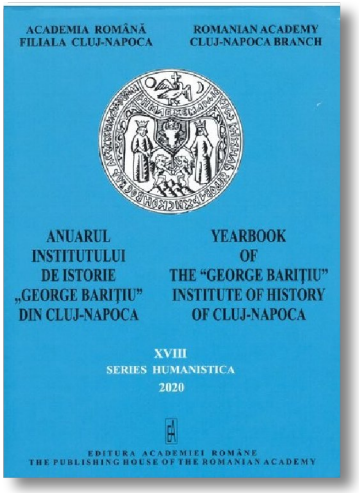

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BACK TO THE PHENOMENA THEMSELVES: THE DELEUZIAN MEDIATION OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL IDEAS

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Abstract. Gilles Deleuze has an ambiguous relationship with phenomenology to say the least, which has been characterized by his commentators as everything from mutual opposition, to critical development, and to complementarity or even full compatibility. Within the French philosopher's own oeuvre, the different strands of 20th century phenomenology play an important, if not immediately evident, role, offering both the conceptual and thematic starting ground for a good deal of Deleuze's own philosophy, which, characterized under the heading of "transcendental empiricism", resonates a good deal with the original project of phenomenology. In this text, I aim to show how Deleuze's reading of phenomenologists not only shaped his own philosophy, but also informed the shape that metaphysics would more recently take, and how current metaphysicians in the continental tradition end up engaging with phenomenology through the mediation of Deleuzian criticisms and conceptual loans. He will be shown to hold an important role as mediator, not only for the transmission of phenomenological ideas outside of phenomenology, but also for providing the perspective with which post-Deleuzian thinkers return to and read phenomenological philosophers.

Keywords: post-phenomenology, Sartre, Husserl, Heidegger, object-oriented-ontology, speculative realism.

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INTRODUCTION

As has been previously noted[1], Gilles Deleuze's relationship to phenomenology is complicated, with interpreters of his work evaluating the philosopher as either an irreconcilable opponent of phenomenology[2], a critical continuator of a host of problematics that had arisen within the phenomenological

[1] Bryant (2008).
[2] Alliez (1995).

tradition[3], or an outright phenomenological thinker himself[4]. This text will not attempt to directly tackle and resolve this dispute. Instead however, I will look at Deleuze's forays into the ideas of earlier phenomenologists, in order to show how his criticism and continuation of their work will end up shaping the theoretical outlook of his successors in contemporary metaphysics.

We will see how the French philosopher reworked concepts developed by the first generations of phenomenologists after (and including) Husserl and how his criticisms and engagement with this tradition affected the way in which phenomenological ideas were received by post-Deleuzian thinkers. By "post-Deleuzian thinkers" I am referring both to theorists who explicitly assume the mantle of "Deleuzians", as well as the newer wave of ontology – and metaphysics – focused philosophers who have been grouped under various labels, from "speculative realism" or "speculative materialism" (Q. Meillassoux, R. Brassier, A. Toscano, I. Stengers, R. Negarestani), to "new materialisms" (L. Bryant), to Object-Oriented-Ontology (G. Harman, T. Garcia, M. DeLanda) among others[5].

To this end, we are faced with threefold task: firstly, to ascertain how exactly Deleuze acts as an intermediary, not only between phenomenology and recent metaphysical theories, but also between phenomenology and post-war French philosophy (as we shall see, a challenge onto its own); secondly, to explore the precise relationship between Deleuze and the phenomenological tradition, by looking at who are the key authors he addresses, and which of their ideas does he mainly tackle; thirdly, to determine how Deleuze's theoretical encounters with phenomenology helped shape the reception of phenomenological ideas within contemporary continental philosophy. I will also briefly touch upon the wider implication this will have on bridging the theoretical gap between contemporary phenomenology and post-Deleuzian metaphysics.

DELEUZE AS INTERMEDIARY

There are two reasons behind this undertaking. First of all, while there have been some very good analyses of the influence that authors such as Husserl[6], Heidegger[7], Sartre[8] or Merleau-Ponty[9] exerted on Deleuze, overall the impact of phenomenology on Deleuze has been downplayed in most of the exegetical

[3] Badiou (1997/2000, pp. 20-24; Agamben, 1999, pp. 224-228; Peden, 2014, pp. 191-256).

[4] Hughes (2008).

[5] For an overview of Deleuze's role in inspiring the new turn in metaphysics see Bryant, Srnicek & Harman (2011, pp. 4-17).

[6] Lawlor (1998; Hughes, 2008).

[7] Agamben (1999, pp. 224-226; Badiou, 1997/2000, pp. 20-23, pp. 79-81; de Beistegui, 2004).

[8] Faulkner (2002; van de Wiel, 2008).

[9] Lawlor (1998; Olkowski, 1999, pp. 59-87; Shores, 2012).

literature – to this effect, we need only look towards Eric Alliez's[10] (his former student) provocative statement that Deleuzian thought is an expression of the "impossibility of phenomenology", in the sense that his immanentist philosophy was terminally at odds with phenomenology's reliance on the given. While it would be difficult to label Deleuze as a phenomenological thinker, it is also an exaggeration to see his thought as completely alien to phenomenology. After all, Deleuze's stated project of creating a "transcendental empiricism" has a strong affinity with Husserl's transcendental philosophy. I contend that, whatever the irreconcilable points of difference between Deleuzian thought and phenomenology, they are made all the more striking due to the proximity of the two projects, as Deleuze raises the philosophical challenges that he himself faces to phenomenology.

