

**Becoming and Destiny in Deleuze and Guattari**

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## ABSTRACT

### **Becoming and Destiny in Deleuze and Guattari**

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This thesis is an investigation of the theme of freedom in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Chapter One investigates Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming as it is articulated in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, and seeks to resolve a problem related to their shifting descriptions of the role of agency in the process of becoming, at times described as voluntary, and at other times described as involuntary. We conclude that chapter with a defense of the claim that their shifting descriptions are unproblematic and are, in fact, attempts to illustrate the paradoxical experience of becoming. Chapter Two investigates Deleuze's earlier text, *The Logic of Sense*, and attempts to make sense of his use of the term destiny. Our conclusion in that chapter is that destiny is neither necessity, pure self-authorship, nor passive resignation, but rather consists of a mixture of activity and passivity, willfulness and chance.

**Keywords:** Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari, becoming, agency, destiny, counter-actualization, freedom

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## Introduction

*See the safety of the life you have built  
Everything where it belongs*

—Nine Inch Nails, “Right Where it Belongs”

This thesis is something of an assemblage, insofar as it expresses a certain unity through the heterogeneous dimensions that comprise it. Both of its two chapters were written so that they could essentially stand alone, but indeed, together, they might be read as meditations on a similar theme in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.<sup>1</sup> This theme amounts to freedom. In the first chapter, though, freedom goes by the name “becoming”, and in the second, “counter-actualization”. Moreover, it is in the second chapter that we attempt to make sense of Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the term “destiny” and seek to reconcile their use of that term with the idea that they are concerned to express a philosophy of freedom. All of this is just to explain the title of the thesis.

Now, to those who know the work of Deleuze and Guattari, they might already sense that each chapter will deal with a different text. They would be right. The first chapter consists of an explication of a key concept—that of becoming—found in Deleuze and Guattari’s second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia, A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), and also attempts some problem-solving beyond that. More specifically, it tries to shed some light on what I call “the problem of shifting descriptions”, which concerns the problem of Deleuze and Guattari’s various, seemingly contradictory descriptions of the role of agency in the process of becoming. The second chapter deals with Deleuze’s

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<sup>1</sup> Generally, I will refer to “Deleuze and Guattari” when I am referring to the philosophies developed both by Deleuze alone and with Guattari. I will refer to just Deleuze when I am speaking about ideas found only in his solo work (or that are articulated much more forcefully in his solo work).

earlier *The Logic of Sense* (1969). As just mentioned, our focus shifts slightly in that chapter, from concerns of becoming and agency to ones of counter-actualization and destiny. But again, one might well read those two chapters as discussions on the same phenomenon—that is, the process through which we are said to find our liberation.

I should also be honest: I am writing this introduction at the end of the process that is this thesis project (in case that was not already obvious). I wanted to say a few things about that process, but only, perhaps, to make sense differently of what has already come to pass and also to potentially help the reader through the text that follows. Right off the bat, then, I wish to note three things. First thing: *A Thousand Plateaus* is difficult, but *The Logic of Sense* is arguably even more so. Why do I say this? Simply because, even from my perspective, there is still much that is obscure about both books; I am certainly no master of either, even as I try to write about some of the concepts central to both. Thus, this thesis is merely a testament to my effort to make sense of various elements from each. Second thing: just to give the reader a taste of the problem under consideration in Chapter One, consider the process of sticking with *any* long-term project. How does it happen that we pull through against, what appears to us to be, all odds? How do we keep going even when we are overwhelmed by signs (some “exterior”, some “interior”) to do just the opposite? Similarly, how does it happen that “we” fail to pull through or keep going, and what is it about subjectivity that explains this dynamic? This is the problem of agency and, in many ways, it characterized the writing of this thesis. Third and final thing: despite the fact that this thesis often deals with the abstract, it is concerned first and foremost with the practical. The reader should never forget—and hopefully, this point is made sufficiently clear throughout the thesis—that certain

questions are never far from any of our examinations of the conceptual, namely, what does freedom look like, how are we to achieve it, and how might we cultivate joy? To my mind, the measure of a good philosophy is the potential it packs for *real* self-transformation—that is, its capacity to provide answers to these kinds of (practical) questions. On those grounds, I believe the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari is a very good one. I can only hope that what I have written helps to show this.

## **Chapter One** **Becoming and the Problem of Agency in *A Thousand Plateaus***

### **I. Introduction: On the Method and the Problem**

Where to begin with an essay? I do not believe I have any other choice: right from the middle. There is an urge or desire to write about some particular thing, even though the thing to be written about remains in some ways vague. Indeed, I read and reread a particular chapter of a certain book, and articles that are supposed to help explain that chapter—its main concepts or ideas—but yet I remain confused about what precise claims the authors of that chapter are trying to make and their reasons for making those (vaguely understood) claims. In other words, I do believe that I understand the sense of the chapter, yet there are still so many questions I have, so many ways in which the chapter remains fragmented for me, irreconcilable with itself. We might say that the way everything is supposed to fit together—to flow together and form something of a whole—is, while not totally opaque, certainly not totally transparent either. And it is on precisely the basis of understanding fragments of a particular text (of philosophy, at least) while being unable to tie many of those fragments together that one sits down to write. One always writes from the middle of things, on the basis of so many partial understandings—of things that have been more or less resolved (concepts or ideas that one *does* seem to understand) and things that have not, but that one remains curious—desirous—to see resolved. Of course, however this supposed resolution might happen, if it ever does, one can never tell in advance; who knows how exactly you will end up expressing yourself, and similarly, who knows what will happen along the way, in the process? (Does one have the control and the energy to hold a single course?) One only ever finds out from a new middle.



The central text in question, in this case, is Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's tenth chapter of their 1980 *A Thousand Plateaus*, "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible...". The central concept in question, in this case, is, as might be expected, what Deleuze and Guattari call "becoming". The first thing to note about this chapter: it is monstrous; the longest of the fifteen chapters that compose the English translation of the book, it has 14 sub-sections and is 78 (very dense) pages long (97 pages in the original French edition).<sup>1</sup> It is, in other words, a small book in its own right. Its pages, too, are just as dense and far-reaching as any others you might read in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari open their veritable tome with the statement, "Here we have made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as furthest away" (*TP* 3).<sup>2</sup> This line could not be (and *feel*) more accurate. In the "Becomings" chapter alone, for instance, there are well over one hundred names dropped<sup>3</sup> and most of these names have their homes in academic disciplines outside of philosophy;<sup>4</sup> references to the work of scientists, poets, anthropologists, writers, mathematicians, psychoanalysts, composers, directors, and painters, as well as philosophers, abound. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari deploy a quite peculiar vocabulary and mobilize quite peculiar themes: discussions transpire of "abstract machines", "bodies without organs", witchcraft, Chinese poetry, drugs, secrets, ethnology, ethology, vampires, contagion, the nature of the cosmos, and (of course) becomings of all kinds, including becomings-woman, becomings-animal, becomings-

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<sup>1</sup> The "Becomings" chapter narrowly beats out the "Nomadology" chapter by four pages.

<sup>2</sup> When citing passages from *A Thousand Plateaus*, I will simply embed in the body of the text the pagination of Brian Massumi's English translation from the University of Minnesota Press. Moreover, I will often refer to *A Thousand Plateaus* by use of the acronym *TP*.

<sup>3</sup> In the body of the text and in the notes, combined.

<sup>4</sup> This is relevant to note because, as Massumi tells us, Deleuze described *A Thousand Plateaus* as "Philosophy, nothing but philosophy" (*TP* ix).

imperceptible, and so on. This is all to say, then, that to read *A Thousand Plateaus* is to find yourself lost at times, to find yourself seeking answers to questions that seem never forthcoming.

So what remains obscure, then? What precisely has drawn me to writing? Fascination, perhaps. Reading through the tenth chapter, one gets the impression that Deleuze and Guattari value, praise, or esteem this phenomenon of becoming they variously describe. But despite its acclaim and (qualified) encouragement, we must ask: how good is this idea, *really*? Or more specifically: what is so special about this original and influential articulation of the concept of becoming? And moreover, how does one even take measure of the value of *any* philosophical idea? As Len Lawlor puts in his *Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*, “If I say that I have a new idea, I cannot really say that this idea is worth anything unless it is tested out in the concrete, and it is in the testing out in the concrete that the real thinking occurs”.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in order to learn the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari—and the meaning and function of the concept of becoming, specifically—one has to perform such concrete, lived testing; one must, in other words, experiment.

And it is this task that brings me to the page, for it is but yet an easy one. The concept of becoming both fascinates *and* troubles. On the one hand, *because* Deleuze and Guattari seem to value becomings and *because* they are themselves considered (by some to be) philosophical heavyweights, one is fascinated; a reader might very well feel the urge to actively experiment with Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy—that is, to perhaps have a becoming of their own. And it would, moreover, be on the basis of having

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<sup>5</sup> Leonard Lawlor, *Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 10.

experienced what Deleuze and Guattari are talking about “in the concrete” that one would be able to evaluate the strength of the concept and perhaps of their philosophy more generally.<sup>6</sup>

But, on the other hand, the concept appears problematic, and the task of assessing it not so simple. There are many passages that seem to describe becomings as processes where at least one of the parties involved has no choice in the matter. One party, for instance, might be “swept up” (*TP* 290) or “thrown into” (292) a becoming, as if some exterior agency has caused that party to become, perhaps against their will. Similarly, becomings appear tied to the notion of destiny (233; 244) and are also “unleashed” (272) and possibly “uncontrollable” (278). Thus, in various places becomings appear to be *involuntary*; one does not choose to become, but is, in some sense, chosen by the becoming.<sup>7</sup> Of course, this makes the concept problematic insofar as it becomes unclear how precisely it is that we are supposed to experiment—presumably a willful activity—with a concept that does not involve our will, volition, or choice.<sup>8</sup>

Yet to claim that becomings are *strictly* involuntary is too hasty; there are other passages that seem to suggest that there is, at least at times, a voluntary dimension of becomings. And moreover, there are more ambiguous passages, still, where the question of the place of agency—of willful choice—in the process of becoming is unclear. I will call this *the problem of shifting descriptions*. It asks: what are the precise mechanics of

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<sup>6</sup> For—and every philosophy teacher knows this—it is all too easy to criticize *any* philosopher or philosophy from the perspective of an outsider. In other words, anyone can superficially read Deleuze and Guattari, or Hegel, or Rorty, or Rawls, or Aristotle, and immediately find reasons to criticize *what they take* to be their philosophy, in each case. It is for this reason that I am tentative to immediately level a negative verdict on the concept of becoming, e.g. ‘It is seemingly contradictory, therefore nonsense, useless, to-be-avoided’. (Throughout this thesis, single quotes indicate a phrase someone might utter, and not a quotation from another source.)

