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The Relation of Deleuze to Derrida

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Abstract

In this paper examination of the negative phenomenology of Deleuze has been ventured upon. Negative phenomenologies repress difference as the transcendental and the empirical are repetitions of the same through iterability. I argue that a negative phenomenology or a reversal of phenomenology repeats it rather than managing to escape it. This is because it still proceeds within its metaphysical vocabulary and ontological structure. Deleuze thus, in inverting and reversing phenomenology, only repeat it by borrowing entirely from its metaphysical vocabulary and structure. Derrida's phenomenology in place, is a meta-phenomenology in discovering the origin of phenomenology as difference, or the difference between philosophy and non-philosophy, transcendental and empirical. Derrida discovers the condition of possibility for phenomenology as the quasi-transcendental, or the interval between the transcendental and empirical which conditions phenomenology in its entirety. The transcendental and empirical are paradoxically identical and non-identical because the difference translates into sameness.

Keywords: Deleuze, Derrida, Transcendental, Empirical

This paper ventures to examine the negative phenomenology of Deleuze. The main aim of the analysis is to exhibit the reversals of phenomenology and repeat its metaphysical structure rather than managing to escape it. In place, Derrida discovers the quasi-transcendental, or that which is neither transcendental nor empirical but the interval between these, as the condition of possibility for phenomenology. Derrida thus inscribes phenomenology in a more powerful form through discovering the quasi-transcendental as its condition of possibility as the quasi-transcendental upholds the possibility of the transcendental-empirical distinction as well as the impossibility of their separation.

The relation of Deleuze to Derrida

Derrida maintains the existence of transcendental-empirical difference though he posits it as a difference without a difference while Deleuze seeks to collapse that difference in his positing of the body without organs. Unlike Derrida who maintains the existence of the transcendental which exists though iterability in the empirical, Deleuze seeks to repudiate the transcendental when he declares there is no Absolute but only the rhizome. Indeed, this translates into saying that there is no transcendental form which determines the empirical through iterability, rather all that exists according to Badiou is the presentation of presentation and the rhizome which exists unprecedented by the Absolute. In other words, matter is purely material which exists without the foundation of the Absolute. As an anti-foundationalist, Deleuze also declares the non-existence of God or all otherworldly forms of transcendence which determine the empirical through inerrability. Derrida argues that all presentation is representation, while Deleuze argues that all that exists is the presentation of presentation, in other words, everything is material, no transcendent form determines the existence of matter.

The schizophrenic response to absurdity in human experience is, in effect, a line of flight, a molecular revolution to accommodate the chaos inherent in existence through liberation from the molar identity which has proved empty and meaningless in the face of absurdity. The de-centered subjectivity

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of the schizophrenic is a defence mechanism against having to adopt a single dysfunctional identity, to be essentialized in a barren world where no stable framework of meaning may be said to hold authority that may protect one from the vagaries and vicissitudes of anti-heroic existence. The psychotic break is, in effect, a coping device for the failure of pure reason to provide a satisfactory and meaningful account of existence. Psychosis involves the lapse into a private language and solipsism, the surge of the mind's subjective and constitutive tendencies over "objective", or consensual and social reality. Madness is postulated as an escape route from overwhelming suffering in the absence of divine mercy and a transcendental logos that will ensure meaningful existence.

The schizophrenic response to absurdity involves the deterritorialization of the organic subject, liberating it and freeing it from closure. The absurd and meaningless existence of the organic body is territorialized. Deterritorialization frees the subject through allowing it to become, in effect, a body without organs (BwO). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, the organized body is one that is centred around what the authors call a "General". Its mode is arborescent. According to it hierarchies are generated and strictures imposed. The organized body is striated. The space of its existence is that of one or other spatio-temporal reference points. It is to be located either at point/site A or point/site B, essentially integral to itself. Not so the BwO. Here the arborescent mode is cast aside. The BwO, is instead rhizomatic. This results in the creation of a smooth space of nomadic forays, distributions and alliances as opposed to the striated one of the organized body. The rhizomatic BwO exists between rather than at point A and/or B.