Secondly, I argue that Deleuze is in an excellent position to mediate the tense interaction that we find within 20th century French philosophy between what we vaguely could call a "rationalist" (and post-rationalist[11]) tradition, on the one hand, and phenomenology, on the other. We can find this antagonism arising, for example, between French Spinozism (present in authors ranging from Jean Cavaillès to Louis Althusser) and phenomenology[12], or between structuralists and the gamut of French phenomenologists and existentialists. An early explicit framing of this dispute is developed in Cavaillès' late essay "On Logic and the Theory of Science"[13], a large part of which is dedicated to the analysis of Husserl's phenomenology, where he states that "it is not a philosophy of consciousness but a philosophy of the concept that can give a doctrine of science. The generating necessity is not the necessity of an activity, but the necessity of a dialectic"[14]. In other words, the development of science must depend on its own immanent dynamic rather than emerging from the framing of a subject-object relation.

This may appear counterintuitive at first glance since post-war French philosophy has widely come to be associated with what is generally thematized under the heading "French Theory", covering both the works of influential post-

[10] Alliez (1995).

[11] This distinction between 'rationalism' and 'post-rationalism' within the confines of 20th century French philosophy is developed by Tom Eyers (2013). Simply put, French post-rationalism emerges as a field of different philosophical approaches that tackle the question of truth and knowledge-production within a post-cartesian framework, where rationalism loses the anchoring it had held in the form of the unified rational subject. Peden (2014) proposes a similar approach, where he sees 20th century French philosophy as tributary to a Spinozian rather than Cartesian rationalism, a rationalism that involves "[t]he demotion of the subject to a consequence of other, more fundamental forces, rather than a founding instance" (Peden, 2014, p. 6).

[12] Roudinesco (2005/2008, pp. 7-9, pp. 38-39; Peden, 2014).

[13] Cavaillès (1994)

[14] Cavaillès (1994, p. 560); For an in-depth analysis of the developments of Cavaillès' confrontation with phenomenology within post-war French philosophy, see the excellent work done by Cassou-Noguès (2001).

war authors and their wider international reception. Taken under the label of "French theory", this strand of post-war philosophy is generally understood to have provided some of the most important recent critiques of rationalism. Obviously, the "rationalism" of the French Spinozian thinkers (and their contemporaries who continued in the same vein) cannot be subsumed under the banner of a capital "R" Cartesian Rationalism. In fact, a good deal of the French philosophy in the second half of the 20th century can be thought of as a rejection of Descartes' grounding of philosophy in the "subject". As Peden[15] argues, a core contention of French philosophers with phenomenology will be centered around Husserl's continuation of this Cartesian tradition through his consciousness-centered philosophy.

Nonetheless, there is a common thread of rejecting the grounding of philosophical speculation on consciousness or subjectivity within this wide cast of thinkers. Instead of seeing the interplay between subjectivity and the given as the prime ground from which to derive the principles of experience (scientific or quotidian), they look instead towards the forces that construct both terms of the phenomenological equation (be it under the form of Cavaillès' dialectic of concepts, the different historical analyses of epistemology developed by Canguilhem, Bachelard or Foucault, the structural Marxism of Althusser, or the immanentist philosophy of Deleuze). The unexpected twist lies in the fact that, by insisting on the primacy of the internal logic of these constitutive forces themselves in the construction of both the subject and the object of the epistemic relation, they open the way for the unmediated access of reason to the things themselves. When and if subjectivity itself will re-enter the equation, it will be to alter this unmediated relationship between reason and the internal dynamic of its conceptual objects. This alteration will take the form of a restructuring of epistemic production by means of the historically contingent forces from which particular forms of the subject and object of knowledge are produced. Nonetheless, these hurdles can be overcome through analytic or deconstructive interventions. The rationalism of these philosophers, therefore, lies in their liberation of conceptual knowledge from the transcendental structure of subjective experience – or, in the words of Cavaillès[16], and later of Foucault[17], in the necessity of a philosophy of the concept, not one of consciousness, in order to tackle the problems of experience.

As I have mentioned, Alliez[18] already counterposed Deleuzian philosophy to phenomenology, proposing that Deleuze's metaphysics is shaped in part by his view that phenomenology's gradual pushing of the source of the given further into transcendence inevitably leads to a sort of "apophatic" ontology, which so heavily characterized a part of French phenomenology after its so-called "theological

[15] Peden (2014).
[16] Cavaillès (1994).
[17] Foucault (1998).
[18] Alliez (1995).

turn"[19]. The resistance of Deleuze's "transcendental empiricism" to the postulation of an exteriority from which the datum springs out into view and his firm refusal to admit to any functional distinction between the sensible and the intelligible are fully developed within his confrontation with phenomenology. In Bryant's[20] interpretation of Deleuzian metaphysics, this immanentist project is seen as a sort of "hyperrationalism", which rejects any modern variation of the Platonic "thesis that the field of sensible given is a rhapsody of unintelligible and irrational appearances"[21], even in its modest phenomenological forms that push this unintelligibility of the sensible to the very edges of the transcendentally-structured experience that is given to us. More than almost any continental philosopher up to him, Deleuze seems unfazed by the post-Kantian censure on immanence.