<sup>7</sup> At one point, Deleuze and Guattari speak of “nonvoluntary transmutation” (*TP* 269).

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps, as a start, we might experiment via “willful” writing...

becoming? How precisely do becomings work and how are we to engage in them? To what extent are they voluntary or involuntary? For, again, one cannot simply say that one simply chooses to become, and insofar as they choose, they become. Thus, this paper is motivated by a *practical* concern: it seeks to know how it is that we might become, for those of us so inclined.<sup>9</sup>

Two other questions will be answered in the course of our investigation. It has been stated that Deleuze and Guattari value becomings, but there has been no hint so far as to why they ought to be valued.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, insofar as becomings are valued, there must be something else—some other kind “of living to do or to be”<sup>11</sup>—that becomings are contrasted with. By the end of the essay, it should be clear why Deleuze and Guattari value becomings and what kind of living is, by contrast, implicitly (but not *absolutely*) disparaged. On to our discussion of mechanics of becoming, then.

## II. *What is Becoming?*<sup>12</sup>

Becoming is many things and there are many different kinds of becoming. As to the first point, here is a list of some of the things Deleuze and Guattari seem to equate

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<sup>9</sup> Deleuze and Guattari never present us with a perfectly explicit formula. It is true, though, that the sixth chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, “November 28, 1947: How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?”, gives the reader something of an answer to the question their chapter’s title poses, and making yourself a body without organs is closely related to becoming.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, Joe Hughes makes the claim that across Deleuze’s corpus, it is often difficult to discern the precise basis on which Deleuze makes many of his value judgments: “Deleuze’s texts are laden with value judgments. [...] this is often the only way we find our orientation on a first reading of his texts: immanence is good, transcendence is bad; trees are bad, rhizomes are good. This whole series of evaluations, however, is usually implicit. It’s never entirely clear why a rhizome is better than a tree, or at what register this evaluation is legitimate”. See Joe Hughes, *Philosophy After Deleuze: Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation II* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 144-5.

<sup>11</sup> Karen Houle, “Micropolitics,” in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Charles Stivale (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2011), 107.

<sup>12</sup> See Todd May, “When is a Deleuzian Becoming?” in *Continental Philosophy Review* 36 (2003): 147. May asks “when” instead of “what” for an important reason: asking *what* a becoming is already puts the wrong spin on things, already has the reader thinking of becomings in an inappropriate or misguided way. For, as we will soon see, becoming is not a *thing*, but rather a *process*. The “what” question predisposes the reader to conceiving of becoming as the former and not the latter.

becoming with: an irreducible dynamism (*TP* 237), a rhizome (239), multiplicity (249), passage (252), a transformation of essential forms (252), affect (256), an haecceity (263), the process of desire (272), movement (281), deterritorialization (291), and flow (303).<sup>13</sup> Similarly, becomings are always molecular (272) and minoritarian (291). And as to different kinds of becoming, we might say that becomings exist on a spectrum. As the chapter's title suggests, there are becomings-intense, -animal, and -imperceptible, but there are also becomings-woman, -child, -vegetable, -mineral, and so on; on the "near side" are becomings-woman and -child and on the "far side" are becomings-elementary, -cellular, -molecular, and -imperceptible (248). Thus, for Deleuze and Guattari, becoming names a wide-ranging and multidimensional concept; somehow, becoming can be all of those listed things, take on any of those listed forms, and be still more.

Becomings are also real. This point must be made for a simple reason: becoming must *not* be thought of as some bizarre and pretentious ivory tower creation with no concrete or "real world" significance. To the uninitiated, though, it might be hard to resist such a characterization, for it is not immediately clear how a notion like "becoming-animal" could have anything to do with something of serious philosophical significance. But becomings have precisely to do with real phenomena—that is, with actually-occurring movements or processes of nature. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize this point about the reality of becomings repeatedly. We are told, for instance, that "[t]hey are perfectly real" (*TP* 238), that "[t]here is a reality of becoming-animal, even though one does not in reality become animal" (273), and that there is a "pure lived experience of double becoming" (305). They also give plenty of examples of becoming from films,

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<sup>13</sup> This list could likely be expanded.

literature, biology textbooks, and the world of artistic pursuits. Both Willard and Lord Chandos are said to have a becoming-rat and Robert De Niro supposedly has a brief becoming-crab in *Taxi Driver*; Captain Ahab of Melville's *Moby-Dick* is said to have a becoming-whale, Freud's patient Little Hans might have a (perhaps thwarted) becoming-horse, and William Faulkner becomes-black in order to avoid being a fascist; wasp and orchid are implicated in each other's becoming and the C virus effected by a certain relation between cat and baboon is said to constitute a becoming; and singing, writing, painting, and composing all apparently aim to unleash becomings. There can be no denying, then, that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming has always to do with real phenomena of a specific kind.

Still, these two points do not tell us all that much about the process or value of becoming. The first point, which suggests that the concept of becoming is wide-ranging and multidimensional, remains abstract; the second point, which speaks of the reality of becoming, provides us with examples but no principles that explain their connection. What more might we say, then? What constitutes the real substance of becoming? Or, what are becoming's various principles and how are they supposed to work?

I will proceed to treat becoming according to two clusters of principles: (1) the principles of non-representation, movement, and liberation; and (2) the principles concerning connection, power, and the machinic. Hopefully, after this extensive treatment of the concept, we will be in a position to better understand the issues identified, specifically (a) the degree to which becomings are voluntary, (b) how it is that we might become, and (c) the possible value of becomings.

### III. Non-Representation, Movement, Liberation

Becoming is not *Being*, but the medium of representation with its linguistic symbols and non-linguistic images is, on its own, only ever able to give us *Being*, to speak of what *is*; it cannot, on its own, give us what is flowing, mobile, or in the process of becoming. It is this insight that will guide our discussion in this section.<sup>14</sup> Now, recall the previously stated list of some of becoming's equivalences. There is undoubtedly an emphasis on movement in that list, insofar as these closely related words are invoked: passage, transformation, process, and flow. Becoming thus involves a kind of movement—the opposite of stasis. Also recall that Deleuze and Guattari insist that becomings are most definitely real; they try to make sure, however, that we are not confused about “which reality is at issue here” (*TP* 238). In the process of a becoming-woman, a man does not “really” become a woman, nor does any human “really” become an animal in their process of becoming-animal, and so on. In other words, a becoming does not involve a literal transformation of sex or species. Neither does it involve acts of resemblance or imitation, whereby one attempts to mimic something else (via cross-dressing or walking on all fours, for instance).<sup>15</sup> Indeed, becoming “represents nothing” (259). Representation, rather—that is, any act of resemblance, imitation, or

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<sup>14</sup> A note to the reader: this discussion is heavily influenced by my reading of Henri Bergson's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Bergson's philosophy had a substantial influence on Deleuze's thought. See Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955), 21-62.

<sup>15</sup> Becoming at least does not *primarily* involve this. Deleuze and Guattari speak of the process of becoming-woman: “We are not, however, overlooking the importance of imitation, or moments of imitation, among certain homosexual males, much less the prodigious attempt at a real transformation on the part of certain transvestites” (*TP* 275). They make this same point in several other places, namely, that resemblance might in fact occur in a becoming, but that it is only ever secondary (250) and that becoming “must first be understood as a function of something else” (275). If anything, resemblance is, for Deleuze and Guattari, “like a finishing touch, a wink, a signature” (305). Thus, becomings *can* go by way of imitation.

identification—most often functions as an obstacle or stoppage to becoming (233). We can already see, then, that there is a connection between the movement of becoming—its processual nature—and the supposed stasis of representation. In other words, we can already see how becoming is fundamentally at odds with representation, or, how becoming is non-representational.

But in what precise sense is representation static? Deleuze and Guattari borrow from Henri Bergson the idea that “reality *is* mobility”<sup>16</sup>—that is, that reality does not consist of a vast collection of discrete, inert *things*.<sup>17</sup> Rather, seemingly discrete, inert things appear and are derived out of a more fundamental movement or process. Thus, reality or nature moves, and as Bergson imparts, “It is movement that we must accustom ourselves to look upon as simplest and clearest, immobility being only the extreme limit of the slowing down of movement, a limit reached, perhaps, in thought and never realized in nature”.<sup>18</sup> These are seemingly bizarre claims. Are there not humans, animals, vegetables, and so on, and which *just are what they are*?<sup>19</sup> And is it not the case that *those* words perfectly represent, identify, or capture the objects they are supposed to (“humans”, “animals”, etc.)? But perhaps it is only *in thought* that objects and the connection between signifier and signified have that kind of apparent stability.

A simple proof in favour of the mobility of reality: imagine trying to visually plot the course of a moving body—that is, imagine trying to represent it.<sup>20</sup> *The body was here, then it was there; it was in point-A and is now in point-B.* The question is: have we

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<sup>16</sup> Bergson, *An Introduction*, 49, my emphasis.

<sup>17</sup> Notable others who think along these same lines: Heraclitus, A. N. Whitehead, and Taoist philosophers.

<sup>18</sup> Bergson, *An Introduction*, 43.

