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*Ontologies of time and the constitution of subjectivity:
Incursions in (and deviations from) the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze*

ABSTRACT OF DOCTORAL THESIS

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Synthesis of the main ideas

The problem:

In this paper we have provided an overview of the ontological conceptualization of time and its relationship to the constitution of subjectivity in the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Moving through modern philosophy, we are witness to a double-tendency on the one hand towards the erosion of a solid basis for identity (be it concrete, scientific, conceptual, socio-political etc.), and on the other hand towards the restitution of the concept of time to its theoretical rights, this second tendency beginning especially with Kant. I have tried to prove how Deleuzian philosophy is part of both tendencies, representing one of the last major metaphysical projects to center on time as an ontological ground, and to develop as a philosophy of difference.

I have also explored how, in Deleuze's philosophy, subjectivity is constituted as an effect of the syntheses that produce time, the subject making up that structure that is determined by time, which first accompanies time's action on itself, as a passive subjectivity, and afterwards acts by itself on time as an active subjectivity. The problem comes up when subjectivity, which is constituted in time, but at the same time divided and inevitably destructured by time, turns on time, by trying to perpetuate its own existence through the suppression of difference and of the productivity of time, the subject subjecting to itself the temporalities on which it acts, subordinating them to a regime of reproduction of the spaces and forms that would guarantee the subject's identitarian persistence in time.

From an exegetical point of view, we will attempt to go through Deleuze's works, pursuing, through its various re-conceptualizations, the common thread of a coherent way of thinking time and its relationship to subjectivity, by trying to correct or complement the existing literature on the subject, in order to demonstrate that Deleuze can indeed be placed within this history of recuperation of time in philosophy, his being one of the most advanced such projects. The exegetical dimension of this work consists in treating the ontology of time as the privileged element of Deleuzian philosophy, serving as an ontological basis from which other concepts are developed, as well as being the key to placing Deleuze in the context of modern philosophy.

Hypotheses

Our research hypotheses are as follows:

1. Deleuzian philosophy contains within itself the resources to formulate a purely temporal ontological framework.
2. This ontological framework is, in the last instance, a monist one, despite the multitude of layers and formations that make it up.
3. The constitution of subjectivity occurs as an effect of the interaction between different ontological registers of time, subjectivity being secondary to time.
4. The constitution of subjectivity relates temporal formations to a form outside of them (the subject), through which their access to their outside will be mediated.
5. The focus that Deleuzian philosophy places on the destitution of subjectivity does not have a negative role, but instead is part of a necessary movement of subjectified thought which seeks an access route to immanence.
6. Rediscovering the immanence lost as an effect of subjective mediation can be done through a number of privileged forms of temporality which produce certain forms of post-subjectivity.

Research methodology

The work respects all typical steps of philosophical research: reviewing the literature on the subject, establishing its central problem, clarifying the terminology, analyzing the texts and phenomena we are surveying in order to discover their properly philosophical core, synthesizing this philosophical core into concepts, outlining already-existing concepts that we are taking up from the literature, the systemic ordering of this conceptual material into a philosophical position we will assume with regards to our problematic field, arguing for our position, engaging dialectically with possible counter-arguments we can foresee etc.

At the same time, the work adopts certain methodological demands specific to Deleuzian philosophy, which come into play especially at the moments of establishing the problem, of analytical work and that of conceptual synthesis. This methodological aspect, of Nietzschean inspiration, consists in outlining the problematic ground that animates the formulation and working out of concepts within a philosophical work, that would also lead us to the culturally-, epochally- and individually-contextual dimension of the work. At the same time, this methodology presupposes, on the part of the researcher, an exercise in depersonalization, to allow the theory itself to find its space of manifesting this problematic ground.

Outline of the chapters

The body of the work will be divided into four chapters. The first treats the purely ontological aspect of the problem, starting from a brief evaluation of the place Deleuze occupies in the history of contesting the primacy of identity in philosophy and of the logical dissolution of the identity on which the dominant image of thought was grounded starting with ancient Greek philosophy. We will follow this with a discussion of the way in which, despite the overall perception of Deleuze as a philosopher who anchors becomings and fluxes onto an armory of territorialities, diagrams, analyses of spaces and geographies etc., his work hides a very sophisticated metaphysics of time grounded on the preceding work done by philosophers such as Spinoza, Kant, Nietzsche and Bergson. Under space, Deleuzian philosophy finds movement and transformation everywhere, who in turn, through their specific characteristics that are determined by their temporal form, produce extension.

