







# A Deleuzian Response to Husserl's Problem of Intersubjectivity

By

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## Abstract

This thesis presents a confrontation between two ways of conceiving self-other relations and community. For Edmund Husserl, the unity of the self has a primary and categorically privileged position in the constitution of the community of persons. His epistemological concern with certainty seems to make this prioritization of unity necessary. For Gilles Deleuze, the self does not have a categorically privileged position. The unity of the self is not conceived as primary and irreducible, but as constituted out of difference, or differential components. Because unity is not prior, others are conceived as playing a primary and fundamental role in the constitution of the self. A Deleuzian conception of community is therefore based on the reciprocal relations between selves, and not grounded on the constituting activity of the transcendental ego. I argue that the Deleuzian account is more faithful to experience in recognizing an essential passivity in the way selves are constituted and interact to form a community.

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## Introduction

The problem that has been the impetus for the writing of this thesis is one that I initially encountered in the work of Edmund Husserl. In the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl attempts to show how a transcendental subject constitutes other subjects, and how these subjects together constitute an intersubjective community and an objective world of communally constituted meanings. In doing this he must reconcile two claims that are central to his phenomenology. The first is that all of one's experiences and meanings are constituted and given unity exclusively by one's personal intentional processes. The second claim is that all objects of consciousness are constituted against the pre-given background of intersubjectivity. In other words, objects of consciousness are given as objective and constituted in tandem with others even though one can only be directly aware of one's own constitution of them.

The tension between these two claims in Husserl's philosophy is interesting because it poses the problem of how one can conceive of a community and of a collective constitution of the world even when one's account of experience begins from the unity of a transcendental subject. The question arises as to whether this is an adequate explanation of the relation between individuals and the collective, between the unity that is a community and the different individuals that compose that unity. Is a concept of community or intersubjectivity, that is, a grouping of heterogeneous selves, adequately conceived if experience is grounded on the unity of a transcendental subject?

Part of my position in this thesis will be that Husserl's theory of how selves communally constitute the world is inadequate. This inadequacy can be traced to the fact

that his theory of intersubjectivity in *Cartesian Meditations* pivots on the idea that an autonomous and universal subject is the necessary ground of our experience and constitution of the world. Such a theory has no room for real otherness, since any other would be reducible to the unity of the transcendental subject that constitutes the others. Prioritizing the unity of the transcendental ego in this way precludes any truly reciprocal constitution between self and other since the self is categorically privileged. What must be achieved in order to formulate a proper theory of intersubjectivity is a balanced notion of the reciprocal constitution that occurs between selves. I will demonstrate that in prioritizing the autonomous self, Husserl merely pays lip service to such reciprocity. Because all constitution is for Husserl ultimately reducible to the activity of the isolated and autonomous ego, it becomes problematic to speak of the communal constitution of meaning.

The ideas of Gilles Deleuze, as expressed in his own writings as well as those co-authored with his occasional partner in writing Felix Guattari, will be of help to us in achieving an adequate conception of how selves communally construct the world and reciprocally constitute each other.<sup>1</sup> Deleuze does not maintain the priority of the self and the unity it constitutes and represents. For Deleuze, unity is not prior, as it is for Husserl. Instead, difference is prior, and out of difference a unified world and unified selves are constructed. The value that Deleuze ascribes to difference is essential to understanding why the theory of community or intersubjectivity that can be derived from his philosophy is more adequate than Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity. On Deleuze's view, selves are

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<sup>1</sup> It is beyond the purview of this paper to explore the extent to which the ideas expressed in Deleuze's solitary writings differ from those expressed in his writings with Guattari.

not a priori unities, but a posteriori constructions. They are constructed out of components of difference. Other persons are sources and examples of such components. This means that the self is not prior to the other, but is fundamentally dependent on its relations with others in order to be what it is. There is a reciprocal exchange of constitutive influence between selves. One cannot perceive, communicate with, help, or hurt another person without being reconstituted. One cannot change another without changing oneself. This reciprocity, based on the idea of difference underlying unity, is what makes a Deleuzian theory of community or intersubjectivity better than the Husserlian theory. On a Deleuzian view, the unity of a community is not reducible to the unity of the isolated ego, but is constructed out of the reciprocal interactions between the members of the community. Thus, I will argue that a theory of heteronomous subjectivity, one that conceives the self as constituted and determined by others, rather than one that conceives all otherness as constituted on the basis of the self, can remedy the problem posed by Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity. It is only when selves are to a great degree heteronomous, or constituted by others, rather than autonomous, or constituted by themselves, that the world can be said to be constituted intersubjectively, or by the many.

In his writings, Deleuze offers us ways of thinking about heteronomous selfhood. For him, the self is not centred and autonomous; it is not sufficient by itself, as it is for Husserl, to give unity to experience. For Husserl, each self is an autonomous, yet identical or universal, mechanism for the ordering of perceptual data into unified objects and a unified world. The self is an abstract point upon which all differences converge and unify. Other persons are manifestations of such differences. Otherness is a meaning built upon the model of one's personal experience of selfhood. On this view, others are at base the

same as the self. A Deleuzian view of selfhood dispenses with the priority of the self. It would conceive of a self as a necessary openness to difference, to the becoming-other or the becoming-new that characterizes all experience. For Deleuze, selfhood *is* becoming-other; it is equal to how one is determined and modified by others, whether these others be other persons, the different foods we eat, or the technologies we utilize in our daily activities. In this way, Deleuze rejects the dualism intrinsic to Husserl's model of selfhood. For Husserl, the ego acts as a mechanism that gives order and unity to the flux of perception. It gives form to the matter of existence. Deleuze proposes a monism in which the self is no longer strictly separate from what is in its vicinity. Instead, the self is suffused throughout its surrounding field or territory. It is a fluid gathering-in of otherness, of difference.

My contention in this thesis is that a theory of heteronomous selfhood makes for a more coherent account of intersubjectivity. A theory of intersubjectivity derived from a notion of autonomous selfhood is unsatisfactory primarily because in the reciprocal relations between subjects, the constitutive power of the self is categorically privileged. A Deleuzian way of thinking about selfhood allows the constitutive relations between heteronomous selves, rather than the necessary structure of autonomous selves, to be the underpinning of a theory of intersubjectivity. Conceiving community in this way means that in the reciprocal relations between selves, no party is categorically privileged. If one party does have greater constitutive power than another, then it does not possess this power absolutely and necessarily by virtue of it being conceived as the autonomous centre of constitutive activity.

But it is also my contention that a strict Deleuzian account of the self-other relation is not adequate. The fault lies in Deleuze's insistence on giving difference priority over unity in our experience. In effect, he reverses the order of priority that Husserl advocates. Unity is produced by difference for Deleuze, rather than difference being grounded in unity. I will demonstrate that an account of experience that is truer to experience can be achieved if we conceive of difference and unity as codependent, rather than one being prior to the other. It will be argued that unity and difference are inextricably linked. Unity necessarily differs, and differences are necessarily unified. Conceiving them as such will allow for a coherent account of the self-other relation that is true to experience.

I will begin the main part of this thesis with an analysis of Husserl's phenomenology of the self-other relation and intersubjectivity. Without intending to reduce Husserl's philosophy to just one of his methodological approaches, my focus will be his 'static analysis' of these phenomena since this analysis presents most clearly how the self-other relation can be grounded on the unity of the transcendental subject. My claim will be that real otherness cannot be conceived in this way and that truly reciprocal relations between self and other are not conceivable on this view.

I will then turn to Deleuze. In much of his thought, pure ununified difference is metaphysically primary. Unity is conceived as arising out of difference as a secondary phenomenon. I will demonstrate that this theory, as an account of our experience, is problematic and that there are other aspects of Deleuze's philosophy that allow for a more coherent account of the relation between unity and difference in experience. By following this thread of his thought we will be enabled to achieve an account of the self-other



relation which gives priority to neither difference nor unity, but which sees the self and any community of selves as a unity that differs, i.e. as a unified set of differences which is in flux. Such unities are open in that they cannot be reduced to the differences that compose them, for the rearrangement of differences and the introduction of new differences are always possibilities. Employing the principle of the codependence of unity and difference will finally allow us to achieve a theory of the communal constitution of meaning and the world which escapes the Husserlian paradox that intersubjective constitutions are ultimately reducible to the intentional processes of the isolated transcendental ego.

## Chapter 1: Husserl's Phenomenology of Self, Other, and Intersubjectivity

### *1.1 The Problem of Intersubjectivity*

Edmund Husserl's phenomenology has two broad concerns: to show through a pure description of consciousness how it is that we constitute objects of consciousness, and to show that a certain class of these objects - the idealities of logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences - are indubitable. The former concern is the method through which the latter is to be achieved.

Husserl's approach to addressing his epistemological concerns involves an exploration of the most general and essential features of consciousness. To do this he employs the method of phenomenological *ἐποχή* (epoché). The epoché excludes or parenthesizes any theoretical constructs or hypothetical interpretations of what is given in consciousness. One overarching theory that Husserl brackets is the "natural thesis", or "natural attitude". This common-sense theory proposes the existence of a world of actuality external to any particular conscious subject, a world that includes *other* conscious subjects. For Husserl, the truth of this thesis is not intuitively self-evident. As a result, our belief in it must be put aside so that we might discover through the direct experience of phenomena those features of consciousness that are self-evident and essential. In order to avoid implicating logical principles in this foundation, i.e. in order to avoid presupposing the very thing he wishes to ground, Husserl turns to a project of pure phenomenological description which attempts to describe the phenomena of consciousness simply as they are given, without any overlaying of theoretical constructs.

By means of this method, Husserl hopes to secure a firm ground for all scientific ways of knowing. Through phenomenological description, the a priori form of all conscious experience, that is, of the world as it appears to us, is supposed to be revealed.

The phenomenological epoché has the effect of restricting one to a phenomenological description of one's own conscious processes. The essential form of all consciousness is hereby revealed. There are a number of aspects to this essential form. Firstly, consciousness is always consciousness *of* some object. Husserl calls these objects "noemata" (singular, "noema"). Secondly, we are always conscious of objects by way of some act of consciousness. Husserl calls these acts of consciousness "noeses" (singular, "noesis"). Thirdly, there is the transcendental ego, the identity pole or point of convergence for all the acts of consciousness and objects of consciousness constituted by those acts. The transcendental ego is like an abstract point where objects of consciousness are presented and represented and coexist to form a unified self and a unified world. Thus, consciousness is not only necessarily consciousness *of* some object, but also necessarily consciousness *for* some transcendental ego.

This analysis of the necessary form of experience presents us with a difficulty. This is because Husserl claims to solve the problem of the constitution of an objective world by means of a method that depends at every level, and particularly at its foundation, on the constituting activity of an isolated transcendental ego. Husserl must therefore address the question of how his method can take account of the meaning of another subject, a meaning that necessarily entails that the subject who constitutes the other cannot experience the other's conscious processes immediately, i.e. cannot constitute them in an apodictic manner. Husserl believes that his phenomenology can

demonstrate how the meaning of others is constituted in consciousness, and how it is that meaning in general can be constituted, not only subjectively by an isolated ego, but also intersubjectively by a community of egos. He believes that he can do this with certainty and without any violation of his method. We will see that although Husserl does achieve an account of the meaning of the other, the otherness of the other is severely compromised because of the dependence of this meaning on the constituting transcendental ego.

### *1.2 The Static Phenomenology of the Other: An Attempt to Solve the Problem of Intersubjectivity*

In the *Cartesian Meditations* and elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> Husserl uses the static phenomenological method in an attempt to solve the problem of intersubjectivity. The static approach favours a synchronic rather than a diachronic analysis of consciousness. In other words, unlike diachronic, or “genetic”, analysis, it does not attempt to describe how consciousness constructs over time the meanings “other ego” and “intersubjective community”. Husserl’s diachronic theories of how consciousness develops posit that the distinction between pre-social and social subjectivity is not a natural feature of consciousness. In other words, the awareness of self does not precede in time the awareness of a community of others. Instead, they develop in tandem with each other. The strict distinction between pre-social and social subjectivity is arrived at only by

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<sup>2</sup> The static phenomenological approach is evident in the fifth of the *Cartesian Meditations*. It is also employed in Husserl’s analyses in the second book of *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, and to a lesser extent in the *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. In my explication of Husserl’s static phenomenology of the other and intersubjectivity, I will be drawing mainly upon the *Cartesian Meditations*, but also his second book of *Ideas*.

means of static abstraction.<sup>3</sup> Static abstraction, or static analysis, attempts to understand how an already formed self constitutes other persons as objects of consciousness (noema) on the basis of its own directly perceived intentional processes. It attempts to isolate the form or essence of the experience of others in the moment of its occurrence, rather than exploring how the meanings of “ego”, “other ego”, and “intersubjective community” have developed over time.

In line with his interest in epistemology and concern for truth, static phenomenology begins from what Husserl believes to be an indubitable certainty: the transcendental ego, the necessary subject of all constitutional acts of consciousness, the necessary correlate of all constituted objects. This is given with complete self-evidence in each moment of consciousness. Beginning with the certainty of the transcendental ego, Husserl must show how the sense of a whole community of subjects, who together constitute an objective world of shared meanings, is possible. There are three main steps to his explication. The first is a description of the primordial sphere, or sphere of ownness. This level of consciousness is arrived at by means of a special epoché that is performed in addition to the standard phenomenological epoché.<sup>4</sup> This additional epoché is unique because it occurs within the phenomenological attitude of consciousness, rather than functioning to bring us into that attitude.<sup>5</sup> It is necessary because in the usual phenomenological attitude intersubjective meanings are not bracketed, even though one is

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<sup>3</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book*, Trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 203.