<sup>19</sup> Some foreshadowing: Deleuze and Guattari claim that “it is not certain whether we can draw a dividing line between animals and human beings” (*TP* 301).

<sup>20</sup> I take this example from Bergson’s *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. See Bergson, *An Introduction*, 42.



actually captured movement in this rendering? It might certainly be true that the body *passed through* the points plotted, but would it be accurate to claim that the body was ever “in” those points? We might say, just as easily, that the movement happened *in-between* points-A and -B. But in that case, the movement itself remains unexplained or uncaptured by the visual representation. Of course, one could go on plotting more points in-between points-A and -B, hoping to eventually capture movement itself, but we could always further ask what had taken place in-between those newly plotted points as well.<sup>21</sup> To represent, then, is always to engage in an asymptotic activity.

We must ask: when is there no movement? What part of nature is perfectly stationary and not in any way implicated in some kind of process? So long as we *are*—and even if we manage to stay perfectly still—our hearts will continue to beat, our blood will continue to flow, and our neurons will continue to fire. Nonhuman animals are composed through those same processes of existing; plants *are* different processes of existing (photosynthesis, for instance); and even rocks are engaged in (albeit, very slow) processes of transformation or change (via “the elements”, like wind, water, and sunlight). But what do acts of representation always offer us? They always substitute for the indivisible flow of nature a static, fixed, or immobile image (or a series of such images). How did the blood get from my heart to my head? How did that plant grow to be so big? In each case, to answer by way of representation—that is, to represent the process through which movement occurred—would be precisely to leave unexplained the movement which had most certainly occurred (*there was this and then there was that*).

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<sup>21</sup> Of course, this example is one of Zeno’s paradoxes of motion. Zeno effectively asks: how is motion possible, given that the distance between any two points is always arithmetically infinite? Hence, Deleuze and Guattari speak of Kierkegaard and his claim that “there is no movement that is not infinite” (TP 281).

Thus, all we would have, in each case, is two “snapshots” that simply mark *moments* in a larger process of which those moments are only a part. And moreover, it is not as if we might be able to simply add or glue the two representations together to arrive at an accurate sense or understanding of either phenomenon, for laying two discrete, inert images side by side does not render a *single* process or movement. This is to say, then, that all we would have, in each case, is “a motionless view of moving reality”.<sup>22</sup>

We are now able to see the sense in which representations are always static. The pure and simple movement of everything that *is*, is indivisible, but representations of the real by nature divide. Thus, representations by themselves simply cannot give us the real; the flow or endurance of any particular object can neither be shown nor comprehended in its singularity, particularity, or uniqueness on the sole basis of still, abstracted fragments of that object’s flow or endurance.<sup>23</sup> Yet, we tend to think just the opposite, namely, that the abstracted fragments are what constitute an object’s primary reality—forgetting, of course, that those immobile “snapshots” are derivative of a more primary process of movement.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bergson, *An Introduction*, 42.

<sup>23</sup> This point relates to another argument Bergson gives for the inadequacy of the medium of representation. Not only do representations betray the movement at the heart of all things that *are*, they are also by nature too general or abstract—that is, they extend to an infinite number of things and *not* the singular or particular. In describing someone, for instance, we might say, “She is *x*”, where *x* is some trait that she shares with others. Traditional concepts always have us understand the particular as a function of the general, instead of allowing us to understand the particular on its own terms.

<sup>24</sup> There are two things I must note here. (1) Bergson does emphasize, though, that our ordinary method for grasping nature or reality—the one that leads us to posit discrete, stable *things*—is fine for practical purposes; it only becomes problematic when it is utilized to grasp nature or reality at a theoretical level. And (2) we have yet to say anything about the Bergsonian concepts of “intuition” and “duration”, which might be helpful here. Intuition is the *method* by which we come to grasp “the very movement of the inward life of things” (Bergson, *An Introduction*, 51). That pure and indivisible movement, which is different for every existing thing, is called duration. In other words, existing things endure in their own unique way. Moreover, when we intuit an object’s duration—its singular essence, rhythm, or pulse—we are said to coincide or sympathize with that object, and are no longer divorced from it, “analyzing” it from a distance.

Now, what is important to notice is that this theorization of reality or nature cannot, when properly understood, leave us unmoved. In other words, to grasp the significance of this point about the irreducible mobility of reality is also to understand that it has consequences for our lives, our living. Indeed, it properly should, as Todd May puts it, revitalize for us the question, “How *might* one live?”<sup>25</sup> Thus, it must not be thought, as often is, that the theoretical concerns of the French philosophers of the 1960s—or, indeed, of all philosophers—are just that—*merely* theoretical, with no consequences or implications for our practical activity or daily lives. In his *Thinking the Impossible: French Philosophy Since 1960*, Gary Gutting frames the case thusly: “The leading French philosophers think for the sake of acting, of transforming a society they find intolerable”.<sup>26</sup> Gutting goes on to suggest, in a similar vein, that the French philosophers of the 1960s were, in each their own way, attempting to construct philosophies that would, in fact, provide us with some kind of “ethico-political guidance”.<sup>27</sup> Thus, to attempt to understand becoming in terms of representation and movement *alone* is insufficient; becoming must also be *felt* and *lived* at the existential level, insofar as it pertains precisely to our liberation, or, our possibilities for freedom.

So recall: representations are by nature inadequate to express the mobility of any existent thing. But it follows, then, that each of us (with our projects and desires) is also

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<sup>25</sup> See Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-25. The book’s thesis is that it is this question that Deleuze always has in mind and always comes back to, always asking afresh (for the question, “How *do* I live?” expresses stability, certainty, finality). As indicated, the first chapter is where this idea is most fully developed.

<sup>26</sup> Gary Gutting, *Thinking the Impossible: French Philosophy Since 1960* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 84. A provocative claim, insofar as there are many that seem to insist that one can reduce French “post-structuralism” to relativism and nihilism. Rosi Braidotti discusses this charge in her *Transpositions* and works to dismiss it. See Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (Boston: Polity Press, 2006), 1-42.

in-process, and thus never fully stable. We must ask, though: does the way we normally operate in the world testify to this idea? How often is it that we deceive “ourselves” into believing that we are totally accounted for and exhausted by a mere concept—a representation—that is supposed to “fit” us? (*I am I, and that is what I am.*) Might it be the case that in *identifying* with a representation, we seriously run the risk of limiting our own freedom, our own possibilities for growth, movement, and connection? We will come to see that the answer to the latter question is yes, and that representations always carry a potential to oppress us (and in ways we may never notice, and moreover, that require our complicity). We will also come to see that, insofar as becomings are non-representational, it is through the process of becoming that we might be(come) free.

Consider an image to which all of us, at least at one time or another, have subordinated ourselves: the image of either “man” or “woman”. These two ideas are models, forms, or abstractions that form two sides of the same, single coin: the gender binary. It is always a question of *either-or*: either you are a man, or you are a woman; insofar as you are not-A, you must then be B.<sup>28</sup> Binaries allow deductions to be made this simply and pervade much of our thinking. Indeed, what might be said to constitute much of the architecture of Western, if not human, consciousness is a whole aggregate of tacit beliefs in the legitimacy of a whole series of binaries we employ on a daily basis in order to function. The gender binary is but one example of a piece of this mental architecture, and moreover, its legitimacy often goes unquestioned. I live out my life as a man, convinced (although I have no explicit awareness of the fact that I have even been convinced) that I am simply *one of* the category, “man”. It follows that certain

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<sup>28</sup> As on passport forms, for instance.

possibilities for my living appear precisely as impossibilities, as ruled out in advance, inconceivable. In other words, the image of “man”—of the masculine—entails a certain life: certain thoughts, attitudes, desires, preferences, ambitions, values, feelings, statements, behaviours, gestures, and so on.<sup>29</sup> And of course, the image of “woman”—of the feminine—entails its own repertoire of ideal existential phenomena, which an “organic” woman is expected to reproduce, and whose reproduction will be judged according to her faithfulness to the image.

We thus come to live *through* these representations; we often *automatically* replicate these abstract, immobile images, “man” and “woman”; we identify with and allow ourselves to be fully accounted for by these images; we effectively keep ourselves from moving (or at least keep the movement from showing)—that is, at a certain level, many of us effectively refuse all movement. But the abstract or conceptual—the representational—is not the flowing real, processual concrete. *Has there ever been a person that perfectly mirrored an abstract gender category?* Or would they not have needed to cease all movement—a theoretical impossibility—in order to do so? *And even if we aspired to this static ideal, would we not, in doing so, be limiting our possibilities for life—that is, again, for growth, movement, and connection?* Indeed, it is in ceasing to care about meeting the abstract standard—that is, about living a life that has been coordinated in advance by other agencies—that a much wider range of possibilities becomes available. In other words, in so ceasing to care, one becomes free to move, or, to

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<sup>29</sup> It is certainly true that the image or form of “man” has been publicly challenged within the past half-century or so, at least in the Western world, insofar as, for example, it’s largely acceptable to be openly attracted to the same sex. But even in this case, we still only have an instance of “the One that becomes two” (TP 5), e.g. ‘Okay, so there are two types of “man”, then’. In other words: still no flow, only two representations, two stabilities.

refuse an artificial stasis. (This, of course, says nothing yet about the conditions under which one might cease to care.)

