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## Deleuze Through Wittgenstein: Essays in Transcendental Empiricism

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Graduate Program in Theory and Criticism  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts  
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DELEUZE THROUGH WITTGENSTEIN: ESSAYS IN TRANSCENDENTAL  
EMPIRICISM

(Integrated Article)

by

M. Curtis Allen

Graduate Program in the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
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London, Ontario, Canada

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## Abstract

This thesis undertakes a comparative study of the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Ludwig Wittgenstein to elaborate three related problems in what in Deleuze calls, ‘transcendental empiricism’. The first chapter deals with the problematic of the dimension of sense in language, and culminates in a concept of the event. The second details the immanence of stupidity within thought and culminates in a practice of *showing* through silence. The third investigates the consequences of aesthetics for the theory of Ideas, and culminates in the concepts of ‘late intuition’ and of a form of life. Each argues for a new way of broaching the subject of realism.

## Keywords

Deleuze, Wittgenstein, transcendental empiricism, sense, stupidity, aesthetics, Idea, event, ideal game, showing, form of life, intuition, static, picture theory, language-game.

## Acknowledgments

My gratitude goes out to the Faculty of the Theory Centre for allowing my presence here, to my thesis committee: my supervisor Professor Daniel Vaillancourt for his great patience and understanding, for the softness of his charm, to Professor Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu always-surprising originality, for the freedom his course gave me, and for his generosity, and to Professor John Vanderheide for his subtlest of humors and for the uses his course afforded me in the thinking of the thesis. Deep respect goes to my peers at the Theory Centre, without whom I would have learned so much less—you know who you are. To G. K., for inaugurating me into this life and for his never wavering assistance and teaching: I would not be here without you. To B. R. D.: my friend—you alone know what loyalty is. To D. W. F., who impelled me to be unrelenting in the search for who knows what: you are a posthumous man and I have had the pleasure of witnessing a flake of your life. To C. W.: you were my counterbalance, my anchor, my day. To S. G. A.: my only friend in a desolate year, my night. Lastly, infinite gratitude goes to Melanie Caldwell who is not just mere mortar between stones, but the whole edifice of the Centre—its architecture; without you we would all evaporate into nothingness.

To my Serpent, my Grace, my Apple—only one of these is your true name: *felix culpa*.

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## List of Abbreviations

Below is a list of abbreviations to aid the reader in understanding the references given in the in-text citations.

Works by Deleuze: *Difference and Repetition* (DR); *Logic of Sense* (LoS)

Works by Wittgenstein: *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (references appear solely with their propositional numbers); *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief* (LC); *Philosophical Investigations* (PI); *On Certainty* (OC). *Culture and Value* (CV); *Remarks on Color* (RoC).

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Works By Kant: *The Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR), *The Critique of Judgment* (CJ).

Works by Walter Benjamin: *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* (GTD).

To clean and tidy up Matter . . .  
To put back all the things people cluttered up  
Because they didn't understand what they were for . . .  
To straighten, like a diligent housekeeper of Reality,  
The curtains on the windows of Feeling  
And the mats before the doors of Perception . . .  
To sweep the rooms of observation  
And to dust off simple ideas . . .  
That's my life, verse by verse.

–Fernando Pessoa



## Introduction

*Background to a heresy* – There is no natural affinity between Gilles Deleuze and Ludwig Wittgenstein waiting to be *discovered*, though it is waiting to be *invented* by the transcendental empiricist. It seems heretical, nevertheless, even to keep them in the same breath. Their philosophies give the impression of mutual exclusion. The professional worlds of their scholarship are divided by continents, both figurative and literal. To those accustomed to accepting the common wisdom about what Deleuze and Wittgenstein have produced in the history of thought—about what a Deleuze represents, about what a Wittgenstein represents—both will appear here somewhat unrecognizable. What they afford each other in this thesis is the chance to be, if only briefly, unmoored from the images that have been made of them—by the legacies both of their critics and their supporters. By and large, those legacies are for this reason left to one side.<sup>1</sup> There are those texts of great profundity and originality on both sides—nevertheless, recapitulation of them aids us little. In no small part is that due to a near complete dearth of comparative

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<sup>1</sup> There is of course a vast literature on both Wittgenstein and Deleuze, some of it intensely scrupulous, some of it interpretively genius, some of it bewilderingly mistaken, much of it irritatingly regurgitative or cloying. That does not dissuade me of the value of the literature itself, or of the gifts of many secondary readers. The point is to have the thoughts oneself, not to know that someone else has had them. Only when secondary literature is useful for the first end, is it useful at all.

literature on them: the ostensive object of this work.<sup>2</sup> Only two such texts exist, so far as I know. One—which attempts to delineate the themes of sense and paradox in the works of the two philosophers—would be to us immediately relevant, if it were not for the fact that its insistence on an “essential incompatibility” nullifies its *raison d’être* at the outset of the text. It is pleonastic to a high degree: to defend a claim that Deleuze and Wittgenstein are basically different is to defend oneself against no rival at all.<sup>3</sup> In short, it is an article that speaks to no one. The only other text, “Schizoanalytic Investigations”, takes on a comparative study of Wittgenstein’s language-game with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the “order-word” found in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Although it is more amenable to us, and of some interest for scholarship generally, it is entirely focused on the normative political ramifications of its conceptual comparison, and what a

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<sup>2</sup> There are comparative monographs on Wittgenstein and Heidegger and at least one monograph on Wittgenstein and Derrida, as well as a comparison of the two in the preface to *Speech and Phenomena*—an early appeal to analytic philosophers of language to take Derrida seriously. See, for example Lee Braver, *Groundless Grounds; A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2012; Henry Staten, *Wittgenstein and Derrida*, University of Nebraska Press, 1984; Newton Garver, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs*, pp. ix-xxxii, Northwestern UP, 1973.

<sup>3</sup> “At the Margins of Sense: The Function of Paradox in Deleuze and Wittgenstein” in *Paragraph* 34.3, pp.358-370. Reidar A. Due. Edinburgh UP, 2011. Although well researched (or at least well cited), it is also evident that Due’s understanding of Deleuze is tenuous. For example, the article denies that Deleuze has anything to do with the analysis of false problems, and claims “that Deleuze was hostile to pragmatism”: “Neither of these philosophical programmes, the search for ways of refuting scepticism, the endeavour to dissolve all philosophical questions as resulting from false problems or the elaboration of a transcendental pragmatism [the two main interpretations of Wittgenstein’s later work], have any resonance in Deleuze’s philosophy,” pp. 358-9. His book *Bergsonism* devotes a chapter to the analysis of false problems (viz. the negative) and his constant invocation of the concept of action, not to mention his use of Peirce—the founder of pragmatism—in the books on cinema, nor Deleuze and Guattari’s affirmation of pragmatics as the ‘highest’ form of semiotics in *A Thousand Plateaus* should dissuade us from accepting too easily the dual basis of this ‘incompatibility’ between Deleuze and Wittgenstein. Furthermore, It deals exclusively with Wittgenstein’s later work, and—like all orthodox reading of Wittgenstein—treats the difference between the earlier and the later, as one would treat two different authors. In other words it ignores the spirit of the works in lieu of its methods, form, and outright claims.

normative semiotics means in relation to commanding, obeying, “insignment” (*enseignement*), etc.<sup>4</sup>

The absence of comparative material is not altogether surprising. It is certainly no secret that their legacies are antagonistic. Deleuze famously had no great love for Wittgenstein, and especially none for his followers: “Wittgenstein's disciples spread their misty confusion, sufficiency, and terror.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet even foregoing polemic, which is rare in Deleuze, they still seem in many respects incommensurable, whether we consider the spirits of the two thinkers, or even what thinking might be composed of for each of them. While Deleuze sees philosophy as a non-progressive creative enterprise of concept production, Wittgenstein sought the point at which philosophy would ostensibly be over. Deleuze wields the concept<sup>6</sup> as irreducibly problematic; for Wittgenstein, the end of philosophy would be reached when one could effectively do away with the traditional problems of philosophy. Deleuze

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<sup>4</sup> “Chapter 3. Schizoanalytic Investigations: Deleuze-Guattari and Wittgenstein” in *Between the Seen and Said: Deleuze-Guattari's Pragmatics of the Order-Word*, pp. 84-103. Bruce David McClure. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Warwick, Dept. of Philosophy, 2001. It is ironic that Due's article denies Deleuze any relation to pragmatism and McClure's monograph connects them in its very title. It only shows how unfixed, and how contentious, even basic claims about these thinkers, but especially Deleuze, are. It's also unsurprising that the only person willing to indulge the heresy of placing Deleuze and Wittgenstein in the same room, so to speak, comes from the famous school of Deleuzeans at Warwick—the same school that held the CCRU, from which Nick Land's fame and all of Speculative Realism ostensibly emerges, and at which Ray Brassier also received his PhD.

<sup>5</sup> Deleuze, *The Fold*, p. 76. Thanks are due to Professor Vaillancourt, who pointed out that Deleuze has in mind here principally Jacques Bouveresse, who champions analytic philosophy, and in particular Wittgenstein, in France.

<sup>6</sup> Deleuze's critique of the concept in *Difference and Repetition* (which we will deal with implicitly in many places later) and his later affirmation of the concept in *What is Philosophy?* do not refer to the same object. In the former he follows the Kantian triad: sensation (intuition), concept (mediate representation), Idea; from that standpoint he wages his critique of the concept in other thinkers such as Leibniz and Hegel. In the latter, the concept is closer to the Idea in *Difference and Repetition*, or again to the ‘problem’, and in certain cases ‘multiplicity’. If we use the term concept affirmatively, it is in the latter sense, or else non-technically.

happily connects language to myriad extra-linguistic formations, Wittgenstein, by contrast, remains embroiled in the puzzlement it confronts him with. The list could go on... Nevertheless, there are certain philosophical character traits, certain attitudes that oblige us to disregard the accumulation of divisions. However, we should advance a warning. These two are not clandestine kindred spirits; they are and remain different. Wittgenstein is not some secret progenitor of a Deleuzian vision, and Deleuze is not some well-disguised Wittgenstein. They do not resemble each other, and there is no genealogical tree capable of tying them to a common root, with the exception—perhaps—of Spinoza.

This is what they share in: Firstly, a desire to get out of the phenomenological trappings of the “hidden” as something preeminent in or for thinking; uncovering is not an operation they think interesting, or even useful. It is because, “everything lies open to view”,<sup>7</sup> and it precisely accounts for the stubborn persistence of perplexity, difficulty, and wonder in each. The immanence in question does not do our thinking for us. Now we are forced to consider another resonance—an ethico-aesthetic imperative: Philosophy *must* force us to think, not to bestow thoughts unto us or merely transfer the product of thinking. In each, thought is construed on this basis as an adventure (concept in one, investigation in the other). In turn, the involuntarity of the adventure leads directly to the mistrust of traditional philosophical forms (e.g., the development of a thesis). They exhibit an irreducibly aesthetic element in their thinking. What is unfamiliar can be fostered as a force of thought—hence Wittgenstein's laconic aphorism and Deleuze's

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7 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §126.

circuitous series. They each share in the distinctly modern spirit of the experiment. They leave something open to being thought, and not merely left to being rehearsed.

Lastly, no one can seem to decide on the fundamental disposition of either of these thinkers. Wittgenstein is a solipsist, a realist, a scientific thinker, a mystic; or, Deleuze is a metaphysician, an ontologist, he is only concerned with the conditions of experience, he precludes all hierarchy, he is an aristocrat, or an anarchist... We would like to say, instead of foregrounding either of them within well worn paths, that the gravity and the marvel of their thinking remains in the resistance they present to any semblance of a standard identification, even to being “identified” as such. That does not oblige us to assume that they lack the necessary precision of thought. To the contrary, the manner of their slippage is proportional to their continuing efficacy, however dense, complicated, obscure, or confused.

*The Wittgenstein sieve* – The question is: how to be selective without effacing the depth and breadth of the work? To this end, we remain in a more basic fidelity to Deleuze—although this is not to underappreciate or demote the relative value of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein, instead, acts as a sieve on the system of Deleuze’s thought. Or else, he performs a focalizing operation upon its themes: a reduction and a clarification (taken in their culinary senses) against background of transcendental empiricism. This operation affects the style of thought no less than the formal structure or the contents therein: Wittgenstein provides hygiene for the complexity of the fields

involved,<sup>8</sup> without at the same time divorcing the origin of the material from the wellspring of its intricacies.

*Disciples?* – Through Wittgenstein, we also hope to avoid the narcissistic optimism (the beautiful soul) of certain quasi-Deleuzian literature that could naively be called ‘vitalistic’<sup>9</sup>—though even vitalism gets a bad reputation from it. Our criticism is two fold, the one side implicated by the other: on the one hand, lies a willingness to be swept away by the rhetorical power of the Deleuzian nomenclature, which seems to be endowed with all the libidinal purchase that an erotomania of the intellect can afford. On the other, much heavier, hand—one responsible for the first—lies the covert reintroduction of Transcendence into the concepts Deleuze so carefully wrought from its myriad pitfalls. It poisons everything. Consequently, this thesis will contain no grand gestures made in the name of Difference, The Virtual, Becoming, Intensity, Singularity, The Body without Organs, The Rhizome, The War Machine, or Life (writ large).<sup>10</sup> The Deleuze that emerges from the various Wittgensteinian operations may not be so familiar a face.

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<sup>8</sup> Using Wittgenstein in this way is completely in fidelity to him: “We [philosophers] are merely ‘tidying up a room’.” Wittgenstein, quoted in Ray Monk, *The Duty of Genius*, p. 299.

<sup>9</sup> Here we have in mind certain philosophers, cultural theorists, art theorists, queer theorists, affect theorists, political theorists, and so on, in the North American academic context. Some of whom know Deleuze’s work quite well and feel that appropriating freely means also appropriating without consequence for what is appropriated, others—especially in affect theory—appropriate without taking the time to read or understand what they appropriate: they attempt to replace the impertinence of grounding the object in emotions—for example, as expressionism does in the case of art—without changing the personalism or the structural coordinates of its model. Our model counterpoint here is François Zourabichivili, who unfortunately died at the philosophically all-too-young age of forty-one in 2006. He published relatively little, and very little of what he did is available in English. Who knows what works we will be missing in his absence? He will be discussed later where opportunity permits.

<sup>10</sup> This is not to discount these concepts in their own right, only to acknowledge that they have all, in one way or another, become the metonyms of a transcendent and abstract hope, spiritual pacifiers.

*Form and direction* – We propose instead a modest realism and a modest absolutism on the basis of ‘transcendental empiricism’ that serves also as an implicit critique of the philosophy of mind. Transcendental empiricism is this: the investigation into the conditions of real experience, one in which its conditions are transcendental; in other words, conditions that, though real, do not resemble their empirical actualizations, but which can neither be divorced from the variety of their actual cases. It perverts the Kantian project of transcendental idealism, which seeks the conditions of *possible* experience to which *The Critique of Pure Reason* is supposed to provide the foundation.

We provide three essays in transcendental empiricism. Each hones its objects on the sharpening-stones of the guises of Wittgenstein. Each treats a particular problem. Each works from within a faculty, offers a critical exploration of a traditional philosophical discipline, and each plays itself out in a medium or dimension of that faculty—namely, the one capable of providing for us the absolute object of transcendental empiricism, the ‘transcendent exercise of the faculty’ in question or its absolute moment, its truly transcendental instance. This must engender its own genesis from within, reach its foremost endogenous limit, and grasp what can alone be grasped by means of its particular faculty.

In Chapter One we find within the faculty of language a working through the philosophical discipline of linguistics or logic (used both in its modern valence—since, through Wittgenstein, we are confronted with formal logic—and in the valence given to it by the history of philosophy and ancient philosophy in particular). We also find in the dimension of sense or expression, a medium capable of the exercise, the absolute moment in the logic of sense: the event, expressed in the construction of an ‘ideal game’ through

the surface of a ‘counter-actualization.’ Here we counter the insulation of language, and the assurance of its fixity, without losing the *real* conditions of its living usage, and without giving it over to a nominal, historicist methodology of enumerating empirical cases of use.

In Chapter Two we are confronted with the faculty of thought, haunted by the spectre of the traditional discipline of epistemology. We find in the medium of stupidity a state immanent to thought and the stakes for an orientation of thought necessary to carry it to its limit, its absolute moment and transcendent exercise: the *cogitandum*, expressed in the affirmative ‘non-being’ of a silence capable of forcing thought into being. In so doing we counter rationalism with its own shortcomings and put them to other uses. We begin to seek the constitutive ground of what is peculiarly human: *bêtise*. We become what we already are—stupid before the mere prospect of thought: we begin to think without assuming—in advance for everyone—what “everybody knows...” Attrition comes to the ‘image of thought’ in Wittgenstein’s *practice* of investigation.

In the Final Chapter we confront the terror of philosophy, as pertains, at least, to philosophy of mind: the faculty of sensibility or the faculties of *aesthesis*. We are lead into the discipline of aesthetics, and we seek out its philosophical conditions. But *for* these conditions we must pass through a strange lacuna: the history of philosophical aesthetics is a long and sophistic game of aversion to the aesthetic itself. Therefore, we track down aesthetics where it *should not* be: in the medium of the Idea<sup>11</sup>. Through the

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<sup>11</sup> Here I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor John Vanderheide for his course on the history of the subject, and in the use of the name “aesthetic Idea” for which his course was named.



history of the Idea, and its radical revaluation in transcendental empiricism, we arrive at the absolute and paradoxical articulation of an aesthetic Idea, the *sentendum*. It, with the usual eyes and vision of philosophy, its habitual means, is the hardest of all to grasp. It welds the corporeal with the phenomenal, the phenomenal with the noumenal, the concrete with the reality of the abstract. And, just as its understanding requires the iteration of our formal structure—requires undergoing the solecism of the ideal game and the stupefaction of a necessary thought—so too are the results of the exercise of the *sentendum* only wrought after a long apprenticeship and a deeply constitutive pedagogy: the aesthetic idea forms its real relation by means of an *a posteriori* and *rigorous intuition* which always apprehends, purely, *a form of life*. It implies not merely the reconstitution of a philosophical aesthetics, rather it affects and pervades the whole standard of philosophy itself—it must perform the transcendental exercise on sensibility as the transcendental exercise of philosophy. The contours of an *aesthesis*, an *ethos*—in short, of an *ethics* in the most profound, Spinozist, sense—can only be evinced from bud of philosophy: The Idea gets planted in the mud of aesthetics—*idea terrestris*. The diffusion of the aesthetic and the ethical, and their inseparability, in Wittgenstein’s life and work acts as our last divining rod of a form of life.

*Detractors, plus one good enemy* – If we admonish certain strands of research that make Deleuze’s philosophy into a collection of reified tropes, instead of wresting from his concepts the real conditions of their problems and all that implies; If their clothes fit too loosely,<sup>12</sup> and we seek in transcendental empiricism a more careful, more sober

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<sup>12</sup> “...one begins with concepts that, like baggy clothes, are much too big.” *Bergsonism*, p. 44.

articulation of a realism, we do not bend all the way over to the scientism of much analytic and, increasingly, continental thought, nor to the recent return to the communist old guard, nor again to the new philosophical Pythagoreans,<sup>13</sup> all of whom are frequently set in contemporary relief to the so-called ‘vitalisms.’

