

## Immanence and Transcendence

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The concepts of “immanence” and “transcendence” have a long lineage in the history of Western metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> The names of Plato and Aristotle stand for two diverging tendencies that have placed the realm of truest reality—the Ideas or Essences—either *outside* or *within* the world. But when it comes to the question of how one is to know or communicate the *spiritual* and the *sensual*, such clear distinctions become blurred. The strategic approach that has led thinkers to insist upon immanence can be easily characterised: it has always been a question of revealing the *theological motivations* that linger in outer-worldly experience. At the same time, emphasizing immanence means collapsing the hierarchical order—whether cosmological or political—that is traditionally rooted in the idea of the One. The thinking of immanence—as the counter-concept to transcendence—is thus connected in a particular and exemplary way to Kant and to the project of Enlightenment.

The thesis that I wish to develop here asserts the *relevance and rightness of an immanent philosophy*, a philosophy, therefore, that is *critical of transcendence and metaphysics*. After some introductory observations, I will explain in more detail how the problem relates to Kant. This will reveal that talk of a simple opposition between immanence and transcendence

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is not satisfactory because safeguarding the immanent use of reason necessarily requires excluding the unknowable realm of transcendence. The world of immanence thus appears to “us (finite) beings” as but a fraction of the world in itself. The phenomenon whereby both concepts complement each other shows the complexity of what is at stake here. To put it in simple terms, we might say that immanence is not thought radically enough as long as it remains necessary or possible to separate it from a realm of transcendence as a meaningful instance (an instance which is considered to occasionally intervene in the world *ex machina*).

In two further steps, I will draw on the work of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995). Both these thinkers emphasize the claim to immanence by thinking through what I have just described as the phenomenon of their complementarity. They carry out an ontological appropriation of layers of experience, whose opacity (which cannot be revealed by traditional philosophical means) grants a relative advantage to the transcendental thinker in comparison to the scientific philosopher who soberly insists on the immanence qua verifiability of empirical knowledge. While Heidegger at this point creates a new mystery surrounding the experience of Being, Deleuze succeeds in locating every postulate of transcendence “on the level of immanence,” that is, on the level of our concrete involvement in the world.

I would like to begin by tracing some of the major historical steps in the development of the concepts of immanence and transcendence. The concept of immanence was first established in the work of the medieval scholastics Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. Drawing on Aristotle’s distinction between acting and creating, these thinkers conceived of “God and His effect which is identical with His Being” as an immanent activity—an activity that is limited, however, to the activity of understanding. What is important here is that immanence is not oriented *against* a divine

transcendent position, but is conceived as a form of manifestation (not in the sense of worldly expression, but in the sense of a spiritual being-with-itself).<sup>2</sup> Secondly, this aspect was further developed in the works of Spinoza, for whom substance becomes the immanent cause of all things. The thesis of a God turned away from the world or of a God who creates the world, emerges as the vision of an abstract magnitude which cannot be explained, and therefore cannot be comprehended. Thirdly, Kant's transcendental dialectic in the *Critique of Pure Reason* marks an historical turning point. Kant reduces reason to its immanent use and thus distances himself from previous models of speculative argumentation, which under the sign of a *metaphysica specialis* claimed to be able to explain the existence of God or the immortality of the Soul. Fourthly, in the context of German Idealism, following Kant, the principle of immanence is applied to the totality of knowledge of the "absolute I," which concentrates on itself and its history. In a fifth step, in the course of the nineteenth-century, this realm of immanent truth (the absolute I, or what Hegel calls Spirit) is limited as a result of scientific positivism.<sup>3</sup> This explains, sixthly, the popularity of certain forms of rhetoric which have attempted to resist the prevailing "immanent status" whether it be of the Spirit, of History, of the ruling classes or of instrumental reason (in the name of a transcendent). To name but one example here: Jean-Paul Sartre's book *L'imaginaire: Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination* (1940) interprets the "intentionality" of consciousness as a transcendent phenomenon and plays it against the empiricist "illusion" of immanence.<sup>4</sup> According to Sartre, the empiricists failed to acknowledge the fundamental characteristic of experience, which is that consciousness overcomes itself towards something outside of itself. Conceived as a U-topia of social relations and not as a correlate of something defined by intentional-psychological or quasi-anthropological factors, this "outside" plays an analogous role in Neo-Marxist contexts as the transcendent vanishing point of descriptions of the present (the Idea of Freedom).

## I

But let us now return to Kant. It is generally assumed that with Kant, and with the critical turn he brought about in philosophy, the end of the ontological-contemplative era was announced and a new era of logical-reflection or a philosophy of consciousness began. Kant's project, as described in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is to make metaphysics face its own limitations so that the incessant and fierce disputes between the various successors of the scholastics could finally be settled by a higher judge—a project that is realised by the fixing of boundaries of knowledge, which can only be trespassed unlawfully. Reason is thus prevented from slipping into the supernatural. It is forced to subordinate itself to the scientific request of understandability and empirical verifiability and must therefore lower its expectations to the intellectual satisfaction of its naturally valid metaphysical needs. In fact, Kant's critical development towards a metaphysics of nature, which reveals itself as a science, aims to dissolve the unavoidable task of pure reason whose field of inquiry goes beyond the limitation of experience.