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, Trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), 95.

<sup>5</sup> A. D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations* (London: Routledge, 2003), 216.

restricted to one's own intentional processes.<sup>6</sup> Even after one has performed the usual phenomenological epoché, one does not experience the world as one's own exclusive "private synthetic formation". Rather, it is experienced as available and accessible to others. It is experienced as an intersubjective world in the sense that it exists in itself in isolation from any particular subject's consciousness of it.<sup>7</sup> The special epoché of the fifth meditation restricts us to only those intentional processes and objects that are given immediately in consciousness. In this way, one sets aside consciousness of the perspectives on the world that other subjects constitute. There is at this level of analysis a sort of nature, a primordial nature that includes only what has been, is, or can potentially be constituted originally, that is, with indubitable certainty, by the isolated subject. In this sphere, all that is alien or other - that is, other subjects and objective nature in general - is put aside, for these meanings involve more than what is present immediately to consciousness. In the second step, Husserl shows how the meaning of another subject is constituted. While this takes place within the primordial sphere, it includes perceptions that cannot be made present to the subject in an immediate way. From here, Husserl moves on to the constitution of nature as objective, or as "intersubjectively common".<sup>8</sup>

In the primordial sphere, one's own body is unique in several important ways. Firstly, it is constituted as the perceptual origin, the here from which all else is perceived, and in relation to which all else receives positional predicates. Secondly, one's body is moved in a direct manner, and is employed to move all foreign objects. As Husserl says, it is the only body in primordial consciousness that is ruled and governed immediately by

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<sup>6</sup> Husserl, *Meditations*, 89.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>8</sup> Husserl, *Ideas*, 179.

the subject.<sup>9</sup> One does not experience this movement through third person observation, but through an immediate awareness of the ability to move at will. Thirdly, the body is one's "locus of feelings", both emotional and sensory. It is the only body in the primordial sphere with "fields of sensation".<sup>10</sup> These three primary characteristics of how one's body is experienced allow it to be identified through perception, such as in the case of seeing a hand as one's own and distinguishing it from the hand of another. Only one's own body can be constituted originally in this way. Husserl's explication of the constitution of the other must show how we come to perceive a foreign object as 'sensitive, as active, and as the null-centre of perspectives on the world'.<sup>11</sup> In short, a foreign body must be recognized "*as something that is originally constituted in an alien sphere of ownness*",<sup>12</sup> similar to how our own bodies are constituted as animate in our personal spheres of ownness.

To perceive an object as a sentient other is to constitute it as a centre of consciousness distinct from one's own whose conscious processes cannot be intuited by the original subject in a direct manner. This indirect form of intuition or presentation is called "apperception". If the subjective processes and perceptions of an other could be given originally, they would be part of one's own essence and the other's sensuous modes would be experienced as part of one's own psychophysical unity.<sup>13</sup> But they are not, and cannot possibly be made present to the constituting subject. This mediate form of

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<sup>9</sup> Husserl, *Meditations*, 97.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, 221.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Husserl, *Meditations*, 109.

intentionality is necessary to the constitution of the other, for without it self and other would be indistinguishable.

The term “apperception” also refers to the co-presentation, or accompanying presentation, of a perspective on an external object that is blocked from view. In other words, when I see an object, such as a mountain or a tree, standing before me, it is evident that accompanying this visual presentation is the assumption that it is possible to take a different perspective on this object. At the moment, I do not directly perceive these other perspectives, but along with what I am presented with directly in consciousness is the “co-presentation” or apperception of another side. I have a vague expectation of what it would look like. I anticipate that I could make the other side directly present to my consciousness by changing my position in relation to it. However, whereas this sort of apperception is linked with the possibility of an original presentation or “verification”, the apperception of another subject’s constituting processes cannot possibly be moved to presence.<sup>14</sup>

The recollection of a past present is also similar to how an other is intuited within the sphere of ownness. Just as recollections transcend the “living present”, and are therefore not immediately present to the ego, the other transcends one’s primordial consciousness.<sup>15</sup> Again, the difference is that while recollections were once directly present in consciousness, an other’s mental processes can never be. Other transcendental

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 115.



subjects are therefore not given with “unqualifiedly apodictic evidence”.<sup>16</sup> They are intended through “[a] *certain mediacy of intentionality*”<sup>17</sup> that cannot be made immediate.

Despite this mediacy, Husserl contends that the intentionalities involved in the constitution of an other must allow one to transcend the primordial sphere toward intersubjective awareness.<sup>18</sup> Husserl sets it down as a principle that any such transcendence beyond what is present originally must be based upon a core of actual presentation.<sup>19</sup> Husserl finds this core in the similarity between the physical appearance of one’s own body and the body of that object, present in the primordial sphere, which will come to be constituted as an other. The apperception of the other’s consciousness requires what Husserl calls the “pairing” of the visual presentation of its external physical body with the apperception of one’s own body as it would look if one were to see it from “there” rather than “here”, i.e. if one were to step outside one’s body and see it from a distance, as if it were an object of perception like any other. The similarity of the objective presentations of these bodies serves as the basis for a transference of the sense “transcendental subject” from the original subject to the other. What is transferred to the object and thereby made co-present along with the presentation of its bodily appearance is the notion of it being a “here” in relation to which all else is “there”.<sup>20</sup> Subjective bodily sensations and psychic acts are also made co-present with the foreign object.<sup>21</sup> Thus, for Husserl, the physical is the “founding level” of the psychological reality of the other.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 109-110.

<sup>20</sup> Husserl, *Ideas*, 176.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 172-174.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 358.

Pairing involves what Jeffery W. Brown calls “an analogizing transfer of an original sense to a new instance”.<sup>23</sup> This means that when one intends an object as an other, it becomes a subordinate instance of the sense “transcendental ego”, a sense that is already directly present in the primordial sphere. It is therefore an “enriching” of this original meaning,<sup>24</sup> not a radical departure from it or a rupture of its unity. As we have already said, one does not directly experience the intentional processes of an other. But by means of pairing, such generic processes, known originally only through one’s own constituting activity, become associated with an external object.

Husserl does assert, however, that there is a certain degree of reciprocity involved in pairing. The analogizing transfer of meaning from self to other entails a reciprocal transfer from other to self. As a result, how one conceives the meaning of oneself as a conscious subject is altered through the experience of others. Pairing is therefore the constitution of the other and the simultaneous reconstitution of one’s sense of being a particular transcendental ego.<sup>25</sup> But despite this reciprocity, it remains the case that the self retains logical primacy and otherness remains subordinate to the self. Husserl upholds a metaphysical schema that gives unity, here in the guise of the transcendental ego, primacy over difference, which is present here in the form of other persons who are constituted by the transcendental ego.

The upshot of this analysis is that the other’s body is the first objective thing to be constituted; it is the first thing to be constituted as identical in two primordial spheres – in

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<sup>23</sup> Jeffery W. Brown, “What Ethics Demands of Intersubjectivity: Levinas and Deleuze on Husserl,” *International Studies in Philosophy* 34(1) (2002): 26.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

one's own and in the other's.<sup>26</sup> This is because, after pairing, an object of consciousness has the sense of having its own sphere of ownness analogous to the original subject's sphere of ownness. The object therefore "transcends any single sphere of ownness", and becomes objective.<sup>27</sup> In other words, we have here an "intersubjective co-constitution".<sup>28</sup> The other's body thus becomes the first of many such 'possible intentional intersections between my sphere of ownness and another's'.<sup>29</sup>

A consequence of the objectification of the world is that each subject becomes one among many centres of consciousness whose perspectives are but appearances of the world as it exists objectively.<sup>30</sup> The ego-community that is formed as a result of the constitution of others is supposed by Husserl to possess an "*intersubjective* sphere of ownness" through which the objective world is constituted.<sup>31</sup> The objective world is an intrinsic part of this sphere's essence, just as primordial nature is part of the essence of the subjective sphere of ownness.

### *1.3 The Problem of Intersubjectivity Unsatisfactorily Solved*

It is a shortcoming of Husserl's static analysis of otherness that it does not allow the transcendental ego any direct knowledge of other subjects. It asserts that there are certain objects that the ego constitutes as other conscious subjects, but there is never any apodictic evidence that these entities are actually present to themselves as constituting

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<sup>26</sup> Husserl, *Meditations*, 124.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, 227.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>30</sup> Husserl, *Meditations*, 129.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

subjects. This is a necessary consequence of the fact that the stream of conscious processes that is apperceived when one experiences another subject cannot become present to the original experiencing subject. Because other streams of consciousness can only be apperceived, there is no indubitable proof for the constituting activity of other subjects. Husserl insists on a necessary distinction between what is present to oneself and what is present to an other. But this distinction is entirely subsumed within the sphere of an isolated consciousness. Husserl has therefore not presented indubitable evidence for the objective existence of others in isolation from one's experience and constitution of them.<sup>32</sup>

This problem of solipsism has consequences for intersubjective phenomenology. In the *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl tries to give intersubjective phenomenology an epistemological status that is equal to, although methodologically different from, that of subjective phenomenology.<sup>33</sup> In terms of phenomenological method, the subjective level of inquiry must precede the intersubjective level because consciousness must be consciousness *for* a transcendental subject, as well as consciousness *of* some object. Unfortunately for Husserl, the status of subjective and intersubjective phenomenology, in terms of certainty, cannot be on par. Only subjective phenomenology can lay claim to any certainty. At the subjective level, there is the certainty of the ego and what is immediately present to it. The science of phenomenology builds upon this basic level of givenness. From this starting point, claims about the essence of the ego can be made with certainty. However, because others are not given with original self-evidence, the intersubjective

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<sup>32</sup> David Carr, "The 'Fifth Meditation' and Husserl's Cartesianism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 3(1) (September 1973): 23-29.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

community that is constituted along with them has no firm basis.<sup>34</sup> Husserl claims that the different streams of consciousness that are apperceived as constituting different perspectives on the same objective world are united in the form of a communal intentional act that constitutes an intersubjective nature.<sup>35</sup> However, in the context of Husserl's method, it is difficult to see how this intersubjectivity can ever be anything more than a mediate and indirect object of consciousness for the isolated transcendental ego. Because of the uncertainty of the psychological world of others, the individual can really only know the community as s/he constitutes it solipsistically. The ego has only its own constitution of this community as evidence, and so the community must remain an object,<sup>36</sup> never known to be present to itself as a constituting intersubjectivity with its own primordial sphere.

Another way of stating Husserl's unsatisfactory solution to the problem of intersubjectivity would be to say that other subjects and the intersubjective community are not autonomous or fundamentally distinct from the transcendental ego. For Husserl, they are reducible to it as to a foundational unity or sameness. In the fifth meditation, Husserl performs an epoché that limits our consideration to the ego's sphere of ownness. This is the core of being, the source of all acts of consciousness and the basis upon which all objects of consciousness are constructed. Even though the conscious processes of other subjects are not directly present in the sphere of ownness, their meaning is fully constituted on the basis of what is directly present in this sphere. By means of pairing, we constitute certain objects as being directly controlled by conscious processes like our

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 33.

own. However, it remains the case that the self maintains a logical priority over the other. While pairing does involve reciprocity between self and other, it nonetheless favours the self because it occurs entirely within the sphere of ownness. The other is a “modification”, a new instance, an analogue of the transcendental ego and its sphere of ownness. The sole source of the meaning of the other is the self. As a result, otherness in Husserl is not radically other. It is derived entirely from the unity of the self and is reducible to this unity. Pairing cannot be said to be properly or fully reciprocal given this priority of the self.<sup>37</sup>

The “authenticity of constitutive intersubjectivity” is undermined by the priority of the self in the experience of others.<sup>38</sup> Husserl needs a notion of intersubjectivity in which meanings are constituted by the many, by a community of autonomous egos. This is the true social ontology that Husserl is aiming for. However, the priority of the self makes this impossible because the self is always the absolute centre of constitutional activity, the absolute center of being. Husserl’s demand that intersubjectivity operate to construct meaning requires a more radical notion of otherness. It requires that otherness not be reducible to the unity of an ego. As long as it is so reducible, intersubjectivity can never achieve independence from the ego that constitutes it. As a result, we have a homogeneous, rather than a heterogeneous, intersubjectivity. Or we could say that the heterogeneity of intersubjectivity is reducible to the homogeneity of the transcendental ego. Either way, Husserl’s other does not contribute positively or radically enough to the constitution of the world. Because the ground of the other is the ego, because Husserl

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<sup>37</sup> Brown, 27-29.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 28.

gives reality to others and the objective world only by way of abstraction from what is immediately given in the sphere of ownness, any meaning that an other does contribute is reducible to the sphere of ownness of the ego and the sense that was transferred from there to allow for the constitution of the other. By making the ego the foundation upon which others and the world are constituted, Husserl makes all difference converge upon sameness, a common feature of representational modes of thought. For Husserl, it is epistemologically important that subjectivity maintain its unity because this provides his inquiry with an indubitable starting-point. His theory maintains the unity of the subject by allowing no break in the unity of intentional processes. If others were radically other such a break in unity would occur. However, because others are analogues of the self, no break occurs. The unity of the subject is maintained by making all otherness and differences an aspect of the synchronous unity of the subject.<sup>39</sup>

Static analysis begins with an ego whose essence is not in any way determined by others. Because static analysis does not allow others to play a primary role in the constitution of any particular self, the reciprocity that occurs between self and other is categorically unbalanced. The self always has a privileged role to play in the reciprocal constitution that occurs between self and other. Consequently, the intersubjective community of egos is conceived as having no primary constitutive role to play in the formation of its particular members. Even Husserl's more diachronic analyses of intersubjectivity in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* do not forsake the priority of the ego. While Husserl there gives more emphasis to the intersubjective constitution of meaning, he still maintains the priority of the experience of

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 29-32.

the isolated subject. The epoché must begin, he says, from the phenomenologist's "own vantage point": "he must begin with his original self-experience and his own original self-consciousness, i.e., the self-apperception of himself as the man to whom he accords whatever he does accord".<sup>40</sup>

Husserl's philosophy is a transcendental philosophy in the Kantian sense. It posits a theory about the necessary conditions of our experience of a unified and knowable world. Like Kant, he sees the universal subject, the transcendental ego, as that which allows for the possibility of this experience and knowledge. Unity and structure are given to what we perceive by virtue of the always identical ego that accompanies all our intentional acts of consciousness. For Husserl, it is this underlying unity of being that allows the world to be experienced and known. Differences must become subordinate to this unity if they are to present and be representable in consciousness.

