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The Expression of Meaning in Deleuze's Ontological Proposition

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Philosophical modernity pivots around the question of meaning: Is the world inherently meaningful, or is meaning projected onto the world by humans? Or to put it another way: Is the world to be explained in terms of meaning, or meaning explained as an aspect – but only one aspect – of the world? Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that this is indeed the fundamental issue at stake in modern philosophy. If so, then perhaps the most profound philosophical divide would be the one between those who insist on taking our experience of meaning as the incontrovertible datum that explains intelligibility, thereby providing the fulcrum for epistemology and ontology; and those who believe that meaning is not co-extensive with intelligibility, but is to be accounted for in terms of processes whose comprehension does not depend upon their being re-inscribed within the realm of meaning. The former are those who hold meaning to be primary, and hence to be the condition for the secondary distinction between the intelligible and the unintelligible; the latter are those convinced that we must first begin by explaining how intelligibility is possible before going on to explain how meaningful phenomena emerge from intelligible yet meaningless processes.

At first sight, it would seem that we have merely reiterated the familiar opposition between idealists and materialists. But in fact, neither position can be straightforwardly mapped onto either term of this alternative. For, just as an idealist may prioritise the intelligible over the sensible without privileging meaning, a materialist may appeal to the intrinsic intelligibility of 'matter' – however the latter be defined – in order to account for the origin of meaning. Consequently, everything

depends on how meaning and intelligibility are articulated. For materialism hardly represents an advance over idealism if it is only able to account for meaning by postulating an originary principle of intelligibility in matter. Thus it is not only meaning's emergence from meaninglessness that must be accounted for; it is also the emergence of the intelligible from the sensible. The first is an ontological problem about what meaning is, the second is an epistemological problem about how intelligibility is possible in a world whose structure does not depend upon thought. It is imperative not to elide these two, on pain of mystifying both the nature of meaning and that of thought.

It is Kant who is supposed to have discredited the metaphysical postulate of an originary isomorphy between thought and being by ruling out appeals to intellectual intuition. In doing so, he carried out a decisive redistribution of the relations between meaning, sensibility, and intuition. The intelligible is neither intuited intellectually nor passively imprinted upon the mind by sensibility. Mediating between reason and sensibility is the understanding as the faculty of judgement, which weds concepts and intuitions into representations whose objectivity is a function of their propositional content or meaning. By placing the power of judgement at the heart of the machinery of cognition, and by construing the objectivity of representations in terms of their propositional content, Kant turns the theory of meaning into the key that demarcates the boundary between the intelligible and the unintelligible.[1] Thus, in *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze credits Kant with discovering a properly transcendental dimension of meaning as that which overturns the metaphysical intuition of 'essence': "It is true to say that meaning [*le sens*] is the discovery proper to transcendental philosophy, replacing the old metaphysical essences."[2]

1 Cf. Robert Hannah, *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

2 Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), p. 128, hereafter *LS*. At this stage, a point of clarification is necessary. It is important to insist that, for much of the time, when Deleuze is talking about '*sens*' he is simply talking about 'meaning'. Granted, the French word '*sens*' can also mean 'direction', a semantic nuance which Deleuze frequently exploits in order to bring out the specifically *topological* aspect of his concept of meaning, as exemplified by the fact that it is deployed upon a 'surface'. And no doubt it is in order to retain this nuance that Deleuze's translators have opted to render '*sens*' systematically as 'sense' rather than as 'meaning'. But this laudable desire to preserve an undeniably important philosophical nuance comes at the cost of occluding the extent to which Deleuze's

Yet, as early as his 1954 review of Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*,[3] Deleuze is already suggesting that the Kantian problematic of representation has not completely revoked the privileges of essence, because the disjunction between phenomenon and noumenon simply reiterates the distinction between being and appearing. In order to consummate the critical displacement of essence by meaning, Deleuze insists, it is necessary to absolutise the immanence of this world in such a way as to dissolve the transcendent disjunction between things as we know them and as they are in themselves, and hence to abandon the representational framework which continues to construe meaning as the key that unlocks the intelligible realm, rather than as that which dispenses with the latter altogether: "To say that this world here is self-sufficient is not only to say that it is sufficient *for us*, but that it is sufficient unto itself, and that it does not relate to being as to an essence beyond appearance, or to another world which would be the realm of the Intelligible, but rather that it relates to it as to the meaning of this world."[4] Consequently, Deleuze continues: "That there is no 'beyond' means that there is no beyond of this world, (because Being is nothing but meaning), and that there is no beyond of thought in the world (because it is being that thinks itself in thought), and lastly, that there is no beyond of language in thought itself."[5]

14 years later, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze will re-assert this interpenetration of thought, being, and meaning in the claim that "[t]here has only ever been one ontological proposition: Being is univocal."[6] Univocity entails that "Being is said [*L'Être se dit*] in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is

concern with the logic of sense constitutes an engagement with what we are here calling the fundamental problematic of philosophical modernity: the problem of meaning. Thus, wherever possible, I will translate '*sens*' as 'meaning' in order to emphasise the overlap between Deleuze's concerns and those of the more 'mainstream' – I use the word without endorsement – post-Kantian tradition. It is precisely this overlap which is needlessly obscured by the tendency to fetishize the word 'sense' at the expense of 'meaning' in a way that encourages the widespread perception of Deleuze's work as wilfully eccentric.

3 Jean Hyppolite, *Logique et existence. Éssai sur la Logique de Hegel* (Paris: PUF, 1953); *Logic and Existence* Tr. L. Lawlor and A. Sen (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1997).

4 Gilles Deleuze, 'Jean Hyppolite, Logique et existence' in L'île déserte et autres *textes*. Ed. D. Lapoujade (Paris : Minuit, 2002). pp. 18-23, p. 20, hereafter *JH*

5 Ibid.

said differs: it is difference itself."[7] '*L'être se dit*', writes Deleuze, and the accusative '*se*' bears underlining here: it implies not only that 'being is said' but also that 'being *says itself*'. Being says itself because thinking is not exterior to being, as it is for the philosophies of representation: rather, the difference between thinking and being is intrinsic to being insofar as the latter is nothing but difference, or better, *differentiation*. Thus in his review of Hyppolite, Deleuze writes: "The external empirical difference between thought and being gives way to the internal difference of Being thinking itself [...] Thus, in logic, there is no longer what I say on one hand and the meaning of what I say on the other, as there is in the empirical [...] My discourse is logically or properly philosophical [...] when I say the sense of what I say and Being thereby says itself."[8] This is why ontology (from the Greek *on* (gen. *ontos*) 'being' (prp. of *einai* 'to be') + *logia* 'writing about, study of') must take the form of a proposition: it is the discourse *of* being, where the genitive is as much objective as subjective. And this univocal discourse entails a transcendental logic of meaning precisely insofar as being does not say itself as the identity of essence but rather as the difference of sense (i.e. meaning).