These unavoidable problems of mere pure reason are *God*, *freedom* [of will], and *immortality*. The science which, with all its preliminaries, has for its especial object the *dissolution* [*Auflösung*] of these problems is named metaphysics – a science which is at the very outset dogmatical, that is, it confidently takes upon itself the execution of this task without any previous investigation of the ability or inability of reason for such an undertaking.<sup>5</sup>

“Dissolution” in this context can mean two things: on the one hand, that tasks are resolved or questions answered, and on the other hand, that the tasks are revealed to be false or the questions wrongly posed. Kant chooses a middle way when, in the Transcendental Dialectic, he declares that there

can be both a legitimate and illegitimate use of Ideas. In fact, reason becomes tangled up in paralogisms and antinomies when it “confidently” sets off to recognize the absolute. In accordance with their dogmatically conceived nature, the ideas do not belong to an *immanent* but to a *transcendent* usage; they amount therefore to false or incorrectly grounded problems. Thus, in the appendix to the “Transcendental Dialectic,” Kant writes:

For it is not the idea in itself, but only the employment of the idea in relation to possible experience, that is transcendent or immanent. An idea is employed transcendentally, when it is applied to an object falsely believed to be adequate with and to correspond to it; immanently, when it is applied solely to the employment of the understanding in the sphere of experience.<sup>6</sup>

Reason cannot relate immediately to its object, but can do so only by way of the understanding, that is, by bringing the already-determined knowledge of the understanding into a systematic and at the same time *problematic* order.<sup>7</sup> Bearing in mind its incapacity for intellectual contemplation, metaphysical reason must thus limit itself. Although reason cannot be prevented from bringing up transcendent ideas, in its regulative scientific use, it must be careful not to overstep the boundaries of the *mundus sensibilis*.

Of course, the duty of theoretical reason to operate within the boundaries of possible experience is based on the assumption that reason is capable of defining those boundaries. According to Kant, reason proves itself up to this task by being able to pass a synthetic judgement *a priori*, which defines the *subjective* legalities that function as the necessary conditions for any possible experience of things. By emphasizing subjectivity as a foundational instance, Kant refers to his own critical innovation of metaphysics as a transcendental philosophy—albeit at the cost of the *synthetic* and *singular* character of theoretical judgements of reason.

And a high price it is, because it comes with the “progressive independence of different rationality complexes,” so that reason is reduced to being a capacity amongst others and furthermore can only save its autonomy by withdrawing from the world of experience.<sup>8</sup> As a result, in the context of the first critique, reason transfers its power to the understanding, which as the originator of experience only recognizes what corresponds to its own constitution and the subjective pure forms of contemplation. For Kant this is indeed a curtailing “only,” because under such critical conditions it is no longer possible to recognize or classify the being of a being in itself. Transcendental philosophy thus presents itself as a shrunken form of *general* metaphysics, even though it may still be related to some kind of *special* metaphysics.

The project of the Kantian enlightenment was largely successful where it was able to demonstrate the dogmatic ambitions of the rational systems of scholastic metaphysics, such as, in accordance with Wolffian categorizations, assertions about existence that went beyond the realm of rational ideas. His transcendental philosophy proved itself as a limitative or immanent theory insofar as it established boundaries of experience beyond which no reasonable judgements were to be possible. As a metaphysics of metaphysics, transcendental philosophy was thus constituted through reflection on the limits of finite knowledge. Metaphysics was introduced as the science of the general, the unchangeable, and the necessary; in its mentalistically reduced form, it remains a theory of consciousness, which determines *a priori* the necessary subjective conditions for the objectivity of general synthetic judgements.

The question nevertheless arises as to whether and to what extent metaphysically-burdened assumptions implicitly enter into the Kantian conception. In his *Treatise on Method*, Kant goes about the task, “of preparing a firm foundation for those majestic edifices [of metaphysics as science]. For this foundation has been hitherto insecure from the many

subterranean passages which reason in its confident but vain search for treasures has made in all directions.”<sup>9</sup> We may doubt whether Kant’s discovery of the transcendental really prepares the ground for a safe and steady science, or whether it does not instead pave the way for a “cave landscape” (Deleuze) of underground labyrinthine tunnels.

A metaphysics that takes special care not to misuse reason in a superficial or transcendent way conceives of itself, in Kant’s words, as a “metaphysics of metaphysics.”<sup>10</sup> With its critical theses, it meets with wide approval, particularly with regard to the fact that essences that cannot be identified as belonging to the realm of subjectively founded and accessible experience must consequently be regarded as unguaranteed speculations, and which remain philosophically questionable with regard to their truth value. What remains problematic however (and already was so for first generation readers) is the way in which the boundary between the realms of immanence and transcendence is drawn—for instance, in the case of Kant, the way in which the world of experience is reduced to a dualistically conceived world of appearance which cannot be defined ontologically. What will emerge is that the judgement of the metaphysical element within critical philosophy essentially depends on whether Kant’s positive explication of experience as empirical knowledge—which he carries out in his transcendental aesthetics and analytics—can itself get away without relating to transcendent assumptions, in other words, whether it proceeds purely immanently. In an attempt to show how a philosophy of difference is interested in radicalizing the critique, in what follows I will first refer to some thoughts by Heidegger and then to Deleuze.