That said, Wilfred Sellars, via Ray Brassier—his continental advocate—presents us with a solution (alternative to Deleuze’s own) to the problems of empiricism, of the philosophy of mind, and of Kant’s transcendental idealism which is concerned—surprising as it may be—with the same problematic nexus as transcendental empiricism, even if the content of their philosophies differs in the extreme. Brassier calls Sellars’

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<sup>13</sup> There are of course, interesting exceptions in both of these camps, which are in truth heterogeneous, badly analyzed composites. I do not do justice to what counts in them for lack of space, but instead terry the field polemically to point out the too-broad strokes of contemporary tendency, as abuts the problems of Deleuze. Here I indicate briefly: first, analytic philosophy of science, which is largely dogmatic—and in which more than a few Wittgenstein scholars belong: Kripke, et al.; on the continental side, many of the speculative realists have found a new exoticism in the blandness of the analytics, which marks for them some kind of technical guarantee in the value of ‘argumentative rigor’: Meillassoux makes use of Nelson Goodman’s work on the epistemological consequences of inference based on grammatical analyses of counterfactual conditional statements in relation to Hume’s critique of causation and the uniformity of nature. See, *After Finitude* “Hume’s Problem”, pp. 82-111, and Goodman’s *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*. Negarestani’s recent turn to medieval problems of physics, and his increasing use of Brassier, as well as Peirce’s mathematics, and his championing of Fernando Zalamea’s work all point in this direction. See “Globe of Revolution” in *Identities* 17, Euro-Balkan Institute, 2011. Without a mastery of the material Negarestani is drawing from, it is hard to judge his grasp on this material, and to adjudicate on his wide use of technical vocabularies—we suspect that much of it is rhetorical. Whatever the case may be, his capacity to elucidate the material of others is attenuated, either by the thinness of his own grasp, or by the concision of its extrapolation due to the original points and syntheses he hopes to make. The most absurd and virulent case of scientism is to be seen in the Theory Centre’s own graduate, R. Scott Bakker, whose novels are often premised on the eliminative materialism of the Churchlands. Brassier is here also implicated. Thirdly, we are referring to the new communisms, which represent a return to a thinking reminiscent of East bloc austerity, which contains at the very least an ambivalent relation to authoritarianism. Here we speak to those doing work circulating around Zizek’s invocations of Lenin (and his ironic, but frequent use of the figure of Stalin) and the still baffling appreciation Badiou has for Mao and Maoism. Lastly of course, we refer to Badiou and his ontological adherents. A common symptom emerges: it all smells of a philosophical crisis of conscience in the wake of moral, theological, political, or epistemological un-grounding—a collective loss of heart, but maybe also a new synthetic revolution akin to that which Kant performed on rationalism and empiricism.

project a ‘transcendental realism’:<sup>14</sup> it looks auspicious in its similarity. Furthermore, Sellars is perhaps the only reader of Wittgenstein to have understood the full import and scope of his picture theory—that is, understood its truly sub-representative power, its objective relation to the real—and to have put it to his own uses. And although it is beyond the purview of our project to fully elaborate its consequences or mount of thorough-going critique of them, suffice it to say, with respect, that we find suspicious the strength of the dominion he makes of cognition. Sellars’ philosophy remains entrenched, in the last instance, in a cognitivism that, now as always, seeks to build a bulwark around the sensible in the name of reason—the sensible which gives experience its efficacy, and alone makes palpable the unity of mind and nature.

*Navigation* – Due to the technical detail and conceptual difficulty of the subjects, works, and authors dealt with in the course of these essays—and moreover to the added complication of my commentaries and conjunctions—it is easy to lose one’s bearings and forget the unifying thread in the inevitable diffusion and mixture beset the problems from chapter to chapter: Language, thought, sensibility; linguistics, epistemology, aesthetics; sense, stupidity, ideality; event, non-being, late intuition. Each essay is structured fourfold: once by a faculty, again through a discipline and its implicit critique, a third time in a characteristic medium, dimension, or state, and lastly by a transcendent

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<sup>14</sup> Ray Brassier, “Nominalism, Naturalism, and Materialism: Sellars’s Critical Ontology” in *Contemporary Philosophical Naturalism and Its Implications*, p. 101. Eds. Bana Bashour, Hans D. Muller, Routledge, New York, 2014. See, Wilfred Sellars, *Empiricism and Philosophy of Mind*. Harvard UP, 1997. See also, Matija Jelenc, “Sellars Contra Deleuze on Intuitive Knowledge” in *Speculations: A Journal of Speculative Realism* V, pp. 92-126, especially pp. 118-121.

exercise or a moment of the absolute. If one keeps these as signposts, one may also retain the forest of transcendental empiricism through the many trees of its instantiation.

In the end, what is at stake? We say that the only way that ethics touches the real is through the production of forms of life. That takes place first and foremost, in the practico-theoretical fields manifested in creative productions (art, philosophy, science, etc.) summoned by transcendental empiricism.

## Chapter 1: Deleuze, Wittgenstein and the Problem of the Event

We have encountered this difference of nature between the expression and the representation at every turn, each time we noted the specificity of sense or of the event, its irreducibility to the denotatum and to the signified, its neutrality in relation to the particular and to the general, or its impersonal and pre-individual singularity. This difference culminates in the opposition between the object = x as the identitarian instance of the representation in common sense, and the thing = x as the nonidentifiable element of expression in the paradox [*aliquid*]. But, if sense is never an object of possible representation, it does not for this reason intervene any less in representation as that which confers a very special value to the relation that it maintains with its object.

By itself, representation is given up to an extrinsic relation of resemblance or similitude only. But its internal character, by which it is intrinsically "distinct," "adequate," or "comprehensive," comes from the manner in which it encompasses, or envelops an expression, much as it may not be able to represent it. The expression, which differs in nature from the representation, acts no less as that which is enveloped (or not) inside the representation. For example, the perception of death as a state of affairs and as a quality, or the concept "mortal" as a predicate of signification, remain extrinsic (deprived of sense) as long as they do not encompass the event of dying as that which is actualized in the one and expressed in the other. Representation must encompass an expression which it does not represent, but without which it itself would not be "comprehensive," and would have truth only by chance or from outside. To know that we are mortal is an apodeictic knowledge, albeit empty and

abstract; effective and successive deaths do not suffice of course in fulfilling this knowledge adequately, so long as one does not come to know death as an impersonal event provided with an always open problematic structure (where and when?). In fact, two types of knowledge (*savoir*) have often been distinguished, one indifferent, remaining external to its object, and the other concrete, seeking its object wherever it is. Representation attains this topical ideal only by means of the hidden expression which it encompasses, that is, by means of the event it envelops. There is thus a "use" of representation, without which representation would remain lifeless and senseless. Wittgenstein and his disciples are right to define meaning by means of use. But such use is not defined through a function of representation in relation to the represented, nor even through representativeness as the form of possibility. Here, as elsewhere, the functional is transcended in the direction of a topology, and use is in the relation between representation and something extra-representative, a nonrepresented and merely expressed entity. Representation envelops the event in another nature, it envelops it at its borders, it stretches until this point, and it brings about this lining or hem. This is the operation which defines living usage, to the extent that representation, when it does not reach this point, remains only a dead letter confronting that which it represents, and stupid in its representiveness.

– Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*<sup>15</sup>

### **Introduction**

In the above passage, Deleuze stakes out the parameters and relations of a something quite special in language—how [language](#) touches reality, the manner of its “living usage.” In doing so, he articulates also a point of contact between the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, and his own work, the *Logic of Sense*. It is no surprise, then, to see—as an especially rare occurrence—Deleuze engaging directly with Wittgenstein

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<sup>15</sup> *Logic of Sense* pp. 145-6.

(even if he appears to be referring to Wittgenstein's later work). It should also be noted that Deleuze here marks the relationship between expression and representation, a relationship that constitutes the very limit of Wittgenstein's work in the *Tractatus*; a relationship that animates every one of its propositions and constitutes its very *raison d'être*. Yet, this relationship animates Wittgenstein's first great work somewhat in the manner of a Freudian drive—namely, in silence. Hence the *Tractatus* appears to us less a treatise on “the event” than a treatise as an event; it does not *represent* an event it *expresses* one. The work itself is such an event. Thus, the relationship so described above is turned on itself, since its 'living usage' becomes in the *Tractatus* embodies (even if in anguish) this very relationship. Therefore, the *Tractatus* stands as a unique logical crystal, the very “static logical genesis”<sup>16</sup> of sense itself. While endeavoring to grow-out from the edges as it were, to elaborate and elucidate the strange static becoming of sense, and this point of contact between two great, and therefore, irreducible thinkers, it is imperative for us first to apprehend the problematics involved in each of their works, and further, -perform the critical labor of a serialization of perspectives from each side that offer some vision and appraisal of the other. We will begin by contextualizing both Wittgenstein's and Deleuze's projects with a view to their conceptions of sense, especially as it bears upon logic and language, so that we can then offer a series of intersections; places where each thinker comes under the torsion of the other's thought.

### *Deleuze*

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<sup>16</sup> See, “Sixteenth Series of Static Logical Genesis” in *Logic of Sense*, pp.109-117.

Deleuze's foremost concern in his early work is to establish a transcendental field adequate to real experience ([transcendental empiricism](#)). Given this, when confronted with the metaphysical impasses involved in language's relation to both bodies and ideas, Deleuze finds in the dimension of expression (or sense) a third term capable of reconnecting the two great lost worlds of the history of philosophy, but without, for all that, producing a higher term, capable of unifying supposed opposites. The surface—the geographical avatar of the metaphysics of sense—inheres both to the body and to the Idea, but remains irreducible to each. It connects one to the other, and language to each. For Deleuze, thought's consistency, a way of thinking has an orientation before having an object; “[tracing] dimensions before constructing systems.” (LoS, 127). The dimension of expression (sense) in language (which is at the same time, not merely linguistic, but is also the logical attribute of the body or state of affairs), presupposes a metaphysics of surface, an orientation on this surface. This metaphysics in turn presupposes a distinction between its philosophically traditional rivals, and the terms which correspond and are proper to them, since the surface does not exist independently of a depth and a height (or a body and a proposition). Thus, a brief elaboration of metaphysical depth, surface, and height will provide us with the necessary context for the common theme of sense in Wittgenstein and Deleuze.

*Height* – The metaphysics of the heights is inextricable from an essential movement of ascension. With respect to its relation in language, the height belongs to the Idea. The Idea always has a unilateral direction of determination; it conditions without itself being conditioned, and without itself being a condition. Therefore, Ideas have no essential *relation* in themselves to that which they condition. In fact, they retain their



purity to the extent that they remain unaffected with respect to the particulars they determine (or to what or who participates in them). Conversely, an Idea also maintains an *a priori* independence from other Ideas. Hence the aporetic conclusions of the properly 'Socratic' or elenctic dialogues of Plato, and the corresponding impossibility of the provision of intentional definitions (what would be in various cases the solutions to the questions, 'What is Justice?,' 'Beauty?,' 'Knowledge?,' etc.) Ideas are just as inert towards genera, since no predicative schema is adequate to them. Ideas connect to language through signification. Or, perhaps more accurately, Ideas constitute the very dimension of signification<sup>17</sup> in language; signification, in and of itself, is not constrained by any correspondence with a state-of-affairs that—unlike denotation—would be capable of determining its relative truth-value, and of acting as the criterion, the *sine qua non*, of that truth-value. The Truth of the Idea is absolute, eternal, and immutable. Its model is not correspondence, but Identity. The truth of an Idea must be identical with its object. Furthermore, Idealism always has, for this reason, an unshakable mystical kernel which guarantees for it, in advance, the inclination of the thinker to truth<sup>18</sup>. In drawing broad strokes then, Idealism has as its linguistic avatar, signification, and Materialism denotation; each with its own forms of rationalization, each time newly ramifying the dimension of manifestation along with the subject which speaks in its name. Signification does indeed retain reference as one of its functions, but it does so only ever by way of the concept, and *not* in mediating a relation (between thought and being, or between a

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<sup>17</sup> [Meaning is here avoided in general because the French term \*sens\* can also be translated as meaning, meaning too refers to phenomenological concepts that abandon real relations.](#)

<sup>18</sup> What Deleuze will rebuke as the "good will of the philosopher". *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 129-167.

proposition and a state of affairs)<sup>19</sup>. In short, signification separates language from bodies, provides it with a quasi-autonomous order, and with a purely linguistic, or more precisely, propositional foundation (hence the modern analytic co-incident of philosophy of language, logic, and mathematical formalism or foundationalism). Given that only intensional definitions have a purchase on the determination of essences, it follows that the enumeration of types or instances of knowledge, are always both incidental and incomplete with respect to the articulation of the Idea. (This, in turn, constrains the activity of the philosopher: she can neither be an expert, nor an accountant of parts or participations. In her positivity, she dwells in the static glory of the form, but in practical affairs she takes on a negative role as the master-purveyor of derivations, a guardian against false images and simulacra. Unsurprisingly, ideal ascent has immediate moral consequences. To take one well known example, this peculiar constraint of the philosopher yields a distributive genius capable of according her the right (or the burden) of philosopher-king<sup>20</sup>. “[T]he philosopher is a being of ascents; He is the one who leaves the cave and rises up. The more he rises the more he is purified. Around this “ascensional psychism,” morality and philosophy, the ascetic ideal and the idea of thought, have established close links.” (LoS, 127).

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19 Hence the importance of reference—or in the parlance of structural linguistics, deferral, or a negative yet constitutive terminological difference between signifier and signified, but not between facts and things, or statements and facts—on the one hand and the concept on the other for both Frege and Saussure. See, “Begriffsschrift, A Formula language, Modeled Upon that of Arithmetic, For Pure Thought.” Frege, Gottlob in *From Frege to Godel: A Source Book in Mathematical Logic*. Ed. Heijenoort, Jan van. Harvard U.P., Cambridge Mass., 1976. “Sense and Reference.” Frege, Gottlob. in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (May 1948), pp. 209-230. Frege, Gottlob. and *Course in General Linguistics*. De Saussure, Ferdinand. Trans. Harris, Roy. Open Court, Chicago, 1983.

20 See also the association of the signifier with the figure of the despot (king), in Deleuze and Guattari’s two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

*Depth* – If the operation of the Height is to ascend to the principle (unencumbered therefore by the concrete, and by the trouble of a hyletic and existential excess), the deep thinker as opposed to the high thinker, the materialist opposed to the idealist—Democritus-Heraclitus opposed to Socrates-Plato—operates differently, she lives in an altogether different atmosphere. The thought of the depth is itself bifurcated along two poles: once along the line of a graspable, naturally revealed, or intelligible depth, and once along the line of a schizoid, unfathomable, germinal or inchoate depth.

*Critical/Scientific Depth* – The metaphysics of the scientific depth finds its emblematic formulation in the state-of-affairs. Its craft is the physico-legal determination of bodies, that is, the body as state-of-affairs, or of the actions and passions of the body as the situation of the body in or as a state-of-affairs. Its orientation, therefore, is general. There is no quiddity (no direct existence) of the body within the field of a scientific depth. Furthermore, the proposition no longer exhibits the primordially of an absolute in the identification of the truth with the Idea (as in the case of a first element, or pure name<sup>21</sup>), but instead *delimits the form of possibility* of a correlation with a hypothesized instance (whence arises its generality). If the Idea keeps a remainder which is always in-itself complete because it remains un-predicated (and in that sense, absolutely and negatively, free), never to be exhausted or filled up with its instantiations, the law of the body (a proposition of natural science) awaits its validation in an actuality that verifies its formulation.

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21 See Plato, *Theaetetus*, 201e-202b.

Nevertheless, in its en-framing the form of possibility does an epistemic violence to phenomena that is no less thorough-going than the unilateral determination which the essence gives to appearance. On the contrary, the scientific image of depth is all the more violent precisely on the basis of its relative appraisal of truth. *It seeks to set limits on the phenomenon such that this same phenomenon is now endogenously defined by the form of possibility that it validates*<sup>22</sup>. This 'natural' regime of depth gives to itself all the powers of a model of recognition that cannot but institute the emergence of states-of-affairs (the actualities of bodies) within this very same possibility. (The actual atom validates the general physical atomic laws, but by the same token, such and such an action or passion cannot be attributed to the phenomenon appraised as atom without falling within the generic possibilities that define the atom according to these laws.) In short, it requires of recognition only to find what it makes merely possible, and to make impossible what in turn cannot be properly generalized. That is why Wittgenstein is right to say, “[w]e ought not to forget that any description of the world by means of mechanics will be of the completely general kind. For example, it will never mention particular point-masses: it will only talk about any point-masses whatsoever.” (6.3432)<sup>23</sup>.

Things may not be wholly deterministic (otherwise quiddity would be predictively possible), but for the same reason, nothing is unique, singular, or even temporally real

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22 This is essentially Nietzsche's objection to the whole Kantian project and its German influence: “[T]he time has come for us to think this over. How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible? Kant asked himself, - and what really was his answer? By *virtue of a faculty*...The honeymoon of German philosophy had arrived; all the young theologians of the Tübingen seminary ran off into the bushes - they were all looking for "faculties." And what didn't they find - in that innocent, abundant, still youthful age of the German spirit, when Romanticism, that malicious fairy, whispered, whistled, and sang, when people did not know how to tell the difference between "discovering" and "inventing."” *Beyond Good and Evil*, §11.

<sup>23</sup> All references to the *Tractatus* are indicated by their propositional numbers alone.

outside of a hypothetically temporal coordination; little more than a registration space. At least the Platonic appearance has the freedom to become false, the freedom to deviate or to be a bad copy of its idea. The relativity of states-of-affairs is overcome only by the extent of the hubris of an intelligible depth. Again Wittgenstein here is instructive: "...the view of the ancients is clearer in so far as they have a clear and acknowledged terminus, while the modern system tries to make it look as if *everything* were explained." (6.372). Its model is correspondence. Its dimension of language is denotation. As such, truth is relative, mediated by a relation to an extra-propositional reality, but one whose formative conditions are delimited *a priori* by the imposition of a law (logical, natural, political, etc.) for which all that is relevant to that law must apply in advance. Hence, we arrive at the great poverty of the intelligible depth (and with it, the equal poverty of the ambitions of epistemology). No longer the absolute and mute world of the Idea, this first articulation of the depth resides in a relatively contingent horizon of states-of-affairs (it cannot say why or when such and such a thing will happen), but one for which the outside never falls outside the form of its own expectation. The Ideas of the heights are mathematical in spirit, and pretend to finality and completeness, and are expressed by the intensional definition or the axiom, while the general laws of the critical depth are physical (in the sense of the discipline), probabilistic, and are expressed by the *if...then*. Each handles chaos in its own way: the one extricates it through a movement of purification in the model (which does away with the body) and a movement of derivation or *deformation* in the copy (which provides the requisite moral disgust), the other subdues the body under the form of possibility, a Procrustean movement of *conformation* (amounting to something like a categorical imperative).

