this classical system of thought arrives in the form of a third type of judgment: the synthetic a priori judgment. From the perspective of classical philosophy this type of concept is a monster, but, as Deleuze states, one cannot create new concepts without them being considered as abominations. As for the concept of synthetic a priori, it is “a prodigious monster” since it introduces a third category, according to Deleuze, a “simplest thing in the world which bursts a conceptual frame”. These types of judgments, according to Kant, combine both conceptual and spatio-temporal determinations. Kant gives an example of a synthetic a priori judgment: give a philosopher a concept of triangle and ask him to relate the sum of its angles to a right angle. The philosopher soon runs into a dead-end, since the concept of the triangle does not hold

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73 Deleuze, Kant 14.03.1987, p. 7.
74 Deleuze, Kant 14.03.1987, p. 8.
75 Deleuze, Kant 14.03.1987, p. 9.
in itself anything that might act as a resource for an analysis starting from the sum of the angles of a triangle (180°) and ending at the equation of that sum with two right angles (2 x 90° = 180°). The philosopher cannot produce a solution to the problem, since the concept of the triangle does not contain anything outside its definition: a polygon with three vertices and three edges. Thus, the concept of the triangle produces nothing new, it is – ultimately – a statement of identity “A is A”.

Now, give the same problem to a geometrician, and he will draw up a proof to Euclid’s famous theorem “sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles”. As Kant says, for the geometrician it is a matter of “construction”. To prove this we need to extend the base of a triangle BC to point D and draw a parallel to line BA that is marked as CE.

![Diagram of triangle with extended base and parallel line]

Now we can see that the sum of the three angles touching point C equal two right angles and that they correspond with the angles of the original triangle, since the lines CD and CE drawn in extension are parallel to BC and BA. As Kant says, contrary to the philosopher the geometrician produces his solution “through a chain of interferences [that is] always guided by intuition”.

It is the proof procedure that counts: this geometric demonstration involves producing a proof on the basis of sensible intuition. We must show the construction of the triangle as the sum of two right angles. That means appealing to a field of experience that is by definition outside the a priori conceptual realm of concepts. This requirement is evident in geometry which Kant defines as “a body of synthetic a priori judgments that determines the properties of space”, as well as in mathematics in general.

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76 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A716/B744.
77 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A716–717/B744–745.
Here the judgment is synthetic since it is not in the concept of triangle to extend its base BC to point D and draw the parallel of BA as CE and thus to produce the proof to 180° equaling two times 90°. Yet, it is a universal and necessary judgment, since it applies to each and every triangle. Deleuze provides a similar case: “the straight line is the shortest path between two points”. We cannot concur that this type of statement is an analytic one, since “the shortest path” is not included in the concept of a straight line. It is unclear whether “the shortest” would be a predicate or an attribute. What is at stake here, states Deleuze, is a rule of construction. This he defines as “the rule according to which one produces in experience an object which conforms to the concept”.

A rule of construction is not included in the concept. For example, the Euclidian concept of a straight line – “the straight line is the line which is ex aequo in all its points” – does not give us the means of producing such a line in experience. Here Deleuze refers to Kant’s successor Salomon Maimon, who highlighted the notion that construction is based on pure intuition, at least in the case of geometry. As Oded Schechter comments, synthesis is “a productive activity of the intellect which culminates in creating new objects”. Synthetic a priori judgments are thus of utmost importance, since they provide a way of arriving at new, yet necessarily true knowledge. Yet, one may ask: Why triangles and straight lines? Why is the discipline of geometry nominated as a prioritised field for achieving such knowledge? Because geometry researches and operates within the spatio-temporal framework which Kant defines as providing the “pure forms of sensible intuition”.

Thus, in the operation of synthetic a priori judgments, the heterogeneous domains of the conceptual and the sensuous are brought together. In the example of geometry, the concept of, say, triangle corresponds to its conceptual determination, and the rule of construction for the triangle contributes in turn to its spatio-temporal determination. The contingency of experience is able to fuse...

79 Deleuze, Kant 14.03.1987, p. 10.
81 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A22/B36.
heterogeneous concepts together in synthetic \textit{a posteriori} judgments – as in the statement “this rose is red” – but what provides the universality and necessity to \textit{a priori} judgments is their linkage to conceptual order. Why, then, are spatio-temporal determinations not containable in concepts? Because of the \textit{here-and-now} of time and space. One can very well think of two objects which are strictly identical in their concept. To illustrate this Kant gives the famous example of two hands. Yet, spatially they are not reducible to one another. Take two hands, in every way identical, and you still end up with a left hand and a right hand. Despite the various possible objections to this argument, one may still say that no spatio-temporal objects are superimposable.\footnote{For various approaches to the problem of left- or right-handedness in Kant see James Van Cleve, “Appendix C. Incongruent Counterparts and Absolute Space” in \textit{Problems from Kant} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 231–233.} 

For Deleuze this means the positing of space and time’s diversity which is irreducible to conceptual order: “Spatio-temporal position is not a conceptual property”.\footnote{Deleuze, \textit{Kant 14.03.1987}, p. 13.} Any given object in experience is distinguished not only by contingent \textit{a posteriori} synthetic judgments linking various concepts under the singular perception of an object, but also by its unique situation in space and time. Categories produce unity; they unify the diverse under a concept. Space and time are, on the contrary, diverse – both in the way that what appears in spatio-temporal coordinates is diverse, as well as in the way that space and time themselves are diverse. There are a multitude of points – possible “heres” and “nows” – in time and space. Thus we can distinguish between the empirical diversity of apparitions and the \textit{a priori} diversity of space and time.

\textbf{The Co-Existence of Intuition and Concept} 

Space and time are the forms of appearing, the presentation of what appears. As such, apparitions are immediately in space and time. There is no mediation. Concepts, on the contrary, are mediation. That which appears is referred to a concept, which is a re-presentation of the presentation of spatio-temporality. Space and time as the forms of the given are immediate and passive, concepts are mediating and active. Subjectivity inhabits this rift between the passive receptivity and active conceptuality. Deleuze notes that the Kantian subject is in
this sense modern. In classical philosophy it is space, extension, which is the “other” of unextended substance, thought. The finite, extended body is the source of all error since it houses the thinking substance. Kant modernises this schema: the question is no longer the opposition between two substances, extended and unextended, but that of the coexistence and synthesis of two forms, sensuous receptivity/intuition and conceptual spontaneity. In the Kantian subject, the limit to thought is found within thought itself.⁸⁴

Deleuze nominates this internal limit to thought as “problem” in the geometric sense. As we have seen, for Kant concepts in the field of geometry are not analytic but rather synthetic. Their *a priori* necessity and universality is entirely due to the spatio-temporal construction of a certain geometrical object. There the given and the conceptual are fused together. Any given geometrical object is at the same time the source of knowledge about its properties that can be applied to any similar object. As Melissa McMahon points out, we find in Deleuze the notion of the Kantian geometrical concept taken to embrace all concepts: a thing’s concept is not thought of primarily in terms of identity (particular x corresponds to concept X), but rather as a rule of construction. A concept demarcates a *territory*, “a set of distinctive points or movements” which schematise a certain mode of occupying space and time.⁸⁵ A problem, then, is thought’s encounter with the unthought within itself. A problem is where thought runs into something indeterminable, unable to resort to representations of already-given identities and is forced to construct a rule. This means a shift from the question of essence to that of *sense*. “Sense is located in the problem itself”, states Deleuze.⁸⁶

Deleuze proposes that if one wishes to gain understanding about something, to reach its essence or Idea, one should step outside essentialism in the traditional meaning of belief in something like the Platonic essences. These would be universal, invariant, eternal determinations applying to particular, variable and finite things. The Deleuzean essence, derived from the Kantian notion of synthetic *a priori* as a certain, particular spatio-temporal determination which yet possesses universality, denotes a particular thing’s capacity to affect

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⁸⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 154. See chapter two for discussion of sense.
and be affected. This capacity may be exercised according to the thing’s interaction with other things which may help or hinder its functioning. As Deleuze notes, an empirical thing’s “essence” or “problem-Idea” is its condition, a “positive multiplicity” of pre-individual relations.87

Regarding generative problems, Deleuze speaks about a “method of dramatization”, which replaces the essential question (“What is x?”) with cartography of local values: Who? When? Where? Deleuze’s “dramatisations” concern “dynamisms, dynamic spatio-temporal determinations, that are pre-qualitative and pre-extensive, taking ‘place’ in intensive systems where differences are distributed at different depths, whose ‘patients’ are larval subjects and whose ‘function’ is to actualise Ideas”.88 The term dramatisation is chosen because when assigning a system of spatio-temporal determination to a concept, one replaces logos with drama.

THE PROBLEM OF LEARNING
With the concept of problems comes the task of learning. As an example of how problems do not just appear to a subject fully formed and lacking nothing but their answers, but rather how problems and subjectivities are engaged in a process of mutual determination, Deleuze considers the case of a would-be swimmer.89 When one is learning to swim, a mutual problem-field is developed between the body of a swimmer, the physio-dynamic properties of the water, the possible social reasons for the learning (“she wants to learn to swim, because her older sister bullies her for not knowing how”) and other such factors. Here, in order to learn and master the art of swimming, one does not simply ask, “What is water?” or “What is swimming?”, but rather learns to distinguish the relevant questions and practices as one goes into the water and experiences the relations between the body and the waves. The question is not about information but of individuation. This takes place very concretely in terms of a particular body’s capacity to affect and be affected. The bodily capacities change for the one who did not previously know how to swim as her milieu expands to cover that of swimming pools, lakes and seas. Likewise,

87 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 267.
89 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 165.
the learning process may lead to socio-economic changes when the learner becomes fascinated by her new, liquid environment and starts a career as a professional athlete.

Granted, when considering the swimmer and the sea we are still within the field of already formed objects. Yet, these “material assemblages” present their own sets of pre-individual problems. As Deleuze explains, the sea, for example, is “a system of liaisons or differential relations between particles” which exists as a noumenal Idea. The differential relations provide a field of variation, all the possibilities for the actual existence of the sea. The totality of this transcendental system is “incarnated in the real movement of the waves”. The waves rolling over the swimmer are, then, the concrete actualisations, or local “solutions”, to the “problem” of the sea. In Deleuze’s vocabulary, the transcendental, “problematic” field will be called the virtual and the empirical, “resolutive” field will be called the actual.

It is important to keep in mind that Deleuze’s virtual problems are not problems in the sense of unclear or missing signification: when faced with the transcendental problem-fields, one is as much guided by sensibility as by the more cognitive faculties. The process of learning is, essentially, unconscious: “Problems-Ideas are by nature unconscious: they are extra-propositional and sub-representative”, that is, they cannot be judged under concept. The only way to truly learn is to place oneself in encounter with what is outside one’s previous scope, to encounter the virtual. As the body of the swimmer adjusts to the buoyancy and movements of its new watery medium, it discovers, through sensory rather than perceptive means, the previously unknown gestures and postures necessary to keep afloat. According to Deleuze this applies to the whole of consciousness and knowledge: they accumulate through the sensibility of the body in encounter with its surroundings. In the following section I shall continue with Deleuze’s reading of Kant, particularly on the matter concerning sensibility and its role in judgments and, building on that, I can better elaborate the Deleuzean philosophy of transcendental empiricism.

90 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, p. 165.
91 For a more detailed consideration on actualisation as a local solution to a virtual “problem”, see chapter two of the present work.
92 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, p. 267.
1.3 Deleuze’s Transcendental Empiricism

Deleuze’s reading of Kant is admittedly partial, as befits his style of utilising past philosophers, since he highlights Kant’s anti-classical aspects and passes quickly over such features that maintain the traditional appearance – essence duality. Namely, Kant is frequently quick to remind his readers that one must not confuse the phenomenon with the “pure” noumenon, the thing-in-itself. However, Deleuze is able to highlight those salient features in Kant’s thought which help to reconstruct him as an advocate of non-essentialism. Whereas the search for essences seeks to unify knowledge with what is eternal, and thus formulates thought as the recognition of universal values, Deleuze’s “empiricism” strives to approach the singular and the unrecognisable, and address “the conditions under which something new is produced”.

The encounter between Hume and Kant, as staged by Deleuze, produces one of the main points of departure for the kind of philosophy that attempts to address the problem of novelty. What is the relation between “the given”, the experiential world that our senses and understanding provide for us, and the conditions of this given sensibility? The question is situated, in short, between empiricism and rationalism. To once again restate the views of the respective positions: Hume’s empiricist notion was to place sensory impressions as the primary ground for ideas of consciousness. Any appeal to ideas or concepts refers to experience, in the last analysis. The path to knowledge begins in experience and is in fact wholly derived from it. Concepts do not precede sensibility but are formed out of the perceived relations within the manifold of the given. Kant, in turn, starts his enquiry by questioning the primacy of the given. It seems apparent that human experience is not manifold but rather appears under a variety of forms that are universal and a priori, shared by any cogent subject. Therefore, if we wish to attain knowledge that is universal and necessary, we must turn to the conditions of the given.

Yet, Deleuze asks, does not the notion of the given, either in empiricism or rationalism, already suppose too much? How can we trust that the supposed immediacy of the sensible provides a stable

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ground for thinking? Is the given immediate in the first place? Even if we follow Kant in considering the given as mediated through the conceptual machinery of the categories and the forms of space and time, we end up taking the given as given, on the basis of which the transcendental conditions can be formulated. In effect we trace the transcendental from the empirical. This is why Deleuze claims that Kant’s philosophy is in fact too empirical.94

As we saw earlier, Deleuze considers Kant’s concepts as re-presentations of the “raw” presentations of the spatio-temporal field. Yet again, these representations provide the universal forms of sensible presentations. Kant’s transcendental subject makes possible the unification of diverse experience and the knowledge of all forms of possible experience. Still, states Deleuze, there is beside the conditioned possible experience the unconditioned, singular and specific actual experience. If philosophy is to be empiricist, as Deleuze maintains it should be, it must proceed from the haecceity – “thisness” – of things in their appearing.95 We must not take the naïve empiricist stance of accepting the given as given, unproblematically, but we must likewise avoid the rationalist tendency to posit the agent of the unification of experience as a transcendent entity.

KANT BETWEEN THE SENSIBLE AND THE CONCEPTUAL

Deleuze’s proposed middle ground between Hume and Kant – transcendental empiricism – takes as its point of departure the opposition of specific actual experience versus general possible experience. To explicate his stance, a further consideration of the concepts of perception and sensation is needed. In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant develops a theory of perception that is a synthesis of spatio-temporal appearances. In what he calls “transcendental deduction” we can observe three distinct procedures forming a synthesis: apprehension, reproduction and recognition.96 These are the co-existent phases in the process of forming a perception out of the manifest flux and multiplicity of experience.

94 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, p. 135.
95 Haecceity is a term deriving from Medieval philosophy and it denotes the distinct qualities or properties which make a thing just that particular thing. See John Duns Scotus, as discussed in Nathan Widder, “The Rights of Simulacra: Deleuze and the Univocity of Being”, Continental Philosophy Review, vol. 43, no. 4 (2001), p. 453, n24.
96 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A99–110.
For Kant, apprehension synthesises the multitude of distinct parts of experience to form a unity. Likewise, reproduction functions as the temporal contraction of parts to form a continuity. This sensible spatio-temporal complex must be related to the form of an object in recognition. These three elements combine to synthesise for us the object in perception. The third element, recognition, provides us with a general object-form to which we can “match” the various sensations of space and time. Kant calls this “empty” object-form the object $x$. On the one hand, we have sensible diversity, on the other hand the form of an object. The former is pure sensation, the latter pure perception. The object $x$ will receive a concrete determination in the act of synthesis of spatio-temporal diversity. A white, round shape with black patches, rolling movement, against a background of green horizontal space: a football. These myriad sensations would never attain the status of an object without the empty form of object in general. Without object $x$ there would be nothing to unify the diverse sensations of experience as the form of an object, since sense experience itself does not intrinsically contain the principle of going “beyond” the sensible.

Thus, the unity of perception provided by the general form of object $x$ correlates with the unity of consciousness. The statement “I think” expresses this unity. This, notes Deleuze, presents the formal objectification of the thinking subject and formulates the “I” as a fractured subject-object. For Kant “I think” is an abstraction produced from the discrete and diverse items of experience taken to its ultimate limit. It can be thought but not known. “I” becomes the object of its own thinking. For Deleuze this provides a step forward from the form of cogito proposed by René Descartes, which is known as the famous formulation “I think, therefore I am”. For Cartesian cogito there are two “logical values,” the determined and the undetermined. The determination “I think” does imply an undetermined existence “I am”, for there has to be existence in order to think. “I think” determines this undetermined existence as the existence of a thinking subject.98

As Deleuze’s reading of Kant highlights the centrality of the difference between the conceptual and the sensible, he contradicts the Cartesian cogito and the Kantian “I think”. For Deleuze Kant’s critique of Descartes questions the possibility of determination’s influence over the undetermined. How would “I think” determine the undetermined existence expressed by “I am”? Kant’s answer to this is to formulate a third logical value, the determinable: “the form in which the undetermined is determinable (by the determination)”. For Deleuze this form amounts to a discovery of an internal difference within the subject, taking place between the determination as such and that which it determines. This transcendental difference between the concept (“I think”) and the sensible (“I am”) is not a difference in degree but a difference in kind.

This qualitative difference between the conceptual and the sensible orders is mediated by the form of time. My existence is determined in time as the persistence of something in perception and this persistence implies that there is a process of determination. This mutual determination in Kant is commented by Andrew Brook: “at any time at which I represent a representation of mine as occurring, I will also represent myself as occurring. Representations come to me as mine; I appear in everything in my ‘field’ of representation. Thus, I will represent the time of all my representations as inside the time-span of myself – as ‘in me’”. “I think” determines my indeterminate existence (“I am”) under the form received from the determinable: as a phenomenon in time.

“Consequences of this are extreme”, as Deleuze notes. The undetermined existence of myself is determinable only through time. “I” is a phenomenon, “a passive, receptive phenomenal subject appearing within time”. The active spontaneity associated with the conceptual operations of the subject are not the inherent attributes of a substantial being, but rather the result of an originary passive receptivity of sensibility. “I” experiences itself thinking. According to Deleuze, “I is an other, or the paradox of inner sense. The activity of thought applies to a receptive being, to a passive subject which represents that activity to itself rather than enacts it, which

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99 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 86
100 Andrew Brook, *Kant and the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 199, original emphasis.
101 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 86, original emphasis.
experiences its effect rather than initiates it, and which lives it like an Other within itself”.

TOUCHING THE REAL

It is this receptivity to real experience that Deleuze values in Kant, rather than the domain of possible experience as conditioned by the transcendental categories. As the rationalist cogito thinks itself and in thinking itself relates the diversity of experience to the general form of object \( x \), it places the conditions of perception as transcendent. In situating the field of consciousness as immanent to a transcendental subject, Kant reintroduces the element of identity that is external or transcendent to the empirical. In this way, according to Deleuze, Kant “betrays” his promise of an immanent critique of reason. Whereas in classical philosophy thinking is threatened by the external, extended spatium which infiltrates error into the internal and natural processes of thought, Hume and Kant introduce a notion of reason where the deceptive illusions are produced by the consciousness itself. In other words, classical thought begins with already-established identity, the knowledge of which is threatened by the wantonness of the world. The critique of reason, in turn, situates identity as the result of transcendental processes.

As Deleuze emphasises, after Kant the philosophical conception of thought is limited from the inside. There is no longer an extended substance which limits thinking substance from the outside, and which resists thinking substance, but the form of thought is traversed through and through, as if cracked like a plate, it is cracked by the line of time. It makes time the interior limit of thought itself, which is to say the unthinkable in thought. From Kant onward, philosophy will give itself the task of thinking what is not thinkable, instead of giving itself the task of thinking what is exterior to thought.

The key question of post-Kantian philosophy, as defined by Deleuze, would then be the enquiry into the nature of the relation between the

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102 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 86, emphasis modified.
form of determination (activity, spontaneity) and the form of the determinable (passivity, receptivity, time).

Concepts belong to the “I think”, the active form of conceptual determination which combines with the “I am”, the passive form of spatio-temporal determination in the act of perception. Kant tends to favour conceptual order in positing transcendental subjectivity – the site of the unification of experience – as already possessing the powers of synthesis, that is the “ingredients” of identity-formation. Since this threatens to bring back the transcendent in the form of the exteriority of categories from the immanence of the sensible field, Deleuze makes an empiricist reversal at this stage. Instead of posing the problem as how the given is given to the subject, it is better to ask, as Hume did, how the subject is constituted within the given. To phrase it otherwise, the Deleuzean empiricist seeks the conditions of actual or real experience, not the general, universal conditions for possible experience. For this, he must devise the maxim: “Experiment, never interpret”.104

As we have seen, Deleuze locates in Kant the potential for thinking of experience in its actuality. This can be found in Kant’s considerations of the synthetic a priori judgments, where the conditions of synthesis are not “wider” than what they condition, but rather conditions appear in mutual genesis with the conditioned. This is why Deleuze gives much weight to Kant’s later Critique of Judgment, for it concerns imagination freed from the legislation of the a priori concepts of understanding. Judgment, as quickly summarised, thus denotes the “pragmatic” ability to devise or adjust principles according to the actual experience.

**Synthesis and Aesthetic Apprehension**

As Deleuze explains in his lectures on Kant, in the Critique of Pure Reason three operations are given which constitute a synthesis. The first aspect is the successive synthesis of the apprehension of parts. What constitutes the parts mentioned? Every perceived thing is a multiplicity: the thing is in relation to multiple other things and is itself composed of multiple parts. In apprehending these parts, we notice a spatio-temporal succession. The parts are perceived as occupying a certain spatial position in comparison to other parts and, however

104 Deleuze and Parnet, Dialogues, p. 48.
tiny, they themselves possess extension, so that the act of perception happens in time. My eyes scan things, here and there, from left to right. The succession of apprehension takes place both in terms of the spatiality of things – a desk has an upper and a lower side, its plane has depth and width et cetera – as well as in temporal terms: I relate parts to each other, successively, in time and this requires memory. This is the second aspect of synthesis: reproduction. Apprehension possesses an element of futurity in it, since our attention moves from one part to the next, relating part to part, object to object. Reproduction, on the other hand, provides the dimension of memory in order for relations to emerge, since we have to recall previous parts in order to fix a relation with them and a successive new part.\(^{105}\)

Both of these aspects, apprehension and reproduction, refer not to passive reception per se, but to the faculty of imagination. In addition to the form of space and time (the form of intuition) and to the determined spatio-temporal form (the synthesis of the imagination) a third form is needed that relates the spatio-temporal form to the general form of an object: the form of recognition. Recognition is needed in order to perceive something as a discrete object and it bestows the necessary attributes of objectivity to sensations: \(x\) is an object because it has a cause and it possesses unity et cetera. The third aspect of recognition is an act of understanding, not of imagination: in understanding one relates the diversity of the sensible to the general form of the object \(x\).\(^{106}\)

Thus, the synthesis of perception requires an apprehension of successive parts. Yet, what remains to be questioned is what constitutes a part. Deleuze finds an answer to this problem in the Critique of Judgment, where the structure of syntheses is fully explored in relation to spatio-temporal determination: we need an aesthetic comprehension of measure.\(^{107}\) This is what is required by the imagination in order to begin to synthesise the parts. One might appeal to understanding which can provide measure in the mathematical concept of number, as in providing a formal framework in the form of a metric system, for example, but this analytical measure does not apply to objects in perception. Imagination does

\(^{105}\) Deleuze, Kant 28.03.1987, pp. 9–10.

\(^{106}\) Deleuze, Kant 28.03.1987, p. 11.

not operate by concepts. Further, objects do not provide a constant, universal measure. Imagination can function only by applying a *sensible* or *qualitative* unit of measure and, as Kant states, such a unit is found in the human body.\(^{108}\) Here is, once again, a basis for considering Kant as a phenomenological thinker, as Deleuze notes that apprehension “already implies something like a lived evaluation of a unit of measure”.\(^{109}\) For example, in preparing a parcel to mail I perform a complex act of measuring the different parts of the assembly: I relate the length of a rope to the length and movement of my arm and the width of a cardboard box to the length of the rope I use to tie the box with.

Here, beneath the syntheses of perception, we have a necessary element of measure that is ultimately aesthetic. That is, the measure is subjectively determined, not objectively. From this results that the measure is always considered in a given case, the act of measuring happens *in situ*. Because of the measure’s case-by-case nature, measures are constantly checked against other measures and perceptions. The measure made depends on the object of perception or the milieu of the said object. A man is huge in size in comparison to an ant but hopelessly outnumbered when compared to the denizens of an anthill. From a certain perspective the palm of my hand can cover a cathedral. It is aesthetic comprehension, done without recourse to concepts. Rather, the evaluation happens in experimentation with one’s surroundings: in any given context there are a multitude of potential measures and things-to-be-measured.\(^{110}\)

When considering perception we find ourselves constantly on the shore, faced with the roar of the sea, out of which we may pick various “partial” sounds, as in Leibniz’s famous example, but we never catch – in perception – every sound of that multiplicity. When I distinguish a sound of a particular wave hitting a rock, I have an “apperception” of it, a splashing and hissing sound, but underneath the ground provided by my synthetic abilities dwell the minute sounds made by the various parts of that certain wave and that certain rock. I, as an individual, possess a distinct point of view, a particular clear and distinct “zone” in the totality of the world that is unclear and

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\(^{109}\) Deleuze, *Kant 28.03.1987*, p. 12.

\(^{110}\) Deleuze, *Kant 28.03.1987*, p. 12.
indistinct. As Deleuze formulates it in his lectures on Leibniz at Vincennes University, an individual expresses the totality of the world, but only a finite, particular portion of it in a clear and distinct manner. An individual point of view is thus, according to Deleuze, “the proportion of the region of the world expressed clearly and distinctly by an individual in relation to the totality of the world expressed obscurely and confusedly”. Every other part of the world affects a particular individual, but in most cases only in a minutely weak manner. Here is a parallel between Leibniz and Kant: what constitutes the determined point of view of apperceptions is what is related to unique spatio-temporal location, that is, the body of an individual.

What provides the measure and point of view required for the synthesis of perception is thus the body and its relations to the world. This is clearly a notion that brings both Hume and Kant together in Deleuze’s reading. In aesthetic apprehension there is no need for a transcendent subjectivity providing a set of universal and invariable conditions of experience. Rather, every perception or apperception is a unique complex of measures and points of view, providing the conditions of this singular perception on a case-by-case basis. Here the subject is not constitutive, but is conversely constituted in an experimental relation with the world. Experience is not a property of the subject, but rather the milieu in which a subject takes form and this milieu is, according to Deleuze, the pre-conscious materiality of the body or, in other words, the aesthetic.

**Existence as Experiment**

Experimentality denotes the dynamic and processual structure of individuation. To exist is to constantly adjust and re-adjust one’s boundaries, as existence takes place in a network of relations, as the lesson from Hume goes. Existence is, thus, variation. As Deleuze phrases it, the constant variation of measures on an aesthetic basis amounts to the grasping of a rhythm. What is here meant by rhythm is a comprehension of a certain relation in the world, and that comprehension takes place on a bodily level. Rhythm is outside the concept and has thus nothing to do with a metre. Rather, as Deleuze and Guattari note in *A Thousand Plateaus*, rhythm is communication between two disparate realms. A metre is the conceptual division of

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space and time into a homogeneous grid. Rhythm is the relation between heterogeneous elements, existing in the in-between. Deleuze and Guattari state: “There is rhythm whenever there is a transcoded passage from one milieu to another, a communication of milieus, coordination between heterogeneous space-times”.\textsuperscript{112}

A rhythm denotes, then, the exteriority of relations in the world, as proposed by Hume. Rhythm is the initial, bodily, aesthetic and pre-conscious apperception that acts as a measure for “later” judgments. From this notion we get a glimpse into the heart of Deleuze’s idea of productive differences. As an illustration and an example, however insufficient, I ask you to consider two sets of relations – a pictorial rhythm, if you will. First we have two parallel series with events distributed evenly and simultaneously:

From this example we can see that the parallel series produce only a mirror-like repetition of each other. This amounts to a repetition of the same, communicating nothing, producing nothing novel. Then, as a second example, we can introduce another set of parallel series with events distributed evenly, but respectively in different meters:

The events are still placed evenly within their own series, but this time bringing the two disparate series together produces at least a slight variation into their combination. Suddenly there appears some kind of communication between the series, as the metric events accentuate each other. We might even state that there is, for the observer, a fleeting sensation as the eye searches for the metric regularity between the two series presented. Granted, each of the series composes its own homogeneous space-time distributed along the line and forming a meter, each in isolation as well as together in combination, but the

\textsuperscript{112} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 313; see chapters two and five of this study for further analysis of rhythm as a relation between different milieus.
rhythm happens somewhere in between these two series, in the transversal relations between the placement of the events in their respective series.

Henri Maldiney, a phenomenological philosopher of art, influences Deleuze’s reading of Kant in the present context of the notion of rhythm. Rhythm, the “primordial” differential relation before identity, constitutes the different faculties of perception. It is thus a form of autopoiesis, the self-generation of the world. Maldiney states that the sense of form in formation, which takes place as a continuous transformation, constitutes the sense of rhythm. Maldiney considers the world as Gestaltung, a formative activity endlessly producing new variations of itself.

**Rhythm and Chaos: The Sublime**

Yet, as with the sound of a wave hitting a rock, rhythm as the basis for measure – and thus a clear and distinct view of the world – is constantly on the verge of fading back into chaos, into the indistinct roar of the sea. As Kant establishes in his analyses of the sublime in *Critique of Judgment*, subject is sometimes faced with such overwhelming sensations that they produce an intuition of infinity and expose the finitude of the subject’s comprehension. In philosophy the concept of the sublime has been used as a quality of something of a vast magnitude, something exceeding the measure of man. In experiencing a sublime phenomenon, the rhythm as bodily measure collapses and Deleuze recounts this collapse in his lectures on Kant as a story involving a series of catastrophes occurring upon the synthesis of perception. First, in the act of perception, I am confronted with something that overwhelms me, I become dizzy and my imagination wavers. This is because I cannot find a suitable unit of measure. Every attempt is pushed back and I need to resort to grander and grander units but nothing will be adequate. Synthesis of apprehension will not work.114

Secondly, while I am able to distinguish heterogeneous parts, here and there, distinct from each other, there is no succession

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between the parts. Every part is encountered as a new one with no connection to previous ones. The rhythms of aesthetic apprehension are broken. This leads to the third catastrophe: what I encounter with my senses is unrecognisable. My sensations do not conform to the form of the general object. Apprehension, reproduction and recognition all fail me. Now, in Deleuze’s words, “[m]y whole structure of perception is in the process of exploding”.

Sublime is the term used by Kant to refer to those phenomena that awaken in us the intuition of infinity. The feeling of sublime is not merely the consciousness of a measure greater than the human body. The sublime is rather an intuition of the “boundlessness” of a formless object. Kant gives us examples of the sublime phenomena as being those like the vastness of a starry sky, the raging and tumultuous sea or the magnitude of the forces of an earthquake. These can be categorised as belonging to the mathematical sublime, which concerns the vast or infinite extension unlimited by ideas, and the dynamical sublime, which denotes nature’s intensive might overbearing the aesthetic judgment.

In the face of the sublime, aesthetic comprehension – the evaluation of rhythm – becomes compromised. Deleuze states of this confrontation: “instead of a rhythm, I find myself in chaos.” Imagination as the synthesis of perception is pushed to its own limit. Deleuze notes that here we discover a similar internal limit as we found in the faculty of thought. At the same time as we discover the ground of the synthesis as rhythm, we unearth its ungrounded nature in chaos.

Chaos and rhythm constitute the self-differentiating dynamic of Nature for Deleuze. This is, then, the starting ground for transcendental empiricism. Deleuze states of transcendental philosophy or “metaphysics” of classical nature that they impose a disjunctive logic of alternatives: “either an undifferentiated ground, or groundlessness, formless nonbeing, or an abyss without difference and without properties, or a supremely individuated Being and an intensely personalised Form. Without this Being or this Form, you

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115 Deleuze, Kant 28.03.1987, p. 13.
116 Kant, Critique of Judgment, §23.
118 Deleuze, Kant 28.03.1987, p. 13.
will have only chaos”. Metaphysics and transcendental philosophy seek to fix the undifferentiated chaos by positing transcendent identity, a God or a transcendental subject, to act as the guarantee of the individuation of Being. Deleuze is ready to follow Kant into the analyses of the sublime, but leaves when Kant discovers a faculty that prevents chaos, the faculty of Ideas, or reason. Kant’s own comprehension of the element of the sublime is negative: the sublime acts as a shock to guide us out of the realm of the sensible into the transcendental level of Ideas.

For Deleuze, the usefulness of the Kantian notion of the subject is in the idea of the subject inhabiting a difference between the conceptual and the sensible. This occurs in synthesis, especially in the aesthetic. Yet, Kant ends up positing the transcendental subject as the unchanging locus of distributing identities upon the empirical. Experience then becomes an act of recognition or representation of the sensible within the categories provided by conceptual reason. On the other hand, Kant does not subject the concept of the given to a thorough critique, since he derives the conditions of experience from the lived experience itself.

Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism is, then, a return to the immediacy of the given in the sense that his philosophy is concerned not with identities, but with differences. Whereas the transcendental subject appears in Kant as fully-formed, equipped with the ability to condition the given by the powers of synthesis, the Deleuzean subject is a “larval” one, taking place or becoming within the same processes that provide the sensible to the subject. As in Hume, the larval subject is posited in constant encounter with its outside. It is a synthetic construction, but unlike in Kant, the conditions of the synthesis are themselves constantly shifting: the generative process takes place “case-by-case” and every individuation is a haecceity, a “thisness” composed within the network of its relations. Here the identity of an individual is not formulated in accordance to its internal essence that would determine its relations to other entities, but is rather understood on the basis of the generative difference that acts as

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120 Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §23.
121 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 78.
the condition for its becoming existent as a distinct thing. On the basis of this, the question of difference becomes central.

**Deleuze’s Philosophy of Difference**

Deleuze’s early philosophy, up to his writings with Guattari, can be characterised as being an explicit philosophy of difference. This means that he seeks to overturn or invert the established metaphysical relation between identity and difference. A philosophy based on identity approaches difference as something that diverges from identity. Thus, the difference between A and B is fathomed as something between two stable points of identity. There is a secondary and accidental relation, difference, between two ontologically primary and necessary entities. The diversity manifest in the phenomenal given is due to this extension between self-identical instances. Accordingly, thought, when seeking the value of truth, must learn to navigate its way beyond the appearances of the given into the essences at the heart of being.

In contrast, Deleuze starts from the primacy of difference “in itself”. The diversity of the given is a problem from which to begin. Difference, understood as the relation which does not derive from identity, does not appear as diversity. “Diversity is given”, states Deleuze, “but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse”. It is true that the immediate given displays its diversity, but this diversity exists between already-given objects. In order to think the “internal”, productive difference displayed by entities in their process of formation, it is indeed necessary to proceed beyond the given. In this sense, Deleuze’s thinking is in alignment with Kant’s critical impetus of questioning the conditions of knowledge before proceeding to knowledge itself. Deleuze states: “Difference is not phenomenon but the noumenon closest to the phenomenon”.

Deleuze also retains the Kantian ideas of the faculties and synthesis of perception, as well as the forms of space and time as conditions of subjective experience. Therefore, in proceeding beyond the subject to address the problem of the conditions of the subject

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122 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 222.
123 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 222.
and its experience, we must understand the “pure” or internal difference as non-spatio-temporal. This means that the internal difference is transcendental to the subject. Yet, it is within the sensibility of the given, rather than in the conceptual order of reason, that we find a way of addressing the transcendental field. For Deleuze the Kantian Idea is inverted: rather than pure concept, the Deleuzean Idea is “a pure intuition for which there is no concept”.124 For Kant, the Ideas of reason impose regulation upon experience and delineate the form of all possible experience. Deleuze overturns this Kantian structure of Ideas and considers them instead as problem-Ideas which challenge reason: experience presents us novel conjunctions of things, “matters-of-facts”, and thus exceeds our concepts. Each novel matter-of-fact presents a Leibnizian clear and distinct point of view in the midst of every possible actualisation of relations in the world and in doing so alludes to an oscillation of distinct forms arising out of indistinct chaos.

Deleuze finds a way to address this fluctuation between form and chaos in Kant’s aesthetics. Whereas rational ideas are characterised as re-production, re-cognition and re-presentation of the sensible under the form of a concept, the aesthetic ideas as Deleuzean problem-Ideas arise out of sensible presentation and are thus outside the legislation of conceptual order. Deleuze expands the dynamism of the Kantian aesthetic to encompass the whole of thought: we encounter something that forces us to think. Yet this something, as a problem, does not become resolved in total conceptual determination. Thought-as-encounter is rooted in aesthetic receptivity and is, ultimately, passive in nature in the sense that we are subjected to thought rather than the subjects of thinking. In the analysis of Kant’s concept of the sublime Deleuze finds a model for thought’s encounter with its outside. In the experience of the sublime the mind’s faculties encounter their own limits and an element of discord is introduced between reason, understanding, imagination and sensibility.

Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism takes its cue from Kant’s transcendental philosophy by situating the conditions of experience outside the given. However, in elaborating those conditions we must be careful not to reproduce the given in the transcendental conditions in the forms of good or common sense. This is, ultimately, the error

124 McMahon, “Immanuel Kant”, p. 99, original emphasis.
of Kant, claims Deleuze. Statements such as “it is evident” or “everyone knows” refer to an uncritical form of thought proceeding from the self-evidence of the given. Yet, Kant uses these commonsensical observations as determining their conditions. This results in rationalism that is, perhaps surprisingly, all too empiricist. To be faithful to the diversity of the given is to approach it as a problem in the light of aesthetic experience. The question is not “What is X”, referring to an essence or a concept, but rather “How is X”, “When is X”, “In what way does X…” This refers to phenomena as actualisations of problems that are transcendental in the sense that they imply pre-individual existence.

The next two chapters of this study present elaborations of the “problematic” relation between the transcendental and the empirical and address the questions of individuation in spatial and temporal terms, respectively. Chapter two concerns the process of biophysical individuation, as well as its connection with the aesthetic sensibility of the body and the semiotic sphere of sense. We will come to see that Deleuze utilises the work of Gilbert Simondon in formulating an account of individuation that relies on the notion of a pre-individual field as the genetic component of the emergent individual. Chapter three, in turn, concerns Deleuze’s reading of Henri Bergson and introduces a temporal dimension into consideration and expands the view on the productive difference as a virtual problem.
2. Encountering the Outside: Affect, Individuation and Territory

As we saw in the previous chapter, Gilles Deleuze wants to provide a *genetic* account of the real in his philosophy. This means approaching the given as a problem and seeking the method of accessing the conditions of experience. This is very much in accord with Kant’s critical philosophy, but Deleuze takes a decisive turn away from what he calls the Kantian tendency to limit thought to representation. For Kant, representation takes place as the harmonious functioning of different faculties of consciousness where the sensible intuitions are given object-form in the workings of reason. As Deleuze says, Kant provides the conceptual framework for all possible experience and the task of this framework – the categories – is to “tame difference”.

