

***Universal man as supplementary value***

*Outline*

This paper will return to the early work of Deleuze and his “destruction of”/“assertion of the construction of” (we might say “deconstruction of”) identities and subjects in *Difference and Repetition* (1994) and *Logic of Sense* (1990). Famously, all identities are renounced in the name on the one hand of a Nietzschean differences of force and on the other in the name of particularities. Identities are, at the limit, derived and constructed from difference, and difference is defined *in itself as pure difference*, not in relation to the same. Thus in Deleuze’s interpretation, the eternal return of the same speaks not of the return of something identical with what came before, but return as the generation of what we call the same. The same “is said of” difference, just as “univocal Being [God, self] *is said of* beings which are not univocal” (1990, 300).

Thus Deleuze questions the great historic division of philosophy between on the one hand the pre-enlightenment centring of the infinite divine being and, on the other, the Kantian substitution of it by the finite self. For the self can only exist by virtue of God, and in this respect the enlightenment fools itself as to its own true footing:

As long as we maintain the formal identity of the self, doesn’t the self remain subject to a divine order, and to a unique God who is its foundation? Klossowski insists that God is the sole guarantor of the identity of the self and of its substantive base... One cannot conserve the self without also holding onto God (294)

Subsequent to this deconstruction, in what way does Deleuze’s distinction between the differentiation of the Idea and the differentiation of its actualisation inform the construction of, or “saying of”, identities; and what implications does this have for a post-humanist, post-subject thought? It will be argued that it is not a question simply of discarding the subject or the human, and in that sense “man” must remain a *universal* concern. However, Deleuze’s logic, in a similar way to the supplementary logic of Derrida, implies that the locus of the “universal” would be displaced from its pretensions as implying a grounding principle, a measure of all measures. It would instead feature as constant accompaniment – perhaps of the nature of a friend; as one of those ideas that remains universally *within* the field of investigation, but not as arché *to* that field.

As we know, this strategy is not more profound than humanism and the philosophy of the subject. On the contrary, it reverts to the surface of which Deleuze speaks throughout *The Logic of Sense* (see particularly 4-11). Its strategy is *otherwise*, and thus, it will be shown, potentially effective.

---

We wish to speak of a potentially effective strategy which, acknowledging the sense of “man” as a universal concern, nonetheless does not attempt to give that universal question the status of a archaic or grounding principle. This strategy operates *otherwise* than the usual strategy of *depth* – we could say, the strategy of phenomenology. Universals, within a structure determined by depth and a return to origins or *ursprungliche erfahrungen* (to use Heidegger’s term), gain their status by means of their location at the root of the bifurcating tree. Deleuze, in series 2 of *Logic of Sense*, destroys the authority of roots and branches in the name of the surface (elsewhere and later: by means of the rhizome, the root as unrooted, un-branched, un-originated) – a surface which he finds in the Stoics and in the adventures of Lewis Carroll’s Alice, where, as he says “‘Depth’ is no longer a complement”<sup>1</sup>. Depth is ascribed to the serious or ironic boy, and Carroll detests boys in general (unless they be left-handed or stammerers); it is the little girl who understands stoicism, who works at the surface, who appreciates, as Deleuze says, the *event*.

---

<sup>1</sup> 1990, 9

What is this event? For this non-originary strategy is effective precisely because it respects the stoic/Deleuzian event. According to an analysis of stoic philosophy quoted in *Logic of Sense*, the stoics divided up the table of things according to another logic than the platonic one of model and copy. On the one hand there are bodies, states of affairs, actions and physical qualities which are causes in relation to each other; the time of these states of affairs is the pure, living present, and these bodies occur in space. As such, this is the realm of *being*. But these bodies, although they are causes "in relation to each other and for each other"<sup>2</sup> do not elicit effects within this realm of states of affairs. There is within this disjunctive logic *no* relationship of cause and effect.

On the other hand, there are *events*, which are the effects of those states of affairs. Effects do not arise within the realm of being; they occur in *extra-Being*<sup>3</sup>, in "incorporeal" entities<sup>4</sup>. As Deleuze says:

[These entities] are not living presents, but infinitives, the unlimited Aion, the becoming which divides itself infinitely in past and future and always eludes the present<sup>5</sup>

Things are thus divided in a new way, and our thought is thoroughly disturbed:

The genius of a philosophy must first be measured by the new distribution which it imposes on beings and concepts. The Stoics are in the process of tracing out and forming a new frontier where there had not been one before. In this sense, they displace all reflection.<sup>6</sup>