We can elucidate the form of possibility in the example of the mathematical function. Through the function, possibility is manifested as the definite domain of a function. Where something is left undefined from the outset, that thing has no sense. For example, in the case of a mathematical function  $f(x)$  where  $x/0$  is not defined, it has no bearing, or relevance, as an input in that function (even though it is plainly a case, since it can be formulated). We can also relate this to the tripartite structure of a Peircean logic, wherein induction represents the domain of defined contents (possible results), deduction represents the results of specific values which yield meaningful outcomes (actual results), and abduction would represent an operation which escapes the predetermined domain of defined functional variables (virtual results)—e.g. the establishment of a rule according to which one may be able to define the expression  $x/0$ , but one for which the form of possibility given by the domain of function is itself insufficient.<sup>24</sup> However, this operation—abduction—does not justify itself by merely producing a still more general domain *a posteriori*. No, it requires an endeavor of thought which cannot be prescribed by either the function or its domain; a properly scientific intuition, but one whose effective operation escapes the formalization of contents required by the infrastructure of a scientific depth. The “virtual” in science.

In conformity with its requirements, the scientific depth requires an expansive superficial, logical, or technical apparatus. It requires too, in keeping with this mental equipment, the means to manage such an apparatus, that is, a commensurate capacity for storage, a bureaucratic furniture able to systematize and cohere not only the formal

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24 See “Abduction and Induction” in *The Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, pp. 150-7.

elements required of the technical language, but also the accumulations of laws and the development of their unification. Given the necessary generality of the form of possibility, along with the subtlety of the network of these possibilities, scientific depth finds itself in the curious position of being quasi-empirical while, at the same time, withdrawing from experience (except, perhaps, from the form of possible experience)<sup>25</sup>. In itself, it contributes nothing whatsoever to modes of life, or to real experience. The height is exclusive, but the depth is inclusive; the height transcendent, the depth transcendental.

Scientific depth nevertheless has many characteristics that seem close to us: first, the extent of its endeavor alone requires a form of non-anthropocentrism (at least in principle). Second, it undoes the privileges of the Height (e.g. ontologically grounded moral direction as well as the “privileged instants of time” of ancient thought). Thirdly, due to its generality, it mandates equality before the law (no longer this or that point, mass, particle, etc., but any point, etc. whatsoever)—the variable now usurps the power held in the Height by the essence. Fourthly, it indicates a radical metaphysical constructivism, from the perspective both of the mutability of Nature, and in its epistemological apparatus. More accurately, for science the interrelation of the two is the very *index* of such a constructability. And finally, in its proceeding, it effectuates the

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25 As the reader will have noticed by now, part of our attempt is to show a certain congruity between the critical paradigm and the scientific one (if one can indeed call science a paradigm). Part of this attempt, comes to combat an idea which certain contemporary thinkers maintain (Meillassoux being its most virulent advocate): that the critical project is entirely at odds with the scientific project (from a fundamental point of view), and that evidence of this can be provided in the fact that scientists believe that there is such a thing as an external reality that is, on the one hand, indifferent to us, and that, on the other, we can make claims about (e.g. the dating of material). Suffice it to say that both *critique*, and for example physics, begin in method by description, and end in conditions of possibility (whether these are of pure reason, or of motion makes no difference here).

production of an immanently transcendental field. However close it might be, we must see in these false movements of the depth the negative determinations which keep it tied to a humanism, to moralizing, to a disastrous and generic equality, to botched or mundane constructions, to an 'immanence' which must repress the slightest crack to the Outside, and to a transcendental field still mired in the traps of consciousness.

*Schizophrenic Depth* – Although Deleuze admires this conception of depth greatly, one that he sees at work not only in the Pre-Socratics, but also renewed in the projects of Nietzsche, Artaud, and then Klossowski, his concern *en masse* in the *Logic of Sense* deals with the articulation of the surface, and so, we encounter this more profound depth (of which Deleuze works on in later works in the guise of various vocabularies), only at the sites where these two conceptions confront one another—from certain perspectives, in various concepts. More precisely, they meet at the site of the “crack” which gives something of depth to the surface. Before treading into the fragile world of the crack, first some elucidation of the characteristics of this depth will guide us into a discussion of the relation between the surface and the depth.

With respect to language, in this case of schizophrenic depth, there is no longer any difference in kind between bodies on the one hand, and language (words, propositions, etc.) on the other. And this is why, for example, the sonority of words becomes paramount in the speech of the schizophrenic<sup>26</sup>. However, neither the body nor the word remain untouched, for all that. If height purifies the idea from bodies (and as

**Comment [U1]:** Maybe some lexical examples should be useful in a footnote

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26 For a detailed analysis of the procedures involved in the language of the schizophrenic and of the distinction between the nonsense of the depth and that of Lewis Carroll's for example, see “Thirteenth Series of the Schizophrenic and the Little Girl” in *Logic of Sense* pp. 82-93.



such promotes the signifier as a first name or an unconditioned element), and the intelligible depth operates in the relative dependence of a correlation between a state of affairs and a proposition (but also depends on their distinction), the schizophrenic depth experiences both language and bodies as a pure affection. “Things and propositions have no longer any frontier between them, precisely because bodies have no surface. The primary aspect of the schizophrenic body is that it is a sort of body-sieve.” (LoS, 86-7). In this way, the depth is characterized by a nonsense that is not, cannot be, the genetic moment of sense, such as the surface entails (LoS, 82).

Thus the problem of the metaphysical depth, is no longer a matter, strictly speaking, for linguistics, for logic, or for epistemology: the unforgiving nonsense of the depth is foremost a clinical problem—although still thoroughly philosophical and metaphysical, even if clinical. Hence, the figures of the actor, and the logician are replaced by that of the madman, the schizophrenic.

Deep nonsense marks the point at which the articulations of bodies and of speech, of words breaks down; the point at which everything dissolves into the raw forces of a terrible life. Furthermore, this is why, at any rate, we can not speak of the schizophrenic as the subject of the depth, since everything is consumed in a primordial 'confusion' which allows no subjective distinction between, for example, enunciations and the affections that befall the enunciator. “... [T]he word loses its sense, that is, its power to draw together or express an incorporeal effect distinct from the actions and passions of the body, and an ideational event distinct from its present realization” Instead, “[e]very event is realized...every word is physical, and immediately effects the body...[T]he moment the pinned-down word loses its sense, it bursts into pieces; it is decomposed into

syllables, letters, and above all consonants, which act directly on the body...” (LoS, 87). It should too be noted that clinical studies of schizophrenia show auditory hallucinations to be far more prevalent than optical ones (perhaps, precisely because of this abominable *corporealization*). As body, the schizophrenic depth and the language it implies falls along the divided line, no longer of language and body, but between action and passion (as the formative poles of affection). The passion-word wounds through phonetic values, and the action-word “...wields inarticulate *tonic* values” (LoS, 90). These in turn correspond to the two states of the body in depth, or to the two bodies of this depth: partial-object or fragmented body, body without organs or glorious body (LoS, 90)).

As was said, the crack in the surface is the site where the terror of the depth comes into contact with the sense of the surface (which can signal either the terrific collapse of meaning, or the conditions of a new lucidity). Without a doubt, there is a difference in nature between the regime of the surface and that of the depth. However the important boundaries of the problem lie, not in the distinction of the regimes (although it may be part of an important preparation), nor in the ostensive difference between the crack and the frontier it represents between inner and outer experience (and the complicated relations these maintain through the crack), but rather of finding a point, movement, or operation whereby the line of the crack itself is not prolonged and deepened, and doesn't inevitably realize its eventual disintegration into the fury, terror, or catatonia of the depth. That is, it is no longer a question of what these regimes are (even relative to each other), but of who is capable of a mode of life that can risk their interference (LoS, 156-7). In other words, how does one will the event without at the same time bringing about its complete actualization as an irreversible dissolution in an

inconsolable depth (madness, death)? The key it seems, for Deleuze, is to will the event on a plane which forgoes the coincidence of eventual and corporeal death (the lines established by Blanchot)<sup>27</sup>; to find a place and (perhaps more importantly) a duration which allows this—the ideal game, or the “flat representation” (LoS, 156-7). To wield a “counter-actualization” alongside the actualization (the selection of the *event* in what happens). Counter-actualization is an operation, which is objective without being corporeal (or having thingness). A theme, a musical behavior, a dance, a form of life. In this insistence on such a construction or selection, the surface takes on its aesthetic, but also its properly ethical valences. “We cannot foresee, we must take risks and endure the longest possible time, we must not lose sight of grand health. The eternal truth of the event is grasped only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh... [But] we must double this painful actualization by a counter-actualization which limits, moves, and transfigures it...Counter-actualization is nothing, it belongs to a buffoon when it operates alone and pretends to have the value of *what could have happened*... To the extent that the pure event is each time imprisoned forever in its actualization, counter-actualization liberates it, always for other times.” (LoS, 161). Fate as experiment.

*Surface* – The surface does not exist independently of its metaphysical counterparts. Seen from one side or the other, it appears as a secondary order or organization within, and in relation to, either the depth or the height (the dimension of expression in language as function of the idea, or as a logical attribute as that “which happens” to the body or state of affairs.) As such, the surface is all the more tenuous as it

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27 See, e.g. “Literature and the Right to Death” in *The Work of Fire*, and *The Space of Literature*.

is irreducible. Additionally, this is why Deleuze says the surface does not ex-sist at all, but only ever “insists.” It is incorporeal without being ideal, and ideational without being imaginary. It operates (from the corporeal perspective) through the bifurcation of cause and effect (and gathers together a quasi-independent regime of effects for itself). In language, it is sense, and its epistemological coordinates are logical before being factual. Its project is the ideal-game (the play of the genetic moment of sense given by a logical nonsense, that is, by paradox). It is at the same time a pre-individual, impersonal, transcendental field—one that seeks to extricate all the trappings of good sense and common sense: self, world, and God. As such it is the pure Event (one that must also be, but only very carefully, actualized). As a relation it represents the disjunctive synthesis, and in pathology humor and perversion.

### Wittgenstein

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein diagnoses a crisis in philosophy which will ripple throughout his entire career. Throughout his life, and beginning with the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein made attempts to put philosophy to rest (both on personal and professional grounds).<sup>28</sup> What is the place of philosophy with respect to other forms of knowledge (assuming philosophy is a form of knowledge), and how can it thus be put to use? In the *Tractatus*, from proceeding through its propositions, “the answer” becomes clear by the

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28 This will have very different methodological consequences for the *Investigations* even if its *conatus* remains similar. This difference will be addressed in [Chapter 2](#) as the positive practice of thetic denial, or non-representational manifestation—of philosophical investigation as a showing-process.

end, and is heralded by the claims—impudent or intrepid—of its preface: to find the final solution to all philosophical problems, to provide the answer to the problem of life. We know very well what form this takes there: all philosophical problems are merely misunderstood propositions of logic, or of natural science (see props. 6-7). Nonetheless, when conceived as a kind of formal slight-of-hand we do a disservice to ourselves, since in doing so we misunderstand, in advance, the crisis that animates this desire to effectively end philosophy. We ricochet off of the real conditions of the problem without inhering in them.

Preliminarily, this “crisis” represents a new (though obscure) conflict between the mind and the body, and between entities and their relations. Like the polemic between rationalism and empiricism played out within philosophy (of which each author, and each group treats the conflict in their own way), this new conflict set at the level of scientific delimitation implies, for Wittgenstein, a specific crisis for philosophy<sup>29</sup>. In other words, it developed not explicitly in terms of philosophy, but between two poles of scientific thought, and through two different two different scientific epistemologies. The, apparent, mutually exclusive exhaustion executed by these scientific poles precisely correlates to the philosophical crisis felt across western Europe during the decades-long period stretching from the immediate past of World War I to the beginnings of the Second World War; described with special anguish and disgust in the Germanic world (Husserl),

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29 One may here note that Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, the inaugural text of modern (European) logic is allied, through its title, with “pure thought”. *Begriffsschrift* itself of course means 'concept-writing'. Thus from the outset, the problems of logic are developed as problems of the mind (as problems of thought). Furthermore, it is not a stretch to assume that the 'pre-scientific' mantle of natural philosophy (as the development of the knowledge of *body*) has carried into the science of the discovery and description of natural law (*viz.* the natural sciences).

and particularly poignantly, even if naively, in the Hapsburg empire (Vienna school). For Wittgenstein, the seemingly comprehensive descriptions available to natural science on the one hand (the totality of factual propositions), and to logic on the other (the totality of analytic propositions) mandated the eviction of metaphysics: it left metaphysics without its own object of study<sup>30</sup>. This is the crisis of philosophy—it no longer has any claim to positive epistemological content, and this already constituted the solution to the problem. Although immediately consequential for philosophy, such a crisis also has its manifestations in the competing claims of two epistemological approaches to the question of scientific apodicticity, regarding science's own well-founded basis, exemplified by the well-known conflict between the formalists and the constructivists played out in mathematics and in logic<sup>31</sup>. By setting this out, we don't mean to suggest that the *Tractatus* adheres to the coordinates of the problem as staged by its expressly mathematical dimensions. On the contrary, these dimensions affect the *Tractatus* only to the extent that it bears exclusively on philosophical questions. Wittgenstein was thus, up to that point at least, unique in his use and contribution to the project of modern logic: his logical concern is only ever philosophical. In this respect, the *Tractatus* comes to light as the last great work in the rationalist tradition, and of the 17<sup>th</sup> century tradition of the *treatise*. What does Wittgenstein do with the crisis, and why does the *Tractatus*—in its

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30 The term 'analytic' does not here have its more technical Kantian meaning. In one sense it refers to the historical distinction in logic between analytic truths (e.g. those derivable from closed deductive systems, such as syllogistic reasoning) and factual truths (those that require some external verification, such as "It is raining outside"). In this sense analytic has a similar meaning to the rational (as opposed to the empirical), and this should carry the historical valences of the pre-Kantian polemic between these terms. It is defined as what can be done, in principle, in thought alone. Wittgenstein's conception of logic also parallels this to a large degree.

31 This is well defined, very over-optimistically, by the program of Hilbert. Wittgenstein's own philosophical upbringing was already embroiled in this debate, since both Frege and Russell were instrumental in the development of its question.

severe brevity, its alien thematic mixture—seem to us a singular moment in the history of philosophy?

*A Treatise* – Wittgenstein is the last great thinker of Truth (5.5563) (and is able therefore, also, to give to us its decline (e.g. 4.441-2). The *Tractatus* represents the attempt to think logic *per se* without any mediating discourse nor with any non-logical content to which logic might be applied—as in an analytic of statements; in the application of logic to a philosophy of language. Carried to extreme purity, at its most rigorous, logic can say nothing, properly speaking, which is rigorous. What it can do is judge whether something is true or false (whether it has sense), or whether it is nonsensical. The criterion for the exogenous conditions of truth and falsity is sense (its correspondence to a state of affairs), the test of sense is its truth value, and the test of its truth value is tautology and contradiction. These latter are limit cases, and are therefore nonsense—satisfying all or none of the conditions of state of affairs—but do not lack sense, are not *senseless* (Wittgenstein defines these inversely, but we will see later why we must appeal to this reversal of terms). As nonsense, tautology and contradiction are not logical—but certain (4.466, 5.143). They are “the propositions of logic...Therefore the propositions of logic say nothing...[but] are [uniquely] true from the symbol alone” (6.1-6.113). In other words, Wittgenstein has written a work of pure logic, and by giving logic the absolute free play of its own elements for itself, he delivers himself unto his own anguish: the poverty of rigor or *rigor mortis*; the impotence of language. At the same time however, what we cannot say (which for him means with clarity—i.e. logically) can be made manifest (shown). This, he calls the mystical. The mystical is

nonsense. It is also at the same time ethics and aesthetics. Together, he calls these (along with logic) transcendental.

For Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* there is only logic (which for him includes the entirety of both what can be thought and what can be said—epistemology, philosophy of language), and the mystical (ethics, aesthetics—what can be shown). There is only a minimal metaphysics and no fundamental ontology. Logic is first-and-only philosophy. He carries solipsism to its limit (solipsism as limit), and in doing so assures us neither the epistemological guarantee (*a la* Kant and the certain knowledge of an unknowable Noumenon) by which our thought can be ascribed a limit *a priori*—since that would require us to think what, by definition, we cannot (*viz.* the limit of our thought); nor does he assure us of the metaphysical guarantee (*a la* Leibniz's compossibility, Berkeley's God, etc.) by which our world (solipsistic or otherwise) is insured by the World which contains, makes possible, makes continuous, or harmonizes all other worlds. This is Wittgenstein's honesty and his anguish. But his thrift and genius is in how he implicates traditional philosophical problems, by drawing *effects* from what can be said (or cannot be said) of the proposition, and this is why it is a logico-philosophical treatise and not solely a logical one. Nevertheless, it is on the basis of its logic that any philosophical discussion is mounted, and also on the basis of philosophy that any logic is constructed.

Above we have presented a brief sketch that represents a somewhat—though not entirely—orthodox view of the *Tractatus*, and one that is *en masse* quite accurate; however there is a simultaneous current which runs throughout the entire treatise. The logical and the mystical are coextensive, though not strictly reducible. It is our wish to bring to light this double exposure, or rather, the two sides of its surface. The two



animating poles of the *Tractatus* compel an analysis of duality as something immanent to the proposition, and as something which, in the final analysis, is subtended by a dimension of language that is, in a manner of speaking, below and beyond all dualism—or better yet, constructed at the genesis of the two term series: sense and paradox.

### **The Problem of Sense**

*Form and Multiplicity* – The *Tractatus* presents us with a discrete and frozen conceptual landscape; its world is Static. Some might call it synchronic description. However, apart from the direction that points us in, it would be technically false to say, since it is not really that all of his entities happen at the 'same time'. Instead, he is concerned with what can be said of things non-temporally (6.4311)—that is “sub specie aeterni” (6.45). Eternity too however has a not-all-together standard meaning, hence it is timeless in lieu of being infinite in duration or durable. The question of the eternal, and its involvement with sense, effect, and event we will return to. Let us here merely remark that its idea is not concluded on at the end of text of the *Tractatus*—despite being explicitly conjured there—but implicitly pervades the whole standard of its system from the outset. We can see this easily from the metaphysics that begins the treatise, and more importantly, here, in dealing with Wittgenstein's concept of form.

Form is what is common to both states of affairs and propositions (2.2, 2.202-3). It is on this basis that form appears to be a somewhat straight forward notion. But, really, the relative ease with which it is deployed in the *Tractatus* is due, mainly, to the quick and plain terseness of Wittgenstein's prose, more than it is to do with any orthodox

concept of form (and is unfortunately responsible for the worst misgiving with respect to the history of Wittgenstein's readership)<sup>32</sup> it bears little resemblance to either its more or less 'common sense' notion (as in the shape of an object, or of the general characteristics which would form a class of objects) which would largely coincide with the Aristotelian formulation, or to the basic Platonic notion of Forms (in which case concrete objects would stand as semblances, derivatives or degradations of a model). Form in Wittgenstein has an immediately mystical content, without for that reason conceding any logical make up. The next question would be, "Why is form, at the same time pictorial and logical?". Form marks the *a priori* unity (but not a synthetic one) of the sensible and the intelligible, or more strictly, it marks their original indifference or indistinction with respect to one another, without, for all that, lacking determination or coherence: form is sense (2.221). And this because there is not perception on one end (presupposing a pictorial schema) and the intellect on the other (presupposing a logical one). Sense or form, is immediately both from the outset, and more than that, we are not able to speak of them as entities which we could distinguish, even in principle. Thought is univocal with whatever can be thought (but this is a reversal of the idealist viewpoint), and sense, can stand, at least in our initial determination, as the limen between what is thinkable, and what is sayable. According to Wittgenstein, all sayable things have sense. Sense in turn is itself what is *shown* in the proposition. Therefore, at this level anyway, sense is never said of itself—at this level indeed it is never said at all. "A proposition *shows* its sense. A proposition *shows* how things stand...and it *says* that they do so stand." (4.022). Logical

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<sup>32</sup> For example its influence is felt in Kripke's concept of rigid designators in *Naming and Necessity*.

form is not a representation: “My fundamental idea is that the ‘logical constants’ are not representatives; that there can be no representatives of the *logic* of facts.” (4.0312). these forms taken together constitute “logical multiplicity” (4.04-4.041).