Gilles Deleuze also elaborates a transcendental philosophy, one that he calls transcendental empiricism. He too is concerned to show how our experience of a unified world is possible. His solution to this problem is a reversal of Husserl's. In his solution, Deleuze elaborates a theory that gives priority to difference. Out of difference comes the unity that we experience, and experience depends on this priority of difference. This theory will prove to have serious consequences for the idea of epistemological certainty and serve as an instructive stepping-stone on our way to addressing the question of how the self and the world can be best understood as the product of collective constitution.

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<sup>40</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) 253.



## **Chapter 2: Difference and Otherness in Deleuze**

In our first chapter we explored how Husserl gives priority to unity, specifically the unity of the self or transcendental ego, in his static analysis of the self-other relationship and intersubjectivity. We have demonstrated that this analysis is insufficient to support the idea that the world is intersubjectively or communally constituted. This is because the self, as it is initially given in the primordial sphere, is not constituted or determined to any extent by others. An other is constituted by the self as a new instance of the self. As a result, the reciprocal constitution that occurs between self and other is inherently and categorically lop-sided in favour of the self. Similarly, the community of egos is conceived as having no initial role to play in the constitution of any self. The unity of the self is conceived as prior to the constituting activity that the community exerts on the self. The constitution of the world can therefore be traced back to the self, not to the reciprocal relations between selves. This, we have argued, is an inadequate concept of intersubjectivity.

In this chapter, we will employ the thought of Gilles Deleuze to attain a better concept of intersubjectivity. We will begin by exploring how Deleuze gives priority to difference rather than unity, and how he conceives of unities as being constructed on the basis of difference. We will explore his critique of Husserl's representationalism, as well as his critique of representationalism in general. But we will also embark upon a critique of Deleuze's preference for giving priority to difference. It will be argued that making difference prior is tantamount to introducing a transcendent principle as a way of

explaining the world as it is experienced. While this principle is not transcendent in the same way as the transcendent principles of unity that Deleuze is critical of, it nonetheless violates the principle of immanence to which Deleuze's philosophy claims to adhere. We will argue that maintaining a philosophy of immanence requires that neither difference nor unity be conceived as prior. Rather, they must be conceived as mutually implicating and codependent.

In the midst of this analysis of unity and difference, what will have become of our promise to achieve a better concept of intersubjectivity and the reciprocal relations that constitute the world? By achieving a better understanding of the relation between unity and difference, we hope to provide ourselves with a framework with which to understand the self as a unity in flux whose constitution is fundamentally determined by those other selves with which it comes into contact. The self will be conceived as having no unity prior to these relations with others. Rather, it will be conceived as, from the start, constituted by others and simultaneously constituting others. We will therefore have achieved a conception of community based on the reciprocal relations between its members.

### *2.1 Pure Difference*

Let us begin with what Deleuze takes to be most prior: difference. At times Deleuze speaks of differences as if they exist in isolation and separation from all possible unification of those differences into coherent wholes. Difference conceived as such is pure difference. Pure difference is characterized by the differences or "differential components" that become unified into a coherent and experientiable world. Deleuze gives

these differences various names such as “singularities”, “haecceities”, and “constituents”. These are his general names for the primary positive differences that subtend all consciousness, experience, and meaning. When giving primacy to difference, these are the “unexplained explainers” and so cannot be accounted for.<sup>41</sup> Pure difference is irreducible to any ultimate principle or set of unifying principles,<sup>42</sup> and can therefore be said to be “constitutive all the way down” for Deleuze.<sup>43</sup> This is why Deleuze says in *Difference and Repetition* that “difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing”.<sup>44</sup> In other words, the notion of a “behind difference” makes no sense for Deleuze.

Pure differences are, for Deleuze, irresolvably different. These differences are not imperfections that must be reconciled in identity. They are not lacking anything in being ununified. Instead, the distance between these differences is positive distance; the distance is purely affirmed.<sup>45</sup> As such, positive distance is not distance that must be overcome. Differences can be recognized as different and not made to resolve in identity. That is why these differences are differences-in-kind, not differences of degree. The latter are differences that are subsumed by the identities constructed out of difference. Just as a protractor has an abstract point where all of its divisions of degrees, minutes, and seconds converge, differences of degree are all aspects of a single abstract unity. Difference-in-

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<sup>41</sup> Todd May, “Difference and Unity in Gilles Deleuze,” in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*, eds. Constantine V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Routledge, 1994), 46.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>44</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 80.

<sup>45</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, Trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 172-173.

kind, however, pertains to pure difference.<sup>46</sup> Pure differences are neither contradictory, nor subsumed by any identity. It is a mistake to characterize them as such because pure difference is completely unstructured.<sup>47</sup> There is no fixed point of reference that binds them all together. Rather than serving the purpose of an ultimate convergence and cancellation of difference, Deleuze sees pure difference and positive distance as allowing for the possibility of life's movement.

Deleuze believes there is something beyond experience, viz. pure difference, that is more basic and gives rise to unity. By affirming difference in this way we penetrate to the real, to the origin of the sense and value of abstract unities, to the force and will that drives appearances.<sup>48</sup> Pure difference is "anonymous and productive, subsisting beneath and within the perceptible world of identities".<sup>49</sup> This "pure and measureless becoming of qualities threatens the order of qualified bodies from within".<sup>50</sup> Out of the divergence and impossibility that characterizes pure difference, elements are brought together in experience and given resonance.<sup>51</sup> It is the affirmation of distance that Deleuze believes allows for the possibility of the experienced world of changing unities.<sup>52</sup> In this way, Deleuze's concept of difference institutes a way of thinking which displaces the idea of the priority of unity (representationalism) that has dominated philosophy.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Todd May, "Gilles Deleuze and the politics of time," *Man and World* 29 (1996): 295.

<sup>47</sup> Deleuze, *Logic*, 170.

<sup>48</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 197.

<sup>49</sup> Todd May, "When is a Deleuzian becoming?," *Continental Philosophy Review* 36 (2003): 151.

<sup>50</sup> Deleuze, *Logic*, 164.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-174.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>53</sup> May, "Difference and Unity," 39.

## 2.2 *Fields of Unity*

The perceived or experienced world is composed of a selection of differences. In experience, differences become arranged in various fields of unity, or what Deleuze and Guattari call planes, plateaus, or surfaces. There are many such planes. What they have in common is that each brings a unique consistency to the pure difference that underlies the world. A plane “acts like a sieve”; it selects “a section of chaos”<sup>54</sup> and thereby constitutes a perspective.<sup>55</sup> This is analogous to the way a Cartesian grid defines the nothingness of a white page, or the way a city-planner arranges the streets, houses, and public spaces of a neighbourhood. In both cases, a selection is made that brings a certain consistency to the activities that will take place. The movements of thought and practice that will take place are hereby set off on a particular trajectory and made to cohere with one another in a consistent yet fluid manner.

In philosophical practice, planes of thought are laid out or traced in relation to problems. For example, the first philosophy of René Descartes sees objective certainty as problematic.<sup>56</sup> Empirical knowledge seems to lack a ground. Thus, Descartes, like Husserl, seeks to establish a subjective certainty that can serve as a basis for objective knowledge. The concept of the cogito offers a solution to this problem. It allows for the creation of other concepts that remain consistent with it and which continue to work out a solution to the problem of grounding empirical knowledge. The cogito and its related concepts trace a plane of thought, a philosophical plane. This is a sectioning of pure

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<sup>54</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 42.

<sup>55</sup> May, “Difference and Unity.”

<sup>56</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 26-27.

difference, a unity constructed out of difference. As such, the cogito initiates a novel resonance of thought, casting a new pitch and timbre over the conceptual terrain. A new rule of movement is instituted. According to Deleuze and Guattari, it is because Descartes' cogito creates a new unity in, or brings a new harmonic resonance to, thought that it can be considered valuable, i.e., interesting, remarkable, and important. The value of a set of concepts and the plane they trace are, for Deleuze and Guattari, determined by the aims of the philosopher who is engaged in the act of constructing concepts. Their value is relative to the problems that the philosopher wishes to or must address, and to the conceptual possibilities that his/her particular slice of pure difference opens up.

The relationship between a plane and the concepts, or collections of selected differences, that trace it is one that should be precisely understood. Todd May provides a good summary of this relationship. The creation, arrangement, and rearrangement of concepts are the activities that result in the tracing of a plane of immanence.<sup>57</sup> In creating concepts, philosophy "either rearranges a plane, articulates a new plane, or forces an intersection of that plane with others".<sup>58</sup> Any change in the composition or arrangement of the concepts results in a change in the overall nature of the plane. In this way, a concept is a "productive force" in that it has effects on the entire "conceptual field".<sup>59</sup> However, while a plane is the unity of the concepts that trace it, it remains distinct from these concepts.<sup>60</sup> This is because the plane that is traced in the creation of concepts is not reducible to those concepts. In this sense the plane is an "open whole". It is a whole

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<sup>57</sup> May, "Difference and Unity," 43.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

because its concepts are all related. It is open in that these concepts do not exhaust the possibilities of that plane. It remains capable of further development.<sup>61</sup> It is therefore a unity that is capable of differing. Furthermore, what gives a plane its unity is not a principle that is beyond, or transcendent to, the plane. This is why they are called planes of immanence.<sup>62</sup> A plane has unity by virtue of its own consistency, i.e. the consistency that holds between the concepts that occupy the plane at any given time.

### *2.3 Transcendent Principles of Unity*

Any plane gives consistency to thought by constructing unity out of a selection of differences. However, not all philosophers are aware of the nature of the planes that they are constructing. In this way, illusory transcendence enters into thought, for many do not understand that pure difference lies at the root of their thinking as a “principle of genesis or production”.<sup>63</sup> As a result, they believe the unities or concepts that they have constructed are the essential foundations of the world and our experience of it. They believe unity is fundamental, not realizing that it is a secondary phenomenon derived from pure difference. In other words, while they are doing philosophy creatively, they are not aware of this. They misunderstand what they are doing, mistaking the concepts they create for discoveries of the fundamental and eternal unities that ground reality, unities that are transcendent to all possible planes. To make such a mistake is to remain at the level of consciousness where only the effects or symptoms of pure difference are

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, 157.

apparent.<sup>64</sup> To affirm pure difference, or the unconscious, is to affirm the cause that gives rise to experience and its various changeable unities. Attaining the unconscious means shattering the illusion that unity is the most basic feature of reality.<sup>65</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari identify three types of illusory transcendence that have dominated the history of western philosophy. One of these is the illusion of “contemplation” or “objective idealism”.<sup>66</sup> Platonism is subject to this type of illusion. According to such thinking, the immanent world - or world of appearances, flux, and creation, i.e. the world unified in accordance with planes of immanence - is conceived as immanent to a transcendent world of eternal Ideas, Objects, or Essences. According to Deleuze and Guattari, this notion is illusory because it locates concepts that were created in immanence - such as the ideas of justice, temperance, and the good - outside of immanence, thereby artificially isolating them from thought’s creative movements. The Ideas, or transcendent figures of Truth, are thought of as pre-existing or uncreated objectalities,<sup>67</sup> principles of structure that are beyond all planes of immanence. In this way, contingently created concepts are mistakenly elevated to the level of universal necessities.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, these concepts are conceived as governing or limiting the creative processes that take place in thought and practice. For Platonists, the Ideas are

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<sup>64</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 19.

<sup>65</sup> The Freudian unconscious posits or theorizes a fixed structure in the human psyche that determines the conscious operations of the psyche in a uniform and predictable fashion that is not fundamentally altered by material or environmental factors. In contrast to this, the Deleuzian/Guattarian unconscious is a non-structure or non-order that is the prior condition for the structuration of conscious experience. This latter conception of the unconscious is the principle of the production and reformation of the order of conscious experience. It does not anchor experienced unities, as does the Freudian unconscious, but allows for and accounts for the movement and transformation of these unities.