The line of flight towards interbeing is in effect, a quest for authentic being through transcending the strictures of repressive rational and social norms. It is a "transcendence within the immanent", which means we have transcendence but no transcendent. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, "Immanence is immanent only to itself, and consequently captures everything, absorbs All-One, and leaves nothing remaining to which it could be immanent"(What is Philosophy? 45). This means we have immanence, but nothing is immanent.

In his essay "on reversing" by Plato in *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze looks into Aesthetics to show how there is a disparity between our general view of experience (a view based on the invariable Forms, the ideas of Plato), and the conditions of our real experience (which involves constant change, constant flux, chaos). He suggests that what we need is a general view of experience which conforms to our actual experience. This he suggests, exists in modern literature, where divergent series, unrelated stories, are not unified but nevertheless resonate with one another. The structure of this kind of art, then, is reunited with our real experience, which does not proceed through well-ordered single story-lines but through the simultaneous sounding of various different and perhaps otherwise unrelated series of events (*The Logic of Sense* 260-2). Clearly, then, for Deleuze, philosophy must learn from literature of those type like the one created by Beckett, amongst others.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that a work of art reaches the infinite through the finite (*What is Philosophy?* 197), whereas Philosophy is commonly thought to approach the particular through the general. Beckett says much the same in "Dante...Bruno...Vico...Joyce": "Poetry is essentially the antithesis of Metaphysics. Metaphysics purge the mind of the senses and cultivate the disembodiment of the spiritual; Poetry is all passion and feeling and animates the inanimate; Metaphysics are most perfect when concerned with universals; Poetry, when most concerned with particulars. Poets are the sense, philosophers the intelligence of humanity" (Beckett, *Disjecta* 24). With Platonism, the infinite, the essence, the general or the universal, is conflated with the "Form" or "Idea" which alone is considered eternal. "Anti-Platonism", on the other hand, is a philosophy of existence rather than of Forms. It does not do away with essence. Rather, it contends that essences which cannot be disconnected from particulars as existence involves the play of differences (that which we understand as particular). This play of the general and the particular within an essence is sometimes called the "indefinite" in Deleuze (*Negotiations* 136).

Contrary to the metaphysical tradition, which always grasps thought as an object of representation (in the form of the "idea" in Plato, "reason" in Kant, or "spirit" in Hegel, for example), Deleuze and Guattari situate the object of non-relation between truth and thought on the plane of expression. The concept of philosophy, as Deleuze and Guattari address it in *What is Philosophy?* It becomes nothing less

than a diagram of the brain that is traced from the limits of sensibility to the condition of thought, attempting to discover in the perceived as resemblance is not as much to the object of thought, but rather to the force that causes us to think, the condition of sensibility and no longer representation of its sense. The condition of thinking this form of immanence can no longer be said to be common or innate to the Ego, but it can only be approached by means of a constructivism. Schizophrenia, like art, explores the conditions for rendering this plane of immanence discernible by making the bare possibility of feeling more intensive and raising the minimal powers accorded to perception and intuition into a form of “vision”. Consequently, the false is trans-valued into a special and positive power that is now charged with the discovery of new ‘percepts’ and ‘affects’, that is, with exploring the conditions for restoring at least the powers of immanence to the powers of philosophical discernment.

In the original preface to *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze mentions various areas of modern thought which have discovered “a power peculiar to repetition, a power which also inhabits the unconscious, language and art”. Heideggerian philosophy, structuralism, and contemporary fiction explore the difference that haunts any present repetition: present beings are ontologically different from Being. Words have meaning only with reference to other words from which they differ; human beings differ from the substantial selves they wish they were. Representation is premised on the primacy of identity. Identities – phenomena such as Freud’s conscious ego, Marx’s bourgeois reality, Nietzsche’s god, authorial intention, and the speaking subject – are put into doubt by various theoretical perspectives of modernity. In the wake of a generalized anti-Hegelianism in which “difference and repetition have taken the place of the identical and the negative, of identity and contradiction”, one can no longer take identity at face value. Modern thought emerges with the loss of identities and the failure of representation. Now, “all identities are only simulated, produced as an optical ‘effect’ by the more profound game of difference and repetition” (*Difference and Repetition* xix). Hence the interest of this paper in difference is expressed in the phenomenon of schizophrenia, fragmentation and modes of accommodating the chaos that ensues from the ruin of representation and the collapse of the Absolute.