Deleuze finds another model for experience in Kant’s philosophy, in the notion of the sublime in Kant’s third *Critique*. This concerns real experience, unbound by the conceptual. As the sublime phenomena – exhibiting vastness, infinity and a huge magnitude of force – disrupt the grounding of the synthesis of perception in the aesthetic appropriation of bodily measures, the discord of faculties reveals a true difference at work in the sensible presentation that takes place “before” the conceptual representation of things. Thus it is in the domain of the aesthetic, in the experience and intuition provided by the body and its senses, that we find the process of the subject’s constitution. Experience does not appear to “us” as something external. It is rather so that “we” are constituted along the unfolding of experience.

One can see two major themes in Deleuze’s early work. The first is the questioning of the nature of subjectivity. This takes place on the basis of Deleuze’s reading of Kant and Hume, and is later on accentuated by treatises on Nietzsche, Bergson and Spinoza. Deleuze ends up with the notion of a subject that is, on the whole, a product of activity outside itself, subject to passive syntheses. A Humean rather than Kantian subject: the rules of association as the basis of the structuring of experience do not function within the rational activity of cognition, but comprise the passive nature of human mind. The second, conclusive theme concerns the process of individuation or differentiation. If the subject is to be considered as a product of

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certain processes, what are these processes and how do they produce individuals?

The process of individuation is considered here under the thematic of the philosophy of difference. If one started from an essentialist point of view, individuation would simply be a matter of unfolding in extended terms what is already implied in the concept. However, Deleuze’s notion of dynamic individuation seeks to question such a foundation for individuation, since that would, in the end, produce only variations of the same. In order to replace the essentialist model of matter as a passive receptacle of forms, Deleuze develops a system of individuation that considers the process of formation itself as providing its own conditions. This means that both the “rules” of actualisation as well as the process of actualising are real. Yet, the rules, or problems, are not determined by the concept and are thus virtual. The virtual refers to a transcendental field of spatio-temporal dynamisms, differential relations between intensities, which provide the force of actualisation as differentiation.

When considering such dynamic individuations, one of the central questions is the method of transmission between the transcendental and the empirical. Membranes, linings and fluids are interfaces for mediating intensities. Crystal structures begin to form in liquid, wind carries pollen from faraway fields and rain disperses seeds into nearby streams. These individual beings – crystals, pollen and seeds – in turn reach a moment of stability in new environments and encounter new interfaces. Water carries a seed onto wet soil. Intensities pass between the seed and its resting place. Given a favourable environment, the seed begins a phase of growth, transferring nutrients from the soil via the formation of roots. Soon the emerging plant encounters the variable conditions occurring above the ground and starts to affect its environment in different ways.

The key issue here is that we encounter a constantly variable individual, affecting its environment and being in turn affected by factors beyond itself. The emergent plant may prosper, but in turn shadow other seedlings and hinder their growth. Or the plant may be eaten and become nourishment for a passing animal. Individuations fluctuate (pollen, seed, sapling, nourishment), but the one constant element remaining is a continuous process of mediation.
**Mediation: The Question of Individuation**

This chapter addresses the question of mediations and encounters as occurring in the relations of affect, as well as in individuation and territory formation. The discussion considers both affect’s role in the process of individuation and in the context of the affective dimension’s function in territoriality, as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari. This, in turn, provides a basis for understanding the origin of art and artistic activity in the interconnectedness of an individual being and its milieu, as well as the function of affect as the mediator of this reciprocal connection.

In Deleuze’s work, affect can be understood – from the perspective of human consciousness – as taking place somewhere between energy and emotion.\(^{126}\) Affect is a singularity, which is a distinct relation between bodies, as well as an expression of a certain set of relations. Deleuze inherits this two-fold notion of affect from Spinoza: affect is a body’s capacity to affect and be affected by others – and affect is the encounter between the affected body and the affecting body. Things exist by the virtue of their powers and the forces that affect them.\(^{127}\) This formulation implies a world of dynamic individuation: individuals and their environments or milieus can be considered from the point of view of encounters – individuation as mediation.

In the works of Deleuze and Guattari, the concepts of affect, individuation, milieu and territory form a dynamic and contrapuntal model of emergence and organisation. Rather than approaching the world as static Being, via the hylomorphic schema of Form and Matter, they see it as a continual process of Becoming.\(^{128}\) Deleuze and Guattari construct a theory of “corporeality (materiality) that is not to be confused either with an intelligible, formal essentiality or a sensible, formed and perceived thinghood”.\(^{129}\) This corporeality, as matter-energy, is characterised on the one hand by constant changes of state, and on the other by intensive or expressive qualities, both producing

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\(^{126}\) I am indebted to Teemu Taira for this formulation.


\(^{128}\) World-as-becoming has obvious Nietzschean connotations, and the one major influence on Deleuze’s philosophy besides Spinoza is indeed Nietzsche. For a thorough elaboration of Nietzsche’s philosophy of the world as a process of interacting forces, see Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.

and dissolving individuations. These two elements introduce variation in matter, form metastable structures and actualise the abstract virtual into the concrete actual.

Section one of this chapter concerns affect as the mediation of intensity between bodies. For a more detailed look at the concept, Gregory Seigworth makes further distinctions concerning Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza and his use of the term “affect”. As well, Brian Massumi’s elaborations on the nature of affect will be considered. From both researchers’ writings emerges a conception of affect as a pre-individual singularity, the necessary force individualising an individual that resides outside consciousness and language.

In section two, I will use the work of Gilbert Simondon, the French philosopher of science, to illustrate Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of individuation, which by their own admission is heavily indebted to Simondon. For Deleuze and Guattari, whose project in part tries to address the problem of self-organisation emerging from the chaotic flux of the world, Simondon asks the crucial question: What is an individual? What highlights one part of the world as a discrete thing? This enquiry necessitates the exposition of the mechanisms of distinguishing one thing from everything else – that is, answering the question concerning what produces an individual out of an undifferentiated “pre-individual” field. According to Simondon, an individual should not be thought of primarily as a fixed “thing” or entity, but rather as an ongoing process. An individual is not a static being but a becoming. Because of the temporality of its existence, an individual keeps on becoming; it is never “finished”. According to such a perspective, one should strive to analyse the dynamics of individuation. Rather than starting from individuals as things existing in a state of equilibrium, individuation must be thought as a movement of tension and release in a system, “a partial and relative resolution in a system that contains latent potentials and harbors a certain incompatibility with itself”.  

130 Individuation happens relationally; the individual is a process in which a milieu and an individual take shape and draw a limit. This places the individual irreversibly within a certain environment, which

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shapes and provides the “frame” for the being’s capacity for action. In section three, we will see how the pioneering biologist of biosemiotics, Jakob von Uexküll, provides Deleuze and Guattari with a model for an individual’s milieu as *Umwelt*, as a self-contained “world”, that forms the meaningful sphere of existence for a particular living being.\(^{131}\) Starting from von Uexküll’s notion of the fundamental relationship between animals and their environment, Deleuze and Guattari further distinguish between animal milieus and territories, with the latter corresponding to an “expressive” dimension, where the affective relations forming a milieu find their expression and thus form the basis for a non-subjective origin of art.\(^{132}\)

We can see the working of the virtual in the more abstracted level of language, too. The relation between experience and sense concerns the formation of meaning as a process, as experience constructs a subject out of the virtual intensities of the world. As linguistic propositions concern an already defined world, it is from nonsense within language that we can gain an insight into the actualisation of meanings. These processes will be addressed in section four.

### 2.1 Affect as Intensity

As stated earlier, affect is a relative term, as it denotes a passage of intensity between things. Affect means things acting upon other things, nothing more, nothing less. Thus understood, affects accompany the actualisation of the world into discrete individuals. The ontological concept of affect can also be approached from the more familiar perspective of human consciousness. Brian Massumi observes that in human experience the affective dimension appears as a “background” to everyday perceptions. We live in an actualised world that is given to us as organised, consensual reality, which can be described in qualitative terms. This habitual terrain is sometimes disturbed by inexplicable states of intensity, such as a certain emotion

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\(^{131}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 57.

overtaking us, out of nowhere. The unforeseeable nature of affect is “marked by a gap between content and effect”. A certain stimulus (content) does not produce an expected reaction (effect). As affectivity concerns the pre-individual field, this unexpected quantitative dimension of intensity is the indicator of an affect, its trace or remainder within qualitative reality.

The autonomy of affect situates the body into its environment on a fundamental level. “The body doesn’t just absorb pulses or discrete stimulations; it infolds contexts, it infolds volitions and cognitions that are nothing but situated”. Thus the body is always already resonating with intensities that at the same time give rise to this perceptive body. Here we have the two elements of affect: intensity and mediation. Every form of communication includes this intensive dimension, which appears as a “transtemporal” event, since it derives from pre-conscious and pre-actualised encounters.

Massumi analyses the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s colour-coded terror alert system, introduced in March 2002 in response to the World Trade Center attacks. He notes that the alert system functions mainly on the affective level and is used to modulate and calibrate the public’s anxiety. The purpose is to create a mood of acceptance for the strengthening of security measures in society. Since the alert system monitors only the “threat” of an imminent terror action, it communicates nothing: threat or possibility cannot really take an identifiable form. As such, the threat is also curiously...

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134 As Deleuze states in Nietzsche and Philosophy, quality is dependent on quantity: affects, as differential pre-individual relations, form the genetic conditions for qualities; pp. 42–44. This kind of notion of affect is supported also by research done in the field of neuropsychology. As the pioneering neuropsychologist Silvan Tomkins phrases it, affects are distinct and independent from the basic drives (respiration, hunger, thirst, sex) because affects are not bound to the feedback system of the body. Instead, affects are the “silent” neural activations of the biological body, resonating, acting upon and sometimes contradicting the qualified emotions. As an autonomous “extra-dimension”, affect is what makes feelings “feel”, providing intensity to conscious experience. See Tomkins, “What are affects?” in Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader, eds. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 36–37.

135 Massumi, Parables for the Virtual, p. 30, original emphasis. This “infolding” of contexts is what Massumi means by the affective dimension. A body is immersed in its environment via affectivity, receiving and transmitting intensities.

136 “Transtemporality” is used here to highlight the event’s two-sided relation to time, affecting both the past and the future as it enters our consciousness.
transtemporal, since it combines both anxiety about the future as well as the trauma of the past. This is the transtemporality of intensity: fear strikes the body and activates it even before it is registered as a sensation or feeling. “The fear is a dynamic ingathering of an action assuring the continuity of its serial unfolding and moving the reality of the situation, which is its activation … The experience is in the fear, in its ingathering of action, rather than the fear being the content of an experience”. The object of fear appears in our consciousness only retroactively: we feel fear towards what our body just previously encountered as intensity.

As noted in the case of the terror-alert system, intensities are also highly transferable. We all know how a certain mood can spread rapidly among a crowd of people. Or rather, how a certain intensity will spread and produce more or less compatible reactions, according to each person’s acquired patterns of response. To take a most drastic example, when a bomb goes off in a public space, we share the intensity of affect but react in our own fashion to this sudden event: we all are alarmed, prepared by the autonomic nervous system for flight or fight. Some of us will flee, some will halt in panic and some will start to help others. What is noteworthy is that this shared intensity, manifested in different ways, produces a crowd of people out of discrete individuals: as the pre-individual dimension of transferable intensity, the affective is the basis for collective individuation.

**Affective Relations**

As a concept, affect thus covers a broad range. In his commentary on Deleuze’s use of the term, Gregory Seigworth widens the scope of consideration beyond human consciousness and distinguishes a third aspect of the concept, making the following three-part distinction: 1) *affectio*, affect as “effect”, the influence of one body over another, the state of a body, transitive effect undergone by a body in a system; 2) *affectus*, affect as “becoming”, a continuous intensive variation in the relations between various forces; 3) affect as “pure immanence”, an autonomous multiplicity of affects, without distinction of any exteriority or interiority.\(^{138}\)

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These three aspects of the concept of affect can be seen to form a kind of methodology in Deleuze’s writings, a form of both philosophical analysis and critical praxis. First of all, affectio corresponds to a materialist analysis of social interaction, as we saw in Massumi’s account of the U.S. government terror-alert system. From such a viewpoint the social space or situation is seen in terms of forces and effects, resonance and collapses between bodies. Socio-political formations, institutions and language function as the imposition of a consensual reality upon different individuals. It is here that the Deleuzean and Foucauldian notions of Power are united: Power is the affectio of desire, a stratification of a certain set of force relations.\(^{139}\)

However hegemonic and totalising a certain power structure is, there is always the potential for a change in a given system. Affectus denotes this potential: the work of recognising and analysing the “lines of flight”, or processes of becoming-other, that form their beginnings in a certain social space or situation. There are always possibilities for escaping the dominant power structures: “The first rule of the social is that it flees on all sides at once”.\(^{140}\) This is the principle of the rhizome and the line of flight: rather than taking the form of resistance or counter-attack, which would already accept the power structure as given, the critique of power formations should start from the evaluation and “cartography” of possible breaking points. In such a way the critique is able to leave the level of actualised power (linguistics, politics) and reach the counter-actualising machinations of affects. As Deleuze and Guattari state, the affective potential of a line of flight concerns an “[i]mperceptible rupture, not signifying break” in a given system.\(^{141}\)

Finally, the third level of consideration is affect itself, seen as a positive force, not an effect of force but the “plane of immanence” of forces. Immanence here corresponds metaphysically with Spinoza’s single substance (Deus sive natura): immanence as immanent to itself, immanence as substance. This is why Deleuze and Guattari speak of the plane of immanence: all metaphysical distinctions or hierarchies are ultimately collapsed or flattened into an even consistency. This is the

\(^{139}\) Seigworth, “From Affection to Soul,” p. 166.

\(^{140}\) Seigworth, “From Affection to Soul,” p. 166.

\(^{141}\) Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p. 24.
ontological foundation of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy: “pure” immanence, not subjected to anything else, does away with real distinctions (form/matter, mind/body, concept/content) and provides the basis to approach everything as active production.

In the three-part exposition of affect, the focus moves from the affective capacity of bodies or things to the interval – a derangement or deterritorialization of states of affairs, and finally to the plane of immanence as “the absolute ground for philosophy” and un-individuated, impersonal life – *a life* (*une vie*).142 By nature indefinite, this impersonal life is present in all the moments an actualised individual goes through – abstract, yet real. *A life* is abstract because it retains all the potentiality of the unactualised world, not yet bound by form or subject. It is the grand total of the infinite relations of the world. Deleuze summarises:

Each individual, body and soul, possesses an infinity of parts which belong to him in a more or less complex relationship. Each individual is also himself composed of individuals of a lower order and enters into the composition of individuals of a higher order. All individuals are in Nature as though on a plane of consistence whose whole figure they form, a plane which is variable at each moment. They affect each other in so far as the relationship which constitutes each one forms a degree of power, a capacity to be affected. Everything is simply an encounter in the universe, a good or a bad encounter.143

The scope of Deleuze’s concept of affect develops a new form of materialism. Approaching things as encounters charges them with the potential to transform. Traditional Western thought has approached matter as a “silent”, inert, passive substance that requires the imposition of form upon it in order to exist in a concrete way. Deleuze’s view is that matter possesses immanently the potential to form and transform itself. And because of this, matter-energy or matter-flow also retains the potential for further modulations or transformations. However, flows can come to a halt; matter

142 Seigworth, “From Affection to Soul”, p. 168. See chapter three of this work for further discussion on the concept of indefinite life.
coagulates and stable identities are formed. This actualisation is self-evident. The actualised world is matter-memory, composed of individuals in various phases of transformation. Affect as mediation implies the structure of individuation, as an individual begins to emerge out of its environment. A cloud forms when air cools below its saturation point and millions of water droplets take the appearance of a white mass. A mass of air is becoming saturated and the cloud is an expression of this process. A thing is better known through its conditions or what it expresses than through an isolated examination of what it is. Therefore we must consider individuals in the process of their formation.

2.2 Individuation as Process

As Elizabeth Grosz observes, individuation is a matter of creation for Deleuze: “actualisation is individuation, the creation of singularity (whether physical, psychical or social), insofar as the processes of individuation predate the individual[,] yet the individual is a somehow open-ended consequence of these processes. Individuation contains the ‘ingredients’ of individuality without in any way planning or preparing for it”. The basic model for such dynamic individuation comes from Gilbert Simondon. As Deleuze and Guattari state, “Simondon demonstrates that the hylomorphic model leaves many things, active and affective, by the wayside”. The wayside or the outside, “things active and affective” that appear as excess in the hylomorphic form/matter schema, include the implicit singularities in matter (for example, the undulations of fibers guiding the operation of splitting wood) and the variable intensive affects (for example, the wood that is more or less porous, more or less elastic). A woodworker knows that she must “follow” the plane of wood in order to manufacture something out of it. In working with the material one


145 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p. 450, original emphasis.
addresses less a form imposed upon matter than material traits that correspond to the affective dimension of matter.\textsuperscript{146}

Simondon considers both hylomorphic as well as substantialist theories of individuation and finds them deficient. The point of view of these two notions is backward as they start from individuals that are already formed rather than from the genetic process of individuation. According to Simondon, substantialism regards “the unity of living being as its essence” and locates the principle of individuation “inside” the individual being. Hylomorphism, in turn, approaches the individual as “the conjunction of a form and some matter.” But despite the differences in these two conceptions, “there is the [shared] assumption that we can discover a principle of individuation, exercising its influence before the actual individuation itself has occurred, one that is able to explain, produce and determine the subsequent course of individuation”.\textsuperscript{147}

Simondon’s argument is that the individual should be approached \textit{ontogenetically}. Ontogenesis designates “the development of the being, or its becoming – in other words, that which makes the being develop or become”.\textsuperscript{148} This means considering the individual as a dynamic, continuous process of development that is filled with pressure to individuate further. As the process is fundamentally contextualised – taking place in a “surrounding” environment – it is insufficient to contemplate the individual as a thing in isolation. Instead we must approach the individual as developing or becoming within its context, a \textit{milieu}. “The true principle of individuation is mediation” and the process of mediation concerns the two-way action between an individual and its milieu.\textsuperscript{149}

Evidently, this reciprocal view of development is shared by the theory of evolution in the notions of adaptation and habitat, ecological niches and biotopes. For example, we might think of the sense organs of a bat, whose sensory capabilities have adapted to the conditions of its nocturnal living environment. Or, in the case of human products, we can consider the relationship between a certain type of cheese and all the elements it is the result of: the type of mammal providing the milk, the diet of the mammal, the fat content

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{146}] Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 451.
\item[\textsuperscript{147}] Simondon, “The Genesis of the Individual”, p. 297.
\item[\textsuperscript{148}] Simondon, “The Genesis of the Individual”, p. 300.
\item[\textsuperscript{149}] Simondon, “The Genesis of the Individual”, p. 304.
\end{itemize}
of its milk, the type of bacteria used for the acidification of the milk, the type of enzymes used for coagulating the milk, the aging period and storage conditions of the maturing cheese et cetera.

It is often said that a certain variety of wine is a “portrait” of the landscape it was produced in, and we can extend this metaphor to cover every being’s relation to its milieu. An individual being is a product of its environment, which, in turn, is shaped by the individual. To reiterate the argument: for Simondon, an individual is not a being possessing an essential unity, nor is it just a product of conditions that would pre-exist the process of individuation. The individual itself should instead be considered as an active and ongoing process. The individual, as a process, unendingly forms and shapes itself. Further, this formation is situated irrevocably in a milieu, a pre-individual field of singularities. In short, an individual is a process, immersed within a milieu and interlinked with many other processes.

**The Individual in Formation**

To an individual-as-process there is no pre-existent form that the individual would thus actualise. Rather, becoming exists as one of the dimensions of being, “it corresponds to a capacity beings possess of falling out of step with themselves”. The notion “falling out of step” (déphaser) denotes the being’s potential to change its state and resolve an initial incompatibility that is rife with potential. This makes an individual a local “solution” to a pre-individual “problem”. For instance, a living human individual is produced as a process, which unfolds in various directions. The forming embryo undergoes multiple phases of radical transformation, acquiring both hereditary and situational traits in cell division, migration and invasion. The developing individual is shaped according to internal and external impulses and these impulses form a transversal mixture, not structured and totally determined progress. Deleuze and Guattari state: “Evolutionary schemas [should] no longer follow models of arborescent descent going from the least to the most differentiated,

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150 It goes without saying that the term singularity must here be understood only relatively, since an individual thing may appear as a pre-individual field or milieu from the perspective of another individualizing being (which, in turn, acts as a pre-individual singularity to something else). Thus there are both pre-individual and individual singularities.

but instead a rhizome operating immediately in the heterogenous and jumping from one differentiated line into another.\textsuperscript{152}

In \textit{Difference and Repetition} Deleuze argues that Darwin’s revolution in biology concerns the question of individuals preceding the species. It then follows that species should be considered as populations of individuals rather than be subjugated under the great taxonomic units: genera, families, orders and classes. Biological genera or families would possess an integral essence, whereas populations can be seen as sets of individuals going through various phases of transformation and differentiation.\textsuperscript{153} Or, to be more exact, one can very well speak of biological genera, but these should be seen as undergoing processes of individuation similar to what their “component” parts, the individuals, undergo.

Individuals begin forming in the pre-individual or “virtual” realm. The virtual should not be understood as chaos in the sense of undifferentiated randomness but rather as a state of undifferentiation that is nevertheless overflowing with determination. As Deleuze emphasises, “far from being undetermined, the virtual is completely determined”.\textsuperscript{154} The virtual is pure structure structuring itself: fully real, yet without being actual. The virtual contains the elements, relations and relational values for the actualisation to take place in a process of differentiation. Virtuality can be approached, following Simondon, as a state of “supersaturation” where the potentialities are not pre-formed but unfold in the process of their actualisation. That is to say that the potentialities are in a constant state of transformation and appear, when located in an individual, as supersaturation, “something beyond a unity and an identity”.\textsuperscript{155}

Conditioned by the virtual, an excess of potential and thus more than mere possibility, individuals are in a state of “metastable equilibrium”, that is, they always retain the possibility to further transform. Stable equilibrium would be a state in a system that has expended all its possible transformations and no energy remains to produce any further changes. Even though a singular being can attain

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{152} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{153} Gilles Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, pp. 248–249.
\textsuperscript{154} Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, p. 209.
\textsuperscript{155} Simondon, “The Genesis of the Individual”, p. 302, original emphasis.
\end{flushleft}
such a state, its immersion in a milieu ensures that there are additional possibilities for further individuation.\textsuperscript{156}

*Transduction* is Simondon’s term for the mechanism of individuation. This denotes a process that is “physical, biological, mental or social … in which an activity gradually sets itself in motion, propagating within a given area, through a structuration of the different zones of the area over which it operates. Each region of the structure that is constituted in this way then serves to constitute the next one to such an extent that at the very time this structuration is effected there is a progressive modification taking place in tandem with it”.\textsuperscript{157}

The most basic example of the process of transduction provided by Simondon is the growth of a crystal, but the scope of the concept reaches beyond mineral formation into the more complex realms of wide-scale geological, biological and cultural formation. As a general structuring function, transduction “is the correlative appearance of dimensions and structures in a being in a state of preindividual tension”.\textsuperscript{158} Transduction can thus be understood simply as transfer of information, and Simondon defines this as “the tension between two disparate realities, it is the signification that emerges when a process of individuation reveals the dimension through which two disparate realities together become a system”.\textsuperscript{159} Information implies in itself a problem, a possible change of a system’s state, and thus appears as a necessity to individuate.

**REALITY AS ACTUALISATION**

Simondon’s theory of individuation resonates with Deleuze’s notion of reality as a continuous process of actualisation through a synthesis of affects, with actualisation taking place as a local solution to a virtual problem. This constant, universal synthesis takes place as repetition in

\textsuperscript{156} Simondon distinguishes between physical individuals and living individuals by virtue of an “inner” activity of individuation. A physical object, a piece of rock, is more or less a result of individuation, and can end up in a state of stable equilibrium, its “inner” energy spent to such an extent that it possesses no means of further individuation. A living thing, however, “conserves in itself an activity of permanent individuation” (Simondon, “The Genesis of the Individual”, p. 305, original emphasis). Thus metastability, a state retaining the potential to break a stable equilibrium, is a precondition for life.\textsuperscript{157}


\textsuperscript{159} Simondon, “The Genesis of the Individual”, p. 311, original emphasis.
a series. Actualisation of forms and representations happens relationally, as James Williams summarises: “We only acquire habits by synthesising earlier members of a series in later ones. We only acquire representations in memory and in language by synthesising earlier memories that are themselves syntheses of experiences”.

As there is an infinity of series (affect-encounters), individuals are only syntheses of “previous” individuals and are themselves effecting further syntheses. Individuation is thus a process of encounters, of passages and transductions. This does away with the hylomorphic structure of form and content, since both of these are constantly changing as well. We cannot adhere to unchanging transcendental conditions. Simondon states: “The a priori forms of the sensibility are not obtained either a priori or a posteriori by abstraction, but rather must be understood as the structures of an axiomatic that appears in a process of individuation”. In order to know the nature of a thing, we must follow its trajectory “backwards” into the syntheses that produced it. As these synthesis-structures are also themselves syntheses, Williams notes that the transcendental conditions of individuation are “appearance-specific in the sense that the abstract form of conditions turns out to be that there must be specific conditions for each thing, rather than general ones for all of them”. This situates a singular process of individuation within a network of processes, a milieu, which acts as the condition of the genesis of an individual.

Simondon emphasises that an individual is fully understood only together with its milieu: “the individual possesses only a relative existence in two senses: because it does not represent the totality of being, and because it is merely the result of a phase in the being’s development during which it existed neither in the form of an individual nor as the principle of individuation”. The process of individuation is a mediation or passage of intensities between an individual and its milieu. This makes clear the connection between Simondon’s notion of individuation and Deleuze’s concept of affect. Transduction is affectivity, and analysing the function of affective

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qualities in the individual’s relation to its milieu is what leads Deleuze and Guattari to develop the concept of territoriality. Originally an ethological term for animal domains, Deleuze and Guattari expand it to address the question of the dynamics between habituation and derangement, and territorialization and deterritorialization.

2.3 Milieu and Territory

In their book *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari begin to utilise the concept of territoriality primarily within the psychological context of modelling the investment and location of psychic energies.\(^\text{164}\) In subsequent work they expand this model to a more encompassing theory of formation of matter, which takes place as a result of encounters between various forces, from the “base” material level of geology and biology to the human social level and its institutions.

Deleuze and Guattari state in *A Thousand Plateaus* that territory and affect are interlinked, and from this point of view art, being the primary domain of the affective, is not the privilege of human beings. The expressive has a certain auto-objectivity: art, as territoriality, is an expression of the various intensive relations taking place on a pre-individual, affective level.\(^\text{165}\) Here territoriality needs to be considered as a part of the matter-flow process of individuation, as previously discussed.

If we, following Deleuze and Guattari, take the statement *bird-song is the origin of art* as our basis of consideration, do we not err on the side of humanisation? The sentimental human mind might well interpret the dawn chorus of bird-song as a welling of joy springing from the new day beginning – but certainly the birds do not sing out

\(^{164}\) Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1983). “Deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization” figure in correspondence with “decoding” and “recoding,” with the former pair referring to a localised psycho-physical organisation of the body and the latter pair to symbolic representations and mental investments. See Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 55–56. Please note that while I use standard British spelling in my study, I have chosen to retain the -ize ending in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s terminology of “territorialization”, “deterritorialization”, and “reterritorialization” for the sake of consistency, as they occur in the majority of English translations and commentaries of Deleuze and Guattari’s work.

\(^{165}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 316.
of happiness – at least “happiness” as we understand it from the point of view of human consciousness and psychology. According to a standard ethological view, a bird acts upon a series of internal and external impulses as it perches on a branch and starts its song with which it announces the domination of its territory and invites potential mates to come forth. Even though many birds “improvise” additional variations or imitations to their song, this activity can still be considered as an impulsive action having to do with the animal’s territorial behavior. Bird-song is indeed the paradigmatic example of animal territorial activity, and the development of the concept of territory in the field of ethology has its beginnings in the study of bird behaviour.\footnote{See Bogue’s compact introduction to the history of the concept of territoriality in \textit{Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts}, pp. 56–57.}

\textbf{Milieus and Territories}

The most well-known theorist working in the field of animal territoriality is Konrad Lorenz, who in his book \textit{On Aggression} states that territorial behaviour is manifested as the aggression necessary to defend one’s own territory, directed both towards other individuals within the same species and in some cases towards other species as well. Even though aggressive territorial behaviour can lead to injury and sometimes even death, it still serves for the survival of the species on a scale greater than individuals. Aggression is one of the great biological drives and internal struggle is beneficial to the species itself, as it ensures that the stronger individual will take hold of favourable territory and will thus more reliably pass on its genotype.\footnote{Konrad Lorenz, \textit{On Aggression}, trans. Marjorie Kerr Wilson (London: Methuen & Co., 1967), p. 30.}

However, it is more favourable for the survival of the species if the struggle for territory can take place in a substitutive manner, instead of by physical acts of aggression. Territorial behaviour thus occurs most often on a symbolic, “expressive” level, where various signs are used to communicate the domination of a territory and to declare the dominator’s powerfulness to a possible rival. Bird-song and the vivid colours of tropical fish therefore serve territorial behaviour, and function as signs of aggression and potential violence. Or, accordingly, various signs can declare the withholding of
aggression, for instance when a possessor of territory lets a mating partner into its domain.\textsuperscript{168}

In any case, according to Lorenz, the birds’ morning chorus does not possess an element of artistic expression, but should rather be regarded as a set of instinctive signals, serving territorial aggression and the reproductive instinct. How, then, can one speak of birds as the origin of art? In \textit{A Thousand Plateaus} Deleuze and Guattari observe that even though aggression plays a definite role in territorial behaviour, it cannot function as a parenthetical reason for the formation of territory. Aggression is manifested differently between territorial and non-territorial animals, and this goes for many other functions as well, such as gathering food, mating and caring for offspring. Nevertheless, none of these factors explain territoriality, but rather territoriality explains them. As Deleuze and Guattari state: “These functions are organised and created only because they are territorialized, and not the other way around. The T factor, the territorializing factor, must be sought elsewhere: precisely in the becoming-expressive of rhythm or melody, in other words, in the emergence of proper qualities (color, odor, sound, silhouette…).”\textsuperscript{169}

These “expressive qualities” appear autonomously, they are “auto-objective, in other words, find an objectivity in the territory they draw”\textsuperscript{170}. Expression is thus not confined to the actions of an individual being. Rather, it takes place in the network of relations between different individuals and milieus. The bright colours of a coral snake, for example, express something about the snake and its relation to other environmental factors in its habitat. We can here recall the notion of an individual being acting as a portrait of its environment. Therefore, for Deleuze and Guattari, expression is primary in relation to territoriality: a territory is formed as a result of expression, and expression is the “auto-objective” functioning of relations within an environment. To grasp this idea, we must now acquaint ourselves with the distinction Deleuze and Guattari make between environment or \textit{milieu} and domain or \textit{territory}.

\textsuperscript{169} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 316, original emphasis.
\textsuperscript{170} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 317.
Deleuze and Guattari define a being’s milieu as a coded “block of space-time” constituted by the periodic repetition of a code.\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 313. This “periodic repetition” corresponds to the repetition involved in the synthesis of affects as a virtual or supersaturated condition for actualisation.} In other words, a milieu is the living environment, “the world” of a certain being, within which things are able to appear as meaningful and continuous. This milieu is differentiated, “coded”, out of undifferentiated chaos through a being’s capabilities to perceive and act. For instance, one can consider a tick, whose milieu is extremely small from our human point of view. Only a few elements make up a tick’s world; these include sunlight, butyric acid and warmth. The tick climbs to the top of a stalk of grass, its skin being sensitive to sunlight. The odour of butyric acid, secreted by mammals, makes the tick loosen its grip and drop off the stalk. Provided that it has landed on something living, it then directs itself towards the warm skin covered under hair, pierces the host’s skin and sucks its blood. After nourishing itself with the host’s blood, the tick drops off to the ground, lays its eggs and dies.

This is the example used by Jakob von Uexküll, an early 20\textsuperscript{th} Century pioneering ethologist, when he presents his concept of milieu, \textit{Umwelt}, the self-enclosing unity of every individual’s world.\footnote{Jakob von Uexküll, “The new concept of \textit{Umwelt}: A link between science and the humanities,” trans. Gösta Brunow, \textit{Semiotica}, vol. 134, no. 1 (2001), p. 119. See also Bogue, \textit{Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts}, pp. 58–62.} This world is constituted of the perceptive capabilities of an animal subject and covers all the things a certain animal is able to perceive and thus understand. The tick’s \textit{Umwelt} is very limited; its world is constituted by a small number of stimuli to which it reacts in a mechanical fashion. For Deleuze, this makes the tick “the true philosophical beast” instead of the owl of Minerva. The tick is celebrated as such because of its extremely reduced world: it can respond to “[n]othing but a few signs like stars in an immense black night”\footnote{Deleuze and Parnet, \textit{Dialogues}, p. 61.}. Yet, it possesses great power to act. The simplicity of the tick’s world helps us to see that a body is defined by its affects.

The human milieu, on the contrary, is probably the most complex, as we possess an enormous number of approaches to our environment and a great capacity to respond to and affect it. For any
one animal individual, the internal relations within its milieu form the appearance of various things and their possible meanings. A dog is a source of food for a tick, predator for a rabbit and servant for a human. The dog is also manifested very differently in these different worlds: as an inviting scent and warmth for the tick, as a threatening smell and sharp teeth for the rabbit and as a four-legged, domesticated animal for the human.

Even though we, as humans, often generalise our own milieu as the standard for every living being, it is worth bearing in mind that our own faculties of perception and understanding are the result of a certain process of evolution and individuation. Such a process has advanced those capabilities that have best enabled us to survive in our living environment and has discarded those that have hindered us. Scientific biology has, however, focused on the animal as automaton reacting to various stimuli. Against this, von Uexküll wants to emphasise the concepts of animal subject and milieu: a living being’s perceptual experience accounts for its behavior. “We do no longer ask the animal ‘How does the outer world push you around?’, we now ask it ‘What do you perceive of the outer world, and what is your response?’”

One receives countless different answers to von Uexküll’s question from countless different milieus. Each milieu or Umwelt has its own spatio-temporal dimensions: a tick can spend a very long time positioned at the tip of a blade of grass, waiting for an animal to pass by, whereas a bird’s rapid neural activity and metabolism makes it appear as a very fast and energetic creature to us. A bird can take wing from its branch, we cannot. We, as heavy, wingless creatures, cannot even reach the tip of the branch the said bird was sitting on. Each milieu is thus “coded” in a certain way. That is, a milieu is organised as a certain wholeness of meaning. But, as Deleuze and Guattari stress, “each code is in a perpetual state of transcoding or transduction”. Different milieus pass into one another: a living being’s internal and external worlds communicate via different sensory organs, linings, membranes and fasciae. Different creatures’ milieus encounter each other, for instance, via predatory, parasitic or symbiotic relations.

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175 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p. 313, my emphasis. Note the use of Simondon’s term “transduction”.

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MILIEU AS MEMBRANE

Deleuze and Guattari praise von Uexküll particularly for his observations on transcoding and its importance. In his theory he approaches milieus as “melodies in counterpoint, each of which serves as a motif for another: Nature as music”\(^\text{176}\). Instead of using the behavioristic schema of stimulus-and-reaction, von Uexküll considers a being’s actions as harmonic relations of resonance between various milieus, which are regulated more by “musical” (harmonic/melodic) than mechanistic factors. Because of their continuous overlapping, predator-prey relations bear with them perhaps the most complex contrapuntal arrangements, as two competing species have adapted and counter-adapted their capacity to capture and evade each other. For example, a spider spins its web as a “counterpoint” to a fly: the filaments of the web must withstand the impact of the fly, but at the same time be thin enough to be translucent to it. Also, the mesh of the net must match the size of the fly’s body\(^\text{177}\).

Nevertheless, a young spider spins its first web without “knowing” a thing about flies and cannot be said to understand much of its prey after catching it either. The meaning of an action, as well as its expressiveness – a spider’s web can be considered as an “expression” of the fly – do not arise from the act of spinning the web. Web-spinning can be understood as a single note in a melody, and it must be just the right kind in order to resonate harmoniously, that is, meaningfully and productively, with a number of milieus. In a functioning contrapuntal relation there is a theme that expresses meaning, which spans over different milieus.

A milieu in itself does not, however, constitute a domain or territory. Deleuze and Guattari call territory “an act that affects milieus and rhythms, that ‘territorializes’ them”\(^\text{178}\). The territorializing act is expressive of relations between milieus, it is “artistic” and the artist is the first one to set up a marker stone, to plant a flag. Expressive qualities do not belong to a subject, but rather “delineate a territory that will belong to the subject that carries or produces them. These qualities are signatures, but the signature, the proper name, is not the constituted mark of a subject, but the constituting mark of a

\(^{176}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 313.

\(^{177}\) Von Uexküll, “The new concept of Umwelt”, p. 122.

domain, an abode … One puts one’s signature on something just as one plants one’s flag on a piece of land”.

The male bowerbird of the *Ptilonorhynchidae* family collects bright-colored stones, components of its milieu, and arranges them in the front of a small “hut” it has built from twigs, on top of a green mat of moss it has laid out. Here, functional components (stones, twigs, moss) are transformed and arise as qualities. The bird’s action forms a rhythm between these components, and the rhythm has become expressive. After building itself a stage, the bird displays itself on it and begins its song, and thus declares its connection to its territory. Deleuze and Guattari state regarding the emergence of territory: “There is a territory precisely when milieu components cease to be directional, becoming dimensional instead, when they cease to be functional to become expressive. There is a territory when the rhythm has expressiveness. What defines the territory is the emergence of matters of expressions (qualities)”.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between milieus and territories in order to avoid a certain expressionist anthropomorphism. A singing bird does not express its mind-state autonomously, but is rather functioning according to the stimuli offered by its milieu. It is only when its activity – singing – is situated as a part of a wider rhythm of diverse milieus, does its song become expressive and territorializes the milieu. The expressive quality, the territorializing factor, precedes both the territory and the components out of which it is assembled. Expression, the affective intensity, abstracts the milieu into territory.