## II

Heidegger’s connection with and continuation of Kant’s critical enterprise stands under the sign of a forced

metaphysics of *finiteness*. In his book entitled *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929),<sup>11</sup> Heidegger approaches “Kant’s teachings of schematism and time as preliminary stages of a problematic of temporality,” as announced in the first paragraph of the second part of *Being and Time* (1927).<sup>12</sup> According to him, profound sketches of a metaphysics of Dasein founded in time are to be found within transcendental analytics, especially in the context of his A-deduction and the chapter on schematism. Heidegger suggests that behind the school-like metaphysical façade of the epistemological consolidation of the natural sciences harbours a new attempt to found ontology.<sup>13</sup> He recognizes in the Kantian teaching of transcendental imagination the temporal structures of human being-in-the-world (ontological structures of “transcendence”), albeit at a preliminary stage. In the final paragraph he sums it up as follows:

It is not because time functions as ‘form of intuition’ and was interpreted as such at the point of entry into the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but because the understanding of Being must be projected upon time from out of the ground of the finitude of the Dasein in man, that time, in essential unity with the transcendental power of imagination, attained the central metaphysical function in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This itself thus rattles the mastery of reason and the understanding. ‘Logic’ is deprived of its pre-eminence in metaphysics, which was built up from ancient times.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike Hegel, Heidegger does not aim to reinstate the primacy of logic in metaphysics. His rejection of the “point of view of consciousness” does not refer to a dialectical relation between essence and appearance. In order to infiltrate (not suspend) Kant’s dualism, following Husserl’s method of reduction, Heidegger adopts the strategy of a radical finalization of the understanding of Being. In other words,



he relies on an ontologization of the experience of phenomena.

Heidegger thus goes both beyond and behind Kant. His placing of finitude at the centre of critical philosophy in the reception of the subject leads him back to ontology, on the one hand, and away from postulating the thing-in-itself on the other. In his book on Kant, Heidegger interprets the transcendental syntheses developed in Kant's *Analytic* (apprehension, reproduction and recognition) as syntheses of time, which, before all concrete knowledge—but within experience—develop their ontological patterns. These patterns are not just abstract components of an intellectually conceived wholeness of experience, which can be reconstructed retrospectively. Rather, they have to do with a phenomenological anticipation of the infamous "Ereignis" (event of appropriation) that distinguishes itself structurally from any experience conceived according to the representational model.

Let us pause for a moment, and take things a little slower. To begin with, we can hold on to the fact that Heidegger conceives of temporality as the decisive dimension of the transcendental because it is what constitutes the pre-existent structures of the possible givenness of something—the letting-be-present of Being. That anything affects us, that we encounter anything at all which we are not—this fundamental characteristic of the final human existence is what Heidegger calls *transcendence*. Transcendence thus does not refer here to an overcoming of immanently available empirical facts. On the contrary, Heidegger uses the term to define the fundamental structures of every possible experience—in the sense of an openness of existence towards otherness. (This is analogous to the characteristics of Dasein's ecstasy, which because of its temporal constitution "stands outside of itself"). On this point Heidegger's terminology differs from Kant's in a remarkable way. For while Heidegger endeavours to define the transcendental (qua ontological) structures of the transcendence (of Dasein), Kant identifies a qualitative

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difference between the realms of transcendence and the transcendental.<sup>15</sup> In a word, Kant defines transcendental logic as an immanent logic of empirical knowledge and thus distances himself from speculative logic, which, despite the limits of human understanding, wanders into the metaphysical realms of transcendence.

But does this mean that Kant is a thinker of immanence and Heidegger a thinker of transcendence? This question cannot be answered so simply because neither thinker uses the concepts in the same way. At this point it may make sense to apply to the relationship between Heidegger and Kant the previously claimed thesis of immanence as an index for the “truthfulness”—I use the Nietzschean term “*Redlichkeit*”—of philosophy. In two steps, this aspect of their relation ought to become clearer. *Firstly*, Heidegger complies with a demand for immanence when he insists on the finitude of the human being and extends the primacy of finitude to the understanding of Being as such. The temporal condition is a irreducible factor of all experience—and it is indeed problematic how, on the basis of reason’s unlimited claim to truth, Kant distinguishes a realm of immanence as a world of appearance from another realm that stands under the sign of transcendence. This distinction relates furthermore (a) to a securing of the necessity and general validity of empirical knowledge, (b) to the guarantee of a systematic and consistent order of experience that is communicated by means of a regulative application of the Ideas, and (c) to the maintaining of the traditional position of reason as the protector of truth by means of its autonomously carried out self-limitation. To summarize, this means that implicit premises are involved in the Kantian concept of experience which relate to the epistemological distinction of experience, to its totality and undiminished assertive claim. Kant’s *withdrawal from* and *reference to* a realm of being-in-itself—which is inaccessible to finite subjectivity yet at the same time implicitly assumed—defines one of the essential conditions of the concept of experience. Reason’s necessarily unfailing ability to self-differentiate makes up for

its helplessness with regard to epistemological questions and thus legitimates philosophy as the transcendental foundation of all individual sciences.