But why is sense a function of difference rather than identity? Why is meaning a locus of differentiation rather than identification? To understand why, we must bear in mind the crucial role played by the logic of expression throughout Deleuze's work. A remark from the last page of Deleuze's *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* is particularly illuminating here. Deleuze writes there: "The expressed is *meaning*: deeper than the relation of causality; deeper than the relation of representation."[9] According to Deleuze, it is the triadic structure of expression that provides the key to understanding Spinoza's rationalism: "substance expresses itself, the attributes are expressions, and essence is expressed."[10] The three moments of expression will be articulated in terms of the expressive mode, the attributive expression, and the

6 Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968); *Difference and Repetition*. Tr. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). p. 52/35, hereafter *DR*

7 Ibid., p. 53/36

8 *JH*, p. 21

9 Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris: Minuit, 1968), p. 311, hereafter *SPE*.

10 Ibid., p. 21

expressed essence (substance). But the entire impetus of Deleuze's interpretation of Spinozism consists in insisting that it is substance that orbits around the modes, rather than the reverse[11]. Thus, the critical destitution of substance turns the latter qua expressed into a function of the expressive mode. Moreover, it is because being expresses itself as meaning that it can be grasped without invoking intellectual intuition. This was already hinted at in Deleuze's review of Hyppolite, where he commended Hegel's version of absolute rationalism for dissolving the metaphysical dualism of being and appearing[12]. Accordingly, the dissolution of representation consummates the critical destitution of substance in such a way as to entail that being expresses itself as meaning, but only insofar as meaning qua expressed must be grasped as entity, which is to say, as event rather than as substance. The expressed meaning 'insists' or 'subsists' in the proposition that expresses it, while remaining irreducible to the signifying word or the designated thing. Thus, in *Logic of Sense* we find Deleuze asserting that "meaning is the *expressed of the proposition*, the incorporeal at the surface of things, the irreducible complex entity, the pure event which insists or subsists in the proposition."[13] (1969: 30) By the same token, Deleuze's fundamental ontological proposition in *Difference and Repetition* constitutes a 'complex entity' in which being expresses its 'own' meaning: "In the proposition considered as complex entity we distinguish between meaning, or what is expressed in the proposition; the designated (what expresses itself in the proposition); and the expressive or designating factors, which are numerical modes, that is to say, differential factors characterising the elements endowed with meaning and designation."[14] The expressive factors that differentiate being are its numerically, which is to say, quantitatively distinct modes or individuating differences, while the attributes are expressed as its qualitatively distinct meanings: "The attributes effectively operate as qualitatively different meanings, which relate back to substance as to a single designated; and this substance in turn operates as an ontologically unified meaning relative to the modes which express it, and which subsist within it as individuating factors or inherent intense degrees."[15]

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11 Ibid., p. 59
12 *JH*, p. 20
13 *LS*, p. 30
14 *DR*, p. 52/35, tm
15 Ibid., p. 59/40, tm

But why should the auto-expression of being as meaning depend upon the distinction between quantitative difference at the modal level and qualitative difference at the attributive level? There is a fundamental difficulty here: on the one hand, Deleuze assures us that being expresses or thinks itself through thought, while on the other he insists that "meaning is never a principle or origin; it is produced"[16]. How then are we to reconcile the claim that being expresses itself as meaning with the claim that meaning is a consequence rather than a cause, a product rather than a principle? This is the challenge confronting anyone trying to make sense of Deleuze's exceptionally ambitious but also extraordinarily difficult project. But we can begin to see how these apparently conflicting claims may be reconciled by distinguishing between two different levels at which Deleuze's philosophy of difference operates: On the first level, differentiation is *ontic* (in the non-Heideggerian sense of the word as 'pertaining to existence or being', rather than in contrast to 'ontological') and is elaborated in terms of the theory of temporal individuation which lies at the heart of *Difference and Repetition*. This is Deleuze's account of modal difference as quantitative distinction: individuation provides the sufficient reason for actualisation and hence for modal differen*t/*ciation. On the second level, differentiation is *logical* (in the sense of 'pertaining to logos or discourse', rather than a particular technical discipline) and is explained in terms of the transcendental topology of the sense-event provided in *Logic of Sense*. And it is here that Deleuze provides us with an account of the origin of qualitative distinction at the level of attributive expression: it is the production of meaning that explains how symbolic differen*t*iation generates qualitative difference at the attributive level. But it is important to note that both levels of this ontico-logical distinction encompass the distinction between virtual differen*t*iation and actual differenciation: both virtual and actual dimensions are fully operative at the ontic and logical levels. In this regard, the relationship between the ontic and the symbolic, or between time and meaning, suggests that *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense* may be connected in a way that echoes in an odd and entirely unexpected fashion the link between Hegel's *Phenomenology* and his *Logic*. Thus it is necessary to recapitulate Deleuze's account of ontic differentiation in *Difference and Repetition* before considering how it might be connected to the account of logical differentiation proposed in *Logic of Sense*.

16 *LS*, p. 90

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Difference and Repetition proposes an ontology of temporal difference: it is precisely being *as time* that is "said in one and the same sense of all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities"[17]. And it is because those individuating differences or intrinsic modalities express divergent rates or 'tendencies' of duration that being cannot be conceptually comprehended as an intuitable object. Already in 1956's 'Bergson's Conception of Difference', Deleuze is arguing that to conceive of being as pure self-differentiation is to conceive of it in Bergsonian terms as duration: "Duration, tendency, is self-differentiating; and what differs from itself is immediately the unity of substance and subject."[18] *Difference and Repetition* will qualify and complicate this claim that duration is the 'immediate' unity of substance and subject, or being and thought, by suggesting that this unity cannot be represented as an identity; it must be generated through a synthesis which simultaneously joins and disjoins substance and subject, thought and being, via an involution of temporal difference that renders it in and for-itself.

Thus, Deleuze uses the scalpel of a refined Bergsonism to rearrange the body of Kantianism. Representation is subjected to a critique which annuls the mediating function of conceptual understanding vis-à-vis reason and sensibility. In *Difference and Repetition* the tripartite structure of the first Critique ostensibly undergoes an involution which folds the Transcendental Dialectic directly into the Transcendental Aesthetic. The mediating role of the Transcendental Analytic is supplanted by an account of spatio-temporal individuation which provides the sufficient reason for a non-conceptual synthesis of reason and sensibility. With the unifying function of the understanding suspended, the aesthetic manifold need no longer be subjected to conceptual subsumption; it now incarnates the dialectical structures of ideal multiplicity. Rather than being specified via the representational logic of subsumption, wherein the concept is always too 'baggy' to fit the particular object, the individuated entity is the actualisation of a virtual multiplicity; and it is individuation as ultimate determinant of