The key issue in territorialization is to note the autonomous status of expressive qualities: things must *be distinguished* from the components of a milieu in order to become expressive. A coded milieu needs to be “decoded” or “deterioralized” in order to become territory. A certain domain needs to be chosen as the location for a twig hut, a certain arrangement of the coloured stones needs to be made and certain qualities need to be decoded from their previous functions and be recoded into a new assemblage. Then things appear as new: instead of being consumed as nourishment, the juice of berries is used to color the walls of the twig hut, stones are set in

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formation, leaves are collected and placed upside down, so that their lighter downside is displayed.

If one can fathom an origin of art in this type of activity, it means art as deterritorialization or derangement of the “natural” state of things.\textsuperscript{181} Corresponding to the movement from affect-as-effect to the interval enabling becoming and further on to the immanence itself, as observed in section one, territoriality transforms the simple declaration of possession, “planting of the flag”, into autonomous expression exactly via decoding. The rhythms and relations between decoded components form an autonomous expressive element, which is independent of the (animal) subject’s state of mind. The twig hut and the song in front of it do not just manifest the domination of a certain place, but express the relations of different milieu components, which find their expression in the bird’s singing. Now “signature becomes style”\textsuperscript{182} and the bird-song, a reaction to inner and outer impulses, becomes music.

In response to Simondon and von Uexküll’s notion of individuation as “musical” or harmonic resonance, taking place on an affective level, Deleuze and Guattari use the musical term refrain to denote “the active coinvolvement of organisms and milieus in their mutual determination”.\textsuperscript{183} By avoiding any reference to subjects, consciousness or cognition, Deleuze and Guattari see the world as a continually self-producing or self-transforming multiplicity of relations. “The essential relation is no longer matters-forms (or substances-attributes); neither is it the continuous development of form and the continuous variation of matter. It is now a direct relation material-forces”.\textsuperscript{184} Individuations appear, coagulate and stratify, and then get swept away again in a perpetual process of becoming-other. When considered from this perspective, we can see how decoding or deterritorialization or “counter-actualisation”, taking place in the formation of territory, functions as a model for artistic activity. If art is the domain of the excessive – sensations and affects – it is by definition oriented towards its own supersaturated condition, the virtual. Art takes place as the site that thematises itself as a site, a domain or a stage, but simultaneously collapses its unity by expressing

\begin{footnotes}
\item[181] “Natural”, as defined by a thing’s function as a milieu component.
\item[182] Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 317.
\item[183] Bogue, \textit{Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts}, p. 73.
\item[184] Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 342.
\end{footnotes}
qualities that migrate from other milieus. Art as derangement: actualised Nature opening up to the virtual forces of the Cosmos.

2.4 Experience and Sense

As outlined so far concerning the function of affects in individuation, Deleuze regards Nature – or the world – as a continuously self-producing or self-creating system of differential relations. Out of this production rise singular beings as temporal stabilisations or coagulations of matter-flow. In order to preserve a dimension of creation in this system of production Deleuze introduces two ontological categories, the virtual and the actual. The process of actualisation of the virtual forms the “given” world of beings and things that our experience presents. There exists an asymmetry between these ontological “states”. For true novelty to appear in the world, the virtual must be distinct from the actual: if the process of actualisation was reversible, the virtual would exist either as a resource of pre-existent forms or as a set of mere possibilities already containing the determination of their outcome. As befits Deleuze’s philosophy of immanence, such pre-existent forms or determinations have to be replaced with the radical relationality of Simondon’s ontogenesis. At the core of Simondon’s theory of individuation is the concept of transduction, which denotes a state of tension between two or more pre-individual singularities and the subsequent resolution of this disparity that appears as a new “phase” in the existence of an individual. Because the pre-individual relations are themselves processes of individuation, there are no transcendental forms or laws but rather passing of information and formation of tendencies or habits.

Alberto Toscano notes that at the heart of Deleuze’s appropriation of Simondon lies the notion of the individual as a certain process of passing information: a “signal-sign system”. A signal denotes here the existence of a pre-individual field and its initial incompatibility or tension of disparate elements. An emerging individual is then a sign of the resolution of this problem, a

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“composite” phenomenon. Deleuze states: “Every phenomenon flashes in a signal-sign system. In so far as a system is constituted or bounded by at least two heterogeneous series, two disparate orders capable of entering into communication, we call it a signal. The phenomenon that flashes across this system, bringing about the communication between disparate series, is a sign”.\textsuperscript{186} This notion introduces Deleuze’s critique of epistemological representationalism. The viewpoint of representationalism embodies philosophy’s dream of “pure” empiricism where the subject encloses all that is – the given – and can yield an adequate explication of it. This would situate everything that exists within the sphere of representation and, in Deleuze’s view, would thus subjugate everything under total anthropomorphism. As Claire Colebrook formulates, Deleuze wants instead to posit givenness beyond the subject, knowledge or human experience. This appeal to the transcendental situates Deleuze’s philosophy as empiricism that extends beyond the subject.\textsuperscript{187}

The actualised world of representation is a world determined by habit: its modes are familiarity, recognition and common sense. In order to think beyond representations of the habitual world, one must discard abstract universals such as totality or subject and try instead to examine those conditions under which something new is produced; that is to say, the conditions that make differences appear. Deleuze, as an empiricist, defines actual things as “multiplicities”, series of pre-individual elements. Thought cannot thus begin from a foundation of pre-set meanings. It has to strive to examine the production of meaning in the same processes that produce the subject that interprets those meanings. Therefore one must start from the immediate given, the actual, and seek the conditions for that singular immediacy – not universal conditions for all possible experience and meaning, as was discussed in chapter one of this study. As signal-sign systems, individuations are given as phenomena (signs) out of which their genesis (signal) can be deduced. Individuations as signs, then, appear as expressions or symptoms of pre-individual or virtual “problems”. The starting point for such an empiricism is a fracture in the self (the Kantian “I” that thinks) that enables one to seek out the limits of

\textsuperscript{186} Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, p. 222.
representation and to address the conditions of the given. This immediacy outside representation can only appear as fracture or rupture in the “fabric” of normality. Individuation, when encountered as a sign of its conditions, belongs not to knowledge but to the realm of the sensible. As such, the sensible sign appears to us as something problematic and disruptive.

THE PROBLEMATIC SIGN
Deleuze first formulates the problematic nature of signs in his study *Proust and Signs*. He discards those interpretations of Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* that focus on memory and remembrance as the “key” to the interpretation of the novel. Instead, Deleuze reads the novel as a recount of an apprenticeship in signs: “Everything that teaches us something emits signs; every act of learning is an interpretation of signs or hieroglyphs”.188 During the vast span of Proust’s work the narrator explores signs of many different orders – all of which, provided that they truly are signs of something new and not mere recounts of what the narrator already knows, appeal to involuntary and unconscious mobilisation rather than to conscious act of understanding. Deleuze refers to a passage in the *Republic* where Plato distinguishes between two types of sensations: those that leave the mind tranquil and inactive, and those that force it to think. The first type are objects of recognition (“that is *x*”), recognition being the harmonious exercise of our faculties. The other type of sensations (“what is *that*?”) causes a discord in our faculties and forces us to think. What is at stake is no more a question of recognition: something snaps the mind out of its tranquil state and makes it seek out the truth.189

When considering the two types of sensations – recognition and encounter – Proust is a Platonist in the latter sense. For Deleuze *In Search of Lost Time* is a gigantic study of signs that force us to think. The narrator encounters deceptive signs of society life, signs of love, signs of jealousy *et cetera*. An anxious and jealous lover searching for veiled truth behind the actions of his beloved is a far more suitable character for Deleuze’s philosophy than a Platonic friend of truth. Philosophy’s error is to suppose a benevolence of though; in contrast,

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188 Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, p. 4.
the Proustian lover works under no good will or natural love for truth, but is rather forced to think under pressing circumstances.\textsuperscript{190}

Signs implicate and they must be explicated. Thus, they concern the sense of things. Sense must be understood here in its widest meaning: as in senses, faculties of the sensuous, the five senses. Another denotation of sense is “meaning” – it is the sense of a proposition. Further, sense can be understood as making sense or coming into one’s senses: to conform oneself to the good sense or to the common sense, or else be judged senseless. And, finally, sense can be understood in the context of sensing: did you just sense that? Something slippery, just out of reach of our senses.

To summarise or categorise, sense can be located in-between: between the senses – that is, the sensory apparatus of our bodies – and things themselves. Between one sense and another sense, as the wholeness of our affective existence, the bodily or material direction of our being-in-the-world; and between words and things, as in the “mode of presentation” of a sign.

The formulation of sense as the mode of presentation of a sign originates from Gottlob Frege, who, despite his neo-positivism, still posits certain objectivity to sense. Commenting on Frege, Chris Colwell notes that Frege distinguishes between the mode of presentation of a sign (its sense) and that which the sign designates (its reference). Frege’s purpose is to explain the functioning of propositions that contain signs that have no referent (for instance, fictional characters such as Dorian Gray) or cases in which propositions containing different signs have the same reference (for instance, when some phenomenon has different names, or when different names are used under different circumstances, the classic example being “morning star”, “evening star” and the planet Venus). While Frege privileges reference over sense, due to reference’s truth-value, sense still retains its objectivity – or at least its inter-subjectivity. Sense cannot be wholly subjective since it can be the property of more than one thinker. Thus, sense resides somewhere between the subjective ideas of thinkers and the objects to which thought refers.\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{190} Deleuze, \textit{Proust and Signs}, pp. 94–95.
Sense-in-Between

As Colwell states, the key thing to consider here is the status of the *in-between*. A philosophical notion of sense belongs neither to the subject (as in phenomenology or existentialism) nor to the object (as in positivism). This notion of sense coheres with Deleuze’s understanding of sense, as he is most of all a thinker of in-between states. For Deleuze, sense contains all its connotations: “meaning”, “direction”, sense as the faculty of perception and as the mode of presentation.

In his work *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze seeks to determine the status of meaning and meaninglessness through a series of inquiries with language, games and literature. For him, the realm of sense can be approached from two directions; one beginning with words or propositions, the other beginning with things or states of affairs.\(^{192}\)

On the side of language or words, we find that there are three relations within the proposition: 1) *denotation*, linking the proposition to particular things or states of affairs; 2) *manifestation*, linking the proposition to the person who speaks or expresses himself or herself, and to beliefs or intentions or such mental states of the speaker, and 3) *signification*, linking the proposition to general or universal concepts. We now have three factors: first, things, or states of affairs; second, the speaker, or the subject and third, language, or the order of signs. Deleuze proposes that each relation – denotation, manifestation and signification – offers itself as primary; that is, each one claims to be the ground for the other two relations. There is a contest between the three. In speech, it is the “I” which begins the speech act, the “I” that speaks, thus manifestation would seem to be the origin of proposition. As Deleuze notes, this is naturally the position of Descartes’ *Cogito*, which functions as the ground of all propositions: the “I” is understood as soon as it is said. It presents itself as having signification which is immediately understood and identical to its own manifestation.\(^{193}\)

However, the primacy of manifestation holds true only in speech, as there the “I” is primary in relation to concepts – primary to the world and to God. Yet, if another domain exists in which significations are valid and developed for themselves, then

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\(^{192}\) Colwell, “Deleuze, Sense and the Event of AIDS”, p. 6.

significations would be primary and would in turn provide the basis of manifestation. As Deleuze notes, this domain is language. We can note here the structuralist distinction between language \( (\text{langue}) \) and the use of language \( (\text{parole}) \). From the point of view of language, concepts such as God or the world are always primary in relation to the self as a manifested person, as well as to things as designated objects. Here, propositions appear as premises or conclusions, subsuming their objects under universal categories.\(^{194}\)

Although Deleuze does not offer an explanation for the third perspective of denotation, Colwell comments that he must mean the primacy of denotation in the “this-now-here” immediacy of sense experience.\(^{195}\) Lost between the three competing viewpoints – between denotation, manifestation and signification – we find ourselves in a circle that Deleuze calls “the circle of proposition”. None of the three relations will suffice to function as the principle of the proposition, as the condition of the possibility of the proposition or as the link between the proposition and what is external to the proposition. In addition to the three dimensions of the proposition, we need a fourth dimension, which is the dimension of sense.

Sense cannot be located in one of the three dimensions of the proposition, according to Deleuze. Denotation already presupposes sense, it cannot give rise to sense. Identifying sense with manifestation has a better chance of success, since the designators themselves have sense only in virtue of an “I” which manifests itself in the proposition. Deleuze considers this “I” a primary in manifestation and quotes Alice in Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland: “if you only spoke when you were spoken to, and the other person always waited for \( \text{you} \) to begin, you see nobody would ever say anything”. Sense would thus reside in the beliefs and desires of the person who expresses himself or herself.\(^{196}\)

However, the order of beliefs and desires is founded on the order of conceptual implications of significations. Even the identity of the self or the “I” that speaks is guaranteed only by the permanence of certain signifieds, the concept of God or the world. Thus, personal identity of the speaker, the “I” that speaks, is founded on the identity

\(^{194}\) Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 15.
\(^{195}\) Colwell, “Deleuze, Sense and the Event of AIDS”, p. 6.
\(^{196}\) Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, pp. 17–18.
of language. If the order of language collapses, or the significations are not established in themselves – as often happens, for instance, in Carroll’s stories of Alice, where God is indeed dead or mad or just arbitrary – the I finds itself “in conditions where God, the world and the self become the blurred characters of the dream of someone who is poorly determined”.

Still, language or signification also fails to establish itself as the ground of sense, given its recursive nature. We cannot make the sense of one proposition explicit in another proposition without presupposing the sense of the second proposition and so forth in infinite regress. Every proposition attempting to offer a definition of sense will itself require another sense.

Thus, the only domain for sense has to be a fourth dimension of the proposition, a dimension of its own. And this domain, as we have already noticed, is the milieu of the in-between. As Deleuze asks:

is there something, *aliquid*, which merges neither with the proposition or with the terms of the proposition, nor with the object or with the states of affairs which the proposition denotes, neither with the ‘lived,’ or representation or the mental activity of the person who expresses herself in the proposition, nor with concepts or even signified essences? If there is, sense, or that which is expressed by the proposition, would be irreducible to individual states of affairs, particular images, personal beliefs, and universal or general concepts. The Stoics said it all: neither word nor body, neither sensible representation nor *rational representation*.

Deleuze outlines sense as “the expressed of the proposition”, as an incorporeal, complex and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition. Sense then lies somewhere between propositions and states of affairs, on the brink of becoming nonsense.

**GOOD SENSE, COMMON SENSE AND NONSENSE**

The adjoining of sense to nonsense serves to distinguish sense from the good sense or the common sense. Good sense is, for Deleuze, the

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197 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 18

198 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 19, original emphasis.
sense of signification. As sense, it is ordered in one direction only, along the line of linear thinking. Good sense “foresees” – it is able to extrapolate from the present and the past in order to predict the becoming of the future, based on past and current models. As the “good” sense, it identifies the past, present and future as the Same, as a repetition of the Same in the face of the Other – a repetition that denies the possibility of the repetition of difference.  

Common sense, on the other hand, is the sense that is linked with and governs denotation and manifestation. As Deleuze states, common sense “identifies and recognises”, and in doing so it identifies and recognises both the self, the “I” that manifests, and the things which the self experiences.

Good sense and common sense function together in a self-complementing circle. The identity of common sense provides the direction for the movement of good sense. And, in turn, the action of good sense, “in bringing the manifold of experience under the categories of general signification provides the matter without which identity would remain empty”. This unidirectional nature of good and common sense is underpinned by the multiplicity of directions possessed by the “pure” sense, as postulated by Deleuze. This multiplicity of directions blurs the particular manifestations of good sense and the particular identities of common sense. Sense, thus, appears as nonsense from the point of view of good sense and common sense.

“Nonsense, absurdity, expressions that violate the rules of good and common sense…” No wonder Deleuze’s Logic of Sense deals widely with Alice’s adventures in Wonderland. As Colwell notes, Deleuze’s notion of sense grounds the functioning of language in its widest range, and that widest range includes nonsense and the absurd. Nonsense achieves such instances of meaning, representation and thinking that the good sense and common sense cut off in their illusory clarity. Colwell sums: “Nonsense is not the absence of sense; it is the sense that fails to result in denotation or significiation or manifestation”, residing in the fourth dimension of propositions.

199 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, pp. 75–76.
The appearance of nonsense, the stuttering of thought and language, brings us to the question of the sign as an encounter with the outside of thought. This outside can be approached as residing in the affective and will thus formulate common problematic to both material and linguistic dimensions: the notion of individuation, formation of beings and meanings, as a process of relations. Affect – the transduction of intensities – forms the structure of individuation, which happens relationally between an individual and its milieu, a pre-individual field. The notion of individuation-as-transduction can be understood in biophysical as well as in linguistic terms: the biological material process acquires an expressive dimension in the appearance of territory or sense when the components of a certain individuation arise as qualities or signs. They appear as deterritorialization of a territory or nonsense in language and thought – in other words, as the dimension of sensation and art.

So far, I have sketched the outlines of Deleuze’s ontology of encounters as a philosophy of relations and individuation as the synthesis of them. The discussion has used the terms and examples of a spatial process – crystal growth and cloud formation, spider webs and bat ultrasound – but, for Deleuze, the core question of the actualisation of the virtual as a synthesis of affects is a temporal one. Therefore, we must now turn our attention to the concepts of process, emergence and event from the point of view of time. In order to do this I shall look into Deleuze’s reading of Bergson and the value of the conception of time as intensive, qualitative dimension.
3. Time and the Virtual: The Intensive Difference

To sum up the core content of previous two chapters would be to state that regarding both subjectivity and indentity-formation Deleuze faces the question of their genesis. This genesis is defined in terms of the pre-individual field and internal, intensive difference. Deleuze locates this non-conceptual difference within the empirical: there is manifest diversity and in order to do justice to this diversity of the world we must not presume some kind of unity or totality “behind it all”. This means that difference is though “as it is”, in its self-grounding nature, without prior reference to a pre-established identity as the defining term of difference. Such difference is necessarily “internal” in the sense that it is present in every entity’s particularity: identity is not based on comparison between conceptually similar beings, but rather on the internal differentiating dynamic of every thing.

In chapter one the dynamic of internal difference was located in the fracture within the subject: in the “fractured I” born between the conceptual and the aesthetic. In chapter two this fracture was found in the threshold between individual and its milieu: a forming individual is shaped by the impulses of its milieu – yet it periodically encounters its “outside” as all milieus are interrelated and their boundaries are shifting. This mutual becoming makes possible the emergence of novel qualities as the becoming-other of individuals.

What must be addressed next is the temporal nature of intensive, internal difference. In Deleuze’s work, the questions of time, movement, difference, and the ontological friction between conceptual and non-conceptual come into focus most clearly in his reading of Henri Bergson. As his commentators have noted, Deleuze’s reception of Bergson is one of the main philosophical building blocks of his thinking, and as such warrants sustained attention.203 Even though the Deleuzean method of reading other

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203 One of the earliest commentaries devoting sustained attention to Deleuze’s relation to Bergson is Michael Hardt’s Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). As Deleuze’s contributions to ontological questions have been recently reappraised, a number of books and articles detailing Deleuze’s connection to Bergson have been published in the last few years; see for example Alexandre Lefebvre, The Image of Law: Deleuze, Bergson, Spinoza (Stanford: University of Stanfod Press, 2008); Valentine Moulard-Leonard, Bergson-Deleuze Encounters: Transcendental Experience and the
philosophers is to extract a set of concepts from a certain thinker’s system, sometimes involving seemingly odd choices of “minor” or neglected strands of thought, Bergson is one of the figures whose influence can be noticed throughout Deleuze’s *œuvre*. Likewise, the questions Deleuze focuses on are central in Bergson’s own philosophy, too.

In particular, three key texts in Deleuze’s work directly reference Bergson as their subject: “Bergson’s Conception of Difference”, an essay from 1956, his monograph *Bergsonism* from 1966, and both volumes of his *Cinema* books (1983 and 1985). Deleuze’s 1956 essay casts Bergson as undertaking a critique of certain general dominant philosophical strands of his time, deriving from Hegelian dialectics in particular. Granted, Bergson shares with Hegel a profound sense of the historicity of philosophy. Thought has arrived at a point in its history when it can recognise itself as historical and assess its own tendencies. We no longer fall under the illusion of timeless and super-human structures – that is, timeless and super-human history – but recognise those structures as creations of human life, historical and changing.

The recognition of the historicity of human thought in philosophy did take place during the same period of time as the early development of modern natural and social sciences, from the age of Enlightenment onwards, escalating in the 19th Century. Even though Bergson ends up criticising the natural sciences, as they seek to assume the position of “objective” truth by extracting unchanging laws or tendencies from the changing flux of the phenomenal world, science recognises, at the very least, the historical development of its own methodology too.

With the historicist notion of human thought in philosophy, the problems of novelty and creation become central. How is thinking able to escape its own bounds and renew itself? Similarly, the same question concerns also the processes of life and matter: where lies the impetus to change? And what is the nature of that impetus, the spark of life? As Elizabeth Grosz observes, it is due to the novelty of his concept of life that Bergson is the most Darwinian of philosophers and Deleuze, in turn, the most Bergsonian. Darwin formulated a

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*Thought of the Virtual* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008). Respectively, Alain Badiou also states that Bergson is the one “master” to whom Deleuze is most faithful: *The Clamor of Being*, p. 39.
conception of life that is an amalgam of activity and passivity: the action of individual variation and the passion of natural selection. Bergson follows this idea by conceiving life as the process of matter individuating itself. This happens in the intersection of the actual present time of matter and the virtual, accumulative time of memory. Life charges passive matter with vitality and the necessity to change. Deleuze’s further refinement is to discard the notion of the passivity of matter. For Deleuze, life is not contained merely within the organic matter, but in the dynamism within matter itself – whether organic or inorganic. As Grosz formulates it, Darwin, Bergson and Deleuze each distinguish life “as a kind of contained dynamism, a dynamism within a porous boundary”.

**The Intensive Time of Individuation**

The Bergsonian answer to the question of the dynamism inherent in creation and life is the concept of duration (durée). The concept of duration appears in different guises throughout Bergson’s writings, but its essence is the idea of reality as a dynamic state, a mobile and continuous flow. For instance, human consciousness manifests such continuity in the experience of different mental states. As Bergson states, experience does not consist of a passage from one mental state to another, as if the states were static and change was result of the passage only. On the contrary, the passage of mental states denotes a changing process in itself: “there is no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing change every moment: if a mental state ceased to vary, its duration would cease to flow”. Duration, then, emphasises a certain wholeness of change – process as mobility – and as such can be compared and contrasted to a dialectical view of progress. As can be seen from Bergson’s example of mental states, his conception of mobility is not progression from identity to another via negation but rather interlinking flow. Mental states do not negate each other, even thought they differ.

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206 Bergson’s insistence on the continuity of duration has been criticized by Gaston Bachelard in *The Dialectic of Duration*, trans. Mary McAllester Jones (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000). In short, Bachelard claims that the Bergsonian duration lacks the dynamism of a dialectical view of the world, with its lacunae and violent disruptions provoking development. For
At the core of Bergson’s critique against dialectics is his unique notion of difference, which has been of great influence to Deleuze. Whereas the Hegelian movement of dialectics proceeds by negation, leading the progress of the world via contradiction to *Aufhebung*, Bergson sees difference as something other than negative. The consideration of difference not in terms of identity (X is different from Y, because…) but identity in terms of difference (X differs from itself and thus produces itself via this internal dynamic) is the task of modern philosophy. As Deleuze comments on Bergson: “If philosophy has a positive and direct relation to things, it is only insofar as philosophy claims to grasp the thing itself, according to what it is, in its difference from everything it is not, in other words, in its *internal difference*”\(^{207}\).

As we have seen in several contexts during the present work, Deleuze posits the “authentic” internal difference, or difference in kind, against the “inauthentic” difference in degree that has dominated Western metaphysics since the classical period. This is necessary to bracket out the classical notion of substance that locates things “in” time, rather than approaches entities as becoming “through” time. As Deleuze states, “Bergson’s thesis could be summed up in this way: real time is alteration, and alteration is substance. Difference of nature is therefore no longer between two things or rather two tendencies; difference of nature is itself a thing, a tendency opposed to some other tendency”\(^{208}\). Here Deleuze equates difference of nature – difference of self with itself – and duration. The equation refers to the idea that an event is non-dividable, that is, *the production of time is the fundamental question of philosophy*. This means a commitment to the notion that everything real is not already determined by “possibility” (that is, a reserve waiting to be actualised at some moment in the linear progression of time), but rather that everything retains the “virtual” dimension of the “creative process of actualization”. In other words, events do not follow a deterministic plan; time in itself retains heterogeneity.\(^{209}\)

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\(^{207}\) Gilles Deleuze, “Bergson’s Conception of Difference” in *Desert Islands*, p. 32.

\(^{208}\) Deleuze, “Bergson’s Conception of Difference”, p. 37.

\(^{209}\) Deleuze, “Bergson’s Conception of Difference”, p. 38.
In his own work, Deleuze comes to share Bergson’s focus on time. As a representative of the emerging poststructuralism from the 1960s onwards, Deleuze is concerned with the development of a system of thought able to approach the question of difference in itself, or “authentic” difference, as mentioned above. Taken in the historical context, this type of approach seeks to address and criticise the main current of Western metaphysical thinking. By way of recapitulation, and to pose the matter in very general terms, the central concepts of such a metaphysical tradition include substance, essence, spirit, matter, et cetera — all of which imply the ideas of self-presence, identity and totality. These ideas form the solid ground, against which difference is contrasted and derived from. To think of difference itself requires the overturning of this configuration. For Deleuze, thought must strive to do justice to “pure” difference, if it is to escape the bounds of its stratification and enable true novelty and creation in the world. This is certainly a profoundly Bergsonian ambition and marks Bergson’s influence in Deleuze’s work.\(^{210}\)

In what follows, I will approach the question of creation in Bergson’s work, by introducing some of his most notable concepts (duration, intuition and multiplicity). I will outline some central conceptions of Bergson’s thinking through Deleuze’s reception of those ideas and his subsequent formulations, especially via an explication of Deleuze’s notion of the three syntheses of time which combine to produce a consciousness of time in the subject. Ultimately, to clarify the matter by means of a unified problematic, I shall present the “cinematic” question of time and the image: how are we able to approach the image as something fundamentally unrepresentative? To think of images as representations is to situate one’s thinking inside the categories of identity and totality, where images would be derivative of the discrete “originals” and would thus belong to an inferior category ontologically.

Cinematic images, as encompassing within them the questions of movement and time, provide Deleuze the model for approaching the flow of life itself. Cinema is able to present other durations, different than the one in which we find ourselves immersed. As an

\(^{210}\) This ambition also links both Bergson and Deleuze to the tradition of process philosophy, which prioritises change ontologically, and does not treat it as accidental to the substance. Other modern process philosophers include Alfred North Whitehead, Charles Peirce, Gaston Bachelard, and John Dewey, to name a few.
example of this kind of cinematic presentation, I shall provide an analysis of Cristian Mungiu’s film 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days (4 luni, 3 saptamâni si 2 zile) from 2007, viewed as the image of time – or rather, as intertwining images of different modes of time. This intertwining produces a representation that is able to address sensibility outside the “interested” point of view of our human “sensory-motor schema” and to present different durations of time: facets of the intensive, temporal difference itself.

3.1 Duration and Multiplicity: The Time of Differentiation

Deleuze shares Bergson’s basic conception of human consciousness: as Kant formulated it, we do experience the world only as it is synthesised in space and time. It follows that in our experience the dimensions of temporality and spatiality are amalgamated, as the one dimension cannot be approached without the other. But, as Bergson and, following him, Deleuze state, this is only one type of synthesis of the world, and supposing the existence of that type only will lead thought to a dead-end as thinking will end up reproducing the real on the basis of the empirical.\footnote{Bergson discusses the intertwining of space and time in relation to Kant in \textit{Creative Evolution}, pp. 223–225.} We become the passive receptors of a pre-given, already-synthesised world that is incapable of “true” novelty and creation, since the world only has to offer the “possible”. This is the world under the “Judgment of God”, a world that is essentially a process of stratification where things or entities are necessarily compared to a transcendental order (God, Nature, Substance, or other totality).\footnote{I can here only refer to the Deleuzean problematic of Nature and matter as dynamic processes of stratification and de-stratification. This view he derives largely from Spinoza, via the concept of the affect and Spinoza’s radical monism. This, alongside the question of individuation, is discussed in chapter two of the present text. As for stratification as the “Judgment of God”, see \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, chapter three.}

If thought is to overcome its stratified state, it must seek its own boundaries and by doing so encounter its own conditions. Thus, Bergson and Deleuze extend the historicity of thought “backwards” in the history of philosophy to Kant and the transcendental conditions of experience. It is true that human thought is conditioned by Kantian
synthesis that produces our spatio-temporal experience – but what is at question here is human thinking and intellect. Thought traverses other possibilities for synthesis: inhuman spatialisations and temporalisations. This is what Deleuze means by the indefinite mode of life, a life.\textsuperscript{213}

Instead of approaching time as a spatialised dimension, a “timeline” constituted by similar moments one after another, we can “displace” time and try to approach it in its pure state. This means a mode of time that cannot be distributed spatially into distinct points. Bergson calls this “pure” state of time “duration”.

TIME IN ITSELF: THE BERGSONIAN DURATION

The concept of duration lies at the core of Bergson’s philosophy and forms the cusp of his critique of both Kantian transcendental idealism as well as scientific thought. Science, for Bergson, cannot provide a fundamental account of time, since science confuses time with its spatialisations and temporalisations. The viewpoint of science ignores time as the dimension of change, Bergson claims, since science cannot conceptualise the “smooth” movement of change within its model of points-in-time. In human consciousness, time takes the form of two fundamentally different kinds: the scientific, spatialised, “chronological” time of separated instants, but also the experienced time, which takes transitions between different states as its essence.\textsuperscript{214}

Bergson sees this latter notion of time as time in its pure state, “unmixed” with the dimension of spatiality. The experienced time of duration can thus be seen in comparison to Kant’s notion of aesthetic apprehension which takes place outside the legislation of concept. This type of time, in its mobility, eludes the conceptual, abstract scientific thought. When one attempts to measure a moment, it is gone. One measures, instead, an immobile, complete timeline, whereas time in itself is always mobile and incomplete. Since we are so used to think of time within the conceptual framework of science, the

\textsuperscript{213} Deleuze, “Immanence: A Life” in \textit{Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995}, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2006), pp. 384–390. To put it very briefly, Deleuze attributes \textit{a life} as the transcendental field, pre-individual and impersonal, which gives rise to singular subjects and consciousnesses. Still, individuated entities retain their connection to this transcendental field and thus possess a “virtual” (not possible) potential for qualitative change.

nature of time as duration can be approached only by intuition. To help understand the case, Bergson offers the following image: a thread in two spools, one unrolling to represent the ageing of man and the diminishing length of his life span, the other spool rolling the thread to the form of a ball, representing the accumulation of memory.\(^\text{215}\)

The image of the two spools is misleading in the sense that it is necessarily a spatial representation – time as linear thread rolling between the spools – but it begins to illustrate the importance of memory to Bergson. For, indeed, consciousness equals memory to him. No two moments can be equal or alike, since even though they were otherwise completely similar, the latter moment includes the memory of the earlier one as well. Memory accumulates. Thus, consciousness cannot experience two similar moments, or else it would be totally fragmented and in a constant state of birth and death.\(^\text{216}\) The accumulation of memory makes consciousness essentially temporal, not spatial. This leads to the equation \textit{consciousness} = \textit{memory} = \textit{duration} and makes Bergson a philosopher of time in the first place. His philosophy is really an extended attempt to detach the thinking of time from all forms of spatiality.

If no two moments can be the same for consciousness, then the consciousness of time itself (without spatiality) must be heterogeneous in nature. For Bergson, the immediate data of consciousness forms a multiplicity and is temporal in its nature.\(^\text{217}\) In discussing the relation between time and space, Bergson makes the distinction between quantitative and qualitative multiplicities. Quantitative multiplicity would be, for example, a flock of sheep: a homogenous group (they are all alike), yet composed of distinctive individuals with spatial coordinates. The flock is therefore numeric, discontinuous and yet homogenous. The qualitative multiplicity, however, is temporal in nature: it does not form a set with definite spatial coordinates but unveils in linear (spatialised) time as a process. As an example, we can think of the shifting of emotions in ourselves:

\(^{216}\) Bergson, \textit{Matter and Memory}, pp. 128–130.
\(^{217}\) This is in contrast to phenomenology in which the multiplicity of phenomena is ultimately related to a unified consciousness, and therefore falls back unto the transcendent totality that phenomenology started to criticise. See Deleuze, \textit{Bergsonism}, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 117–118. The concept of “true” multiplicity, as derived from Bergson’s philosophy, is essential for Deleuze’s own thought.
emotions are not distinct, they do not negate each other and they cannot be juxtaposed, therefore the qualitative multiplicity is continuous and heterogeneous.\textsuperscript{218}

As Leonard Lawlor and Valentine Moulard suggest, the Bergsonian concept of multiplicity has to be seen as an attack on Kant, who, for Bergson, ends up producing a mixture of time and space in his philosophy, as touched upon above.\textsuperscript{219} The spatiotemporal amalgamation results in difficulties, especially when considering the possibility of freedom and free will, since Kant ends up positing the idea of free will transcendentally, outside the sphere of man. As Bergson states, freedom requires necessarily a dimension outside mechanistic causality: \textit{mobility}, and he is committed to the notion of man’s freedom of action outside the material dimension bound by the laws of causality.\textsuperscript{220}

QUALITATIVE PROCESS: THE INDIVISIBILITY OF MOVEMENT

Two central concepts have emerged so far in Bergson’s elaborations: time and movement, and they both can be equated with duration. I have already followed Bergson’s argument about the indivisibility of time – divided time is spatialised – but a similar reasoning applies to movement as well. Granted, when one starts to think about movement, it is likely to be in terms of spatiality: an object moving in a certain space. But this conception of movement already involves a separation between the object and the “empty” space it moves across. Bergson’s aim is to show that this distinction does not capture the nature of movement, as it should be grasped from the perspective of the moving object. Otherwise we end up not with movement, but immobility as the object of our thinking.

In \textit{Matter and Memory} Bergson takes up the ancient Greek philosopher Zeno’s paradoxes of movement and its impossibility. In short, movement becomes impossible for Zeno because of movement’s infinite divisibility. If we want to get from point A to

\textsuperscript{218} Bergson, \textit{Matter and Memory}, pp. 267–269.
\textsuperscript{220} Bergson, \textit{Matter and Memory}, p. 243.
point B, we first have to leave from A, passing through some “halfway point” towards B. Still, arriving at the halfway point requires itself another halfway point, and this arrival yet another halfway point, leading to infinite regression. As a result, we will never arrive at point B.\(^{221}\)

For Bergson, paradoxes like this mean that movement – as well as time – is often confused with spatiality in common sense. Duration, as movement and time, must be indivisible; otherwise we will not get to the temporal essence of it, but rather remain within the spatial framework. The example of Zeno’s paradox does not capture movement as such, but presents a series of still images. If I were to move my hand across my desk, it would start from a halted position, move along the plane of the table and proceed to a halt again at the other side of the desk. Surely, I can see the trajectory my arm makes, as it arcs across the desk. Likewise, I can plot as many intermediary points within the trajectory as I wish, representing the different stages of the movement. Yet again, these points and stages “freeze” movement in its temporality, states Bergson: “at a stage we halt, whereas at these points the moving body passes. Now a passage is a movement and a halt is an immobility. The halt interrupts the movement; the passage is one with the movement itself”.\(^{222}\)

**The Method of Intuition**

If duration, in its temporality and multiplicity, is out of reach of our common sense, how can we grasp it? If our everyday spatialised intelligence is guided by our needs and interests, how to achieve a sense of the world that is purely temporal? Conceptual thinking essentially partakes in the spatial, as according to Kant, it cannot grasp movement as such. Hence, Bergson states, to achieve an “immediate contact” with an object, is to approach it in its temporal continuity. At the core is the idea that analytical (meaning “symbolic” for Bergson) representation can never give an account of a thing’s dimensional value. Bergson gives an example of walking through a city. The experience of that walk can only grasped by simple intuition, not by the most elaborate reconstruction of the walk via juxtaposed

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\(^{221}\) Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 251.

photographs taken from every possible angle.\textsuperscript{223} What Bergson is looking for is something akin to Kant’s synthetic a priori judgment, which captures the process of construction of the object, as discussed in chapter one of this study.

Intuition would thus be a method of getting back to things as they are, in themselves as duration. An illuminating example of duration can be found in \textit{Creative Evolution}, where Bergson discusses the dissolving of a lump of sugar into a glass of water. If we want to mix the sugar with the water, we must wait for it to dissolve. “This little fact is big with meaning”, comments Bergson, since in this situation we have the interlinking of several durations or several pre-individual meters or series as they form the rhythm of the individual named “sugared water”. Surely, one can give a scientific account of sugar’s dissolving, even measure the time it takes for the crystals to mix into water, but it would not account for our \textit{waiting} for this to happen.\textsuperscript{224}

The “mathematical” model of sugar’s dissolution would give equal value to each moment it abstracts in the process. However, for us, this would not be an any-moment-whatever, but a unique one, a perhaps frustrating and boring wait for the sugar’s dissolution. The moment also incorporates an encounter of different durations: our own, the sugar’s crystalline duration and the water’s fluid one. As for the dissolving of sugar: a stream or flow of phenomena has its own direction and rhythm. A sugar cube, when immersed in water, starts to liquefy and this process is irreversible. If the process is abstracted into points in time, the moments can be “re-visited” in their representations, and the process turned backwards. This is an impossibility, if we conceive time as duration.

Analytical thought can proceed \textit{ad infinitum}, piling up different viewpoints, dividing the analysed object and translating the divided fragments into symbols, but it never succeeds in grasping a thing in its uniqueness, in its duration. This is because the components of analysis are by necessity generalised, symbols or concepts. Their divisibility forms the core of the problem: first, concepts themselves represent isolated perspectives on the thing examined, and secondly, they form

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a system of concepts, out of which one can choose the most appropriate. The analytical thinking has its origin in our practical, everyday needs. Human intellect, in its evolution, has developed the patterns most suited to its survival, and these include perception of the world in terms of necessity and utility. As such, this analytical intellect is practical, useful and even necessary for us to function in the everyday world, to succeed in planning things, and to create scientific models of the workings of the world. Still, for philosophy this cannot be the final word. In phenomenological terms, philosophy must move beyond the intentionality of perception. The method of intuition is then an attempt to achieve “absolute”, disinterested knowledge outside the habitual and interested human viewpoint. Deleuze highlights the notion of intuition in his reading of Bergson, as it functions as a way beyond the boundaries of human subjectivity. Kant teaches us a valuable lesson: the given world of our experience is the result of a transcendental synthesis, but this synthesis must not concern the conditions of real experience. In a word, the world could be different. Or, the world is difference. Therefore we must take a step further from Kant and intuit the genesis of the syntheses that constitute the given. This genesis Deleuze posits as the “pure” difference – or difference without identity – and he sees it as a fundamentally temporal term. Therefore he turns his attention to the habitual formation of subjectivity as a series of temporal syntheses, and in the next section I shall describe his contemplations on the matter.