The thesis then advances to an ample discussion of the three syntheses of time, as they appear in *Difference and Repetition*, and to the transformations that this conceptual groundwork undergoes throughout the Deleuzian oeuvre, the three syntheses constituting a conceptual prototype for other theoretical tasks which Deleuze undertakes. Without leaving the strict framing of Deleuzian metaphysics, we will explore aspects of the ontology of time that remain implicit in the texts themselves, building, where necessary, paths to other authors to more deeply develop these aspects that are insufficiently developed by Deleuze himself. We will continue by laying out how the syntheses of time (on the level of which subjectivity, for Deleuze, is constituted) form entities between the two ontological layers – that of events and that of bodies – and how exactly does Deleuze's initial ontology of time integrates itself within the one he develops with Felix Guattari, this latter one having temporality as a characteristic first of desiring machines, and then of assemblages and the rhizome. Lastly, we will treat the issue of difference in itself, of absolute difference, from the angle of an ontology of time, clarifying why, despite its wealth of layers and multiple re-elaborations, Deleuzian philosophy remains, nonetheless, a monist one.

The second chapter deals with the relationship between consciousness, time and subjectivity. Here we will go more deeply into the issues of subjectivity, that, in the first chapter, still occupied a secondary place in our exposition. We will analyze the process of individuation and the separation that this introduces between the individual that is to be subjectified, and what will

become his world, as well as the way in which the temporalities that constitute the individual appear. We will then move to subjectivity itself, looking at how conscious life is restructured to relate to its experience through the mediation of subjective structures. Thus conceived, subjective consciousness will become the interface through which that order that produces subjectivity will be internalized as ego, as language and as preconscious, forming the interiority of the subjected individual. Lastly, we will see how Deleuze recovers immanence at the level of an a-subjective form of consciousness. Throughout this chapter we will also engage with Deleuze's relationship with psychoanalysis.

The third chapter goes into Deleuze's political philosophy, starting from the relationship between production and time. Production is the north star through which Deleuze guides himself in thinking the political, in the same way in which creation and providing the conditions of possibility for creation are understood by Deleuze as being central tasks for philosophy, science or the arts. In this section we will focus especially on the texts written in collaboration with Félix Guattari, exploring the relationship between Deleuze's political thought with Marx and the Marxian tradition on the one hand, and with a plurality of sources onto which Deleuze-Guattarian micropolitics, especially, focuses on. We will therefore explore how Deleuze and Guattari miss forming a theory of classes by identifying these classes with demographic molar formations. Going in this issue more deeply, we will reconstitute a conception of class that takes into account Deleuze's ontology of time, as well as the analyses undertaken by him together with Guattari on micropolitics and libidinal economics. Moving from the smaller-scale temporalities of desire and production to the more ample one that underlie society as a whole, we will lay out the Deleuzian understanding of history in its relationship with becomings and intempestive temporalities, as well as in its relationship with the ample temporalities outside of it (biological, geological etc.).

The fourth chapter represents a series of theoretical developments that follow from the ontological theory we have outlined, leaving a strictly Deleuzian framework in order to explore three problems on the intersection political philosophy and the theory of the subject: (1) the function of fatigue in the revolutionary subjectivity, (2) the way in which commodity fetishism operates in contemporary society and the time that type of subjectivity that it invokes, and, lastly, (3) the problem of the barring of the future, on the one hand underneath the form of the 'near-future' as an anticipation of the present, and on the other hand behind the specter of extinction.

This chapter takes up materials we have previously developed and published during the period of the PhD under two different forms, taken up with some modifications.