17 *DR*, p. 53/36

18 Gilles Deleuze, 'La conception de la différence chez Bergon' in L'île déserte et autres *textes*. Ed. D. Lapoujade (Paris : Minuit, 2002). pp. 43-72, p. 52

actualisation which ensures the exact coincidence of the ideal and the real, and hence a precise fit between ideal genesis and empirical actuality. In seeking out the ideal conditions capable of generating the individual entity of actual experience, rather than the particular object of possible experience, Deleuze's 'transcendental empiricism' treats the concept (i.e. the Idea as virtual multiplicity) as the object of an encounter which is no longer governed by the logic of recognition: thus Deleuze declares, "concepts are the things themselves, but things in their free and untamed state, beyond "anthropological predicates"."[19]

Ideas are characterised as both distinct and obscure. They are distinct insofar as they are perfectly differentiated – via the reciprocal determination of relations and the complete determination of points – but obscure because they are not yet differenciated – since all Ideas coexist with one another in a state of virtual perplication. By the same token, intensities are at once clear and confused. They are clear insofar as they are enveloping and confused insofar as they are enveloped. Thus the clarity of enveloping depth is inseparable from the confusion of enveloped distance. Accordingly, in individuation, the perplication of ideas is expressed by the implication of intensities. Enveloping depth clearly expresses distinct relations and points in the Idea, while enveloped distance confusedly expresses their obscure indifferenciation. Moreover, enveloping depth constitutes the field of individuating differences, while enveloped distances constitute the individual differences. Intensity is individuating precisely insofar as it expresses the Idea; but this expression[20] is a function of thinking:-

> "To the distinct-obscure as ideal unity corresponds the clear-confused as individuating intensive unity. The clear-confused is not a characteristic of the Idea but of the thinker who thinks it or expresses it. For the thinker is the individual as such."[21]

19 *DR*, p. 3/xxi-xxii, tm

20 For accounts of the role of 'expression' in Deleuze's thought which differ from the one presented here see Len Lawlor (1998) 'The End of Phenomenology: Expressionism in Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty' in *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 31. No. 1, 15-34; and Simon Duffy (2004) 'The Logic of Expression in Deleuze's *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*: A Strategy of Engagement' in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 47-60.

21 *DR*, p. 325/253, tm

Intensity as spatio-temporal dynamism implies an individual thinker precisely insofar as it is the expression of an Idea. Thus, Deleuze insists, the Idea finds expression in the realm of the sensible because intensity *thinks* and is inseparable from thought; albeit a thought that is no longer a function of representational consciousness:-

> "Every spatio-temporal dynamism marks the emergence of an elementary consciousness which traces directions, doubles movements and migrations, and is born at the threshold of those singularities condensed relative to the body or the object of which it is the consciousness. It is not enough to say that consciousness is consciousness of something; it is the double of this something and each thing is consciousness because it possesses a double, albeit very distant and very foreign to it."[22]

Yet what precisely is the relation between the elementary consciousness that emerges in every spatio-temporal dynamism and the body or object which it 'doubles'? What is the nature of this enigmatic 'doubling'? The answer lies in the correlation between intensity as 'expressing' and the Idea as 'expressed'. The movement of actualisation corresponds to a fork in being between the intensive individual's clear-confused thought as 'expressing' and the distinct-obscure difference in the Idea as 'expressed'[23]. In actualisation, univocal being splits between the expressing thought of the intensive thinker – the 'larval subject' of the spatio-temporal dynamism – and the expressed Idea. This is why the difference between thought and thing, thinking and being, is not a transcendent condition of access to things, as it is for the philosophy of representation, but is rather internal to things themselves. In actualisation, each thing is at once the expression of an Idea and the thought through which that Idea is expressed: "Every body, every thing thinks and is a thought insofar as, reduced to its intensive reasons, it expresses an Idea whose actualisation it determines."[24] Things themselves determine their own actualisation insofar as they are the loci of spatio-temporal dynamisms inhabited by larval subjects whose thought is the clear-confused expression of a distinct-obscure difference in the Idea. The larval subject of spatio-temporal dynamism is the thinker of individuating difference insofar as it clearly expresses a distinction in the Idea. Thus,

22 Ibid., p. 316/220, tm
23 Ibid., p. 326/253
24 Ibid., p. 327/254, tm

individuating difference is the thought that 'makes the difference'[25]. It is the 'differenciator of difference', the 'dark precursor', through which difference in the Idea communicates with difference in intensity[26]. The intensive individual or larval subject is the thinker whose clear expression of distinct relations and points in the Idea generates the individuating difference through which the virtual is actualised.

Ultimately then, individuation determines actualisation, which unfolds according to the fork in being between expressing thought and expressed Idea. This fork is a function of the nature of intensity as enveloping and enveloped. Consequently, the distinction between individuating and individual difference depends upon Deleuze's account of intensity as essentially implicating. Moreover, not only is the larval subject of spatio-temporal dynamism the catalyst for individuation, and hence for actualisation, since it is his clear expression of a distinction in the idea that 'makes the difference'; it is the larval subject that provides the conduit for this fork in actualisation insofar as it is at once the patient of individuation, or the expression of the Idea, and the individuating agent, or the expressing thought.

If time qua duration pertains essentially to mind ('*esprit*'), it is precisely the mind of the larval subject, whose thinking of individuating difference determines the actualisation of the virtual as a contraction of memory. Thus, for Deleuze as for Bergson, matter is to be understood "as the dream of mind or as mind's most dilated past."[27] The larval subject of spatio-temporal synthesis dreams matter into being through the individuating difference of his thought insofar as it clearly expresses a distinction in the Idea.

But actualisation occurs through an individuating difference which is the determination of a differentiation in the Idea; not the specification of a difference in the concept. Thus actualisation is the determination of the difference between two differences: the extrinsic difference between instants contracted in the present and the intrinsic difference between the degrees of contraction of memory. The difference between the past and

25 Ibid., p. 43/28
26 Ibid., p. 154/117
27 Ibid., p. 114/84, tm

the present resides in the difference between these two contractions of difference – between the repetition in extensity of extrinsically related successive instants (*partes extra partes*) and the repetition in intensity of internally related co-existing levels of the past[28].