3.2 The Three Syntheses of Time

Deleuze considers the common sense notions of time in the actual experience of a human subject in *Difference and Repetition*. In a way that is influenced by Bergson’s conception of time, as well as Hume’s concept of habit, Deleuze distinguishes the three transcendental conditions – three syntheses of time – that combine in the consciousness of the “passage” of time. Our experience of the passing of time is thus constituted by a series of syntheses, making up the phenomenal time. The three syntheses of time are passive as they concern the formation of subjectivity in its passive receptivity. In this
way the passive synthesis of subjectivity is, like Deleuze’s interpretation of Kant’s aesthetic sensation, determined by the bodily dimension of spatio-temporal complexes rather than by the conceptual order imposed by a transcendent subject. In fact, Deleuze goes beyond the psychic life in developing his notion of passive synthesis, as he maintains that this originary synthesis concerns biophysical life in general. Life, in the barest terms, is the contraction of excitation on material surface. Life contemplates: not in a psychological sense, but as “a sensitive plate”, retaining and joining singular instants to form a continuum that appears to the consciousness as “living present”, the flow of time.\footnote{Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, p. 70.}

Everything is contemplation. Deleuze asks: “What organism is not made 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?” The element of contemplation Deleuze nominates as “soul”. Or rather, in the plural terms “souls”, as the individual is composed of smaller-scale individuals. “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’.” And these souls are not consciousness as “[t]hese contemplative souls must be assigned even to the rat in the labyrinth and to each muscle of the rat”.\footnote{Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, p. 75.}

Originary synthesis, as a process of excitation and its contemplation in contraction is essentially temporal, pre-individual and pre-conscious. As Deleuze states, the synthesis of time in the subject is necessarily passive since it is not “carried out by the mind, but occurs \textit{in} the mind which contemplates, prior to all memory and all reflection”.\footnote{Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, p. 71.} As parts in the habitual formation of subject, each synthesis exhibits a certain form of repetition serving as the foundation, ground and ungrounding of time, respectively.
THE FIRST SYNTHESIS OF PRESENT AND HABIT

The first synthesis of time “expresses the foundation of time upon the basis of living present”.\(^{228}\) This is a synthesis of the habit, a repetition of present moments into linearity. Given three discrete moments (A, B, C), we contract them into a continuity by dividing them as belonging to a series running from past to future via the present moment. This synthesis, acting according to Hume’s concept of association, provides the relation between one moment and another. The present, as such, would be meaningless without relation to other moments. The present moment lives in the recall, or retention, of the past and anticipation, or projection, of the future. The first synthesis, as the foundation for the empirical consciousness of time, can be schematised as in the following figure:

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{A) Past} \quad \text{Retention} \quad \text{B) Present} \quad \text{Projection} \quad \text{C) Future}
\end{array}\]

This synthesis is a necessary condition for the occurrence of the present moment in the first place. Without it there would be no one to contemplate or gather together the multiplicity of singular excitations. Deleuze states: “Habit [the first synthesis] is the originary synthesis of time, which constitutes the life of the passing present”.\(^{229}\)

Yet, what is characteristic of the present is that it passes. Here appears a paradox, since what passes must have something to pass through. The first synthesis does not provide us with this dynamic; it is only a static line of time. As the present constitutes time, how can it pass within the constituted time? There must be a transcendental ground for the empirical foundation of present, passing time. Deleuze continues: “there must be another time in which the first synthesis of time can occur”.\(^{230}\) The present moment in itself does not explain the notion of its passing. First there is moment A. Then comes moment B. Does this second moment come into presence out of nowhere to “push” the previous moment into the past? There must be something more than mere present within the present, for otherwise the appearance and disappearance of present moments would be unexplainable. Time

\(^{228}\) Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 114.

\(^{229}\) Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 80.

\(^{230}\) Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 79, original emphasis.
passes and for this passing it needs a “wider” temporal dimension. What would this transcendental ground be, “against” which the present moment would gain the momentum of passing? Deleuze’s answer is derived from Bergson: memory.

**The Second Synthesis of Past and Memory**

The second synthesis of time, memory, is that of the virtual past. The present moment contains both the passing present as well as a ground that is transcendental to it. The temporal dimension of the past, in the way Bergson fathomed it as duration, lingers in every moment, yet it is qualitatively different from the present. Duration presents us the internal difference, the difference in kind: “Duration *is that which differs from itself*”. The virtual past is not a depository of present moments in the sense that it would be merely a passive receptacle. Misleadingly, the notion of passive accumulation of time in the form of memory is easily invoked by Bergson’s example of time as a thread running between two spools. Yet, as a qualitatively different mode of time, the virtual past cannot have been present as a present moment, even though it is the condition for the present.

This notion is difficult to understand, since, when leaving the first synthesis behind, we also forsake the empirical understanding of time. Here memory, or the virtual past, must be understood as Bergson’s duration, as a “pure, *a priori* past, the past in general”. This virtual past functions as the “double” of each actual present moment. It is a double since it exceeds the recollection and prediction of the first synthesis, which happens in accordance to the interests and needs of an empirical subject. Therefore, past is not a “dimension of time, [it] is the synthesis of all time of which the present and the future are only dimensions”. In a way, the pure past provides “spatiality” to time, in terms of which it is possible to represent past present moments. Virtual past is the transcendental condition of empirical time. As the actual present moment is the contraction of the virtual past’s transcendental field, the infinite layers of pure past are, from the point of view of consciousness, understood as memory. To use, once again, the Leibnizian notion of clear and distinct zones of

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232 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 81.
233 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 82.
perception, we can fathom the pure past as the indistinct totality of
time, out of which the intentionality and interests of consciousness
represent moments as memories.

The virtual past is, then, not an extensive accumulation of
singular moments, a collection of “that which has happened”, but
rather an intensive dimension of time, as discussed earlier regarding
Bergson’s conception of duration. Therefore, the virtual past does not
consist of an extended set of discrete past moments. It is the
preservation of the past in and for itself. As our consciousness is
grounded towards the interests of adaptation to our environment,
recollections are also born out of the needs of utility and practicality.
Actual memory is always a representation: it is formed from some
perspective, a clear and distinct zone. The virtual memory is the past
as it is – our relation to it cannot be anything but disinterested, in the
Kantian aesthetic sense, as well as regarding Bergson’s conception of
intuition as an anti-analytical stance.

Thus, in order to understand the virtual nature of time, the
Bergsonian method of intuition is needed. In the actualised world,
identities are formed according to an opposition between different
elements. X is not Y, not Z … et cetera. Therefore the relation of
difference between things is something that is only secondary to
identity. As can be recalled from Bergson’s discussion of intuition as
activity trying to grasp a qualitative multiplicity, the intensive
difference is not an accidental, but a primary and generative relation.
The virtual past is of the intensive type. Certainly, Bergson proposes
that there is a “storehouse” memory, out of which we can recall
successive instants as if looking into the past. But alongside this
memory is the pure memory of the virtual past.\textsuperscript{234} The first kind of
memory is comprised of extensions of the present, as they refer to
their moment of being present. In a way, the storehouse memory
attests to our finitude, as it expresses – bio-physically as well as
psychically – the limits of our powers to contract singular instances
into our being. The virtual past does not know this limit. It is the past
as such, the unlimited identity expressed in the roar of Leibniz’s sea,
out of which we acquire representations as distinct perceptions. The
virtual past can be envisioned as the whole of the past “pushing” itself

\textsuperscript{234} Bergson, \textit{Matter and Memory}, pp. 162–164.
into the present by offering present perceptions additional context and depth.

**The Third Synthesis of Future and Thought**

Up until now we have gathered from Deleuze two temporal dimensions; those of the passing present and the pure past. Still, our relation to pure past necessitates further questioning. If the pure past is the co-existence of all pasts, how to make a distinction within this virtual past? In the present, a *version* of the past is selected, from the point of view of the actual moment. The pure past, in turn, is independent of such active selection. What is the nature of the relation between these two temporal dimensions? Deleuze offers an example: consider two events, one infantile, one adult, in the life of a person. What is the nature of their relation? It is clear through psychology and psychoanalysis that childhood events can have an influence on later adult life. Yet, this influence is not mechanistic or continuous but takes place when triggered and bestows its effect as from a distance. The past does not influence the present in a continuous manner: there must be *chance*, the dimension of future, to initiate the influence of past events on the present.\(^{235}\)

Deleuze’s account of the three syntheses retains a decidedly Kantian structure, and one can fathom the passive temporal syntheses – present, past and future – as corresponding respectively to Kant’s apprehension, reproduction and recognition.\(^{236}\) In chapter one I followed Deleuze’s reading of the Kantian synthesis as it ends up in the catastrophe of the sublime. Here the same is stated in terms of temporality. In the beginning there is the discontinuity of singular instants. Then, in the first synthesis of habit, the present moment is constructed as retention and projection order the singular excitations into series to form a passage of time. The second synthesis of memory introduces the transcendental field of pure past as the condition of the present moment. It is an impersonal past, time in itself, out of which memories are actualised and “personalised” from the perspective of the present. Past, in itself, does not yield any answers or direction to things. Without a third dimension of the future nothing would be

\(^{235}\) Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 104.

\(^{236}\) Joe Hughes highlights the Kantian structure of Deleuze’s philosophical system in his admirably clear exposition *Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009). See especially pp. 91–124.
determinable. This is why Deleuze nominates the third synthesis of the future as “thought”\textsuperscript{237}: it is the determination of objects of thought out of the singularity of the personal present and impersonality of the pure past.

Thought as determination is the opposite of a Platonic conception of thinking as “reminiscence”, unearthing already existing relations within being. The world is a multiplicity of relations external to their terms and this is why the pure past is qualitative and intensive – that is, virtual. There is nothing necessary in representations pushing up to the surface of our consciousness. Rather, thought experiments with combinations of different elements as it actualises those representations. Difference appears as difference in nature – the internal difference – only outside the empirical, in the virtuality of the pure past, and it is the object of the futurity of thought to intuit this difference. Yet, one must not conceive thought as an exercise of free will. As Deleuze states, the “present exists, but the past alone insists” and thus propels thought to an encounter with the virtual past.\textsuperscript{238}

Thinking as the act of philosophy is, then, experimental and not analytical. Thought strives to think difference as difference, to remain faithful to the multiplicity of the real outside the conditions of possible experience. Bergson considers that Kant’s project of critical philosophy ends up stuck within the analytical approach: “if metaphysics is only a construction, there are several systems of metaphysic equally plausible, which consequently refute each other, and the last word must remain with a critical philosophy, which holds all knowledge to be relative and the ultimate nature of things to be inaccessible to the mind”. For Bergson, this is not enough, for this means that philosophy remains within the framework of human needs and utility and thus comes to stand for “an intellect enslaved to certain necessities of bodily life, and concerned with a matter which man has had to disorganize for the satisfaction of his wants”.\textsuperscript{239} This clearly echoes the Deleuzean critique of Kant’s philosophy as succumbing to a pre-established image of thought.

As Deleuze summarises in \textit{Bergsonism}, the notion of intuition denotes an immediate knowledge, but it must be capable of forming a

\textsuperscript{237} Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, pp. 113–114.
\textsuperscript{238} Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, p. 85, my emphasis.
\textsuperscript{239} Bergson \textit{Matter and Memory}, p. 240.
method, if it is to act as a guiding principle for metaphysics. The crux of the matter lies in the freedom to state problems: it is erroneous to restrict the categories of the true and the false to solutions only. A speculative problem is solved as soon as it is stated, since it “contains” the possible solutions in itself. A “true” problem is characterised by its persistence. As we saw in discussion on Deleuze’s notion of problems in chapter one, problems have more to do with learning than with knowing.240

In short, the ability and freedom to pose problems testify to the fact that we can reach out beyond the given and thus approach the conditions of the given. We must consider each entity as a **symptom** of its conditions. Deleuze summarises thus: “We will never find the sense of something (of a human, a biological or even a physical phenomenon) if we do not know the force which appropriates the thing, which exploits it, which takes possession of it or is expressed in it. A phenomenon is not an appearance or even an apparition but a sign, a symptom which finds its meaning in an existing force”.241

Thought is able to determine a particular group of symptoms by way of constructing a distinctive assemblage out of the unlimited senses of objects. This bears a striking resemblance to the artistic process: thought is understood as **composition**. Deleuze has famously stated that philosophical enquiry should resemble a detective novel or a work of science fiction, not in imitation of the form, but in sharing a similar drive to approach a given situation as a set of leads and to construct a world out of them.242 As Deleuze has drawn parallels between philosophical thought and other types of creative thinking, we can approach, for example, filmmakers as participating in the creation of new possibilities of experience, constructing an assemblage out of assorted parts (frames, shots, sounds and cuts). In the following section I shall briefly sketch Deleuze’s ideas about cinema, and consider how that medium can contribute to the “thinking outside our boundaries”, a project that philosophy and the arts share. Moreover, Deleuze’s notion of cinema connects many issues that were raised in his reading of Bergson, especially concerning the form of time.

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241 Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 3.
242 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. xix.
3.3 Cinema: Time and Movement

Time and movement, the ultimate Bergsonian concepts, would also seem to be the ultimate concepts of cinema. Bergson, however, criticised the new cinematic art form of his time and maintained that cinema failed to present movement as such, and instead resorted to presenting an immobile series of images.\(^{243}\) That goes to say that cinema, ultimately, betrays the dimension of time in favour of spatiality as it does not capture the inner quality of moment as such. Bergson’s doubts about cinema probably stem from the relative novelty of the medium in late 19\(^{\text{th}}\) and early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) Century. In 1878 photographer Eadweard Muybridge famously managed to capture the trot of a horse with 24 cameras, providing a paradigm for technology’s ability to dissect fluid motion and isolate it into fragments. Muybridge’s series of photographs capturing the sequentiality of movement would aptly serve to illustrate Bergson’s idea of the representation of motion that actually produces only immobility. This series of “motion pictures” results in cutting the gait of the animal into objective still points. This cutting-up of movement is also presented against a measuring grid that represents the space that the horse-object moves across. Bergson even names this “false” conception of movement as “the cinematographic illusion”.\(^ {244}\)

Yet, out of all Deleuze’s writings not devoted to a single philosopher, Bergson features most prominently in Deleuze’s two volumes on cinema. As Deleuze notes, despite Bergson’s criticisms of the medium, his ideas about time and movement encompass the essential features of cinema. Granted, Bergson seems to be correct in stating, that the cinematic image presents an illusion of movement – “the oldest illusion” – as it is a photogramme, consisting of numerous immobile sections. But, Deleuze argues, cinema gives us precisely a moving image, not an image that has movement added to it. In a cinematic image movement belongs “to the intermediate image as immediate given”.\(^ {245}\)

Thus, in order to think of cinema as such – its very “nature” – we must return to Bergson: “nothing can prevent an encounter

\(^{243}\) Bergson, \emph{Creative Evolution}, pp. 331–332.

\(^{244}\) \emph{Creative Evolution}, p. 332.

between movement-image ... and the cinematographic image”.\textsuperscript{246} In hindsight, we can see that Bergson’s philosophical ideas were shaped by the same cultural, economic and technological climate that gave rise to early forms of cinema. Hence, maybe, the distrust: for Bergson, cinema was perhaps too much “of its time” and he did not see the potential inherent in this emerging medium. Obviously, cinematic presentation was still in its infancy at the time of the publication of Creative Evolution in 1907.

Deleuze’s aim in his two volumes of Cinema is to trace out the development of the form, but also to approach cinema as a type of thinking. Not the conceptual, linguistic type, but the one that experiments with matter and motion and through juxtaposition of various elements tries to give a presentation to various durations. In general, Deleuze posits a fundamental shift between classical cinema up until World War II, and post-war cinema. The two volumes devote themselves to these two periods, and their titles – Cinema 1: The Movement-Image and Cinema 2: The Time-Image – indicate the central concepts Deleuze finds specific to the earlier and later periods. The former type of cinema, characterised by moving-images, is epitomised by the classical Hollywood-era genre film and has its essence in movement and action. The later type, presenting the time-image, is portrayed by European post-war art film, where the narrative sequence of images is often disjointed and cut off from the sensory-motor schema that our common sense expects.

THE MOVEMENT-IMAGE AND TIME-IMAGE

Even though Deleuze’s Cinema books proceed by a detailed taxonomy of various images as cinematic elements (the movement- and time-image, plus their various subtypes), I shall confine myself here to a short elaboration of the two main types of images. As mentioned, the movement-image is a defining feature of the classical cinema for Deleuze: “The cinema of action depicts sensory-motor situations: there are characters, in a certain situation, who act, perhaps very violently, according to how they perceive the situation. Actions are linked to perceptions and perceptions develop into actions”.\textsuperscript{247} The “sensory-motor schema” denotes a view of the world that is oriented

\textsuperscript{246} Deleuze, The Movement-Image, p. xix.
\textsuperscript{247} Gilles Deleuze, Negotiations, p. 51.
towards the survival and well-being of the subject. Within it things appear in terms of the good sense and common sense, actions have objectives and effects have causes.

The movement-image presents a situation, in which the characters, as well as the viewers, inhabit a narrative – and logical – world. The characters can interact with the world, events in it “fall into place”, the movement-image is a form of spatialised cinema: time determined and measured by movement. This does not exclude montage, for the impressions of movement and action are enhanced, rather than diminished, by the techniques of cutting and juxtaposing the shots. It is relevant that in the movement-image past, present and future can be distinguished from each other. The viewer is kept aware whether a scene refers to something that has happened in the past or alludes to something that is going to happen in the future.

The time-image, on the other hand, presents the past, future and present as indistinguishable and the sensory-motor schema as collapsed. Deleuze locates this tendency of the modern cinema in the conditions of the post-war period which presents: “Situations which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces which we no longer know how to describe”.248 Rather than telling a story, the time-image presents disoriented, discordant movements that form other patterns than narrative structures. The time-image oscillates between the past and the future – it is sense in its formation, inhabiting the temporality of Aion as it tears a bifurcating split into the present time of Chronos, as was discussed in chapter two. The time-image refracts time like a crystal and presents time’s two directions out of the present which Deleuze describes: “One of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past”.249 Time-image “disturbs” the memory – the actual memory of chronological recollections – by presenting something that exceeds our sensory-motor schemas and reveals the co-existence of all pure past. This is achieved, for example, by “irrational” cuts between images, stating the exteriority of relations between them. Movement image cuts between images to present the continuity of motion – at its barest it functions like the Muybridge photographs. Time-image presents the disruption of this schema and,

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249 Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, p. 79.
accordingly, brings to the fore the very structure of perception on which cinema is founded. Cinematic images are able to present us an acentred view of the world. In short, they remind us of the catastrophe of the sublime waiting at the end of the Kantian synthesis of faculties. According to Deleuze, cinema has devised methods to address its ultimate subject matter: time. By images that may be categorised as belonging to sub-sets of time-images, cinematic presentation has achieved glimpses of time as difference.

IMAGE, BRAIN AND PROCESS
Deleuze begins the discussion of movement-images with a commentary on Bergson. He situates Bergson in a time, when the “historical crisis of psychology coincided with the moment at which it was no longer possible to hold a certain position. This position involved placing images in consciousness and movements in space”. Thus, images were isolated into a matter of consciousness, they were qualitative and without extension. Movement, on the contrary, would be spatial: extended and quantitative. Deleuze sees Bergson’s philosophy as an attempt to join the two disparate dimensions, so that things may pass from one order to the other. Otherwise we would end up with the dead ends of pure idealism or pure materialism.

The birth of cinema takes place in a similar cultural and scientific environment and Deleuze notes the “factors which placed more and more movement into conscious life, and more and more images into the material world”. Cinema would thus produce its own evidence of this as the movement-image. While philosophy still had to deal with the anchored and centred position of the subject, cinema had the advantage of lacking a “natural” centre. Montage presents us with the possibility of a variety of divergent “views”. Deleuze speculates: “Instead of going from the acentred state of things to centred perception, [cinema] could go back up towards the acentred state of things and get closer to it”. To phrase it otherwise, cinema could be able to present a multiplicity. For Deleuze cinema does not produce a spatialised image of time, but presents the interconnectedness of time and space. The cinematic image is

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250 Deleuze, The Movement-Image, p. 58.
252 Deleuze, The Movement-Image, p. 60.
movement: it is not a question of illusion – the Bergsonian “cinematic” illusion of 24 frames per second – but movement as such. A similar presentation is achieved in the time-image, as it shows temporality without reducing it to spatiality. Representation based on identity thus falters.

This denotes a transition from the human condition to an inhuman perspective and this is what Deleuze means when he states: “the brain is the screen”. The brain, as the rest of human existence for Deleuze, is a process; it is made up of the encounters that it takes up and which it organises through the body’s active and passive powers. As such, thought extends out into the world and we ourselves are shaped by our experiences. This notion defuses the union between thinking and human consciousness. Thought exceeds the boundaries of the thinker.

Alongside philosophy, Deleuze sees the history of arts, as well as the history of science, as alternative fields of development of thought. Philosophy, arts and sciences experiment with reality and create new reality themselves. Thus, for Deleuze, the history of cinema is not localisable somewhere within human history, as a simple part of the whole that transcends its parts. Rather, the “event” of cinema – as well as the events of baroque painting or atonal music, for example – transform “man” in kind, not in degree. There is a genuine change, something new created in the world. This links the practice of art with thinking. Both are able to reach out beyond the human condition – the conditions of possible experience – to present a qualitative change. In the case of cinema, artistic thought presents us with the time-image: a non-spatialised image of time through the cinematic apparatus. Even though Deleuze often characterises the time-image in terms of techniques of montage or cut of the film, I propose that the time-image can reside in a variety of cinematographic presentations. In what follows, I conclude this chapter with an example of the interplay between movement- and time-images in modern cinema.

253 Gilles Deleuze, “The Brain is the Screen” in Two Regimes of Madness, p. 283.
Durations: 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days

Otilia and Găbiță, the central characters of Christian Mungiu’s film *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, share a room in a student dormitory in Bucharest during the final years of Communism in Romania. Găbiță is pregnant and needs an abortion, which is illegal. Distracted and inexperienced, she seems to have postponed the abortion until very late, and needs the more steady and practical Otilia to help in managing to arrange the operation. As they have to resort to a clandestine non-professional “physician” to perform the abortion, arrangements have to be made in secrecy. Everywhere they encounter obstacles, from getting a hotel room to paying the abortionist and meeting his ever-growing demands.

Finally, they manage to get a room, and after having succumbed to the requirements – money and sex – of the abortionist, he performs the operation. Injecting a probe, he leaves Găbiță to wait for the foetus to come out. He tells her that it might take some time, and she has to lie still during the waiting. Otilia has to leave her friend, since she feels obliged to go to a party at her boyfriend’s parents. She leaves the hotel and goes to the boyfriend’s home, only to get stuck at the dinner table among middle-aged strangers. She is visibly anxious to get back to the hotel, and tries to call Găbiță a few times, with no answer. Finally she manages to leave and rushes back to her friend. We find that the probe has worked and Găbiță has had the abortion, the foetus lying dead on the bathroom floor. Now they have to dispose of the already relatively developed foetus, and since Găbiță feels very weak, understandably, Otilia does what she has to do and runs out to hide the small body. In desperation, she finally drops the foetus into a dumpster. Returning back to hotel, she finds to her horror that Găbiță is not in the room. She fears the worst, until it turns out that Găbiță has managed to go downstairs to the hotel restaurant and is having a dinner. The two friends sit by the table, in silence, and the movie ends.

It is clear to see that the film deals with time as its subject matter. Everything in the narrative happens during one day. The title *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* refers to the time Găbiță has been pregnant – a very long time in terms of abortion. Then there is further delay: the abortionist tells her to wait for the probe to take effect,
which should take a maximum of two days and this results in difficulties securing the privacy of her hotel room.

All in all, the narrative unfolds in a fashion that represents a very “realistic” flow of time. The scenes are long, with very little editing between the shots and as such the film builds upon movement-images in its construction. However, the viewer is constantly presented by the “thickness” of time in the form of delays, hindrances, obstacles: the hotel room is difficult to secure; Otilia has to switch the hotel once as she cannot get the room that was originally booked; the Communist-era bureaucracy requires constant showing of identity cards and filling of forms; the abortionist has to be persuaded to perform the operation, since the pregnancy is already so far along, and Otilia has to go to meet her boyfriend’s parents and gets mired in the tedious dinner table conversation.

Thus, the whole film seems to unfold in a state of suspension, a state of suspended mobility. This gives rise to a feeling of tension in the viewer, which reaches its peak at the moment when a true time-image is at last presented in the film. As Otilia returns from the boyfriend’s parents’ place, she rushes back to the hotel, unaware of Gâbiţă’s fate, as she has not answered the phone. Fearing the worst, she has to negotiate her way into the room – again encountering reluctant officials trying to hinder her access – and finally gets to see what has happened: the abortion has occurred and the dead foetus is on the bathroom floor. Here the camera pans down to focus on the foetus, for a shot that feels unbearably long. This breaks the narrative’s sensory-motor schema: the viewer feels the need to turn the gaze from the sight of death – embodying the four months, three weeks and two days’ life span of the child – but the camera does not turn away and forces us to watch. We get a sense of the finality of Gâbiţă’s choice, the event of death, the durations of the characters; Gâbiţă’s naïve passivity (time just flows by her), Otilia’s anxiety (she has to force her way through the “thickness” of time), and the dead child’s stillness, death’s stoppage of time. This image ties the elements of the film together: this is where we ended up... It presents the particularity of the situation, as in question is not the abstract concept of the sensory-motor situation (“any death whatsoever”), but rather the singularity of the life that has ended. We sense the virtual dimension of the individuation that has ceased: what could have
become of this child, what might be the effect of this on Otilia and Gâbița’s life, what could have been had the child not been conceived…

As such, the image of the aborted child on the bathroom floor illustrates the ability of certain images to contain heterogeneity, to force us to think or, to be more precise, to expose us to the force of thought which exists outside our boundaries. Earlier on in his work Deleuze has nominated such images as simulacra. In the next section I shall present Deleuze’s notion of the simulacrum as a concept that possesses critical power over representational thinking, the tradition of thought which prioritises identity and thus produces a weakened understanding of difference in itself. Representational thinking suppresses the dimension of time, as it fathoms entities as situated “in” time and change as movement between points in time. In order to think the “authentic” difference, the identity of things must be understood as becoming “through” time and expressing the internal differential dynamic that is at the base of their becoming. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, this dynamic is mediated through a synthetic process that produces constant heterogeneous variations on the individual. Representational thinking does not fathom this dynamism and regards the instances of such heterogeneity as a threat of unlimited identity, bound to derail the good and common sense into a dimension of madness. This threat of the simulacrum, as originated by Plato, is the question addressed next.
4. “Powers of the False”: Images, Copies and Simulacra

Consider a television show about the producers of a television show. Or an actor elected as a president. Or the said president’s co-optation of a movie character as a symbol of foreign policy and military might. Are we not witnessing a displaced presence? Or the complete erasure of any presence whatsoever?

As a quintessential concept in the theories of postmodernity, the word “simulacrum” has frequently been deployed to account for the disappearance of reality and the rampant scattering of groundless images of which our contemporary world is supposed to increasingly consist. Oxford English Dictionary defines the word “simulacrum” as follows:

*Simulacrum*: a) a material image, made as a representation of some deity, person, or thing; b) something having merely the form or appearance of a certain thing, without possessing its substance or proper qualities; c) a mere image, a specious imitation or likeness of something.

And the corresponding OED definition of the term “simulation” is:

*Simulation*: a) the action of practice of simulating, with an intent to deceive; b) a false assumption or display, a surface resemblance or imitation of something; c) the technique of imitating the behavior of some situation or process ... by means of a suitably analogous situation or apparatus.

The French sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard is perhaps the most well known user of the term, and he defines the simulacrum as an image that “bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum”. The simulacrum should, according to Baudrillard, be understood as an image without a foundation or a referent. Furthermore, such an image cannot be distinguished from images retaining a relationship to some origin and it effects a collapse of the dichotomy between an original and a copy.

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In his social theory from the end of the 1960s onwards, Baudrillard postulates a rupture between the modern society, based on political economy of the production and consumption of commodities, and the postmodern world in which groundless simulacra, as signs or images, comprise the objects of circulation in society. Whereas the modern form of the social is definable in Marx’s terms of capital, the bourgeoisie and the workers’ struggle against exploitation, the postmodern era is characterised by the end of production as a social organising force. This means that the established forms of social theory have come to an end. Baudrillard states: “The end of labor. The end of production. The end of political economy. The end of … the exchange value/use value dialectic”.255

The end of production here comes to mean the beginning of reproduction. Labour, in the modern era, meant the production of goods, services or such, all of which added to the accumulation of capital, and provided the “reality” of social theories. In the postmodern world, we are in the midst of simulation instead of production. Labour has become a sign: a sign of one’s position in the workplace, a sign of one’s social position, a sign of one’s personality and lifestyle choices. The reproduction of these signs in the society becomes the primary mode of organisation. To be sure, the “basic” reality of material production has not disappeared – it has just been outsourced, symbolically or concretely, into the “lower” regions of the social organisation, into countries with low labour costs, and to immigrant workers. Yet, the prime objective of the postmodern formation is the circulation of signs: information technologies, media, communication networks and the “knowledge industry”.

There is a decidedly ambiguous tone in Baudrillard’s rhetoric about the era of simulacra and simulation, at once melancholic and gleeful as regards the closure of the modern society. We have forsaken the Real of our established social order, the reality of production, and entered the hall-of-mirrors of recursive and circulating images without ground. This shift to the simulacra means the death of previous social theories, for the postmodern configurations of the social cannot be conceptualised and critiqued with, for example, the Marxian apparatus

so suitable for analysing the modern industrialised world of capital, labour and its exploitation.

In this chapter I wish to elaborate on the concept of the simulacrum in correspondence with what has been discussed in the previous part of this study; namely, the possibility of formulating a non-representative model of individuation and identity in philosophical thought. In contrast and comparison to Baudrillard’s elaboration of the simulacrum, I shall explicate how Gilles Deleuze uses the concept as well, in *Difference and Repetition* and in one of the appendices of *The Logic of Sense*, “Simulacra and Ancient Philosophy”. There is one decisive difference between Deleuze and Baudrillard: Deleuze does not apply the simulacrum as a concept for historical analysis of social forms, as Baudrillard presents his theory of the notion. Rather, Deleuze’s simulacrum functions as a problematic concept eroding the foundations of philosophy of representation since Plato. For him, the simulacrum is a “bad copy”, a deceptive imitation so removed from the phenomenon it imitates that it does not count as an image or representation anymore. As such, simulacra denote the pure production of difference-in-itself and disrupt the schema of appearances and essences. The proliferation of simulacra is not a socio-historical observation for Deleuze, but rather something that is present at the core of Western philosophy right from the very beginning: the threat presented by the diverse and the multiple to thought based on similitude and unity. Therefore, simulation – the production of simulacra – is not primarily the concern of “our” times, but is to be celebrated wherever and whenever these deceptions show up.

**The Inverting Critique**

Deleuze finds a connection between Plato and Kant in that for both of them the “inverse” of their systems of thought lies within their own writings. As we have seen, Deleuze establishes Kant as a thinker of apparitions instead of appearances, and parallel to this, in the concept of the simulacrum he finds the tools for the “overturning” of Platonic representationalism in the works of Plato himself. In contrast to Baudrillard’s conception of the simulacra as the *end* of production, Deleuze sees simulation as the production of production. As has

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become evident, for Deleuze Kant’s theory of the faculties opens up a transcendental field that is novel in the history of philosophy. For the first time the problem of subjectivity becomes synthetic. Kant seeks to answer the following question: what are the conditions of there being phenomena? And further, of what nature is the operation of the subject experiencing these phenomena? However, Kant’s concern is, in the final analysis, legislative, as he seeks to provide the grounds for distinguishing illegitimate uses of reason from legitimate ones.

Deleuze sees a fundamental flaw in this jurisdiction of the faculties. It traces the transcendental from the empirical and produces a vicious circle. The Kantian subject is supposed to be an active one, providing the conditions of all possible experience from within its own synthetic processes. Yet, these processes are modelled after the already given observations of our psychological consciousness. Kant’s transcendental subject retains the form of an empirical person. This means that the transcendental is in fact conditioned by the empirical, even though the Kantian analysis constructs its goal as being the other way around, with the transcendental conditioning the empirical.

If the transcendental conditions of experience are modelled on the basis of the empirical, we end up at an impasse. The legislation of reason can only recognise and represent what we already know, distributing sameness to account for the diversity and singularity of the experiential world. Thus, the notion of genuine creation becomes problematic. Therefore Deleuze takes up the considerations on aesthetic experience in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. There he finds that Kant opens up a possibility of pushing the harmonious co-operation of the faculties to their limits – into an “unregulated exercise of all faculties” – as the subject is faced with aesthetic phenomena that do not subsume themselves to pre-given conceptual categories. For Kant the aesthetic phenomena appear as “problems” to thought, requiring the adjustment of the limits of conceptual understanding. Deleuze takes this model and extends it to cover all actual experience. In effect, he moves from Kant’s first *Critique*, with its transcendental aesthetic providing the forms of possible experience, to the third

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The *Critique* which posits aesthetic judgment as an exploration of the conditions of real experience.

As Deleuze argues, the form of possible experience and the reflection of real experience must be tied together and “the conditions of experience in general must become conditions of real experience”. Deleuze attempts this with his category of the virtual. Instead of governing all possible experience with universal and general categories, the virtual must give account to the singularity of real experience, manifest in the contingency of actual states-of-affairs. Thus, the question is not about conditioning but about production. What produces a certain entity? As I have discussed in chapter two, an individuation can be considered as a local solution to a virtual problem.

What this means can be clarified by Gilbert Simondon’s physicalist terms: an individual is a product of a pre-individual “tension” or “supersaturation” in a certain system of relations. As Simondon’s example of crystal formation attests, the growth of a crystal is due to a potential within its environment. This potential to crystallise does not, however, contain any determining possibility which would then be exactly like its actualisation, minus reality. This would be essentialism: the “idea” of a crystal would be pre-existent in comparison to its actualisation. Deleuze’s virtual is, in this sense, anti-essential as he stresses that the transcendental field of the virtual is not the field of the possible. If the transcendental were “merely” possible, it would be populated by entities resembling the empirical field, lacking in their degree of reality since they are not actualised. For the virtual to be a genetic factor, it must be distinct from the possible. Therefore the virtual must be considered as “real without being actual, ideal without being abstract”. The virtual is “ideal” in the sense that it is the principle of emergence of actualisations. It is not abstract in the way that it would provide universal and general principles or conditions for actualisation – actualisations, as well as their conditions, are always singular. It is this singularity of actualisations as apparitions that Deleuze thematises in the concept of the simulacrum. It provides a non-essentialist model for considering the images, visual, aural or tactile, of art. Yet, images as simulacra are not removed from

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259 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 208.
the real, as Baudrillard claims, but rather express it. In the following chapter we shall examine in more detail the two facets of simulacra – the Baudrillardian simulation and Deleuzean expression – and approach the question of the affirmation of world-as-appearance and its repercussions.

4.1 A Solar Vision: The Hierarchy of Images and Copies

The question of appearances and their value is an enormous one in the history of philosophy. Respecting the breadth of this theme, the present discussion shall be limited to staking out the foundations of the problematic category of simulacra. My point of view is in a wider sense the mimetic relation between the perceived reality and its representation and as such, I present an explicitly aesthetic perspective on this question. The standard definition of mimesis is formulated according to Plato and Aristotle as the representation of nature. Here, then, appears a division between representation and nature, the former being second-rate action in relation to the primacy of nature that is immediately present to itself. To provide a short introduction to the problem of the simulacra starting from antiquity, I shall very briefly introduce Stephen Halliwell, who presents an admirably clear and concise account of the problem of mimesis within the tradition of Western philosophy in his book *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*.

In his study on mimesis Halliwell claims that the mimetic function, most often ascribed to art, contains two often opposing positions: world-reflecting and world-creating. The first of these fathoms representation as the mirroring of world and thus allows art merely the function of a passive reflection of reality which exists “outside” the artwork. The second position conceives art as imagination and bestows it with power to create an alternative world-in-itself.\(^\text{260}\) The span of mimeticism is thus spread between the two poles of artwork as mirror of the world and artwork as creation of an alternate world. The tension between these two extremes shows in Plato, as one of the founding thinkers of the distrust of appearances,

when he fails to reconcile the power of artistic creation with the
demand for a truthful representation of the world. Hence the standard
view of Plato as the imposer of domesticating demands on art: it must
not be given too much leeway, since artistic imagination results from
divine madness – inspiration – and can lead a susceptible audience
astray by the force of its rhetoric. Yet, even though art can be
convincing, it is not truthful, as it gains its momentum from madness.
Further, art, when trying to imitate the phenomena of the world,
necessarily results in a second-hand depiction of a material thing that
is already removed from its essence. The resulting conclusion is, then,
that art is either too powerful or holds too little power in its inability
to convey to us the truth of the world. In short, art is not truthful.

PLATO AND THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE
Namely, the principal site of considering the mimetic relation between
appearances and essences is Plato’s famous Cave – without a doubt
the most well-known philosophical fable in the Western tradition. The
allegory appears in Republic's 7th Book as a dialogue between Socrates
and Glaucon and concerns the education of men. Therefore its
immediate context is that of epistemology and pedagogy. As Socrates
describes it, the fable considers the tendency of men to treat as reality
that which on closer study is revealed to be illusion. The renowned
mise-en-scène is as follows: a group of slaves is held in a cave. They have
been chained there since their childhood, with their heads fixed to
face the back of the cave. Behind them is a great bonfire and a
walkway goes between the slaves and the fire. People pass by on the
walkway carrying various things including figures of men and animals.
All that the slaves can see is the wall of the cave, onto which the
flames cast shadows of everything that passes by via the walkway.
Likewise, everything they hear is an echo of sounds issuing from the

Now, asks Socrates, would it not be only natural that the
prisoners in the cave comprehend the things they see and hear –
shadows and echoes – as reality? It is all that they have ever
experienced. Likewise, would they not consider as wise the one who
could better envision what forms shall appear next and in which
conjunctions? If one of the slaves would be capable of accurate predictions like that, he or she would be thought of as possessing true knowledge about the nature of things in the world.