We come now to the second step, which concerns Heidegger's critical attitude towards metaphysics in its relation to the latent metaphysical implications of Kant's concept of experience. The fact that these implications perhaps include transcendence relations—understood as relations that are not identifiable as being within the immanence of experience (and that therefore expose Kant's concept of experience to a forced immanent critique)—this fact is easily misunderstood in the context of Heidegger's concept of transcendence. It is important to proceed here with care. First of all, it can generally be said that Heidegger's critique of Kant culminates in his critique of “representative thinking.” Although already in the 1920s Heidegger had turned away from the abstract idea of a pure subject that confronts a world of given things, it is only in the course of his general rejection of the tradition of metaphysics at the end of the 1930s that the destruction of “subjectivism” really becomes effective. Whereas in his book on Kant, Heidegger is still trying to detect philosophical preliminaries to his fundamental ontology in between the lines of certain passages in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, later on he becomes more sceptical. To put it bluntly, while in 1929 Heidegger still believed he could interpret transcendental imagination as an inscrutable capacity of temporality, his later readings bring Kant's primacy of understanding clearly to the foreground. In the eyes of the later Heidegger, the idea of Being as that which develops within syntheses of time, independently of hasty patterns of interpretation, seems to be totally missing in Kant's thought. This is clearly apparent in the fact that Heidegger—for instance, in his 1940 *Nietzsche* lectures on modern European nihilism—considers subject and object to be necessary starting conditions for Kant's understanding of experience, and therefore no longer the results of pre-existent synthetic processes of time.

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Briefly, when it comes to Heidegger's later critique, it is important to mention his criticism of onto-theology. This refers to the fact that Heidegger also criticises Kant for holding on to theological surrogates in his transcendental philosophy. The most important of these surrogates is the logic of grounding that "provides a reason" for experience, that stipulates categorial possibilities for experience, which manifest themselves *per se* in the unified subjective act of apperception. Experience is thus assigned to conditions which restrictively regulate its possibilities and at the same time dissimulate the genetic process of experience that is not subjectively controllable with regard to *a priori* unchanging entities such as subject, object, concepts, and pure forms of perception. According to Heidegger this cements the forgetting of Being—in other words the destiny of Western History—and this, for both Heidegger and Kant, means the destiny of world-history in general.

Another word now about the guiding concept of immanence. As already mentioned, I am orienting myself according to Kant's idea of an immanent experience that is not contaminated by a transcendent use of reason. At the same time however, Heidegger's Kant readings show that Kant himself does not remain faithful to this principle. It is indeed impossible to confirm Kant's idea of experience from the theoretical position of immanence. This is not the place to carry out the necessary critique to reveal a logical inconsistency in Kant's demonstration, i.e., in his deductive steps. Kant's concept of experience is conceived tautologically—and Kant definitely reflects upon this structure. Nevertheless Kant's assumed fact of experience certainly lacks phenomenological plausibility.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, in Kant's eyes the empirical fact of an experience that is not categorially formed, but appropriable by a subject, is impossible. All kinds of clinical, aesthetic, religious or minority-group experiences are thus systematically excluded. (Perhaps we should even point out that the phenomenon of the sublime, which Kant analyses in the

*Critique of Judgement*, is incompatible with the concept of experience as laid out in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, or at least calls to be revised).

But what is true of Kant is also true of Heidegger's concept of transcendence. When towards the end of the 1930s, Heidegger distances himself from the project of metaphysics, from subjectivism, and also from Kant, he is also distancing himself from his own earlier opinions that were still largely oriented along Kantian lines. This is most apparent in the *Introduction* (1949) and *Epilogue* (1943) that are included in later editions of the lecture *What is Metaphysics* (1929).<sup>17</sup>

In accordance with the idea of an immanent approach to the process-character of being, the positing of an "I" as the centre of activity which must overcome itself to reach the other constitutes in itself a transcendent position.<sup>18</sup> It presumes the existence of an already given subject that relates to other already constituted objects, and the way in which this occurs is conceived as a secondary phenomenon (that can be reconstructed in a subject-object relation). But Heidegger argues precisely *against* this kind of assumption in his critique of onto-theology, in which he characterizes the realm *in between* (namely, the "belonging together of Being and Thought") as a primary phenomenon, which is to be conceived as existing before its possibility that is retrospectively anchored in the subject.