Moreover, actualisation as determination of the difference between the contraction of habit and the contraction of memory implies a third synthesis; and it is the latter that institutes a correspondence between expressing and expressed, thought and Idea. Between the determination of thought in the passive self of the larval subject and the indetermination (i.e. indifferenciation) of problematic being in the Idea lies the pure and empty form of time as the transcendental condition under which the indeterminate becomes determinable[29]. It is 'pure' because it is the exclusively logical time internal to thinking, rather than the chronological time in which thought unfolds. It is 'empty' because it is devoid of empirical content (the living present of habit), as well as of metaphysical substance (the contractions and dilations of ontological memory). And it is 'transcendental' because it ensures the a priori correspondence between thinking and being as expressing and expressed. Accordingly, it establishes the correlation between the determination of thought as individuating difference borne by the intensive thinker, and the determinability of being as differen*t*iated but undifferenciated pre-individual realm. Thus it is the third synthesis of time which accounts for the genesis of ontological meaning as that which is expressed in thought,[30] and which relates univocal being directly to its individuating difference as the expressed to its expression. In this regard, it is indissociable from the transcendent exercise of the faculties through which the Idea is generated[31]. The third synthesis is the properly ontological synthesis which determines actualisation as the different/ciation that generates the future through the division between past and present. Moreover, as actualisation of the future, it conditions the actualisations comprised in the past and the present because it generates the correspondence between thought and Idea which is already presupposed in them. Thus, the third synthesis not only generates the

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., p. 220/169

30 "Meaning is like the Idea which is developed through sub-representative determinations." (Ibid., p. 201/155, tm)

31 Ibid., p. 251/194

specifically ontological difference between two sorts of difference – the extrinsic difference that separates instants contracted in the present and the intrinsic difference that separates the contractions of memory – it also brings together what it separates since it establishes a correspondence between the larval thought contracted in the present and the Idea embodied in the degrees of contraction of ontological memory. The 'fracture' of pure and empty time conjoins thinking and being even as it separates the past and the present which are retained as degrees of contraction in the Idea: "For just as difference is the immediate gathering and articulation of what it distinguishes, so the fracture retains what it splits, and Ideas also retain their sundered moments."[32]

Accordingly, thinking for Deleuze is never the activity of a constituting consciousness. Likewise, transcendental synthesis is not anchored in the subject of representation. Rather, both thinking and the subject of thought are engendered through the empty form of time that fractures the 'I' which is supposed to lie at the origin of thinking and correlates it with the larval consciousness which crystallises through the contractive contemplation of pre-individual singularities (the un-differenciated 'groundlessness' of the Idea):-

> "It is the empty form of time that introduces and constitutes Difference in thought; the difference on the basis of which thought thinks, as the difference between the indeterminate and determination. It is the empty form of time that distributes along both its sides an I that is fractured by the abstract line [of time – RB], and a passive self that has emerged from the groundlessness which it contemplates. It is the empty form of time that engenders thinking in thought, for thinking only thinks with difference, orbiting around this point of ungrounding."[33]

Between the determination of the passive self and the indetermination of the I fractured by the Idea lies the difference generated by thinking; and it is through the latter that the pure form of time establishes the correlation between expressing intensity and expressed Idea[34]. Thus the key

32 Ibid., p. 220/170, tm
33 Ibid., p. 354/276, tm
34 Ibid., p. 332/259

distinction (though it remains unstated in Deleuze's text) is that between the specifically ontological different/ciation carried out by *thinking* and the clear-confused *thought* of the larval subject who expresses that difference. Yet thinking is an act; precisely "the most intense or most individual act"[35] insofar as it overthrows the identity of the I and the resemblance of the self[36].

Deleuze associates this act with the 'caesura' of pure and empty time. The caesura of time effects a selection wherein repetition in intensity and differentiation in the Idea are separated from the repetition of habit and the difference in the concept. It marks the point at which difference *in* itself is repeated *for* itself. The future as unconditioned or absolute novelty emerges through the fracture of time that allows individuation to rise up to the surface of consciousness in the gap between its specific form and its organised matter. But it is the caesura that generates this fracture in consciousness and hence the act of the thinker that produces the new. Thus it seems that the act through which consciousness is fractured by the form of time in such a way as to introduce novelty into being is a peculiar privilege of complex psychic systems. Only consciousness can be folded back into its own pre-individual dimension; only the psychic individual can become equal to its own intensive individuation. It is the thinker – the philosopher-artist – who is the 'universal individual'.

Ultimately, the caesura of thinking, the fracture of time, the affirmation of recurrence, and the experience of death through which the psychic individual becomes re-implicated in individuation, all point toward a fundamental ontological conversion wherein consciousness frees itself from the strictures of representation to become the catalyst for the eternal repetition of difference-in-itself. For it is through the caesura of thinking that the implication of intensity is finally prised free from its explication in extensity and intensive difference finally becomes liberated from extensive repetition.

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35 Ibid., p. 285/221
36 Ibid., p. 283/219

Deleuze distinguishes between physical, biological, and psychic systems by virtue of the order of Ideas incarnated in them, their rates of individuation, and their figures of actualisation. But they are also distinguished by the fact that they express increasing degrees of complexity. Deleuze defines the latter in terms of what he calls the 'values of implication' or 'centres of envelopment' present within a system as it undergoes individuation and actualisation[37]. These centres of envelopment "are not the intensive individuating factors themselves, but their representatives within a complex system in the process of its explication."[38] They have three characteristics. First, they are signs, flashing between two series of difference in intensity; the latter constituting the 'signal system' which generates the sign[39]. Second, they express the meaning of the Idea incarnated in the system. And third, insofar as they envelop intensity without explicating it, these centres testify to local increases in negentropy, defying the empirical law of entropic explication. Thus what distinguishes complex systems is their incorporation of individuating differences: though the latter are never directly expressed in the extensity whose actualisation they determine and in which they are partially explicated, they are enveloped within it insofar as they subsist in a state of implication in signal-sign systems. The latter constitute the centres of envelopment for intensive difference within an extensive system; or as Deleuze puts it, the phenomenon closest to the intensive noumenon[40].

Accordingly, the complexity of a system in extensity can be measured by the extent to which its individuating factors become discretely segregated from the pre-individual continuum and incorporated within it as signal-sign systems. Where the intensive factors that individuate physical extensity remain extrinsic to the latter, so that the physical qualification and partitioning of a system occurs 'all at once' and only at its edges, those that individuate biological systems are enveloped within the organism (as genetic factors for instance) so that the specification and organisation of the latter occurs in successive stages, through influxes of singularities involving dynamic interaction between

37 Ibid., p. 329/255
38 Ibid., p. 329/256, tm
39 Ibid., p. 286-7/222
40 Ibid., p. 329/256

the organism's internal milieu and its external environment.[41] Thus, Deleuze concludes, "the living pays witness to another order; one that is heterogeneous and of another dimension – as though its individuating factors or atoms considered individually according to their power of mutual communication and fluent instability, benefited from a superior degree of expression in it."[42] For Deleuze, the intensive factors enveloped in living organisms enjoy a 'superior degree of expression' because their biological incorporation implicates them in extensity without exhaustively explicating them. Centres of envelopment harbour an un-explicated residue of implicated intensity. Consequently, Deleuze considers the complexity exhibited by the living to be fundamentally 'heterogeneous' to the inorganic precisely insofar as the former 'expresses' intensity to a higher degree than does the latter. Here as throughout *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze's use of the term 'expression' is quite specific. 'Expression' is explicitly defined as "that relation which essentially comprises a torsion between an expressor and an expressed, such that the expressed does not exist apart from the expressor, even though the latter