Through such a multiplicity, there is an implacable co-incident between form, as we have described it here, and Benjamin's conception of the Idea found in the “Prologue” to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. He says: “Ideas are timeless constellations...” (GTD, 34). “The representation of an idea can under no circumstances be considered successful unless the whole range of possible extremes it contains has been virtually explored. Virtually, because that which is comprehended in the idea of origin still has history, in the sense of content, but not in the sense of a set of occurrences which have befallen it...” (GTD, 47). Furthermore, the connection in itself, between Wittgenstein's logical multiplicity and Benjamin's ideal constellation, is sufficient enough for what Deleuze has in mind when he speaks of incorporeal effects in the *Logic of Sense*, “These are effects in the causal sense, but also sonorous, optical, or linguistic “effects”—and even less, or much more, since they are no longer corporeal entities, but rather form the entire Idea. What was eluding the Idea climbed up to the surface, that is, the incorporeal limit, and represents now all possible *ideality*, the latter being stripped of its causal and spiritual efficacy.” (LoS, 7). Hence, in connecting up the idea or form, with the limen that splits the proposition from the state of affairs, we can now see what Wittgenstein means by his picture theory (and also finally rescue it from its naïve interpretation). Form is not an analogue of the empirical by the linguistic; this can be easily refuted since even a false proposition has the same logico-pictorial form to a state of affairs as does a true one. We understand immediately that there is no resemblance between sheet music, or a

phonograph record, and the sound of the music (4.014). Rather what is common to them is the incorporeal limit (the effect), as sense of the proposition and logical attribute of the state of affairs. For Wittgenstein such logico-pictorial form is timeless or, for Deleuze the incorporeal limit (the surface) insists things and words, as “Aion”—the empty form of time (an instant which neither retains past occurrences, nor anticipates future ones).

*The Issue of Color* – On the issue of color, Wittgenstein was famously perplexed. Although his *Remarks on Color* are the definite product of his later thinking, they are for us, guide posts for the delimitation of sense, and in particular a clear manifestation of paradoxes arising out of, what is for common experience, an essentially uncomplicated affair. Through color we touch on one of the boundaries of Wittgenstein's thought—the one whereby the linguistic and the perceptual meet in a zone of indetermination that Wittgenstein, despite his genius and best effort, cannot fully assimilate to the world of the language game.

Color can be thought in-and-of itself; the thinking of color doesn't require of us that a shape necessarily bound it. Color, *per se*, is therefore formless<sup>33</sup>, and yet it is in a way dependent, it must inhere in form. Is color a phenomenon, a quality, a property of objects, can it be said to have properties itself? Color is obvious; has anyone ever mistaken a color for the wrong color, and what would be the criteria for the mistake? Yet color is wildly relative (unlike shape), the whole appearance of individual colors changes drastically depending on their relative contiguity—the studies of Albers shows this well. (This is why what painters call local color, or psychologists call color constancy is

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33 Form here does not refer to Wittgenstein's concept just analyzed above.

thought to be an additional mental process) . Furthermore, shouldn't we consider this a change in nature, as regards color, since there isn't anything else we can predicate of a color (as in translucency, opacity, shape, texture, glossiness, mattedness, incandescence, etc), that is, since it is already pure “appearance”. And given the fact of color-relativity in contiguity, it nevertheless seems that the system of relations between them obtains from subject to subject (even though we can't guarantee that subjects have the same *qualia* in mind.)

Color affirms unique sense, but it is, curiously, directionless, categorically speaking. There are no dualities which would provide the restriction of its reality to the alternatives yes or no (4.023). In fact, it appears even stranger than this, and because it is common to the entire visual field, indeed we could say that it, along with shape, exhausts the visual field, since all other visual traits can be seen to derive from these two. However, shapes can be given descriptions by which one could reconstruct them—provided one understood the rules that such a construction required (e.g. a square is made use four equal lines that converge at right angles). Color, on the other hand, cannot be given descriptions at all. Color-words appear as pure names, and as such their denotation and their sense coincide entirely. And since a color's denotation and sense collapse, we can easily see that colors have no signification; colors do not signify (signification requires that a sign be explainable by means of other signs, or signifiers by other signifiers). And this, by turns, leads us back to the paradox of the description of a color: it can be said *and* be shown, but moreover, it can only be said insofar as it can be shown. “When we're asked "What do the words 'red', 'blue', 'black', 'white' mean?" we can, of course, immediately point to things which have these colours,—but our ability to explain

the meanings of these words goes no further! For the rest, we have either no idea at all of their use, or a very rough and to some extent false one.” (RoC, §68).

The sense of a color is the color itself, but so too is it the *denotatum* of the word which names the color. This is the first figure of nonsense according to Deleuze (LoS, 67). An individual color is both itself (red is red, and not green, blue, yellow, nor even crimson or vermillion) and at the same time, that which determines a color's essence (its redness) is relative to the contiguity of all other colors. This is the nonsense of the proposition which states it's own sense, and the paradox of the abnormal set (the set that is included as a member itself). This, we may well assume, is responsible for Wittgenstein's trouble in being able to come to any kind of comprehension of color, that is, of what we all immediately apprehend and have no trouble using (in common language, as a perceptive guide, etc.), but eludes even definitional description. Again, Benjamin might aid us in translating the gap: “The idea thus belongs to a fundamentally different world from that which it apprehends. The question of whether it comprehends that which it apprehends...cannot be regarded as a criterion of its existence.” (GTD, 34). Color is, then, pure incorporeal effect, neither physical nor mental.

*The Proposition and Good Sense* – There is no doubt that in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein wants nothing more than a total comprehension of the world on the basis of language. But his brilliance is carried out in his dogged persistence not to let his objective interfere with the proceeding of his theory. And so, even though this is undoubtedly his aim, it is evidently not his result—although not for a lack of sufficient logical formalization, but in spite, or rather because of it. Deleuze holds that complete description (total comprehension) is impossible—and more importantly, undesirable—

because whenever it is enacted, it is enacted at the expense of what it excludes in order for it obtain coherence. But even a perfect exclusion is impossible—instead, the attempt makes up the tandem law of the *doxa*, opposed to paradox: on the one hand, *good sense* fixes a single direction for sense<sup>34</sup>, and is developed at the level of signification; on the other hand *common sense* fixes identities and is developed in manifestation. What we would like to show is how Wittgenstein escapes these traps, even in falling prey to them.

Deleuze gives us four dimensions for a proposition: 1) denotation or indication; 2) manifestation; 3) signification; and 4) sense. As we said, good sense most often develops in signification. Good sense is always unique sense. Unique sense is the *sine qua non* of the form of an alternative. The job of good sense is to predict. “Good sense is said of one direction only: it is the unique sense and expresses the demand of an order...The arrow of time gets its orientation from this direction, since the most differentiated appears as past, in so far as it defines the origin of an individual system...Good sense therefore is given the condition under which it fulfills its function, which is essentially to foresee.” (LoS, 75). Wittgenstein is no exception here (e.g. 3.144, 3.203-3.23). “A proposition must restrict reality to two alternatives: yes or no. In order to do that, it must describe reality completely.” (4.023) For reality to be described completely, its sense must be determinant, and for this, each thing must have unique sense (3.23). Unique sense capitulates to us the correspondence between the number of simple signs in a proposition and the number of 'objects' in a state of affairs. This correspondence then, would exhaust the truth-conditions of propositions; and therefore we arrive at the general form of the

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34 This would be immediately present to the French reader, since meaning, sense and direction can all be translated by the French *sens*.

proposition. “The existence of a general propositional form is proved by the fact that there cannot be a proposition whose form could not have been foreseen (i.e. constructed).” (4.5). This indeed confirms Deleuze's suspicion of collusion between Chronos and the present, since it is only on the basis of the arrow of time that the present itself can be fixed (“Chronos is the present which alone exists.” [LoS, 77](#)). And indeed, following suit, at this point in the text, Wittgenstein seems to conflate expression (sense) with signification (symbol) (3.31-3.312), but it is inevitable in the case of unique sense that they are collapsed into one another, although this does not, even in Wittgenstein, make them ultimately reducible. That the general form be included in unique sense is confirmed by Deleuze outright, “good sense is not content with determining the particular direction of the unique sense. It first determines the principle of the unique sense or direction in general, ready to show that this principle, once given, forces us to choose one direction over the other.” [LoS, 76-7](#)).

However, paradox affirms both directions of the alternative at once. Furthermore, truth conditions are always partial (probabilistic in Wittgenstein's parlance) even if they allow for generality, because if they were not, the truth of a proposition could not be applied to states of affairs. In other words, there must be some condition of a proposition which some state of affairs *does not* fulfill in order for it to have truth conditions at all. “The truth conditions of a proposition determine the range that it leaves open to the facts.” (4.463). His truth tables and theory of probability follow easily from this. But again, at its most fundamental, logical propositions have no truth conditions, because “the propositions of logic are tautologies.” (6.1). Therefore tautology represents this unconditional, or one could say rather, neutral element in language that determines the



condition, just as the condition determines the conditioned (tautology has a probability 1, and contradiction 0). Paradox affirms both directions at once, and this holds true of logical propositions. “Tautologies and contradictions lack sense. (Like a point from which two arrows go out in opposite directions to one another.)” (4.461). It follows from this of course, that they are, furthermore, indifferent to the general and particular—thereby un-grounding the general form of propositions: “An ungeneralized proposition can be tautological just as well as a generalized one.” (6.1231) This will bring us later into the question of fate, and will allow us to see clearly what Wittgenstein's obsession with the solution [to philosophical problems](#) means.

*Solipsism and Common Sense* – As we said earlier, common sense fixes identities, and in a certain way, we can already see this in the case of simple signs. If a sign may only mean one thing then its identity is effectively fixed. For Deleuze this would obtain, not only logically, but pathologically as well: what is true of common sense in logic is also true for the subject. Under the subject, common sense aggregates various faculties according to an 'I'. “One and the same self perceives, imagines, remembers, knows, etc.” ([LoS](#), 78). And through the subject, common sense aggregates various data according to a particular object or individual world. “It is the same object which I see, smell, taste, or touch...the same world I breathe, walk, am awake or asleep in...” ([LoS](#), 78). Again, Wittgenstein seems to be no exception in that he retains solipsism as the limit of the world (and in this initial analysis, we assume here that the figure of the limit represents the world's insoluble unity, without which it would no longer retain the characteristic that allows us to provide its objects with a unique sense.) However, we run into large passages butting up against either side of the discussion of solipsism (and indeed even

within it) which will contest all the bases on which identities could be constructed. We have the feeling, then, that what Wittgenstein does with the notion of solipsism is unique in the history of its defenders.

First, he asserts that identity need not be at all a requirement of logic, and in fact he shows that it is logically quite meaningless to assert an identity (for example between  $p$  and  $q$ ) since if it is true, it is always only trivially true, hence one could not infer the identity of two objects on the basis of their indiscernibility, for in that case no inference would even be necessary (or possible), leading to the conclusion that for every so-called identity, we will always have two or more signs corresponding to precisely the same symbol. Therefore we cannot infer the totality of propositions (or states of affairs), given that self-identity is not common either to all objects or to all signs. By turns, then, it does away with the predictive value of logic. This much Russell had already pointed out in his introduction to the *Tractatus*, “Wittgenstein is enabled to assert that propositions are all that follows from the totality of atomic propositions (together with the fact that it is the totality of them); that a proposition is always a truth-function of atomic propositions; and that if  $p$  follows from  $q$  the meaning of  $p$  is contained in the meaning of  $q$ , from which of course it results that nothing can be deduced from an atomic proposition.” (Russell, xviii). In itself, this fact, is already enough to destroy whatever remained of good sense and Chronos. “Superstition is nothing but the belief in the causal nexus” (5.1361)

Next, Wittgenstein set out to systematically eliminate manifestation as a dimension of language, insofar as manifestation presupposes a subject external to the proposition that must be capable of saying it. “It is clear, however, that ‘A believes that  $p$ ’, ‘A has the thought  $p$ ’, and ‘A says  $p$ ’ are of the form ‘ $p$ ’ says  $p$ ’: and this does not

involve a correlation of a fact with an object, but rather the correlation of facts by means of the correlation of their objects. This shows too that there is no such thing as the soul—the subject, etc.—as it is conceived in the superficial psychology of the present day” (5.542-5.5421). In doing so he shows that anything that can be said about a subject, or the form of an 'I' capable of speaking a proposition is immediately part of another proposition such that we will never be led out of the proposition unto a self external to the language of which it is spoken about. This is concluded even more radically in proposition 5.631, “There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.” Taken together, these two figures represent what Deleuze diagnoses as the tripartite curse of the *doxa*—God (signification) and the self (manifestation) have been effectively dissolved; all that is left is the world (denotation). ([LoS](#), 78).

*Fate and the Mystical* – In his chapter on singularities Deleuze states explicitly the kind of world that follows from a logic of sense:

We seek to determine an impersonal and pre-individual transcendental field, which does not resemble the corresponding empirical fields, and which is nevertheless is not confused with an undifferentiated depth...What is neither individual nor personal are on the contrary, emissions of singularities insofar as they occur on an unconscious surface and possess... [an] immanent principle of auto-unification through a *nomadic distribution*, radically distinct from fixed...distributions as conditions of the syntheses of consciousness. Singularities are the true transcendental events... Only when the world, teaming with...singularities, opens up, do we tread at last on the field of the transcendental. ([LoS](#), 102-3).

But isn't this already the case of the *Tractatus*? The question which is begged of us from the last section is this: Why does solipsism persist, given that the thinking subject has evaporated along with any guarantee of the unity of propositions? As Wittgenstein points out, “...solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with

pure realism.” (5.64) And, when solipsism is carried out in this way it can only mean one thing: the self loses all relation to the thinking subject, and itself becomes a singularity, it remains as an *aliquid*<sup>35</sup> there to witness the world, of which it must now be the limit since there is no longer any fundamental difference in kind between the world and its interpretation by a subject (indeed this no longer even has any meaning). Thought, world, life are one. “The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it.” (5.64). But then we have to ask: Why is it a microcosm; why is the world *my* world? Is this not because solipsism, under its new aegis, represents the event, and thus may allow us to understand Wittgenstein's retention of the term?

The world is my world, not because the world no longer exists outside of my mental reality (that is no longer even a question) but rather the possessive 'my' stands for the becoming quasi-cause of the event, the world is now a gigantic 'ideal game'. It must retain this 'my', insofar as there is always a quasi-cause, or a “mute-witness” for the event. “This game which can only exist in thought and which has no other result than the work of art, is also that by which thought and art are real and disturbing reality, morality, and economy of the world.” (LoS, 60). Or again it is linked because each event is communicated in the whole Event. “All of these thoughts communicate in one long thought...everywhere insinuating chance and ramifying each thought, linking the “once and for all” to “each time” for the sake of “all time” (LoS, 60). This is the eternal truth of

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35 This is a term oft-used in *Logic of Sense*. It is part of the Stoics' complex ontological catalogue, literally in Latin meaning “something”, but is employed by Deleuze as an *ens paradoxum* or perhaps also as an anti-law of parsimony— *entia sunt non multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*. This would be in concord both with the split between fate and destiny in the Stoics, according to Deleuze, and with their imperative to affirm destiny while denying necessity (cf. *Logic of Sense*, pp. 142-147, p.169; Cicero, *On Fate*).

the event and goes a long way to explaining Wittgenstein's ideas of the eternal (non-temporal), why there no *a priori* order of things, why things never happen at the same time ("It is the characteristic of the event to elude the present"), why things could be different from how they are, and why finally, at the end of the *Tractatus*, logic, ethics, aesthetics are transcendental, and the mystical is logically necessary since the rules of logic cannot be applied to themselves. In short, Wittgenstein built a transcendental field of language, laid out along its incorporeal surface, delimited all at once or *as if* once and for all, and in so doing, discovered what he could not accept—the *creative nonsense of immanence*.

Why is it when something in thought is *really* accomplished, we get the feeling that nothing at all has happened (or that it seems already to have happened once its moment of articulation arises)? In no small part, this peculiar feeling arises from a lack of precise thought, by those commentators (like myself) whose powers of reflection have come at the expense of *vision*. However, there is another cause (or rather a quasi-cause) that remains potent in this in spite of everything. We feel this temporal jamming precisely because of the static genesis of the event. If this seems to be the case, is it surprising that the theory of the event should be immediately caught up in the problems of logic, for logic (its crippling limitations notwithstanding) is not merely the calculus of possibility (which in fact distinguishes it from all empirical fields, including natural science) nor is it a mere regulatory endeavor of language or epistemology by its own means, but it is both of these precisely because of its status as the science of the *static*, and therefore as a perspective of the event. But, what is at stake here is not our definition of logic, but rather the capacity to grapple with the *fact* of novelty—a fact that only ever appears as a *fait*

*accompli*—and moreover to apprehend it in thought beyond any metaphysical description of necessity or determinism, or of contingency or freedom, to understand it as something that subtends, subsists or insists in these determinations as a paradoxical fate, and as the font of any supposed pre-eminent philosophical number; any monism, dualism, etc. This is why whenever it crops up, it appears that nothing has happened, as something already finished, or at best as something bound to have happened. Wittgenstein has written perhaps the most beautiful treatise on this fate, on this weird little crystalline object of the creative-in-the-immanent cause called the effect, the event (or the mystical), and it was Wittgenstein's lament, or perhaps his rigor, only to be able to see his creation, appearing thus, as the uselessness of an ideal language, in its static genesis. Nevertheless, "... To invent an entire language, among the most pathological and aesthetic one can dream of..." (LoS, 52).

## Stupidity and the Image of Thought: On Clear Confusion

Our greatest stupidities may be very wise.

– Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

*Introduction* – We are interested in a nexus of problems tangentially related (from a critical perspective) to the failings of epistemology to grasp the purchase our actions, the systems and transcendental structures that our actions both derive purchase from and give it to. We are chasing after the real conditions of experience pertaining to thought, in such a way as to avoid the feeble antagonism between reality and thought, but also the overdetermination of thought as tantamount to the essence of the real; thought is fully real, but the real is univocally differentiated—not everything that counts is thought. Instead of hedging our bets in forms of rationalism—which always try to ground action or ethics (which is for us nothing but creation) in an adequate knowledge<sup>36</sup>—we search

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<sup>36</sup> Here the new rationalisms are no exception, whether the accelerationists, or Brassier are in question. In the one, the structural deficits of Capital are spirited-away by the effective progress of its distributive model; they are to me a bunch of hubristic utilitarians who believe that a butchering of Marx justifies their particularly gross variety of reformism—the kind which takes the stench of its high-speed incrementalism for radical emancipation: it is heedless of real forms of life, and seeks in a “luxury communism (Alex Srnicek)” the fantasy of a bourgeois without bourgeoisie. It mistakes technology for a force of production and not a means of production—in Marxian terms they conflate the difference between labor power and the means of production and think automation is capable of surmounting that difference.

instead for the ground of the immanence of stupidity in thought, and seek to show how one will never overcome stupidity by the accumulation of more and ‘better’ knowledge, nor by “waging a war on stupidity,”<sup>37</sup> but instead by understanding that the prison of stupidity is also, in a sense, its own freedom: the impotence of thought is also its royal faculty (DR, 152). Thus we will confront not only stupidity, as it is theoretically articulated by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, we also confront questions of certainty, doubt, error, along with the figure of the idiot, and the mute expression of a

Brassier’s Sellarsian program of “methodical materialist” cognitivism is far more mature, rigorous, and worthy of consideration. Thus it is no surprise that Brassier is to the accelerationists a kind of patron saint—an accolade and acolytes I’m sure he would rather do without. However better a thinker Brassier may be, he suffers the same basic assumption: he takes the acquisition of ‘knowledge’ as good in itself, and as a foundation from which to engineer an ethics and a politics. What is to economic modeling in the one, cognitive mapping (not only in the neuro-scientific sense) is to the other—they find a savior in each case. See, “#ACCELERATE: A Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics.” In *#ACCELERATE: the Accelerationist Reader*. Williams, Alex; Srnicek, Nick. Eds. Mackay, Robin; Avanesian, Armen. Urbanomic, New York, 2014. As well as “Prometheanism and its Critics” in *#ACCELERATE: the Accelerationist Reader* and “Nominalism, Naturalism, and Materialism: Sellars’s Critical Ontology” in *Contemporary Philosophical Naturalism and Its Implications*, Brassier, Ray. Eds. Bashour, Bana; Muller, Hans D. Routledge, New York, 2014.

Cf. what seems now like a striking admonition, by Zourabichvili, to these new forms of left political rationalism: “It’s not always clear which ‘leftism’ was that of Deleuze. The left is ordinarily characterised by its voluntarism. Deleuze, however, developed the least voluntarist philosophy imaginable: attesting to the ‘unwillingness’ of the Russian idiot; the ‘absence of will’ of the aboriginal American... He always insisted on the fundamentally involuntary character of true thought and all becomings. Consequently, nothing was more foreign to him than a program to transform the world according to a given plan, or according to a certain goal.” “Deleuze et le possible (de l’involontarisme en politique)” in *Deleuze: Une Vie Philosophique* [unofficial translation by Diarmuid Hester.], p.335.

The sole ‘rationalist’ exception here is Spinoza, who sees no difference between an adequate idea and an effective power of action (as opposed to passion); this only superficially resembles Descartes’ account of the causes of error that will be discussed later. Since in Spinoza knowledge does not provide the ground of acting, they cannot be perceived as separable instances (and this because there is no mind/body problem in Spinoza). See, *Ethics*, E3D1-3, E3p1-2, E3P1. Spinoza’s theory of emotions (or affects), for the same reason, also towers above both the rationalists, and especially the empiricists (affordances made for Hume).

<sup>37</sup> The opening lines of Ronell’s dense and insightful survey on the subject: “The temptation is to wage war on stupidity as if it were a vanquishable object...” *Stupidity*, p. 3.



silence which forces thought into being—that is, the question of why we *must* think. We also bring to light the relation of stupidity to the melancholic category of the clear-confused (opposed to the clear and distinct<sup>38</sup>) in the intimation which stupidity shares with creation.

The thinking of stupidity is, of course, not without precedent, but to a large extent the abridgment of the topic does not concern us, since the form of a thing usually indicates to us only superficial resemblances that distract from real differences between the instances of an ostensible topic. Avital Ronell has, nevertheless, presents us with the only full-length monograph on the subject, to my knowledge. But for Ronell, Stupidity never exits the barrenness of a literary imagination divorced from the forms of life that keep such an imagination from being arbitrary and superfluous.<sup>39</sup> It never finds itself where its ethical wagers, where the demands and declarations it makes of stupidity—in short, where its stakes—are no longer merely speculative. Discursivity defers its being engendered in flesh and blood by retaining its eternal possibility. This is why Ronell can

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<sup>38</sup> Although I will speak about the ‘clear and distinct system’ and other related phrases, it should be understood that clear and distinct thought is always clear and confused thought, only doubly confused.

<sup>39</sup> Despite the tenor of the language, and our choice to use the words ‘arbitrary’ and ‘superfluous’ in describing Ronell’s *Stupidity*, we do find within it some remarkably salient points, and do not in fact underestimate it in the use of these seemingly diminishing terms. One could argue that, insofar as one subscribes to some basic form of Saussurean semiology, that all forms of language (specifically in the relation between the signifier and signified) are, in a very special sense, arbitrary. Ronell—being brought up in the traditions of hermeneutics, and being a proponent of deconstruction—would be all too familiar with this. We, on the other hand, do not uphold the arbitration of the sign in the same way (at least in any non-trivial sense) since it requires that signs submit to, and dwell within language, rather than the other way around. That is, for us, signs function also sub-linguistically and supra-linguistically, and as such have a metaphysical purchase beyond their merely symbolic functions in the economy of discourse by itself, however important these may be. Similarly we use superfluous in its etymological sense, which concatenates the orgiastic representations of the signifier (i.e. the floating signifier, the excess of signification) with the purely symbolic circularity of such a regime of signs. What Deleuze and Guattari will later call “*signifiance*.” Cf. *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 117.

hold in reserve the possibility of the actual constitution of stupidity,<sup>40</sup> and moreover draws from this reservation the performative breadth of her vast resource—the whole of the western canon. But, it is for the same reason that the superfluity of the performance never lives itself *as stupid*; instead it enacts its survey cleverly—all-too-cleverly—as a sympathetic *surveyor*. It is our endeavor to be more modest: to give ourselves over, however cautiously, to our own stupidity; to divest ourselves as far as possible of any ironic reserve of wit or distant intellectual disinterest in the subject.

*Three Words* – Stupidity is a power, immanent to thought, capable of—and necessary for—creation. Our understanding of how stupidity plays out in creative productions involves an epistemological category borrowed from Leibniz and Deleuze: that of *clear-confused* thought. Clear-confused thought is a mode of stupidity, necessarily, and in a particular way.

Stating one's *objective presuppositions* has long been a part of clear-confused thinking. Objective presuppositions are those precepts formalizable in their expression: axioms, principles, definitions, and so on. The words we here define are those of immediate import to a definition of stupidity. Stupidity is not error, idiocy, dumbness, or ignorance, anymore than it is a form of intelligence. For the sake of tidiness, we will be etymologically concerned only with the terms that seem immediately in need of differential address; those that are in danger of becoming synonyms for stupidity. As they will also contribute to our overall aim, these three terms will be taken in the context of

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<sup>40</sup> She affords this reservation on performative *epistemological* grounds insofar as stupidity “consists... in the absence of a relation to knowing.” Epistemology entertains a distinction here, but we object on different grounds, those of forms of life—on the basis of a transcendental empiricism. Ronell, *Stupidity*, p. 4.

their obsolete and etymological valences. *Stupidity* is doubtless the most important, and it will also take on many of the determinations given it by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*. The second most important of the three is the term *idiot*, as it will take on a certain strand of the history of philosophy, and factor into both the concepts of error and certainty (the clear and distinct system) as afforded by Descartes. The third of course is the word dumb, which will align itself with the powers of silence, or—as will see—the affirmation of *showing* as a positive ‘non-being.’

The use of idiocy and the figure of the idiot are not altogether foreign to the history of philosophy. One could argue it has a lineage stretching all the way back to the Greek philosopher Pyrrho who, credited in part with the invention of skepticism, lived roughly from 360-270 BCE and sought a state of absolutely tranquil disaffection (*ataraxia*) on the basis that we can neither make veridical nor falsidical judgments about the world.<sup>41</sup> More explicitly, we have the renaissance philosopher, Nicolas of Cusa, giving us his idiot, who has an immediate relation with the divine through the practice of a learned ignorance (*docta ignorantia*)<sup>42</sup>. The most famous idiot in the western tradition is of course Descartes, who doubts everything except that he is doubting. In philosophical history, the idiot has, no matter what version one might prefer, essentially to do with the suspension of presupposition, with ways of bracketing presupposition off, and so philosophically idiocy has always been something *methodological*. Wittgenstein’s later

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<sup>41</sup> For a general account of the life and main tenets of Pyrrho’s philosophical practice, see “Pyrrho” in *Lives of Eminent Philosophers Volume II*, Diogenes Laertius, pp. 475-519. Trans. R. D. Hicks. Harvard UP, Cambridge, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> This is the subject and title of a three-book work of Cusa’s; Nicolas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance (De Docta Ignorantia)*. Trans. Jasper Hopkins; Arthur J. Banning Press, Minneapolis, 1981. The case of Cusa’s idiot is more complex than we have time to treat here, and does not entirely comply with our schema of privation and the suspension of judgment.

work also fits somewhat into this tradition. There is another valence that the idiot has, besides her methodological approach, one implied by this method of suspension. It coincides with taking society to be the locus of opinion and belief (*doxa*), and defines a relationship between the idiot and society, and each time refashioning the mode of this relationship. The English word idiot comes from the ancient Greek *idi t s* meaning ‘a private person, or an individual’ and *idios* means ‘one’s own, or private’. Given this history, the idiot is defined in contradistinction to society, and idiocy as method yields its formative practice in types of *privation* (e.g. in the suspension of belief, opinion, presupposition, and so on). These perspectives on the idiot in English were also consistent with the Latin *idiota* until around 1300 (at which point the more contemporary senses of the word start to appear). From this, different figures of idiocy naturally emerge relative to the social formation upon which the specific historical idea of the idiot is formed—conceptions like the ‘village idiot’ for example.

Dumb here is used in its archaic sense of ‘muteness or speechlessness’. In the sense in which one might find oneself dumb-struck by something. It comes the Gothic word *dumbs* meaning ‘mute’. This has obvious resonances with the infamous 7<sup>th</sup> proposition of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*: “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.”<sup>43</sup> Although somewhat obvious, it is interesting too to note that the contemporary usage of dumb as ‘stupid’ comes from associating intelligence with speech.

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<sup>43</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, §7. Trans. C. K. Ogden. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981. Print.

Stupidity is a much more difficult nexus of things to untangle, especially given the conceptual framework from which we will be posing our problem in relation to creation. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* stupidity is defined as “a behavior that lacks good sense or judgment.” The adjective stupid is defined as “lacking intelligence or common sense” and in another sense as “dazed and unable to think clearly.” (cite). Etymologically the English word comes from Latin, through French—the Latin *stupere* meaning ‘to be amazed or stunned’. The Latin in turn comes from the ancient Greek *týpto* ‘I strike’ and further from the Sanskrit *tópati* meaning ‘to hurt’. The origin of its modern English sense appears in the mid-sixteenth century, whereas before, especially in the Latin context, it was affiliated with a sense of wonder, as for example the English word ‘stupendous’ still connotes. In all contexts, regardless of the values associated with its specific historical codings, it is associated with an indelible element of violence, whether due to affection or action, social prejudice or physical harm. It is from this context of violence that we are, in turn, faced with the conditions of creation, with the criteria which engender it in thought, and the movements capable of allowing us to understand stupidity, not as a merely exogenous and accidental misfortune or error, but as something properly immanent to thought. Finally, it is this same violence, which may also allow us to affirm stupidity—with the necessary caution, and in a peculiar ways.

*Creation* – The question of the “problematic”<sup>44</sup> for Deleuze is an eminently practical matter. Given this, the realist question *par excellence* is not, ‘how do we confirm the existence of objects, independent of experience?’, but something quite

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<sup>44</sup> An analysis and use of the very complex issue and status of the “problematic” in Deleuze will form one of the bases of our third chapter.

different; the realist question is, ‘what made experience necessary, or what forces it into existence?’ From this follows the whole problem of creation, of the *dynamis* of immanence, and with it, the problem of creative production. It follows in the form of questions about our genetic constitutions (psychic, material, and so on) and about the structures that regulate, measure out, and resist the singular powers of our existences. This direction of investigation into the conditions of real experience Deleuze calls ‘transcendental empiricism’:

Descartes remarked that we cannot deny this equality [the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles]... but we can indeed think, even of triangles, without thinking of that equality. All truths of that kind are hypothetical, since they presuppose all that is in question and are incapable of giving birth in thought to the act of thinking. In fact, concepts only ever designate possibilities. They lack the claws of absolute necessity – in other words, of an original violence inflicted upon thought; the claws of a strangeness or an enmity which alone would awaken thought from its natural *stupor* or eternal possibility: there is only involuntary thought, aroused but constrained within thought, and all the more absolutely necessary for being born, illegitimately, of fortuitousness in the world. Thought is primarily trespass and violence, the enemy, and nothing presupposes philosophy: everything begins with misosophy. Do not count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think. The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself. (DR, 139; my italics).

According to Deleuze everything starts with sensibility, since the object of the encounter must be apprehended there before anywhere else.<sup>45</sup> It is the first ‘transcendent exercise of a faculty’ in which what appears can only be sensed—a selection of the purely sensible, the *sentendum*; a making perceptible. This exercise bears the faculty, from within itself, to reach the limit of its own outside, to bear and maintain what it is

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<sup>45</sup> We will return to the question of sensibility *in the absolute* in the final chapter.

not, within itself. Thus, there is an imperceptibility proper to sensibility or the *sentendum*, a forgetting essential to memory, and importantly for us, a stupidity immanent to thought or the *cogitandum*. “Each faculty must be borne to the extreme point of its dissolution, at which it falls prey to a triple violence: the violence of that which forces it to be exercised, of that which it is forced to grasp and which it alone is able to grasp, yet also that of the ungraspable from the point of view of its empirical exercise.” (DR, 143).

The empirical exercise of the faculties affords for a specific faculty a restricted, and common, or civil, use of the other faculties (e.g. one imagines or recalls something which originated in another faculty). From the point of view of the transcendental form of the faculty, however, the civility of ‘common sense’ appears less like a restitution than a momentary, and mostly superfluous, cease-fire. It should be no surprise then, that from the standpoint of common sense, we still consider stupidity the product of mere misunderstanding, something that might be easily corrected if the right information and attitude were adopted (as if attitudes can simply be adopted or sloughed off)—in a word, we regard it simply as something external. Much the same could be said about our relationship to cruelty. But, to assume this is also to assume the ‘good will of thought’, and to disregard the fact that the cruelty and stupidity which manifest themselves around us has stakes of its own, independent of and conflicting with ours. However, to underestimate the reality of those stakes, no matter how heinous they might be—say for instance, in the name of the maintenance of a particular psychic, cultural, or political life—is to do ourselves a great disservice, and to effectively misapprehend our own stupidity and our own cruelty.

*Excursus on the 4<sup>th</sup> Meditation* – For Deleuze, as well as for us, stupidity is not error. Stupidity is a problem for thought, whereas error remains external to it. We will orbit stupidity by way of difference, in delimiting what error means for the thinker of error *par excellence*. In Descartes’ “Fourth Meditation” an understanding (principally of the cause or causes) of error is in need insofar as where there is doubt, there is also the possibility of error. Doubt in turn is, of course, indispensable since it constitutes the discourse and method by which one arrives at something metaphysically incontestable, namely the thinking of oneself, or again, the certainty of one’s existence as a thinking thing. But, perhaps more importantly still, Descartes will have to track down the sources of error in spite of an unshakable conviction—wrought apparently by principle—of the existence of God. In other words, how does one attribute a cause to the fact of error without attributing that error to the bestowal of God? Here we are concerned with two main ideas and the arguments for them. Firstly, in the conception of error and of certainty, and secondly in the vision that makes these concepts possible, the system and context which gives them sense—and thus, in the ‘subjective presuppositions’ through which this system (that is, of the clear and distinct) is constituted along with its consequences for, what we hesitate to call, epistemology.

It is not by accident that the “Fourth Meditation” begins with these words: “Thus have I lately become accustomed to withdrawing the mind from the senses.” (Descartes, 53).<sup>46</sup> What we need here to take note of is twofold: on the one hand the mind *can* be withdrawn from the senses, and on the other, this is concluded upon before any

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<sup>46</sup> All citations of Descartes’ *Meditations* are given with reference to the original Latin pagination, so that different editions and translations can more easily be consulted.



investigation into error begins (it begins, “Thus...”). There is a contingent reason for this, but there is also a more essential one.

In the withdrawal of the mind from the senses, certain things begin to articulate themselves; we pass from a concern of corporeal things (bodies) to a concern of the *human* mind, and of God. We pass too away from the imagination to the understanding. “...very few things...are truly perceived regarding corporeal things, and that a great many more things regarding the human mind—and still...more... regarding God—can be known,... I direct my thinking away from things I can imagine to things that I can only understand, and that are separated from all matter.” (Descartes, 53). Additionally, we find imagination tied to bodies, and the understanding completely distinct from it. This is the case insofar as the mind is a thinking thing (*substantia cogitans*) only receiving by way of extension ideas of particular bodies (viz., empirical data of bodies as mere affections of the mind.)<sup>47</sup> Yet, since doubt is the index of an imperfection and of a dependence, its inverse produces an idea of that on which ‘I’ depend; “...a clear and distinct idea of an independent and complete being, namely God.” (Descartes, 53). It follows that only the mind can have clear and distinct ideas, and that it can only have clear and distinct ideas about itself and about God.

God cannot be the cause of error, because if he were, it would have to be by deception (since in God, it could not be by accident that he was the cause of error), and that it is furthermore impossible for him to deceive, given that he is perfect, and that every deception involves an element of imperfection, since it is not the truth (Descartes,

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<sup>47</sup> The distinction between the mind and body is, of course, one of the cornerstones of Cartesian thought, and is the explicit subject of the “Second Meditation”, pp. 23-34.

53-4). Here we must disentangle a host of related problems in order to make more concrete a definition of error and the possible relations it entertains with the human being. If such an argument appears robust to us it is because we have already tacitly accepted a series of *subjective presuppositions*: that only the truth can be real; that this reality is fully expressed (can only be identical with itself) in the whole—and thus, that there is a whole—that is, in God (transcendent or otherwise, which is yet to be of any concern);<sup>48</sup> that the truth and the good (i.e. perfection) cannot be thought as separate instances; this of course means that every instance of truth is good (at least in the last instance, if not *tout court*). Although Descartes' argument already implicates a direction, it does not yet provide an account of error as such, only an argument for why God is not, *a priori*, responsible.