Deleuze, therefore, becomes a somewhat aberrant figure in this affair. While, on the one hand, by virtue of his theoretical apparatus, his firm anti-subjectivism, and his main philosophical influences, he seems to fall firmly on the side of the "philosophy of the concept", the empiricist commitments of his philosophy bring him closer to the project of Husserl and his descendants. His atypical approach allows us to introduce him into what would otherwise be an unproductive conversation, in order to reframe certain criticisms of phenomenology as challenges towards the field instead of wholesale rejections of it.

In addition to this mediation, Deleuze will also prove to be a crucial intermediary between phenomenology and contemporary continental metaphysics, as he remains one of the most important sources for the current problematics of continental metaphysics, both in his over-coming of the pronouncements of philosophers such as Heidegger or Derrida regarding the "death of metaphysics" and in establishing the themes that an up-to-date metaphysical framework would have to address. Therefore, his engagement with the ideas of phenomenology will prove crucial in providing the germs for the re-situation of these ideas within new developments in metaphysics.

THE SARTREAN ROAD TO HUSSERL

In pursuing Deleuze's journey through phenomenology, we will have to make a detour through Jean-Paul Sartre's influence on the young philosopher. When Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* was published in 1943, Deleuze was still an 18-year old high-school student, who was, nonetheless, already heavily invested in philosophy, to the point where he receives some notice by high-caliber French thinkers, participating in the intellectual gatherings held at philosopher Marie-

[19] Janicaud (1991/2000).
[20] Bryant (2008).
[21] Bryant (2008, p. 9).

Magdalene Davy's estate[22]. The works of Sartre, both philosophical and literary, had a significant impact on the young Deleuze, his former classmates later attesting to his enthusiasm for the existentialist philosopher[23]. Furthermore, considering Deleuze's poor grasp of German at this point[24], his only contacts with the phenomenological school, beyond Husserl's Parisian lectures which were available in French[25] and the anthology of texts translated by Henry Corbin in 1938, would have been mediated through French reactions to it, dominated, in the 1930s and early 1940s, by Sartre and Levinas, the latter being of little interest to Deleuze[26].

Therefore, Sartre is most likely the original site both of Deleuze's interest in phenomenology and of the shape of his reticence towards it, as Sartre's deviation from Husserl will influence Deleuze's reading of phenomenology even after his early break with Sartre. On the one hand, Deleuze writes glowingly of Sartre – he positively references both Sartre's early Husserlian texts[27] and his later work, like the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*[28]. In a tribute to Sartre, written shortly after he had refused the Nobel prize for literature, Deleuze calls the old philosopher his "teacher"[29]. On the other hand, out of his entire corpus, the only part that Deleuze would exclude from republication consists of his very earliest texts, five essays preceding the publication of his thesis on Hume, three of these, written between 1945-1947, developing themes and ideas from Sartre[30].

The interpretations of these exclusions have been mixed. His biographer, François Dosse, for example, downplays Deleuze's Sartrean phase as youthful infatuation[31], and claims that the texts owe their elimination to being fairly derivative. Peden has a similar diagnostic[32]. Most commentators ignore them altogether. Raymond van de Wiel[33], on the other hand, sees Deleuze's entire philosophical project as an attempt to overcome Sartre's failure to link his phenomenological ontology to his political praxis and views the suppression of the Sartrean essays as Deleuze's attempt to avoid appearing a disciple of Sartre[34] and having the reception of his work distorted. Without going too much into the subject, it could be argued that Sartre's importance for Deleuze's mature

[22] Dosse (2010, pp. 90-94).
[23] Dosse (2010, pp. 93-94).
[24] Dosse (2010, p. 111).
[25] Spileers (1999, pp. 68-69).
[26] Despite this, Deleuze's mature reading of Heidegger is conceptually closer to that of Levinas than that of Sartre. (Peden, 2014, p. 203).
[27] Deleuze (1985/1997c, pp. 60-63; Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, pp. 46-47).
[28] Deleuze (2004, pp. 77-80)
[29] Deleuze (2004, pp. 77-80)
[30] Dosse (2010, p. 95).
[31] Dosse (2010, pp. 92-95).
[32] Peden (2014, p. 200).
[33] van de Wiel (2008).
[34] see also Colombel (2005, pp. 39-40).

philosophy will come to have more to do with being a model for what a philosopher is, as Sartre's theoretical influence on his once-disciple will be gradually eclipsed by thinkers like Bergson, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and even the pre-Sartrean phenomenologists themselves, which explains why he always heaps such high praise on Sartre, while at the same time developing a philosophical system that is fundamentally incompatible with that of Sartre. As Dosse[35] points out, the groundwork for Deleuze's break with Sartre is laid early on, when he attends the master's famous conference "Existentialism is a Humanism", given in late-1945, and is disappointed by Sartre's move towards rehabilitating humanism. Moreover, by 1946, Deleuze was already showing a familiarity with Husserl's philosophy independent of Sartre's interpretations, as well as with Heidegger, to whom he was introduced through the courses of Jean Beaufret[36].

Nevertheless, there are some crucial aspects of Sartre's early work that will come to shape Deleuze's evaluation of Husserl and Heidegger. Paradoxically, considering the impact of Sartre's mature works on the young Deleuze, this influence would come from Sartre's earlier work, which is more directly engaged with Husserl's work.