41 "Unlike the physico-chemical sphere, where the 'code' that underlies forms or qualities is distributed throughout the three-dimensionality of a structure, in the organic sphere this code becomes detached as a separate one-dimensional structure: the linear sequence of nucleic acids constituting the genetic code." Manuel De Landa, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 163-4. While this is in many ways a very useful gloss, the claim that individuating factors constitute a 'code' is problematic on two counts. First, it seems to ignore Deleuze's distinction between individuating and individual differences, which is the distinction between enveloping intensity as clear expression of a distinct difference in the Idea and enveloped intensity as confused expression of the Idea's obscure perplication: "Two individuating intensities may be abstractly the same by virtue of what they clearly express; they are never the same on account of the order of intensities which they envelop or the relations which they obscurely express." (DR, p. 326/253, tm) This irreducible variability in the correlation between individuating differences and pre-individual singularities would seem to indicate an order of complexity which is difficult to codify in an information-theoretic register. Second, it is not clear how individuating factors could become detached as a 'separate one-dimensional structure' without themselves becoming individuated. Intensive individuation was supposed to provide part of the 'sufficient reason' for actualisation (Ibid., p. 285/221), not its cause in extensity, and if the individuating factors invoked in order to account for actualisation are themselves already individuated then the virtual-actual distinction collapses and an infinite regress looms.

42 Ibid., p. 329/255, tm

relates to the former as to something entirely other than it."[43] (Deleuze 1968: 334, 1994: 260 tm) As we have seen, the expressive torsion between expressor and expressed is articulated in the correlation between individuating intensity and pre-individual Idea generated through the fracture of time. More precisely, the ontologically 'expressive' relation between univocal being and its individuating differences is a function of the correlation between intensity in sensation and meaning in ideation which is effectuated through the caesura of thinking. Thus the 'expression' of intensive difference provides the obverse to its 'explication': where the latter corresponds to its degree of dilation in physical space, the former corresponds to its degree of contraction in psychic time. Accordingly, only in the psychic dimension does the expressive relation between sensible repetition and ideal difference attain its consummate realisation. It is in the psyche, and in psychic individuation more particularly, that intensive difference achieves its fullest expression. The psychic realm not only represents an exponential increase in complexity vis-à-vis the domain of the living, but rather the definitive potentiation of intensive difference precisely insofar as it is in psychic individuation – as exemplified by the third synthesis and the caesura of thinking – that the expressing becomes commensurate with the expressed.

However, though the expression of intensive difference concomitant with ontological repetition emerges from bio-physical repetition as a result of the transcendent exercise of cognitive faculties possessing a well specified empirical function, there is a sense in which this maximal psychic repetition of difference is already latent in the habitual repetitions carried out by the larval subjects of passive synthesis. Thus, although ontological repetition arises out of bio-physical repetition, it ultimately eliminates its bio-physical basis by bringing about a definitive separation between bio-physical explication and the psychic expression of difference. Once again, it is Deleuze's empiricist appeal to the primacy of 'experience' that provides the rationale for this separation between entropic explication and negentropic expression in the third synthesis. Instead of presupposing consciousness as a unitary locus of experience, Deleuze atomises it into a multiplicity of larval subjects. But in so doing, not only does he render an elementary form of consciousness ontologically ubiquitous, thereby endorsing a variety of panpsychism; he

43 Ibid., p. 334/260. tm

also injects intensive duration into physical extensity by making the psychic contraction of difference into the precondition for spatial repetition. Though intensity is implicated in space, its nature is essentially temporal as the multiplicity which cannot divide without changing in nature.[44] Thus Deleuze finesses the Bergsonian dualism of temporal heterogeneity and spatial homogeneity by implicating the former at the heart of the latter in the shape of elementary psychic syntheses which precede constituted individual organisms as well as the individuated subject of consciousness. The claim that intensive difference originates in an elementary form of psychic contraction is the crucial empiricist premise (derived from Deleuze's reading of Hume) which will allow Deleuze to attribute a transcendental function to time understood as intensive difference and to construe the latter as the precondition for space construed as extensive repetition:-

> "In each instance, material repetition is the result of a more profound repetition which unfolds in depth and produces it as a result, like an external envelope or a detachable shell, but one which loses all its sense and all its capacity to reproduce itself once it is no longer animated by its *cause* or by the other repetition. Thus it is the clothed that lies beneath the naked, and that produces or excretes it as the effect of its secretion."[45]

The repetition which unfolds in depth is the intensive repetition between the virtually coexisting degrees of difference in ontological memory. Thus the clothed or intensive repetition of duration inhabits bare or physical repetition as its enabling condition. Accordingly, it is the empiricist premise that time implies the psychic registration of difference, and hence that temporal difference is a function of psychic contraction, that provides the precondition for the transcendental claim according to which the intensive noumenon furnishes the sufficient reason for the extensive phenomenon. Consequently, it seems at least initially that the vitalism which Deleuze will quietly but unequivocally endorse toward the close of *Difference and Repetition* – 'the living bears witness to another order, to a

44 "The indivisibility of the individual pertains exclusively to the property whereby intensive quantities cannot divide without changing in nature." (Ibid., p. 327/254, tm) The latter is precisely Bergson's definition of duration as qualitative multiplicity, which he contrasts to the quantitative multiplicities proper to space.

45 Ibid., p. 370/289, tm

heterogeneous order, and to another dimension' – follows from a panpsychism which is rooted in a form of radical empiricism.

Yet there is a fundamental ambiguity concerning the relation between the organic and the psychic in *Difference and Repetition*. On one hand, Deleuze seems to attribute a fundamental status to the larval thinker as 'universal' intensive individual and to thought itself as ultimate individuating factor: "every body, every thing thinks and is a thought insofar as, reduced to its intensive reasons, it expresses an Idea whose actualisation it determines."[46] To reduce something to its 'intensive reasons' is to reduce it to its constituting spatio-temporal dynamisms, of which the larval subject is at once the patient and the agent whose individuating thought catalyses the actualisation of Ideas[47]. Assuming that not every body or every thing is organic, this would then imply the absolute ubiquity of larval subjectivity and hence the existence of passive syntheses proper to the inorganic realm. Yet this does not seem to be the case, for all the textual evidence indicates that the passive syntheses executed by larval subjectivity are peculiar to the organic domain. Consider the following three passages:-

> "[I]in the order of constituting passivity, perceptual syntheses refer back to organic syntheses as to the sensibility of the senses, to a primary sensibility which we are. We are made of contracted water, earth, and light, not only prior to recognising or representing them, but prior to perceiving them. Every organism is, in its receptive and perceptual elements, but also in its viscera, a sum of contractions, retentions, expectations."[48]

> "What organism is not made up of elements and cases of repetition, of contemplated and contracted water, nitrogen, carbon, chlorides and sulphates, thereby intertwining all the habits of which it is composed? Organisms awake to the sublime words of the third *Ennead*: all is contemplation!"[49]