There are three things to point out at this juncture. The first is obvious, at this point: for Deleuze and Guattari, it is through evading a representation's capture that we might express a degree of freedom. Instead of getting stuck on one side of a binary, one passes *between* both terms of the binary—that is, one flows. Now, this passage, insofar as it is passage, is precisely liberatory. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari say, “The only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the *intermezzo*” (*TP* 277). The second point is new: Deleuze and Guattari claim that all becomings must pass through becoming-woman—that becoming-woman “is the key to all the other becomings” (277) and that *even women* must become-woman.<sup>30</sup> Todd May helps us to see why this might be the case: “Becoming-woman is the subversion of perhaps our most fixed stable identity: our sexual roles”.<sup>31</sup> In other words, we might understand becoming-woman as a necessary step between other possible becomings insofar as it is precisely our designated “sexual role”, or the gender role we “play”, that is very likely the most “stratified” aspect of ourselves—the thing that often strikes us as so obviously and *essentially* us, and that thus keeps us grounded or immobile in various ways.<sup>32</sup> And again, it is not only men who must first become-woman in order to become at all; women must also become-woman, for the place from which they start *is* man—that is, *Being*. This

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<sup>30</sup> Presumably, Deleuze and Guattari mean that all *human* becomings must necessarily start with and pass through becoming-woman.

<sup>31</sup> May, “Deleuzean Becoming,” 151.

<sup>32</sup> Of course it is true that there are significant physiological differences between “organic” men and women. But two things must still be taken into account: (1) the fact that certain physiologies have come to be linked with certain kinds of mental and behavioural lives, and (2) the many instances where nature appears to “work against itself” (read: work against *us*), as in the many cases of intersex births. For the latter point, see Anne Fausto-Sterling, “Should There Be Only Two Sexes?,” in *The Feminist Philosophy Reader*, eds. Alison Bailey and Chris Cuomo (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 124-44.

brings us to the third point: “man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian” (291). The majoritarian, of course, has nothing to do with quantities, for the world population of men and women is approximately equal, yet there *are* becomings-woman and *no* becomings-man (291). The majoritarian, rather, has to do with a standard—that is, with dominant conceptions, values, forms of expression. In other words, the ways in which most of us *already* think and the values most of us *already* have—either man or woman—are the majoritarian ones. Man = majoritarian = *Being*. Moreover, the majoritarian is the standard by which phenomena are measured; the further the distance from the standard, the more degraded the phenomenon. Thus, minoritarian groups, by contrast, are the degraded—that is, the “oppressed, prohibited, in revolt, or [the ones] always on the fringe of recognized institutions” (247).

Now, “woman” is minoritarian, even though the assemblage of all empirical women do not constitute a minority, and there are becomings-woman, even if many women are not explicitly engaged in any kind of becoming. This is the crucial point: women are not, by virtue of their physiology and conscious life alone, always already engaged in a becoming; on the contrary, many women are just as rigid in their identities as many men are, fearful of any kind of movement that might render them even slightly ambiguous. This is why women, too, must become-woman. Women must effectively blur the boundaries between man and woman via movement in order to become-woman—that is, they must effectively extract an element of the flow of the feminine (which *is* a set of desires, behaviours, and so on) in order to leave *the* woman behind.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari insist that Jews must become-Jewish and blacks must become-black.

What the woman can be said to leave behind is her “molarity”, or, her “molar” status as “woman”. What she becomes is a “molecular” woman, for as Deleuze and Guattari tell us, “all becomings are already molecular” (*TP* 272). An explanation: the woman has effectively left behind the fixed model or image of “woman”—the thing that effectively *subdues* her (277)—in order to become a woman-in-process. Something we said earlier is now much clearer: becomings neither involve a literal transformation in sex or species nor an act of imitation; in *both* cases, the molar is fully implicated, which, on its own, precludes the possibility of a becoming occurring. Thus, having sex-reassignment surgery does not, on its own, constitute a becoming, for one is made into the image of a molar woman. Similarly, resembling or imitating a woman does not, *a priori*, constitute a becoming either, for the point of reference for the act of mimicry is anchored in molar femininity. In both cases, then, we have stoppage: not a becoming-woman, but a *Being-woman*—that is, a re-instantiation of the rigid divisions or classifications that becomings always unsettle. Thus, neither attempt is a becoming-woman because both are dependent on the *already given* or *already constructed*; an image of the molar woman is utilized *beforehand* and structures the phenomenon’s motion or path *in advance*. And what can happen under these conditions? Or, a better phrasing: what moves? Not much, for the gender dichotomy remains fundamentally unaltered—that is, molar identities remain fundamentally intact, stable. Indeed, we have failed to do away with *essences*; one still *is* a man or *is* a woman, even if, as in the case of transgender dysphoria, one comes to identify with the gender classically opposed to their physiology.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> A related point: Deleuze and Guattari claim that it is not good enough to simply relocate the gender binary into each of us (i.e. claim that we are all *both* man and woman), as some of their contemporaries



Thus, Deleuze and Guattari write, “Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes” (*TP* 238). *Points* of stability—the terms of a binary—are representable, but as Deleuze and Guattari tell us, the reality of becoming has nothing to do with these points. Becomings, rather, concern singularities, true creations—that is, phenomena which precisely have no representation, repeatability. Indeed, becomings are always movements *away* from the ready-made or pre-established. When one becomes, they do not arrive back at where they started (with the perfect copy or reflection); instead, something changes, something new stirs—something that has not yet been caught in the web of the all-too-familiar.<sup>35</sup> It is also no surprise, too, that “a line of becoming has only a middle”, with no origin or end (293). Becoming, *as* movement, is always by nature *between* discrete, inert points; in fact, becoming exists *only* as a (*virtual*) line, of which there are no memories or histories that might root it in a point in the past (rendering it a resemblance), and also, of which there are no overarching or transcendent principles that structure its course in advance. It is thus through the middle—through movement, flow, the un-representable, becoming—that freedom gets expressed.

#### **IV. Connection, Power, and the Machinic**

We just claimed that becomings are about freedom and liberation. This is entirely clear when we consider two examples that Deleuze and Guattari provide. They speak of

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attempted to do (Helene Cixous, for instance), for again, this would not rid us of gender molarities (*TP* 276).

<sup>35</sup> An example: where the connections that allow for thought to happen “automatically” are disrupted, as through a conversation, or through reading, perhaps. Thus, in such cases, one does not just encounter who they already were and what they already thought during and after the encounter.

Freud's case of "Little Hans", wherein Freud deals with a young boy named Hans who has a fear of horses (among other things).<sup>36</sup> They ask if it would be possible if Hans were somehow able to change his relation to horses—to, in other words, create a new "assemblage" with a horse and thereby become-horse. They then add, "And in what way would that ameliorate Hans's problem, to what extent would it open a way out that had been previously blocked?" (*TP* 258). Deleuze and Guattari make a very similar remark about someone's (anyone's) "resolve" to start practicing piano *again*. They ask: is it a becoming? Will it "induce a transformation of all of the preceding assemblages to which *x* was a prisoner? Is it a way out?" (251). Becomings thus free us insofar as they allow something to pass or flow, but they also involve something else: connection. In both examples, connection is evident; Hans must create a new Hans-horse assemblage in order to be free of his previous one (which, in him, was felt as fear), and one's connection with a piano *might* be the thing that ends up liberating them. Indeed, it might be that it is precisely *through* connection that flow or movement is possible. This section will discuss this theme of connection—that is, of becoming *as* assemblage, heterogeneous "alliance", "unnatural participation", symbiosis, or "creative involution". Becoming: the art of putting together and taking apart.<sup>37</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari claim that "becoming is not an evolution, at least not an evolution by descent or filiation" (*TP* 238). Rather, becoming always involves relations between *heterogeneous*, and not homogeneous, terms. Filiative evolution,<sup>38</sup> though,

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<sup>36</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *The "Wolfman" and Other Cases*, trans. Louise Adey Huish (New York: Penguin, 2003), 3-122.

<sup>37</sup> I owe this phrasing to Karen Houle.

<sup>38</sup> Filiative evolution: the process whereby the gene pool of a specific population of members of the same species is modified over time through sexual interactions *amongst each other*.

largely pertains to the “strangely familiar, domestic” (248) or “natural”, insofar as instinctual “scripts” are utilized and kept in play, with no deviation from an essentially pre-established code of behaviour and functioning. In other words, a certain *form* of living—that is, of flowing and not flowing, of processual expression—goes unperturbed. Homogeneous connections often alter little.<sup>39</sup>

But, as we have already seen, becomings dissolve forms (*TP* 270). They do so through “*symbioses* that bring into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation” (238). Thus, becomings involve “interkingdoms” or “unnatural participations” (242). An example: imagine a unique encounter between two distinct beings, in no ways preordained, that results in a kind of mutual transformation. In this case, each party would be equally affected by their connection—that is, by their implication in the other’s existence—and their processes of living would take a different shape, change pace. Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly return to a specific instance of just such an event: the becoming-orchid of the wasp and the becoming-wasp of the orchid. The wasp and the orchid are two entities from two entirely different biological “kingdoms”—they do not share genetic material<sup>40</sup>—and yet, there is a certain co-implication of their existences. An orchid “disguises” itself as a wasp and “tricks” an actual wasp into copulating with it; the wasp receives an orgasm in the transaction, but the orchid transfers its pollen onto the wasp such that the orchid now has the means to spread its pollen (through the travel of the mobile, “contaminated” wasp). Moreover, it is through the non-filiative wasp-orchid alliance—the double-becoming of wasp and

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<sup>39</sup> Of course, random mutations can and do occur as a result of homogeneous connection. See Note 15. Are there not cases where becomings go by way of the molar?

<sup>40</sup> Eugene Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus: A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 105.

orchid—that “selective pressures” are swept away (294). In other words, both parties are strengthened through their co-implication; the orchid is liberated *through* the wasp, as the wasp comes to function as a piece of the orchid’s reproductive system, and wasp is liberated from its own reproduction *through* the orchid (293). Each is thus the *subject* of their own becoming and the *medium* of the other’s becoming.

And of course, the wasp does not transform into an orchid, nor does the orchid mutate into a wasp; becoming has an altogether different outcome and significance. The double-becoming of wasp and orchid indicates the institution of an assemblage; a unique or creative way of living is established through the physical, processual connection of two completely different biological entities. Wasp and orchid operate in a symbiotic process that requires each of their “asymmetrical movements” and that yet alter them both through that very process. In other words, their non-filiative relation effectively redefines what each of their bodies is capable of. Simply, what the wasp and orchid do—the wasp-orchid process—*works*. Indeed, their bodies can “communicate” or “relate” in a mutually advantageous way that was not initially prescribed by evolution—that is, in other words, productive even if “unnatural”.