In one of his last works – *What is Philosophy?* – written in collaboration with Felix Guattari, Deleuze talks of "Sartre's presupposition of an impersonal transcendental field" which "restores the rights of immanence"[37], and thus allows for the possibility of philosophy (read, implicitly, as phenomenology) to become a "radical empiricism" that "does not present a flux of the lived that is immanent to a subject and individualized in that which belongs to a self"[38]. This passage is a useful entry point into the way in which Sartre's work influenced Deleuze's outlook on phenomenology and how exactly Deleuze (mis)uses Sartre. Because, if we look just a paragraph earlier within the same text, we find Deleuze criticizing the view that "immanence is a prison (solipsism) from which the Transcendent will save us" – but this is precisely a view towards which Sartre gravitates, especially when he criticizes Bergson in his early work. What Deleuze finds within the early Sartre is, therefore, a phenomenology stretched to the limits of its dependency on the ego, which will inform how Deleuze engages with Husserl and represents the conceptual key which will allow him to borrow liberally from Husserl, without being concerned that he would be introducing conceptual inconsistencies within his own thought.

Sartre dismisses the modulation of consciousness around the transcendental ego, to which Husserl commits to starting with Ideen[39], as counterproductive.

[35] Dosse (2010, pp. 94-95).
[36] Dosse (2010, pp. 95-96).?
[37] Deleuze & Guattari (1991/1994, p. 47).
[38] Deleuze & Guattari (1991/1994, p. 47).
[39] Husserl (1982).

> We find admirable all of Husserl's descriptions in which he shows transcendental consciousness constituting the world by imprisoning itself in empirical consciousness. Like Husserl, we are persuaded that our psychic and psycho-physical *me* is a transcendent object which must fall before the epoche. But we raise the following question: is not this psychic and psycho-physical *me* enough? Need one double it with a transcendental *I*, a structure of absolute consciousness?"[40]

Already with Sartre, the problem of structuring consciousness around the transcendental ego arises, as, for him, this transcendental ego is not only unnecessary for providing the principle of unity of objects or of consciousness, but serves to obscure how the *I* actually emerges from a self-unifying and self-individuating consciousness. This leads to him conceiving of the impersonal consciousness represented by the transcendental field.

For Deleuze, this is already a significant development, one which will help ground his entire theory of experience. However, for him, Sartre does not go far enough: while he liberates the flux of lived experience from its structuration around transcendental subjectivity, Sartre, nonetheless, re-fetters experience to subjectivity via the transcendent ego lying outside of consciousness – his solution to the problem of solipsism. Deleuze, as we have seen, rejects not only the solution, but the existence of the problem itself. For him, pure immanence presents us with the danger of solipsism only insofar as this immanence is already conceived as being immanent to a subject. Of course, merely affirming the dissolution of the subject is an empty gesture if this does not fundamentally change the conscious organization of experience in any way.

This brings us to the second point of Deleuze's objection, namely that Sartre's transcendent ego is an illusion brought on by its being derived from the unity of consciousness, while the processes and forces that produce this unity are discounted. As Deleuze states: "consciousness becomes a fact only if a subject is produced at the same time as its object, all three of them being outside the field (*hors champ*) and appearing as 'transcendents'.", therefore consciousness

> expresses itself as fact only by reflecting itself onto a subject which refers it to objects. This is why the transcendental field cannot be defined by its consciousness which is nonetheless coextensive with it, but withdraws from all revelation. [...] Without consciousness the transcendental field would be defined as a pure immanence since it escapes every transcendence of the subject as well as of the object.[41].

As his commentator David Lapoujade points out: "one must begin with a world in which consciousness is not yet revealed though it is co-extensive with the

[40] Sartre (1936/1957, p. 31).
[41] Deleuze (1997a, pp. 3-4).

entire transcendental field. One cannot yet establish any distinctions within it: neither subject, nor object."[42]

Deleuze's foray into Sartre not only provides him with crucial conceptual material for the development of his own metaphysics, but it is within this encounter that he develops the fundamental elements of his positioning with respect to phenomenology, which he will maintain, with slight variations, throughout the rest of his oeuvre. With this in mind, we can move on, fully-equipped, to Deleuze's relation to Husserl.

DELEUZE READING HUSSERL

It could be said that, in a certain sense, Deleuze turns Cavaillès' criticism of Husserlian phenomenology on its head. Where Cavaillès accuses Husserl of deferring to the analysis of consciousness in order to obtain scientific notions, instead of having them generated from the dialectical transformation of concepts[43], Deleuze charges Husserl with sabotaging the immanence of the plane of consciousness by having it be constituted by and structured around the subject-form, which thus becomes a transcendent grounding for consciousness. In this sense, Deleuze is more sensitive than Cavaillès to the way in which Husserl conceives consciousness within his transcendental philosophy, which allows Deleuze to move the object of critique in such a way as to allow phenomenology to actually engage with the critique, without abandoning its core focus on consciousness. In other words, if our criticism of phenomenology is that it extracts the materials of its analysis from the given, this leaves phenomenology no way to answer this critique without compromising its fundamental endeavor; on the other hand, if this criticism is directed towards the fact that phenomenology conceptualizes the given as a product of the subject, this issues a challenge to theorize how this subject is constituted in the given.