> "A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to

46 Ibid., p. 327/254, tm
47 Ibid., p. 156/118-9
48 Ibid., p. 99/73, tm
49 Ibid., p. 102/75

> contract a habit. This is no mystical or barbarous hypothesis. On the contrary, habit here manifests its full generality: it concerns not only the sensory-motor habits that we have (psychologically), but also, before these, the primary habits that we are; the thousands of passive synthesis of which we are organically composed [...]
>
> Underneath the self which acts are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action and the active subject. We speak of our 'self' only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third-party who says 'me'. These contemplative souls must be assigned even to the rat in the labyrinth and to each muscle of the rat."[50]

These and similar passages, which constantly reiterate the intimate connection between larval subjectivity and the organic domain, strongly suggest that Deleuze's claims concerning the necessary role of passive synthesis in the constitution of the present, and of larval subjectivity in individuation, point not towards their ubiquity across the organic and inorganic realms, but rather toward the much stronger vitalist thesis that it is insofar as everything is ultimately organic and/or 'living' in some suitably enlarged sense that everything 'thinks' in some equally expanded sense. Despite initial appearances, Deleuze does not anchor his endorsement of vitalism in panpsychism; his assertion of panpsychism is rooted in his commitment to vitalism. Deleuze's claim is not, contrary to what one might expect, that some minimal form of consciousness is implicated even in the inorganic realm, and that this provides the precondition for the emergence of organic sentience; the latter being understood as a complexification of this more primitive inorganic 'prehension' (of the sort envisaged by panpsychists like Whitehead, and more recently, David Chalmers).[51] Rather, Deleuze seems to assert 1) that a primitive form of organic time-sentience, understood as the psychic expression of temporal difference – as effectuated in the correlation between thought and Idea – provides the precondition for the actual *experience* of individuated extensity; where 'actual experience' is

50 Ibid., p. 101-3/74-5, tm

51 Cf. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, (London and New York: The Free Press, 1978); David Chalmers 'Is Experience Ubiquitous?' in Chapter 8 of Chalmers' *The Conscious Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

understood as simultaneously comprising an unconscious or sub-representational level and a conscious or representational level, and 'individuated extensity' is construed in terms of the physico-biological explication of intensity; and 2) that the psychic expression of temporal difference concomitant with this time-sentience only attains it ultimate ontological dignity in a specifically psychic dimension of individuation. Within this continuum of experience that runs from the sub-representational to the representational level, organic contraction provides the originary juncture between the virtual dimension of the pre-individual and the actual realm of constituted individuals. Thus the contraction of habit yields the originary organic synthesis from which the two divergent continua of empiria, i.e. ideality and sensibility, derive. More precisely, given the two diagonal axes around which *Difference and Repetition* is structured, ideal-sensible and virtual-actual, organic contraction marks the point of inception of difference in experience from which these two diagonals originally diverge before ultimately converging again in the ontological repetition which generates the transcendental difference that splits experience by separating psychic expression from physical explication.

Nevertheless, Deleuze's insistence on casting psychic expression as the sufficient reason for physical explication puts him in a position where he is constantly equivocating between the claim that he is providing an account of the genesis of actual experience and the claim that he is giving an account of the genesis of actuality *tout court*. The two are not coextensive. In response to Deleuze's claims that the synthesis of the present (organic contraction) constitutes extensity in actual experience, and that the psychic expression of difference determines the physical as well as the biological actualisation of Ideas, it is necessary to point out that, for all its much vaunted audacity, Deleuze's excavation of the sub-representational and unconscious dimensions of experience still leaves vast tracts of actual reality completely unaccounted for. For even if organisms are composed of contracted water, nitrogen, carbon, chloride and sulphates, these elements are not themselves composed of organic contractions – thus the neutrinos, photons, gluons, bosons, and muons which compose physical space-time cannot plausibly be construed as contractions of organic habit. Nor can galaxies, gravitational fields, or dark matter. Whatever their ultimate ontological status – whether they are patronised as useful idealisations or admitted as indispensable

constituents of actuality – these are precisely the sorts of physical entity that cannot but be ignored by the empiricist bias of Deleuze's account of the constitution of space and time. It might be objected that these and other supposedly 'theoretical' entities do enjoy a real generative status for Deleuze as the ideal components of virtual multiplicities.[52] But the only reason for confining them to the domain of ideality – unlike the heart, muscles, nerves, and cells to which Deleuze ascribes a privileged role as the loci of passive syntheses – is the empiricist prejudice that insists on contrasting the putative 'concretion' of experience to the 'abstraction' of cognitive representation. Deleuze radicalises empiricism, widening the ambit of actual experience to include sub-representational and unconscious depths; nevertheless, it is precisely the assumption that experience invariably comprises 'more' than whatever can be cognitively represented and the ensuing contrast between conceptual abstraction and perceptual concretion that encourages him to include muscles and water within the ambit of actual experience, but not galaxies and electrons. It is because the actual extensity whose genesis Deleuze attributes to the operations of passive synthesis has been circumscribed as a domain of experience, and hence necessarily tethered to the organic, that the muscles of rats are deemed more appropriate sites for the larval subjects of spatio-temporal dynamisms than are electrons. And it is Deleuze's empiricist bias toward the genesis of actuality as constituted in experience that explains his restriction of the ambit of passive synthesis to differences that can be organically registered. In this regard, it is important to note how the autonomy Deleuze attributes to the realm of ideality as virtual reservoir of pre-individual singularities is nevertheless anchored in the empiricist claim that temporal difference presupposes psychic contraction and that contraction requires an organic substrate. For it is the organic contraction effected by the larval subject that is responsible for the expression of the Idea: "Larvae bear Ideas in their flesh, while we are still at the stage of the representations of the concept."[53] The speculative audacity with which Deleuze upholds the rights of virtual ideality should not blind us to the curiously conservative nature of this empiricist premise.

52 De Landa (2002) proposes a reading of Deleuze wherein virtuality becomes the preserve of theoretical entities such as phase spaces and dynamic attractors. But, as Alberto Toscano has pointed out, he does so at the cost of eliding Deleuze's fundamental distinction between virtuality and possibility. Cf. Alberto Toscano, *The Theatre of Production*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), p. 184-7.

53 *DR*, p. 203/219, tm

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Ultimately, the vitalism which is endorsed at the close of *Difference and Repetition* is indissociable from the empiricism which is embraced at its opening, and the epistemological shortcomings of the latter are aggravated rather than ameliorated by the considerable conceptual ingenuity displayed in pursuing the ontological ramifications of the former. Vitalism may or may not be compatible with physics; but it behooves the vitalist to make at least some sort of attempt to reconcile them. Yet although discussions of biology abound in *Difference and Repetition* – notably developmental biology – physics is conspicuously under-represented, and where it *is* invoked, albeit metonymically in the form of thermodynamics, this is only in order to be lambasted for consecrating entropy. In this regard, it is important to note that Deleuze's characterisation of entropy as a transcendental illusion presupposes his account of the implication of intensive difference through the synthesis of memory – it is the latter which implicates time as uncancellable difference in actual extensity. But this is based on an account of time as duration which remains vitiated by the empiricist premise that insists on locating the constituting syntheses of time and space at the juncture between the organic and psychic realms.