We might provide another example of connection *as* becoming, yet from a more familiar context. In his *Deleuze and the Political*, Paul Patton references a professor, Jane Gallop, and a story she recounts of an interaction with one of her graduate students.<sup>41</sup> The student contacts Gallop in an attempt to go over an essay he had written and received a poor grade on (from her). Gallop reluctantly agrees to meet with the student. Their meeting is “long and intense” and involves close readings of both the student’s essay and

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2000), 68-87.

the text on which he was writing. In the end, both Gallop and her student are “exhausted”, but the student in particular is essentially defeated—that is, he is described as appearing almost hunched-over and vulnerable. Gallop showed him all of the errors he had made, live and firsthand, and the look on his face and in his body indicated his recognition of the fact the he had indeed made those errors.

Now, the interesting thing that Gallop notes is that the feelings she experienced during and as a result of her exchange with the student were indistinguishable from sexual ones. Patton intends to show by way of this example that our experiences of desire are often indistinguishable from our experiences of power. Thus, the power that the teacher displayed over the student, and that was recognized *as* (legitimate) power by the student (as evidenced in his bodily and facial reactions), resulted in feelings indistinguishable from sexual ones. But we must note at least three other things: 1) the power exercised by the teacher is not evidence of *domination*; rather, the exercise of Gallop’s power conforms to the standard and expected relations that hold between teacher and student; 2) there is a sense in which the outcomes of the meeting between Gallop and her student could not have been predicted at the outset of their correspondence, insofar as the student ended up making Gallop reschedule one of her appointments, and Gallop caused the student to see his work in a new light; and 3) *both parties were made stronger—their power was increased—through the encounter*, precisely insofar as the student walked away with a recognition of where he went wrong and thus what he needs to do next time in order to improve, and Gallop was made aware of her powers as an educator—that is, her power to directly affect others through her teaching and expertise. Patton puts the last point this way, “In short, what produced her

erotic state was the experience of her successful exercise of her own power as a teacher, in a manner and to a degree she had never done before; in other words, her feeling of her own power to enhance the power of the other”.<sup>42</sup>

As it turns out, and as I have already suggested, Patton claims that the experience described by Gallop was a becoming. Now, Patton defines becoming as (simply) engagements with the powers of other bodies.<sup>43</sup> This is certainly correct, and although—as our investigation has already demonstrated—there is more to the concept than that, we can still see the sense in which Gallop’s story embodies a double-becoming. For each party becomes *through* the other—that is, each is the *medium* of the other’s becoming. Indeed, as Patton writes, “a becoming-student on the part of the teacher, to the extent that she was forced to come to terms with his vision of what he had wanted to say in the paper, and a becoming-teacher on the part of the student to the extent that he was forced to see his own text through the eyes of a more experienced reader”.<sup>44</sup> We might actually put the point slightly differently. The becoming consists in the fact that each party left the meeting with a shifted sense of their bodily capacities. The student encountered his own limits as a reader and writer as they were clearly pointed out to him by his teacher, putting him in a better position to surpass those limits, while Gallop came away with a renewed and different idea of her power as an educator. Indeed, Gallop plausibly *surprised herself* through the encounter.

Thus, Patton comes to claim that becomings are precisely these encounters where the power of each implicated party is enhanced as a result of their connection:

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<sup>42</sup> Patton, *Deleuze*, 77.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

“becomings may be regarded as processes of increase or enhancement in the powers of one body, carried out in relation to the powers of another, but without involving appropriation of those powers”.<sup>45</sup> The two examples we have drawn on—a certain insect-plant relation and a particular teacher-student relation—testify to this conception of becoming, insofar as in both cases, a process is engendered that allows previously anchored elements to move, flow, or circulate in new and unforeseen ways. Moreover, the novelty of each process is effectively the site of and cause for growth—that is, movement, liberation, *and* the enhancement of the powers of the bodies involved.

In a becoming, then, a certain sort of unique connection between entities is made. But we must also always inquire into the connection’s effects—that is, we must ask whether the process initiated between the entities—its quality and pace—contributes to each of their existences or proves, rather, dangerous or even fatal to one or both parties. As Deleuze and Guattari say, it is always a question of “machinic” functioning, not “organic” functioning (*TP* 256). In other words, do the two connected entities create a stronger, more complex machine—that is, a joint process that both links them *and* carries them each away from their organic or “programmed” functioning? Thus, it is always a question of the process effected by the relation between “elements” that have entered a kind of communication. This is nothing complicated, either. We might ask, for instance: what processes are effected by the relation between my body and the bodies of caffeine that enter it? Or, what process is effected by the relation between a grown man, a wild coyote, and a museum?<sup>46</sup> In each (and every) case, the question is: what does the machine

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> I take this example from Cliff Stagoll’s entry in *The Deleuze Dictionary* for “Becoming + Performance Art”. In his entry, Stagoll shows how one man’s art project expresses becoming. The project consisted simply of a performance artist, Joseph Beuys, living with a coyote in a museum for seven days. Man +

do? And moreover, the machine's specific functioning will determine if the process instantiated through its connections is a becoming. Insofar as the "organs" of the bodies that constitute the machine are "annulled" (260)—that is, insofar as each body's elements have been liberated from their "natural purposes" or "teloi"—and the machine thus constituted expresses a novel and productive relation, the relation expressed constitutes a becoming.

### **V. The Problem of Shifting Descriptions: Becoming as Voluntary/Involuntary**

We have so far covered a fair bit of ground in our exegesis of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming. We have argued that becomings are processes, passages, or movements that cannot be represented—indeed, that have no representation—and that are by virtue of this fact liberatory. One becomes on a moving *line* that passes *between* the stable *points* of a binary and comes up through the middle, running perpendicular to the space between those points in play. One might be said to have a becoming or to be passing through the initial stages of a becoming, for instance, when a previously "stratified" domain of knowledge or knowing becomes, for whatever reason, more complicated—when, in other words, a simple "either-or" no longer suffices to characterize a certain aspect of reality. One comes to have a new thought, feeling, or desire that escapes the dominant, molar "codes"; the State- and family-moulded architecture of consciousness becomes disrupted or unsettled, and thus, one effectively leaves behind their molarity and ventures out into a much more free and much less

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Coyote + Museum. What could happen through the institution of this unique assemblage? Who could predict what would transpire over those seven days? How would the various bodies implicated interact and would something new come about through the play of these different forces? Would man and fox leave behind their molarities, if only temporarily? Insofar as there is creation, there is also becoming. See Cliff Stagoll, "Becoming + Performance Art," in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 24-26.



bounded—“smooth”—space, where there is no telling what else they might encounter, how else they might become. Moreover, the flow of becoming—against the stasis of *Being*—occurs through connection—that is, on the condition of our porousness, of having capacities both to affect and be affected. We ask: what was responsible for the break from molarity? Or, put another way, what was the cause of the becoming? In every case, the cause is the heterogeneous alliance, the “unnatural”, creative relation that comes to redefine the capabilities of bodies.

But recall the question this essay is supposed to answer: are becomings voluntary, involuntary, or somehow a mixture of both? We want to know how to engage becomings—that is, we want to experiment with Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy—but we must first figure out if there is a voluntary dimension of becomings, and if there is, *where* it might be; finding that place, if it exists, would be one’s obvious starting point for experimentation. Yet, all we have said so far about the principles of becoming do not immediately shed light on this issue. Connections with alterity certainly do not need to happen voluntarily, as when I catch a cold virus; but similarly, they could, insofar as I might work to create an open-ended situation, the resolution of which is not under my control, as in improvisational jazz or comedy. Before saying any more, though, we must first seriously engage with Deleuze and Guattari’s shifting descriptions of becoming. Remember: their descriptions of becoming shift insofar as they give seemingly incompatible accounts of the role of the will, or of free choice, in the process of becoming. We will now look more closely at some of these descriptions, in order to render more clear the problem under investigation.

### Suggestions that Becomings are Involuntary

We have repeatedly claimed that becomings are not simple, in the sense that one does not simply (freely) choose to become, and become precisely insofar as they make this free choice; Deleuze and Guattari make entirely clear that becomings do not work like that. Indeed, we might call this “the naïve conception of the mechanics of becoming”. But exactly what evidence is there to suggest that such a conception is implausible? I will proceed to give three reasons for asserting that becomings, in fact, are involuntary phenomena—that is, phenomena that do not require the will, volition, or choice of any implicated party.

First reason: the case of the double-becoming of wasp and orchid. We must note that becomings might very well involve the double-relation of nonhuman entities. Wasps and orchids, cats and baboons, horses and monkeys—Deleuze and Guattari list all of these cases of double-becoming, and thus the problem of freedom immediately appears. For is it not the case that *only* “organic” humans are free—that is, free to choose? Indeed, is it not on the single assumption that we humans are free that our society is one of legal institutions and penitentiaries, of crime and punishment—in short, of individual responsibility? Yet, we do not (currently) hold animals responsible for their behaviour, presumably because there is tacit agreement among us that they cannot do otherwise than they do. A nonhuman though living thing is said to operate by instinct; they are, by and large, conceived of as “automata” (as Rene Descartes would have it). They do not “choose”, but merely “act” according to their evolutionary or biological “programming”. And although they themselves can do nothing other than what their programming dictates, we humans can transcend or override *our* programming. We can supposedly

choose not to sexually gratify ourselves, to not gather food and eat it, and to not be violent with potential or real enemies. We might say, in fact, that it is our supposed freedom—our capacity to freely choose—that is *the* central justification for our history of and continued dominion over all things nonhuman.<sup>47</sup> In other words, our “agency” makes us *qualitatively* superior, and *everything* will be measured and judged by how closely it resembles the human.