If one of the slaves should be released from his captivity and shown the things that have caused the shadows the slaves have witnessed, he undoubtedly would not recognise the things in themselves and would still consider their shadows as the true reality. Also, if the slave was to turn his gaze to the fire, he would be blinded by the blaze and avert his eyes from the brightness back into the twilight world of shadows. Further, if dragged from the cave, the prisoner would be extremely distressed and seek to return to his familiar habitat.\textsuperscript{262}

However, says Socrates, after some time outside the cave the former prisoner would begin to acquaint himself with his new environment and would gradually come to see his earlier reality – that of the shadows – as unreality. Finally able to look upwards into the sky, he would understand the sun as the source of all the things he has previously seen. If he returned to the cave, the freed slave would undoubtedly pity the impoverished existence of the chained prisoners and consider their supposed knowledge as inferior to what he now knows about the workings of the world.\textsuperscript{263}

The fable of prisoners is analogous to our situation within the experiential world of perceptions. Socrates likens us to the slaves: what we see around us are shadows of a higher reality of essences. The empirical world is a world of images, caused by something unperceived by our senses. As the slave must leave the cave in order to fathom the world in a deeper way, so must we aspire to contemplate the world of ideas, ultimately the idea of Good. As the sun makes other things visible and is thus the source of our perceptual knowledge, the Good makes other things intelligible and, in a sense, provides being to them. Thus, as the sun is revealed as the source of perceptions to the freed slave from the cave, the Good is the highest form of knowledge, distributing intelligibility and value to every other being.

\textsuperscript{262} Plato, \textit{Republic}, VII, 515a–e.

\textsuperscript{263} Plato, \textit{Republic}, VII, 516c–e.
**THE PEDAGOGY OF ESSENCES**

Here, then, is the paradigmatic scenario of classical epistemology: we have a variety of experiences which turn out to be mere fleeting images reflecting unchanging essences. On the one hand there are intelligible or supersensory essences, on the other hand there are sensible appearances. Further, there is a hierarchy between these things, since mere appearances do not yield, within themselves, any true knowledge about the world. The diversity and ever-changing nature of the empirical world present a problem for the thinker. Plato devised a kind of multi-tiered pedagogy to guide people towards enlightenment. In *Symposium* he presents a process of acquiring knowledge in an example of a lover.  

To love is to desire something that one does not possess. The lover’s path to wisdom begins with the basest object of love, that of a beautiful body. Yet, this sexual love is but an expression of the craving for something unchanging, so that a wise man is able to move to a more abstract level in his quest for the truth of love. A corporeal, beautiful body shares characteristics with other beautiful bodies, so nothing in this one particular body is original. If one seeks the essence of love, it seems clear that it is found in every body inspiring desire. As there are traits worth loving also in bodies that are not beautiful, we can see that the desire of the lover must be transferred to a more worthy goal, the beautiful soul.  

As the lover comes to realise that there are institutions that are responsible for the existence of beautiful souls, he shall move to contemplate the beauty of these institutions guaranteeing a harmonious and just social order. From here the lover shall move on to love knowledge itself, as it makes intelligible the good social order. Here we are evidently very far removed from the love of a single beautiful body. In contemplating the generality found in love and beauty, the lover finally arrives at the philosophical treasure his quest will present: the form of beauty itself. It is not itself any thing, but as the essence of beauty partakes in all beautiful things.  

The quest for essences is presented in the analogy of ladder. There one must process, as if from rung to rung, from the base material phenomena towards “higher” intelligible reality and, finally, to essence itself. Plato states:

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one goes always upwards for the sake of this Beauty, starting out from beautiful things and using them like rising stairs: from one body to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, then from beautiful bodies to beautiful customs, and from customs to learning beautiful things, and from this lesson he arrives in the end at this lesson, which is learning of this very Beauty, so that in the end he comes to know just what it is to be beautiful.\textsuperscript{265}

This pedagogy presents a hierarchy ranging from particular appearances and general intelligible notions to universal and eternal essences. In Republic this hierarchy is discussed explicitly in relation to images. The dialogue in the 10\textsuperscript{th} Book concerns the role of imitation. If one is to revere the truth, says Socrates, one cannot revere a man more.\textsuperscript{266} Even though he has loved the epic poetry of Homer since youth, Socrates must speak out against poetic imitation. As an example of imitation he considers a bed. There are a multitude of beds in the world. What is common to all of them, if anything? Socrates answers: “we customarily hypothesize a single form in connection with each of the many things to which we apply the same name”.\textsuperscript{267} What makes a particular phenomenon a bed is its relation to the general form of a bed. Beds come in many different shapes and compositions. Therefore, their appearance cannot guarantee true knowledge about their “bedness”. A particular instance is, then, contrasted to the unity and generality of a form. Apparent nature appears, thus, under the principle of a universal mimesis: every phenomenon is a reflection, or imitation, of some other, foundational reality.\textsuperscript{268}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{265} Plato, \textit{Symposium}, 211c–d.
\item \textsuperscript{266} Plato, \textit{Republic}, X, 595c.
\item \textsuperscript{267} Plato, \textit{Republic}, X, 596a.
\item \textsuperscript{268} Modern scientific reductionism can also be included in the group of mimetic theories. Scientific reductionism seeks to explain “higher” level, complex phenomena via the working of their more elementary parts. Thus, reductionism subscribes to a notion of a fundamental reality which is able to provide an explanation of the apparent world. Entities such as sub-atomic particles or genes have been posited as foundational elements in various theories; see, for instance, Steven Weinberg in physics (\textit{Dreams of a Final Theory: The Search for the Fundamental Laws of Nature}, New York: Vintage Books, 1993) or Richard Dawkins in genetics (\textit{The Selfish Gene}, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976). However, a problem of emergence persists in science: the limits of reductionism become apparent when studying highly complex systems which exhibit properties that are not causally determinable from any elementary parts. Such systems can be located in neurology, meteorology, and study of ecosystems, as well as in
\end{itemize}
4.2 Realer than the Real: Baudrillard and Simulacra

The Platonic conception of truth is solar. Like the sun emanates light and makes things visible, so do the various perceptions in the world find their origin in a higher principle which distributes order, meaning and value throughout the extended spatium. This model of emanation lays the foundation for a hierarchy of things, as well, in providing the means of categorising particulars as partaking more or less in the intelligible. Therefore we can state that an original entity is closer to truth than its imitation, a picture, for example. The highest principle – whether God, the Good or the World – guarantees the hierarchy of things and grades them according to their proximity to the grounding principle. As in the allegory of the cave, the highest principle emanates light and enlightens the world. Within its luminescence we can evaluate, measure and classify, as well as condemn and denounce those things that are shadowy and obscure and thus further from truth. Our earthly organisations and institutions follow the celestial forms and from this similitude we can ascertain their righteousness. Politics, economy, manufacture and the arts should thus strive to follow the model set out by the highest principle and distribute their elements in accordance with the ideal forms.

Yet, asks Baudrillard, what if the solar principle is not of rational distribution but of excess and expenditure? The sun keeps on burning away, granting its light and warmth for free, and asks nothing in return. The fundamental nature of the world is not rational organization but rather obliteration and excess. This is the point of departure for Baudrillard’s Symbolic Exchange and Death where he champions Georges Bataille’s view of the primacy of expenditure and sacrifice in social formations. Through Bataille, as well as via the work of Marcel Mauss and Ferdinand de Saussure, it is possible to conclude that one must prioritise the “symbolic exchange” of signs before the capitalist exchange of property. The contemporary – as well as premodern – society is built fundamentally on values contrary to those which appear to us as “rational”: utility, economy, production. Instead, a “general economy” of expenditure, waste, sacrifice and

human sciences, such as sociology. See the American theoretical biologist and complex systems researcher Stuart Kauffman’s critique of reductionism in Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason, and Religion (New York: Basic Books, 2008).
destruction lays the foundations of human existence. Historically, different social formations can be divided along the line of “symbolic” and “productivist”, with corresponding values prioritising either symbolic exchange or production and exchange of commodities.\(^{269}\)

Thus, modern society is on its way to returning to a pre-modern organization of symbolic exchange. Baudrillard, following Bataille, claims that it is in the “nature” of human beings to value modes of production which do not contribute to a utilitarian system of production and accumulation of wealth. The extravagance and luxury inherent in works of art, for example, attests to this. From the utilitarian perspective the excess radiating from symbolic exchange appears as death: the destruction of meaning, of good sense and rationality.\(^{270}\) Death is, in the final analysis, implicated within the folds of life, Baudrillard suggests, as “excess, ambivalence, gift, sacrifice, expenditure and the paroxysm,” in other words “anti-economy”.\(^{271}\)

Accordingly, within the sphere of symbolisation and meaning, the modern society has reached a stage which in fact is in conflict with the capitalist rationalism of utility. The symbolic value of things is highlighted, and the productive value or use-value of things is suppressed. Use-value has traditionally been understood as the value accumulated by an object according to which real uses the object can be put. Marxian theory postulated a shift away from the use-value of things to their exchange-value in the market of purchased goods. Further, exchange-value elevated itself as the fundamental ground of valuation as the universal equalization by the monetary system made possible the valuation of every thing in monetary terms. The acts of accumulation and consumption have replaced production as the basis of reality. Thus, the modern social formation finds itself at “the end of production”.\(^{272}\)


\(^{270}\) A powerful example of the intertwining of excess and death in the form of art is Damien Hirst’s extravagantly expensive artwork *For the Love of God* (2007), a platinum cast of a human skull completely encrusted with diamonds, offered for sale with the asking price of 50 million pounds. Such a crass display of wealth created an amount of controversy and criticism regarding the artist’s intentions and the artistic merits of the work.


THE AGE OF SIMULACRA

The end of production and the loss of use-value define the age of simulacra. It is not so much that the post-modern society is returning to the pre-modern mode of symbolic exchange, but rather that the mode of production characterising the modern society is succeeded by a unique mode of “simulation”. What Baudrillard means by simulation can be illustrated by his example of a story by Jorge Luis Borges. In *On Exactitude in Science* Borges writes about a great Empire which was able to create a map that was so exact that it ended up covering the whole of the Empire. When the Empire finally ceased to exist, all that was left was the map. Now, the “fable has come full circle for us”, states Baudrillard.273

What was once real – labour, production and use-value – has been abolished. Gradually, “we” post-moderns find ourselves among signs and codes, denoting to other signs and codes in an infinite recession. The image has always possessed this subversive dimension, as can be noted in the discussion of Plato and mimesis above, but now, according to Baudrillard, the subversion of reality has been fully accomplished. In a world that is characterised by the “precession of simulacra” reality has come to emulate its simulations. It is as if everything has shifted to a “meta-level” of articulation, essentially putting an end to the distinction between the real and the simulated. We find ourselves facing the devaluation of the real and the devaluation of the power of the images that no longer possess the abstractive capacity in relation to extinct reality. Baudrillard emphasises: “It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself”.274

We have arrived at this *hyperreal* state via three stages of the simulacra. The first stage is that of the “counterfeit” image, the dominant schema of the image in the classical period when images were considered to be inferior substitutes for the real. The second phase is that of the “production” of images taking place at the time of the Industrial Revolution and the means of increasingly perfect reproduction. It is here that the distinction between reality and its representations starts to fade. The third stage is the “precession” of

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274 Baudrillard, *Simulations*, p. 4.
simulacra, when simulation or representation is “the dominant schema” and precedes reality.\textsuperscript{275}

The image conjured up at the beginning of this chapter, the political figure as film star and \textit{vice versa}, can here be considered again. In the modern age of Marxist use-value and bourgeois alienation of labour it was still possible to critique the perverting features of emerging exchange-value and capitalist marketplace. Now there can be no ideologies beyond what is shown on the TV screen. The ultimate star-become-politician – Ronald Reagan, or in a more recent case, Arnold Schwarzenegger – is a recurrent example of the non-ideology of the hyperreal age. The image and sign come first, fashioning a politics, economics or a sphere of culture only afterwards. The image itself has shifted from being “the reflection of a basic reality” to masking and perverting the reality. Further, now the image “masks the \textit{absence} of a basic reality” and “bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum”, Baudrillard says.\textsuperscript{276}

The post-modern era of simulation is thus characterised by various end-points: the end of production, the end of ideologies, the end of critique. The subjects of such hyperreality become monad-like individuals, immersing themselves in the empty play of signs-upon-signs. The former collective values of culture and politics become supplanted by entertainment, mass “communication” and information technologies. Images insinuate themselves into everyday lives in a way that everything becomes a surface or projection screen: the workplace becomes a fashion show, with “casual Fridays” to display one’s weekend fashion wear in advance; cultural sites become tourist attractions become shopping malls become casinos. Disneyland and Las Vegas are the most prized referents for Baudrillard. They are no longer artificial entertainment complexes as the notion of artificiality has become extinct. Go to Paris to see the Eiffel tower, or go to Vegas to do the same. There is no longer an essential distinction between those two options.

\textsuperscript{275} Baudrillard, \textit{Symbolic Exchange and Death}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{276} Baudrillard, \textit{Simulations}, p. 11.
As will become evident in the following section dealing with Deleuze’s notion of the simulacrum, there are many similarities between Baudrillard and Deleuze on this matter. For instance, Baudrillard’s theories of simulation and hyperreality resonate with Deleuze’s statements of the “control society” that succeeds the Foucaultian disciplinary social order. The Baudrillardian subject of simulation is in a very similar situation with the subject of the society of control that Deleuze envisions: individuals are expected to “broadcast” themselves continuously, to emit a perpetual “telepresence” in order to function as members of the society. Whereas in Baudrillard’s modern era and Foucault’s disciplinary society the rules of conduct came as impositions from the outside, regulating the bodily or material existence of individuals by the way of constructing spaces of containment (the factory, the school, the hospital), in hyperreality or control societies the rules are internalised. The post-modern subject wants to commit him- or herself to life-long learning, to become a healthier and better-looking person by dieting and exercising, to distribute and broadcast his or her personal traits via more and more popular social media.

Yet, Baudrillard’s constant stance of pronouncing the “end” of modernity belies a mixture of fascination and nostalgia: fascination with the emerging order of simulacra and nostalgia for the reality of production that once was. There is a tone of simultaneous celebration and revulsion in Baudrillard’s descriptions of the masses who willingly immerse themselves in the “ecstasy of communication” and “media massage”. The post-modern condition has abolished all limits on meaning and thus annihilated the possibility of meaning itself. In a sense, modernity has erased itself, appearing only as ironic nostalgia for pre-modern social forms. Still, the existence of nostalgia attests to the fact that an idea of a reality remains, even though as an image in groundless circulation. Deleuze’s theory of the simulacrum is not so much socio-political critique as a philosophical exposition of the concept’s origins and its place in a system of representation. Therefore, as Deleuze sees the simulacra present right at the start of philosophical thinking, he does not end up in a dead end of the real, but rather finds the means of questioning the dichotomy of reality and

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277 Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies” in Negotiations, pp. 177–182.
appearance in the foundations of thinking. Simulacra are for Deleuze something to be affirmed – *as* the real and not as the replacement of it – rather than lamented.

### 4.3 The Disruptive Sign: Deleuze’s Simulacra

Baudrillard’s analyses of the simulacra and the society of simulation seem to lead us to a dead end of nihilism, irony, regret and nostalgia for the real. As we have seen, Baudrillard’s abandonment of his early valorisation of primitive societies’ symbolic exchange and his subsequent embrace of a mode of aristocratic aestheticism in the play of seduction leaves us with nothing much than the ecstasy of groundless signs. Yet, this arrangement still retains the Platonic distinction between the original and the copy and will result in a Nietzschean scenario of nihilism, losing faith in appearances as a result of losing faith in their originals.

Deleuze’s work on simulacra presents, on the one hand, a somewhat similar approach and critique of the Platonic epistemology, and yet, on the other hand, an alternative model of deceptive images that might lead us to the affirmation of the world as appearance rather than to Baudrillardian irony and nihilism. Further, Deleuze’s reading of Plato and the representative system of thought is, in a somewhat mischievous manner, still a Platonist one, however skewed it might be from the standard tradition of reception.

The simulacrum is a concept employed by Deleuze only in his work from the late 1960s. The context for the consideration of simulacra is that of challenging the representational image of thought that Deleuze nominates as Platonism. As such, he follows the trail marked out by Nietzsche in his decree to the philosophy of the future: to “reverse” Platonism. What would it mean to reverse Platonism asks Deleuze in the beginning of “The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy”, an appendix to *The Logic of Sense* and the longest text devoted to the topic of the simulacrum. What philosophy has not tried the reversal? If understood as the “overturning” of Platonism, such an inversion would mean the elevation of appearances over essences – in short, turning the Platonic hierarchy of being on its
head. This endeavour, claims Deleuze, “dates back to Hegel or, better yet, to Kant”.278

As was discussed in chapter one, Kant is for Deleuze the first “modern” – that is, post-classical – philosopher, who does indeed invert the hierarchy of essences and appearances. For Kant the problem is no longer the classical one addressing extended spatium reflecting the internal intelligibility of the true world more or less incorrectly or imperfectly. In such a conception it is the essential which grounds and guarantees knowledge and truth. Conversely, the problem of modern philosophy is the appearance of appearances as such: as Deleuze says, for Kant appearances are apparitions. Yet, for Kant, as well as for Hegel, the overturning of Platonism comes to mean “the abolition of the world of essences and of the world of appearances”.279 This remark shall be clarified in greater detail later on in this chapter, but in short it means that the recourse to idealism cannot avoid the Nietzschean scenario in which Man does away with God but retains the similar dynamic of “manufacturing the divine”.280

Does the reversal of Platonism result in idealism? It is from this question or problematic that Deleuze’s ruminations on the simulacrum begin. Rather than attempting to overcome the Platonist schema of essences and appearances, Deleuze, once again, infiltrates the textual work of Plato and seeks to produce a reading that is both faithful and perverse. As Alfred North Whitehead has famously claimed, all Western philosophy stands in the shadow of Plato’s work, amounting to little more than footnotes to Plato’s dialogues.281 The question of overcoming this tradition is akin to that of man trying to overcome the need for eating. One may vary one’s diet and even try fasting for a while, but one cannot simply leave behind the context of eating in general.

“To reverse” should be understood, then, as the attempt to produce an inverse. To turn inside out. To produce a topological variation where parts of a system are pushed down when they previously were pulled up and vice versa. Not overcoming as overturning, with Plato ending upside down and non-subjective

278 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 253.
279 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 253, my emphasis.
280 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, p. 158.
idealism replaced with a subjective one, but as the inversion of the structure that produces a new kind of problematic. As Deleuze states, he attempts to bring “the motivation” of Platonism into the light, proceeding from the abstraction of receiving a pre-given system of thought into the active consideration of its underlying ground. This hidden motivation of Platonism, for Deleuze, is the “will to select and choose”.

What this amounts to is elaborated on in the next section.

**THE WILL TO CHOOSE**

Deleuze’s “The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy” begins with a discussion of the Platonic motivation to make a difference, to distinguish “the ‘thing’ itself from its images, the original from the copy, the model from the simulacrum”. This selection is essential for Plato if we are to proceed to knowledge from the diversity of experience. As we have discussed regarding the well-known Platonic epistemology, an empirical thing is – according to the solar and visual metaphor – but a shadow of its essence. Earlier on in *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze associates this will to select with language and its difficulties in coming to terms of the becoming of the world, the flux and mutability of material reality in comparison to the eternal, unchanging and pure being of the essences. In chapter two of this study, regarding the paradoxical relationship between sense and nonsense, we have come to see how the good sense’s affirmation of a determinable direction (sens) in all things is disturbed by the paradox of becoming. Deleuze’s examples of this are Alice’s becomings in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, where she undergoes a series of transformations. By eating a mushroom, Alice “becomes larger than [she] was and smaller than [she] becomes”, as Deleuze describes the paradox of her transformation. It is the characteristic of a becoming to pull in two directions at once: the difference between two directions becomes actual only in taking one route – going left, I make apparent the right. According to Deleuze, this paradox “is the affirmation of both senses or directions at the same time”.

It is in the context of the paradoxes of pure becoming that Deleuze refers to Plato and distinguishes two Platonic dimensions.

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The first dimension is that of limitation and measure which means the assignment of fixed qualities onto particular subjects in particular instances of time, “for example, a particular subject having a particular largeness or a particular smallness at a particular moment”. This dimension is contrasted by the second one, the dimension without limitation or measure. This is the dimension of becoming and it is inhabited by intensities: the quality “larger” is in perpetual movement, never stopping, becoming larger still. A definite quality – say, a volume of 3.5 cubic meters – is halted, fixed, quantifiable. An intensive quality such as “larger” does not find a similar state of rest. Its restlessness, or paradoxical lack *and* overflow of direction (*sens*), situates it as the “madness” inherent in becoming.

Plato, says Deleuze, is the one establishing this division between the limited being and the unlimited pure becoming. However, this division does not take place in the Platonic dualism between the intelligible and the sensible, between Ideas and matter, but rather it occurs as a “more profound and secret dualism hidden in sensible and material bodies themselves”. Within matter itself there is a hidden and “subterranean” scission between that which partakes in the workings of the Ideal and that which eludes the hold of the intelligible. This, according to Deleuze, is the definitive Platonic distinction. It does not occur between Ideas and their manifestations, models and copies, where there is continuity between the original and the follower. Rather, the dangerous division for thought takes place between copies and *simulacra*: between those that partake and those that elude.

The problem of the simulacrum lies at the heart of the question of identity. As discussed earlier in the context of sense and signs, Plato concurs that there are things which we recognise and which leave the mind in tranquillity and there are things which cause an uproar in our faculties as they cannot be categorised immediately. These latter things Deleuze nominates as signs, as was discussed in chapter two of this study. The Platonic epistemology thus hovers between the twin poles of fixed and unfixed identity. To have knowledge of a thing is to determine its participation (*metechein*) in the corresponding Idea. Participation in the ideal fixes the being and

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286 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 2.
identity of a thing. In contrast to this there is a dimension of chthonic obscurity, that of infinite identity which belongs to pure becoming. This is the dimension of relationality, the immanent field of Kantian aesthetic apprehension where bodies are related, and thus apprehended, to other bodies, or as “microperceptions”, as Deleuzes later on formulates with Guattari.

The paradox of infinite identity eludes the fixity of present moment and exists in the category of Deleuze’s second temporal synthesis, suggesting a fracture in the course of time. In the paradox of becoming both past and present are affirmed, but as a divided process that keeps on bifurcating – “larger” making a thing smaller in the past than it will be in the future. This slipperiness of becoming is worrisome for Plato, as it threatens the foundations of knowledge based on essences and identities.

THE PHILOSOPHER AS STRANGER
What causes Plato’s fear of the ungrounding of knowledge and identity? Paradoxically enough, the threat of this seems to be built within the very conditions of philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari present a “geophilosophical”, that is historical, geo-political and cultural, account of the birth of the doubt over the stability of identity in the face of becoming in Greek thinking. Whereas thinking in social formations previous to the Greek city-states had been founded on myths of sovereign power and their guarantee of meaning, Greek philosophy is born in an immanent expanse of rival thinkers. The origins of Greek thought lie in the archaic empires of the Near East from where the proto-philosophers migrated to Greece. The archaic states “captured” the flux of becoming in meaning by “overcoding” the surrounding geographical areas into the transcendent, mythical order of the despot. The value and meaning of things (money, goods, subjects) were guaranteed by the ruler whose status as the “master signifier” was, in turn, guaranteed by a founding myth, such as a god bestowing the divine power on the despot to wield upon earth. The spatial organization of imperial State is denominated by Deleuze and Guattari as an arithmetic unity with the ruler at its centre.

288 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 86.
The Greek cities, on the contrary, formed a different kind of space, that of a geometrical organisation. Instead of a centred space of the imperial states, where the flow of signs, people and goods was seen in relation to a single, transcendent central point, the Greek cities existed within a network of commercial, political and military circuits. As Deleuze and Guattari state, the Greek structure of city-states is “fractal” and it forms an immanent milieu of relations. This is due to Greece’s geographical position regarding the eastern empires: they are close enough to gain from the wealth and circulation of things from archaic states, but far enough away to be able to be organised in a different way.\(^{289}\)

Both models of socio-political organisation – the archaic State and the Greek City – deterritorialize the surrounding landscape and reterritorialize its resources. That is, the flow of goods, people and the like is diverted towards the center. “The imperial spatium of the State” is reterritorialized on the palace and the treasures and supplies hoarded there. “[T]he political extensio of the city” is, in turn, reterritorialized on the agora and marketplace. In the State formation the de- and reterritorialization appears as from on high: a celestial component rises from the deserted earth and a “Stranger” – an individual like no other – makes of the earth a territory, a State. The emergent Emperor is established as a transcendent power, magnificent palaces and temples are erected to display this might. City-states, on the contrary, are formed as immanent planes of competing interests. They constitute a kind of “international market” on the margins of States and free select groups – merchants, artisans and other wanderers – from the bonds to an Emperor.\(^{290}\)

The figure of the thinker changes accordingly. In the archaic empires the thinker takes the form of a wise man or a priest. His function is to devise and support the founding myth of the State and thus grant a transcendent despondency to the ruler. This foundation supplies fixity to identity and meaning: everything can be checked against the significance of the Empire; everyone is a subject to the Emperor. The precursor of philosophy is, according to this conception, mythopoetic thinking. Its purpose is to manufacture (poieîn) a myth (mûthos). The central characteristic of a myth is that it is self-

\(^{289}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 86–87.

\(^{290}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 86–87.
justifying, as stated, for example, by the historian of philosophy Henri Frankfort.\textsuperscript{291} The divine origin of the inspiration of poets, wise men and priests provides the guarantee of the validity of the myth. This means that the founding myths are not argumentative, but instead present an unquestionable foundation that justifies their own validity. Likewise, the mouthpieces of the myths, the wise men, remain fixed to the foundation, inhabiting the courts and temples of the imperial order.

When we shift our focus to ancient Greece, we find, in turn, the despotic institution largely gone. This is partially due to the practice of trade, which had eroded the tradition of kingship over time. The despot was no more the sole locus of the incoming flow of wealth and goods. Officials rather than kings ruled the emerging Greek city-states. For instance, in Athens the office of \textit{árchôn} took the place of a king. What is more, this office was filled by election, not by inheritance, and the group qualified to be candidates for the post slowly shifted from noblemen to those with sufficient wealth. For an ambitious merchant operating within the fertile trade network of the Mediterranean Sea, North Africa and Near East, prestige could be achieved via the accumulation of riches in place of the traditional hereditary route.\textsuperscript{292} Since trade is, by definition, a passage between territories, it could slip outside the jurisdiction of local rulers – an exemplary case of deterritorialization.

The trade of ideas and education, too, would leave the courts of kings and begin to reach wider regions. At first, the earliest known Greek philosophers operated within the Greek colonial periphery of Ionia (nowadays Turkey), Italy, Sicily and the northern Aegean.\textsuperscript{293} The first shining moment of Western philosophical tradition, the teaching of Socrates and Plato, would occur in the largest and the most famous place of trade, Athens. Its commercial democracy provided the social conditions ripe for the exchange of goods, as well as ideas.


Yet, the figure of the philosopher is that of a Stranger, according to Deleuze and Guattari: “These types come from the borderlands of the Greek world, strangers in flight, breaking with empire and colonised by peoples of Apollo – not only artisans and merchants but philosophers”. They deterritorialize thinking from the surrounding empires and reterritorialize it in the agoras of Greek cities. Greece provides the suitable socio-economical environment for the practice of wisdom which migrates into its milieu. Deleuze and Guattari continue: “Philosophers are strangers but philosophy is Greek”.

Deleuze and Guattari delineate three conditions of philosophy that could be found in the Greek environment. First is the “the pure sociability as milieu of immanence”. This means the free ability to pursue associations, without the interference and legislation of imperial sovereignty. This immanence of thought implies no prior interest because, on the contrary, conflicting and competing interests act as the conditions for it.

The second factor necessary for the birth of philosophy is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, “a certain pleasure in forming associations”. Deleuze and Guattari situate the origin of these associations of friendship, and also of rivalry, in the societies formed by émigrés into Greece. There is a certain joy in sharing one’s thinking and arguing against the others, competing in the marketplace of philosophy. Accordingly, they consider the third genetic element of philosophy as the “taste for the exchange of views, of conversation”. These three features constitute the conditions of Greek philosophy: immanence, friendship and opinion. Yet, these factors constitute a competitive milieu as well. The immanence of sociability has its own cruelty. The pleasure of friendship contains also the joy of rivalry. The taste for opinion leads to antagonisms and retributions.

The condition for the birth of philosophy – the community of free men – defines it also as an antagonistic or agonistic practice: rivalry between free men. It is in the Greek agon as a milieu of rivalry that Plato’s thinking is situated. To return to the question of the

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294 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 87.
295 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 87.
296 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 87.
paradoxes of becoming, the determination of identities is cast into crisis right at the beginning of this agonistic relationship between competing thinkers. The philosopher is no longer the wise man, with a guarantee and authority bestowed as from on high – from the despot or from the gods themselves – but a philo-sophos, a friend of wisdom. But who is to distinguish the true friend from the pretenders?

THE PHILOSOPHER AMONG RIVALS

As Deleuze phrases it, his conception of Platonism “appears as a selective doctrine, as a selection among claimants or rivals”. The initial motivation of Plato’s philosophy is to distinguish the essential from mere appearances and this is due to philosophy’s deterritorialization from the transcendent power provided by the state and the despot. Within the field of imperial overcoding, meaning and identity could be fixed, with the grounding for stable identities provided by a founding myth which endowed the emperor with a divine might. Now, in the agon of Greek philosophy, identity is in danger of becoming infinite: sophistry abounds. Deleuze notes that in Plato’s dialogues all sorts of claimants declare themselves as the true inheritors of a certain quality. Even though the Platonic method is to establish a relation between a phenomenon and a corresponding essence, it is only the first step in the dialogues. If, as in the Statesman dialogue, we come to establish that the statesman is a shepherd of men, then arrives the problem of a rivalry of claims. “I am the true shepherd of men”, say the doctor and the merchant, as well as the gymnastic trainer and the labourer. Now, who possesses the wisdom of shepherding men in this case?

Whereas the priest or the wise man of an imperial regime could lay his claim to wisdom simply by referring to his status as the mouthpiece of imperial or divine order, guaranteed by a founding myth, the philosopher is in a much more agonistic situation. He is a “friend” of wisdom, but only a friend among others. To be a friend of wisdom does not imply the possession of it. As Deleuze and Guattari say, the Greek milieu bestows thinking with immanent sociability among friends who gain enjoyment from the pursuit of wisdom.

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300 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy?, pp. 87–88.
However, this sociability has its reverse in the cruelty, rivalry and antagonism between competing thinkers. And yet, the possibility for this rivalry – the immanent relations between equal men – is the possibility or condition for philosophy in general.

Thus the Platonic *aporia*: the immanence of rivalry necessitates the search for fixed identities, yet the search is compromised by the lack of transcendent ground and the emergence of competing claimants. It is as if the Platonic sun is blocked by a crowd of people, or the rays of the sun are refracted through a maze of mirrors. “Which way, which way?”, Alice keeps asking in Wonderland. What direction does the sense of a phenomenon lead to? The possibility of both directions, of infinite identity, always threatens.

**The Question of Circumstance**

As Deleuze and Guattari state, transcendent thought, which is contrasted to immanent philosophy, projects itself onto the mortal world in the shape of icons:

> [T]he transcendent God would remain empty, or at least *absconditus*, if it were not projected on a plane of immanence of creation … In both cases, imperial unity or spiritual empire, the transcendence that is projected on the plane of immanence paves it or populates it with Figures. It is a wisdom or a religion – it does not much matter which. It is only from this point of view that Chinese hexagrams, Hindu mandalas, Jewish sephiroth, Islamic ‘imaginals,’ and Christian icons can be considered together: thinking through figures.  

The prephilosophical figure implies projection from the heights of transcendence. A philosophical concept, in turn, implies a connection with its neighbours on an immanent plane. The Platonic Idea is, in the first place, constituted in such a way as to ward it off from the accidental. As we have discussed, according to Plato we can draw distinctions in phenomena according to their participation in Ideas. Yet, as Deleuze observes, in some of Plato’s dialogues the question of essence – “What is X?” – is inevitably displaced and mixed with other questions. The search for the essence becomes, more often than not, a question of “the case”. This happens in the so-called aporetic

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[^301]: Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 89.
dialogues of Plato where the question “What is this?” takes other forms, as Deleuze states: “who? in the Republic; how much? in Philebus; where and when? in the Sophist; and in which case? in Parmenides”.

The question of circumstance – the relations of an Idea on an immanent plane of thought – replaces the question of essence. In Deleuze’s interpretation, the Platonic notion of the Idea retains its pre-Socratic, “Dionysian” energy exactly because it concerns the spatio-temporal dynamic of a phenomenon. In Deleuze’s view it is only in the later Aristotelian interpretation that the Platonic Idea is nominated as “the division of a genus into contrary species in order to subsume the thing investigated under the appropriate species”. This later Aristotelian specification misses the real motivation of the Platonic division, claims Deleuze. The Platonic method of division does not concern the dialectic of contrariety that is used in the determination of species. The “real” purpose of the Platonic division is the selection among claimants. As was noted earlier, in the Greek milieu of immanence, all kinds of rivals make their claims to possess the true essence of this and that. Deleuze states: “The purpose of division then is not at all to divide a genus into species, but, more profoundly, to select lineages: to distinguish pretenders; to distinguish the pure from the impure, the authentic from the inauthentic”.

Division, then, is not to be understood in its width – the determination of a genus and species – but in its depth: the selection of true lineage among the dialectic of rivalry (amphisbetesis). The division starts from “commingled” mass of undifferentiated matter and is analogous to the work of refining gold. It is a process of gradual selection of valuable matter among the various more or less impure metals, earth and stone, “the removal of which through repeated smelting and testing leaves the ‘unalloyed’ gold … for us to see”; Plato describes the process. Here it is important to note the difference in the notion of determination between Plato and Aristotle. Whereas the Aristotelian division begins its method of division into categories by establishing a determination in the first place, the Platonic dialogues present arduous processes of confrontation with the immediate. Plato

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302 Deleuze, "The Method of Dramatization", in Desert Islands, pp. 95–96.
303 See Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, pp. 213–214.
304 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 254.
305 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 254.
306 Plato, Statesman, 303e.
establishes philosophy as the discipline of making a difference – or determining which differences matter – but this determining of differences takes place from the undifferentiated ground up. Despite the Ideas providing a ground for the establishment of limited identities, the method of establishing those still needs to grapple with the unlimited.

This is why the dialogues of Plato take such twists and turns. Gregory Flaxman notes: “Neither abstraction nor synthesis characterise the Idea in Platonism”, and this is why it still retains a connection with difference in itself. \(^{307}\) Aristotle criticises Plato for the lack of mediation in his method: there is no “middle term” which could act as the basis of selecting a thing’s participation in one species or another. Accordingly, Deleuze praises Plato’s dialogues for displaying the “brute presence” of not having succumbed to the requirements of representation. \(^{308}\) Thus, the Platonic Idea is not simply opposed to the image, but rather is born out of the necessity to select among the various images which are presented to us by the immediate experience.

**THE MYTHIC FOUNDATION**

Yet, claims Deleuze, the first irony of Plato’s dialogues, the arrival of numerous rivals, is superseded by a second one. When the work of division undergoes its selection, it suddenly renounces itself and makes an evasive action by a detour into myth. In the *Phaedrus* as well as in the *Statesman* the introduction of a myth seems to interrupt the process of selection. Is it not the case, as Aristotle would claim, that the lack of mediation forces the Platonic discussants to take recourse in the mythic structure, which alone can impose their claims with the force of plausibility? It may seem so, but Deleuze does not agree. Myth is indeed the story of a foundation. Myth presents a model according to which the different claimants can be judged. It is the claim or pretension which needs a foundation. The various rivals can be judged against this mythic ground. Deleuze uses the example of *Phaedrus* where the myth of souls before their incarnation is introduced. Prior to their incarnation into bodies, souls were able to see the Ideas. From there we derive the method of judging the

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\(^{307}\) Gregory Flaxman, “Plato” in *Deleuze’s Philosophical Lineage*, p. 25, n12.

\(^{308}\) Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 59.
different claimants who propose themselves as possessing the true 
love: those souls who have seen many things prior to being born into 
the world of mortals are worthy of the claim to divine love. True 
claimants take part in the Idea of love. False pretenders – in this case 
the sensual, forgetful and petty souls – are distinguished by their lack 
of participation. Deleuze states: “In short, elective participation is the 
response to the problem of a method of selection”. 309

According to the Platonic hierarchy, to participate (metechein) is 
inevitably to possess only a part, to rank second. Only the Idea 
possesses itself fully. A is A, but not only in the sense of a Kantian 
analytic judgment. The Idea also bestows something on the 
participants. It possesses a certain quality firsthand and the 
participants claim it second-hand. Deleuze evokes a Neoplatonic triad 
of the unparticipated, the participated and the participant and 
provides the following analogies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unparticipated</th>
<th>participated</th>
<th>participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>object aspired to</td>
<td>pretender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>fiancé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deleuze says: “The participated is what the unparticipated possesses 
primarily. The unparticipated gives it out for participation, it offers the 
participated to the participants”. 310 However, this possession can be 
merely partial, since only the foundation can lay claim to itself in full. 
The Idea is pure quality and the material world provides the extension 
to this quality. This is, correspondingly, the structure of 
representation: quality and extension. As Deleuze states, this structure 
subordinates difference to resemblance: “difference necessarily tends to 
be cancelled in the quality which covers it, while at the same time 
inequality tends to be equalised within the extension in which it is 
distributed”. 311

According to Socrates’ analogy of the cave, the world consists 
of a multi-tiered hierarchy of representations, ranging from concrete 
things to vague images of things. The domain of representation 
consists of “copies-icons” which are “defined not by an extrinsic

310 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 255.
311 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, p. 266.
relation to an object, but by an intrinsic relation to the model or foundation”. The model or the foundation is the Same, that which possesses primarily. The copy is the Similar: “the pretender who possesses in a secondary way”. We have, thus, two kinds of possessions. The pure self-identity of the foundation possesses an exemplary similitude. The pure resemblance of the copy possesses an imitative similitude.

THE ABYSS BEYOND BAD COPIES
The Platonic copy-icon can be judged according to the degree of its participation in the corresponding Idea. This participation is imitative, but not merely of an external character, of “likeness”, but of an internal, “noetic” nature. This noetic participation denotes a correspondence between the Idea and a thing’s relational and proportional values. The entire world consists of this participation; every thing lays its claim to some Idea. However, the world is not occupied only by copies – the resemblance of which can be determined by the Platonic dialectic as the measurement of a thing’s mimetic potential – but also by entities whose claim to an Idea is unfounded. These unfounded things are of the order of shadows, illusions, mirages, phantasms: the simulacra. The Platonic category of images is divided into two: copies-icons and simulacra-phantasms. It is not that the simulacrum is merely a bad copy. The difference between copies and simulacra is a difference of nature. A bad copy is an image removed from the Idea by the 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation of copies-of-copies. Yet, even the worst copy still retains at least an iota of resemblance. The simulacrum, in turn, is an image without resemblance.313

Here Deleuze draws up on an example from the catechism, inspired by Platonism: “God made man in his image and resemblance. Through sin, however, man lost the resemblance while maintaining the image. We have become simulacra. We have forsaken moral existence in order to enter into aesthetic existence”.314 There is an element of the Fall into sin in the simulacrum. It is an image “spoiled” by its deceptive appearance without internal resemblance.