Now for Heidegger, the turning away from an imaginary thinking goes hand in hand with a turning away from the world that is structurally determined in the "Ge-Stell," that is, in the primacy of technology. And it is precisely here that Heidegger's thinking in turn fails to live up to the claim of immanence. Indeed, Heidegger seems to hope that his turn towards a concept of Being beyond worldly occurrences will lead to an escape from the dilemma of a present that is increasingly dominated by science and technology. And thus, the opposition between transcendence and the immanent connections of a technologically administrated world is

repeated once again. Transcendence presents itself as a haven of freedom and enlightenment, while immanence on the other hand is a place of darkness and confusion.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to the “Gnosticism” of Heidegger’s teachings on Being,<sup>20</sup> we may draw on a modern philosophy of difference inspired by Nietzsche, namely the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, who constantly and throughout all his writings referred to a thinking of immanence. In *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie* (1991) Deleuze, in collaboration with Félix Guattari, writes:

Immanence can be said to be the burning issue of all philosophy because it takes on all the dangers that philosophy must confront, all the condemnations, persecutions, and repudiations that it undergoes. This at least persuades us that the problem of immanence is not abstract or merely theoretical. It is not immediately clear why immanence is so dangerous, but it is. It engulfs sages and gods. What singles out the philosophers is the part played by immanence or fire [*la part de l’immanence, ou la part du feu*]. Immanence is immanent only to itself and consequently captures everything, absorbs All-One, and leaves nothing remaining to which it could be immanent. In any case, whenever immanence is interpreted as immanent *to* Something, we can be sure that this Something reintroduces the transcendent.<sup>21</sup>

Immanent processes of becoming that are thought in terms of a radical empiricism give rise to relatively stable entities, for instance forms of subjectification or experience, that are constituted through habits. But as soon as these entities are conceived as independently existing unities, they are detached from the realm of immanence. They then stand as transcendent instances above the processual character of reality and are separated from their own genetic conditions.

A philosophy that is based on transcendent instances considers these instances to be fundamental (i.e., pre-existent) to the realm of immanence, so that in the end immanence can no longer be thought as something that is self-structured, but as something that is subordinate to the presumed necessary poles of transcendence. Thus it becomes clear that Deleuze actually combines together Kant's thinking of immanence and Heidegger's critical onto-theology. Experience is thus conceived as immanent when it is no longer geared to a transcendent instance, neither with regard to a stable subject, nor with regard to an outer-worldly being that is determined from above by the fate of the world.

### III

Gilles Deleuze first made a name for himself as an interpreter of Nietzsche and Bergson, and later as the co-author (with Félix Guattari) of *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). More recently he has been known as a philosopher of film. Somewhat less known are his very original drafts of a philosophy of immanence as laid out in the books *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *The Logic of Sense* (1969).<sup>22</sup> In both these books Deleuze develops the concept of philosophy that underlies all his other major works (including his books on Nietzsche, Kant, Bergson and Spinoza as well as Foucault and Leibniz).<sup>23</sup> It is also fundamental to his more popular "aesthetic" and political works (including those written in the early 1960s). In fact, looking at French post-war philosophy in general, one could say that there has been no other writer who has developed so consistent and positive a thinking of difference. From a philosophical perspective, he can be closely related to Foucault, even though Deleuze presents himself less as an historical philosopher and more as someone who works *conceptually* in an attempt to establish a new kind of thinking oriented along the lines of immanence. Deleuze does not stand in any way for a negative metaphysics, which would

content itself with pursuing a traditional logocentrism *ad absurdum*. On the contrary, he attempts to deliver a philosophical theory for the “thought of the outside” that Foucault called for, and which makes a new beginning with difference. It is no wonder, then, that a determining criterion of actuality for a philosophy of immanence lies in its appropriateness as an instrument for the analysis of power. But immanence thinking is by no means only relevant in political contexts. In what follows I will concentrate on some philosophical aspects of Deleuze’s ontology, his theory of time, and his analysis of power.

My first point is this: Ontology generally seems to be a discipline of the past. This is because, according to Kant, every conscious attempt to define being objectively is suspect of being uncritical or “pre”-critical. Even Hegel reflected on this connection (even in the context of a rehabilitation of ontology) when he insisted on “substance becoming subject.” The problem of ontology is further complicated by Heidegger. In his thinking, it is precisely ontological access that Being eludes—and it is precisely this elusive character of Being that calls for a different kind of thinking and a different ontology. Being is not made into Spirit (as with Hegel), but is considered as an instance that cannot be grasped with the means of the spirit. Each of these strategies has led to an idea of thinking that has profoundly influenced contemporary European thought: various kinds of positivist or rational ontologies on the one hand, and the ontology of transcendence on the other. I mentioned earlier the idea of a complementary phenomenon. On the one hand, there are the scientists, functionalists and constructors who formulate their ideas without an ontological claim; on the other hand, there are the mystics, romantics and utopianists who consider a pragmatic view of the world to be unsatisfactory and remain unswayed by rational or logical means.