In the absence of any physicalist corrective to vitalist hubris, biocentrism leads infallibly to noocentrism. Physical qualification and partitioning is determined by the correlation between intensity and Idea, larval thought and ontological memory. Thus Deleuze's account of spatio-temporal synthesis begins by ascribing a privileged role to organic contraction in the 1st synthesis of the present, proceeds to transcendentalise memory as cosmic unconscious in the 2nd synthesis of the past, and ends by turning a form of psychic individuation which is as yet the exclusive prerogative of *homo sapiens* into the fundamental generator of ontological novelty in the 3rd synthesis of the future. Matter is relegated to 'a dream of the mind', whose representation in extensity presupposes its animation by a temporal difference that generates inanimate extensity as its blockage. The empiricist premise that the life of thought must already be implicated in insensate matter insofar as the latter is *experienced* underlies Deleuze's vitalist claim that physical space-time harbours an impetus toward complexification belying the

reign of entropy in actuality. The contrast with which Deleuze presents us, between actuality as an entropic junkyard yoked beneath the iron collar of representation, and an actuality transformed into an inexhaustible reservoir of ontological novelty as the result of what effectively amounts to an idealisation of matter, continues to assume that the experience of time is irreducible to the objectifying representation of space.

Deleuze dissolves the Bergsonian dichotomy of space and time, quantity and quality, at the cost of reabsorbing the former into the latter in what ultimately amounts to an idealist monism. Psychic individuation in the act of thinking defines the point at which experience is transected by pre-individual singularities in the Idea and impersonal individuations in sensibility. Psychic individuation marks the moment wherein time, i.e. being, is folded back into itself. Transcendental access to the meaning of being is internalised within experience through the transcendent exercise of the faculties, which generates Ideas as the correlates of larval thought (albeit a 'meaning' which is indissociable from non-sense).[54] As we have seen, it is the transcendent operation of the faculties, provoked by the encounter with individuating intensity as the unthinkable proper to thought, which gives birth to the act of thinking through which the Idea is generated:-

> "It is nevertheless true that Ideas have a very special relationship to pure thought [...] The para-sense or violence which is transmitted from one faculty to another according to an order assigns a particular place to thought: thought is determined such that it grasps its own *cogitandum* only at the extremity of the fuse of violence which, from one Idea to another, first sets in motion sensibility and its *sentendium*, and so on. This extremity might just as well be regarded as the ultimate origin of Ideas. In what sense, however, should we understand 'ultimate origin'? In the same sense in which Ideas

54 "Meaning is the genesis or production of the true, and truth is merely the empirical result of meaning. [...] Nevertheless, the Idea which traverses all the faculties is not reducible to meaning. For it is just as much non-sense; and there is no difficulty reconciling this double-aspect through which the Idea is constituted by structural elements which have no meaning in themselves, while constituting the meaning of everything it produces (structure and genesis)." (Ibid., p. 200/154, tm)

> must be called 'differentials' of thought, or the 'Unconscious' of pure thought, at the very moment when thought's opposition to all forms of common-sense remains stronger than ever. Ideas, therefore, are related not to a Cogito which functions as ground or as a proposition of consciousness, but to the fractured I of a dissolved Cogito; in other words, to the universal *ungrounding* which characterises thought as a faculty in its transcendent exercise."[55]

Thus the Idea in which the meaning of being is expressed is the unconscious of pure thought understood as ontological memory. The double genesis of thought and being in the encounter with intensity which gives rise to the act of thinking produces the divergent lines of actualisation in the real according to the distinct meanings via which thinking expresses being. Thus Ideas have an attributive status as expressed in actualisation, yet ideal meaning is generated by the act of thinking. Deleuze uses Bergson to reconcile Kant's discovery of the transcendental status of time with Spinoza's monism. While Spinoza cannot deduce the number and nature of fundamental differences in substance, which he calls 'attributes', Kant deduces these differences, which he calls 'categories', by de-substantialising them and yoking them to representation. But the Bergsonian 'method of intuition' offers Deleuze a way of identifying the wellspring of ontological differentiation by characterising differences in nature in terms of divergent series of actualisation. Moreover, these divergences in actualisation are not merely empirically given since they are engendered in and through thinking as expressed meanings of being. Being is said in a single sense of everything that is, yet everything that is differs, and this modal difference in everything that is is a function of divergences in actualisation corresponding to the distinct senses (or meanings) in which being is expressed in thought: the Ideas. Thus, for Deleuze, the key to grasping ontological differentiation, or the real differences in being, lies in seizing the differences in actualisation; but this in turn hinges on grasping the way in which the larval subject of spatio-temporal dynamism is the bearer of individuating differences, clearly enveloping distinct differences in the Idea, as well as individual differences, which confusedly envelop the Ideas' obscure perplication. Yet the individuating expressions of being occur in and as thought: from the germinal thought of the larval subject to

55 Ibid., p. 251/195, tm

the fully potentiated thinking of the fractured I. For Deleuze then, being is nothing apart from its expression in thought; indeed, it simply *is* this expression, which is distilled in the crystallisation of meaning.

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This crystallisation is the focus of *Logic of Sense*. Deleuze distinguishes between three dimensions of the proposition: designation, whereby it refers to some individuated states of affairs; manifestation, indexing the beliefs and desires of the speaking subject; and signification, comprising the system of inferential relations between concepts. Attempts to ground the meaning of the proposition in any one of these dimensions quickly unravel when it becomes apparent to what extent they each presuppose one another: thus designation cannot be carried out independently of the beliefs of the speaking subject; manifestation relies upon the validity of inferential signification between conceptual beliefs; and conceptual inference cannot be dissociated from the designation of some initial premise. Meaning cannot be deduced from any of these aspects of the proposition: rather than being construed as a function of empirical designation, subjective manifestation, or conceptual signification, meaning must be assumed as the ideal element which ensures the real genesis and functioning of each of these three other dimensions. Meaning is the ideal genetic element animating the internal structure of the proposition and securing the correspondence between names and qualities, adjectives and properties, verbs and attributes[56]. Thus it is meaning that establishes the originary correlation between what is expressed by the proposition and the corresponding attribute of the designated state of affairs as the obverse and reverse faces of a single-sided topological surface or Möbius strip continuously twisting around itself. To say that being is univocal is to say that being is the coincidence of what is expressed by propositions and what happens to bodies: "Univocity means that it is the same thing that happens and that is said: the attributable of every body or state of affairs is the expressible of every proposition. Univocity signifies the identity of the noematic attribute and the linguistic expressed, event and meaning."[57]