Let us displace the classical subject into this logic. Instead of a *self* defined in its Being as essentially a *soul* to which the self should, in truth and for truth, remain true so that the accidental matters which fall to this substance (such as bodily appearance) remain precisely accidental to but representative of that soul; Deleuze's disjunctive and stoic logic would give us as on the one hand a body, a physical material and present being within a state of affairs comprised of combinations of other bodies intermixed and occurring in the present; the body of this self-thought-otherwise acts as a *cause* on the states of affairs of which it is a part; and *vice versa* the states of affairs act as causes on the body. Thus, for instance, the state of affairs of the entry into this room is comprised of a series of causes in relation to each other, such as the movement of the door by means of the force applied by the hand.

However, this action of the hand on the door produces not a "new property"<sup>7</sup> of any material thing, despite the action of causes; rather, the effect of this action is the passive-active *event* or *way of being* on the surface of being<sup>8</sup>. This active-passive event is that of: the door being opened. Or: the person opening the door.

In this stoic division of being and concepts, the self in its identity occurs, we can see immediately, *not* in any way as a grounding principle, as a substance to which the accident of a particular physical existence or location in a state of affairs would arise as a side-effect; but rather the identity of the self becomes an after-effect of the situation considered on the one hand as an interwoven series of states of affairs and on the other as the events which occur at the limit of these states. The question of identity would remain in play, but precisely *as* question, *as* a problem, *as* derived. The question of the identity of the subject, of the nature of woman or mankind, remains with us, accompanies us always like a close friend, a companion. Man as a concern remains, we could say, *universal* in the sense that once broached, this question will not recede, will not be escaped (except by means of bad faith); however, the universality of this question will no longer grant to it also the privilege of an organising or grounding principle.

This situation can be generalised. We can say that no longer is it necessary or even possible to grant to matters of universal import the status of origin or ground. This follows from the destruction of the structure of the tree. Once the status of branched structures as universal explanation is removed, the question of the ground or origin loses its relevance to the field of investigation. Bifurcation becomes

---

<sup>2</sup> op cit 4

<sup>3</sup> op cit 7

<sup>4</sup> op cit 4

<sup>5</sup> op cit 5

<sup>6</sup> op cit 4

<sup>7</sup> to use Bréhier's words quoted in op cit 5

<sup>8</sup> again to use Bréhier's terminology

merely one possibility amongst many. It becomes a sub-set of the rhizome, of the *surface*. Events, we have said with Deleuze and the stoics, occur at the surface of being; and this surface is also both the destruction of depth and the destruction of the metaphorical power of depth as organising principle. With this destruction we see the deconstruction of the origin.

For Deleuze, all identities are renounced in the name on the one hand of a Nietzschean “differences of force” and on the other in the name of *particularities* (which in themselves have no identity). Identities are, at the limit, derived and constructed from difference, and difference is defined *in itself as pure difference*, not in relation to the same. Thus in Deleuze’s interpretation, the eternal return of the same speaks not of the return of something identical with what came before, but rather of return as the generation of what we call the same. Or, to put it in the language of *differences and repetitions*:

repetition does not presuppose the Same or the Similar – these are not its prerequisites. It is repetition, on the contrary, which produces the only “same” of that which differs, and the only resemblance of the different<sup>9</sup>

The same “is said of” difference, just as “univocal Being [God, self] *is said of* beings which are not univocal”<sup>10</sup>. Thus, in terms of the identity of the subject, we take from the differential situation of bodies, states of affairs and their surface events the possibility to *say* this identity. *It is said of* non-univocal beings that there is the univocal identity of the subject. We would thus tend to disagree with Badiou in his Deleuze book where he insists, in the face of Deleuze’s own doubts<sup>11</sup>, on the overriding privilege of a Deleuzian univocity. Yes, there is univocity, but this univocity – of the identity of the subject, of identity *per se* – is that which “is said of” the field of differences, the field of non-identity. The clamour of being is its insistence to be spoken, its importunacy in the face of all evidence of its derived character; being, and with it the being and identity of the subject, clamours like a friend whispering at our shoulder – a friendship we cannot ignore but which we also can no longer allow to dominate and control the field of which it is an effect.