This realm, which cannot be defined ontologically, can take a number of different names. It is the non-identical, the absolutely other [*tout autre*], Being as transcendence, and so



on. For Deleuze, however, this alternative realm belongs to the same schema of thought that was described at the beginning. It belongs to it insofar as it is its negative. The situation begins to change only when immanent thinking renounces its belief in oppositions and manages to grasp the processes of difference and repetition which exist in a virtual sense even before their representation. Deleuze operates with an immanent philosophical ontology that differs from the classical project of a *metaphysica generalis*, which was to define being in essential and conceptual terms. It is precisely this programme that makes his book *Difference and Repetition* such an important event in the history of philosophy. Two unusual conceptions surface at once: first, that the concept of Being which is ungraspable by traditional conceptual means is not defined as transcendence but as immanence<sup>24</sup>; and second, that a totally different notion of the concept begins to emerge, one that is able to think “being,” albeit not in terms of categorial generalities. It is perhaps easiest to explain Deleuze’s thinking of immanence from the angle of his concept of difference. What is most important here is that difference differentiates itself: it is not inscribed negatively into the concept but occurs as a result of “ontological” processes of becoming. With this philosophically conceived concept, Deleuze refers to the immanence of being, understood processually, without however monopolizing it, representing it, or unifying it. This positive interpretation of the inner brokenness of philosophical ontology defines Deleuze’s fundamental move. It is the novelty of this idea (anticipated perhaps only by Nietzsche) that has led to many a misunderstanding—or non-understanding—in readings of Deleuze’s philosophy.

For indeed: what is this so called differential process of becoming if it is not an anonymous event that occurs behind our backs, a naked life, a romantic chaos, another male fantasy? These are some of the insinuations held against Deleuze that are uttered in the name of a kind of “neoconservatism”<sup>25</sup>—as if it sufficed to turn off one’s reason, give up consciousness,

and slip into the indifference of being. This kind of view may suffice for a concept of indifference, but surely not for one of difference. Ultimately, for Deleuze, the apparently opaque concept of being dissolves into a multitude of differential processes, singularities, and events. The concept of being that suggests stability, unity, grounding, and order evaporates *as difference* into the plurality of becoming. This becoming that occurs immanently—in other words, that structures itself—is for Deleuze nothing else than time. Thus the realm of microphysics and floating quanta cannot be separated from the immanent environment; it is not located somewhere beyond the subject but on “this side of consciousness” (as Hegel would say), as a process that is differential as much as genetic, and which constitutes experience.

This brings us to the second point. Like Heidegger before him, Deleuze posits a synthesis of time as the process of subjectification that lies at the foundation of the subject.<sup>26</sup> If the subject is not able to grasp these processes of time it is because it is subordinate to them. “I think” cannot coincide with “I am.” In a way, it is as if Deleuze had transferred Heidegger’s late insights into his earlier interpretation of the three syntheses which in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* were united as *one whole* experience. He thus succeeds in introducing a series of dissonances into the harmonious background music of “representative thinking,” which rests on the third synthesis of recognition, as the highest synthesis which cancels out the other two syntheses of apperception. Recognition means that a subject identifies or re-identifies perceived phenomena on the basis of pre-given conceptual possibilities. Against this vision of harmonious collaboration, Deleuze defines the communication of individual capacities by means of their difference.<sup>27</sup> Experience thus organizes itself *this side of consciousness* and is actualized each time by a particular subjectification effect, which depends for example on a phenomenological body, and its threshold of perception and affection. Thus, the following picture emerges: the immanent structure of becoming—that is, dynamic connections between

singular points—must necessarily pre-exist the actualization results that progressively become conscious. But in fact this order *de iure* is turned upside down: what is primarily given are normal, daily acts of representation, the habitual world of objects and things that surround us as more or less stable individuals. Only in extreme situations (when thresholds of consciousness are disrupted) or during sudden events (in the course of overwhelming metamorphoses such as those sometimes brought about by art)—only at such moments do we become aware of the intensive and virtual regions of life. It is not usually the result of sheer sensitivity but in the wake of a catastrophe, as when we are swept away by an event, overstimulated and defenceless—but also less sensationally, in the density of lived life, where small but innumerable strings of experience intersect and overlap.

Time places immanent structures into forms of actualization that can be distinguished phenomenologically. Unlike Heidegger, Deleuze connects the sensual realm, the realm of desire with the ontological status of temporality. Time is not suspended in some vulgar outer dimension: it is what throbs at the heart of our lives in passive, self-abandoned syntheses. And precisely because it continues to flow independently of its active synthesis (as in the form of arbitrary memories), it corresponds to the differential use of our abilities which cannot be regulated subjectively and harmoniously. Our senses are therefore just as suited to develop a perception of time that is appropriate to the various speeds at which time passes, as thinking is suited to raise immanence to the status of a concept. The being of immanence, which could not be grasped by traditional ontological means, thus expresses itself in the lower regions of physical life, where it can be thought by a new kind of thinking. In carrying out analytical reconstructions, Deleuze by no means continues to follow the model of representation. Rather, it is as a result of the definition of immanent structures that the actual planes of given empirical relations begin to become visible.