Conclusions and personal contributions

The hypotheses that guided our research represent a series of problematic coordinates that indicate how we went through the Deleuzian oeuvre. Thus, we have seen, going text by text, how the problematic of temporality returns, even where it is pushed into the background, and how it continues to nourish the concepts that grow out above it: as a single example, we can look at all the nuances and rigor in the conceptual construction of the plane of immanence is put to work to produce a geometric concept congruent with a temporal understanding of experience (**hypothesis 1**). Behind the entirety of Deleuzian ontology we find a complex vision of time in which we see contemporalities constituting themselves from an intempestive sea of temporal fluxes with different rhythms and speeds, all being at the same time based on a time of absolute difference, on the affirmation that marks the emergence into the world of a new being together with the differential singularity from which it actualizes itself, guaranteeing the univocity of the entire structure (**hypothesis 2**).

In constituting these contemporalities, certain structures appear and concentrate, structures that coordinate the contemporalities and subject them to an order which ensures that these contemporalities get fixed onto extension, but that, at the same time, mediate their access both to their outside, blocking and unblocking this access, as well as to their own developments, that are slowed down or accelerated, depending on the needs of self-perpetuation of the structure. This structure – subjectivity – is not in itself an additional temporal thread attached to certain durations, but the static form constituted in the trace of reproductive repetitions organized around a lack, the structure reconstituting temporalities as chronologies (**hypotheses 3 and 4**). Nonetheless, we see how the time of difference continues to operate even at the level of the subject, furnishing the duration that subjectivity tries to incorporate, a wealth of material that overwhelms any efforts of the subjective structures to tame it, offering the first proof of its lacunar character (insufficiency). At the same time, difference ends up reabsorbing the matter of subjective form, constraining it to always be on the lookout for new sources of material onto which to embody itself, offering a second proof of its lacunar character (need). Thus the embodied subject is trapped between a mechanic, sisyphic, repetition of its material reproduction, and pursuing a way of escaping, either

trying to *complete* itself, to isolate itself from the flow of time, either to undo itself. Under the impulse of difference, subjected thought looks for its way back to immanence, to the clamor of being, looking to regain its powers from which it has been uncoupled by the subject-form (**hypothesis 5**). This process can't be understood as a negative task that thinking establishes for itself, to de-structure the subject – negating the negation – but instead needs a positive surplus, the construction of a form of time through which it can regain its own capacity to act and its unmediated access to the outside (**hypothesis 6**).

This positive or constructive exit from subjectivity is at the same time useful in drawing a distinction between Deleuze's method and that of a (post-)Hegelian dialectic – the other distinctive characteristic that we should point out is that, unlike the motion of the dialectic, for Deleuze's philosophy the subjective phase of the process is in no way a necessary moment in the movement to overcome a presupposed 'alienation' from our 'authentic' being, a moment that, once undergone, would take us to a superior, mature form of a previously lost innocence. What Deleuze discovers, following Nietzsche, is a certain form of subjectivity that has escaped the strict confines of being a procedure meant to stabilize a process, in order to turn its own reproduction and perpetuation into its sole purpose, against the life that it subjects to itself. This subjectivity is neither necessary, nor inevitable, nor a fatal flaw that we cannot overcome.

We have seen the same conceptual thread along each stratum or register we have looked at. We have therefore selected three such registers – the ontological level of difference, the phenomenological (in the widest possible sense, of a theory of experience) level of consciousness, and the political level of production – because they figure most prominently in Deleuze's work, being the spheres within which Deleuze usually puts forth the problem of philosophical, artistic or scientific creation.

In its current form, the work is obviously incomplete. On the one hand a number of confrontations and additions to Deleuze's texts from the works of his contemporaries and successors are missing, here being present more as short references, developed only where necessary for the coherence of the exposition. On the other hand, the text suffers from a certain timidity in the face of the tasks of conceptual creation demanded of it, which we could not overcome without having the text lose its strictly exegetical character. Both deficiencies are owed in a large part to the formal imperatives placed by this type of writing, as well as to the strict limits

of the subject we have chosen for ourselves. The correction and overcoming of these limitations will be the task of future research.

Meanwhile, our hope remains that through this text we can contribute to a (re)evaluation of the moment which Deleuze represents in the history of philosophy, and that, by further developing the ideas sketched out here, we can take part in widening the breach that time has opened for itself in philosophy, and that difference has opened for itself in the general order of things.

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