But what does all of this mean for the phenomenon of becoming? It seems simple: perhaps it is the case that freedom or agency has nothing to do with it, or at least that there are definite cases where these things do not. Insofar as we operate with a conception of nonhuman though living entities as utterly (ontologically) distinct from human ones, then it follows that freedom or agency need not have any place in the event of a becoming. (But what would happen if we refused to operate with such a conception?) Even becomings between organic human entities might similarly be involuntary. We might say, then, that just as the wasp and orchid become (perhaps) by *feel*, a molar man becomes-woman by feel also, as does a molecular woman becoming-child, and so on. In each case, the notion of choice fails to enter the picture. Now, how this would look at the level of the concrete remains unclear, for the possible differences between choice and feeling have not been drawn out. We will press forward, then, in the hopes that it might become more clear how feel differs (or does not) from choice, and similarly, how feel might take total priority over choice as a condition of the process of becoming.

The second reason to think that becomings are involuntary stems from Deleuze and Guattari’s peculiar vocabulary, with regard both to Willard’s becoming specifically

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<sup>47</sup> Other possible justifications: our capacity for language, our ability to make and use tools, our degree of “self-consciousness”, etc.

and to becomings in general. On the very first page of the Becomings chapter, they say this of Willard’s becoming-rat: “Willard then experiences a pause in his destiny, in his becoming-rat. He tries with all his might to remain among humans” (*TP* 233). There are two things to notice about this quote: 1) their use of the word “destiny”, and 2) Willard’s seeming resistance to his own becoming. Both of these ideas—of destiny and of resistance—seem to indicate that becomings are involuntary—that is, that they, in an important sense, exist apart from the one who becomes as some kind of exterior agency, and that they choose you regardless of any plans you might have. Indeed, when we refer to an entity’s destiny, we mean to say (I think) that a certain state of affairs is the *only* state of affairs that is ever going to materialize; things could not or will not turn out otherwise than how destiny prescribes.<sup>48</sup> A person might remark that ‘X is destined to do great things’ or that ‘Y and Z were destined for each other’. In each case, what seems to be suggested is that something beyond the choices of individuals is or will be responsible for some phenomenon having occurred—this thing, or force, being destiny. Thus, insofar as Willard has a destiny, it might plausibly be argued that forces greater than him—greater than his individual will or agency—are responsible for his becoming.

And do we not see precisely this when we move from the theme of destiny to that of resistance? Willard “tries with all his might” to resist his becoming—that is, to retain his molarity (to “remain among humans”)—but is, in the end, overcome or overtaken by it. What began as a somewhat novel and mutually beneficial relation to a pack of rats<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Deleuze scholar Constantin Boundas claims that Stoic philosophy—a notable influence on Deleuze’s thought—actually opposes destiny to necessity. See Constantin Boundas, “Gilles Deleuze and the Problem of Freedom,” in *Gilles Deleuze: Image and Text*, ed. Eugene Holland et al. (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 229. We will take up the issue of destiny in Chapter Two of this thesis.

<sup>49</sup> The relation was a creation, and it created something, namely, a *space* with no transcendent rules that would dictate how the relationship is “supposed” to unfold.

“involves” into a fatal one; the line of flight, once of creation, turns into a line of abolition. Now, it seems involuntariness is implied by the very idea of resistance. Willard is essentially described as becoming *against his will*. A battle of wills? A struggle between “opposing” forces? I resist with all my might a burglar attempting to break down my front door, just as Willard resists his becoming. At least in the case of the former, we have a clear-cut situation where two distinct forces meet, each vying for a different outcome in the meeting. Insofar as we conceive of Willard’s becoming the same way, his becoming is involuntary; Willard faces-off against the becoming, wills not to become, but ultimately loses the contest. We might say, following Deleuze and Guattari, that Willard is “swept away”, “carried off”, “snapped up”, or “taken hold of” by his becoming—again, as if some exterior agency, like a hurricane, comes to affect him—“uproot” him—despite all of his protestations.

And the final reason in favour of conceiving becomings as involuntary is this: the inherent *risk* of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari state, “The risks are ever-present, but it is always possible to have the good fortune of avoiding them” (*TP* 250). Here again we see an involuntary aspect of becoming, for risk implies uncertainty, or, precisely a lack of control. This might explain why sexuality is described as “the production of a thousand sexes, which are so many *uncontrollable* becomings” (278, my emphasis). In a sense, though, this point about risk and the uncontrollable—which renders becomings at least somewhat involuntary and never entirely chosen or willful—is not new, for remember that one of the features that makes becomings liberatory or free movements is their lack of teloi; again, there are never any transcendent rules that structure a becoming’s course in advance. Thus, our freedom is had, possibly at our own peril; perhaps the price we pay

for the possibility of freedom is precisely a loss of control, or, the impossibility of mastery.<sup>50</sup>

And this also explains yet another element of the process of becoming: their possible *violence*. Deleuze and Guattari seem quite explicit about the fact that becomings are by no means necessarily pleasant processes. They can be “fearsome” and one might feel their self “reel”, “disrupted”, and/or “upheaved” (TP 240). Would anyone freely choose such obviously violent sequences, or are we to imagine that such sequences are involuntary?

#### Suggestions that Becomings are Voluntary

But to claim that becomings are *purely* involuntary is likely too hasty. It is true, we have established that the course of a becoming is never pre-established—there is no sovereign will or transcendent design that determines its passage before it has even begun—but might there not be cases where one chooses to attempt to at least *initiate* the process of their own becoming, in contradistinction to Willard’s seemingly willful resistance?

“[X] starts practicing piano again” (TP 250) and it might constitute a becoming; if it does, would it not be correct to say that X made a *choice* at some point that eventually led to their becoming? X desires liberatory movement—“a way out” (251)—and playing piano—the *choice* to play piano—might very well put X in free motion—the very thing X seemingly desires and seemingly chooses to attempt to initiate. In a similar vein, Deleuze and Guattari claim that singing, composing, painting, and writing “have no other

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<sup>50</sup> This point about risk actually works both ways: insofar as becoming involves risk, is it not implied that we are free to take the risk, to choose it?

aim: to unleash these becomings” (272).<sup>51</sup> Insofar as these artistic pursuits have this aim, is it not then obvious that one can indeed set-out with the idea or intention to become, even if it remains out of the adventurer’s hands if a becoming results from their idea or intention?<sup>52</sup> (For becomings are still “unleashed”—that is, they take on a life of their own, regardless of any implicated party’s “preliminary” wishes.) Slepian *seeks* a becoming and thus performs various actions that he thinks will bring one about (258); and is it not the case that Robert De Niro chooses to experiment, desires to become and so chooses to pursue his desire (274)? Deleuze and Guattari say of Henry James: “James is one of those writers who is swept up in an irresistible becoming-woman. *He never stopped pursuing his goal*, inventing the necessary technical means (290, my emphasis). Given these various cases of (at least attempts at) becoming provided by Deleuze and Guattari themselves, we must conclude that *some* becomings might be willfully pursued, although not ultimately effected by the pursuer and their will alone.

Suggestions that Becomings are Ambiguous with Respect to the Question of Freedom

But even that last quote about Henry James is troublesome. Even if James “never stopped pursuing his goal” of becoming-woman, what are we to make of Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the word “irresistible”? In other words, if some becomings are irresistible, what implications does this have for the possibility of the voluntariness (or involuntariness) of becomings? Deleuze and Guattari similarly speak of temptation (*TP* 247) and of being “drawn into” (306) or “called toward” (240) a becoming. All of these

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<sup>51</sup> Harkening back to the introduction: do we not write in order to become? That is, to allow something to move or flow, to allow something new to emerge?

<sup>52</sup> “Free the line, free the diagonal: every musician or painter has this *intention*” (*TP* 295, my emphasis).

words and phrases resonate with each other, but how do they help us to understand the precise mechanics of becoming?

One interpretation of the meaning of “irresistible”: an object that we find irresistible exerts such power or control over us that we succumb to its temptation *and yet wish this were not the case*. An obvious example: a man on a diet finds chocolate irresistible and thus consumes it, despite simultaneously wishing he had the willpower to choose otherwise. He wishes he could resist—wishes he had the strength to overcome his temptation—but is himself overcome. An interesting dynamic, then, characterizes this man’s conscious and bodily life: there is, in him, a desire for some object of temptation and a simultaneous desire opposed to the satisfaction of the first desire.<sup>53</sup> In this case, the first desire is satisfied, in an important sense, *against the man’s will*.

Another interpretation: one willfully pursues what they find irresistible (as James seemingly does). One might find the study of philosophy or the mechanical maintenance of cars irresistible, *and have no problem with—indeed, desire—this very state of affairs*. In each case, we might say that the one who so finds himself willfully pursuing what they describe as irresistible is expressing their desire as fully as they are able, allowing it to flow with vital intensity. Indeed, one might feel liberated—somewhat paradoxically—through the expression of their irresistible desire. William Faulkner has “no other choice” but to become-black in order to avoid being a fascist (*TP* 292); but is one free when they do not have any other real choice, when they find a particular choice irresistible? Henry James, the passionate philosopher/mechanic, and Faulkner—all of them desire the thing they cannot resist anyway, in contradistinction to the “weak-willed” dieter who

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<sup>53</sup> Is the second desire “merely” a cultural appropriation? In other words, does one experience the second desire only because it has been transmitted to them via “the outside”?



seemingly does not desire what he experiences as irresistible. In the former case, we observe a kind of *alignment* (between will and desire) that we do not in the latter.

And there is yet another issue related to this notion of irresistibility and its link with freedom and becoming. In both of our “interpretations”, the question was not raised of whether or not anyone ever chooses what it is they desire in the first place, be it chocolate, philosophy, or anything else. Simply, does anyone ever choose their obsession or fascination? Our guilty dieter is distressed precisely because he wishes to not have a desire he finds so overwhelming (and “bad”, and perhaps overwhelming because “bad”). But are those that willfully pursue their irresistible desires in any more control over their objects of desire than the guilty dieter? Of course, one might have desires they choose not to act on (presumably), but this obviously does not answer our more basic question about the possibility or impossibility of one choosing their desires (and perhaps relatedly, the path of their becoming).

