Tabla de Contenidos

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Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence

Difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse.
-Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition

This is a book onDeleuze. In particular, it is a book on Deleuze's metaphysics which makes no reference to his ethics, politics, or aesthetics. It is not a book on Deleuze and Guattari. Nor is it a book on Bume, Spinoza, Nietzsche, or Bergson. I do not seek to demonstrate that Deleuze is really a Bergsonian vitalist in disguise. Nor do I seek to show how Deleuze is really a thinker of active and passive forces. I do not, above all, seek to make any comment on Deleuze's collaborative works with Guattari and how these might represent departures or continuations of his earlier work. In fact, in order to adequately engage in such a project it would first be necessary to do something similar to what I am attempting here. Rather, the present volume seeks to speak simply and in an informed way about what Deleuze means by “transcendental empiricism” in his two early masterpieces Difference and Repetition and The Logic of Sense.

In what follows I seek to demonstrate that Deleuze's transcenden tal empiricism attempts to overcome the opposition between concepts and intuitions, noesis and aisthesis, that has characterized most of the history of philosophy and which arises from the assumption of a finite subj ect whose receptivity is conceived of as passive. In executing this proj ect I have also sought to determine how Deleuze is able to avoid fall ing into criticisms of being a speculative dogmatist and how the subject must be rethought in its relationship to being. Contrary, then, to the somewhat standard picture of Deleuze, which treats his ontology as an empiricism, I have sought to present a hyper-rationalist version of his thought, contextualizing it in terms of debates that surround classical rationalism but also German idealism as exemplified in the figures of Kant and Salomon Maimon. This has not been out of a desire to present yet another “monstrous” version of Deleuze, but because the problemat ics surrounding German idealism and rationalism struck me as closest to those governing Deleuze's proj ect of a transcendental empiricism and seemed to best explain his engagement with differential calculus that is so often ignored in treatments of Deleuze's thought. In short, if Deleuze is able to depart from the philosophy of representation charac terized by the primacy of the concept, then this is because he discovers ntelligibility in the aesthetic itself, i n the very fabric of the given, in the form of the differentials of perception. Deleuze does not so much give us a way of mediating the relation between the universal and the particular, but dispenses with the problem altogether. In this connec tion, I am able to provide a justification of his project that need make no reference to a politics or ethics based on a preference for differ ence over identity. Deleuze's ethics and politics follow-rightly-from his ontology, not the reverse. Deleuze thinks of himself as having solved a very traditional and central problem in the history of philosophy and proceeds to draw the consequences of this solution. I leave it to my read ers to decide whether emphasizing Deleuze's debt to thinkers such as Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, and Maimon does not prove more illuminat ing to his text than a discussion of his thought that relies heavily on his debt to English empiricism.

It might seem strange to emphasize that this is a book on Deleuze when this can be clearly discerned from the very title of the book. How ever, given the standard image of Deleuze, it is imperative that I do so. Too often it is assumed that the names “Deleuze” and “Deleuze and Guattari” are identical and can be used interchangeably.1 The question of whether or not significant transformations take place in the encoun ter of these two individuals is not even raised. This constitutes a be trayal of the singularity of Deleuze's thought as well as that of Deleuze and Guattari. Moreover, Deleuze insists

that continuous multiplicities change in kind when divided. We might claim equally that they change in kind when new dimensions are added to them. To simply equate “Deleuze” with “Deleuze and Guattari” is to ignore this fundamental principle belonging to a logic-of multiplicities. Unable to adequately deal with such complex issues in the space of a single essay, I thus opted to restrict myself to Deleuze's thought.

By contrast, as a rejoinder one might object to treating the name of Deleuze as a unity, pointing out that the various texts by him alone . display very different styles and concerns. However, as I hope to show in the course of this book, this argument falls prey to what I will later call the empiricist fallacy in that it individuates that which belongs to Deleuze by the empirical texts marked by his name and not by what belongs to De- . leuze's style. Deleuze himself was fond of pointing out that events are not) individuated by the individuals that belong to them, but rather that indi viduals are individuated by the events that befall them. In this connection I am entirely in agreement with Badiou's claim that “Deleuze arrives at conceptual productions that I would unhesitatingly qualify as monotonous, composing a very particular regime of emphasis or almost infinite repeti tion of a limited repertoire of concepts, as well as a virtuosic variation of names, under which what is thought remains essentially identical.”

While Deleuze's language may change from text to text, one is nonetheless able to discern a distinct structure at work throughout his thought. Given this, I have not hesitated to emphasize some of his works to the detriment of others, for the very simple reason that it would be redundant and unnecessary to cite each instance in which a particular concept occurs. Thus, for instance, if I was able to find adequate textual support for a particular concept in Difference and Repetition, then I felt no obligation to discuss the concept as presented in Nietzsche and Phi losophy. Since the aim of my proj ect is philosophical and not historical, I do not feel my account of Deleuze's thought suffers from this strategy. Moreover, by emphasizing some texts of Deleuze's over others, I was able to suggest another picture of his proj ect than the standard one that portrays him as a Nietzschean anarcho-desiring machine fighting reac tive forces of ressentiment and bad conscience. Consequently, I attempt to read Deleuze as he himself read other thinkers. I ask what problems informed Deleuze's thought and seek to determine how these problems necessitated the construction of particular concepts.

There is also a tendency to attribute anything D deuze had to say about another thinker or artist to his own position. While it is undeni able that Deleuze is deeply indebted to all the thinkers and artists he wrote on (including Kant) , it is strange to assume that the works expli cating his own philosophy consist of handy summations of what he had already written about other philosophers. Rather, we must be careful to determine whether what appears in one of Deleuze's studies of other philosophers repeats itself in the works articulating his own philosophy. We cannot assume that the contents of Deleuze's studies are identical to his independent philosophical works. As Deleuze says of his work in Difference and Repetition:

> There is a great difference between writing history of philosophy and writing philosophy. In the one case, we study the arrows or the tools of a great thinker, the trophies and the prey, the continents discovered. In the other case, we trim our own arrows, or gather those which seem to us the finest in order to try to send them in other directions, even if the distance covered is not astronomical but relatively small. We try to speak in our own name only to learn that a proper name designates no more than the outcome of a body of work-in other words, the concepts discovered, on the condition that we were able to express these and imbue them with life using all the possibilities of language.

Discussions of Deleuze have not attended enough to the manner in which he trimmed his arrows. The idea of trimming one's arrows also suggests the idea of selection, of discernment between what one

takes up and carries into the future and what is left behind. As brilliant and clear as Deleuze's discussion of Nietzsche's reactive forces may be, this does not merit us ascribing it to him if it does not appear in those works where Deleuze articulates his own philosophy. Similarly in the case of Bergson. I suspect that much of this practice has arisen due to the sheer obscurity and difficulty of Deleuze's own works, but this makes it no more justifiable.

To be sure, throughout this book I find ample opportunity to refer to Deleuze's works in the history of philosophy and aesthetics. However, in doing so I gave myself two simple rules. First, whenever reference is made to one of Deleuze's commentaries on an artist, art form, or an other philosopher, then it must be possible to demonstrate in fact or in principle that Deleuze employs precisely these same terms and concepts in his own independent works. Second, whenever there is a divergence among concepts between Deleuze's own work and the conceptual work Deleuze attributes to another, then there must either be a tacit critique or divergence between Deleuze's proj ect and that of the other think er. In this way I have hoped to discover a singularity of Deleuze's own thought, marking his divergence from the history of philosophy that he grapples with and constructs for himself.