Deleuze recognizes that the immanence of immediate experience is sabotaged by the forces that structure it into subjective experience[44], just as the sources of thought (philosophical or otherwise) are obscured by implicit presuppositions; however, his response to this is not to conduct an *epoché*, a suspension of content, but to deconstruct the subjective ordering of experience in order to expose, in his words, "how is the subject constituted in the given"[45]. Armed with this perspective, however, Deleuze can now return to Husserl and see him in a different light, taking up a number of ideas and insights from

[42] Lapoujade (2000, p. 192).
[43] Cavaillès (1994, pp. 473-560).
[44] Deleuze (1969/1990a; 1977/1991; 1968/1994; 1997a).
[45] Deleuze (1977/1991, p. 16).

Husserlian phenomenology. Two of these are crucial to his thought: his theory of singularities and events, which borrows significantly from Husserl, and his conception of the passive synthesis of time.

While Deleuze's theory of singularity has numerous philosophical ancestors, from the early Stoics to Duns Scotus, Spinoza, Leibniz, and others, the contribution of Husserl cannot be overlooked: Deleuze's concept of the singularity finds a kindred concept in what Husserl calls "eidetic singularities", material essences of facts. It is from Husserl's eidetic singularities that Deleuze will extract two important features: the singularity's sterility and its neutrality.

The sterility refers to the fact that Deleuze's singularities, much like Husserl's, appear as incorporeal doubles of bodies, described as "ideal events" or "surface effects"[46]. The neutrality, on the other hand, refers to the singularity's complete autonomy with regards to its perception within a consciousness or to its expression within a proposition[47]. Due to their neutrality, singularities can interact with each other through the mediation of structures, thus overcoming their inherent sterility and becoming capable of generating sense even from their fragile position on the surface of the actual bodies. With this conceptual stroke, Deleuze tacitly addresses Cavaillès' attacks on Husserl – the constellation of singularities pertaining to this or that factual state of affairs that is of interest to science can thus be ontologically separated from the material and historical conditions which cause each of them individually and can be placed on an autonomous plane of their own, where they can be brought together in such a way as to generate new notions through their own internal logic.

This notion of singularity is not only limited to concepts, of course, but extends to all surface effects produced by bodies, which are essential to allowing sense to be made out of the chaotic mixture of bodies. In order to underline the importance of Husserl in the development of this concept, we will turn to the following passage:

> [W]hen Husserl reflects on the 'perceptual noema', or the 'sense of perception', he at once distinguishes it from the physical object, from the psychological or 'lived', from mental representations and from logical concepts. He presents it as an impassive and incorporeal entity, without physical or mental existence, neither acting nor being acted upon – a pure result or pure 'appearance'. The real tree (the denotatum) can burn, be subject and object of action, and enter into mixtures. This is not the case, however, for the noema 'tree'. […] When therefore Husserl says that the noema is the perceived such as it appears in a presentation, 'the perceived as such' or the appearance, we ought not understand that the noema involves a sensible given

[46] Deleuze (1969/1990a, pp. 96-99, pp. 100-103).
[47] Deleuze (1969/1990a, pp. 20-24).

> or quality; it rather involves an ideational objective unity as the intentional correlate of the act of perception."[48] He ends this passage with the question: "Could phenomenology be a rigorous science of surface effects?[49]

Husserl's other important influence on Deleuze can be located in the first synthesis of time developed in *Difference and Repetition* – the passive synthesis of the "lived present". For Deleuze, the passive synthesis operates in a similar way to Husserl's one: retention of the past and anticipation of the future deploy from their point of contact – the living present –, which thus synthesizes them into the flow of time (in Deleuze, however, this synthesis is fundamentally grounded on repetition in itself). This synthesis is passive, because it "is not made by the mind, but it is made in the contemplating mind, preceding all memories and all reflections"[50]. Through this synthesis, the past and future can be treated as separate parts of time. Deleuze's point of departure from Husserl, however, comes from two other sources: Hume and Bergson.

By employing Hume's concept of habit, the passive synthesis can be conceptually described as contraction. This is a crucial development, because it makes the passive synthesis within the contemplating mind only a particular case of a more general rule, and because it allows for passive syntheses to be elaborated by any entity, not confining it to conscious human subjects.

Secondly, and this is Deleuze's debt to Bergson, the living present cannot ever be truly conceived as a sort-of point-like instant, and thus, later in his work, the passing present will be replaced by the present as duration. This, in and of itself, is not particularly striking within modern ontologies of time; however, Deleuze's treatment of the present as duration is distinctly Bergsonian.

This part of his metaphysics of time will only be developed fully with *The Logic of Sense*, but the results turn out to be spectacular, as they allow for larger and larger durations to be synthesized with incredibly vast horizons of retention and anticipation[51]. In order to hold these durations together, he conceptualizes two more syntheses of time – the second active synthesis of memory, understood as the conditions for ordering the past presents in relation to the present emerging within the passive synthesis, thus producing a pure past, on which the living present can be grounded, and the third synthesis of pure time, which pertains to cuts within a duration that order and structure it, which will be later theorized as events/singularities[52].