56 *LS*, p. 30
57 *LS*, p. 211

Yet, how can Deleuze insist both that meaning is constitutively unconscious[58] and that it is a noematic expression? Husserl defined noema as the correlates of intentional consciousness' sense-bestowing noetic acts.[59] But what is noematic sense the correlate *of* if, as Deleuze insists, consciousness is not 'of' something but rather *is* that something? It is not the correlate of a constituting consciousness because, as saw above, 'everything thinks and is a thought', and hence has no need of intentional consciousness to be expressive of thought. But the fact that thought is unconscious does not render the claim that everything is thought less gratuitous. For Deleuze, meaning is something because everything is at once expressive thought and expressed thing so that meaning is the identity-in-difference of thought and thing, thinking and being. This is the veritable meaning of univocity. Thus, when Deleuze describes the production of the surface of incorporeal meaning, he does so precisely in terms of the distribution of ordinary and singular points which he had used to characterise the differentiation of the Idea. The topology of meaning coincides with the internal structure of the Idea. The question then is: Is Deleuze *mathematising meaning* and hence breaking with the doxas of transcendental anthropology; or is he *semanticising mathesis* in a way that ultimately reasserts the transcendental sovereignty of the meaningful over the intelligible and that re-subordinates the Idea to anthropological predicates?

In order to address this question, we must consider Deleuze's 1967 text 'How Does One Recognise Structuralism?'[60] In this text, which can be seen as providing a succinct *précis* of *Logic of Sense* much as 'The Method of Dramatisation' schematises *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze fastens onto the Lacanian triad of real, imaginary, and symbolic, holding up the latter as privileged retainer of the objectivity and autonomy of meaning beyond the proposition's real and imaginary aspects – which is to say, beyond its designation of empirical reality and its signification of imaginary representations. It is because the symbolic is the domain of structure and structure is defined in terms of the primacy of

58 Cf. *LS*, pp. 124-5

59 Cf. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book.* Tr. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1982), esp. p. 214.

60 In *L'île déserte et autres textes*, ed. D. Lapoujade (Paris: Minuit, 2002), pp. 238-269.

differential relations over identical elements that meaning must be understood as an effect of difference. But meaning remains indissociable from meaninglessness, since the differential elements which produce meaning are themselves a-signifying. Consequently, if "[m]eaning is never a principle or origin; it is produced', this is because 'meaning is always the result of a combination of elements which do not themselves signify."[61] The proper remit of transcendental philosophy, Deleuze suggests, is to account for the genesis of meaning by unlocking the workings of a symbolic register governed by a-signifying and non-propositional yet perfectly intelligible processes. Thus the elements of the symbolic and their combination index a dimension of intelligible difference which encompasses and generates meaning: that of differentiation as the reciprocal determination of indeterminate elements: $ydy + xdx = 0$ or $^{dy}/_{dx} = {}^{x}/_{y}$.[62] Ultimately, it is the mathematical conception of the differential and hence the mathematisation of difference that provides the key to grasping the structure of the symbolic: mathesis unlocks the symbolic matrix for the genesis of meaning.[63] And it is the *serial* organisation of reciprocally determining differential elements that constitutes structure. The catalyst of serialisation and the instance that causes divergent series of differences to resonate is a supernumerary signifier or 'paradoxical' element which is at once structure's permanently empty place and its perpetually placeless element. For Deleuze, it is this paradoxical coincidence of structural lack and excess that constitutes non-sense as the 'object=X' that differentiates difference. Thus, not only does non-sense produce sense, it provides the originary dimension of intelligibility within which sense unfolds. This 'object' is the veritable 'subject' of structure in the sense of being the dynamic 'quasi-cause' that transforms one structure into another.

The thesis of the intelligibility of non-sense allows Deleuze to reconcile his acknowledgement of the transcendental status of meaning with his endorsement of Spinozism's most radical thesis, 'the thesis of absolute rationalism', which is founded upon "the adequation between our understanding and absolute knowledge", an adequation that "requires the total intelligibility of God, which is the key to the total intelligibility

61 Ibid., p. 244
62 Cf. Ibid., p. 246
63 Ibid.

of things."[64] This is of course precisely the thesis that the Kantian critique of metaphysics is supposed to have rendered insupportable. The tension between the 'absolute' rationalist thesis according to which being expresses itself as meaning and the transcendental-critical thesis according to which meaning is always an effect is neutralised by converting the intellectual intuition of essence into the production of meaning as event. Hence Deleuze's claim that structuralism necessarily entails a practice since "it is not only inseparable from the works it creates but also from a practice relative to the works it creates. Whether this practice be therapeutic or political, it designates a point of permanent revolution or transference."[65]

By the same token, the dichotomy that pitted mathematised meaning against semanticised mathesis is defused by the claim that being expresses itself as meaning, but meaning is always an effect generated by meaningless yet mathematically intelligible processes. However, this resolution comes at a price. Although he establishes a basis for meaning in an autonomous domain of symbolic intelligibility that transcends the domain of language, Deleuze does not seem to register the need for an account of how the symbolic itself is originally instituted or indeed how thought is able to access it. This would of course be part of the remit of an epistemological agenda which, like Heidegger before him, Deleuze has effectively foresworn. But it is not enough to show how sense is conditioned by non-sense if relativising the autonomy of meaning depends upon absolutising the autonomy of mathematical intelligibility. Deleuze has merely shifted the burden of explanation from that of the origin of meaning to that of the origin of mathesis. The latter cannot be defined independently of thought and the nature of thought cannot be explained without some attentiveness to the evolution of minded creatures. If post-Darwinian modernity entails that neither thought nor mindedness can be taken to be originary, one cannot forego the obligation to explain the emergence of the latter on pain of regressing to some pre-modern paradigm. Curiously, Deleuze's transcendental predilections seem to have blinded him to the binding nature of this intellectual obligation and inadvertently precipitated him back toward the pre-modern myth of an originally intelligible and hence enchanted world. Thus, when Deleuze writes "It is certain that all designation presupposes sense, and that one

64 Ibid., p. 216
65 Ibid., p. 269

must install oneself in sense from the outset in order to carry out every designation"[66], he seems to ignore the possibility that the relation of reference might be founded from the bottom up and the outside in, which is to say, within the element of reality, rather than from the top down and the inside out, which is to say, within the element of ideality. By beginning from the fully-formed proposition and ontologising meaning as *sine qua non* for the proposition's designative dimension, Deleuze continues to operate within the confines of a 'top-down, inside-out' approach to meaning whose veritable alternative is not materialism – a doctrine every bit as liable to transcendentalise the intelligible as idealism – but the methodological naturalism whose refusal to subordinate science to ontology goes hand in hand with its insistence on separating ontology from semantics. Only by upholding this modern separation can one hope to provide a non-mystificatory account of the connection between meaning, mind, and intelligibility.

66 *LS*, p. 28