<sup>66</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 6-7.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45



models or pure qualities that sensible things only imperfectly imitate or represent.

Similarly, our thoughts are true or well formed to the extent that they accurately represent the purity of these eternal forms. In this way, creativity is stifled and those who inhabit the world of flux are seemingly made passive and oppressed in relation to the transcendent power of the Ideas.

A second illusion, that of “reflection” or “subjective idealism”,<sup>69</sup> entails making planes of immanence, or what can also be called here fields of consciousness or determined and particular acts of thought, immanent to an undetermined and uncreated, universal and necessary subject. According to this model, all immanent creative acts of consciousness are governed by the necessary structure of this subject. Immanuel Kant’s concept of the subject, depicted by Deleuze and Guattari as a bull-headed machine, is one example of this type of illusion. Similar to the Ideas of Platonism, this subject is a concept created in immanence or in consciousness and is therefore wrongly conceived as the being in which consciousness is centred.<sup>70</sup> In this case, justifying knowledge entails knowing the a priori structure of this subject, or the way that it gives a necessary structure to the flux of sensible data. Here we see our freedom of thought being limited in a manner that is similar to the way in which Plato’s Ideas bound the immanent movements of thought.

A third illusion, that of “communication” or “intersubjective idealism”, comes about when transcendence is seen as emerging from within the immanent field of consciousness. Husserl, like Kant, posits the concept of the universal subject as the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 46

necessary ground of reality. Husserl attempts to move beyond the isolation entailed by the grounding of reality in the self by showing how the objective world is actually constituted intersubjectively. As we have demonstrated, Husserl does not fully succeed in justifying the intuition that objective meanings are constituted intersubjectively. Therefore, the flux of creative immanence must remain immanent to a subject with a supposedly necessary manner of constituting meaning. The upshot of Husserl's approach is that while he tries to shatter the isolation that results when experience is conceived as grounded on the intentional processes of a transcendental subject, he does not do this in a convincing manner because the intersubjective community is constituted as an analogue or representation of the original subjectivity.

I would guess that Deleuze and Guattari call the transcendence of Husserl's thought "*intersubjective* idealism" because he attempts to establish as a basis for the apodictic grounding of the sciences the agreeable or identical ways in which all subjects constitute the objective world. For Husserl, having properly justified knowledge means that one's objects of consciousness must be conceived as intersubjectively constituted, i.e. subsumable within a unity that encompasses all transcendental subjects, and not constituted merely by a single isolated subject. For Deleuze and Guattari, this ultimately means that consensus, arrived at by means of "communication", is the mark of truth. If all subjects can agree that they have constituted identical meanings in their consciousnesses, then it is safe to say that these meanings are universally true. However, Deleuze and Guattari do not believe that concepts are created through communication, discussion, and consensus building. What happens instead is a subordination of many differing perspectives to one that prevails as the most popular. Discussion leads to a lessening of

difference through the establishment of a universal consensus, i.e. through the subordination and subsumption of difference in unity. As such, it misunderstands the real problem or challenge of thought, for it believes that thought must find peace in universals.<sup>71</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, thought is strife and philosophy ought to promote the proliferation of differences through the creation of concepts and tracing of planes. Concepts and planes should not represent an already existing opinion, but a new direction for thought, practice, and life.

These three “idealisms” employ representationalist models of thought. “The primacy of identity,” says Deleuze, “...defines the world of representation”.<sup>72</sup> In representation, all immanent perspectives converge on a unity, and each perspective is a property, or representation, of this unity. As Deleuze says, representational thinking “maintains a unique center which gathers and represents all the others”.<sup>73</sup> Differences are “either reduced, marginalized, or denied altogether” by dominating identity.<sup>74</sup> On such a view, transcendent concepts provide the necessary forms of experience, while the sensible is merely the variable content of the forms. By virtue of such concepts, experiences are equivalent and repeatable because they have the same “organizational form”.<sup>75</sup> The “actual (here and now) sensations” that instantiate a concept are devalued because at another time other sensations could provide content that would produce an equivalent representation and therefore equivalent knowledge.<sup>76</sup> This reduces the sensible to

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>72</sup> Deleuze, *Difference*, ix.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>74</sup> May, “Difference and Unity,” 45.

<sup>75</sup> Bruce Baugh, “Transcendental Empiricism: Deleuze’s Response to Hegel,” *Man and World* 25 (1992):

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

difference which is said of the identical.<sup>77</sup> Any sensible particularities that are not accounted for by the concept are “accidental or extrinsic”.<sup>78</sup> If this is the nature of thought, then transcendent principles of unity explain the sensible and how it is raised to the level of knowledge.<sup>79</sup>

As we have already shown, Deleuze and Guattari find fault with Husserl because he is ultimately concerned with giving priority to a representational mode of thought. In their own philosophies, Deleuze and Guattari deny the primacy of representational thinking. They are critical of this image of thought, which understands both thought and the world as ordered by a priori forms of possibility that govern how we experience the world. For representationalism, it is the existence of transcendent structures that is problematic for thought. These structures are conceived as independent of thought’s immanent movement and therefore unaffected by its movement. For representationalism, it is philosophy’s job to discover or represent these transcendent unities.

Deleuze and Guattari think it is misleading to conceive of philosophy in this way. They make it their task to institute a way of thinking philosophy that gives order, consistency, and continuity to thought while at the same time allowing it to move and create,<sup>80</sup> free from the governing influence of transcendent unities. They conceive philosophical thinking not as representational, but as creative in response to problems that are immanent to it,<sup>81</sup> problems that are determined by the movement of thought. As such, the discipline of philosophy does not seek knowledge of what already is, but instead

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<sup>77</sup> Deleuze, *Difference*, 57.

<sup>78</sup> Baugh, 134.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 42 & 47.

<sup>81</sup> Paul Patton, “Concept and Event,” *Man and World* 29 (1996): 317.

undertakes the task of fashioning novel concepts that are primarily self-referential. Philosophical concepts are therefore not uncreated. The concepts we use need not already exist. Rather, they can be unique and novel "singularities" because concepts are open unities formed out of a selection of differences. Thus conceived, the value of philosophical thinking lies in its capacity to invent new ways of thinking and living. For Deleuze, a philosophy ought to engage the world in a creative manner, giving us tools that enable us to refashion it.<sup>82</sup> Concepts are thus an investment in the future in that they can determine what the world will be like by inspiring us to live differently.

Deleuze's and Guattari's philosophy seeks a middle way between representationalism, which posits haltings in, or barriers to, the movement of thought such that it becomes static and rigid, and the extreme disorder of chaos, where determinations in thought appear and disappear simultaneously so that there is no continuity between them.<sup>83</sup> Any ultimate resting place for thought is, for Deleuze and Guattari, an illusion. This is not to say that unities are not necessary for there to be experience. They are necessary. It is not unities per se that prevent the creation of concepts, but only unities which posit a certain structure as necessary and which claim that a certain perspective is "unsurpassable".<sup>84</sup> The main upshot of Deleuze's and Guattari's approach is that we should not cling to any constructed unities as if they are necessary. Giving priority to difference does not get rid of unities altogether, but only

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>83</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 42. The idea of chaos is synonymous with pure difference for Deleuze. There may be some doubt as to whether those terms are equivalent, since true chaos would preclude the idea of any distinct determinations, no matter how unstructured and random their relations with one another. I will seek in this paper to dispose of any need to appeal to either chaos or pure difference in an immanent account of experience.

<sup>84</sup> May, "Difference and Unity," 40.

those unifying principles “that either preclude difference or relegate it to a negative phenomenon”.<sup>85</sup> For Deleuze, all unities are in flux and so unity must be understood as being related to difference as a prior condition if we are to understand the nature of reality and experience.

#### 2.4 Transcendence and Pure Difference

Given that Deleuze posits pure difference as the necessary condition for the phenomenon of unity and the creation of concepts, it is pertinent to ask whether in doing so he is positing an ultimate transcendent principle that eternally and necessarily conditions our experience. In a sense he is, for, as Michael Hardt says, Deleuze is not an anti-foundationalist.<sup>86</sup> But he argues for a different kind of foundation, one that does not condition the world in the same way traditional forms of transcendence do. This is the case for a number of reasons.

Firstly, whereas the types of transcendental representation that Deleuze finds fault with are characterized by oneness, unity, and structure, pure difference is completely unstructured. It therefore involves no “transcendental fixity”<sup>87</sup> for it imparts no necessary form to the structured world of appearances. This, however, is exactly the function of traditional forms of transcendence. It is this feature that leads them to theoretically limit the possibilities of creation. Thought becomes focused on the attainment of and conformity with these forms. It becomes focused on the goal of achieving an adequate

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xv.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., xi.

and consistent representation of these forms to the exclusion of many other possible ways of thinking. Pure difference, on the other hand, while it gives rise to structure and unity, is not itself an underlying unity. It is that out of which all unity and structure is created, and theoretically no structure that arises from it is necessary. As such, pure difference values contingency and anomalies. Transcendental representation devalues contingency. It posits an underlying necessity that constrains the world. It must then confront the paradox that much of what we experience is not in conformity with the underlying ideal form. The thoughts of a madman and the ways he gives unity and meaning to his experience, for example, cannot be understood in their own right if we require his thoughts to either conform to our notions of sane thinking and common sense, or else be relegated to the class of anomalous accidents that are simply not worthy of consideration in our attempts to understand the world as it is. For those who subscribe to representationalism, the discrepancy between what we expect from the world, based on a preconceived notion of its underlying unity, and what we actually find in the world, leads to the view that the world is lacking something. Then there arises the imperative to make the world conform to the posited foundation. But if we take the view that there is no ideal structure to the world, then the world lacks nothing in not conforming to our concepts. The only lack can be the misunderstandings that arise when we take certain structures as necessary, or construct concepts while believing that we are actually discovering something eternally necessary. Positing pure difference eliminates the confusions that result from transcendental representationalism. We need not be confused that the world as we experience it does not conform to our concepts, for we realize that our concepts do not provide or represent the foundations of the world. According to Deleuze's transcendental

empiricism, there are many possible ways of giving order to the world because order is derivative. It arises from pure difference, from non-order. Pure difference offers us an explanation of the phenomenon of unity, rather than leaving it unexplained and using it to explain the phenomena of experience. It explains the occurrence of 'universals'. For Deleuze and Guattari, "[t]he first principle of philosophy is that Universals explain nothing but must themselves be explained".<sup>88</sup>

A second reason why pure difference is not a form of transcendental representationalism is that traditional forms of transcendence are posited as knowable entities or structures. These are principles that are at least hypothetically thinkable. They must be if they are to be discoverable. Pure difference, however, is beyond thought. Thought depends on this reserve of potential relations, but all thinking must be done in accordance with some form of contingent structure that has been constituted from pure difference because unstructured thought would be complete nonsense. No particular created structure is necessary, but some kind of structure is necessary for thinking to occur. Here we see that pure difference is not a knowable fact. Rather, it is a useful positing, a belief that is believable because it allows us to make sense of the world as we perceive it. It is an hypothesis that helps explain what we experience. Our experience is characterized by various unities that change their form through time. Both unity and difference are evident in the world. Traditionally, unity has been favoured as an underlying principle. Deleuze hypothesizes that difference is that which lies behind appearances because this idea has greater explanatory power than any transcendent principle of unity. Instead of being frustrated by the discrepancy between our concepts,

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<sup>88</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 7.



i.e. our unities, and the various ways in which the world contradicts these, we can see our concepts as contingent yet powerful constructions that contribute to the possibilities of this world.

So because pure difference differs from transcendent principles of unity in that it is non-structure and hence unthinkable, we can safely say that pure difference is not a kind of transcendental representationalism. However, there is good reason to suspect that there is an element of transcendence involved in the idea of pure difference. As we have said, pure difference is not a “traditional” form of transcendence, i.e. representationalism. But it is for Deleuze the most prior condition of the world as it appears. Deleuze’s empiricism provides us with a theory of the conditions that make experience possible. This is why it is a *transcendental* empiricism.

If we are to say that pure difference is transcendent then we ought to be clear about what we mean when we say “transcendent”. When designating certain principles of unity as transcendent we signify that these principles are both foundational in relation to the world as it appears and also in themselves unexperiencable in as far as these principles are not corporeal. Transcendent principles of unity claim to provide only the *form* of all corporeal experience. Actual experience cannot be merely an empty form. All experience involves some measure of corporeality. Now if we say that pure difference is transcendent, then what we seem to mean is that it is a condition of possibility for the world as it appears and that it is beyond experience. Deleuze would agree with our first statement, that pure difference is a prior condition for experience, but he would disagree with the statement that pure difference is beyond experience. In *Difference and Repetition*, for example, Deleuze suggests that pure difference is directly experiencable.

He says there that affirming the difference below representation means that we enter the domain of “‘experience’, transcendental empiricism or science of the sensible”.<sup>89</sup> A bit later he states that transcendental empiricism involves

apprehend[ing] directly in the sensible that which can only be sensed, the very being *of* the sensible: difference, potential difference and difference in intensity as the reason behind qualitative diversity.<sup>90</sup>

Here he plainly asserts that pure difference, the most prior condition of experience, is sensible and can be apprehended in experience.