This metaphysics of time is not altogether alien to Husserl's one. Nonetheless, the evacuation of the transcendental ego, on which the entire

[48] Deleuze (1969/1990a, p. 20).
[49] Deleuze (1969/1990a, p. 21.
[50] Deleuze (1968/1994, p. 97).
[51] Deleuze (1969/1990a, pp. 4-6, pp. 60-64).
[52] Deleuze (1968/1994, pp. 70-128).

articulation of the structure of time hinges for Husserl, is undeniable. For Deleuze, any subjective structure has to emerge from these constitutive syntheses of time, and not the other way around. At the same time, his move beyond chronological time at the level of the third synthesis leads into his postulation of a second register of time besides the *Chronos*, the *Aion*[53] – the free-floating temporal domain of the incorporeals. The same conceptualization of time and singularities will be once again brought to the fore when Deleuze tackles what he sees as Heidegger's limitations and half-measures.

A 'SPINOZIAN HEIDEGGER'?

At his philosophical best, Deleuze's Heidegger (as for Foucault) is seen as an essentially Nietzschean thinker[54], above and beyond his membership in the gallery of key-phenomenological philosophers. This does not, however, imply that Deleuze's interest lies in what we could call, for lack of a better term, non-phenomenological intuitions to be found within Heidegger's work. As we shall see, Heidegger's turn towards a philosophy of difference and, prior to that, his critique of representationalism provide valuable impulses towards Deleuze's philosophy.

In an interesting historical parallel, we can find both the old Heidegger and the young Deleuze facing similar problems, and moving in similar directions, towards the end of the 1950s. In 1956-57, the seminar Deleuze was working on focuses primarily on Kant and post-Kantian philosophy, dealing with the problem of the foundation in metaphysics – the lecture notes to this seminar have been recently published, after circulating for a while in their original form on various online sites, under the title "What is grounding?"[55]. The issues Deleuze deals with in these courses are driven by his readings of Kant's German successors, but most of all by Henry Corbin[56]'s translation of Heidegger's texts collected within the volume *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?*, comprising of Heidegger's inaugural Freiburg lecture *What is metaphysics?*, together with *The Essence of Ground*, parts of the second division of *Being and Time*, and the full text of the fourth and final parts of *Kant and the problem of metaphysics*.[57]

[53] Deleuze (1969/1990a, pp. 88-91; 1968/1994, pp. 60-65, pp. 77-81).

[54] Deleuze (1968/1994, pp. 64-66, pp. 201-202; Deleuze, 1986/1988, pp. 109-114).

[55] Deleuze (1956-1957/2015).

[56] Corbin's role in intermediating the French reception of Heidegger may have some relevance of its own, as some points of proximity between Henry Corbin and Deleuze have previously been noted (Hallward 2006, p. 57, p. 160). It is also worth noting that Corbin's translation of Heidegger in 1938 already preempts a humanist reading of his work, defending Heidegger against charges of anthropocentrism in the preface to the collection, which may have influenced Deleuze's later reaction to Sartre's turn to humanism (Peden, 2014, p. 202).

[57] Kerslake (2008, pp. 30-36; Peden 2014, p. 245; Rölli 2016, pp. 129-131).

At this stage, Heidegger already informs Deleuze's reading of Kant's transcendental analytic, at the end of which the young Deleuze already demands we move beyond Kant's separation of noumenon and phenomenon, in order to reach a genetic principle and methodology for the constitution of the objects of experience[58]. This echoes Heidegger's thematization of Being, with further Heideggerian input guiding Deleuze's discussions of time and its relationship with finitude. However, we need to acknowledge that, at this point, Deleuze has not yet overcome the trappings of transcendental subjectivity. Surprisingly enough, this is not due to Deleuze's over-reliance on Heidegger, but from his having to rely on the early Heideggerian corpus rather than the philosopher's later work. As Rölli points out, only after he wades through "the late Heidegger's onto-theological critique or his theory of difference"[59], Deleuze will be able to fully develop an immanent concept of grounding – a feat that will also lead him to criticize Heidegger's slips into transcendence. Although it is difficult to precisely date when exactly Deleuze develops this immanent understanding of grounding, it appears to have fully matured by the time he writes Difference and Repetition[60].

At roughly the same time, in 1957, Heidegger holds two lectures titled *The Principle of Identity* and *The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics* (later published together under the heading *Identity and Difference*). Heidegger here goes once again through the onto-theological critique, aimed now at the questionable metaphysical foundations of the modern subject[61]. Heidegger points out that "[t]he grounding contention of the principle of identity is exactly what the whole of Western European thinking has in mind - and that is: the unity of identity constitutes a grounding feature in the Being of beings."[62]

With this in mind, he launches, in the latter part of *The Principle of Identity,* into a confrontation with Hegel's representational conception of the grounding principle of identity. While for Hegel, Heidegger contends, the focus of thought is on "the Idea as the absolute concept", which is thought through the gradual *Aufhebung* of previous thinking as it has come to be understood and sedimented, we now must turn and consider "the matter of thinking" to be "difference as difference"[63], meaning a step back into the previously un-thought (*das Ungedachte*) surrounding the philosophical thinking of the past. Of course, for Heidegger, what is not-yet-thought in the history of philosophy is the ontological difference, which is the object of the thinking that must overcome metaphysics as a mode of thinking Being as generality.

[58] Deleuze (1956-1957/2015, pp. 33-40).
[59] Rölli (2016, p. 130).
[60] Deleuze (1968/1994, pp. 28-69; see also Rölli 2016, p. 152).
[61] Heidegger (1957/2002a).
[62] Heidegger (1957/2002a, p. 26).
[63] Heidegger (1957/2002a, p. 47).