312 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 259.
313 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 256–257.
314 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 257.
As one can devise the most complicated hierarchies from the basis of Plato’s system of models and copies and the latters’ validity according to their level of participation in the foundational models, one can also run down the ladder of hierarchy to encounter worse and worse participants. In this descent, proposes Deleuze, we are presented with a constant degradation of claimants until the process culminates in the one that does not possess anything more than an empty external resemblance – a simulacrum.\textsuperscript{315} In the Greek agonistic rivalry of thinkers, the problem becomes that of distinguishing the pretenders from the worthy claimants.

The claims to Platonic Ideas are based on the supposed participation in a certain quality which is possessed firsthand by a pre-existent foundation. For example, there is the quality of courageousness to which the courageous man can lay a claim. Yet, among the rivals, there are different degrees of possession of this quality and who is to say which claimant is the courageous one? Up until this point we can still proceed by the way of Socrates’ dialectic, trying our way here and there with questions testing the validity of claims. However, according to Plato, there are also rivals who base their claim on nothing more than empty images and thus do not possess the foundation at all. The game of claims is no longer fair; it is spoiled by the impostors.

Who is this false pretender? The Sophist. \textit{Sophistēs}, the one who “does” wisdom, the one who makes his business with wisdom. The figure of the sophist in the Platonic dialogues is of one who practises the art of philosophy through rhetoric and thus introduces an element of treachery into the proceedings. Originally a term for a wise man or a poet, by the time of Plato the word sophist had come to denote a wandering teacher who gave tuition for a price. Plato portrays the sophists in several dialogues as wily rhetoricians taking advantage of the ambiguities of language in order to produce an effect or appearance of wisdom, instead of practising philosophy for the love of wisdom and justice. Thus the sophist is a false friend of wisdom – a pretender and a charlatan claiming to possess wisdom that he does not have. That makes the sophist a being of the simulacrum.

What is really noteworthy according to Deleuze is the structure of Plato’s dialogue, the \textit{Sophist}. Contrary to the other dialogues

\textsuperscript{315} Deleuze, \textit{The Logic of Sense}, p. 255.
utilising the method of division – the *Phaedrus* and the *Statesman* – we are presented with no founding myth in the *Sophist*. The reason for this is simple enough for Deleuze: as the myth constructs a “foundation-test according to which the pretenders should be judged and their pretensions measured”, the corresponding dialectic of division results in the authentication of the Idea. Now, here the object of division is the sophist, a claimant without resemblance to the Idea, and his definition cannot be founded on any originating myth, for otherwise the sophist would have an essence after all.\(^{316}\)

The sophist is false, and his falsehood cannot be given foundation. There is no way to define the *true* sophist. Faced with this “satyr, or centaur, the Proteus who meddles and insinuates himself everywhere”, Plato ends up questioning the very notion of the system of models and copies.\(^{317}\) The case of the sophist is much more troublesome than the problem of the possible formlessness of such things as mud, hair and dirt. When questioned in *Parmenides* whether Socrates thought that there is a corresponding Idea for “undignified and worthless” things like dirt, his answer was that there could not be. Socrates states that mud and dirt are “just what we see. Surely it’s too outlandish to think there is a form for them”.\(^{318}\) This exclusion of base things of life can be explained away by philosophy’s perennial preoccupation with the eternal and fear of the body,\(^{319}\) but the sophist presents an active force of resistance to the model-copy system of representation.

According to Deleuze, the sophists’ claim to wisdom is a simulacrum, an underhanded pretension, taking place “under cover of an aggression, an insinuation, a subversion, ‘against the father,’ and without passing through the Idea”.\(^{320}\) The sophists’ pretension conceals a dissimilarity *within* the pretending image. Whereas the faithful copy or copy-of-a-copy – say, a table and an image of a table – resemble something on the basis of an internal resemblance between the model and the copy (or copy-of-a-copy *et cetera*), the simulacrum

\(^{316}\) Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 256.
\(^{317}\) Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 256.
\(^{319}\) An exception to this is provided by the Cynics of Plato’s time, who embraced life in accord with nature and thus affirmed the bodily existence of man. See passages on Diogenes of Sinope in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R.D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), Book 6.
\(^{320}\) Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 257.
only feigns a relation of resemblance. Therefore Deleuze posits a difference of nature between copies and simulacra. The sophist wields this infernal, demonic power of the simulacrum in order to argue his point of view without being a “true” friend of wisdom. Whereas the philosopher is concerned with knowledge and thus with the production of a right opinion, the sophist’s subversion is merely an unproductive art of rhetoric that places itself outside the sphere of knowledge. The philosopher wants to define, to fix, to impose a limit; the sophist, in turn, evades, changes, mutates and undoes limits.

Thus, the Platonic aim is to suppress the simulacra. Not because of their being such bad copies that they have lost their claim to truth, but because their simulation enables the critique of the representative order in the first place. Therefore, with respect to copies and simulacra, we have a dualism of heights and depths. Plato’s method of division aims to utilise the dialectic process to ascend to the heights of pure Ideas. Against this, the sophists are self-contradictory, subterranean creatures, distributing quasi-wisdom for a price. They use methods that do not contribute to the search of knowledge and trick the true friends of wisdom. Such is their craft that they have to be repressed and buried as deep as possible.

Yet, the sophist – once recognised and defined – has already done his damage. Even the consideration of simulacra has forced Plato over the abyss of simulation and in a lightning flash of an instant has poisoned the roots of the tree of knowledge. As the sophist and the simulacrum lack a true essence, it becomes impossible to distinguish the true claimants from the pretenders. How can we even distinguish Socrates from a sophist? He is haunted by a demonic double: the simulator. In the *Sophist* the final definition of the sophist is indistinguishable from Socrates: an ironist who works by means of arguments in order to compel the person who he is conversing with to contradict himself.\(^{321}\) In an instant Socrates’ uniqueness is gone: he is truly a philosophical gadfly, but his distinctness is lost in a swarm of other argumentative gadflies.

The Platonic edifice is then overturned by an image that does not resemble anything other than itself. Here resemblance is to be understood in the sense of a connection between an essence and its manifestation. The sophist is a man whose true essence is his lack of

essence. This is the crux of Plato’s criticism of sophists. There can be no founding myth for the sophist. Yet, the very definition of the sophist opens up the possibility of entities without essence and thus collapses the whole Platonic hierarchy of essences, manifestations, copies, images and simulacra. Falsehood – images without internal resemblance to Idea – can be everywhere. This is the position Deleuze assigns to Hume when he notes that illusion has insinuated itself into human nature in the form of illegitimate beliefs which act as the building blocks for future associations and beliefs. Truly, we are swimming in delirium.

In the simulacrum we can observe a dimension of becoming-mad: of unlimited identity. Using words reminiscent of the Kantian sublime, Deleuze notes that “the simulacrum implies huge dimensions, depths and distances that the observer cannot master”. When presented with these apparitions, we are in the presence of the same “aleatory point” that Deleuze described in the failure of the third passive synthesis and the disharmony of faculties, as discussed in chapter one of this study. In experience there is only appearance, but from which point of view? The faculties cannot prove a transcendental grounding for experience. Once again we are presented with Alice’s question in Wonderland: “Which way, which way?” What can provide a sense to things? As Socrates found out, once one has gazed into the abyss of the simulacra, the danger of the viewer becoming a simulacrum presents itself.

The danger of unlimited identity was, thus, recognised in Plato’s works. Yet, despite the seeds of contradiction found within the writings of Plato himself, the progress of representational thought has continued throughout the history of Western philosophy. Deleuze identified the will to choose as the motivation of Platonism. Still, he says, Plato is content to establish the model of the Same and the intrinsic relation between foundation and appearances, and to merely exclude everything else as obfuscations of this domain. It is in Aristotle that the true deployment of representation as the method of limitation gains its full force. For him the method of division is perfected as specification – dividing being into genera and species.323

322 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 258.
323 For further discussion on the implications of this division, please see chapter five of this study.
A third moment in the history of representation in philosophy occurs as the effect of Christianity when philosophers such as Leibniz and Hegel try to render representation infinite, to claim the unlimited by inserting it into the system of division. Deleuze states that representation becomes then “orgiastic”, inserting the infinitely small or large within the fold of what is representable. Yet, in Deleuze’s view such orgiastic representation ultimately fails in affirming difference as it is. How, then, should one proceed in trying to affirm difference? That is the question addressed in the following section.

4.4 Affirming Difference-in-Itself: Lucretius, Nietzsche and Deleuze

The aesthetic is the sphere of the affect: an “aliquid” world of liminalities, membranes, interfaces, exchanges, passings and becomings. Affectivity immerses objects in a network of relations. Everything consists of powers to affect and be affected. In an immanent philosophy that is the only hierarchy. For Deleuze the aesthetic experience – or apperception in the Kantian sense – is the site of the genesis of our representations. As the first part of the study at hand has hopefully established, for Deleuze the path of going from the given to the conditions of experience leads to Kant, especially via a thorough detour of *Critique of Judgment*. It is here, says Deleuze, that the Kantian legacy is ultimately formed: namely in the notion that the aesthetic experience opens up a possibility to think of experience in general without conditions, that is, to address the issue of real experience instead of possible experience. The aesthetic resides outside legislation. It cannot be judged on the basis of the conceptual. And, upon discovering this, Kant throws the whole issue of normativity into question. The aesthetic is radically singular. One can make aesthetic judgments only on a case-by-case basis, as the aesthetic phenomena appear as under categories which are born alongside the phenomena.

This is why Deleuze nominates Kant as the first “modern” philosopher of apparitions instead of appearances, and it happens on

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324 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 262.
325 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 23.
the grounds of the aesthetic. The existence of the simulacra is aesthetic, not moral (that is, hierarchical in the Platonic sense). The sense of a phenomenon is relational, experiential and event-like, and these characteristics are evident in the Kantian account of the aesthetic: an aesthetic experience is an encounter between the object and the observer.

Lucretius and the Original Diversity

Here, in considering the simulacra as the union of heterogeneous series, Deleuze evokes the names of Epicurus and Lucretius, whose “naturalism” he advocates as the kind of philosophical pluralism necessary to counter the Platonistic representationalist tradition within philosophy. In the second part of his text “The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy”, Deleuze gives a brief exposition of some basic tenets of his own empiricism by referring to Lucretius’ poem *De rerum natura*. Lucretius, though widely regarded as “merely” advocating an earlier Epicureanism, is praised by Henri Bergson and George Santayana for developing some originally less-than-coherent ideas of Democritus and Epicurus into an impressively intuitive system of philosophical materialism. For Deleuze, Lucretius is a figure worth praising for his commitment to naturalism, contrary to the mythic or supernatural framework of pre-philosophical thinking. Lucretius’ naturalism makes him a philosophical antidote to Platonism’s recourse to transcendent foundations for beings. The lesson of Lucretius is, in short, that diversity is essential to the products of Nature. When looking around ourselves, we find manifest diversity in the world. Lucretius states:

Turn your attention now to a meadow in which there are grazing beasts of various kinds, wooly sheep and brave war horses and, not at all far from them, horned cattle, all of them munching the same grass and drinking the same water from the flowing brook, under the same

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azure sky. Each of them lives its life in its own
shape and nature, following the pattern of its parents.
So various is the life the same nourishment fosters
in the same field and in the brook and pond as well.
So too are the parts diverse of which each creature is made—
bones, sinews, organs, guts, the different
results that have come about from the same beginnings.  

An altogether harder lesson to learn is to think of the diverse as
diverse, without subsuming it to some kind of unity, oneness or
wholeness. At this point it must be evident that this has been
Deleuze’s aim throughout his own œuvre, especially explicit in *Difference
and Repetition*. In Lucretius’ conception of Nature we can observe three
tendencies and, correspondingly, three principles. They can be schematised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURAL DIVERSITY</th>
<th>PRINCIPLE</th>
<th>➔ Diversity of worlds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Diversity of species</td>
<td>Specificity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Diversity of individuals within species</td>
<td>Individuality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Diversity of parts within individuals</td>
<td>Heterogeneity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrary to Plato or Aristotle, for whom diversity is a degeneration of
a previous unity, Lucretius’ naturalism starts from the fact that
everything that exists appears as diverse: “none of the things that
appear before our eyes is made / of only one kind of element, but
rather of different seeds / that have been commingled”.  
The principles of specificity, individuality and heterogeneity imply a world
that is composed of a diversity of “worlds”, as beings interact with
each other, compose or are composed of each other. Every individual
is distinct from every other and ultimately irreducible to abstract
generality. Lucretius illustrates this by a moving example: a mother
cow searches in vain for her calf, which has been taken away to be
sacrificed to the gods. Even though calves might all look the same to

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328 Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 2.562–573.
us, she would recognise her own offspring from among any number of them.  

Likewise, no grain of sand or speck of dust is indiscernible, given sharp enough powers of observation. This corresponds with Deleuze’s reading of Leibniz, where an observer has a clear and distinct point of view to a part of the world that is, in totality, unclear and indistinct. Yet, the observer is still affected by the whole of the world. Likewise, one can note a parallel with von Uexküll’s concept of Umwelt, which denotes the life world of each animal subject, shaped by the particular subject’s powers of observation and action. Umwelt forms the clear and distinct zone of observation for every particular entity; the outside of this habitual milieu is obscure, as it lies outside the formal capacity of the individual. Still, the entity is from the beginning caught in a web in inter-milieu relations which can affect the individual and in which the individual can act as a pre-individual intensity to some other milieu and individual-in-formation.

Accordingly, when thinking about a grain of sand we can shift the perspective and the scale of observation. Instead of a singular granule of sand we can speak about its components – molecules, atoms and sub-atomic parts. Or we can consider a sandy beach, composed of millions of grains of sand. Wherever we turn, we come to see that distinctness and heterogeneity occur. Accordingly, states Deleuze, nature must be thought of as the principle of the diverse and its production. However, one must be careful here not to fathom the principle of production as producing a totality or a Whole. Deleuze sums up the Epicurean thesis: “Nature as the production of the diverse can only be an infinite sum, that is, a sum which does not totalize its own elements”.  

The principle of diversity cannot, in itself, form a Whole, or Being. The notion of wholeness is the idea to resist and Deleuze considers Lucretius as having been able to hold his ground against the inherent will-to-foundation in philosophical thought. To totalise the diversity of Nature under such a concept as the One is to subsume everything under One’s judgment, the judgment of God. What one does in declaring “To Have Done With the Judgment of God!” is to

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331 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 267.
332 As Antonin Artaud’s radiophonic play from 1947 is titled: Pour en Finir avec le Jugement de dieu. This is a catchphrase later adopted by Deleuze and Guattari.
refuse a “final” aim of everything, a total unity, telos, or Absolute. Instead, what is noted and affirmed is the diversity and difference inherent in nature. The Platonic hierarchy must be overturned since it implies that nature is fundamentally an imperfect manifestation of some higher – that is, transcendent – principle. There is nothing that would gather the plurality of everything that exists under one totality: nature is not collective. Rather, nature is distributive. It distributes various elements into relations with each other, yet without forming a total sum. From this follows that nature is not attributive. Instead of expressing itself as attributing a quality to extension, “A is B”, nature is conjunctive. Beings connect, oppose and support other beings: “This and that … Nature is Harlequin’s cloak”.333

Nature as this ramshackle construction, making itself up as it goes along, is what is truly affirmed and what affirms itself. In contrast, what is artificial and frail is the One. It is merely an abstraction, considered arbitrarily in isolation from the network of beings. The tendency to take recourse in a totality provided by a mythic foundation is a characteristic Deleuze noted in Plato. Lucretius, in turn, is a critic of that which makes man’s soul anxious. Unhappiness is caused by the “false infinites” that thinking produces: “To the origins of language, the discovery of fire, and the first metals royalty, wealth, and property are added, which are mythical in their principle; to the conventions of law and justice, the belief in gods; to the use of bronze and iron, the development of war; to the inventions of art and industry, luxury and frenzy”.334 Happiness is, then, produced by the understanding of the diverse as diverse, without adding a mythical, transcendent dimension in order to account for it.

APPEARANCES AND THE THREAT OF NIHILISM

One may easily note similarities with Lucretius and Nietzsche’s project of critiquing those tendencies in Western though which enslave man under a belief of something higher than the apparent world. As Deleuze states, Lucretius and Nietzsche are united in their critique of myth and the transcendent: “From Lucretius to Nietzsche, the same end is pursued and attained. Naturalism makes of thought and sensibility an affirmation. It directs its attack against the prestige

333 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 267.
334 Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, p. 278.
of the negative; it deprives the negative of all its power; it refuses to
the spirit of the negative the right to speak in the name of philosophy”.

Instead of elevating the transcendent as the hidden principle and secret of this apparent world, both Lucretius and Nietzsche seek to affirm appearance as appearance. To be more exact, the term “appearance” already leads us to posit a difference between
which appears and that onto which this appearance is founded. Hence Deleuze’s adoption of the term simulacrum. As there can be no hierarchy in a system of thought “tainted” by the idea of a groundless image, thinking reaches the “power of the false” ($\textit{pseudos}$).

The sophist obscures and obfuscates the Platonic hierarchy of claimants and leads us to a point where there can be no distinction between true claimants and false pretenders.

In his text “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable” Nietzsche sketches a “history of an error”, meaning the history of the notion of a true, transcendent reality. The history of the transcendent is presented as six stages, all of which illustrate a case of relating the true world with the illusory one, the one “we” inhabit. The first three stages are, in succession, Platonism, Christianity and Kantianism and the status of true being is ascribed to the Ideas, God and the noumenal world, respectively. The true world in the first Platonic version is attainable by the wise man. Then, in Christian thought, the true being is postponed: it is promised in the future for the one who believes and repents. Moving ahead, Kantian thought takes a leap further and establishes truth as forever unattainable, but still providing a kind of consolation and imperative for mortals. According to the solar model of truth, we proceed from the light of the Ideas into the Northern fog of Königsberg, with “the old sun” seen only through mist, pale and elusive.

The latter three stages present a movement further away from the thought of a true world and towards Nietzsche’s own thinking.

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335 Deleuze, \textit{The Logic of Sense}, p. 279.
336 Deleuze, \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy}, p. 96.
338 Scholars have disputed the extent of the latter three stages as representing Nietzsche’s own thinking. John T. Wilcox is the most inclusive; he states that all three stages contain elements of Nietzsche’s work as it proceeds. See Wilcox, \textit{Truth and Value in Nietzsche: A Study of His Metaethics and Epistemology} (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1974), p. 123. Others, such as Heidegger, see the beginnings of Nietzsche’s philosophy in stage five, but full-fledged
The fourth stage lays the foundation for the acceptance of the fact that we cannot attain nor know the true world. From this follows a question: how can something that is unknown radiate an influence on us? The fifth stage is the one where the idea of a true world becomes the so-called “true” world when we recognise that the idea of truth has become superfluous. The last and sixth stage does away with the thought of a true world altogether. Nietzsche states: “The true world – we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one”. We find the simulacrum-effect at work: once we deny the primacy of the model, we end up denying the secondary status of the copy as well. Therefore, the dichotomy between the two is abolished. In the light of the Deleuzean story of overturning Platonism, this stage means its completion, “twilight of the idols”.

What is notable is that the very idea of overturning is found within the thinking of Plato himself. As Walter Pater comments, the “disintegrating Heraclitean fire” takes hold of men’s customs and concepts once the figure of the sophist is introduced. Thus, even though Plato wanted to suppress the dangerous notion of the simulacrum, he had formulated the thought already and made possible the ungrounding of the hierarchy of knowledge and truth. Against the dichotomy of essences and appearances, with its establishing of representations as the repetition of the same, it is possible to posit simulacra or apparitions as the repetition of difference. Simulacra are no longer “false” in the sense of being opposed to truth, as, following Nietzsche, the notion of a true world must be done away with altogether. A true world of models and copies would be ruled by the self-identity of the highest principle, organising the world of appearances according to the resemblance between phenomena and this superior principle. The “false” Nietzschean world is, by contrast, subject to constant reinvention of itself as the repetition of difference. This is how Deleuze reads Nietzsche’s notion of the eternal return. It is not to be thought of as the eternal return of the same, but of the perpetual production and distribution of differences. This denotes

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world as synthesis, a becoming. Yes, an eternal return, but as the return of difference, of continual variation or creation.\textsuperscript{341}

Nietzsche’s thought of the eternal return is mainly posed against the danger of nihilism inherent in the abolishment of the transcendental foundation of thought and knowledge.\textsuperscript{342} If we accept the claim that nothing is true we run into the risk of short-circuiting thinking altogether. The claim “nothing is true” in effect breaks down thought because even this claim cannot then be held as truth. Here the correlation between truth and belief disappears. Nihilism is defined by Nietzsche in his notes as follows: “A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought \textit{not} to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist”.\textsuperscript{343} An intellectual stance like this cannot grant any meaning to the world anymore. This state is described by Nietzsche as the “great nausea” of nihilism.\textsuperscript{344} The devaluation of the values on which man has previously based his measure of the worth of the world evokes this feeling of sickness.

Yet, this nausea is not the final word on the matter. As Nietzsche delineates in his six-stage “history of error” mentioned above, the phase of nihilism shall be overcome. From the aporia of “nothing is true” must be fashioned an unconditional affirmation of the world as it is. This happens via the idea of the eternal return. This means that man has to present himself the question of the possibility of accepting an eternal or perpetual recurrence of all events.\textsuperscript{345} This is the challenge separating passive nihilists from the active ones who are able to affirm life, for there are two kinds of nihilism: passive, which denotes the decline of the power to affirm, and active, which in turn stands for the increasing of the power of the spirit.\textsuperscript{346} The active

\textsuperscript{341} See Deleuze, \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy}, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{342} A more recent commentator of Nietzsche, Bernard Reginster, shares with Deleuze the emphasis on the crisis of nihilism in Western thought and the centrality of the problematic of the overcoming of this crisis in Nietzsche’s writings. See Reginster, \textit{The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on the Overcoming of Nihilism} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
\textsuperscript{346} Nietzsche, \textit{Will to Power}, 22, p. 17.
nihilist is able to rise to the challenge of the eternal return and will it unconditionally.

**Nietzsche’s Affirmation of the Apparent**

Affirming the thought of eternal return or eternal recurrence means affirming existence as it is, without meaning or final aim. As Deleuze emphasises in his reading of Nietzsche, eternal return does not concern the notion that everything will return in a manner that is exactly the same as it has been, and that this will happen time and time again. Rather, “the eternal return is linked, not to a repetition of the same, but on the contrary, to a transmutation”.\(^{347}\) What recurs is not the same but rather the “meaningless” variation; the world is a becoming, constantly re-arranging itself. “Nothing is true” is here affirmed by turning transience and contingency into absolute values. The two dead-ends of nihilism – disorientation and despair\(^ {348} \) – are overcome. Disorientation, the perceived lack of “true” values, is swept aside by the acceptance of being as becoming. This means that the world as becoming “must appear justified at every moment (or incapable of being evaluated; which amounts to the same thing)”;\(^ {349} \) we cannot appeal to any ultimate or final aims (future) or foundations (past) to evaluate the present. This is obviously the inspiration, alongside Lucretius, for Deleuze’s notion of the world as becoming under the principle of diversity: the world as an infinite sum of elements without a totality. As Nietzsche confirms: “*The total value of the world cannot be evaluated*”.\(^ {350} \) To replace disorientation of the lack of values, an entirely new kind of valuation is introduced in the thought of eternal return. In a world conceived as eternity and its perpetual recurrence there cannot be any finality. Therefore, everything is valueless and yet of a wholly novel value. Every moment of existence, disentangled from the dependence on a final goal, is valued absolutely as such. Every moment is transitory, but that does not take away from its value as it cannot be evaluated against some transcendent eternity. This does away with the second aspect of nihilism, despair over the truth that is unattainable. There is no more need to lay the foundation of existence on the ground of “true” being and, accordingly,

\(^{347}\) Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. xii.

\(^{348}\) As schematised by Reginster, see *The Affirmation of Life*, p. 29.


\(^{350}\) Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 708, p. 378, original emphasis.
everything is affirmed in its “falsehood”: the contingency and locality of being. Here “the false” has to be understood in the meaning of “the apparent” in its positive connotations. What appears is an apparition: it is affirmed as such and not as an illusion covering up some more fundamental reality. When the notion of the “real” world was abolished in the crisis of nihilism, the connotation of the “merely false” world lost its negative value.

As Nietzsche states, art is the privileged site of production of such falsehood. It is clear that works of art do not fall into a dichotomy of true and false and, likewise, do not comply with a correspondence theory of truth. Who can say that one artwork is truer than the other? Or that a certain interpretation of an artwork holds the truth of its existence? Art’s truth must be judged in every case, in the work’s being-here-and-now. This is precisely what disturbs Plato as regards art. Art displays itself as apparition; it “treats illusion as illusion; therefore it does not wish to deceive; it is true”. Art does not take recourse in myth, in the transcendent, but rather displays itself as artifice. In the practice of art we can observe the power of the simulacra to affirm difference and divergence. Deleuze’s term is that the simulacrum-as-work-of-art “complicates” within itself heterogeneous series of meaning or affectivity. This is evident in the light of Kant’s aesthetics. A work of art must be encountered – and judged – as a unique presence, a singularity. Or rather, as a set of singularities: a work of art is an assemblage (agencement). Deleuze’s original French term contains the meanings of putting together, joining of different parts, making a mise-en-scène, fitting, assembling. In a sense bricolage, an assemblage is something that keeps heterogeneous elements together, and, crucially, makes them work together. Consistency is the key word here, coupled with immanence. The consistency of an assemblage – an identity, in other words – does not rely on a supposed resemblance to a transcendent form which would act as the foundation for the entity. Rather, according to the model of eternal


352 In fact Deleuze, when beginning his collaboration with Guattari, abandons the term “simulacrum” in favour of “assemblage” (agencement). The reason for this may partially lie in the fact that Deleuze tends to reassemble his terminology on a case-by-case basis, depending on the focus and aim of the text at hand. Nevertheless, there is a manifest continuity between these two terms and this is discussed further in chapter five of this study.
return, the world is affirmed in its immanence. This means that the universe is closed upon itself; there is no “higher” reality of organization. Ontologically speaking, the world is flat. Phenomena are assemblages composed of relations of pre-individual singularities. That the phenomena “return” eternally denotes the idea that their being must be thought from the perspective of their constitutive differences and the ongoing process of this genesis. In comparison to eternal return, identity is an effect.

Simulacra as assemblages of the heterogeneous are what Deleuze defines as “signs” in *Proust and Signs*. As was stated in chapter two of the present study, signs *implicate* and they must be *explicated*. Signs as problematic instances are found already in Plato. There are objects of recognition and representation, says Socrates, and then there are objects which cause us to do a double take. *What is that?* The mind wonders and is forced to think, discovering the fundamental discord of its faculties. As the simulacrum implies an unlimited identity, with its sense proceeding towards nonsense, it appears as a problem. In the conscious mind the simulacrum’s problematic status is due to its obscurity; within the pre-conscious passive syntheses the problem is the virtual “overdetermination” or “supersaturation” of a being-in-formation. The simulacrum as a sign, as an assemblage of singularites, registers as intensity, not identity. There, in the moment of encounter that defies recognition, the passage from the virtual to the actual takes place. Furthermore, in the intensity that the actual, empirical consciousness registers, one can glimpse the counter-actualising force of the virtual and recognise the potential points for the transformation of the situation at hand. The next chapter of this study addresses the concept of the assemblage in terms of individuation and counter-individuating force of intensity. Then, in concordance with the notion of the simulacrum, the question of the work of art as assemblage is explored. If art is the principal manifestation of the order of the simulacra, can the same status be applied to assemblages as well? Is a work of art a special kind of assemblage? Does not the material repetition inherent in art effect a one-way actualisation with no counter-actualising tendencies remaining in the artwork? Or, rather, is it not the repetition of material itself that opens up the work of art as an encounter with the virtual?
5. The Assemblage of Art

In the preceding chapter I discussed Deleuze’s portraiture of phenomena as simulacra. Deleuze fathoms the world as a network of “problematic” signs. These signs refer not to an ideal form or an essence, but instead to an internal dissimilarity and heterogeneity within beings. In concordance with this, Deleuze elevates the simulacra as possessing a subversive power in the system of thought based on a representational hierarchy of things. The realm of simulacra obfuscates the essential origins of phenomena and this threat of instability within images was recognised already in antiquity and resulted in distrust towards artistic methods of mimesis. Foremost among the critics of simulacra, Plato found the figure of the Sophist to be a problematic one: the Platonic method of division cannot find the exact nature of the Sophist because he possesses no true essence. This suggests the existence of beings which are without essence – simulacra – and this threatens the integrity of the whole system of representation. In short, as Platonism constructs a multi-tiered world of essences and corresponding instances – ranging from things to copies and, finally, to the “bad copies” of the simulacra – Deleuze seizes the potential inherent in groundless simulacra and uses them in his “overturning” of Platonic thought. By fathoming phenomena as simulacra and not as Platonic copies possessing an internal similarity to some fixed, eternal essence, identity becomes unlimited. This dimension of madness is what Plato wants to avoid and what Deleuze, in turn, wants to celebrate. The “nature” of a thing is unfixed; it is not contained within a pre-formed identity such as a Platonic essence.

In its groundlessness the simulacrum affirms the world of appearances, the world “as it is”. As the simulacrum denotes here an identity which can hold heterogeneous elements together, it cannot be gathered under a concept that would provide a foundation for its unity. Therefore, one can say that the simulacrum is an immanent image as it does not refer to a “higher”, transcendent principle of organization, but rather appears in itself. This is not to say that the simulacrum would be an unproblematic or uncomplicated entity, but that its conditions of being reside ontologically on a same “level” as it is in itself and determine a thing on a case by case basis. There is a profoundly Lucretian and Nietzschean tone in Deleuze’s writings on
the simulacrum, as he defines the concept as wielding a subversive power against the Platonism of representational thought. This would mean judging the truth of a phenomenon against its degree of closeness to its transcendental condition. A thing would then be good or bad according to how fully it expresses its essence. Yet, as Nietzsche held the falsehood inherent in the images of art as the model for every phenomena – they cannot be judged against any finality, as such purposefulness is lacking in the world – so does Deleuze highlight the power of simulacra to disturb and disintegrate representational thought.

FROM SIMULACRA TO ASSEMBLAGES
Yet, after Deleuze’s two major philosophical works, *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* in 1968 and 1969 respectively, the simulacrum seems to drop out of his vocabulary almost totally. This in itself is not unusual, since Deleuze’s terminology tends to be utilised in each of his works depending on the context at hand. For each new problematic he constructs an appropriate conceptual “toolbox”, often to be rearranged in later texts. Still, in the case of the simulacrum, it appears that Deleuze wanted to abandon it for good, as is implied by this letter to Jean-Clet Martin: “it seems to me that I have totally abandoned the notion of simulacrum, which is all but worthless”. This observation is offered as hindsight, as the letter dates from 1990 – more than twenty years after Deleuze’s two major philosophical tomes of the late 1960s. The reasons for this rather harsh judgment on the worth of the concept of simulacrum remain open to speculation. One major development of Deleuze’s philosophy after the end of the 1960s was the increasing focus on developing a “positive” immanent ontology, rather than criticising the tradition of philosophy. For what its worth, the simulacrum remains a “critical” concept, challenging the thinking based on representation, and thus might seem to be tied too closely to the system of thought it criticises. Simulacra and simulation no longer hold subversive power once the question of representation has been put aside. In short, after having

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found the means of “overturning” Platonism, Deleuze could move on to other problems.\(^{354}\)

However, I wish to reclaim the concept of the simulacrum for it seems that it still retains a force of explication or explanation. This is the case especially when analysing the workings of art and our encounters with it. For the duration of their existence, theories of art have largely approached works of art in terms of the logic of representation. A singular work of art has been thought of as either representing an object, an essence of some kind, or, at least, an abstract category. Even though Deleuze might have considered the “problem” of Platonism as solved, it is still worthwhile to consider the work of art as an instance of the simulacrum, even in an explicitly Deleuzean framework. A principal reason for this is that the practice of art concerns presentation and representation. However, it is evident in works of art that they transgress the straightforward Platonic view of mimesis and thus possess a power to subvert representation in a manner akin to simulacra.

Regarding the status of the simulacrum, Deleuze states that the simulacral “modern work of art” is characterised by its ability to internalise dissimilarity: “We know … that certain literary procedures (the same holds for other arts) permit several stories to be told at once”.\(^{355}\) The work of art affirms heterogeneity whereas our representational thinking seeks to suppress this and to install a hierarchy of identities over the manifold of experience. This heterogeneity or unlimited identity is the one possessed by the Sophist and it is the threat of this unlimited dimension which Plato wants to suppress. Thus, the work of art as a simulacrum appears as a radical form of being for Deleuze, since it is able to provide an insight into the transcendental conditions of sensibility (see chapter one). As we have seen, Deleuze notes that for Plato “the simulacrum implies huge dimensions, depths, and distances that the observer cannot master”.\(^{356}\) The similarity of this to the Kantian sublime is obvious, as well as to

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\(^{354}\) The adoption of the notion of simulacrum by other theorists, such as Jean Baudrillard, may also have had an influence on Deleuze’s rejection of the concept. Especially as Baudrillard’s use of the term is in some significant ways opposite to that of Deleuze, as was discussed in chapter four.

\(^{355}\) Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 260.

\(^{356}\) Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 258.
Deleuze’s own idea of the disharmony of faculties in the third passive synthesis of time.

Still, there are refinements to be made to the conception of the work of art, and I wish to devote this final chapter to those issues. First, Deleuze follows the concept of the simulacrum with that of the assemblage. It has several advantages in comparison to the simulacrum, so I shall explicate the notion of the assemblage in general, as well as in conjunction with the case of the work of art. To that end, I shall utilise both Deleuze – especially his writings in *A Thousand Plateaus* co-authored with Guattari – and, in addition, a later developer of “assemblage theory”, philosopher Manuel DeLanda. The concept of assemblage has the advantage of retaining the dynamic character of individuation, as fathomed by Deleuze on the basis of Gilbert Simondon, whereas the simulacrum seems to appear only as a destabilising – deterritorializing or counter-actualising – concept. Also, as a general theory of individuation, the form of an assemblage can be used to consider the way art functions as a destabiliser of our tendency for stable hierarchies, based on recognition of pre-given identities. A work of art, as an assemblage in the process of its deterritorialization, is an encounter with difference instead of recognition of the same.

After considering the assemblage in general, as well as in the case of art, I shall raise my third issue, which addresses the question of reproduction in art. As has become clear, the task of the work of art is to “work against clichés”.357 This means overturning the logic of representation. A work is not to be recognised (it is about *this*), but encountered (*what* is this?) This conception amounts to a basic modernist or avant-gardist stance regarding art. Still, art presents something like an image, a *work*, whether visual, auditory, or tactile. My question is: how is the subversion of clichés possible in types of art working through mediums of representation or reproduction? In considering so-called “mass art” of cinema, video art, recorded music and other types of art utilising the distribution of recorded media, the critical question is whether they amount to something akin to a repetition of the same. How is a recording able to inscribe difference? Here the previously considered notions of the genesis of subjectivity (chapter one), affectivity and territoriality of art (chapter two), the

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357 Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, p. 63.
virtual as a dimension of time (chapter three), and the simulacrum as a critical force (chapter four) come together.

5.1 Assemblage Theory

While devoting a close reading to Plato’s *Sophist* in his quest to find the means of subverting the Platonic representational hierarchy within Plato himself, Deleuze also notes the post-Platonic developments of representational thought. To be sure, Plato is indeed the founder of “the domain of representation filled with copies-icons … defined not by an extrinsic relation to an object, but by an intrinsic relation to the model or foundation. The Platonic model is the Same”. An intrinsic relation to a “higher” identity of foundational Forms thus defines a being’s existence. The foundation is pure self-identity and everything else is arranged in great chains of being descending from this ground of identity. Yet, as was elaborated in the previous chapter, Deleuze sees Plato as content to stake out this domain of representation and to exclude everything else that might pose a threat to this system: bad copies, false pretenders, simulacra and Sophists. However, this gesture of exclusion leaves Platonic thought still open to the subversive effect issuing from the discarded part of being. Socrates wants to bury the simulacra deep in the bottom of the ocean, but he still attests to their existence. The madness of the unlimited identity continues to haunt Plato.

In this sense, Deleuze identifies Aristotle instead of Plato as the “true” enemy of anti-representationalist or immanent thought. In Aristotle’s deployment of the categories in his “taxonomic” model, representation is made to cover the entire field of being, “extending from the highest genera to the smallest species”. According to this view, advanced by Christian thought inspired by Aristotle’s teachings, the world is organised in a Great Chain of Being, *Scala naturae*, running from most primal beings to the highest principle of God. Every

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358 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 259.
359 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 259.
360 The chain-like organisation of being – or arborescent model of being, as Deleuze and Guattari phrase it – is evident in conceptions concerning both biological and social hierarchies. The king is the ruler of men, subject only to God above. Man rules over the animals. The lion is the king of the animal kingdom, *et cetera*. See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great
phenomenon is ultimately explainable by its relation, via hierarchical links, to the perfect organising origin. Deleuze sees Aristotle’s positing of genus, species and individuals as separate ontological categories as a formidable barrier to a conception of the world as an immanent set of relations. Aristotle perfects the Socratic method of division by creating a three-tiered hierarchy by which every phenomenon can be categorised according to its position relative to the taxonomy. This classification works by means of necessary differences and essentially continues the Platonic method of division introduced in *Sophist*.

The Platonic method of division works as follows: in order to find a definition of something – say, a dog – one must first locate the largest kind of thing under which the dog belongs. After that, division must begin by splitting that kind into two parts, and deciding which of the two the dog falls into. This parting method will be repeated until the proper position of the dog has finally been pinpointed. Aristotle’s refinement of the method results in the formulation that a proper definition of something should yield the genus (*genos*) of the thing defined. The genus “grounds” the thing and answers to the question of its kind. The necessary differences (*diaphora*) provide a unique identification of the thing within its genus. The result of this work of definition, *summa divisio*, is a species (*eidos*).\(^{361}\) For instance, the human (species) in Aristotelian definition is an animal (genus) which has the capacity for rationality (necessary difference). What this method defines are essences, which belong not to individual beings but to species.