It is important for Deleuze to argue that pure difference is directly experientiable because otherwise his philosophy of pure immanence is compromised. Designating pure difference as a transcendental principle by virtue of its metaphysical priority is relatively safe since the function of its priority is not to impart any necessary structure to that which appears in the world. In this respect, it is quite opposed to the kind of priority assumed by transcendental principles of unity. But if pure difference is transcendental in that it is beyond experience, and even beyond all possible experience, then it is the case that the conditions of experience are not apparent in, or immanent to, experience. Consequently, Deleuze’s philosophy could no longer be called a philosophy of pure immanence.

In what follows, I will argue that a consistent philosophy of immanence can be elaborated more effectively without positing pure difference as the a priori condition of experience. I will accomplish this partly by way of an explication of a general Deleuzian theory of the self-other relation. This will show that while differences are apparent in experience, pure difference is not. In experience, differences are unified, and these unities

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<sup>89</sup> Deleuze, *Difference*, 56.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

composed of differences undergo processes of differing. That is, they are in flux. Thus, in experience there is a codependency of unity and difference. Unity differs across its variously connected fields, and differences are unified in these fields. Pure difference is itself an idea that is transcendent to these fields and is therefore not a feature of experience. Fields or planes are characterized by unified differences, not pure difference. The planes might be said to *imply* the notion of pure difference, but this is an idea that transcends our empirical capacities.

In addition to correcting Deleuze's philosophy of immanence, we will also be furnished with an account of the self-other relation that gives others primary constitutive power in relation to the self and therefore allows for the world to be conceived as constituted by the reciprocal relations between its parts.

## 2.5 *Deleuzian Concepts*

To begin the next section of this thesis, I will say a bit more about Deleuze's and Guattari's theory of concepts. This theory will prove to be helpful in our attempt to formulate a Deleuzian model of the self-other relation because, like selves, concepts are unities in flux. They are unities that undergo processes of differing.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari elaborate a theory of concepts. Here, concepts are characterized as distinct territories, or regions of activity and power, where selected differences, or what can also be called singularities, have been gathered to compose higher singularities or "events". Concepts are events or territories of thought:

“[t]he concept speaks the event”.<sup>91</sup> So when we speak of the features and structure of concepts, we are also speaking of the features and structure of events, singularities, or territories of thought.

Concepts are never simple. They are each a “combination [*chiffre*]”<sup>92</sup> composed of a multiplicity of components, which are themselves concepts composed of components. Although a concept’s components are distinct and heterogeneous, they are made inseparable, or homogeneous, within the concept. This is the “endoconsistency” of the concept.<sup>93</sup> What holds the various components together and unites them in the form of a singular concept is a certain harmony or resonance which renders the components partially indiscernible and thus inseparable from a certain creative point of view, or according to a certain “taste”.<sup>94</sup> A concept as a whole is the “point of coincidence, condensation, or accumulation of its own components”;<sup>95</sup> it is apprehended all at once as a unity with a singular vibration or “intension”.<sup>96</sup> The conceptual point is a quality or intension that runs constantly throughout the components, while the components are intensive features or intensive ordinates of this overall quality.

Deleuze and Guattari offer us the example of the concept of a bird. To grasp and understand this concept one need not look to a higher class to which it belongs, such as animal, flying thing, or sacred/poetical motif. Instead, one need only look to its singular components, “its postures, colours, and songs”, and feel or intuit the indiscernibility or

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<sup>91</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 21.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

harmony that unites them into one “syneidetic” entity,<sup>97</sup> one synthesis of component senses, a single qualitative entity synthesized from the components’ qualities, a “refrain”.<sup>98</sup> To have a concept in this way is to perform an “act of thought” that surveys the components and immediately grasps their unity.<sup>99</sup> In surveying its components, the concept-intension courses through them. This is a survey without distance in the sense that the concept-intension is “immediately co-present to all its components or variations”.<sup>100</sup> This immediacy is what makes conceiving a concept infinitely speedy and non-discursive. The grasping of the concept is not a process of deduction, but an *intuition*, or instantaneous survey, which holds the components together. Unlike discursive propositions, concepts do not refer to any concrete or extensional states of affairs. Concepts are uniquely constituted unities, and therefore self-referential or “self-positing”; the only object of the act of intuiting or creating a concept is “the inseparability of the components that constitute its consistency”.<sup>101</sup> The concept need not refer to anything other than itself.

However, the components of a concept or territory are not eternally inseparable. Rather, they are inseparable only at the moment of the intuiting of a concept as a singular accumulation. All concepts and territories are in flux. Component singularities are lost and gained in processes of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari use two words to name this process of the exchange of singularities: deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The former designates the instability or “virtuality” of a territory, the openness of its limits or

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

boundaries so that it is capable of becoming other, of taking on new component singularities. Reterritorialization names the relative stability or “actuality” of a territory. A territory has stability because all its determinations are not brought in and expelled from it simultaneously. In other words, there is a *relative* continuity of singularities in that all the singularities of a territory will not be replaced all at once. There is no *absolute* continuity because a territory has no eternal or necessary components. Relative continuity, or consistency, is what differentiates a territory from pure difference.

## 2.6 *Deleuzian Selfhood and Otherness*

We may take a concept’s survey as a model or analogue of what it is to be a self, for a self can also be characterized as a territory or event, a unity constructed out of difference. As Deleuze and Guattari say, all concepts are multiplicities, but not all multiplicities are conceptual.<sup>102</sup> Just as the concept’s survey, or overall intension, is not located in a dimension that is supplementary to its components, we might say that a self is not in a separate dimension than its components. A self is, rather, a quality or intension that suffuses the features of its field or territory. Thus, the “I” is at no distance from its field. It *is* the field in as far as it is indiscernible from it. The “I” is the inseparability of what *is* in the field, just as the concept is the inseparability of its components and is at no distance from them.<sup>103</sup>

Thus, we have a characterization of a self as singularity or event. A self is a gathering-in of differences, of the components that for a time make it what it is. Other

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>103</sup> Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, “Translator’s Introduction,” *What is Philosophy?*, by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): ix-x.

persons are immediate components of a self in as far as a self takes in or contemplates others in its interactions with them. A self, as a territory or selection of differences, has a quality or resonance that surveys, or suffuses, it. An other, as a component event, is a modulation of this resonance, a counterpoint that changes the quality of a self as a whole.<sup>104</sup>

To encompass an other within one's survey is to habituate oneself to this other as a component. A self habitually contracts or takes in the elements of which it is composed. A plant composes itself similarly, but according to its own specific capacities. It contracts water, earth, nitrogen, carbon, chlorides and sulphates to make itself a plant.<sup>105</sup> Another person is contracted into the survey of a self in an analogous manner. What is contracted does not remain separate from that which contracts. David Hume's example of two men rowing a boat, who are really one existing in a state of mutual contraction, is fitted for our purpose.<sup>106</sup> Each becomes the other in an on-going act of mutual creation. They are propelled along a common trajectory by the work they do in tandem. The self in-habits the other, just as the other inhabits, or occupies the territory of, the self.

For Deleuze and Guattari then, "I is a habit", "a habit, acquired by contemplating the elements from which we come".<sup>107</sup> Habit is the survey that continuously holds components together, continuously contracts components of difference. Habits change, different components are picked up and let go, and the self changes coextensively. As

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<sup>104</sup> Deleuze's category of the other is not limited, as it is for Husserl, to other subjects whose mental processes are analogous to one's own. Anything can be other for Deleuze: trees, rocks, birds, rain, women, and men. All these others play a part in the becoming of any self. For the purpose of this paper, I will place emphasis on the role that other persons play in the constitution and becoming of a self.

<sup>105</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 105.

<sup>106</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 490.

<sup>107</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 105.

individuals we are ever-changing conventions,<sup>108</sup> convocations, or gatherings-in. This shows why Deleuze and Guattari call “English philosophy”, or empiricism, a “free and wild creation of concepts”,<sup>109</sup> for this way of thinking emphasizes a continuous changing of conventions and habits, and therefore a continuous reformation of all unities, including concepts. In empiricism the self is not distinguishable from the singularities it contracts or contemplates. For it, the subject is “the habit of saying I” in the midst of perpetual flux.<sup>110</sup> Empiricism emphasizes not an abstract universal subject, but events as singular proliferations in a field.

Deleuze and Guattari displace the abstract subject through the notion of the “there is”. The “there is” replaces the absolute “I”, or transcendental subject, which was supposed necessary by Husserl to give unity to the world. It is a conception of selfhood that indicates the de-centering of the self and its dispersal throughout a territory that includes other things and other persons as components. For example, there is water to drink, there is sunlight, there is an other who feeds, an other who threatens me, etc.

In an essay entitled “Michel Tournier and the World Without Others”, Deleuze accounts for the possibility of the movement or becoming-other of a self by what he calls the a priori Other, or Other-structure. Actually present other persons are the variable content of this a priori condition of perception. They are living expressions of possible worlds, of differences yet to be actualized in the territory of a self.<sup>111</sup> As such, others are

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>111</sup> Deleuze, *Logic*, 307.



conceived as mediators between the perceptible and the imperceptible, between different immanent fields of unity.

For those familiar with 20<sup>th</sup> century French philosophy, Deleuze's experimentation with the concept of an a priori Other in the essay on Michel Tournier cannot help but bring to mind the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. In Levinas's version of phenomenology, the other is closely tied to a notion of metaphysical priority. Therefore, a brief look at some of the general themes of Levinas's thought may illuminate, by comparison, what is accomplished or made possible by Deleuze's concept of the a priori Other.

### *2.7 Levinas's Concept of the Other*

Levinas offers us an early attempt at a critique of Husserl's phenomenology and the priority it assigns to the unity associated with the constituting activity of the transcendental ego. To a great extent, Levinas accepts the validity of Husserl's descriptions of intentional consciousness. As far as he is concerned, these accurately account for the foundations and procedures that give us knowledge of a unified world of being. But Levinas also thinks that Husserl's account of consciousness is incomplete. There is an aspect of consciousness, he argues, which coexists with intentional consciousness and which is fundamental to what we are. Levinas calls this 'nonintentional consciousness' and argues that it is coextensive with our experience of other persons.

In his philosophy, Levinas maintains that our experience of others, an experience in which we play a passive role, introduces into consciousness an experience of difference

that cannot be subsumed by the synchronous unity that is constituted by the transcendental ego as its knowledge of the world. Through our experience of others we have what he calls a “metaphysical” experience of infinity, the significance of which is eminently ethical. This experience puts our “ontological” being into question by immediately showing to us the manner in which our existence necessarily does violence to others. This awareness of unsubsumable difference is in some way prior to, is somehow a condition for, the activity of intentional consciousness, which gives us a unified and knowing self, as well as a unified and knowable world. For Levinas, ethics and metaphysical difference is the a priori condition for epistemology and ontology.

Levinas characterizes Husserl’s epistemological phenomenology as follows.

Husserl is in agreement with the main current of philosophy’s tradition in that for him what is meaningful and characterizes the mind is the “psyche qua knowledge”.<sup>112</sup> All that is in the psyche – that is, all that is sensed, contemplated, willed, perceived, understood, reflected upon – is an object of knowledge.<sup>113</sup> In other words, knowing is the dominant mode of consciousness for Husserl. Knowing thought looks toward the thinkable, toward beings or the objects of thought, which are the correlates of Husserl’s cogito (I think). The world is a harmony or correlation between thought and the thinkable. For Husserl, this is the grounding correlation. The empty intentionality of thought fulfills itself in grasping objects as knowledge.<sup>114</sup> It looks toward what is other and makes otherness a part of the self in the act of knowing. It makes objects, including others, part of

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<sup>112</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, “Nonintentional Consciousness,” in *Entre Nous: Thinking of the Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 124.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-5.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

immanence.<sup>115</sup> In this way, the “I think” is determined by its objects<sup>116</sup> and what is indeterminate is transformed into determinate or formal knowledge by being brought within the unity of the “I think”. What is in time and dispersed becomes knowledge by being made present to the “I think” and by being re-presented through memory.<sup>117</sup> In Husserl’s philosophy, thought as learning means taking, seizing, possessing, making present to mind, i.e. to the self. This making immanent of what is transcendent means thought is self-sufficient.<sup>118</sup>

Levinas also believes that non-theoretical intentionality, i.e. nonintentional consciousness, is present in Husserl’s thought, although it is not at the core of his philosophy<sup>119</sup> or developed as fully as it could be. The movement to transcendental life in Husserl’s phenomenology by way of the epoché reveals to us this nonintentional consciousness, says Levinas. For Husserl, the epoché promises to reveal the certainty of the unities that constitute the world. Only inadequate evidence of the certainty of these unities is found in natural consciousness. Original evidence is sought in transcendental consciousness so that the certainty of these unities can be judged. In this respect, Husserl’s inquiry remains within the bounds of knowledge and being.<sup>120</sup> Husserl’s “horizons of meaning” are equal to being. Intentional analysis reveals the horizons of meaning and rediscovers what of being has been forgotten.<sup>121</sup> For Husserl, the

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 125-6.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>120</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, “Philosophy and Awakening,” in *Who Comes After the Subject?*, eds. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991), 211.