Error arises from the relation in me between the faculties of the intellect and the will, and more specifically in the over extension of the will beyond the purview of the understanding. Such a relation is *not* an internal problem concerning the constitution of the faculties. As each is bestowed by God, they are, in themselves, perfect in kind (Descartes, 56-7). Thus error amounts to a relation which cannot itself be real according to Descartes (since what is real is also true), but instead is put on the side of “non-being,” and negation.<sup>49</sup> Error is a negation of freedom (a privation of knowledge) due to the

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<sup>48</sup> Although, not of explicit concern even for Descartes, it seems evident (given the continuous analogy of divine bestowal) that God is not in the world, though natural light (in Descartes, innate cognitive essence of the human: cogito) permeates the whole of the *Meditations*.

<sup>49</sup> See *Meditations*, p. 54: “...I have been so constituted as to be somewhere in the middle ground between God and nothing, or between supreme being and non-being...” One may be led to wonder just what this non-being is (or more appropriately what it isn't), and to what extent, nothing (non-being) and lack (privation) are strictly assimilable. It seems to that as Deleuze says that stupidity constitutes itself precisely in the indeterminate *relation* between individual and ground, that he at once ironizes Descartes' ‘middle

indifferent extension of the will, the faculty of free choice (Descartes, 57-8); extended into indifference because the intellect alone is capable of making a judgment between the two terms of an alternative.<sup>50</sup> And, in the negation of freedom, the figure of the idiot appears, again in the guise of a privation in which only the natural capacities, heedless of any sociality of error, are responsible. “Inherent in this incorrect use of free will is a privation that constitutes the very essence of error: a privation, I say, is inherent in this operation insofar as the operation proceeds from me, but not in the faculty that was given to me by God, nor even in the operation of the faculty insofar as it depends upon God.” (Descartes, 60). Given that the extension of the faculty of choice (free will) is to blame, error is an eminently freely chosen and therefore a wholly avoidable idiocy. And it is consequently, the ignorance of such an impotency that allows Descartes a claim to the category of clear and distinct thoughts, or what is more, the true and the good.

In this way stupidity escapes thought by installing error outside the implications of an impotency immanent to thought itself. The intricacies of error can be housed under what Deleuze will call ‘the good will of the philosopher’ or again the ‘dogmatic image of thought’; a situation in which the thinker’s natural capacity to think and their desire for the truth are sufficient in themselves to point the way, and put one on the road to truth.<sup>51</sup>

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ground’ here, but also rescues the issue of ‘non-being’ from its negative definition, and restores to it (or provides for it for the first time) its positivity, its affirmative character.

<sup>50</sup> See *Meditations*, p. 58. One will recognize here the scourge of good sense or ‘unique’ sense discussed in our first chapter in relation to the *Tractatus* and to the framing of good sense (grounded by the work of *Difference and Repetition*) in *Logic of Sense*, along with its resistance to the figures of nonsense, paradox, and neutrality in these works.

<sup>51</sup> See e.g. the beginning of “The Image of Thought” in *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 129-30, 130: “Someone who neither allows himself to be represented nor wishes to represent anything. Not an individual

Although Deleuze himself espouses necessary thought—that is, the engendering of the genesis of thought within thought itself—the program of where to begin and how to proceed could not be more different in the two thinkers, and Deleuze reserves a hostility for Descartes that is virtually unparalleled, relative to the host of other thinkers Deleuze will, over the years, come to investigate and critique.

*Stupidity* – Stupidity is not ignorance, any more than it is innocence, naiveté, or error. Neither is it the absence of intelligence. Moreover, it is not, as we already alluded to, other people’s problem: it is each and all of ours. For Deleuze, stupidity is a peculiarly human condition:

Stupidity [*bêtise*] is not animality. The animal is protected by specific forms, which prevent it from being 'stupid' [*bête*]. Formal correspondences between the human face and the heads of animals have often been composed; in other words, correspondences between individual differences peculiar to humans and the specific differences of animals. Such correspondences, however, take no account of stupidity as a specifically human form of bestiality...One is neither superior nor external to that from which one benefits: a tyrant institutionalises stupidity, but he is the first servant of his own system and the first to be installed within it. Slaves are always commanded by another slave. Here too, how could the concept of error account for this unity of stupidity and cruelty, of the grotesque and the terrifying, which doubles the way of the world? Cowardice, cruelty, baseness and stupidity are not simply corporeal capacities or traits of character or society; they are structures of thought as such. The transcendental landscape comes to life: places for the tyrant, the slave and the imbecile must be found within it – without the place resembling the figure who occupies it, and without the transcendental ever being traced from the empirical figures which it makes possible. It is always our belief in the postulates of the *Cogitatio* [the image of thought] which prevents

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endowed with good will and a natural capacity for thought, but an individual full of ill will who does not manage to think, either naturally or conceptually. Only such an individual is without presuppositions. Only such an individual effectively begins...” See also Zourabichvili’s fine extrapolation of the mutilation of necessity and the outside that inaugurates his monograph on Deleuze; *Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event*, pp. 44-6.

us from making stupidity a transcendental problem. Stupidity can then be no more than an empirical determination...But whose fault is this? Does not the fault lie first with philosophy, which has allowed itself to be convinced by the concept of error even though this concept is itself borrowed from facts, relatively insignificant and arbitrary facts?... Philosophy could have taken up the problem with its own means and with the necessary modesty, by considering the fact that stupidity is never that of others but the object of a properly transcendental question (DR, 150-1).

Stupidity is made possible through individuation, and the unique relationship we have to speciation. If the determinations of the species bear upon and protect the animal from acting against itself in favor of a mutative element potentially catastrophic to the continuation of specific forms (as we in our current environmental semi-oblivion are all too closely acquainted with), the fact that the form of the 'I' can stand, in human beings, as the universal index of the species, while at the same time not being determined by the specific forms that the I or the Self make into principles and arrogate to themselves, then the torrent of the forces of individuation are given leeway, and a relationship emerges between the determination of an individual and an indeterminate existential ground. "Stupidity is neither this ground nor the individual, but rather this relation in which individuation brings this ground to the surface without being able to give it form." (DR, 152).

Stupidity, as this inability to give form to the surface by grounding the individual in the desire to associate it with the principle of the 'I' or the Self (that is, as a metonym of the species), is precisely the category of the clear-confused in thought. The form of the individual is given and obvious (e.g., the limit of my phenotype is clear), but what it carries with it, along with the conditions of its genesis and plasticity are essentially confused from the standpoint of the 'I', since clarity cannot entertain any idea of a indeterminate relation internal to the objects of its consciousness.

Despite stupidity giving the human being its particular hideousness, and despite it giving rise to what is perhaps worst in our natures, it is also our freedom. We are, via stupidity, in a relation with the mutative powers of the ground, which has consequences well beyond the formation of the individual, since stupidity is this non-formed relation itself.

‘A pitiful faculty then emerges in their minds, that of being able to see stupidity and no longer tolerate it...’ It is true that this most pitiful faculty also becomes the royal faculty when it animates philosophy as a philosophy of mind – in other words, when it leads all the other faculties to that transcendent exercise which renders possible a violent reconciliation between the individual, the ground and thought. At this point, the intensive factors of individuation take themselves as objects...and from faculty to faculty, the ground is borne within thought – still as the unthought and unthinking, but this unthought has become the necessary empirical form in which, in the fractured I (Bouvard and Pecuchet), thought at last thinks the *cogitandum* (‘the fact that we do not yet think’ or ‘What is stupidity?’). (DR, 152-3).

*Excursus, On Certainty: Wittgenstein I* – If the absolute object of transcendental empiricism is the transcendent exercise of a faculty, it also has a relative, subsidiary, applied, normative, or descriptive object: that of the investigation of ‘the image of thought.’ This is precisely the ‘perspicuous’ view which characterizes the inclination of late Wittgenstein. This descriptive endeavor installs itself right in the relation constitutive of stupidity (between the individual and its ground) and hits the mark that error and good will miss; it is, in a sense, the science of the clear-confused.

Though not sufficient in itself, description exposes the deeply normative and pedagogical implications of stupidity. The ground (distinct-obscure in itself) is confused necessarily by the image of thought, by that clarity which characterizes the forms of the

individual, and the consciousness it retains in the form of the 'I'. If stupidity is intimately bound up with the processes of individuation, prior to and stripped of its specific efficacies, then what can be said about the nature of this ground? On what registers does Deleuze see effective points of entry and agency with respect to this relation between individual and ground: ontological, biological, psychological, pedagogical, epistemological, or practical points? We sense that the answer will not be straightforwardly delimited in the boundaries of these categories. On the other hand, what Wittgenstein finds everywhere in his investigation is the essential groundlessness of the image of thought—" [t]he difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing." (OC, §166): The groundlessness is the confusion which lies unquestioned, and unquestionable, from the standpoint of mere doubt towards objective presupposition or mere normativity. But this confusion is the ground itself, albeit seen from the standpoint of clarity; already installed in one's own stupidity as it were. If stupidity is and remains important, it is because it cuts to the heart of our determinations, at the same time blind and mute to its own condition.<sup>52</sup> *On Certainty* is—in its penetrating enquiry into the conditions of certainty—the antipode of a Cartesian doubt, and the certainty *it* implies. It seeks out the "indeterminate... [that nonetheless] continues to embrace determination" (DR, 152); it seeks out this ground necessarily without the aid of a consciousness capable of being present to itself (*cogito*)—with a mute grasp on the fleetingly partial intelligibility of stupidity itself. It exposes the necessarily social dimensions of the image of thought, as well as the unshakable convictions within it that rest seemingly on air. "At

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<sup>52</sup> Deleuze: "It is difficult to describe this ground, or the terror and attraction it excites. Turning over the ground is the most dangerous occupation, but also the most tempting in the stupefied moments of an obtuse will. For this ground, along with the individual, rises to the surface yet assumes neither form nor figure. It is there, staring at us, but without eyes." *Difference and Repetition*, p. 152.

the foundation of a well-founded belief, lies belief that is unfounded.” (OC, §253). Deleuze carries this further and shows though of course unfounded (with respect to knowledge), stupidity rests in an essentially indeterminate relation which is anything but arbitrary or innocuous, and that diversifies itself in myriad actualizations, from biological processes to social formations.

First we want to understand more precisely what is entailed by the image of thought, and its investigation in *On Certainty*, then, with Deleuze’s realism, “to show the fly the way out of the fly bottle” of normativity (PI, §309), not by some ultimate appeal, but by a dynamic and pragmatic process of grounding: by the ceaseless and creative, even if constantly fraught and troubling, relation of the individual and ground. This will lead us to *showing* (the affirmation of a ‘non-being’) as a non-representational practice of the genesis of thought (practice of the *cogitandum*).

For Deleuze, “a single Image (of thought) in general... constitutes the subjective presupposition of philosophy as a whole.” (DR, 132). If Wittgenstein aims at the dissolution of philosophical confusion in general, it is because he seeks at the same time to make explicit everywhere this subjective presupposition, this image (this is the meaning of clarity for late Wittgenstein). Objective presuppositions are installed at the level of principle, and are as such both suspendable (as in the case of skepticism), and at the same time appear more fundamental than subjective presuppositions. Indeed subjective presuppositions do not even appear to act on the conditions of the principle at all from the standpoint of the clear-distinct system (the system of objective presupposition). Subjective presuppositions on the other hand *seem* to come in at the level of fact, even while they condition the structure and sense of facts themselves. This



is what Wittgenstein is getting at when he says he is "...inclined to believe that not everything that has the form of an empirical proposition *is* one." (OC, §308). The logic of sense does not find its formative articulation above the level of its existence (in a realm of its mere possibility, in principle). And it is here that Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* takes on an investigation of Moore's statements that have the form "Everybody knows..."<sup>53</sup>

"'I know' is here a *logical* insight. Only realism can't be proved by means of it." (OC, §59). If realism can't be proved by the logical insight of the proposition "I know," it is because this logic represents the beliefs that fall prior to, and are exempt from, the grounds of doubt; that is, they make up the 'scaffolding' of subjective presupposition or the image of thought: they construct the poles of good sense and common sense. As subjective presuppositions, they hide among the other propositions; they are of the same *form* all the while differing in *kind*. But why does this mean that they cannot be used to prove realism (as Moore's naïve attempt would like them to)? Wittgenstein says our certainty about them does not justify their validity, it only gives them a functional role in the construction of sense within a language-game. They represent the axes of a normative system, synthetic *a priori* forms of judgment. And without them, quite literally one loses the power of judgment: one becomes stupid. Therefore, from the point of view of mere normativity, these propositions appear arbitrary though not 'consensual' in the sense of a collective project of public reason (an enlightenment). For Wittgenstein they would be inherited before they could be agreed upon. "I did not get my picture of the world by

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Deleuze: "We would do better to ask what is a subjective or implicit presupposition: it has the form of 'Everybody knows ...'. Everybody knows, in a pre-philosophical or pre-conceptual manner ... everybody knows what it means to think and to be." *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 129-30. Wittgenstein suggests that for Moore's statements the concept of being in error, or of being mistaken have no sense—i.e., that everyone will apprehend in advance the legitimacy of the form of his discourse; cf. *On Certainty*, §32.

satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false.” (OC, §94). The image is also not agreed upon prior to its enactment only later to be inherited. Neither does this, however, consign the contents of the image to time immemorial: the language-game, regardless of its inheritance, mutates with time. But this shows too, contrary to Descartes’ view, that—because of the image of thought—certainty precedes both truth and falsity, correctness and error, since it is only from within the image that mistakes themselves have sense. Hence, certainty is groundless—and in that sense arbitrary—insofar as truth and correctness are indeed the means of epistemological grounding. Nevertheless, we sense that this is only part of the picture.

Deleuze wants to show that when one approaches the limit of the image of thought—its own uncontested bases—from within its arbitrariness is justified only insofar as one understands the scope of this image in purely discursive or epistemological terms. If one no longer limits the ramifications of the image to mere discourse, this image is no longer purely arbitrary, at bottom, but neither must it be accepted even in the absence of another normative framework, another image. Nor, finally, is the image something that must be replaced with something else (this would be reactive *in extremis*), instead it must be struggled with and overcome, even if it remains unvanquished, even if our moments of victory are unable to metastasize into another model of recognition, another mythology, ideology, or ‘*Weltbild*’. Naturally though, the overcoming of the image of thought, following what has already been said, will not be merely discursive either. And this is why we must take full account of Wittgenstein’s emphasis on practice, and not see him—

as too many commentators on Wittgenstein do<sup>54</sup>—as the promoter of a ‘correlationism’, as a kind of linguistic idealist (*a la* Derrida). In short, on the one hand we can say that practice *touches* the real, reaches beyond the pale modifications of purely discursive sense-making and the grounds and groundlessness it implies from within itself, and on the other that discourse itself has a pale grasp on the *real* conditions and requirements of sense—its social, historical, mythological, ethnological, ethological, biological, metaphysical conditions; its efficacious, genetic constituency.

Only by engendering and becoming pregnant with the indeterminate relation of stupidity—that is, by a genuine practice, exercise, or experiment of thought—do we come into contact with the mutative and obscure powers of the ground, those which preside over creation and creative production itself. Here, although such creations must be locally actualized, the loci themselves matter very little insofar as the process and means of this creation are the same in literature, the plastic arts, film, philosophy, and science. If one is to do the *necessary* work of carrying a faculty to the point of its own genesis, one must reach below and beyond the given (the image of thought) into the incredulity and dangers of that zone where mistakes (errors) no longer have any meaning; into stupidity, at the risk of bogging oneself down in depressive episodes, in a barbiturate somnambulant automaticity, an antiproduction, an utter dependency, or at the risk of sacrificing oneself to the great anti-specific Moloch of indifference or apathy; or worse

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<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, Meillassoux’s interpretation of the *Tractatus* as an example of ‘strong correlationism’ in *After Finitude*; pp. 41-8. Although, not polemically positioned against Wittgenstein, unlike Meillassoux, Braver conflates Wittgenstein and Heidegger in a similar, albeit more nuanced, way. Furthermore, he does so precisely on the issue of grounding and groundlessness in the two thinkers, and auspiciously ends his book on the question of finitude. One wonders if Braver may have had Meillassoux’s polemic against them in mind. See, Lee Braver, *Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger*. MIT Press, Cambridge (2014).

still, one risks entering into a place where racism, sexism, xenophobia, and tyranny are also transcendental pitfalls. Suicide too is everywhere lurking. But, there is also no other risk. There is not even the alternative of forgoing these dangers, since what most call everyday life is already a capitulation to one or another of them. “We cannot foresee, we must take risks and endure the longest possible time, we must not lose sight of the grand health,” (LoS, 161) even if this means drugging from the ground—in all stupidity—the font of our intelligence.

*Philosophical Investigations* – The work of the *Philosophical Investigations* is exhausting—I am exhausted by it even now as I write. It exacts a relentless vertigo upon its reader, or else produces sheer boredom. More often than not, it induces both by turns. Vertiginous because it constantly bombards one with the ordinary without the expected provision of a timely proverbial recuperation: just when things seem to come to a head—as one prepares for the long-awaited epiphanic release—more problems ensue. There is never an end to the problems, and little in the way of resolution ever appears self-assuredly. On the other hand, boredom, or rather a kind of stupefaction, comes at the expense of its ceaseless injunction for one to think oneself. And at its heart—in its resolute withholding from the temptation towards didacticism and thetic declaration—it wants to divest from the understanding of language, and of philosophy generally, the model of representation. In its stead we find a deep pedagogy of showing, and of practice: a pragmatics of thought. It is both the frustration and the brilliance of the *Philosophical Investigations* to require all the resources of an imbecile who no longer presumes to begin thinking with what “everybody knows.” It is at such a beginning, for

Wittgenstein, that the obvious and the difficult read correspond precisely.<sup>55</sup> And it is here, in enduring the work, that the *cogitandum* appears, not so much in any *presentation* capable of giving to thought a substance that it necessarily lacks, as in how it provokes us the act of thinking itself. If Wittgenstein so deeply mistrusts the belief in private experience, it is because there are no ‘thoughts’ as such. There is no unit of thought, there is only an act of thinking, and a thinking which shows itself in our action.

...you again and again reach the conclusion that the sensation itself is a Nothing.” Not at all. It’s not a Something, but not a Nothing either! The conclusion was only that a Nothing would render the same service as a Something about which nothing could be said. We’ve only rejected the grammar which tends to force itself on us here. The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to *convey* thoughts which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or whatever. (PI, §304; my emphasis).

But neither is it, for all that, reducible to a calculus of stimulus and response. Wittgenstein is no less suspicious of the physiologist (of behaviorism) than he is of the bearer of the beautiful soul (inner experience of sense data and thought).

The *cogitandum* is a ‘non-being,’ but it does not lack any reality or positivity on this account. Moreover, does not the *Philosophical Investigations* embody this ‘royal faculty of stupidity’, and don’t we arrive here at the pure *cogitandum* (its non-being, the being of the problematic) through the exercise of the book? Wittgenstein’s aphorisms there give us a glimpse into a truly non-representational mode of philosophy; such as it is, no longer capable of telling us what to think, no longer capable of upholding the dogmatic image of thought, even if remains embroiled in its problems, in the problems of

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<sup>55</sup> I am indebted here to my friend and fellow artist Justin Schlepp for his ideas about the obvious and the difficult read in his “The Infernal Voluptuousness of Not Creating Anything.” Cited from an unpublished manuscript.

a mere normativity. The situations given in the aphorisms of *Philosophical Investigations* nevertheless *literally* force us to think. As such, the veritable medium of the investigations is the *cogitandum* and the unthought, given over to its own possibility: it appears only in the spaces separating one language-game from another. That is, it appears as the unthought, or unsaid of the book itself. It cannot even be written, it produces (given that we are conscientious, perspicuous enough) what can *only* be thought, and shows, with an honesty characteristic of Wittgenstein, its stupidity alongside and inseparable from its intelligence. Its affirmed stupidity in fact becomes exactly commensurate with the *cogitandum* in the clarity it exacts from its investigations.