Aristotle’s notion of the chain of being is that of a hierarchy, with “lower” beings – worms, bugs and other minuscule creatures, at the bottom and man, as the crown of all creation, at the top. Every species has its place in the chain, and in fact *must* occupy just that place, since there can be no “empty” places in the continuity of being. As a result the universe becomes perfect, fixed and non-dynamic, its

\(^{361}\) See Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. Jonathan Barnes, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, II, §13, 96b2–97a4. We can also note the connotation of the term *eidos* as being in Plato's vocabulary for “Form” and here functioning in a similar manner as an essence of a particular being.
manifest diversity being distributed according to the essential definitions of things.

The problem with such a hierarchy is that it conceives of singular instances – individual entities – as something that must be put into their "proper" place. An individual is not enough; it needs taxonomy to act as its support. This means placing the Aristotelian hierarchy of being as a transcendental foundation for the world and distributing the singular beings of the world into fixed, impenetrable categories. This fundamental scission into being proves fatal, since it introduces many kinds of ontological divisions, the most obvious being the difference between natural and artificial. On one hand, we have beings belonging to natural kinds; on the other hand, we have artificial aggregates. As Aristotle observes in *Physics*, nature (*physis*) possesses an internal principle of self-modification – change or growth. What is artificial is, in contrast, devoid of this natural ability to effect change. The internal, active principle is what separates nature from artifice (*techne*). Even though there are many different interpretations of this categorical separation between *physis* and *techne*, the fact remains that it is still presented as a demarcation line between two types of being: “Of things that exist, some exist by nature, some from other causes”, states Aristotle.\(^{362}\)

As noted in the previous chapter, Deleuze turns to ancient Atomists in his search for non-categorical thought. The naturalism of Lucretius offers him the notion that diversity is essential to the world. Yet, this diversity is hard to conceptualise as such, as thought proceeds through relations of analogy and hierarchy and produces the apparent

\(^{362}\) Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, II, §1, 192b9. Stephen David Ross presents a variety of interpretations concerning the Aristotelian relation between nature and artifice in his book *The Ring of Representation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992). It is possible to posit nature – the principle of self-generating movement – as separate from artifice, which does not possess this principle. Natural beings, then, belong to *time*, whereas all that is artificial does not exist within time in a similar way. Artifice belongs to a temporality which is geared towards ends and the application of that which is artificial. Yet, Ross states that is possible to state that the self-originating movement of nature is included also in *techne*; p. 21. Another writer emphasizing the aporetic character of trying to separate nature and artifice is Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent, who in her *Éloge du mixte: matières nouvelles et philosophie ancienne* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1998) focuses on contemporary science of composite materials as illuminating the obscurity of the category of artificial. Bensaude-Vincent singles out Aristotle as the first philosopher to be able to posit the paradox of mixtures: either the components are erased and a new substance is born, or the components remain as a juxtaposition of minute particles. In both cases we are not presented with a mixture as such, but a false or perceived mixture. See p. 53.
world as a representation of some hidden order. Lucretius’ natural diversity includes the diversity of species, individuals and parts composing the individuals: in short, diversity of many worlds, of worlds-within-worlds. Nature appears then as a principle of the diverse and its constant renewing production. This principle of production can only produce an infinite sum without totality. As there is no Totality or a totalising point of view – such as God’s perspective – the whole of existence is composed from an infinite set of perceptions, which form an immanent plane. A perception is a certain expression of affects, a singular state of relations, so it can be claimed that relations constitute the plane of immanence. There are myriads of singular worlds – points of perception – within an infinite network of perceptions. The majority of them are not human, so what transcendental thought must strive to achieve is to grasp the real. This denotes a world that is neither categorised by Aristotelian natural kinds, nor conditioned by the Kantian rules of possible experience, since these constitute the tracing of the real from our human, psychological point of view.

**THE HETEROGENEOUS IDENTITY**

In order to escape representation and to reach the *inhuman* view of the world the identity of beings must be understood as, ultimately, non-categorical. As can be recalled from chapters one and two of this study, the aim of transcendental empiricism is to give an account not of the actual, empirical reality, but of the conditions out of which this reality is formed. To understand the individual, we must look into the pre-individual and the process of individuation. The term adopted by Deleuze and Guattari for this kind of understanding of identity is assemblage. Individuations are not point-like realisations of an essence, but of the type of an hour, an afternoon, an event taking place: an amalgam of attributes, a *haecceity* – “thisness”. They state that in all things

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363 Reoccurring exhortations for the nonhuman or inhuman perspective in Deleuze and Guattari’s work, as well as a bestiary of werewolves, vampires and nameless horrors of science fiction in *A Thousand Plateaus*, are not borne out of a taste for the monstrous, but out of understanding that the pre-individual field is not reducible to “our” thinking and appears thus monstrous from the human point of view. As the now undoubtedly familiar Deleuzean maxim goes, the real must not be traced from the empirical.
there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage.\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, pp. 3–4.}

Here, the question is not of an identity that can be defined in extensive terms, with fixed spatio-temporal coordinates, occupying a definite place in the chain of being. Rather, identity with its mode of assemblage is intensive, composed of relative speeds and slownesses, undergoing different rates of change, faster, slower…

As can be deduced from Simondon’s theory of individuation as morphogenesis, every being is an individualisation or an incorporation of a set of pre-individual relations. What this Lucretian vision of the world as diversity enables is the overcoming of ontological boundaries. Everything is natural \textit{and} artificial; there is no distinction between the two. According to Deleuze and Guattari natural is artificial:

\begin{quote}
We oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity, peopling by contagion to sexual reproduction, sexual production. Bands, human or animal, proliferate by contagion, epidemics, battlefields and catastrophes. … Unnatural participations or nuptials are the true Nature spanning the kingdoms [genera and species] of nature. Propagation by epidemic, by contagion, has nothing to do with filiation by heredity, even if the two intermingle and require each other. The vampire does not filiate, it infects. The difference is that contagion, epidemic, involves terms that are entirely heterogeneous … These combinations are neither genetic nor structural; they are interkingdoms, unnatural participations. That is the only way Nature operates – against itself.\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, pp. 241–242.}
\end{quote}

Things exist by way of their sub-individual connections and these connections are not pre-determined by an individual essence. This is the crux of the lengthy quotation above. Deleuze and Guattari
highlight the “unnatural” process of nature which proceeds not only along the hereditary lines according to the categories of the chains of being, but also through non-categorical connections which produce a mixture of Aristotelian nature and artifice. The creation of the concept of the assemblage is due to the need to resist the tendency to think according to essences and in this sense the assemblage follows the simulacrum in Deleuze’s thinking. An assemblage, just as the simulacrum, gathers together heterogeneous elements and presents an identity that contains something that cannot be simply recognised and represented.

What is characteristic of an assemblage is that its actual properties may be categorised, but its capacities to interact with other assemblages are not determined. This capacity – always left partially untapped – is the dimension of the virtual. For instance, in theory we can make a list of the properties of a human being, even though going through all of them would make up quite a lengthy catalogue. What we cannot give complete accounts of are the capacities to affect and be affected the said human possesses. This is the principle of the exteriority of relations. As the philosopher Manuel DeLanda phrases it, an assemblage’s affective capacities make up its “space of possibility” – yet the space is not internal or essential to the identity of the assemblage, but rather virtual: it contains potential for novel transformations.366

Here the affective assemblage replaces essence as the foundation of an identity. What something is can be observed by the way it acts, by what affects it possesses as a capacity to affect and be affected. As Deleuze and Guattari see it, a “racehorse is more different from a workhorse than a workhorse is from an ox”. This is not taxonomy according to genera and species; it is an answer to the question of what a certain body can do. Furthermore, they state: “We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more

powerful body”. There is no pre-formation, as Simondon says – no pre-existent whole or essence to a thing. Instead, identity emerges as the result of pre-individual processes, as well as the being’s own functioning that is, in turn, affected by its component parts.

THE MECHANISM OF ASSEMBLAGE
No finality bestows on an assemblage its identity. Rather, an identity emerges as an effect out of the workings of the pre-individual parts of a being. This emergence is of a statistical or catalytic nature, rather than due to strict causality. As DeLanda has observed, assemblages display the principle of “redundant causality”, a conception which simply denotes that a being’s exact component parts are ultimately redundant from the point of view of causality. A number of different “micro-causes” can have caused an assemblage-level effect, so the individuality of specific micro-level agents is not a causally determining factor. Rather, it is the effect that stands in the focus when defining the identity of an assemblage. It is, once again, beneficial to recall here the principle of the exteriority of relations Deleuze constructs already in his reading of Hume: relations are exterior to their terms; that is, the “internal” properties of the composing parts do not explain the relations which constitute a whole.

The principle of exteriority of relations means that an effect arises statistically out of the pre-individual singularities and brings about a qualitative change in the individual. For instance, we can look at a colony of ants and notice that the individual insects are more or less replaceable. The assemblage – the colony – cannot be reduced to the functioning of its pre-individual parts. In this way, the assemblage is both historical and ahistorical. The component parts of an assemblage possess a unique history and they each form a unique kind of assemblage themselves. Yet, the emergence of a property in the “upper level” assemblage appears as an event, a “leap” over the linear causality of determination. Putting together a set of ants and considering them only on their individual level cannot give an account of the emerging properties of the super-individual assemblage, the

369 Deleuze, “Hume” in *Desert Islands*, p. 163.
colony. Or, to take a physico-chemical example, the properties displayed by single atoms of hydrogen and oxygen cannot yield an account of the properties of the chemical substance water. Likewise, the properties displayed by singular drops of water cannot explain all the modes of behaviour of a larger mass of water.\textsuperscript{370} What this amounts to is that we will never provide an adequate description of an assemblage by focusing on its properties or the properties displayed by its component parts alone, in isolation. What we must look for are the \textit{capacities} displayed by the assemblage or its parts, as in the case of the workhorse, racehorse and ox. The dimension of capacity – the virtual – does not belong to individuals, but the individuals rather “carry” it within them or can be said to incorporate it.

To characterise the mode of being of the assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish two axes in it: material and expressive components, and processes that can be either stabilising (territorializing) or destabilising (deterritorializing). The material and expressive components can be roughly categorised as falling under the axis between “machinic assemblage of bodies” (affective materiality) and “collective assemblage of enunciation” (language, semiotics, “incorporeal transformations”).\textsuperscript{371} This can be schematised as follows:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node (a) at (0,0) {Material components (“states of bodies”)};
\node (b) at (0,-1.5) {Expressive components (“incorporeal transformations”)};
\node (c) at (-1.5,-3) {Territorializing processes};
\node (d) at (1.5,-3) {Deterritorializing processes};
\draw[<->] (c) -- (d);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

An assemblage is, then, “an intermingling of bodies”, material and semiotic, which undergoes processes of strengthening or disassembling its current identity.\textsuperscript{372} An archetypal example of an assemblage would, thus, seem to be a social formation of some kind,

\textsuperscript{370} Stuart Kauffman proposes that there is such an ontological leap between physics and biology: properties displayed by biological phenomena cannot be reduced to the terms of physics. \textit{See Reinventing the Sacred}, chapter four.
\textsuperscript{371} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{372} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 87.
such as a political party or an institution of state. These clearly consist of material conditions (workers, material assets, \textit{et cetera}) and expressive components (rules and regulations, statements, symbolisations, \textit{et cetera}) and they undergo phases of stabilisation and change. A forceful instance of this is the juridical system. It is composed of buildings, clerks, officials and judges, as well as semiotic components such as laws, conducts and practices. It effects corporeal transformations, producing prisoners and enclosing them in special quarters and, in addition, incorporeal transformations such as declaring people guilty or not guilty. Yet, despite the examples traversing the social field, it must be kept in mind that Deleuze and Guattari nominate every single thing as an assemblage. The world is constituted of affects: parts within parts, affecting one another. Phenomena-as-assemblages exist as “boxes” within boxes, or a set of Russian dolls, qualified according to spatio-temporal scale and perspective. There are components great and small, mountains and molecules, and likewise assemblages. I am an assemblage of myriads of parts: physico-chemical, biological, cultural, technical. The parts I consist of are assemblages, too, on their respective levels. The hands that I type this text with consist of formations of flesh, sinew, bones, nerves, arteries and so forth. They have an individual history as “my” hands, and a structural history of the assemblage of human hand evolving through generations of ancestors, as the hand is a deterritorialized paw. My fingertips, pressing the keys, are made of biological cells, which, in turn, consist of molecules which are aggregates of atoms. We can continue into the sub-atomic level and never encounter the foundational stratum of reality which would act as a strictly determining foundation for the “higher” levels.

Likewise, there are many assemblages of which I am a part of. My family, my university department, my neighbourhood, my

\footnote{Social entities such as these are what DeLanda principally discusses in his assemblage theory – as he explicitly strives to create a philosophy able to address the social phenomena as assemblages. However, one must keep in mind that for DeLanda, as for my purposes here, the concept of assemblage is to be applied to “a wide range of wholes constructed from heterogeneous parts. Entities ranging from atoms and molecules to biological organisms, species and ecosystems may be usefully treated as assemblages and therefore as entities that are products of historical processes” (DeLanda, \textit{A New Philosophy of Society}, p. 3, my emphasis).}

\footnote{In fact it seems that at the sub-atomic level we encounter a radically indeterminate reality, see Werner Heisenberg, \textit{Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science} (New York: Harper and Row, 1958).}
nationality, humankind, the whole animal kingdom, planetary organic matter, Earth, the stellar system, Milky Way, the local system of galaxies and so forth into massive scale cosmic structures. At any level of consideration we are dealing with populations, not species, and with relations of parts to a (relative) whole. And, as mentioned above, there is also the question of emergence where different entities and attributes emerge not causally but statistically out of smaller-scale parts, without the larger-scale entities being reducible to their constitutive parts, as well as the wider assemblages affecting their components. As DeLanda phrases it, the world is composed of “nested” sets of individuals of different spatial and temporal scales.

The fact that everything is an assemblage does not mean that anything can become one: there are some criteria to ascertain that a certain assemblage is a real and functioning entity and not merely a random aggregate of parts. First, an assemblage has to possess the power to affect its constituent parts. The ability to do this functions as the criterion of the assemblage’s reality. In theory, any two – or more – entities can be viewed as belonging to a same assemblage, but only those instances of co-existence which bring about a change in their parts can be considered as really forming an assemblage. For instance, I might concoct a relation between myself, the dark side of the moon and every phonograph record released in June 1958. Clearly, those parts listed are not affected by any super-individual unifying assemblage, however strongly I wished to believe in it. There has to be consistency for the assemblage to remain over time as the parts are able to reproduce the assemblage in repetition or retention. Then again, the assemblage of my university department is very much real, according to the effects it can have on me, my colleagues, my office furniture, my computer, et cetera.

The appearance of emergent properties is the second criterion for assemblages. To continue the example of a university department, it can bring forth effects that its constituent parts cannot

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375 Deleuze and Guattari often use terms such as “pack”, “swarm” or “band” and invoke such animals as rats, wolves or bees to denote the non-essential unity or coherence of things. A view prioritising evolutionary populations, rather than “natural” species, was discussed in chapter two.


evoke in isolation. Likewise, the department fulfils the third feature of an assemblage, that of redundant causation. A university department is not the “sum” of the histories of its parts. In a way, a significant number of its sub-individual parts are interchangeable, and this is the reason for the power of its continuity through the years. Professors, lecturers, students and administrative staff can come and go, yet the department stays. Yet, the Simondonian point of the relationality of individuation must be brought up as a reminder: the department can, in turn, function as a sub-individual part in another assemblage, such as the university faculty or a certain professional sector.

According to Deleuze, understanding the world as a fundamentally diverse, open system of interacting individuals, emerging from a pre-individual field and, in turn, acting as pre-individual components to some other individuations, amounts to seeing the world as the production of difference from difference. The classical notion of essence produces, in turn, the same from the same, and results in knowledge as recognition and representation of this relation of similitude. Immanent diversity produces difference from difference, and results in knowledge as an encounter with an inhuman aspect of the being and a corresponding need to experiment with the world. It is from this fundamental strangeness, the manifest novelty of the world from which we can see the practice of art arising. In the next section, it is time to delve into the mode of the work of art in the light of what has been discussed in the previous chapters.

5.2 The Assemblage and Diagram of Art

“Art treats illusion as illusion: therefore it does not wish to deceive; it is true”, to quote Nietzsche once again.379 Based on the notion of art as a simulacrum, one can agree with him. Art is apparition. This is a direct opposite to the conception of art as representation. To treat illusion as illusion is to affirm it and then end the sentence. Nothing to add to it. If we oppose illusion to anything else, we bring in the relation of art’s representation of something: art versus its object, art versus expression, art versus truth. Illusion must not be understood in its evaluative meaning as a lack of something. Art as illusion does not

lack essence or truth, since it does not promise them in the first place. As Douglas Thomas notes, it is namely because art cannot provide the truth – understood as internal resemblance to a Form or an essence – it also cannot be judged according to representation and truth-value. Art is, then, singular with no resemblance and equivalence.  

Art, as understood in Nietzschean way as singular, concerns sensation. This is what Deleuze and Guattari affirm: “Aesthetic figures, and the style that creates them, have nothing to do with rhetoric. They are sensations: percepts and affects, landscapes and faces, visions and becoming”. Art has a privileged position in the examination of the conditions of real experience, since art uses percepts and affects to create “a being of sensation”. By creating a material thing – a “monument” – the artist strives to express the nonsubjective elements of a pre-individual world that is understood as immanence. The sensations produced by art flow “beyond” the subjective sensations of the artist or the spectator; Deleuze and Guattari state: “Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived”.  

There is, then, autonomy to sensation. In subjective experience the dimension of sensation is one that precedes cognition, bestowal of meaning and representation. Sensation is the domain of the affect, as described in chapter two. It is the “micro-perceptive”, vibratory realm of “silent” neural activity below the threshold of consciousness. Deleuze and Guattari describe it as: “Sensation is excitation itself … Sensation contracts the vibrations of the stimulant on a nervous surface or in a cerebral volume: what comes before has not yet disappeared when what follows appears”. This description locates the birth of sensation in the contractive moment of habit, as discussed in chapter one. Sensation can thus be understood as formative in two senses: as normative in producing a habitual body, and as mutative in expressing the preindividual nature that is becoming. Sensation

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381 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 177.
382 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 164.
383 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 211.
operates in the virtual temporal dimension of the past and the future, making possible the actualised instances of present.

**Sensation as Microperception**

In considering sensation as the virtual form of perception, Deleuze utilises Leibniz’s theory of perceptivity, as mentioned in chapter one of the present work. Deleuze does this in order to give an account to the nature of the pre-individual or transcendental field. To distil Deleuze’s conception of perception into a single sentence: the conditions of real experience are obscure and virtual perceptions (sensations). The basis of this notion lies in Leibniz’s concept of the monad, according to which every individual expresses the totality of the world, yet in an obscure and confused manner: “Every monad … expresses the entire world, but obscurely and dimly because it is finite and the world is infinite”.\(^{384}\) The individual is, in theory, affected by every other individual in the world. Obviously, most of the influence of this background noise or the “mass of dancing particles of dust” is minute and thus remains obscure. What is clear and distinct to us is but a narrow searchlight in the vast darkness of the night.

As was discussed in chapter one, according to Deleuze perception takes place at the limit of its becoming conscious. This limit is the condition for there to be an evolving consciousness at all, since if the “insistence” of accumulating microperceptions did not force the perception over the threshold of consciousness, there would be no need for a new perception of the world. Deleuze notes: “minute, obscure, confused perceptions … make up our macroperceptions, our conscious, clear, and distinct apperceptions. Had it failed to bring together an infinite sum of minute perceptions that destabilize the preceding macroperception while preparing the following one, a conscious perception would never happen”.\(^{385}\) Thus, perception amounts to a collapse – constantly tipping over the edge of a catastrophe of the faculties.

The minuscule “neural” perceptions constitute both conscious perception as well as the passage from one perception to another. This is the assemblage-like nature of experience. The passage from

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\(^{385}\) Deleuze, *The Fold*, p. 86, my emphasis.
one moment to another is due to the metastable or supersaturated condition of the microperceptions. Deleuze queries: “How could a feeling of hunger follow one of satisfaction if a thousand tiny, elementary forms of hunger (for salts, for sugar, butter, etc.) were not released at diverse and indiscernible rhythms? And inversely, if satisfaction follows hunger, it is through the sating of all these particular and imperceptible hungers”.

From the point of view of consciousness, microperceptions are unthinkable. They are the invisible, inaudible, untouchable forces of the world. Yet, when considered from the point of view of individuation-as-assemblage, the microperceptive level of sensation provides component parts for the macroassemblage of a perceiving subject. Every perceived phenomenon is akin to the roar of the sea: a whole composed of minute parts, synthesised to an object-form by the consciousness. Another wording for this notion is to state it in terms of the actualisation of virtual singularities, manifested in the intensities accumulating and pressing themselves “into” perception. Conscious perception is the actualisation of virtual microperceptions.

As was discussed earlier regarding the formation of an assemblage, the manifest properties displayed by the individual-as-assemblage do not accumulate from the “lower” level of components to the “higher” level of (relative) whole in a causal and determinate way. As was shown by Deleuze in his reading of Kant’s theory of the synthesis of consciousness and the eventual disharmony of the faculties, the genetic condition for experience resides in radical difference. Likewise, in his reading of Leibniz, Deleuze opposes the simple “from parts to whole” linearity in the formation of perception. This would be a simple accumulation of sub-representative perceptions over time until the moment that the threshold of consciousness is crossed and perception is thus produced. Rather, the genetic process of a perception is differential, not causal. Subjectivity – or being-individual – is subtractive. We express the whole of the world, the plane of immanence, but only obscurely; the conscious perception, such as that of the sea, is in turn clear but confused. The conscious perception is a subtraction, and thus confusion, of the microperceptions which constitute it. We do not fathom the roar of the sea as an aggregate of individual waves, let alone of single drops of

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386 Deleuze, *The Fold*, p. 87.
water. Perception is given to us by the way of variations of intensities: relational aggregates which point towards sensation rather than perception.

The work of art is “a bloc of sensations”, write Deleuze and Guattari. Art utilises the material dimension in order to draw expressive qualities out of it. Art addresses the problem of the genesis of perception, experience and meaning and, as such, functions as a destabilizing force in an assemblage. The actual work of art, understood as an assemblage, consists of variable components according to its type, genre, historical situation and cultural function. As Deleuze and Guattari state, art takes place in heterogeneous forms: “In no way do we believe in a fine-arts system; we believe in very diverse problems whose solutions are found in heterogeneous arts”.

Each art, each genre and each work of art posits itself as an exploration of a particular problematic concerning the genesis of experience. If there are unifying factors in all the different works of art, they are that of the medium of sensation and the milieu of the plane of composition. As Elizabeth Grosz interprets it, by the plane of composition Deleuze and Guattari refer to the assemblage of art which includes all works of art, traditions, styles, methods, techniques and such as its component parts. They are heterogeneous parts, and thus the only thing they may share is their functioning as components in the actual assemblage of art.

**Outside the Lived: The Autonomy of Art**

As art concerns sensation, there may be a tendency to see it in vitalist terms as life’s self-actualisation. The artist would stand in as the mouthpiece of this, recounting the “lived” through his or her works. This would, however, go against the grain of Deleuze’s Lucretian lesson which states that the diversity of the world does not produce a totality. The work of art as the expression of the lived would already presuppose the boundaries of life and bestow upon itself a kind of organicism or “fleshism”, as Deleuze’s critique of the

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387 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 164, original emphasis.
389 Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, p. 70. However, Grosz does not formulate the plane of composition in terms of assemblage.
phenomenological focus on the lived body is phrased. To conceive art as addressing not the lived, but the undifferentiated life, one must attest to the autonomy of sensation. The affects and percepts of art “belong” neither to the observer, nor to the artists but instead arise from the “unlived,” indeterminate life, a life.

This indeterminacy requires that the assemblage model of the work of art must be supplied with another axis, in addition to the dimensions of content-expression and territorialization-detterritorialization. This axis is of the line of flight (vanishing point, ligne de fuite) and it leads to the “diagrammatic” part of the assemblage. The work of art as assemblage can be fathomed to consist of both matters of content and expression: art happens when matter becomes expressive. Recall the territorial beginnings of art in animality: a bird arranging — composing — the elements of its milieu and effecting the emergence of expressive qualities out of the material components of its arrangement. As Deleuze and Guattari phrase it in musical terms, the composition of (material) milieu components forms (an expressive) territory as the refrain, as discussed in chapter two of this study. Even though the refrain is a musical concept, my view is that it can be utilised to approach the diagrammatic dimension of all kinds of art-assemblages.

Deleuze and Guattari provide a three-part exposition of the formation of the refrain in A Thousand Plateaus. First, we encounter a child afraid in the dark, singing to himself under his breath to keep the fear at bay. This act gives the surrounding darkness a human face, organises a point of stability into the unknown terrain. It is the first step of the refrain: a leap from chaos to the beginnings of order. Secondly, the refrain constitutes a dimension as it organises not only a point, but also a space: the space of home. This can be observed in the comforting sounds of the radio or television while we are at home or the rhythms of an animal patrolling its territory. Thirdly, the territory is opened to other territories: someone goes outside his or her usual patterns, honks the horn of the car when leaving for a road trip or hollers greetings while entering someone else’s yard. Thus, the refrain — a rhythmic pattern which delineates a territory — possesses three aspects: a point of stability, a space of property and an opening to the outside. Correspondingly, three types of assemblages can be

391 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy?, p. 178.
categorised: infra-assemblage with directional components, going from chaos to the threshold of territority; intra-assemblage with dimensional components, organising the emergent territorial assemblage, and interassemblage with components of passage, opening the territorial assemblage to outside.392

The territory is an expression of a certain set of spatio-temporal coordinates possessed, or rather expressed, by a given individual. However, the refrain (movement from content to expression) is, in turn, nothing but the “material” content of music or other form of art. There must be another assemblage able to deterritorialize the refrain and make it the content of a “higher” level of expression. This second-tier assemblage Deleuze and Guattari call a *diagram* or *the abstract machine.*393 In terms of the ontological planes, the refrain still occupies the plane of organisation of Forms and Substances, as it is composed of the spatio-temporal rhythms of an individual being and functions as the maintaining dynamic of this being. The territory holds on to the rhythm of the refrain. The deterritorialization of the refrain-assemblage is only relative, since it introduces a reterritorialization, a re-settlement, of the assemblage. The refrain is the voice, producing meaning, recognition and identity. The diagrammatic line of flight traversing the refrain-assemblage is the noise, a scrambling of the familiar code and an introduction of the heterogeneous element. We move from the Kantian aesthetic comprehension of rhythm into the sublime catastrophe of the disjunction of the faculties. To make art out of the refrain is to confront this catastrophe.

I propose that Elizabeth Grosz’s fine example of the difference between natural and sexual selection illustrates the difference between relative and absolute deterritorialization in the refrain. According to her, the rhythmic patterns of interacting animal milieus form the refrain as the dimensionality proper to a certain individual. These homely terrains are constituted of, and in turn constitute, the relations a certain animal enters into and likewise make up the animal’s functioning in natural selection. In short, the territory functions as the graph of the possible. It is only when we enter the properly aesthetic domain of the expressive that we break up the

boundaries of the natural and gain access to the “excessive” dimension of the sexual. Art is excess, in a sense that reminds one of Georges Bataille. Excess as the force that traverses life, but does not reduce life into self-realisation: the force that exceeds the boundaries of life, puts it at risk, creates something for its own sake.  

The abstract machine can be understood as, literally, the diagram of a given assemblage. It lays out the space of possibility for a given assemblage and, as a virtual process, is not reducible to the content-expression axis of assemblages. Deleuze and Guattari state:

An abstract machine in itself [in contrast to assemblages] is not physical or corporeal, any more than it is semiotic; it is diagrammatic (it knows nothing of the distinction between the artificial and natural either). It operates by matter, not by substance; by function, not by form. Substances and forms are of expression ‘or’ of content. But functions are not yet ‘semiotically’ formed, and matters are not yet ‘physically’ formed. The abstract matter is pure Matter-Function – a diagram independent of the forms and substances, expressions and contents it will distribute.

Diagram thus denotes the construction of the real “yet to come”, the virtual potentiality for the qualitative change of a certain assemblage. As the quotation above suggests the diagram does not conform to identity bestowed by substance or form, but instead addresses the dynamics of matter. In art this “diagrammatism” appears as the problematisation of the work of art’s own medium or “support”. The diagram is the movement from accepting a certain arrangement of elements as it usually is perceived to seeing the assemblage in an entirely new perspective. A major part of Deleuze’s work has been the analysis of different types of artistic practises and the location of their respective diagrams. Cinema, images and the dismantling of the sensory-motor schema; music, refrain and its deterritorialization; painting, figures and nonrepresentative diagrams; literature, language and its stuttering… All these diagrammatic functions open up the perception of the work of art into a sensation and offer glimpses of the world outside the lived existence of a subject. In what follows I

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394 Grosz, _Chaos, Territory, Art_, pp. 54–55, 63.
395 Deleuze and Guattari, _A Thousand Plateaus_, p. 141.
wish to address one instance of diagrammatism in the practice of music – and especially in the field of music I term phonographic.

5.3 The Repetition and Difference of Recording

So far, I have elaborated a conception of the work of art, the artist and art itself in terms that can bring to mind an almost mythical practice of becoming-other, where both the artist and the audience is swept away in a line of flight of nonpersonal affects and inhuman forces. What this notion lacks, at least on the level of rhetoric, is a certain emphasis on those concrete artistic practices which constitute the assemblage of art. After all, with Deleuze we are dealing with empiricism, however transcendental its operational object is. To remind: “In no way do we believe in a fine-arts system”, state Deleuze and Guattari, but rather: “we believe in very diverse problems whose solutions are found in heterogeneous arts”.

It is my belief that one crucial feature to keep in mind vis-à-vis Deleuze’s writings on art is the very heterogeneity of the practice of arts. Deleuze’s own repertoire ranges from pure ontological systems to very concrete readings of singular works of art. As he can be characterised, perhaps ultimately, as a thinker trying to provide an account for immanence that is not unity or totality, a similar principle is beneficial in discussing the function of art in Deleuze’s thought. Here, the concept of the assemblage is of great value, as it provides a way of addressing complex systems as continuing processes of individuations. Likewise, the aspect of the simulacrum – originally bestowed upon art by Deleuze, and later on discarded – is very useful in thinking of art’s practical existence fathomed as possessing both representative and anti-representative features.

Art-as-assemblage situates the practice of art among other (human) activity, accounts for the heterogeneity of those practices and affirms the historicity of the components of the work of art. Also, the dynamism of the assemblage model allows for understanding art – the practice of it, production, distribution and reception – both in terms of the virtual and the actual. However justified on the basis of Deleuze’s metaphysics, Deleuzean accounts of the arts tend to focus

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on the deterritorializing force of the sensation and thus discard the particularities of singular works of art. These are, after all, as much objects as they are lines of flight. It is the actual, present-at-hand world that is immersed in the virtual, as Deleuze notes already in *Difference and Repetition*: “Indeed, the virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object – as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension”.

With this understanding in mind, it can be stated that art entails the production of objects which always takes place in a certain historical and social situation. These objects, as assemblages, have their actual side (content and expression) and their virtual side (the diagram, sensation, the line of flight) and can undergo themselves and effect on others processes of stabilisation and destabilisation. The virtual is, according to Deleuze, the transcendental condition of the object, but it is useful to comprehend the virtual as an ontological category or mode of being, not as a lofty, removed realm of disembodied forces and sensations. The virtual resides within things; it is the “relational” dimension of things which enables us to understand the relationship between discrete things and superindividual structures. The elaborations of the dynamism of the assemblage are worked out in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and that work is the main reference for the Deleuzean assemblage theory of art. The lasting interest in and fascination with a successful piece of art, understood as assemblage, subsists because it renews itself via internal and external activity, conceptualisable via the axis of de- and reterritorialization. The work of art both deterritorializes and reterritorializes. Art is the freedom to experiment: to question the present actual state and expose its constitution, to create novelty, but also to give “something” to “us”, that is, not to annihilate the object or the subject completely via absolute deterritorialization. Still, something new is produced in a successful work of art, a new sensation, and it is the task of empiricism account for this: “the aim is not to discover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (creativity)”.

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To find the conditions – relating to both the actual and the virtual – under which something new is produced in the practice of art, I wish to devote the rest of this final chapter to a few concrete examples of certain works. To emphasise the relevance of the problematic of the dynamism between de- and restabilising features in processes of individuation in analysing works of art, my view will be on repetition in art. To avoid generalisation and to highlight the necessity of addressing particular aggregates of works of art when studying the functioning of art, I will specifically focus on the question of material repetition in music; that is to say, on the question of phonography in music. In the phonographic assemblage we will find a complex composite of parts, relation to time, as well as both internal and external processes of de- and reterritorializations of the refrain.

**The Phonographic Assemblage**

*I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed. What you will hear, then, are the natural resonant frequencies of the room articulated by speech. I regard this activity not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but, more as a way to smooth out any irregularities my speech might have.*

*I Am Sitting in a Room*, Alvin Lucier’s 1970 composition for voice and electromagnetic tape, features the composer speaking the text quoted above and recording the speech, playing the recording back and recording this in turn, repeating this procedure for a number of times. The aural effect is described in the text: the resonant frequencies of the room where the recording and re-recording is made are highlighted with each subsequent playback. As the re-recordings are compiled in the final work one after the other, we hear the spoken paragraph first as a very “natural” sounding recording, and then, as the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th… generation re-recordings follow each other, the voice gradually loses its linguistic primacy and becomes a catalyst of the room’s resonance. Each successive repetition of the playback accumulates the potential resonances inherent in the material
properties of the acoustic space. Words become unintelligible, and the qualities of human voice are also erased, leaving a rhythmic, “metallic” sounding resonant noise.

This process of the erasure of linguistic dimension of the voice by subsequent re-recordings can be illustrated by the following diagram where the innermost circle represents the first recording and the concentric circles the subsequent re-recordings:

Gradually, with each repetition, Lucier’s voice becomes noise. With *I Am Sitting in a Room* we are at the heart of the recording technology’s subversive, anti-representative potential: *with repetition comes difference*. Yet, at first hand, one could consider the recorded media as the paradigm of re-presentation: the capture of an original event into material medium ready for redeployment. Push the play-button and reproduce the same as before. If representation is the repetition of the same, the force that introduces difference in the recorded medium must work by another means of repetition and here we must turn to Deleuze’s conception of difference-in-itself.

It is clear that there exists an ideal of transparency in the reproductive capacity of recorded media: what else has the impulse for technological advance in that field produced other than successive generations of higher and higher definition within media platforms? Clearer, louder – what is *high fidelity* if not fidelity to the “truth” of the world and an aspiration of its faithful reproduction? This aspiration has resulted in a veritable history of recording technologies, and the promise of transparency in representation seems to be closer and closer at hand. Still, the “fidelity” in high fidelity remains to be questioned. What is the nature that the artifice of its reproduction is

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399 See, for example, David Morton, *Sound Recording: The Life Story of a Technology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), p. 131. Morton claims that the earliest proponents of the ideal of high fidelity sound reproduction were sound engineers and technicians, concerned with the task of clear and “lifelike” transmission.
supposed to represent? The very idea of a recording contains a reference to some originary moment from which the recording is more or less successful reproduction. A *Popular Science* advertisement for Edison phonographs proclaims the aim of high fidelity: “the phonograph serves but one purpose – to *Re-Create* voice or instrument with human reality. When a phonograph does this, nothing more can be asked – it has reached perfection”.

Therefore, there is a foundational Platonism within the idea of phonography – the art of reproduction of auditory phenomena – as the model of original and copy haunts the act of recording. To be sure, a similar Platonism persists in every form of reproduction, but its influence is perhaps most notable within the domain of the audible. This is due to the perceived “natural” quality of audio recordings: even though, due to the years of photographic reproduction, we have come to face visual images within a certain scepticism or awareness of the possibility of manipulation, auditory information is still often received “as it is”. We cannot “see” the manipulations that a sound reproduction may contain. This is due to differences of perception between the visual and the auditory phenomena: whereas the visual field is very much definable in terms of space populated by various distinctive objects, the auditory sphere presents a difficult question about the object-like status of its units. What we hear are sounds, but not sounds as distinct sound-objects comparable to visually perceived phenomena. Rather, sounds unfold in time, and strike us as results or indications of various processes. Sound is vibration in a carrier medium. As such, sound is movement: without vibration there would be no sound.

In this way, the aural world comes to be understood as much, or even more, in terms of time and movement as in terms of objects inhabiting a given space. Sound is immersive: a soundscape within which we as listeners are immersed, with sounds co-existing and influencing each other in a reciprocal process. This quality of the auditory makes it much more akin to the intense duration of time than the spatial type of temporality, as discussed in chapter three. Therefore the example of sound recording might hold a special interest from a Deleuzean point of view. A sound recording is, then, much more “in tune” with our unmediated experience of auditory

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*“The New Edison Phonograph” in Popular Science, April 1927, p. 67.*
phenomena. The eye makes distinctions more acutely: the highest
definition visual reproduction is revealed as an image to our senses.
But for sound, the source – whether mediated or unmediated – is not
necessarily so apparent. Hence the perceived naturalness of sound
recordings, with a “live” capture of an event-like performance as its
paradigm. *Press record, then press play.*

Yet, this naturalness makes us deaf to the complex process of
sound recording and the product-like nature of presentation, which is
perhaps more obvious in visual media reproductions. As media
theorist Friedrich Kittler states, *the cut* has been present in visual media
from the beginning: no recording surface can ever capture as such the
frequency of electromagnetic radiation within the spectrum of visual
light. Every visual experience is fragmented, with the 24-frames-per-
second standard of cinema projection as an excellent instance of this,
and every depiction of an action is comprised of distinct segments.
Sound, on the contrary, takes place on much lower wavelengths of
approximately 20–20000 hertz and is recordable onto a surface as a
graph of the sound wave. For Kittler, this difference in the
frequencies of the respective mediums results in the fact that cuts –
audio manipulations – have entered sound production and
reproduction at a relatively late stage of technological progress of
recording methods.401

So, it is my claim that we have a more “uncomplicated” attitude
towards sound reproduction than to visual media of representation,
and this natural attitude corresponds with the notion of sensory-
motor schema, as developed by Deleuze in his *Cinema* books. We
schematise the hearing of a sound recording as a reception of an
“organic” whole. Yet, this perception of organicism is an abstraction,
as Deleuze states:

The sensory-motor image effectively retains from the thing only
what interests us … Its richness is thus superficial and comes from
the fact that it associates with the thing [portrayed] many different
things that resemble it on the same plane, in so far as they provoke
all the same movements: it is grass in general that interests the

401 Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and
By extension, every listening experience of a “natural” whole issuing from the loudspeakers is a similar abstraction. Every interference by the recording medium itself in this natural schema of listening is perceived as destabilising the experience and, accordingly, as unwanted “noise”. Therefore the “outside” of naturalised, sensory-motoric auditory reception lies specifically within these interruptions of the high fidelity ideal. If something is to deterritorialize the representational schema of the record as the mediation of an original identity that is transcendent to this relay, it is namely the interruption in this system: a scratch, a glitch in the process, a sudden swell of feedback.