<sup>121</sup> Levinas, “Nonintentional,” 123.

epoché is always a matter of attaining more perfect knowledge. The awakenings that his philosophy brings about are intended to be awakenings of knowledge.<sup>122</sup>

But as far as Levinas is concerned, epoché does not complete the incompleteness of our knowledge of the world. That is, full certainty is not attained. Nonetheless, because it “recognizes and measures this failure adequately” it can be called apodictic.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, a kind of complete knowledge is attained through the epoché, a knowledge that is both “knowledge of knowledge [of what has been forgotten of being] and nonknowledge [of the “life” that transcends being and is its condition of possibility]”.<sup>124</sup>

So for Levinas, there is more to Husserl’s thought than he himself realized. There is more there than the bringing together of moments of experience through a “stable rule” of unification that gives us knowledge of the world.<sup>125</sup> According to Levinas, the phenomenological reduction can bring us back to what he calls “life”, “to a psychism other than that of the knowledge of the world”.<sup>126</sup> The reduction can be a “permanent revolution” that reactivates and strengthens life, despite the fact that being protests against this.<sup>127</sup> Husserl fails to find original evidence and adequate knowledge. Nonetheless, a realm of meaning that is beyond being is discovered that has consequences for being.<sup>128</sup> This realm offers “a critique of knowledge as knowledge”,<sup>129</sup> a critique of the science of the world that goes beyond the world.

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<sup>122</sup> Levinas, “Awakening,” 214.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-2.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

The face of the other also offers us access to the lived that is beyond the world. As we have seen, Husserl gives great attention to the significance of the other. But for Levinas, theoretical intentionality is not involved in the relation with the other, as it had been in Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity.<sup>130</sup> For Levinas, intersubjective reduction does more than address the problem of solipsism and the relativity of truth that it entails. It is eminently significant for Levinas that the other tears the self from its privileged position as the only "here", the absolute centre of being. The ultimate meaning of the self is thereby revealed.<sup>131</sup> As we have seen, for Husserl the constitution of the meaning of the other as another self leads to the reconstitution of the meaning of oneself. The "here" and "there" are inverted. The self becomes a there in relation to others. For Levinas, the significance of the constitution of the other is not that it is a movement away from the foundations of being (i.e. the sphere of ownness), as it had been for Husserl, but that it is an unveiling of what is most prior: the relation to the other and the responsibility it entails. The self's loss of primacy is its awakening from egoism.<sup>132</sup> In being ousted from one's privileged position as the absolute center of being, one is then exposed to the other and has "accounts to render".<sup>133</sup> The other is not absorbed in the same. Nor can the same escape the other. The closed unity of the self is cracked because the other introduces "the very event of *transcendence* as life",<sup>134</sup> a force greater than the activity of the self in being and which cannot be encompassed by the unity of being. Through the other there is

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<sup>130</sup> Levinas, "Nonintentional," 124.

<sup>131</sup> Levinas, "Awakening," 213.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 214.

an “excessiveness” of life, an “uncontainable” that ruptures the contained.<sup>135</sup> The lived is a transcendence in immanence, “a difference at the heart of intimacy” that cannot be assimilated.<sup>136</sup>

Levinas characterizes intentional consciousness as active and voluntary. Consciousness acts through intentionality to constitute objects and its own synchronous unity.<sup>137</sup> Intentional consciousness actively intervenes in being. In doing so, it expresses its conatus, its active desire to sustain its existence.<sup>138</sup> Our passive relation to others calls this activity of consciousness, its striving and desire to persevere in being, into question, says Levinas.<sup>139</sup> Ontologically, that is in terms of one’s ego and its constituting activity, we have what Levinas calls a good conscience of being. We feel an inherent right to live and persevere in being. Death imposes an unavoidable limit on this right, but it does not fundamentally call into question our inalienable right to persevere in being, to strive to continue existing.<sup>140</sup> This good conscience of being is called into question by our experience of others.

Our experience of others is therefore the basis of what Levinas calls “bad conscience”. This is not the anxiety caused by the finitude of existence.<sup>141</sup> Bad conscience is the putting into question of one’s right to be out of fear for the other person’s precarious existence. This fear for the other cannot be avoided because one’s being, one’s presence in the world, inherently oppresses others in that one occupies the places and

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 212-3.

<sup>137</sup> Levinas, “Nonintentional,” 127.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Nonintentional consciousness does not act, but is characterized by passivity. The “lived” that is accessed through nonintentional consciousness is without having chosen to be (Levinas, “Nonintentional,” 128-9).

<sup>140</sup> Levinas, “Nonintentional,” 130.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

resources that could very well belong to others. In this way, one's being causes unintentional violence. We fear this violence, argues Levinas, even though we simultaneously feel justified in being.<sup>142</sup> This fear comes over us when we encounter the face of the other. The face ruptures the unity of our experience and being. The other's inherent defenselessness and exposure to death puts one's being into question and makes one responsible and fearful for their death.<sup>143</sup> The implicit awareness of bad conscience makes the self that acts in the world and in being ambiguous and enigmatic in that it recognizes itself as somewhat "hateful" in its very identity.<sup>144</sup> Also implied in one's identity and freedom is humility, a questioning of the affirmation of being.<sup>145</sup> Because of the hateful self, the self is no longer sovereign,<sup>146</sup> no longer autonomous. It is forced to take account of the other, to address the question that the other puts to it. According to Levinas, to address the questioning of one's right to be one must say "I".<sup>147</sup> The other thereby calls forth and summons one's identity. The other is a condition of the possibility of egohood. But even after one attains being in this way, the question remains perpetually. One's right to be is continually called into question in what we might call a dialectic without sublation. So the self remains perpetually hateful.<sup>148</sup> The other at once makes identity possible, and calls identity into question.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. 130.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

In Levinas' thought, "[t]he alternative of being and nothingness is not the ultimate".<sup>149</sup> "To be or not to be?" is not the basic question for Levinas because there is a more fundamental aspect of consciousness: our exposure to the other who both makes being possible and calls being into question. Being is secured in the passive relation to the other.<sup>150</sup> In recognizing nonintentional consciousness and bad conscience, we see the "possibility of fearing injustice more than death, of preferring injustice undergone to injustice committed".<sup>151</sup>

Levinas criticizes those who believe that the lived is a confused representation, something that can be made into explicit knowledge through reflective consciousness, which would intend the lived (or act upon it), thereby making it clear and distinct.<sup>152</sup> But spontaneous lived consciousness would be modified if it were to become an object of reflection. Its meaning is misconstrued when an attempt is made to subsume it within the realm of the same. For Levinas, the true meaning of the lived can be rendered only in isolation from reflective/intentional consciousness.<sup>153</sup> The lived is therefore not prereflexive. It is not a "momentary weakening" or a "childhood of the mind" that can be obliterated through intentional development that would favour the I and its "right to be".<sup>154</sup> The lived is intrinsically nonreflexive, inaccessible to reflective consciousness. The lived is inherently inexpressible, inexplicit, and confused in terms of knowing consciousness. It does not and cannot appear in the world as a phenomenon.<sup>155</sup> Being

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 128.



divorced from identity and the same, it has no name and no predicates. But if we are to speak of it we must use language, and language must employ names and predicates.

Therefore to speak of the lived is to necessarily employ metaphor.<sup>156</sup>

To say, as Levinas does, that the lived is a “presence that fears presence”<sup>157</sup> is to use the language of identity and presence to speak of that which is beyond presence and identity. Thus, the most paradoxical of statements are amenable to it, such as: it is naked, but not an exposed truth.<sup>158</sup> The lived is therefore not signified in language in the same way that the objects of the world are signified. The lived is signified only in a metaphorical sense. At the same time, this special sort of signification is the prior condition that makes possible the linguistic systems that are used to signify the objects of intentional consciousness.<sup>159</sup> The life that underlies and accompanies the objective world is therefore radically heterogeneous with the objective world. This life is implied in knowledge, but it is not an “interior” experience which contrasts with the “exterior” experience of the world.<sup>160</sup> It is not an experience at all in as far as experience pertains to our relation to the world. It is not an object that can be acted upon or grasped by consciousness.<sup>161</sup> The lived of nonintentional consciousness is superlatively transcendent, a beyond-being that is also uniquely intimate.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,” in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

<sup>157</sup> Levinas, “Nonintentional,” 128.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Alexander Kozin, “The Sign of the Other: On the Semiotic of Emmanuel Levinas’s Phenomenology,” *Semiotica* 152-1/4 (2004).

<sup>160</sup> Levinas, “Awakening,” 210.

<sup>161</sup> Levinas, “Nonintentional,” 129.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

Ultimately, the significance of lived nonintentional consciousness for Levinas is its challenge to the arrogance of the thought of the same. This thought displays a “drowsiness” and “self-complacency” that resists the challenge posed by transcendence. The identity of the same is a false repose, a false fulfillment that is a “petrification” and “laziness”.<sup>163</sup> It is possible for “clear and distinct good conscience”, i.e. intentionality, to go about constituting objective meaning while ignoring or obscuring the passivity that underlies it. But if it does so it goes about its activities as if sleepwalking, ignorantly and naively.<sup>164</sup> The experience of the other frees the self from itself, awakens it from its “dogmatic slumber”.<sup>165</sup> The other involves an awakening, a sobering-up to the larger context of our lives. But it does not destroy or replace consciousness of the same.<sup>166</sup> Intentional consciousness is left intact to coexist with nonintentional consciousness.

## *2.8 Deleuzian Concepts of Self and Other Revisited*

Now that we have some understanding of the significance of the concept of the other in Levinas’s thought, and especially of the manner in which the other signifies a life that is both prior to and not subsumable by the unity of consciousness, let us return to Deleuze’s concept of the a priori Other-structure. We will see that for Deleuze also, the other signifies or expresses difference beyond the actuality or unity of the experienced world. This is a striking similarity between his own conception of the other and Levinas’s. However, we will also see that this difference that is beyond unity, this virtuality that

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<sup>163</sup> Levinas, “Awakening,” 214.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 213-4.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

subsists beyond the actual, is subsumed by unity. It cannot be subsumed all at once in a single field of unity. But in any given field of unity virtualities are constantly being actualized, just as other differences are constantly being released from the bonds of actuality and returned to virtuality. This fluid interchange, involving both unity and difference, that Deleuze's other facilitates represents a significant departure from Levinas's conception of the other. In addition, Deleuze's a priori Other will offer us a key to understanding the crucial metaphysical codependence that holds between unity and difference. I will argue that such a codependence, which implies that neither unity nor difference is metaphysically prior, is to be preferred over both Levinas's and Deleuze's tendencies to assign priority to difference.

As the fundamental structure of the perceptual field, the a priori Other is "the condition of organization in general".<sup>167</sup> Various categories - including fringe-centre, form-background, text-context, transitive states-substantive parts, and theme-potentiality - are regarded as essential to the organization of perception.<sup>168</sup> These categories govern how objects come to be constituted in space and time, and how experience can present to us unified objects that appear within the context of a unified world. Deleuze tells us that the categories may be explained in one of two ways: they can be interpreted monistically, i.e. as immanent to the field of perception, or dualistically, i.e. as a set of subjective syntheses that are applied to raw, undetermined perceptual data.<sup>169</sup> In the latter case, a transcendental ego is invoked as the source of the a priori structures of experience. For his

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<sup>167</sup> Deleuze, *Logic*, 307.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

part, Husserl maintains the dualism of transcendental ego and perceptual data.<sup>170</sup> Deleuze, however, conceives these categories as immanent to the perceptual field, thereby forgoing the strict dualism of a priori subject and constituted objects of experience. Deleuze makes the categories dependent upon a generalized, or a priori, Other-structure rather than on a universal subject which gives order to perceptual data.<sup>171</sup> In this capacity, the a priori Other is not just another category of perception like the others. It is the condition of the possibility of the functioning of the categories. "It is the structure which conditions the entire field".<sup>172</sup> Thus, at the most fundamental level, one's experience of the world, and the constitution of oneself that accompanies this experience, requires that one exist in the company of others. This fundamental sociality is displaced in Husserl by his invocation of the primordial sphere of the transcendental ego.

As we will see, Deleuze's a priori Other-structure underpins the constitution of objects, the temporal determination of experience, and the unfolding of possibility. It also conditions desire in that desired objects are expressed by others in the form of possible objects of perception. In fact, in its most general sense, the a priori Other is "the structure of the possible".<sup>173</sup> It expresses and gives existence to the possible in general. In addition, objects, perceptions, and desires are all given measure, organization, and regulation by the Other-structure.<sup>174</sup> In short, it is the condition of the manifestation of both difference and unity in the field of experience.

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 308-309.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 318.

In order to understand how the Other-structure gives existence to the possible, we must first understand how it conditions the perceptual field. Others give the world and our experience of it unity by allowing our perceptions to be given against a background of other things and ideas that we are not immediately aware of, that we do not immediately perceive. This implicit background or horizon of other things and ideas is given to us as immediately perceived by various others.<sup>175</sup> This is evident in the case of ordinary material objects. The invisible sides of such objects are taken to be potentially visible because one assumes that actual others already perceive these hidden sides, or that others can at least potentially perceive them. In this way, the invisible world behind one's back is anticipated as perceivable and given a certain reality and existence even though one cannot directly experience it.<sup>176</sup> Thus, in the actual presence of others, or even with the mere functioning of the a priori Other-structure in the absence of actual others, the world is more than what is given immediately in experience. What is actually perceived is put in relation with what can potentially be perceived. In other words, it is put in relation with the possible or the virtual, that is, the differences yet to be actualized in a particular field of perception. This means that our immediate perceptions are not fundamentally divorced from those perceptions that came before and those that will follow.