When following a rule, an insurmountable confusion follows from the attempt at justifying the disjunction between the rule as an instruction, and the consequence of the action that follows. For even if one gave a rule and it was carried out exactly as was expected, no rule, in turn, could be given for the *understanding* of the rule—that which can only be thought appears precisely in, or as, this disjunction.

But how can a rule teach me what I have to do *at this point*? After all, whatever I do can, on some interpretation, be made compatible with the rule.” No, that’s not what one should say. Rather, this: every interpretation hangs in the air together with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning... [But] there is a misunderstanding here is shown by the mere fact that in this chain of reasoning we place one interpretation behind another, as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another lying behind it. For what we thereby show is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an interpretation, but which, from case to case of application, is exhibited in what we call “following the rule” and “going against it. (PI, §198-201).

Yet, as practice, everything functions: “That’s why ‘following a rule’ is a practice. And to *think* one is following a rule is not to follow a rule. And that’s why it’s not possible to

follow a rule ‘privately’” (PI, §202).<sup>56</sup> Much like the description of learning Deleuze gives to the example of the swimmer, there is already a deep pedagogy at work: we are composed with the movement of the aphorisms and language-games, just as the swimmer is composed by the movements of the ocean. “I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his [sic.] own.” (PI, 4e). In the muteness of a showing which can only be thought, in the method, which bears an internal relation to the history of idiocy, and in making peace with a fundamental confusion bound to the clarity of expression, Wittgenstein is unique: a stupid, dumb idiot.

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We do not mean to suggest that the program of the *Investigations* should be everywhere upheld, and put in the place of the old image of the dogma: Deleuze’s unambiguous hatred of the Wittgenstein’s disciples indicates the dangers of trying to do so.<sup>57</sup> We do not mean to suggest that there is a single road to the transcendental exercise of thought. We cannot even give a general account of the attributes or character of this exercise; its instances always fail—much like language—to be arrogated to the comprehensive view. This is why rationalism always fails in light of stupidity, and why stupidity makes the hope of a perfect rationalism an absurdly pale wish. There is always a

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<sup>56</sup> Wittgenstein’s employment of the word thought here has the narrow sense for which he rebukes philosophy in its general understanding of the function of language, namely as a communicational paradigm whose units are fundamentally representational and referential, rather than syntactical or grammatical. It does not, on the other hand, exclude our sense of an act of thinking which corresponds to the *cogitandum*.

<sup>57</sup> See for example, *The Fold* p. 76, “...Wittgenstein’s disciples spread their misty confusion, sufficiency, and terror.”

plurality of *cogitanda*, accompanied by a plurality of stupidities. What we seek, rather than a cure for stupidity (even when stupidity rightly inspires dread in those sensitive to its risks), is a way to actively affirm even this: our own impotence, our own ‘involuntarity’. Just as the test of consciousness is provided in the unconscious it presupposes, and the test of kindness marked by the cruelty it entails, so too will the test of intelligence be wrought only by the state of stupidity it implies, and the network of practices such a stupidity rouses. If we can orient our stupidity to its own productive force, instead of once more undertaking the phantasmatic extrication of stupidity as a negative after-image of an illustrious intelligence, then we will be better off for it.



## Propaedeutic to the *Sentiendum*: The Aesthetic Idea

What he says, how he acts, etc. That is aesthetics.

–Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations*

*Introduction* – [We have seen in the each of the first two chapters how a middle term disrupts the smooth organization of two other terms. Thus, we saw in the surface the disturbance of the clean separation of the height and the depth, and sense inhering between the proposition and the logical attribute of the body. We also saw, in the second chapter, the restive stubbornness of stupidity disturbing the clean separation between knowledge and error.](#) This [chapter](#), as its title suggests, serves to clear the way for a concrete analysis of what I will call, following Deleuze’s invocation of Latin terms to refer to the objects of a ‘transcendent exercise of a faculty,’ the *sentiendum*. As with all propaedeutic writing, it does not deliver on its object. Therefore, the extensive analysis of concrete cases, from philosophy, literature, the plastic arts, music, film, or whatever else will take what is prepared here as given, but it will, in any case, be the subject of [another](#) investigation. What we are here concerned with are those moments where, in the nexus of the aesthetic and the ideal, the prospect of the aesthetic Idea—that is, the *sentiendum*—

seemed as if it might, if only briefly, rear its ugly head. [Such an exercise must be tracked down, not in empiricisms that begin with sensations as a ground, it must be sniffed out paradoxically in](#) history of the Idea, and the thinkers of that history. [In each case we will show how, despite the best efforts of magisterial reason, the aesthetic always finds its way into the ideal. Only then can we hope to show what the pure exercise of the aesthetic might look like from within philosophy itself. That is, we aim to point towards a moment when philosophers stop circumscribing the sensible \(even while affirming it\), and begin to philosophize sensibly.](#)

All great thinkers of the Idea are also necessarily confronted with the problematic of the aesthetic and the problems it poses to the Idea. In the history of philosophy, despite the intractable place the Idea has in the proceeding of [that](#) history, there have been relatively few thinkers of the Idea, and only three great ones. The two most obvious, and most immediately apprehended in terms of their relevance and influence, are of course Plato, and Kant.<sup>58</sup> Given our claim—of a necessary confrontation of the aesthetic with the Idea—these are consequently also thinkers of the aesthetic. Deleuze claims, no doubt in the wake of Kant, that “[a]esthetics suffers from a wrenching duality. On the one hand, it designates the theory of sensibility as the form of possible experience; on the other hand, it designates the theory of art as the reflection of real experience.” (LoS, 260). If this is

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<sup>58</sup> Certainly there are those who will object to the fact that Hegel seems auspiciously missing from this lineage, but it seems to us that the Idea in Hegel is overdetermined by the Concept on the one hand, and a sublative dialectic on the other such that the coincidence of the of the theoretical and practical ideas appears, in the last analysis not to have any real distinction which holds between [them](#). For this reason—namely, that there is only really on one Idea—there are no Ideas in Hegel. [There must be a pluralism of Ideas](#). By analogy, if there were no Ideas conditioned in the Platonic system, but only the Form of the Good along its phenomenology, then there would be no Ideas at all, but only a universal principal of phenomena. Similarly, the concept overbears on the monad in Leibniz. On these two figures in relation to the concept see *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 11-6.

the case, we can briefly elaborate a cursory confrontation of the Idea with the aesthetic in these two philosophical juggernauts.

Plato – Plato can almost extirpate this duality from aesthetics since, by making all appearance subordinate to the Idea, he can effectively, negatively claim a partial indifference to the distinction between possible experience and aesthetic reflection, at least with respect to the Idea itself. It is true that art is outright deceptive because it takes as its model the images of first order appearance (already of a metaphysically second order), and thus art will not suffice even for the purposes of garnering legitimate opinion or true yet unjustified belief (*endoxa*), but insofar far as they each can be shown to be derivations of the Form (Idea), this phenomenal difference means little: appearance never touches the purity of the Idea.<sup>59</sup> We encounter for the first time the formalization of the enduring complot of the concept (thought, *dianoia*) and the Idea; of the dominion of these over all thought, cognitive and otherwise.

The Idea is defined above all by its purity: a property that the Idea cannot relinquish without at the same time resigning its character as Idea. Purity belongs to the essence of the Idea,<sup>60</sup> not merely to the guise of its inaugural delimitation in Platonic

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<sup>59</sup> This is evident, even without a lengthy exegesis, from the delimitation of Plato's "ladder" descending from Understanding (*noësis*) down to imagination (*eikasia*) in *Republic*, VI, 509d-511e. The elaboration of this hierarchy is capable not only of rendering a scientific and absolute program for knowledge, but also implies, along the line of its epistemological entities, a correlated descent of metaphysical entities, beginning with the Idea (*idea*) and descending to the image (*eidolon*, *phantasma*). Notably, all forms of experience would reside in the lowest third of the ladder.

<sup>60</sup> I take my cue largely from Deleuze's statement, "...let us imagine particular entities that are only what they are... It's purity that defines the idea," from "H as in History of Philosophy" in *Gilles Deleuze from A to Z*. Though, Deleuze is ambivalent about whether or not this applies to all concepts of the Idea or whether it belongs only to Plato's formulation.

theory but to its *origin*. This is true as much for the independence of Ideas amongst themselves as it is for the unilateral relation that holds of phenomena to Ideas. Nevertheless, one purity is not like another; the differentiation of purity, in the manifold incarnations of Ideas, is the engendering concern of *method*.<sup>61</sup> The early dialogues of Plato are here instructive: the centrifuge of the elenchus<sup>62</sup>—that of the intensional definition—becomes the engine of the dialectic and comes to elaborate the specific purity of the Platonic Idea in terms of the object—namely as discrete Form. Whether or not such a Form is capable of being positively determined in discourse is, for the moment, immaterial. Negatively, one can assuage the natural variety of phenomenal entities (things, relations, actions, dispositions, characteristics, and so on) on the basis that their ideality needs no *ideal* differentiation. Upon first analysis, there is no taxonomy of the Idea; the Idea of a table and the Idea of Virtue do not differ in kind. Of course, in the last instance, there returns the meta-moral wager in the Form of the Good<sup>63</sup> reflecting the strong ethical imperative of the Socratic dialogues, but placing it, not at the level of interrogation—ending practically, as it would, in an ineluctable epistemic *aporia*—but at the level of the principle, one moreover transcending even the nominative being of the other Ideas all-the-while vested with the power of logical, if not existential, bestowal. With the addition of the Good, we discover the great confluence of metaphysics,

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<sup>61</sup> The relevance of both origin and method [which](#) concerns the apprehension of Ideas is clearly formulated in Benjamin's "Epistemo-Critical Prologue" in *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*. Origin and genesis are also considered at length by Deleuze. See, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 202.

<sup>62</sup> [The elenchus is the term used to describe the specific methodological principles involved in the early dialogues of Plato, and is opposed to dialectic, which characterizes Plato's mature work. Although both are interrogative, the former searches for intensional definitions, ostensive definition and the elaboration of doctrine are strictly forbidden. It relies chiefly on a principle of doxastic consistency in the interlocutors. Dialect on the other allows for theorization.](#)

<sup>63</sup> *Republic*, 508e2–509c.

epistemology, and morality—that most regrettable and perduring trinity which accompanies all philosophical transcendence.

As easy as the given treatment sounds to contemporary ears, the dispensation of the aesthetic is wrought only after great difficulty and deliberation by Plato, yet on the side of both the deduction of a first principle and in the use of metaphor (chiefly mythic and allegorical) the sensible floods in everywhere. Plato's "ladder" begins to curl in on itself as if to form a ring or a band that—despite all of its rigorous elanctic or dialectical machinery, and against every explicit demand of the Idea—connects these two complex themes.<sup>64</sup> The image (*eidolon*) cannot be entirely wrested from the Idea (*idea, eidos*), but the image's immanent relation does not imply the corruptibility of purity in principle (nothing can corrupt the purity of the Idea), rather it points to a difference in kind related to possible ideation—to the possibility of an aesthetic Idea.

Kant – Kant's injunction to the program of the Platonic theory of Ideas begins precisely at the site of its purity: on the basis of the object and of kinds. For Kant, Ideas do not lead to knowledge of objects since no intuition of objects can be given in a concept capable of a synthesis. In other words, the Idea cannot be determined in terms of the object at all. Ideas have no content proper to them, and no particular content is

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<sup>64</sup> For a discussion of the complex relation that the theory of the Forms to Plato's own theory of vision as involving both active and passive elements (internal and external light) see P. Pestic, "Seeing the Forms" in *The Internet Journal of the International Plato Society*, Feb. 2007. For the indissolubility of myth and metaphor in Plato's philosophical system see Derrida's "White Mythology" in *New Literary History*, Vol. 6 No. 1, 1974, pp. 5-74. In particular p. 20: "...[T]he strictly *philosophical* configuration of Plato's thought... is nothing but an anachronistic projection (my emphasis)." Lastly, for the unsettling implications of the chimerical 'Form of the copy,' arrived at momentarily by Plato on the deductive grounds of his theory, see Deleuze, "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy" in *Logic of Sense*, pp. 253-66.

capable of fulfilling the idea, even in principle. The peculiarity of the purity of the Kantian Idea is to be found essentially in its emptiness:

For if no intuition could be given corresponding to the concept, the concept would still be a thought, so far as its form is concerned, but would be without any object, and no knowledge of anything would be possible by means of it. So far as I could know, there would be nothing, and could be nothing, to which my thought could be applied. (CPR, B147).<sup>65</sup>

Thus, reason, when considered distinct from the understanding, leads to a necessary illusion, a rational illusion; the mandate of reason's completeness requires that the unconditioned be given in the form of an object that cannot be referred to any possible experience.<sup>66</sup> Thus the position of the Idea is entirely reversed: instead of referring to an objective necessity that phenomena participate in, the Idea is given in the form of the ends or limits of reason in the *subject*.<sup>67</sup> It is from this point of departure, that the freedom of the practical gains its peculiar Kantian, bureaucratic, and self-legislating

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<sup>65</sup> Since Ideas are necessarily unconditioned—because this is what vests the Idea with the power to unify knowledge in the pure concepts of the understanding—they too refer to no object of a possible intuition, and thus neither are they, strictly speaking, concepts in the Kantian sense.

<sup>66</sup> In the case of Plato, the fact that Ideas would determine phenomenal kinds, even if there are no differences in kind amongst Ideas themselves, already implies the importation of the empirical into the ideal: it involves a substitution and confusion of kinds, what Kant calls “subreption.” This is why there are only three Ideas in Kant: soul, world, God. See, for example, subreption in relation to the soul: “Nevertheless, nothing is more natural and seductive than the illusion of taking the unity in the synthesis of thoughts for a perceived unity in the subject of these thoughts. One could call it the subreption of hypostatized consciousness (*apperceptionis substantiate*) (CPR, p. A402).”

<sup>67</sup> In relation to the subjective necessity of empty Ideas, which cannot be filled by any specific content, Lacanian *jouissance* appears as a species of the transcendental illusion, one which would correspond to the Idea Desire, since desire is precisely lacking an object adequate to its demand. Thus, desire is regulative for Lacan. See “Kant with Sade” in *Écrits*, pp. 652-3 (French pagination pp. 773-4).

power.<sup>68</sup> Reason posits its own ends, absolutely and subjectively. From the standpoint of *constitution* (hypostatization and subreption), the Idea represents the transcendental illusion, from within the purview of *regulation*, however, this same illusion becomes at once theoretical and practical freedom, as well as absolute moral maxim. The question remains though: Why are there these three ideas; and if no object corresponds to them, how [are they](#) differentiated as distinct ideas?<sup>69</sup>

Of course, Kant readily seizes upon the duality within aesthetics: he invented it. It marks the difference between the “Transcendental Aesthetic” of the *First Critique* and the “Analytic of the Beautiful” of the *Third*, respectively. From the perspective of *The Critique of Pure Reason* the possibility of aesthetic Ideas is strictly precluded, given the insurmountable rift between the ideal and the sensible. The closest the aesthetic comes to the Idea in the first case is to providing the transcendental condition of pure mathematics.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps what this duality implies (and why there is no mention of the *Critique of Pure Reason* [in the Critique of Judgment](#) outside of the introduction) [is](#) that the manifestation of the aesthetic as pure forms of sensibility, as the *a priori* condition of empirical *sensibilia* (in the forms of space and time), occurs only because of a community or civility of faculties implied by the approbation of knowledge. That is, that

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<sup>68</sup> This freedom is at once *a priori* (since it is part of the structure of reason itself), and also indefatigable, since no possible content, or complex of contents, can bond the Idea with an intuition. On the contrary, Ideas are necessary to unify the concepts of the understanding.

<sup>69</sup> Deleuze has his own answer for this, which corresponds to the three moments of the *cogito*, or the three states of the idea: the undetermined, the determinable, and complete determination; I am, time, I think; soul, world, God.

<sup>70</sup> This is the subject of “How is Pure Mathematics Possible?” in *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* pp. 32-44, which attempts to consolidate the synthetic results of the Critique of Pure Reason into shorter analytic expositions. In any case, it makes the presentation of the “Transcendental Aesthetic” (i.e., space and time) clear as the condition of possibility of mathematics.

the *sensus communis* between the concept and sensation account, not merely for the transcendental condition of possible experience, for the constitution of knowledge of particular objects and their typology (their schematism), but it also affects outright what appears to be the nature of the aesthetic itself—which, for the sake of pure reason is relegated, transcendently anyway, to a registration space, an *a priori* neutral, coordinative, mental substrate—nothing, in fact, that a Cartesian grid could not make possible.<sup>71</sup>

The situation is quite different in the *Critique of Judgment*. To begin with, the aesthetic faculty in question is no longer that of sensation, and the transcendental condition of its objects, but rather the hedonic faculty of pleasure and pain.<sup>72</sup> The question has changed too—which is to say, the critique has changed: the investigation in the *Critique of Judgment* is not driven by what we can know. This also implies too that a new faculty comes to determine the task at hand: namely, Judgment. Since reason, in one sense or another, determines both of Kant's two other great works, we can see that his late great work stands in obvious relief to the mammoth exposition of the function, limits, and power of reason. But, we are met with difficulty in providing a question adequate to the problem of judgment. Again, of Kant's three questions—What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?—the first two clearly correspond to his first two works; to a large extent, however, this final question seems ill fit to the task of judgment, but

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<sup>71</sup> See also Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, p. 211: "Existence is therefore supposed to occur in space and time, but these are understood as indifferent milieux instead of the production of existence in a characteristic space and time." This amounts to Deleuze's non-euclidian critique of Kant's transcendental aesthetic, which has ramifications not only for the supposedly abstract endeavour of transcendental philosophy, but also for questions of anthropology, geo-politics, and in particular colonial conflict.

<sup>72</sup> We will be dealing here exclusively with the "Analytic of the Beautiful."



also the problematic of the aesthetic in general. Perhaps, Kant had originally intended a third critique of reason, one which would elucidate the transcendental role of the imagination with respect to this third question. Whatever the cause for the disjunction, all evidence points to a profound change in Kant's thinking.