We now arrive at the last point. I have emphasized how immanence can be considered as a profane source of experience that makes sense only in the context of temporal subjectification processes. It does not therefore suffice to posit a pure sensuality or a pure thinking of immanence. Our self and worldly relations are always determined by relations of power. But only on the basis of a scheme of immanent thinking is it possible to really begin to see these determining factors.<sup>28</sup> Otherwise an empirical state of affairs—an empirical normality—is hypostatized as a transcendental norm, in such a way that its genetic background and conditions can be considered mere byproducts and ignored. Thus, as long as it is considered a foregone conclusion that a normal human being has white skin, is of the male gender, middle aged, belongs to a (particular) religion, and so on, then there is no need to ask about the disciplining, sociological, political, and economical processes in recent or past history that have given rise to that person. From the perspective of immanence, what can be located within power relations—in the sense of the conditions of actualization of immanent structures—thus *seems* naturally legitimate. Deleuze's philosophy of immanence is therefore both political as well as "absolute." Immanent perceptions, sensations, and concepts are just as much immediately determined by social conditions as are the micrological regions of the political as immanent processes of being. Against established power structures that benefit the rich to the detriment of the many, a kind of thinking emerges that relies on immanence and is thereby qualified to inquire into the implicit strategies that motivate all representative forms of life production and empowerment. Such a thinking does not solely aim at unveiling the orders of life that are otherwise presumed to be natural, but is directed towards a model of free associations and free action.

Deleuze's temporal ontology of immanence thus reveals itself as excluding *de jure* concentrations of power and thereby making them comprehensible as facts with regard to their causal conditions. It is therefore impossible to tacitly insert

transcendence into the corresponding level of immanence, where its power can be played out. It is impossible because the structural characteristic of immanence is a constant transport of difference, so that the syntheses of differential singularities always refer to a particular actuality of immanent structures—and according to Deleuze, it is only on this level that densities and consolidations of power relations are situated. By contrast, the postulates of transcendence, by relying on natural orders and homologies, conceal the power-drenched determination of forms of thinking and action. Although in his early lectures on Kant, Heidegger drew on the dimension of time to expand critical philosophy—and in this regard he was a source of inspiration for Deleuze—his orientation towards the origin of imagination as a medium between understanding and contemplation testifies to a certain natural accordance which in fact renders superfluous any profound analysis of conditioning power relations.

Central to Heidegger's discourse is an act of transcendence which assigns the level of temporal immanence to a self-identical Dasein which overcomes itself.

The same problem can be identified in the context of the critique of onto-theology. Here the difficulty has to do with the presumed philosophical "unity" of being and thinking which, according to Heidegger, pre-exists any active or spontaneous activity of thinking and is but the task of thinking to heed.<sup>29</sup>

In this regard Deleuze can be seen to play off Nietzsche against Heidegger. For while Nietzsche, with the "will to power," presents a concept of immanence that leaves modern nihilism behind because it radically questions the value of value, Heidegger, in his criticism of Nietzsche, relies on the "proper" (*eigentliche*) value of a dedicated "experience of being" (*Seinserfahrung*) which backs away from the escalating nihilism of the times. Insofar as Heidegger, faced with the decay of modernity, holds on to a thinking of transcendence, his diagnosis of the present thus remains stuck in resentment.

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For instead of taking fate (*Geschick*) into our own hands, we are to let fate follow its course and obey the order that comes from the highest ruler: Being itself.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my thanks to Alice Lagaay, who translated this paper from German into English.

<sup>2</sup> See Joachim Ritter, ed., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1995), vol. 4, article on “Immanence”: “In its original form, the noun ‘immanence’ is understood in the context of the immanently divine action that constitutes the Trinity. Every divine way of being is at once the one identical divine Being which contains within itself its ways of being, and since in immanent activity the result resides in the principle and the principle in the result, all varieties of divine being and every divine person who is so by relating to the other, must necessarily be fully contained in the other. The Greek patriarchs referred to this form of being and remaining in each other as ‘Perichorese.’ Faber Stapulensis was to translate it as ‘reciprocal immanence’ (*in invicem immanentia*), which is how the Protestant dogmatics took it on” (221-222).

<sup>3</sup> Max Kauffmann’s *Journal for Immanent Philosophy* (1896) argued, in the name of immanence, not against empirical praxis, but against the prevailing approach of modern science, in particular against psychophysical dualism and mechanism. According to Kauffman, the forefathers of immanent philosophy were the English empiricists Locke, Berkeley and Hume. While Berkeley was to reduce Being to that which is perceived, Hume, in a further step, sought to overcome the essentialism that remained in the assumption of a perceiving subject. “Hume became the first representative of a purely immanent vision of the world [*Weltanschauung*] when, in the first part of his major work, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, he expressed the idea that only so called ‘objects’ or ‘imaginings’ are actually real and that the subject is but a name for the way these objects connect.” (Kauffmann, *ibid.*, vol. 1, 8). Kauffmann considered Mach and Nietzsche, among others, to be later representatives of an immanent philosophy. After Kauffmann’s premature death, several volumes of his *Journal* were published under the direction of Wilhelm Schuppe, who, in contrast to Kauffmann, advocated a more moderate form of empiricism.

<sup>4</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'imaginaire: Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940. English translation: Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, revised by Arlette Elkäim, trans. Jonathan Webber (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by J. M. D. Meiklejohn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 15 (B7), translation modified.