This means that by virtue of the a priori Other, continuity is established between our ever-changing immediate perceptions. Transitions between them are smooth so that the objects we perceive at different times maintain identity despite their varying appearances. A new perspective on an object is therefore not perceived as a new object

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

because others are given as already having perceived this perspective.<sup>177</sup> Others fill the world out, allowing objects to change shape and form while maintaining identity.<sup>178</sup> They make the unknown and unperceived relative because these are given as already known and perceived by others. Others allow one to transition from one immediate perception to another in a smooth and uninterrupted manner. Without others, this transition would be violent. Each new moment would introduce a new and unexpected object into consciousness. Others make the world more comfortable; they “introduce the sign of the unseen in what I do see”.<sup>179</sup>

While giving unity to what we perceive, other persons and the a priori Other-structure also make possible the signification or anticipation of possible worlds apart from what is immediately encompassed in the territory of a self. Others are *expressions* of possible worlds. A range of potential is made apparent in consciousness by means of this a priori structure and the others that actualize it. Deleuze offers us the example of the sudden appearance of a frightened face which utters the expression “I am frightened”.<sup>180</sup> For Deleuze, this presents to experience the possibility of a new experience, a new world, the possibility of a frightening world, or what we might also call the possibility of a frightened self. This face is a novel element, a new singularity introduced into the field of experience, into the survey or gathering-in that is the self. It expresses a possible frightening world, or possible frightening object, that is not yet actual, not yet directly

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>180</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 17.

perceived by the subject.<sup>181</sup> As such, the face of the other acts as a bridge or mediator between the territory of a self that includes this other and something that lies beyond the territory. This “something” is included in the territory of the other self. It might be, for example, something the other has experienced in the past, the effect of which still lingers on the face: a scar, an unsteady gaze, a bleak or stern countenance, or a lipstick smudge, a smile, a joyful glint in the eye. Here we see the crucial difference between Levinas and Deleuze. For Levinas, the difference beyond unity that is signified by the other cannot be brought within the unity of the self. For Deleuze, the difference beyond the unity of the self that the other signifies is a potential part of the unity of the self. In addition, we see that the difference that is expressed by the other, that which causes the other to be frightened, does not subsist in pure difference. It is a difference that is actual in the unified territory of the other. Thus, the other does not offer the self any access to pure difference.

The fright that the other expresses has a particular structure. It does not resemble or represent the frightening object that is expressed. Rather, the expression “implicates” or “envelops” the expressed; the expressed is twisted or torsioned in its expression in the face of the other<sup>182</sup> so that the expression does not have a relationship of resemblance to the expressed. The other, as the expression of a possibility, is “the expressed, grasped as not yet existing outside of that which expresses it”.<sup>183</sup> That is, from the perspective of an experiencing self, an expressed possible world exists only in that which expresses it.

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<sup>181</sup> Deleuze, *Logic*, 307.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

Therefore, it does not exist in actuality,<sup>184</sup> except in a mediated form. It remains, as such, a virtuality, a difference yet to be actualized, yet to be made consistent with the group of other differences that compose the self in question. To make what is expressed actual, to make the possible present, is to explicate the other. The possible is hereby developed and realized.<sup>185</sup>

The concept of the *a priori* Other can also be understood as a principle of temporal movement, a principle of the reconstitution of the self in time. The other is an index of, and an opening to, a possible way of being in the future. It allows for the passage from one stage of self-composition to the next. Without the other one would be trapped in a static world and a static self: “we would always run up against things, the possible having disappeared”.<sup>186</sup> We would run up against not only unexpected objects of perception that impose themselves violently in our field of experience, but also against the fixed limits of ourselves. For Deleuze, if the other does not perform the function of facilitating temporal movement and reconstitution, then something else must so that we can make sense of what we perceive, i.e. the simultaneous unity and openness to change that characterize all that we experience.

The self is at least double in its movement and development in time. It is partially annihilated by the virtual objects expressed by others, and partially remains stable as that which was before the expression of a new virtuality. In this changing of the self there is continuity, for the components that one is composed of do not change all at once, but a bit at a time. Thus, while there is no essential core to the self, there is a continuity maintained

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 19.



over time. Our experience of the world is bound together in such a way that we do not become entirely other when we create something new in thought or find our world reconstituted as a result of an encounter with another person, place, or object. We do not become *completely* other in the process of becoming. Rather, it might be said that we become ourselves in a new way.

When I consider my own becoming I see that there have been noticeable shifts in my ways of being. Elements and components have continuously been added and subtracted. Up until some time ago, for instance, I had had little to no interest in political action, or I was at least sufficiently convinced that any such action was futile. However, in conjunction with studying political philosophy, I met someone who was fervently engaged in political activism. I became close to this person and was deeply affected by her conviction that it is indeed possible to affect changes on a broad scale in society. Seeing her work for change, admiring the nobility of her efforts, and seeing the real results of her efforts inspired me and convinced me that it is possible to enact my own ideals, to persuade people that there are better ways of doing things. In this instance of becoming-other, something of her, some part or component of her, resonated with some part of me. A bridge was thrown out between us, as Deleuze and Guattari would say. There was an overlap of her concepts or components and my own. In some small way we became indiscernible from each other. As a result there was a reordering and recomposition of the components that compose the event that is my own becoming. However, in being influenced by this other person I did not thereby become this other person. She indeed expressed the possibility of a new world to me, a world of political

activism, but I remained who I was to a very great extent. I can still argue politics with her and we can certainly find much to disagree upon.

This fits very well, I think, with what Deleuze and Guattari are trying to tell us about the nature of becoming. Becoming is not a complete reordering of components. Nor is it a complete dissolution of the form or configuration of the components that make up an individual or a situation. Rather, it involves slight or gradual adjustments, partial deaths that alter to greater or lesser extents what we are. In order for me to maintain a sense of myself throughout these changes there need only be consistency. That is, there need only be some elements that remain the same while others are altered. This does not, however, mean that there must be one or a few absolute components that never change. As long as some components remain intact while others fluctuate, a sense of self, a sense of continuity and consistency, is maintained. The definition of the self implied by Deleuze and Guattari is therefore quite Wittgensteinian. Defining an identity does not involve reducing it to an essence or soul that is essential for this identity to be what it is. Rather, an identity is composed of many interwoven attributes or components, none of which are absolutely essential to making the thing what it is.<sup>187</sup>

To conclude this section, I will take note of some differences in how Husserl and Deleuze conceive of our consciousness of others. The problem of solipsism that Husserl must contend with in his account of the self-other relation is made irrelevant by Deleuze's approach to the self-other relation. Deleuze's lack of concern with acquiring knowledge of the other is a necessary consequence of his prioritizing of difference. In denying the

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<sup>187</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, Publisher, 1969), 17; Idem, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, Publisher, 1967), sections 65-67.

priority of unity, Deleuze ipso facto calls into question the possibility of truth and certainty. The prioritizing of unity seems to be an essential correlate of the assumption that certainty is possible. If difference is prior and all unities are in flux, then all that we experience and know is provisional because there is no fixed measure or paradigm of organization that can provide a definitive structure to differences. So Deleuze's lack of concern with epistemology would seem to be a necessary consequence of his prioritization of difference.<sup>188</sup> He does not need others to be transparent to the self (they can remain epistemologically ineffable). Instead, their major significance is that they function to provide the material out of which a self is composed and allow for the recomposition of the self. In this sense, any self is heteronomous, i.e. dependent on otherness for its being.

Now, whereas for Husserl consciousness of an other qua transcendental ego is mediate and indirect, for Deleuze the other person is immanent to the surveyed field,<sup>189</sup> and therefore an immediate constitutive element of the self. This is not only true of other persons. All perceived, experienced, or otherwise contracted objects are for Deleuze immediate components of the self, although some play more intimate roles than others. Here we see that in Deleuze's account, the distinction between subject and object, as well as self and other, is made less strict.

However, mediation is not entirely banished from Deleuze's account of experience and unity, for there remains the distinction between the actual, or that which is

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<sup>188</sup> Whether certainty is made impossible by Deleuze's metaphysics, or if perhaps his metaphysics call for a new kind of epistemology and a new way of understanding truth, is an issue that requires exploration. Unfortunately, there is not room in this paper for such an exploration.

<sup>189</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 47-48.

taken up immediately in the survey that is the self, and the virtual, that which is beyond the survey and which is expressed by the others included in the survey. It is important to notice that the way in which Deleuze has employed the concept of the a priori Other-structure suggests that there is no experience of pure unstructured difference. Differences are either unified within the actual territory of a self or they are unified within the territory of another self and expressed as virtualities in the field of actuality. In this account of experience, pure difference is nowhere to be found. While Deleuze's essay on Michel Tournier does address the idea of pure difference, it is done within the context of a hypothetical world without others, a world that is beyond the purview of what we can call 'experience' in the normal sense of the term.

### *2.9 The World Without Others, or Pure Difference Revisited*

Before moving on to conclude this chapter and show finally how Deleuze's conception of the self-other relation, construed as not requiring any notion of pure difference, allows us to achieve an adequate concept of intersubjectivity, let us consider one last time the idea of pure difference. We will turn first to Deleuze's account of pure difference in his essay on Michel Tournier. I will argue that this account is inadequate if we wish to formulate a concept of pure difference that is amenable to an account of experience that gives priority to neither unity nor difference, but understands these as mutually implicating principles. Furthermore, I will contend that pure difference can be best understood as a sort of regulative idea that is implied by our experience of unity and difference.

As we have seen, the a priori Other-structure organizes the perceptual field in such a way that what is directly perceived is given as part of an implicit background of other

entities and perspectives that can potentially be perceived. In this way, objects and the world in general are given unity. An object that is perceived from many different perspectives is the same object despite its varied appearances, and the totality of objects is given as part of one continuously unfolding world. In “Michel Tournier and the World Without Others”, Deleuze experiments with the idea that in the absence of others and the Other-structure, the world becomes fragmented, its unity lost. As Deleuze explains it, in a world without others each moment, each perception becomes dissociated from all others. The distinction between possibility and actuality is lost and each thing becomes a pure difference that is incommensurable with everything else. We then have repetitions of pure difference where the distances between entities cannot be bridged.<sup>190</sup> The once smooth transitions from one thing to the next become harsh and violent. In the presence of others, objects are presented as if in relief against a full background, a plenitude of possibility. The a priori Other organizes depth so as to make our relation to it comfortable. There is something in the depths of the world to be known and perceived.<sup>191</sup> The other “fills the world with a benevolent murmuring”.<sup>192</sup> However, in the other’s absence, perspectives and objects become detached from one another. The unperceived is now an empty abyss.<sup>193</sup> The appearance of a new object is sudden and violent because it exists only in the moment of its perception. The presence of others foreshadows such objects, giving them existence as possibilities before they become actual. But in a world without others, transitions between the experienced and the unexperienced are not smooth. Objects

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<sup>190</sup> Deleuze, *Logic*, 307.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

contrast sharply. The unknown and unperceived are no longer expressed as virtuals or potentialities.<sup>194</sup> There is only a direct relation to the eternal now of pure and disconnected differences.

The absence of the Other-structure causes a change in the nature of time. In the presence of others time continuously flows, advancing toward the future while leaving the past behind. This movement of time is based on a distinction that Deleuze makes between one's consciousness and its object of desire. A desired object, says Deleuze, is always given in the form of a possibility expressed via another person. The object is therefore future-oriented. It is something virtual and not yet actual. This means that consciousness itself slips into the past. It is one's actuality, or what one is in abstraction from the new possibility expressed through an other.<sup>195</sup> The "I" indicates only what was: "I was peaceful", for example, before the expression of fright.<sup>196</sup> The Other-structure is therefore a condition of temporal movement or "duration": the before and the after.<sup>197</sup>

But the temporal continuity of a self is lost in the absence of the a priori Other. With the loss of all possibility and virtuality that occurs in the absence of others, there can be no mediation via others between consciousness and its virtual objects of desire. Consciousness becomes equal or limited to its immediate object, to what it perceives at any given moment. With the introduction of each new object consciousness, and therefore the self (but we cannot still speak of a self), is completely changed. It becomes incommensurably different from what it was before. In this world without others, there is

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>196</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 18.

<sup>197</sup> Deleuze, *Logic*, 311.

no sense of temporal movement. There is only an eternal now,<sup>198</sup> an eternal repetition of pure differences that are utterly discontinuous. In the absence of others, in the realm of pure differences, we are outside of time, beyond duration.