Thus, there are two final things to note before moving on to our next discussion, which should well situate us for that discussion. First, with regard to the irresistibility of (some) becomings and what this means for the role of freedom in them, we might say this: perhaps, in the process of a becoming, a desire stirs within us that begins to find expression—a desire we have not explicitly chosen but that we just *find ourselves* having. In other words, an involuntary desire, or thought, or feeling, circulates in (or near) us—on our bodies—and comes to saturate us, nag us, and overwhelm us, beyond our will and beyond any of our expectations. The phenomenon is both ours and not, coming simultaneously from within and from without. This could be the sense in which becoming, desire, and (un)freedom are (paradoxically) “linked”. Second, we must realize

this: insofar as becomings are processes of self-and-other-transformation—of double-transformations of nature, or of becoming-other-than-what-one-already-is, in each case—then it might very well be that becomings are the kind of phenomena that transform our desires. Indeed, through becoming, one might come to no longer recognize the self they once were, having adopted/inherited different desires, thoughts, and feelings.

## **VI. Multiplicities, Not Unities**

We have been dealing with the problem of freedom—that is, of willful choice—in the process of becoming. Now, it has so far been claimed that we “have” our freedom through becoming—that freedom occurs via becoming as spontaneous flow, as a declension of molarity through connection with the heterogeneous, and as redefinition of bodily capabilities. But similarly, it has also become clear that one does not simply choose to become (in order to thus attain a degree of freedom).<sup>54</sup> And perhaps the most plausible reason for the complexity of the issue of the place of freedom in becomings relates to Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of subjectivity.

We spoke earlier of machinic functioning, in contrast to organic functioning. We claimed that, for Deleuze and Guattari, it is always a question of whether or not the machine “works”. Various elements meet and interact; does the process that occurs *as* interaction (over a time) enhance the power of the implicated bodies? Or put another way: does the process express an “unnatural” yet productive relation? There is certainly a wasp-and-orchid machine/process/becoming, and it amounts to the same thing to say that wasp and orchid form an aggregate, or that there is an institution of a wasp-and-orchid-assemblage. But what exactly does this notion of machinic functioning have to do with

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<sup>54</sup> An obvious problem, insofar as one would need to already be free in order to initiate a process that might render them, to a degree, free.

subjectivity? Deleuze and Guattari claim that, not only is it the case that individual entities connect with each other and effectively form machines, the individual entities *are themselves* already machines—that is, *multiplicities*. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari say of multiplicities:

“A multiplicity is defined not by its elements, nor by a center of unification or comprehension. It is defined by the number of dimensions it has; it is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension *without changing its nature*. Since its variations and dimensions are immanent to it, *it amounts to the same thing to say that each multiplicity is already composed of heterogeneous terms in symbiosis, and that a multiplicity is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors.*” (TP 249, emphasis in original)

We see here that Deleuze and Guattari are heavily resisting the idea that entities of any kind are entirely “closed in on themselves”, pure “interiorities”. For Deleuze and Guattari, we cannot but be constituted via “outsides”; all of the connections we make with what is seemingly exterior to us both effectively initiate and interrupt flows of all kinds. The air we breathe, the sunlight that “touches” our skin and eyes, the food and liquid we ingest, and so on—these “exterior”, “material” forces come to shape our experience in significant ways.<sup>55</sup> Thus, we are already *symbiotic* and *open* beings (as are *all* beings), composed of and constituted through an infinite multiplicity of interactions between all kinds of bodies—“animals, plants, microorganisms, mad particles, a whole galaxy” (250).

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<sup>55</sup> “Material”, I think, includes it all: ideas we encounter, the desires of others, and other classically “mental” phenomena cannot but shape our existences also.

And there is more. Insofar as we are each multiplicities, we are precisely not “unities”. In other words, there is no fully stable “I”, singular ego, or “essence”—some “One”, some “center of unification or comprehension”, some subject *of* freedom—that underlies and endures through our ceaselessly connective, and thus flowing, experience. Karen Houle puts the point this way: “Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology anchors the claim that we are not homogeneous types—we are, and contain, within and across subjectivities, multiplicities—some of which haul us in one direction, and others which pull against those aims and identities”.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, insofar as connections are made or disrupted, and dimensions to our multiplicity are added or subtracted, *we change nature*.

But how are we to understand this idea? It certainly seems to run against the more common and perhaps more intuitive conception of subjectivity or selfhood. So, what, we might ask, is left of “the subject” after Deleuze and Guattari? We will say three things here: (1) there is a way we should *not* understand Deleuze and Guattari’s claim about multiplicities, (2) the way we perhaps should understand this claim is in terms of the Nietzschean idea of unconscious “drives”, and (3) the collection of these drives is fundamentally related to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “the pack”—a notion that bears directly on the problem of freedom in becomings.

First, then: how are we *not* to understand the claim that we are each multiplicities? One’s immediate thought is likely that Deleuze and Guattari are claiming that we are all schizophrenic or have multiple personality disorder and simply do not know it *or* are able to suppress it. That is certainly the conclusion one might come to after reading the opening two lines of *A Thousand Plateaus*, namely, “The two of us wrote

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<sup>56</sup> Houle, “Micropolitics,” 107.

*Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd” (*TP* 3).<sup>57</sup> This cannot be right, though, for, as Deleuze and Guattari say of multiplicities, “[they are] not divisible”. Thus, Deleuze and Guattari cannot be claiming that we are such that we might be divided into distinct, separate identities. John Rajchman explains:

To think of ourselves and one another as “multiple,” or as “composed of multiplicities,” is not to imagine that we have many distinct identities or selves (personalities, brain modules, etc.). On the contrary, it is to get away from understanding ourselves in terms of identity and identification or as distinct persons or selves, however many or “dissociated.” It means that we never wholly divide up into any “pure” species, races, even genders—that our lives in fact can never be reduced to the “individualization” of any such pure class or type.<sup>58</sup>

Recall this, also: if we were to conceptualize the subject in terms of discrete, multiple identities, we would end up falling prey to the problem of movement and representation we articulated earlier; identities, which are representations, are immobile, but our lives cannot but consist of various flows, on account of the infinity of connections that compose us. And while Deleuze and Guattari do not deny that we often take ourselves to be fully coherent, such a phenomenon is always *emergent*—that is, having a particular sense of self has always to do with the stabilization of a particular arrangement of our largely unconscious “drives” at any given moment.

This brings us to the second point. Deleuze scholar Dan Smith speaks of Nietzsche’s idea that we are made up of a whole aggregate of mostly unconscious

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<sup>57</sup> This is, objectively, the best opening line of any book of (self-purported) philosophy, ever.

<sup>58</sup> John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 81.

drives—that is, roughly, unconscious inclinations or “prepersonal” desires.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, these drives compete among each other, each attempting to impose its will on all the others.<sup>60</sup> Now, the drives being largely unconscious, they are at best opaque to our everyday sense of self; we tend to operate, rather, with a sense of unity and homogeneity (and not of constant struggle between heterogeneous forces). The reality of the situation, Nietzsche contends, is that this sense of unity and homogeneity is largely superficial. Smith illustrates with a compelling example. A woman attempts to quit smoking. She comes to suddenly crave a cigarette—she *finds herself* craving a cigarette—and remarks to herself, ‘I hate these cravings; I am trying to quit smoking, but these cravings are making it so difficult!’ Smith describes the situation thus: there are no reasonable grounds on which to claim that the *drive* to quit is any more “I” than the *drive* to have a cigarette. Indeed, as Smith suggests, it would make just as much sense to say, ‘I have this desire to smoke, but these thoughts of quitting are making it so difficult!’ Nietzsche’s point, via Smith, is that a sense of selfsameness—of being an enduring, essential, personal “I”—is always *derivative* of a certain arrangement of the drives. Indeed, we tend to *identify* with the drive that comes to dominate all the others in any given situation and turn it into the entire ego, for the moment. (‘The thoughts and feelings of quitting are *mine*, but the cravings, though, are not’.<sup>61</sup>)

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<sup>59</sup> See Daniel W. Smith, “Deleuze and the Question of Desire: Towards an Immanent Theory of Ethics,” in *Deleuze and Ethics*, eds. Nathan Jun and Daniel W. Smith (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 127-135.

<sup>60</sup> We need to be careful here, however; to speak of discrete entities “at the bottom” of *Being* is, as we have just pointed out, to get away from the Deleuzo-Guattarian formulation of subjectivity. We must theorize drives as being themselves processes or flows, and not as stabilities. Still, Smith’s reading of Nietzsche has us thinking in the right direction, even if it does not perfectly map onto Deleuze and Guattari’s theories.

<sup>61</sup> We see a similar phenomenon in the assumptions of modern psychiatry: we say, ‘That’s not *me*—it’s my brain chemistry’, as if the two can be so firmly separated.

What of consciousness, then? If much of our conscious life and behaviour is largely the result of unconscious forces, what precisely becomes of the status of consciousness? Again, our everyday conception of subjectivity is that there is an *individual* that deliberates, reasons, decides, chooses, *and then* acts. In other words, we tend to conceive of consciousness as the first step in a causal chain that results in a certain kind of behavioural output. Nietzsche, though, reverses this relation: consciousness—the ego—is largely ineffectual, “epiphenomenal”. This is to say that the ego—the “I” we take ourselves to be—controls or decides largely nothing; it is not a drive itself, but is often only an “instrument” of the drives, “taking sides” with this drive here and that one there. Thus, we might say that consciousness *emerges* on the basis of the particular dynamics of causally prior unconscious forces—that consciousness is, in other words, a *symptom* of the unconscious.<sup>62</sup>

## **VII. “Choices that Exceed Us and that Come from Elsewhere”?—Packs and Favourites, Contagion and Pacts**

Now, Nietzsche’s point is close to Deleuze and Guattari’s, namely, that we are (or at least can be) molecular multiplicities and not molar, confining unities. Deleuze and Guattari, however, frequently use another word to capture their conception of our nature—that is, each of us is, for Deleuze and Guattari, a “pack”.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, they say that

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<sup>62</sup> Lawlor, *Early Twentieth-Century*, 38.