Schizoanalysis as a true politics of antipsychiatry involves in liberating schizoid movements of deterritorialization, so that these movements affect “the flows of labour and desire, of production, knowledge and creation in their most profound tendency” (*Anti-Oedipus* 321). Such deterritorialized flows liberate other flows which extend deterritorialization beyond the individual across the social field. Schizoanalysis must proceed quickly in its destructive task of “successively undoing the representative territorialities and reterritorializations through which a subject passes in his individual history” (318). In carrying out this task of what Deleuze and Guattari will call “destratification” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, schizoanalysis assumes that libidinal investments ranging over the entire social field take precedence over familial investments (356). An important component of schizoanalysis thus turns out to be the “liberation” of “prepersonal singularities” from the constraints of personal identities: “The task of schizoanalysis is that of tirelessly taking apart egos and their presuppositions; liberating the prepersonal singularities they enclose and repress; mobilizing the flows they would be capable of transmitting, receiving, or intercepting, establishing always further and more sharply the schizzes and the breaks well below the condition of identity, and assembling the desiring machines that countersect everyone and group everyone with others” (362).

Self-present in the vertical dimension, overseeing themselves without taking any distance, these are neither objects that can explain perception, nor subjects capable of grasping a perceived object; rather, they are absolute interiorities that take hold if themselves and everything fills them in, in a process of “self-enjoyment”. (*The Fold* 102-3)

This is a radically decentred notion of subjectivity that greatly complicates the subject/object dichotomy. For the subject in Deleuze and Guattari is not a “human being” per se but an effect-structure, not of language but of material-social fluxes. Subjectivity is transpersonal: it occurs not in the subject but in the space between subject and object.

A rhizome doesn’t begin and doesn’t end, but is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation but the rhizome is alliance, exclusively alliance. The tree imposes the

verb “to be” but the rhizome is woven together with conjunctions: and...and...and....(A Thousand Plateaus 25)

Deleuze highlights the precedence of the rhizome over the Absolute, and hence emphasizes materiality and finitude. However this materiality and finitude translates into empiricism which does not differ from idealism upon close examination, as the transcendental-empirical difference is an illusion. Deleuze’s emphasis on materialism and finitude commits phenomenology to an empirical basis, which suppresses aporia and difference. This is because the transcendental is nothing outside the empirical, just as the empirical is just the repeated trace of the transcendental. Nothing separates the transcendental and empirical as transcendental-empirical difference is an illusion. The difference between the transcendental and empirical translates into a paradoxical sameness as the transcendental and empirical are simultaneously identical and non-identical, similar and different.

The quasi-transcendental inscribes this opposition as a simultaneous sameness because nothing separates the transcendental and empirical. The quasi-transcendental is both the grounds of possibility and impossibility of the distinction between the transcendental and empirical, lending to phenomenology an aspect of heterogeneity and undecidability, because truth translates as aporia and that which is neither transcendental nor empirical. This is the quasi-transcendental, the limit, spacing and trace between the transcendental and empirical which allows the thinking of both and allows metaphysics to function. It is the quasi-transcendental or the written mark, functioning as if it was transcendental, which enables metaphysics as it is the conditionality of transcendental-empirical differentiation as well as the condition of impossibility for designating an exclusive sphere of idealism or expressive signs, or empirical signs in converse.

The quasi-transcendental relates the transcendental and empirical in simultaneous identity and difference with identity and non-identity. The necessity for the quasi-transcendental to distinguish the transcendental and empirical makes it impossible to separate transcendental and empirical as each separation depends on the other term for the distinction to be upheld. If there were no transcendental, then it would be impossible to distinguish, as Deleuze does, a pure empirical situatedness and idealism from it. The transcendental thus inhabits the empirical even as it is separated from it through the written mark or quasi-transcendental. Deleuze thus requires the transcendental to exclude it from his corporeality and radical empiricism. Empirical only exists in relation to transcendental through iterability and difference. Deleuze thus needs to acknowledge the quasi-transcendental as a condition of possibility for his phenomenology to inscribe it more powerfully. Deleuze excludes from his phenomenology that which is necessary to thinking it as the transcendental needs to exist in order for the distinction between the empirical to be upheld. Deleuze thus needs to acknowledge that his empirical does not exist outside its relation to the transcendental through iterability and difference.