When consciousness becomes equal to its objects of desire, it becomes impossible to speak of consciousness and delimited objects any longer. Now we must speak of the unconscious and the elements or differences that are the prior condition for the composition of objects. In the presence of others there is consciousness, characterized by a flow of time and objects that maintain identity throughout this flow of time. For Deleuze, this arrangement is a sort of fiction because the flow of time and the objects we are aware of in consciousness are the effects of the more fundamental reality of pure difference. In the absence of others we would, according to Deleuze, become aware of this underlying cause of the world of which we are conscious. Deleuze calls this the unconscious. It is the “double” or “image” of the world of which we are conscious. In the absence of others, there is neither a flow of time nor objects that remain identical throughout this flow. Unity gives way to fragmentation. There is only the repetition of pure difference. This is the unconscious, the “image” of the world that underlies and causes the creative and productive processes that occur in experience.

This fragmentation of reality is the releasing of the elements from the confines of bodies and objects. Elements are here synonymous with differences, pure difference. In consciousness differences are subsumed and structured;<sup>199</sup> they are gathered and formed

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 302.

into bodies and objects.<sup>200</sup> That is, they are made consistent with one another. The Other-structure is the condition of this delimitation of objects and bodies, for objects become discrete only in relation to the possible objects and perspectives that an other brings them in relation to. To pass from one object to another requires that there be discrete objects.<sup>201</sup> The Other-structure therefore binds differences together to form a world and subdivides the world into its parts. A world of liberated differences is found when the world is released from the structure imposed by others. Desire is no longer mediated by others and directed toward possible objects. Desire becomes immediate. It is now oriented toward the necessary, i.e. the disconnected elements or differences that compose all things. This is an absolute deterritorialization in as far as the “territory” that designates a self becomes completely decomposed. Its components no longer resonate in a single survey. Because a territory also designates that which is actual, its complete decomposition marks the impossibility of the distinction between the virtual and the actual.

I do not find the idea of a world without others to be a particularly useful way of understanding pure difference or making it at all amenable to the account of experience that Deleuze gives in “Michel Tournier and the World Without Others”. That account makes others an essential aspect of experience. A world without others is therefore entirely beyond the bounds of normal experience.

A better way of construing the relation between pure difference and the unified world of experience would be to characterize pure difference as unlimited possibility – more specifically, as the unlimited possibility of relations between singularities or events.

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.



Of course, we do not experience unlimited relations because only some relations are actualized at any given time, just as only some possible relations are expressed in actuality at any given time. With the concept of the a priori Other-structure, Deleuze has argued that a condition of the possibility of experience is possibility itself, or that which is not yet actual, relations not yet realized. The a priori Other-structure is the manifestation or expression in time of this ultimate condition of experience. It gives possibility - the future, or what is yet to come - reality and being. Experience is possible only if the world is more than what we experience immediately, only if it is part virtual, only if it has an element of possibility which is not represented or representable, but which is expressed and produced in temporal experience. What makes experience possible is therefore beyond immediate experience, but nonetheless expressed in experience via others.

Bruce Baugh calls a thing's openness to unlimited possible relations its "multiplicity".<sup>202</sup> This is an event's capacity to change meaning by entering into new relations with other events or singularities. This capacity characterizes all things. It is the condition that allows concepts and selves to become, that is, to change components and thereby redefine themselves. It is multiplicity that distinguishes Deleuzian concepts and selves from representational concepts and subjects. For Deleuze, concepts are not pre-given unities or forms of possibility that structure the relations of sensible data in a necessary manner. Through representation, however, possibility is conceived as strictly limited, not just at any given moment, but also eternally because it asserts that unchanging forms determine experience.

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<sup>202</sup> Baugh, 135.

In the Deleuzian model of experience that we have advocated, possibility is unlimited, although not at each particular moment. At any given moment, some relations are actual and these actual relations open up a limited domain of other possible relations. This can be seen in the example of the frightened face. If an actual relation has been established with a certain frightened other, then the possibility is there for an actual relation with that which causes the other to be frightened. This is how the other acts as a conduit between different fields of unity. The same is true of concepts. What components a concept includes at any given time will determine its becoming. What will be included within a concept is therefore not determined by a fixed antecedent rule, that is, in a sedentary or closed fashion. Rather, the composition of a concept is determined nomadically, or in an open and changeable way. In other words, the rule that determines membership in a set is in flux.<sup>203</sup> The changing members themselves change the rule of inclusion. This is why, on Deleuze's view, the here and now of empirical actuality has such a great power of conditioning experience. Only certain possibilities of movement and development are open to a self at any given moment in virtue of its actually existing relations. With each new moment the possibilities and the rules change because new actualizations are realized. This is why Deleuze says that concepts are determined by "local situations".<sup>204</sup>

In representational models of thought, the relations between moments of experience are *internal* to a transcendent concept or pre-given rule. These relations therefore have a necessary form. Deleuzian relations are *external* to any fixed rule. The

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<sup>203</sup> Baugh, 136.

<sup>204</sup> Deleuze, *Difference*, xx.

relations themselves are prior to the rule and are the basis on which rules are made and remade. The unlimited possibility of relations, or pure difference, is therefore implied as an extreme possibility or regulative idea. However, in experience only some of these possible relations can ever be actual. Our access to difference must therefore be mediated because if we were to actually experience all possible relations simultaneously we would exist beyond the bounds of time and history in the unstructured mess of pure difference.

Deleuze's account of selfhood is therefore inherently historical. Events, such as concepts or selves, have an historical genesis, or causal history. Antecedent relations of efficient causation account for the nature and occurrence of events.<sup>205</sup> Events relate and conspire to produce new events as in a chain of causation. But the image of a chain of events is really too simple and too linear to account for the complexity of the relations involved in historical genesis. There is a complex interweaving of relations between events, so complex that there is no necessary outcome of these relations. Genealogy is the study of these material causes that bring about events. Genealogy does not see events as new instances of concepts, nor as exceptions to conceptual rules, but as purely novel and contingent results that create new unities.<sup>206</sup> In arguing for efficient causality, rather than final and formal causality, Deleuze gives emphasis to being's capacity "to produce and to be produced"<sup>207</sup> in a manner that is spontaneous and which grounds the construction of concepts.

We might understand the nature of Deleuze's historicism better if we see it in contrast with Hegel's way of conceiving history. For Hegel, the moments of historical

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<sup>205</sup> Baugh, 141.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> Hardt, xv.

development that are negated and synthesized are “intrinsically or logically related”,<sup>208</sup> rather than extrinsically related. This means that they are structured within the form that the concept or Idea imparts to these determinate representations. This makes the process and outcome of history necessary. Neither the moments nor the end are contingent causal results,<sup>209</sup> for they are structured by a pre-given form and end. In this way, Hegel accounts for phenomena, but at the same time sacrifices creativity and spontaneity.<sup>210</sup> For Hegel, without the a priori Idea to structure representations, the empirical has no content and cannot be considered knowledge. Taken on their own, each “this”, or moment of experience, is equal to any other “this”, and yet they are all absolutely different. As such, each is an “empty, negative universal”,<sup>211</sup> or “indeterminate non-being”;<sup>212</sup> “[w]ith respect to its utter indeterminacy and lack of content, being, the here and now existence of something, is identical to nothing”.<sup>213</sup> For Hegel, to be meaningful and positive instances of knowledge, sensations must be ordered through concepts. Otherwise, they are merely accidental and can make no difference to knowledge. But for Deleuze, “[t]he empirical [...] must be thought even if it cannot be known”.<sup>214</sup> That is, while the possibility of knowledge may be hampered by the denial of the metaphysical priority of unity, thought is yet faced with an even greater challenge: to discern the nature of events which cannot be subsumed within any transcendent principle of unity. The challenge is to think the particularity of an event without the help of a formal principle. On Deleuze’s

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<sup>208</sup> Baugh, 141.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-144.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

view, concepts can be explained, rather than taken for granted, if we look to the ways in which rule governed systems take shape and develop in practice.

### *2.10 Deleuzian Community*

Let us now consolidate what has been accomplished in this chapter. We have seen how Deleuze displaces the priority of unity and makes difference a prior condition of unity. We have used the idea of the construction of unities in time to develop a notion of how the unity of the self is constructed. Most essential and fundamental to the constitution of any self are the differences that are gathered together and made to cohere. These are the fundamental constituents of any self. A self is literally nothing without them, not even an empty form of consciousness. Other persons are instances of these fundamental differences or constituents that compose selves. Therefore, we are all fundamentally social and from the start constituted by our relations with others. Furthermore, in being constituted by others, we simultaneously and reciprocally play a role in constituting others. We impart to them features and components of ourselves. A consequence of denying the metaphysical priority of unity has therefore been the displacement of the epistemological importance of others in favour of an emphasis on the constitutive roles that others play in the formation of selves. Following from this, it can be said that all selves resonate loosely in a great fluctuating communal field of unity that can be conceived narrowly as society, or more broadly as nature in its entirety. This is a community that can only be accessed from within. One can have only a partial view of it. Each self is but a small component territory of the whole. But the whole is not in any way reducible to any of its parts. The self is not categorically privileged in its reciprocally

constituting interactions with others. This does not mean that reciprocation is necessarily egalitarian. It probably rarely is. In some instances an other may exert more constitutive power over a self, as in one's most formative years as a child. At times the self can be a stronger force than the other. But the privileging of one party over the other is not categorically in favour of the self, as it is in Husserl's static analysis. If the self is privileged over the other, then this privilege is conditional. Relative to a different other, a particular self may have less constitutive power. Or the self may undergo some misfortune that leaves her less powerful. The hierarchies of constitutive power are themselves in flux. This way of conceiving of a community and the interactions of its members is made possible in Deleuze's thought not so much because he gives priority to difference, but because he does not make difference subordinate to unity or reducible to any unity, such as the ego, which would then have a categorical privilege in the constitutive activity that is at the basis of the world and our experience of it. Rather than needing the idea of the priority of difference, what we require for this conception that we have achieved of the immanent constitution of an intersubjective community is the idea that difference and unity are mutually implicating and codependent principles. This idea allows us to conceive of unities as constituted by their relations with other unities. If we care to conceive of pure difference as unlimited possible relations, then we can say that pure difference serves not so much as a necessary condition of the world as it appears, but as a regulative idea implied by the world as we experience it.

## Conclusion

The problem that has been the impetus for the discussion in this thesis has been the problem of how best to conceive the relation between self and other such that the concept of community or intersubjectivity that follows is strong enough to allow that our societies and the world in general are products of collective constitution and not reducible to the constituting activity of the individual. Husserl and Deleuze both construct different ways of conceiving the relation between self and other.

Husserl examines consciousness in detail and posits an autonomous and universal subject as the necessary correlate of each and every intentional act of consciousness that contributes toward the construction of the phenomena of the world. Not only is consciousness necessarily consciousness *of* some object, but it is also necessarily consciousness *for* some transcendental ego. Building upon these principles, Husserl tackles the problem of the self-other relation and the intersubjectivity that can only be understood on the basis of this relation. Throughout his examination of the meaning of the other and of intersubjectivity, Husserl does not relinquish the primacy of the ego. The other can be understood only as an analogue of the constituting ego. Whatever the other is apperceived as constituting can only be derivative of what the ego has constituted or is capable of constituting. There can never be any radical difference between the meanings constituted by the ego and those constituted by the other. Because each other is really capable of no more than the ego is capable of, the intersubjective community that includes the original ego and all others is a community that is necessarily constrained by the nature of the ego. Because all apperceived constitutions of meaning find their root in

the transcendental ego, there can be no sensible notion of a collective constitution of meaning derived from Husserl's phenomenology. In the reciprocal relations between subjects, the ego is categorically privileged.

A Deleuzian examination of experience and perception leads us to posit a concept of heteronomous selfhood as a more useful way of dealing with the problem of reconciling the individual with the collective. With Deleuze, the self becomes invested in otherness. Each self is fundamentally a gathering of otherness, a changeable composition of components, none of which are essential to the make-up of the self. Here there is no longer a strict distinction drawn between consciousness *of* and consciousness *for*. The components or objects that compose a self or territory, i.e. what one is immediately conscious of, are equal to the self, i.e. who this consciousness is for. The self is therefore no longer a foundation upon which the world is constructed. The self no longer conditions the world in an absolute way, as had been the case for Husserl. Rather, the world conditions the self. The self is constructed through a selection of the components that compose the world. With this reversal of the priority of self and other, of world and self, that we have in Deleuze, we achieve what Husserl strove for, but could not accomplish. We have in Deleuze a conception of selfhood that takes account of the historically changeable nature of the self, just as Husserl had done through his examination of consciousness, and which also sees the world as not in any way pivoting on the transcendent form of the self. Rather, the constitution of the world is conceived as being conditioned by the collective desires of the many intermingling and co-inhabiting life forms whose lives intricately penetrate one another and lead one another toward reconstitutions with others and decompositions in otherness.



Husserl's analysis examines the modifications that a universal, or static, subject undergoes as it constitutes meaning. Even Husserl's genetic, or historical, analyses of constitution maintain an element of the static subject as the necessary subject of all acts of constitution. Deleuze's account of selfhood is truly genetic because it removes all vestiges of the static subject. The Deleuzian self has no essential aspect, but is constantly redefined by the changes it undergoes in time. Intersubjectivity not based on an autonomous ego might still be, in a sense, homogeneous in that it has a single quality that suffuses it and holds the different components together in a single survey. However, this would be a homogeneity composed of heterogeneous components. Here, neither difference nor unity takes priority. They are conceived as mutually implicating and codependent principles that together allow us to achieve a purely immanent account of the world as it appears to us.

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