<sup>6</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 193 (A643/B671), translation modified.

<sup>7</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 117 (A326/B383). The concept of reason is only legitimately used in relation to a concept of understanding. Conversely however, experimental concepts of understanding can only be explained in relation to transcendent ideas that grant systematic unity to the individual operations of the understanding.

<sup>8</sup> See Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1992), 17.

<sup>9</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 115 (A319/B375-376).

<sup>10</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften, Bande I-XXII* (Berlin: Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1910), Vol. 9, 198

<sup>11</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1962).

<sup>13</sup> See Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 166: "Kant's laying of the ground for metaphysics, as unprecedented, resolute questioning about the inner possibility of the manifestness of the Being of beings [*des Seins von Seiendem*], must come up against time as the basic determination of finite transcendence, if in fact the understanding of Being in Dasein projects Being from itself upon time."

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 166.

<sup>15</sup> See Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 10: "Hence, transcendental knowledge does not investigate the being [*das Seiende*] itself, but rather the possibility of the preliminary understanding of Being [*des Seinsverständnisses*], i.e., at one and the same time: the constitution of the Being of the being [*die Seinsverfassung des Seienden*]. It concerns the stepping-over (transcendence) of pure reason to the being [*zum Seienden*], so that it can first and foremost be adequate to its possible object." Kant writes in the first Critique differently: "We shall term those principles the application of which is confined entirely within the limits of possible experience, immanent; those, on the other hand, which transgress these limits, we shall call transcendent principles. But by these latter I do not understand

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principles of the transcendental use or misuse of categories...but real principles which exhort us to break down all those barriers, and to lay claim to a perfectly new field of cognition, which recognizes no line of demarcation. Thus transcendental and transcendent are not identical terms. The principles of the pure understanding...ought to be of empirical and not of transcendental use....A principle which removes these limits, nay, which authorizes us to overstep them, is called transcendent." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 108-109 (A296/B352-353).

<sup>16</sup> This is certainly true of the concept of experience from a worldly perspective. But Kant's rigour, which is apparent in the uncompromising nature of the assertive claim, is also questionable from an epistemological point of view, at least since Thomas Kuhn and Quine.

<sup>17</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1949), 7-21 and 39-47.

<sup>18</sup> This idea is based on the self-differentiatedness of processes of becoming before these are made controllable through particular reductive thought manoeuvres and assigned and subordinated to individual instances.

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger's theory of the decay of modernity cannot be further analysed here. For more on the relation between technology and metaphysics, see Deleuze's small text about Alfred Jarry, "un précurseur méconnu de Heidegger" in G. Deleuze: *Critique et Clinique*. Paris 1993, 115-125, esp. 116-120. Cf. G. Prauss: "Heidegger und die praktische Philosophie", in: A. Gethmann-Siefert, O. Pöggeler (Ed.): *Heidegger und die praktische Philosophie*. Frankfurt a. M. 1988, 177-190; J. Habermas: *The philosophical discourse of modernity. Twelve lectures*, transl. by F. G. Lawrence. MIT Press 1990.

<sup>20</sup> See Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 1934-1954).

<sup>21</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1991), 47. English translation: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 45.

<sup>22</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); and *Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale; ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> My book *Gilles Deleuze: Philosophie des transzendentalen Empirismus* (Wien, 2003; English translation forthcoming) offers a detailed presentation of these themes.

<sup>24</sup> See Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Thinking Immanence," in Gary Genosko, ed., *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, 3 vols. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), vol. 1, 412-441 and



432-435; Friedrich Balke, *Gilles Deleuze* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1998), 43ff. and 82ff.; and Wolfgang Langer, *Gilles Deleuze: Kritik und Immanenz* (Berlin: Parerga Verlag, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> See Manfred Frank, *What is Neostructuralism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Alice Jardine, "Woman in limbo. Deleuze and his br(others)", in Genosko, ed., *Deleuze and Guattari*, vol. 3, 1397-1413; Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); and Milan Prucha: "'Das Sein ist univok': Deleuzes Ontologie," in Marc Rölli, *Ereignis auf Französisch: Von Bergson bis Deleuze* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink-Verlag, 2004), 393-408.

<sup>26</sup> See François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze: Une philosophie de l'événement* (Paris: PUF, 1994), 48-94.

<sup>27</sup> See Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze's Theory of sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality," in Paul Patton, ed., *Deleuze: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1996), 29-56.

<sup>28</sup> See Ronald Bogue, "Word, Image and Sound: The Non-Representational Semiotics of Gilles Deleuze," in Genosko, ed., *Deleuze and Guattari*, vol. 1, 81-98; and M. Rölli and R. Krause, "Politik auf Abwegen: Eine Einführung in die Mikropolitik von Gilles Deleuze und Felix Guattari," in A. Hetzel, et al., ed., *Die Rückkehr des Politischen* (Darmstadt, 2004), 257-292.

<sup>29</sup> In this respect Deleuze can be regarded not only as a philosopher of immanence but, through Heidegger's Kant-criticism, as the most rigorous representative of a forced criticism and of a critical criticism.