With the division of being and concepts into a different table of disorders by the stoics comes necessarily also a different division of the history of thought. Deleuze questions the supposed historic split of philosophy between the pre-enlightenment centring carried out by and by means of the infinite divine being; and the Kantian substitution of this divine being by the finite self. That is, the substitution of the transcendental for the transcendent. For, says Deleuze, following Klossowski, the self can only exist by virtue of God, and in this respect the enlightenment fools itself as to its own true footing:

As long as we maintain the formal identity of the self, doesn’t the self remain subject to a divine order, and to a unique God who is its foundation? Klossowski insists that God is the sole guarantor of the identity of the self and of its substantive base... One cannot conserve the self without also holding onto God.<sup>12</sup>

The converse, of course, follows: the ramifications of the madman’s acknowledgement of the death of god extend, properly thought, to the “death” of the subject and its identity.

What then, subsequent to this deconstruction, can be said of what has been revealed as the construction of the identity of the subject? For, as we recall from Derrida, every deconstruction is inherently positive. We are called to read the “de” of deconstruction positively, as we would read the “de” of delight or debate or deliverance. What is the effect of the ungrounding of the identity of the subject, the removal of its originary or founding status? What does the deconstruction of this (as of all else) allow us to think? Precisely, we should say, that very thought: the thought that there is here not a ground but a question, a problem; and the life of questions and problems subsists in their explication, their movement, their playing across an eventful surface rather than the derivation from or into a depth of meaning.

Deleuze, in chapter IV of *Difference and Repetition*, sets out what such a movement could be in his thought of the play of the differentiation (spelt with a t) of an Idea and the differenciatio (spelt with a c)

---

<sup>9</sup> op cit 289

<sup>10</sup> op cit 300

<sup>11</sup> 2000, 4

<sup>12</sup> 1990, 294

of its actualisation. It is remarkable that as with Derrida's contemporary strategy of *différance* (spelt with an *a*, and signifying the non-originary origin), Deleuze's structure cannot be heard, it can only be read within the difference between unhearable letters. This unhearable difference is the movement of the construction of identities, the movement of the saying of being out of that which is not-being, out of the eternal return of the same. It has a very particular and precise structure, which Deleuze derives from (or says of) differential calculus, theories of evolution and Marx (amongst others). In this work, Deleuze characterises Ideas *not* as essences but as "complexes of coexistence"<sup>13</sup> or "multiple ideal connections"<sup>14</sup>; the nature of the Idea is *per se* problematic. Ideas are thus to be contrasted with concepts, which remain within the order of identity, subsumed to the rule of the same. Ideas are rather differential (with a *t*) in their problematic nature; and the determination of the "virtual content"<sup>15</sup> of an Idea is termed its differentiation (again with a *t*). The Idea becomes more specific, it is specified in its virtual particularity, by means of a process of differentiation. But this differentiation does not occur as a stand-alone process within the realm of thought. Just as the stoic logic of states of affairs and events supposes a non-platonic relationship between, and a structure of thought of, the present being of physical beings and the events which they effect; so here in an analogous (but reverse) situation the differentiation of the Idea occurs along with the movement of the actualisation of this virtuality into a realm (or "milieu") of differentiation (this time with a *c*) in which it is "incarnated"<sup>16</sup>.

It is indeed within this movement of differentiation interplayed across differentiation that something like the identity of the subject occurs as an event. And this movement is, Deleuze claims above all else, inherently positive:

Consequently - and this is all we wish to say - the negative appears neither in the process of differentiation [of the Idea] nor in the process of differentiation [of its actualisation in the identity in question]<sup>17</sup>

We therefore posit that the death of god, with it the death of the subject as founding principle, with it the death of identity as that from which difference is derived, leave open an open milieu inherently positive in character within which the universality of questions such as that of the identity of the subject, or the value of man, lose (in a constructive way, that is, in a deconstructive way) their position as a ground and instead thereby can be played out and thought out (-these two not so different-) in a manner commensurate with the respect they are due.

Tim Gough October 2008  
[tim.gough@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:tim.gough@kingston.ac.uk)  
+44(0)7966 377 609

## **bibliography**

Badiou, Alain *Deleuze The Clamour of Being (Deleuze: La Clameur de l'Etre 1997, trans Louise Burchill)* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press 2000

Deleuze, G *Difference and Repetition (Différence et répétition 1968, trans Paul Patton)* London, The Athlone Press 1994

Deleuze, G, *Logic of Sense (Logique du sens 1969, trans M Lester & C Stivale)*, NY, Columbia University Press 1990

Deleuze, G *Nietzsche and Philosophy (Nietzsche et la philosophie 1962, trans H Tomlinson)* London, The Athlone Press 1983

Klossowski, P *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle (Nietzsche et le Cercle Vicieux 1969, trans DW Smith)* Chicago, UCP 1997

---

<sup>13</sup> 1994, 186

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> *op cit* 207

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*