The Beautiful<sup>73</sup> is opposed as much to the agreeable as it is to the objective. In other words, it is opposed as much to *opinion* as it is to *truth*. It is universal without being objective, and subjective without being partial (CJ, 43). By occluding both the representations of objects, as well as the interests of the subject, judgments of taste find their universality only in a pure form of aesthetic experience. In this way, pleasure and pain find their purity precisely in a free play with the other faculties, insofar as each can be considered from the standpoint of the hedonic faculty purely in how they affect the subject, in the subject's affection of itself—what Kant calls a 'reflective contemplation.' It has no knowledge and needs none. It is universal (transcendental) without appeal to the object. And it is purely aesthetic. Nevertheless, we are still not able to determine whether it qualifies, for these reasons, as an Idea. We suspect, that since it provides no regulatory function with regard to knowledge (it produces no necessity of the unity of knowledge in the positing of an unconditioned), Kant would reserve the name Idea only for those enumerated in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. However, we are by no means obliged to accept Kant's terms. This fact alone however does not suffice for us to be able collect a

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<sup>73</sup> The tacit connection of the Beautiful with the Idea, in the history of philosophy, here should not be overlooked. This connection, of course, stems from the importance it holds in the catalogue of classic Platonic Ideas.

series of similarities under the same name. We are impelled to seek out the necessary conditions ourselves, elsewhere.

Deleuze – As we claimed earlier, there are only three great thinkers of the Idea. The third in this short lineage, as has yet been mentioned, is Deleuze. Having said that, his theory of Ideas in *Difference and Repetition* is notorious for its difficulty. It is certainly in company with the most difficult texts of the history of philosophy. Compounding the already incredible conceptual complexity and diversity of the text is the fact that it is also thoroughly obscured, to anyone unfamiliar with the history of the calculus, by its discussion of mathematics from which it takes some of its most important concepts. This is no accident: it is in mathematics that Deleuze finds the fullest expression and importance of the problematic, of the deep and objective nature of problems which will predominate the concept of the Idea. The final difficulty of reading the text is that, in philosophico-historical terms, Deleuze's theory is quite new: it takes a long time, and a long readership, for a philosophical theory to really come to light.<sup>74</sup>

As far as I am aware, there is as yet still no reader of Deleuze who fully grasps the importance of this part of his first major work. Its importance in Deleuze's corpus is rivaled only by *A Thousand Plateaus*, and in many substantial ways "Ideas and the Synthesis of Difference"<sup>75</sup> is the germ of that work. We will, perhaps, have to wait for a

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<sup>74</sup> Given that *Difference and Repetition* is also Deleuze's first major work, there are also spectres and implicit arguments against the whole history of philosophy, and as such it consists of a huge variety of conceptual vocabularies from all over that history, with which Deleuze peppers his text through and through with allusions. This also contributes to its general difficulty.

<sup>75</sup> This is title of Ch.4 of *Difference and Repetition*.

thinker parallel in originality and depth for Deleuze's theory of Ideas to fully emerge in its own skin with the [full](#) powers of its claims at last beheld.

We may be waiting a long time. Nevertheless, I will—hesitantly—reconstruct for our purposes its most pertinent features.

While Plato affirms the real determination of the object in the Idea, he misses the ideal condition of variation, which he relegates to the derivative nature of the sensible, thereby leaving himself no genetic account of variation (or becoming) at all. This poses obvious and [well-known](#) problems; [it](#) does not [follow](#), however, [that](#) they are easily overcome. What Kant appends to the regulative function of the idea is this variety of contents, and apprehends in the Ideas the ideal condition of variation in the form of a unity. But he himself misses the *real* determinations of this condition since the Idea appears without an object [and](#) does not belong to a real relation of the object, but is instead given over only to the other faculties, not as constitutive, but as merely regulative. In the end, reason, and thus Ideas, have no reality at all. What Deleuze wants is to keep the objectivity of the Idea, as having real determination for the object, while apprehending in that objectivity, the ideal condition of difference, or difference internal to the Idea as such.<sup>76</sup> What appears in Kant's Ideas as a negative freedom represented by

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<sup>76</sup> It is true Deleuze, does not interpret Kant [in the way we just have](#), but it is precisely because he seeks the real determination of relations that problems afford the object, instead of a nominal and solipsistic interpretation of the Idea. Problems are objective and not subjective: "[I]f Ideas are in themselves undetermined, they are determinable only in relation to objects of experience, and bear the ideal of determination only in relation to concepts of the understanding." [Ibid. p. 170](#)

the Idea, an *ever-possible* freedom, Deleuze will insist on positivising in the object as [‘problematic’](#)<sup>77</sup>

Kant... refers to Ideas as problems ‘to which there is no solution’. By that he does not mean that Ideas are necessarily false problems and thus insoluble but, on the contrary, that true problems are Ideas, and that these Ideas do not disappear with ‘their’ solutions... (DR, 168).

For Deleuze, the Kantian project was not able to go far enough with synthesis; since Kant foreclosed the Idea upon the fact that no intuition could be given to it, the Idea remains for Kant dialectical and not synthetic.<sup>78</sup> Deleuze, on the other hand, will find the principle of synthesis of the Idea in terms of a reciprocal determinability of relations. Consequently, the Idea becomes a multiplicity. As such, he rebukes Plato no less for understanding the objectivity of ideas and their static genesis in terms of identity—by [conceiving](#) ideas as [discrete](#) or as individuals. As a genetic structure of differential relations (multiplicity), the Idea forms its very strange purity:

Each term [of the multiplicity] exists *absolutely* only in relation to the other: it is no longer necessary or even possible to indicate an independent variable. For this reason a principle of reciprocal determinability as such here corresponds to the determinability of the relation. [The effectively synthetic function of Ideas is presented and developed by means of a reciprocal synthesis.](#) The whole question, then, is: in what form is the differential relation determinable? (DR, 172; my emphasis.).

This question is also the question of the typology of relations in the Idea. There are three moments that correspond to such a typology: qualitability, quantability, and potentiality. This is the tripartite structure of the relations of the singularity in the virtual.

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<sup>77</sup> [“We should reserve the name ‘positivity’ for this state of the multiple Idea or this consistency of the problematic”, Ibid, p. 203.](#)

<sup>78</sup> Deleuze will also constantly refer to the Idea as ‘dialectical,’ but it means something entirely different to Kant. Whereas for Kant the dialectic was opposed to the synthetic *a priori*, Deleuze uses the term at once ironically, hoping to wrest it from the burden of Hegel, and also in order to temporalize the Idea.

Qualitability is determined by the relation of singularities to their respective fields of ordinary points. In this sense the relation between the singular and the ordinary can be said to be *ordinal* in the virtual. In its actualization, qualitability produces the species, variety, and qualities of an individual, and the individual appears as a case of solution. Quantitability is determined by the relation of one singularity to another within a given Idea, and can be said to be *cardinal*; in its actualization it accounts for the members of, for example, a species. What effectuates the quality and quantity in the actualization of reciprocal determination is *potentiality*. It is precisely here where we see that the virtual is indeed part of the object, and therefore not merely possible, indeed not ‘possible’ at all, but fully real in its complete determination, even before being actual. Potentiality carries out the passage from one side of difference to another:

A principle of complete determination corresponds to this element of potentiality. Complete determination must not be confused with reciprocal determination. The latter concerned the differential relations and their degrees or varieties in the Idea which correspond to diverse forms. The former concerns the values of a relation—in other words, *the composition of a form* or the distribution of singular points which characterize it...It is indeed a question of the complete determination of the parts of the object: *it is now in the object...* (DR, 175; my emphasis.).

In the end though, it would *seem* that even for Deleuze there are no aesthetic ideas, since according to his own division of the faculties, thought apprehends the problematic Idea, imagination is corresponds to the dynamic spatio-temporal genesis of the actual in potentiality—that is, the passage from the virtual to the actual—and the aesthetic constitutes the field of its actualization (DR, 220-1). This would be disappointing considering that Deleuze himself affirms “Ideas correspond in turn to each of the faculties and are not the exclusive object of any one in particular, not even of

thought.” (DR, 193). Does the above division not, however, neuter the transcendent exercise of the faculties, by which the Idea in each case is apprehended? Couldn’t we say, insofar as the Idea is characterized as absolute by its purity, that there are indeed aesthetic Ideas which promulgate themselves wherever there is genuine aesthetic apprehension and production, and that there is still too much Platonism, too much Kantianism in Deleuze; or again, that only a properly artistic sensibility and production of problematic fields would be capable of arriving there?

However, it is not the case that thought is at a loss with respect to the aesthetic Idea, but rather that thought determined in its strictly philosophical valence through the construction of a sufficient reason has already foreclosed, too narrowly, on the problem of the constitution of thought itself by considering thought as a faculty and not as *the* differential element *par excellence* of all faculties.<sup>79</sup>

*The Trouble with Aesthetics* – Wittgenstein’s life was deeply inflected by his aesthetic inclinations; from the laconism of his great stylistic work, the *Tractatus*, his refusal to include arguments in the *Tractatus* based on aesthetic objections to doing so, his architectural production, the severe selectivity with which he would choose even the furniture for his lodgings, to his invocation that all philosophy should be thought of as a kind of poetry, and even in his alignment of aesthetics with the solemnity of a religious imperative—all roads point to a thoroughly aesthetic life<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> This is something our first two chapters, and especially the second, hoped to show in one way or another.

<sup>80</sup> For all matters of the biography of Wittgenstein, I defer the reader to Ray Monk’s thorough intellectual biography of Wittgenstein bearing the unfortunate title, *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*.

Wittgenstein rightly says that aesthetics is “entirely misunderstood.” (LC, A:I, 1).<sup>81</sup> If we misunderstand aesthetics, it is because we go looking for it in the wrong places, and moreover attempt to locate only in the empirical field and historical instances of art works, some definition of the aesthetic. On the one hand, psychology seeks to reduce the real experience of aesthetics to a regime of corporeal causes. On the other hand, the dream of philosophy is to find through a science of the aesthetic a sufficient reason capable of arriving at an Idea of the Beautiful. In both cases forms of life, and therefore aesthetics, disappears. There is a third ‘explanation’, and a third activity, that is alone equipped to apprehend the ideal conditions of aesthetic, but it is diffuse: “...the aesthetic dimension weaves itself through all of philosophy...”<sup>82</sup>

Here is where the troubles start, and without sufficient perspicuity, aesthetics performs again and again its vanishing act: “It is not only difficult to describe what [aesthetic] appreciation consists in, but impossible. To describe what it consists we would have to describe the whole environment.” (LC, A:I, 20). We should not see in this only the empirical impossibility of enumerating all of the circumstances involved in the state of affairs in which an aesthetic judgment takes place. Rather the impossibility of describing the positivity of the aesthetic runs up against the mistaken attempt to substantialize it in cognition or extension. The very being of the aesthetic (the

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<sup>81</sup> In referencing Wittgenstein’s *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief*, the capital letter refers to the lecture course or conversation, the Roman numeral to the particular lecture, and the number to the aphorism. E.g., A:I, 20 refers to the “Lectures on Aesthetics”, lecture one, aphorism twenty.

<sup>82</sup> “Wittgenstein’s Aesthetics” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wittgenstein-aesthetics/> (Accessed July, 2014).

*sentendum*) is itself intensive, and cannot be made palpable by means of description, at least in the sense that description serves an indicative function.<sup>83</sup> It lacks no viscera, no teeth on that account, but it is easy to pass over unnoticed. We must resist the temptation to sever the description of a language-game from what it seeks to show—from the problematic proper to it. What must be *shown* are the intensive features of a transcendent exercise, and the articulation of its Idea.

There are two false explanations of aesthetics; explanations in which the essence of the aesthetic evaporates. The first is that by causes, which nullifies aesthetic *effects* by attempting to explain their causes, and thus misapprehends the nature of the effect, and of the aesthetic. That is to say, it believes that in understanding or producing the (for example, physiological) chain of causes (e.g., the right sequence of synaptic processes) required to illicit a particular aesthetic effect, that it has also explained that effect, and thus aesthetics then dissolves into a branch of cognitive science (what Wittgenstein would have called experimental psychology). But this misses precisely what is important and problematic about aesthetic experience itself (LC, A:III, 7-11). “The sort of explanation one is looking for when one is puzzled by an aesthetic impression is not a causal explanation, not one corroborated by experience...” (LC, A:III, 11). The mechanist, or the eliminativist presupposes that since it can explain how an aesthetic effect comes about (through the regime of corporeal causes, and its tracing or effectuation), they also have the grounds for the reduction of the being of that effect to its

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<sup>83</sup> This is why Adorno calls the mimetic language of art in expression mute, and elucidates the tendency of art to undo and avoid communicative or discursive language as much as possible through the formalization of elements. What escapes this formalization Adorno more or less names expression. In this Wittgenstein, Adorno, and Deleuze are in a basic agreement. See *Aesthetic Theory* pp.109-113



cause.<sup>84</sup> We have already seen in the first chapter how there is an irreducibility proper to the *in-sistence* of the effect in the cause. Mechanism thus misapprehends the ideal, transcendental, or intensive conditions of aesthetics: it never even touches it. Thus causality so defined misapprehends therefore the *objective determination of the Idea* insofar as it disallows real differences in kind in its ontological catalogue.

The second false explanation of the aesthetic is that by reasons. In a construction of a sufficient reason, we would look for an *a priori* account of the possibility of the aesthetic such as we have discussed in relation to Kant, for which the quiddity of the aesthetic disappears in its formalization. Whether this happens at the level of principle (as in Leibniz) or at the level of synthesis (as in Kant), is negligible to the problems of aesthetics, since in both cases, there is nothing aesthetic about it. Thus reason misapprehends the *ideal determination of the object*.

Wittgenstein is always giving examples, and constantly reminding us that all we do is describe. But we should not construe the method of the late Wittgenstein as casuistry. Wittgenstein is not content with mere example. There is something that subtends the description of language-games and can't be enveloped by description. The something that must be thought, and can only be shown. What this is does not emerge from certain generalities by the empirical and probabilistic processes of association or constant conjunction. "The attraction of certain kinds of explanation is overwhelming. At a given time the attraction of a certain kind of explanation is greater than you can

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<sup>84</sup> The conflation of cause and effect is also a basic and common belief of the rationalists, although—with the exception of Descartes, it seems to present fewer obstacles to understanding incorporeals than in the case of contemporary scientific materialism.

conceive [footnote 4: “If you haven’t just the right examples in mind”]. In particular, the explanation of the kind ‘This is really only this.’” (LC, A:II, 22). His method’s insistence on the concrete builds in resistances to modeling the transcendental from the shadow of its empirical cases, of representing the transcendental.

The apprehension of the *sentientium*—which one should not forget is also imperceptible—must play itself out in the concrete, but at the same time will never be understood through causality, nor through the comprehension of reason. It can only be understood in light of a form of life: from which one is impelled and to which one drives. This implies the necessarily diffuse endeavor of the aesthetic, from which the contours of a new kind of consistency, as opposed to causality and the order of reasons, can be felt. Thus an explanation of the aesthetic is an *ex-planation* (of a plane of consistency), the showing of a form of life, and it is only effectuated by the difficultly wrought, highly selective, and *a posteriori* activity of an rigorous form of intuition: “In the beginning was the deed (OC, 402).” For Wittgenstein, and us, aesthetics and ethics are inseparable, because each articulates a form of life by means of an intensive plane of consistency, actualized by the showing of that consistency in the activity of a rigorous intuition. Consequently, the intensive is poorly understood by the model of inner or private experience. The intensive is not characterized by the personal, even if it is apprehended in or by a single individual. The *intensive* is not at all *internal*. The only adequate explanation of the aesthetic is the one you must accept (LC, A:II, 39); it cannot be guaranteed by causality, or by the justification of belief (reason). The activity of a rigorous intuition (the transcendent yet concrete aesthetic exercise) and the entity one produces by means of it—the plane of consistency (the aesthetic Idea)—are not distinct,

they make-up a form of life and can only be apprehended in showing. "...[T]o imagine a language means to imagine a form of life." (PI, 19). Aesthetics is not a form of leisure, something for someone to undertake after everything 'important' is already taken care of: it is for "Someone who... makes certain observations which show that he [sic.] 'really does appreciate'... an appreciation which concentrates on one thing and is very deep—so that you would give your last penny for it." (LC, A:I, 30; footnote 3). Realism comes back to earth along with the Idea when noology<sup>85</sup> replaces philosophy of mind.

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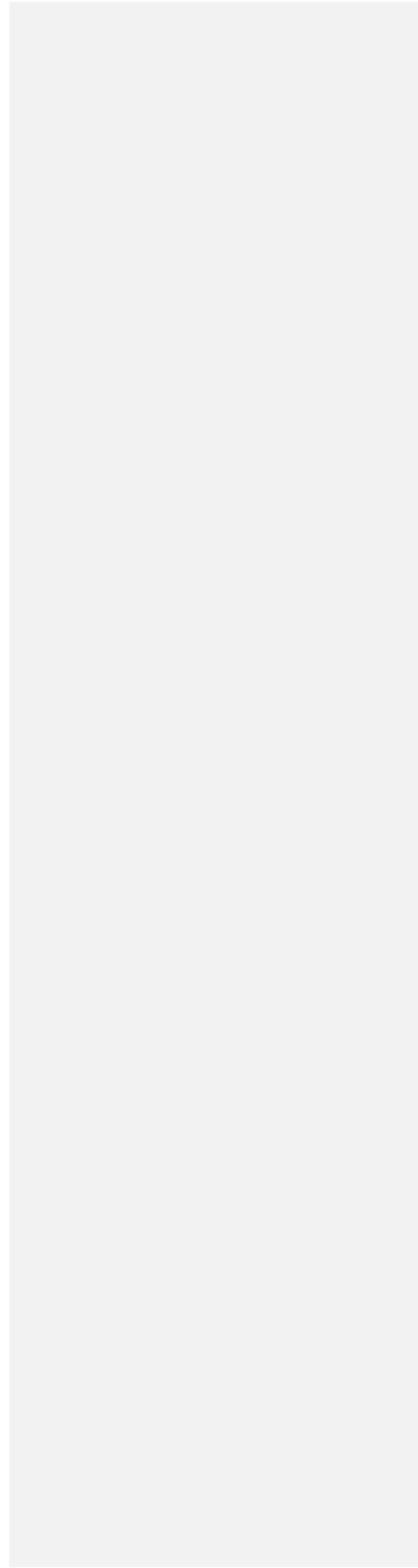
Epistemology, philosophy of mind, will always remain merely nominal until it takes proper account of aesthetics. It will always fall short of the unity of mind and nature, either by subordinating the mind to nature, and thus enveloping it in a runaway scientism; or by subordinating nature to mind, enveloping *it* in a heedless 'liberation,' [a voluntarism](#) ignorant of [all material constraints](#). The *sentendum* (the transcendent exercise of the faculty or faculties of the aesthetic), the [aesthetic Idea](#), which has glimmered faintly in the shadow of the whole history of reason, has still never received a theory adequate to the ideal articulation of its elements.<sup>86</sup> In order to do this, the philosopher must, rather than detailing the conditions (real or possible) of a sufficient reason, instead [compose themselves with the agencies and operations of artistic production itself](#); they must produce the ideal conditions of the aesthetic and be, in turn, constituted by them in order arrive, no longer at another philosophy of art, but at an art of

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<sup>85</sup> That is, the study of planes of consistency, or images of thought: forms of life.

<sup>86</sup> Though already [Nietzsche had understood and lived it](#), and Adorno occasionally comes close as any critic has yet.

philosophy. This is the meaning of an *ethical* life. Finally, following Spinoza, Wittgenstein, and Deleuze into the practical with the rigor of a formerly unrecognizable and absolute intuition—the only life capable of love.



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