These are not completely novel themes for Heidegger, Deleuze managing to reconstruct this Heideggerian argumentation with access to mostly earlier texts. However, the move to overcome representational metaphysics through a philosophy of the ontological difference between Being and beings comes at roughly the same period when Deleuze himself was about to resolve his issues with grounding by developing a philosophy of difference.

It is not altogether clear to what degree Deleuze's concept of difference is informed solely by Heidegger and to what degree he uses his proximity to Heidegger to clarify his own position (however, given Deleuze's earlier seminar on grounding, we should conclude that Heidegger's thinking constitutes at the very least a springboard for problems that Deleuze himself launches in). Nevertheless, Deleuze refers explicitly to Heidegger when formulating his "challenge of difference" towards any philosophical treatment of it. There he states:

> According to Heidegger's ontological intuition, difference must be articulation and connection in itself; it must relate different to different without any mediation whatsoever by the identical, the similar, analogous or the opposed. There must be a differentiation of difference, an in-itself which is like a differentiator, a *Sich-unterscheidende*, by virtue of which the different is gathered all at once rather than represented on condition of a prior resemblance, identity, analogy or opposition[64].

However, Deleuze considers that Heidegger falls short of his stated objective of thinking original difference, by falling back towards a sort of dogmatism of turning the "forgetting of the difference between Being and beings" into the grounds for the pushing Being outside the scope of becoming. This leads to the historical thinking of the formations of Being being governed by configurations that should undergo becoming and determination within history, but that nonetheless appear as quasi-transcendent characteristics of a Being that retreats not just from beings, but also from all of life itself. As Rölli highlights,

> there seems to exist a dogmatic agreement between thinking and Being that is not, to be sure, regulated conceptually, but nevertheless comes about in such a way that the formations of Being find expression in the classical canon of great thinkers.[65]

Deleuze, nonetheless, does not see Heidegger's failings as owing to his being too much of a phenomenologist, but not enough of a Nietzschean[66] – for Deleuze, Heidegger does not meet his own goals because of his *resentment*. When Heidegger removes the Being behind appearance not only beyond conscious experience but beyond history and life (i.e., from time), he leaves himself open to

[64] Deleuze (1968/1994, p. 117).
[65] Rölli (2016, p. 147).
[66] Deleuze (1993/1997b).

the kind of anti-Nietzschean devaluation of life *as it appears*, which ultimately ends up informing Heidegger's conception of technology. This will prevent Heidegger, on a practical level, to see the possibility of any solution that could lead to "a profound reconciliation of the Machine with Duration"[67], that is to say of technology and Dasein.

At the same time, at a theoretical level, what Deleuze calls Heidegger's *resentment* leads the German thinker to fail in fully and adequately problematizing the ontological-ontic difference, as his deepening of the separation between life (i.e. time) and Being prevents Heidegger from addressing what Deleuze calls the problematic nature of Being (the un-thought) under any other guises than the historical configurations of the forgetting of Being. In other words, Heidegger never completely leaves the intentional structures of experience, which renders Heidegger's conception of Being rather sterile[68]. This becomes a problem, since it leaves Being, as ground, without a productive relationship with that which it grounds – in more Heideggerian terms, in the historical progression of the forgetting of Being, the form in which the given is received by the subject appears to owe more to the historical configurations of givenness than on the given which gives itself to the subject (i.e. Being). Thus, the given retreats further and further beyond access due to the theme of finitude that dominates Heidegger's understanding of experience.

Deleuze's philosophical project will take a different route, deepening the Nietzschean commitments that he finds lacking in Heidegger, by resorting to a not-entirely-unexpected source: Spinoza. The issues which Deleuze takes over from Heidegger are attacked head-on with Spinozian metaphysics, but this is done in such a way as to produce an unrecognizable Spinozism – "a philosophy that could be alternatively described as a rationalist Heideggerianism and an existentialist Spinozism"[69].

Where Heidegger's division between Being and beings does not fully meet the test of immanence, Deleuze will turn to Spinoza's way of conceiving the distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* in order to make the final conceptual move in his metaphysics[70]. In this manner, Deleuze can bypass the thematic of finitude that plagues Heidegger's account of experience. Even with Heidegger's critique of grounding experience in subjectivity, the problem of finitude ensures that the thematization of experience will return subjectivity through the backdoor. In this Spinozian mutation of the problematic, the issue dissipates completely, since the difference between Being and beings is no longer one between that which gives existence and that to which existence is given, but rather between the act of creation and that which is created.

[67] Deleuze (1993/1997b, p. 95).
[68] Badiou (1997/2000, pp. 20-23; Peden, 2014, p. 206).
[69] Peden (2014, p. 197).
[70] Deleuze (1968/1990b, pp. 14-15, pp. 99-100).

The shift in the ontological relationship from donative to creative (or productive in other texts) will allow Deleuze to resolve the tensions within Heidegger's account of Being and time between Being's alternating separation from and quasi-identification with time, as well as between the finite form of temporal existence and its essentially non-finite ground[71]. This will be developed in Deleuze's doctoral dissertation[72] into a conceptualization of Being that makes it immanent to its modes of expression (understood in a Spinozian sense); thus, it escapes the trap of reducing the manifest expression of Being to finite forms with a chronological existence, by opening their coextensive virtual dimension within which things gain an "eternal" dimension (echoing his treatment of Husserl's eidetic singularities). In this, we can see Cavaillès' demand for a "philosophy of the concept" addressed from the starting point of phenomenological issues – i.e., from experience.