There is a comparison to be made with Deleuze’s extended discussion of the stages of that other recorded form of art, cinema. Whereas cinema reached its maturity, or its own character, with the time-image, recorded music can be argued to have achieved the same when it took the leap of de-naturalising the transparency of its own medium. To return to I Am Sitting in a Room: the process of successive recording of the previous re-recordings slowly shifts the machinic assemblage of the recording into an expressive dimension. Certain resonances surface through repetition, which intensifies the potential acoustic features of the space in which the recording happens, as well as the peculiarities of the speaking voice which is relayed in the room. Here the assemblage-like nature of the work of art must be recalled: out of the level of content emerges expression. Yet, this emergence cannot be determined or calculated in advance, as it is due to the virtual potential of the assemblage: the effect of a work cannot be predetermined on the basis of its material components, as affects are real but virtual and can be actualised in various ways. Still, the affective dimension of the work depends upon the material components, as they provide the stratum through which the assemblage’s expressive capacity can be fulfilled.

402 Deleuze, Cinema 2, p. 43.
THE CONTENT AND EXPRESSION OF A WORK OF ART

I Am Sitting in a Room as an assemblage incorporates many virtual tendencies within its components. Within the axis of content and expression in an assemblage, the material conditions of a certain voice, room, recording and playback equipment form the side of the content. Expression then emerges out of the assembly of these components, but not out of any assembly whatsoever. As Deleuze and Guattari write about Franz Kafka’s literary method: “Expression must break forms, encourage ruptures and new sproutings”.\footnote{Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 28.} If the assemblage would proceed from content to expression in a predictable manner, there would be no expression, strictly speaking. In the case of I Am Sitting in a Room, this would amount to halting the process of recording the speech to only the first layer and then playing it back as a finished piece, essentially repeating the recording as the Same of the original speech event. Arguably, it is only when the work breaks this pre-given form of the recording-as-relay that it achieves a level of novel expression: the voice deterritorializes from the “I” that is sitting in a room; the “room” is itself deterritorialized in a kaleidoscopic manner into a hall of mirrors, as the re-recordings multiply the virtual capacities of the acoustic space. A new kind of affect emerges, independent of the speaking voice, of the room and of the recording equipment alone.

The process inherent in the form of the work in I Am Sitting in a Room expresses the virtual potential of recording in general: starting with a “natural” depiction of speaking voice and then progressively denaturalising it with each successive repetition of recording, the piece brings out the awareness that there is no natural recording – and no natural experience. Every phenomenon is a result of synthesis of elements prior to experience and therefore like a simulacrum, as these elements may be heterogeneous and not deducible from the form of the complete, already-formed perception. The unique character of a work of art is that it does not try to hide its essence as a simulacrum, unlike other phenomena which are encountered within the framework of consensual appropriation. As we remember, Deleuze proclaims that the task of the work of art is to “fight against clichés”, denoting
that the counter-actualising power of artistic presentations is quickly harnessed into the domain of common sense and recognition.

To fight against clichés is to overturn the logic of representation. A work of art, if it is to function as art, must provoke an encounter with the senses rather than recognition of a common form. Then, the work of art functions as a sign, as Deleuze nominates it in considering Marcel Proust’s work, as was discussed in chapter two. Here the sign must be understood in terms of sensation rather than significance and it is rightly the encounter of thought with its outside which forces us to think – either in concepts or, in accordance with the methodology of art, in sensations (affects and percepts). In everyday terms, sensation is the visceral reaction provoked by a work, experienced prior to any meaning or representation. It is therefore plausible to claim that music as an art form is geared towards sensation rather than understanding, or that, at least, in the reception of music the autonomous, affective bodily reaction is as important as an intellectual appreciation. Music thus would seem to contain an exceedingly rich reservoir of difference: in reception, it “makes difference” as it has the potential to provide us with a novel sensation.

Music, Reproduction and Acousmatic Listening
Yet, what about repetition? Most of the music consumed today is encountered via recordings on a variety of platforms: digital audio files on MP3 players, computers and cell phones, DVDs and CDs, vinyl LPs and cassette tapes, to name but the obvious. How are the shock of the new and the subversion of clichés demanded of art even possible in the midst of media which base their functioning on repetition? Play a song time and time again and you feel its impact lessening as familiarity sets in. Does not the repeatability of a recording make it into a territorial, over-coding assemblage, ready to return the deterritorializing force of music into the region of the similar and the familiar? Moreover, does not the unit-like nature of a recording make it but a commodity, easily bought and sold, subject to global trade of goods? Evidently, yes – but even though recording technology facilitates the perpetual “bad” repetition of the same, it still holds its own potential of subversion. The concept of frequency, according to Kittler, brought about by recording technology, allows music to break with the Old European tradition of Pythagorean
harmony and notation as the preserver of clear and pure sounds (in opposition to the chaotic noise of the world). This would mean a way of thinking in accordance with representational thinking: musical harmony reflects some kind of pre-existing harmony in the world, and disharmony deviates from this pre-given identity. One can ascribe the function of preserving this eternal harmony to musical notation. Yet, since the 19th Century sound has been recordable, vibrations in a carrying medium transferable to a recording surface. What is more, the recording surface functions not as a subject but as a machine: as Kittler states “[t]he phonograph does not hear as our ears that have been trained immediately to filter voices, words and sounds out of noise; it registers acoustic events as such”.\footnote{Kittler, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter, p. 23.} The phonograph hears and records auditory events \textit{acousmatically}, without reference to the origin of a sound.

The term \textit{acousmatique}, “acousmatic”, was first used in relation to music by the French avant-garde composer Pierre Schaeffer. It denotes the effect on music brought about by technology allowing the recording and reproduction of music without apparent reference to the original production of the recorded sounds. In acousmatic music – such as Schaeffer’s \textit{musique concrete} – one focuses on the “texture” of the sounds, not on their origins.\footnote{See Pierre Schaeffer, “Acousmatics”, trans. Daniel W. Smith, in Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music, eds. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 76–81.} In Schaeffer’s case this was supposed to reduce the context of musical appreciation to sound and hearing alone and thus to break the gestural “sensory-motor schema” of listening. For Kittler, the “machinic” hearing enabled by reproduction makes possible for the first time in history “writing without a subject”.\footnote{Kittler, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter, p. 44.}

What the subject filters out, the phonograph records. Given Deleuze’s conception of the formation of the subject in three-stage synthesis, as discussed in chapter one, we can state that the phonographic mode of recording corresponds with the first stage of the synthesis. Whereas the score as musical \textit{mnemotechnics} works as a language, preserving and distributing music via symbolic means, the phonograph effects a material \textit{transduction} of sonic intensities. As Robin Mackay has noted: “where the score represents, phonography
simply transduces”.

On the recording surface there are waveforms and frequencies, not notes. Thus within a representational apparatus we find an anti-representational materiality of a uniquely aural medium. However, it is clear that most of the music produced and distributed within phonographical means falls within the representational model, whether in its form (musical expression, programmatic music, the lyrical content) or in its reception (regarding the recording as a substitute for the real event of live performance). Yet, paralleling Deleuze’s understanding of the evolution of cinema, the advances made in recording technology have ushered in a type of music made with and for “phonographic consciousness”, encouraging the acousmatic mode of listening. As Deleuze and Guattari state regarding musical Modernism: “Certain modern musicians oppose the transcendental plan(e) of organization, which is said to have dominated all of Western classical music, to the immanent sound plane, which is always given along with that to which it gives rise, brings the imperceptible to perception, and carries only differential speeds and slownesses in a kind of molecular lapping: the work of art must mark seconds, tenths and hundredths of seconds.”

These fractions of seconds are musical time in its materiality: not time as the space between notes but time as the texture and sonority of sounds themselves, gathered together to form an assemblage on the recording.

In what I nominate as “phonographic music” the material transduction of sonic intensities is thematised and researched. As a medium of acousmatic listening, the recording makes possible the immanent sound plane, as it detaches the aural material from the representative submission to the symbolic order of the score or from the expressive gesture of the performer. The record as a material

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408 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p. 267.

409 This takes place both in academic and popular music settings, usually in the experimental interzone of both milieus. Examples include electroacoustic music, the studio experiments of the Beatles in late 1960s, electronic music both academic and popular et cetera.
medium refers not to the past (the act of recording) but to the future (its reception); it is potentially the point when sound is deterritorialized into sonic matter, detached from the pre-given images – instruments, established musical forms, the “real time” of performance – bestowed upon music. Phonographic music is characterised by its nature as a pseudo-event: there is necessarily no original event which the recording represents. This is because the phonograph hears acousmatically, without reference to the origins of a given sound, as discussed above. Phonography deterritorializes sound, flattens the score's transcendental plane of organization into a smooth plane of sound. On a computer's hard disk sound data is distributed *rhizomatically*: any given byte can be de- and reconnected with others, given temporary stability in various arrangements.

Any given recording is a “full body”, lacking nothing, without reference to any exterior symbolic order: sound data without a subject. The fact that we hear, say, a recording of a classical work any differently than a location recording of the soundscape of a city is partly due to our reception history and various cultural assemblages. From a machinic point of view (or hearing) there is essentially no difference between those two recordings. Phonography thus makes possible the re-evaluation of the relation between representation and “empty”, non-representative sounds. Recording technology is essentially referential machinery, and yet makes non-referential, acousmatic, sound possible in the first place. *What you hear is what you get.* The sound coming out of the loudspeakers does not have a representational relation to its origin, which would act as its transcendent essence in a representative system. The phonographic sound exemplifies the “radical” relationality of assemblages: if being *is* in germinal relations and their production of reality, as discussed in chapter two, and not in essences and their accidental relations to one another, then the ontological status of a recording is not of a lesser “scale” in a Platonic hierarchy of forms, manifestations, copies and simulacra. This is the apotheosis of simulacra: the question of the content of a recording does not concern its identity or its meaning, but its *effect*; how it functions as an assemblage among other assemblages.

Deleuze describes the methodology of art breaking with the representational schema in cinema and painting. In cinema the time-
image functions as a “shock” to the audience, breaking with a narrative structure, forcing the viewer to extrapolate possible senses to the montage of images and thus to think of the essentially temporal medium of film itself. In the case of painting, Deleuze considers the art of the Modernist painter Francis Bacon and discovers a certain type of painterly *diagrammatism* as a way to fight against the pictorial clichés. The diagrammatic components in painting are various non-representative and asignifying visual elements, such as colour fields, lines, markings and scratchings. The concept of the diagram can be extended to other fields of art as well. As was discussed concerning the assemblage, the diagram is a genetic or germinal element, but also a catastrophic event: it disrupts and extends the space of possibility of a given assemblage.

In the case of music Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the refrain was discussed above. The refrain is the expression that rises out of the material components of a certain assemblage (milieu) and turns it into an expressive arrangement, territory. However, the refrain also works in a contrary fashion, binding the deterritorialized components into a new stable territory. This dynamism of actualisation and counter-actualisation characterises the morphogenetic process of nature. In every assemblage or territory there can be identified both territorializing and deterritorializing elements. In phonographic music the deterritorializing or diagrammatic elements are those that I propose to be *virtual sounds*, that is, aural elements that work in themselves as counter-stabilising forces to the “natural” arrangement of production–reproduction schema. Thus, the diagrammatic elements of phonographic music can be recognised by answering the question: what constitutes a disruption of the ideal of high fidelity? The answer is *noise*.

**VOICE VERSUS NOISE**

The phonographic assemblage pertains to a more general tendency in Western musical tradition which Jacques Attali defines as the co-existence of music and society. In his book *Noise* Attali states that music’s organization mirrors that of the society: music represents the social order, it is our collective memory. He notes: “Music runs parallel to human society, is structured like it, and changes when it
Attali sees a fundamental parallel between the development of societal and musical forms: in pre-capitalist societies music was a form of ritual violence. Thus, society is an assemblage of sublimating physical violence into rituals, while music is an assemblage of sublimating the violence of noise into music. As Attali nominates them, noise is the “simulacrum of murder” and music the “simulacrum of sacrifice”.

In Attali’s view music emerges as an assemblage devised to suppress noise and to represent the orderly organised society, providing the mirror-image of harmony to society’s organic consistency. Thus, there is an analogical relation between societal and musical order, similar to the relationship between society and economy. Attali states: “The entire history of tonal music, like that of classical political economy, amounts to an attempt to make people believe in a consensual representation of the world”. Attali proceeds to compare the history of Western classical music to political and economic factors of its time, but what can be highlighted here is the crux of Attali’s argument: music is a representation of society. This corresponds well with Deleuze’s view on representational thinking, which evaluates phenomena and bestows on them identity according to their relation to a pre-given totality. In such a schema, music amounts to a certain set of acceptable tones and forms, with everything else delimited as interfering noise. According to this type of dispensation, noise can be defined in signal processing terms as unwanted data without meaning. According to Attali, noise – as the simulacrum of originary societal violence that has been sublimated – appears as a source of unease and pain as it erupts in the midst of life.

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411 Attali, *Noise*, pp. 27–28. Approaching the question of mimeticism in terms of human society, the French philosopher René Girard has offered an anthropologically tinged observation that social formations are primarily constituted on the basis of originary mimetic violence. In a community desire is mimetic: one desires the object of another’s desire. As this mutual desire escalates into a conflict of antagonists, the object of rivalry ceases to be the object of desire, but rather the antagonism itself. A mutual enemy or scapegoat emerges. The destruction of scapegoat, now the sacred object of sacrifice, appeases the desire for violence and restores social order. In Attali’s theory music can be seen as the sublimated form of this sacrificial violence. See Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (London: The Athlone Press, 1988).

consensual reality. Noise intrudes on the voice of reason, since it disrupts the relaying of society-perpetuating messages.

This charges the age of phonography with subversive potential. One the one hand, the method of recording sound feeds into the societal relay-machinery and enhances the dissemination of consensual representations. Any type of recording has been deployed as a method of social control, from census to criminal records. Attali states: “Stockpiling memory, retaining history or time, distributing speech, and manipulating information has always been an attribute of civil and priestly power”. On the other hand, recording technology has enabled the detachment of sound matter from the confines of notation and musical traditions of mastery in composition and performance. This has effected a shift in the ontological status of sound: the dualism of tone and noise has been replaced by a continuum running from silence to noise. From this point of view we can see that the immanent sound plane is noise, not a transcendent harmony. Noise does not disrupt a pre-given meaning, but rather forms the genetic condition for the emergence of representative systems of harmony, tone and musical form.

Corresponding with the development of recording and sound production techniques, many musical forms have emerged which can be nominated as foundationally phonographical. These include movements both in academic avant-garde music, as well as in the context of popular music. Within the avant-garde, composers such as Edgar Varèse, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Iannis Xenakis have incorporated atonal and dissonant elements, often produced with non-traditional instruments, into their compositions. Pioneering composers of electro-acoustic music, musique concrète, such as Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry and Luc Ferrari, utilised compositional material derived from recordings of non-instrumental sounds. Minimalists such as John Cage or Steve Reich devised various chance techniques to introduce indeterminacy to the compositional process, ultimately in order to reduce the control of the composer over the emerging processual work. Within popular music, from the 1960s onward the studio has increasingly played a much more pivotal role in producing the then-emergent medium of album-as-artform. The

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414 Attali, Noise, p. 87.
upheaval of the punk movement at the end of the 1970s disseminated the idea that the artists themselves could take initiative in producing, manufacturing and distributing their work. This, in turn, effectuated a new kind of do-it-yourself culture in both academic and popular music methodology and resulted in the diminishing of previous cultural boundaries as a hip hop DJ in Brooklyn could be considered as a collage artist and sound producer in a similar way as a Modernist composer in Darmstadt. Finally, with the advent of affordable computers and digital music software, the demarcation line between “art music” and popular music formulated in terms of the conditions of production has been all but torn down.

**THE ENGINEER AND THE SYNTHESISER**

What emerges as the figure of the sonic experimenter, whether working at home and running a small scale record label, or funded by academic institutions and working at IRCAM, is the figure of the engineer. This term can encompass factual recording engineers, but also producers, musicians, managers and advisors, sound artists, film audio designers et cetera. What is important is the function that the engineer realises within the sound recording assemblage and this is comparable to Deleuze and Guattari’s figure of the artisan. Music, they say, is akin to metallurgy in the sense that both domains concern going beyond the hylomorphic division between matter and form. Instead, both music and metallurgy achieve a continuous variation of matter and development of form in the common sphere of dynamism within materiality.

What this amounts to is that music – or various other practices of art – and metallurgy take as their concern the implicit “non-organic” life within their respective materials. Deleuze and Guattari’s imperative to the artisan is: follow the flow of matter. This entails both the implicit forms distributed in matter as singularities, as well as the intensive affects as traits of expression, as discussed in chapter two. For the former they offer the example of various undulations and torsions as singularities within wood, which the plane maker has to take into account when planning to split a piece of wood. For the latter, they offer intensities of more or less elasticity or porosity within the wood, which define the parameters of the wood’s ability to absorb and distribute force. For the woodworker, both singularities and
intensities are factors which one has to take into account when working the material. Therefore, the question can no longer be of imposing a pre-given form upon previously passive matter, but of mutual interaction of wood and the worker.\textsuperscript{415}

What the metallurgist does, for Deleuze and Guattari, is to utilise intuition in action in following the flow of matter (\textit{material phylum}), or various second-order flows, such as markets. What sets the metallurgist apart from other types of craftsmen is that metalwork does not conform to the model of the mold and the clay, that is, to the model of form-to-be-imposed and matter-to-be-formed. Working the material cannot be fathomed as metal incarnating a form, or achieving its ultimate form through a succession of point-like intermediary forms. Rather, metalwork is a continuous process of formation and deformation: adaptative transformation and development. It is just this “widened chromaticism” that marks the point in common between metallurgy and music.\textsuperscript{416}

Music and metallurgy thus both stand as emblems for the artisan’s (musician-engineer’s or metallurgist’s) approach to matter as mutual becoming which recognises the virtual aspect of material as a dynamic, pre-individual field of potentials that need to be \textit{worked out}, not imposed in advance. Deleuze and Guattari nominate a name for the abstract machine or space of possibility for such a musical endeavour: the \textit{synthesiser}, as it “places all of the parameters [of sound-matter] in continuous variation”.\textsuperscript{417} The synthesiser, as a general nomination for a “sound machine”, is the ultimate producer of simulacra. In my view, to make “fundamentally heterogeneous elements end up turning into each other in some way” is to produce simulacral identities able to hold together heterogeneity.

The synthesiser is an abstract machine of producing material variation within the assemblage of music, whether this happens via the concrete material means of the human voice, musical synthesisers and other electronic instruments, recording and playback devices or acoustic instruments. I propose that phonography is a special category for this abstract machine, as it enables the metallurgical working of sound-matter in a sustained way and that the phonograph should be

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{415} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 408.
\textsuperscript{416} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 411.
\textsuperscript{417} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, p. 109.
\end{footnotesize}
evaluated in the same conceptual category as the synthesiser. Within the phonographic abstract machine a certain set of virtual or “critical” sounds can be identified. They are diagrams in relation to the musical assemblage; meta-sounds which are critical in the sense that they explore and expose the conditions of their own production. Such methods of the musician-engineer are, for example, distortion, feedback, the scratch and its digital equivalent, the glitch.

By turning a machine intended for sound reproduction into a machine addressing the question of its own conditions, these critical sounds imply a virtual field of metastability within the assemblage. They can be assigned proper names and dates: in 1958 Link Wray punctures the speaker cone of his guitar amplifier and produces a distortion to the tone of the guitar, he expands the tonal character of the guitar–amplifier circuit. In 1969 Jimi Hendrix plays Star Spangled Banner at the Woodstock festival, turning the representation of national identity into a feedback-washed lament of the disappearance of 1960s ideals in the face of the Vietnam War. In 1977 DJ Grand Wizard Theodore first takes hold of the record he is playing and starts to scratch it against the stylus, producing a whole new kind of variable meta-sound out of the graphs of sound within the vinyl grooves. Or in 1985 Yasunao Tone sticks office tape onto the reading surface of a CD and disables the error-correction mechanism of a Compact Disc player, allowing the machine to produce its own variations from the scrambled contact between the player and the vandalised disc. One can come up with various examples, but the crux of the matter is that here are unearthed the diagrams of the phonographic assemblage. They are deployed in order to locate the singularities or points of intensity within the assemblage to effect a qualitative change in the arrangement, and thus deterritorialize the assemblage into something new – to enable novel sonic thinking. What once was a standard public address system is now a feedback machine for new kind of piercing sonorities issuing from the circuit of microphone and amplifier. The spiral grooves of a vinyl LP are deformed into Baroque flourishes by the hand that breaks the flow of record-time and starts to sculpt it by scratching the record. It is also apparent that these new affects are not the property of the artist, for she is not their creator but rather a finder – like the metallurgist, digging deep to uncover the veins of ore.
It seems that like there is music proper to birds, there is music proper to synthesisers, sequencers and record players. Music is not an exclusively human phenomenon; as Kodwo Eshun writes, humans can be considered the sex organs of synthesisers, making possible the continuing variation of sound-matter, but not possessing it. Sound frequencies belong to the universe: everything that happens emits sound, given a carrier medium for the vibrations of that happening. Affect and expression are not limited to humans, not even to animals, but concern the non-organic life of matter itself. That is to say that works of art function as a conduit for a world that is not created for human needs. Art works are the opening up of our Umwelt into new affects taking hold of them. Art concerns the milieu which is determined by the affects of a certain individual; the territory which springs into existence by the emergence of expressive components within the milieu; and, crucially, the deterritorialization of that territory, opening the territorial assemblage into its outside and changing its consistency. This process, the art-function, results in a novel phenomenon which is aesthetic in the Kantian way: it does not fall into the grip of an a priori judgment but must rather be evaluated there-and-then. As art operates in intensities, or affects, it addresses the faculty of sensibility first and foremost: representations of the mind, extension and quality, formed by the faculty of reason, follow only after the shock of sensation. In this way art opens eyes and ears to inhuman worlds, engenders new thought, creates novelty in the world and effects an encounter with the virtual.

CONCLUSION

What the discussion above has hopefully shown is that art understood as assemblage makes possible the location of art in the art-function. This function denotes a process of thinking through material means and locating those points of intensity within matter which can effect a qualitative change in a given material assemblage. As it is a function, it can take place in various strata (material, biological and cultural) and in different circumstances. Art-function can emerge on various levels of assemblages. For instance, a singular product of, say, popular culture might be considered uninteresting, mundane or even artless and yet can contribute to the production of aesthetic sensations as a component part of a wider, "upper-level" assemblage. The question is of scale. The sense of a phenomenon is an emergent thing, appearing in a "fuzzy" manner when moving "up" the scale of complexity. Yet, art-function is what sweeps up and gathers together the molecular parts of a particular array and endows them with expressivity.⁴¹⁹ Therefore, when considering the power of artistic creation, one should not adhere to historical, already-established practices of art only. What is more, one should not remain too faithful to the examples of art Deleuze – both alone and along with Guattari – takes up from a decidedly Modernist point of view. It is true, as Claire Colebrook has observed, that the high modern ideal of a radically autonomous work of art provides Deleuze the point of departure for thinking the whole of art as the site of affect which stands alone, independent of the artist, the art work and the spectator.⁴²⁰ Modernism’s separation of art from other facets of life provides it with a critical force to question the conditions of “our” world. As Theodor Adorno states, the modern work of art must discard the idea of representing reality as constitutive of common form. For Adorno, art must instead “turn its back on conventional surface coherence, the

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⁴¹⁹ This becoming-expressive can be schematised, in reference to the chapters of this study: via sensations that are desubjectified (chapter one), understood as deterritorializing impulses from outside a pre-given milieu (chapter two), producing qualitative multiplicities (chapter three) and appearing as simulacral entities (chapter four). These factors all contribute to the assemblage-like nature of art (chapter five).

appearance of harmony, the order corroborated merely by replication”.421

The problem with the Modernist notion of art’s autonomy is, for Deleuze, not its decidedly critical position vis-à-vis the rest of the society or human condition in general. The problem is rather the relation between critical art and the “human” condition: such a stance implies that there is some originary humanity, to which critical art could return us from our modern alienation. The Modernist artwork purports to expose the life enslaved by technology, conventions and commodification and to present the liberation of such a shackled life in the form of the autonomous work. Indeed, Adorno proclaims, such a work discards surface coherence and the appearance of harmony in fulfilling its critical function, but it still appeals to a unity beyond the forced consensus of modern life. It brings us from alienation to authenticity. This is why Deleuze and Guattari declare that the form-shattering works of William Burroughs, James Joyce or even Nietzsche fall back into a supplementary dimension which transcends the fragmentary nature of their works. They note: “the most resolutely fragmented work can also be presented as the Total Work or Magnum Opus”.422 The Modernist work sees the world as shattered, but elevates the subjective observation and expression of this fragmentation as a new kind of unity. Deleuze and Guattari state: “unity is consistently thwarted and obstructed in the object, while a new type of unity triumphs in the subject. … The world has become chaos, but the book or the artwork remains the image of the world”.423 Here the artist’s gesture erects a new totality of authenticity as The Work against chaos, which is secretly an original harmony that has been lost.

This is the danger inherent in locating the authenticity of art within the artwork. The work becomes a carrier of the unity within the artist’s “lived” experience and its expression in the masterly gesture. Essentially, we return to the One: one life, one unifying principle, one expression. But Deleuze insists on the multiple. There is no one primordial life that we all share, and that would provide the bedrock to “our” shared existence as human beings. Rather, life is

422 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p. 6.
423 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p. 6.
difference, the untotalisable sum of the relations of “to-affect” and “to-be-affected” and it thus exceeds our boundaries. There is the life of humans, organic life, but also the vast field of non-organic life which constitutes the becoming of the world. Even when art is building upon the notion of the lived and the expression of that lived, we must remember that each life-experience is only an Umwelt, a limited world closed upon itself. Yet, this Umwelt is constantly bombarded by the outside; it is affected and affecting others, and therefore transforming and transcending its previous boundaries. Accordingly, the “world” that a work of art presents is likewise a perspective that is permeated by affects. These affects do not belong to the artist, or to the spectator, but cut through them both. They are of the order of the real. Affect is the intensity which presses upon us from outside our sensory-motor schema, within which phenomena appear to us as if they were for us. It is for this radical relationality of the affect that sensation cannot be located in the artwork, but rather the work offers it a way of actualisation within perception.

Yet, as the emergent properties of an assemblage, affects or points of intensity are not totally independent of the component parts the assemblage consists of. They appear to us because of the existence of the particular assemblage; there and then, within that particular configuration. Otherwise they would remain virtual, potential perceptions. One way to understand the affect is to approach it as that which deterritorializes the assemblage, effects a qualitative transformation within it. To locate the art-function – that is, the emergence of expressive properties and their deterritorializing force – one must observe the functioning of specific assemblages. As the coda of my study I have chosen to briefly analyse the case of phonography, or recording technology, in relation to the novel musical forms it enables. At first, the question of deterritorialization might seem far off from the repetitive medium of recordings. How could an apparatus of control – as Jacques Attali identifies the means of recording – carry in itself the art-function? At first, what would seem to be a central characteristic of a recording is its instrumental function: the recording apparatus is a machine for capturing, relaying and distributing meanings. Yet, as Friedrich Kittler notes, the recording surface – and, for Kittler, namely the audio recording surface – captures much more than the relayed symbolic order of commonly
shared meanings. The gramophonic edifice captures the real sound wave, and thus preserves the undifferentiated materiality of sound matter.\footnote{Friedrich Kittler, \textit{Gramophone, Film, Typewriter}, p. 86.}

What Kittler locates as the real in his use of the Lacanian triad of the Real (phonograph), the Imaginary (film) and the Symbolic (typewriter), can be translated as the affect in Deleuzean terms, and it spills over the boundaries of the work of art. The instrumentalism inherent in the recorded media helps thus to deconstruct the Modernist work as a total gesture of the artist, but it does not relocate the impact of art into the sphere of mere sociology, as in the concept of the art world\footnote{See Arthur C. Danto, “The Artworld”, \textit{The Journal of Philosophy}, vol. 61, no. 19 (1964), pp. 571–584; George Dickie, \textit{Aesthetics: An Introduction} (New York: Pegasus, 1971), p. 101.} or theories of taste and distinction.\footnote{See Pierre Bourdieu, \textit{Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste}, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 1984).} There is something real within the recording, something that has the potential to inscribe a difference into the replay experience. This aspect makes the concept of the assemblage, as well as of the simulacrum, so suitable to considering works of art in their mediated forms. In the phonographic assemblage the question of its affect is not localisable into one point-like spot of the musical content, of the artist or the listener. Rather, the expressive quality and its virtual charge to deterritorialize the assemblage altogether reside in the multiplicity formed by the whole conjunction of elements. From that assemblage arises the art-function.

To reach this conclusion I have discussed Deleuze’s ontology of difference and his understanding of the process of subjectification in the first three chapters of my study. As has become evident, the philosophical aim of Deleuze is to build up an ontology that is able to place difference as the fundamental term. Difference would thus be the substance that every being partakes in. If something exists, it is due to difference. The genesis of being(s) is what constantly concerns Deleuze: what acts as the “motor” of the constant self-differentiation that is evident in the diversity of the world? Further, how to conceive this primal differentiator in a way that does not fix it into an unchanging identity? This necessity is due to the fact that establishing an identity to difference would derive it from the selfsame difference.
Difference-in-itself is thus Deleuze’s problem throughout his œuvre, most manifest in his work *Difference and Repetition*.

The evident problem of thinking of difference-in-itself is that one is constantly in danger of addressing difference in terms of identity. Difference derived from identity occurs when something differs from something else. For instance, I have two books on my desk and they differ from each other. Even if I had two copies of the same book they would differ, since they are not the same, they do not occupy the same space on the table. One is to the left of the other. The books cannot be superimposed. Yet, this difference is but the manifest differing between two identities, claims Deleuze. By following the line of thought centred on difference between X and Y we do not get to the bottom of “pure” difference which comes before identity. Instead we must try to think of the difference “beneath” the manifest difference. This challenge constitutes a major strand in Deleuze’s thought.

To return to the example: what is unique in each of the books lying on the desk? Them being just there and nowhere else, just the way they are, occupying a unique point in space and time. Still, could not even a singular presence of a book in space and time be put in comparison to a more fundamental matrix, that of the space-time? Yes, if we approach difference again as a comparative term: the book is there now in the present moment, situated 13 centimetres from the bottom edge and 45 centimetres from the right edge of the desk. It can be pinpointed within the co-ordinates of divisible space and time, but only as an abstract, static entity of frozen time and halted movement. But if we turn the comparison the other way around we get closer to affirming difference as it is in itself: what if space and time become existent because of entities “occupying” them? The “pure” difference is pure affirmation: *there is*. Or *this is*. Its existence “makes a difference”.

*This is*, as pure affirmation of a being’s being just-what-it-is, makes it an ontological foundation for the “latter” manifest,

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427 This constitutes an example for Immanuel Kant’s claim of the *a priori* nature of absolute space. The relations between distinct entities are consequences of their positioning in space. This is contrary to Gottfried Leibniz’s claim that the determination of space follows from the relations of matter. See Peter Woelert, “Kant’s hands, spatial orientation and the Copernican Turn”, Continental Philosophy Review, vol. 40, no. 2 (2007), pp. 141–142.

comparative difference between beings. However, at this point one further clarification must be made. It concerns the pure difference as *becoming* rather than being. If the pure difference is understood as the power of self-differentiation inherent in being, and not as a difference between two beings, it follows that this differentiation concerns the temporality of beings. Difference, when manifested, not only concerns space but also time. According to Gilbert Simondon, discussed in chapter two of this work, fully formed individuals should not be considered as ontologically primary. Rather, individuals or beings are processes of individuation or becoming. Individualisation takes place when an individual forms itself out of a pre-individual milieu. The emergent individual can, in turn, act as a part of a pre-individual milieu to some other individual. This is the ontogenetic view of ontology. Correspondingly, the affirmation *this is* could be developed into *this happens*. Individuals individuate themselves and are individuated by other individuals out of pre-individual field. What is notable is that individuation is a question of *perspective*. What is an individual from one perspective functions as a pre-individual singularity for another individual. This is the lesson Deleuze takes from Lucretius: there is diversity, every being is composed of parts and participates in composing other beings.429

An individual may be a grain of sand, composed of molecules, which themselves are composed of atoms *et cetera*. Yet, one might want to consider a stretch of white sandy beach as an individual. Then the perspective would shift to include the grain of sand as only a minor building block of the beach. Going further, by including a dimension of temporality it is easy to see that the beach is actually a process. It is affected by the properties of its components – the relative granular size of its sand – and its milieu, for example the weather conditions typical to the area the beach is in. If the sand is very fine and the weather windy, the whole beach may gradually be swept away by the wind, despite the movement of waves building up more sand in replacement. Or consider a mountain, a being that appears as immobile and unchanging from our human perspective. Still, as understood in a geological scale of time, the mountain is a fluid folding of matter, ever changing its shape. The light of a fluorescent lamp appears as a smooth emission to us, and yet a fly

429 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 266–268.
sees the light as flickering as its visual receptive capability is much faster than what we possess. The macro and micro scales, unattainable to us in perception, are also part of a being. Our existence as human beings is shaped by our sensory-motor schema; the particular sensory, physical, mental and cultural capacities we have. Yet, the world is not “made to our measure”, and Deleuze adopts an anti-correlationist and realist view as regards Kant’s epistemology. For Kant the form of transcendental subjectivity dictates the structure of the apparent world. Everything that appears must appear within certain a priori parameters. What is outside of the conditions of possible experience – the noumenal or the Real – we cannot perceive and bring into representation. Deleuze agrees to a point, but insists on the vital force of the Real as the pressure of the Outside upon our world of representations, breaking up pre-given forms and identities and thus introducing the genitive element of difference.

When Deleuze talks about thought outside representation and about pre-individual difference-in-itself, he means the fathoming of things as flux, as “non-organic” life. To go “beyond” the milieu of the organism is to deny the Judgment of God, the organization and hierarchy of being. Instead, in this “flat” ontology of immanence there are no hylomorphic distinctions of form and matter, but rather “complex relation[s] between differential velocities”. These relations, derived from the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, are nominated as affects. Every body is constituted by its capacity to affect others and, in turn, its susceptibility to be affected by others. On the plane of immanence, within the virtual, all that can be said of individual beings is that there are encounters. There is no transcendence. Everything that is can, in theory, be affected by everything else. Thus, everything has its conditions. This does not mean that every being is causally determined, but that there is an infinite set of conditions for everything – everything has a reason, though not a necessary but a sufficient one. Here we come to the notions of autopoiesis and emergency. The emergence of a distinct being – individuation – is a question of relations. Individuals “occur” in a milieu of causes and the emerging individual functions as (a part of) a milieu to some other emerging individual. What guarantees the

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“flatness” of the ontology of emergence is Simondon and Deleuze’s insistence on the non-existence of pre-formation. To be sure, every individual is preceded by pre-individual factors which constitute the milieu for emergence, but these factors are themselves the result of a process of emergence and not some transcendent structures independent of the process of individuation.

The co-existence of entities on a plane of ontological non-hierarchy means that conditions or mediations travel “transversally” between different modes of beings. Any given individual is a complex situation composed of interactions on different levels of causation ranging from subatomic to cosmic, from biological to social. This means, in effect, the death of God. There can be no original unity or totality, a thing that would be beyond conditioning. This immanent view requires also the discarding of the representationalist form of thought that is based on essences and their instantiations. In chapter four I consider the representational way of thinking which discerns the entities we encounter as re-presentations of some transcendent reality and categorises these entities according to their pre-given identities as instantiations of some original principle of distribution in the world. In an autopoietic model of the world essences have to be replaced with units that are immanent to the material plane. There is no transcendent ground for identity. Instead of essence–instantiation relationship based on resemblance, we have the simulacra-like relation of morphogenesis between virtual “multiplicities” and their actualisations – the pre-individual field and actual individuals.

Understanding individuals as simulacra, the Platonic category of “false”, deceitful images which fail to represent their original essence since they lack one, Deleuze devises the concept of the assemblage as explicating the dynamic nature of identity. As discussed in chapter five, an assemblage is identity understood as a compound of parts: the interaction of different elements that produces certain effects. Every individuation that subsists is an assemblage; it possesses capacity to change its environment and absorb impulses coming from outside its boundaries. As Deleuze says of the simulacra, they are able to engender heterogeneity or “internalize a dissimilarity” within their identity.431 As such the simulacra function as the reverse of Platonic identity: they do not subordinate difference to the same, but rather

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431 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 258.
expose themselves as dissimilar entities and at the same time suggest the simulacral nature of every entity. Therefore the way to approach assemblages-as-simulacra is to experiment rather than interpret. Whereas interpretation posits an original meaning behind the appearance of an entity, the simulacral assemblage is an apparition – its presence does not lack any original foundation. Rather, to understand it is to discover the ways of its being: how it works, what its affective capacities are, what its internal structure is. This type of analysis of an identity brings us to a fundamental relationality within entities. Nothing is singular: everything is connected. And yet, everything is singular as every phenomenon appears right there-and-then, within a particular configuration of affects. In this sense existence is aesthetic: a phenomenon must be evaluated according to a particular set of circumstances. A phenomenon expresses its genetic conditions – it is an individual “solution” to a pre-individual “problem”. The world consists of these expressions; there is no higher totality of which phenomena would be expressions. Such a totality would distribute individuals as possibilities waiting only for their realization. Rather, we must understand existence via the modes of virtuality and actuality. The virtual is not a reservoir of identities lacking actuality: it is fully real, but pre-individual. It exists in every thing as the entity’s relational capacity to change, to unfold in a different manner. Experience is, then, subjection to this dimension which exceeds the experiencing subject and the object experienced. Something in the world forces us to think: experience is an encounter with the virtual.

The experience of art is of special importance for Deleuze, as it concerns the aesthetic which cannot, according to Kant, be subjugated under a pre-given conceptual framework. The aesthetic is the singular: here and now, appearing for me, at the very moment. Yet, it cannot be contained within a particular, actualised entity – whether the expression of the “lived” of an artist or the spectator, or the material configuration of a work of art. The affect is the relational: a displacement of a particular quality from its context. Here we arrive at the point of conclusion of this work. The affect, the experience of art means being exposed to the art-function of a certain assemblage. Art is not merely the work as a unique gesture of the artist’s intention, whether conscious or unconscious. Not the work as autonomous
critique of an alienated world. Not the self-generating meaning of an art world. And not the subjective experience of the audience. Rather, the art-function is in the diagrammatic power of an assemblage to change its consistency and kind: to become something new.
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