Deleuze, by suppressing the Absolute, lapses into privileging materiality and empirical situatedness of the number. Such a move suppresses the quasi-transcendental and iterability as the true condition of possibility of metaphysics. As transcendental-empirical difference is an illusion, an empirical idealism like Deleuze’s repeats rather than diverges from metaphysics. Transcendental and empirical are repetitions, rather than anti-thetical to each other. The transcendental and empirical only exist in relation to each other through difference and iterability. The quasi-transcendental, which is the limit, spacing and trace which upholds metaphysics and allows metaphysics to function, is the true condition of metaphysics as the transcendental has to exist only in and through the empirical. An empirical idealism like Deleuze’s thus suppresses aporia and difference and fails to acknowledge that it borrows entirely from the ontological structure and vocabulary of metaphysics, hence repeating metaphysics rather than truly departing or diverging from it.

Deleuze in emphasizing the rhizome thus lapses into empiricism, which is essentially the same as idealism as the difference between the transcendental and empirical translates into a non-difference or sameness. The empirical is not conceivable outside the dynamic relation of iterability and difference which relate the transcendental and empirical. Truth is not to be situated as either transcendental or empirical, because such a move suppresses aporia and difference. Truth translates rather as that which is

neither transcendental nor empirical, or the quasi-transcendental, the limit, spacing and trace which allows the thinking of both.

The empirical idealism of Deleuze thus re-inscribes metaphysics by instituting a distinction which collapses through the movement of the trace and difference, which designates the a prior distinction between the transcendental and empirical is the repetition of a same. The transcendental does not exist outside the empirical, just as the empirical is the repeated trace of the transcendental through iterability. Deleuze does not differ from Husserl as transcendental and empirical are repetitions of the same through iterability. Derrida thus democratizes phenomenology in showing that Deleuze does not differ essentially from Husserl despite seeking to reverse phenomenology.

Further examination is on Deleuze's phenomenology of the rhizome. Deleuze argues that the rhizome precedes the Absolute. Through this shift towards an emphasis on materiality and finitude, Derrida would find a form of non-philosophy in its emphasis on material presence, as argued earlier, a repetition rather than a reversal of metaphysics and philosophy. Derrida locates the condition of phenomenology and philosophy as the quasi-transcendental or the difference between philosophy and non-philosophy, thus performing meta-phenomenology rather than inverting or negating phenomenology as Levinas, Ricoeur and Deleuze do. Deleuze's emphasis on materialism marks his philosophy as a radical empiricism or non-philosophy, while Derrida would take pains to suggest radical empiricism is essentially the same as transcendental idealism, and the difference or difference between them is nothing. This is because the transcendental exists only through the empirical in the dynamic relation of iterability, the transcendental is nothing outside the empirical, just as the empirical is the repeated trace of the transcendental and does not exist outside of it. As transcendental-empirical difference is an illusion, truth is neither transcendental nor empirical, but quasi-transcendental, the spacing between the transcendental and empirical which enables the thinking of both. The impossibility of the distinction between Deleuze's corporeal phenomenology and Husserl's transcendental idealism in its own possibility as transcendental and empirical are the same, separated by a difference which is not a difference, but the difference. The aporia between the transcendental and empirical enables the thinking of both as difference and iterability which determine the distinction between the transcendental and empirical as non-distinction. In place of a negative phenomenology for Deleuze, Derrida thus performs a meta-phenomenology in discovering the conditions of possibility for phenomenology to be difference, the quasi-transcendental and iterability. Derrida thus inscribes phenomenology more powerfully as it is made reflexive on its own conditions of possibility that enable its production and functioning.

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