A RIGOROUS SCIENCE OF SURFACE EFFECTS: PHENOMENOLOGY AFTER DELEUZE

Thus, we can already count several points on which Deleuze opposes/challenges phenomenology, using ideas originally developed within phenomenology. While Deleuze eschews the analysis of phenomena for the analysis of events and their corresponding affects within experience, I claim that we can conceive of an a-subjective phenomenology that answers the challenges raised here[73]. This would fundamentally imply at least two tasks:

1. Extricating phenomena from the field of consciousness ordered around the transcendental ego.

[71] Heidegger (1957/2002a; 1972/2002b).

[72] Deleuze (1968/1994).

[73] Patočka first mentions the idea of an "a-subjective phenomenology" in his 1965 introduction to Husserl's phenomenology, an idea that he develops as a continuation of the criticisms towards Husserl, already emerging within phenomenology, made by scholars such as Eugen Fink and Ludwig Landgrebe (Chvatík 2005). His efforts are therefore contemporaneous to Deleuze's ones and go in similar directions. However, we must make two important observations. First, Patočka's reception outside the field of phenomenology has not yet advanced significantly, and he does not appear as an important source for any of the contemporary metaphysicians who are the focus of this paper. Secondly, while Patočka's move beyond Husserl is important, as he rejects the claims of subjectivity to be the exclusive ground for appearing, replacing the ego with the world (the *horizon of horizons*), as "the organizational center of a universal structure of appearance" (Patočka, "Epoché und Reduktion", p. 421, apud Chvatík 2011, p. 10), he does not make a clean break with Husserl. For Patočka, the subject is still the privileged site where phenomena are identified as themselves, that is to say they appear as things identical to themselves within the given. This may be why Chvatík (2011, pp. 11-12) sees Patočka's break from Husserl as appearing more ambiguous on this point. Working outside the constraints of phenomenology itself, Deleuze is free to move further, beyond Husserl, in this regard.

2. Opening up the analysis of phenomena to take into account all "planes of experience" and thus providing rigorous conceptualizations of these encounters.

Lastly, I would like to survey how the posterity of Deleuze within the broader field of ontology has attested to the varieties of attempts to meet these challenges, as well as to constitute an interesting case study into how the Deleuzian reworking of phenomenological concepts has given these ideas a new life, beyond their original scope.

First of all, if there is one lasting contribution that Deleuze has made to the historical development of continental philosophy, it has been to re-open the space for metaphysics after the successive declarations of its death. When referring specifically to the ideas that Deleuze takes out of phenomenology, we can see them echo into several new lines of thought. The gradual evacuation of subjectivity from the transcendent plane of consciousness, developed from Husserl and Sartre through Deleuze, has resulted into an ambitious criticisms of the post-Kantian (and sometimes even the post-Cartesian) image of thought – the most prominent examples that come to my mind would be Quentin Meillassoux's anti-correlationism[74], which criticizes what we could call the vicious circular logic of grounding the external world on human consciousness and human consciousness on the external world, and Tristan Garcia's criticisms of what he calls "philosophies of access"[75], that is to say, philosophies focused on conceptualizing the limitations of the subject's access to the objective world.

Moreover, traces of Deleuze's use of Husserl and Heidegger in developing an ontology that takes into account the differential nature of ontological entities and the ways in which this generates and affects their incorporeal surface effects can be found in new attempts at flat ontologies, such as the object ontologies of Graham Harman[76] or Levy Bryant[77], ontologies that attempt to mediate between flux and structure, such as the process ontology of Isabelle Stengers[78], or attempts to theorize being prior to the existence of humans, after their eventual extinction or completely outside their existence altogether[79].

These examples should be sufficient to paint a picture of the wide vistas that Deleuze's engagement with phenomenology has opened. Most of the philosophers I have enumerated are not self-identified Deleuzians, as a good number of them are

[74] Meillassoux (2006/2010).
[75] Garcia (2014).
[76] Harman (2018).
[77] Bryant (2011).
[78] Stengers (1997; 2002/2011).
[79] see for example Brassier (2007); Brassier, Grant, Harman & Meillassoux (2007); Grant (2008); Meillassoux (2006/2010).

critical of several points of Deleuzian philosophy, even as they think within the proximity of the themes that concerned him, just as Deleuze had once done with his phenomenological forbearers.

These disparate ontological projects do have a few common threads, the roots of which are reworkings of phenomenological ideas in the vein of Deleuze's own endeavors. They use a set of conceptions of experience that cannot be limited to the form of subjective human consciousness, which derive from Deleuze's confrontation with Sartre's and Husserl's ego-centered forms of experience, and with Heidegger's thematization of finitude. At the same time, all these recent philosophical projects rely on conceptions of ontic entities whose ontological consistency is grounded on an immanent principle that arises as an effect of their process of production, rather than being grounded on a transcendent substance or principle. This approach can be theoretically sourced (either directly or through the mediation of Deleuze's immediate successors) in Deleuze's treatment of singularities following Husserl's eidetic singularities, as well as his Spinozian developments of Heidegger's notion of ontological difference and his thematization of grounding. All in all, these new developments in metaphysics can attest to the fertility of phenomenological ideas even outside the milieu of their birth, as well as to the value of constructively challenging phenomenology.

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