Transformative Phenomenology: Deleuze’s Lines of Flight

ABSTRACT

If woman discovers herself as the inessential and never turns into the essential, it is because she does not bring about this transformation herself (de Beauvoir, 2011, p.8)

Lines of flight, for their part, never consist in running away from the world but rather in causing runoffs, as when you drill a hole in a pipe; there is no social system that does not leak from all directions, even if it makes its segments increasingly rigid in order to seal the lines of flight. There is nothing imaginary, nothing symbolic, about a line of flight (Deleuze, 1987, p.204)

In The Hermeneutics of the Subject (2005), Michel Foucault provides a genealogy for the distinction between knowledge of self and care of self. Knowledge of self (gnothi seauton) is the acquired information one has about subjectivity. Care of self (epimeleia heautou) is the attendance to the self and the preparation of oneself to certain roles or positions. It involves the performance of everyday practices and a particular lifestyle. Knowledge of self, according to Foucault does not necessitate conscious performance, self transformation or is affected by one’s spiritual or psychic constitution.

This paper is a part of a larger project, one of assembling and classifying types of self conversions phenomenology offers. It analyzes types of techniques and practices of care of self. In this paper, Deleuze’s reading of Masoch’s Venus in Furs (1989) will be examined. What is unique to Deleuze’s essay is that it is a transformative text. It produces minor alterations in his readers and pokes holes in the systematic reading routine. The notion of lines of flight will serve to show how Deleuze skews the need of his readers to identify differences in dialectic terms. Finally, the technique of self care will be compared to a couple of other methods, so as to present what I hope will become a table of transformative phenomenology.