<sup>63</sup> Deleuze and Guattari say of Freud that he “mistook crowds for a single person” (*TP* 30). This is one of Deleuze and Guattari’s central criticisms of psychoanalysis, namely, that psychoanalytic efforts always revolve around the possibility of *restoring* a sense of unity or identity in the analysand. In other words, psychoanalysis is the method by which the analysand is supposed to “find herself”—that is, that supposedly real, deep, personal “self” that makes transparent the reasons for all of her desires and behaviours. But, for Deleuze and Guattari, identifying with such a self amounts to the end of becomings, for (as should be fairly clear at this point) it is through identification that one effectively fails to traverse any distance and pre-empt any future attempts to do so also. Thus, where there are a whole multiplicity of lines running-off in different directions at various speeds in the unconscious, all psychoanalysis (supposedly) sees is a single, dense, immobile point.

“every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack” and that “[a] becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, in short, a multiplicity” (*TP* 239).<sup>64</sup> Let us then inquire into the nature and dynamics of actual (specifically wolf) packs, so that we might better be able to understand the significance of Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the term.

They say that we are always one wolf among others (perhaps among another six, seven, or eight, in contrast to just one other, as our previous example of Nietzsche’s theory of unconscious drives suggested) (*TP* 29). Now, it is important to keep in mind that wolves travel in packs—that is, there is a sense in which they “hang together”—and yet are simultaneously independent of each other. It is true, a pack of wolves often hunts together, and thus that *most* wolves broadly share the aims of the group, but any given wolf is never guaranteed to identify with the rest of the pack, nor the pack members with the pack leader. In other words, pack relations are always revisable, flowing, and dynamic, even if they happen to express a kind of unity. Take a pack alpha, for instance. An anonymous member of the pack might very well challenge the alpha’s status as alpha and either lose the battle or win. In the case of a loss, perhaps the loser is so humbled that they never attempt a challenge again, or alternately, they come to sense the alpha’s weakness and feel that it is just a matter of time before another challenge is due. And in the case of a win, the alpha and the anonymous effectively switch positions, or perhaps the former alpha becomes a loner, “the old deposed head of the pack now living alone” (243). In each case, the *nature* of the entire pack is altered (by activities in any part or between any parts).

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<sup>64</sup> But do *all* becomings—not just becomings-animal—involve packs? Does a becoming-plant, for instance, always involve a pack, too? It might be the case every type of becoming has its own unique character in this regard.



Alphas, the anonymous, loners—these are all various positions pack members might come to hold, for durations unknown. *But what does all of this amount to?* What precisely are Deleuze and Guattari attempting to express with their evocation of observations of pack dynamics? Their point, perhaps, is simple on its face: pack dynamics express the dynamics of *our* lived experience, and moreover, make vivid the experience of becoming (for there are times when we function effectively as a single entity, and other times when such functioning is compromised by a kind of internal scission). The concept of becoming, though, as we have so far attempted to illustrate, is far from simple—why else would Deleuze and Guattari devote so many pages to it?—and it is likely the case that despite any clarity one might have with respect to the dynamics of wolf packs, trying to fully and coherently capture or master the idea of becoming in relation to the possible experience of oneself as a pack—with its various possible positions, and, as Deleuze and Guattari tell us, a constantly shifting, dynamic “borderline” (TP 245)—is always bound to fail. It is at this point clear, rather, that one might only ever be able to “know” becoming by feel (read: by firsthand experience) and that attempts to intellectualize it by keeping the concept at an abstract distance (which we have so far done, for the most part) *seriously compromises the very experience in question*. In other words, to grasp becoming, one cannot start with the approach that seeks to get it perfectly right “in theory” before doing anything else.

Thus, we will make one more point about becoming “in theory” (only because we must) and then do our best to turn directly to concrete experience. The question we have been asking is essentially this: how do becomings happen? Deleuze and Guattari—beyond the *suggestions* that the role of agency in becomings is complicated—are actually

quite explicit in one passage about the apparent contradiction between the two different ways they describe becomings as happening: by contagion/epidemic/infection and/or by alliance/pact. With regard to contagion as the mechanism of becoming, they say this: “[P]acks form, develop, and are transformed by contagion” (TP 242), as opposed to any *filiative* process, as we have previously stated. But insofar as becomings are set in motion by contagion, the subject of a becoming clearly does not choose to have a becoming, just as one does not choose to be infected with the measles virus, for instance. Do Deleuze and Guattari mean to say, then, that a somehow contagious entity can *bring out* the pack in another entity via their contagion? Is their point that purely involuntary encounters initiate (perhaps collective) becomings? They also say, strangely, that becomings only happen insofar as there is a *fascination* for the pack (which may or may not be related to the pack lurking in us) (239-240).

Yet, there is also always some One—an exceptional or anomalous individual in the pack, a “favourite” in the multiplicity—that an *alliance* or *pact* must be made with in order to become (TP 243). This “individual” occupies various positions in relation to the pack that it supposedly “borders” (245); perhaps it is an alpha—a strong leader—on the borderline (of the pack), or else it might be, somehow, a non-pack member, or even other things besides. But either way, does it not seem obvious that becomings can then happen via choice? Is it not the case that to make an alliance or pact with some entity or entities is to engage in a kind of willful activity? But this understanding of becoming is obviously at odds with our understanding of becoming as occurring via contagion. *So, it all boils down to this, then*: in a becoming, does one choose the alliance (from “within”) or is one involuntarily infected (from “without”)? Or might it be the case that the two themes—of

pack and contagion, favourite and pact—are like two sides of the same coin, two different understandings of one and the same phenomenon?<sup>65</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari say this:

It does seem as though there is a contradiction: between the pack and the loner; between mass contagion and preferential alliance; between pure multiplicity and the exceptional individual; between the aleatory aggregate and a predestined choice. *And the contradiction is real*: Ahab chooses Moby-Dick, in a choosing that exceeds him and comes from elsewhere, and in so doing breaks with the law of the whalers according to which one should first pursue the pack. (*TP* 244, my emphasis)

Constantin Boundas solidifies this enigma of freedom's precise relation to becoming when he claims that, despite Deleuze's philosophy being one of freedom, the *problem* of freedom in Deleuze's philosophy "must be constructed and expressed as a paradox, and that his *concept* of freedom should never be forced to shed the paradoxical structure that guides the formulation of the problem in the first place".<sup>66</sup> But what of the task of *understanding* becoming, then? Specifically, how are we to "understand" a "real" contradiction, or a paradox? Are there "contradictions" in our lived experience? Can we say or describe what it would look like to have or make a choice that somehow "exceeds you" and that "comes from elsewhere", or is this an impossibility?

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<sup>65</sup> On the becoming-woman of the warrior, Deleuze and Guattari speak of "his alliance with her, his contagion with her" (*TP* 278). We might also say that the becoming-woman of the warrior is another way of speaking of the warrior's "alliance with girlhood", or of his "feminine contagions". Thanks to Karen Houle for providing an alternate translation of this passage.

<sup>66</sup> Boundas, "Problem of Freedom," 222-223.

## VIII. Four Expression of Becoming, Or, Becoming as the Fundamental Philosophic Experience<sup>67</sup>

There is, of course, a sense in which we *can* describe such a choice, despite its paradoxical or contradictory character. Recall a claim we made just previously, however: trying to *merely understand* becoming—or more precisely, effectively keeping it at an abstract or theoretical distance—is altogether different from actually experiencing one. Becoming: the priority of intense and undomesticated experience at the expense of extended, understood, and recognized experience. Insofar as becomings might be experiences of “lived contradiction”, attempting to transmit that experience to readers by dividing or spatializing it—which is what language effectively does—is an effort that never necessarily accomplishes its aim. The experience of a kind of simultaneity—of oneself as indivisible, heterogeneous multiplicity—is often betrayed by its linguistic representations.<sup>68</sup>

Yet, we must continue to make an effort toward making sense of becoming, even in awareness of the fact that such efforts might very well fall short. What follows are four expressions of becoming. Each is real, expresses a lived process of transformation, and, I

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<sup>67</sup> Whenever we used the phrase “example(s) of becoming” in the preceding pages, we were wrong to do so; we meant to say “expression”, we were saying expression. For it is not as if there is some rigid, abstract form or idea of becoming that then gets instantiated in reality, as the word “example” suggests. To invoke examples is to implicitly posit two realities—the reality of the form and the reality of the concrete particular that imitates the form.

<sup>68</sup> We must ask: what is the relation of language to reality or experience? Words often serve the function of rendering experience too smooth, automatic, or innocuous. Imagine someone explaining the effects of a hallucinogenic drug or of a mental illness; the words in which these experiences get described are almost always insufficient for those who have not had such experiences—that is, the words often fall short, or fail to capture for the listener the reality of the experience in question. This often results, in the case of those who suffer from mental illness for instance, in a lack of sympathy for the experiences those sufferers have to deal with.

argue, embodies the fundamental philosophic experience, which also happens to be the experience of becoming.

Expression #1: Dustin Hoffman

In the 1982 film *Tootsie*, actor Dustin Hoffman plays a man disguised as a woman. The plot is this: Hoffman's character is an actor, but struggles to find work after gaining a reputation of being difficult to work with. He ends up auditioning for a female role, that of a character named "Dorothy Michaels", and does so by transforming himself into a convincing woman, fooling everyone involved in the production.

Now, for our purposes, what is interesting is less the film but rather a recent interview Hoffman gave explaining his preparation for it.<sup>69</sup> The interview fragment is just three minutes long, but expresses (or so I argue) a becoming-woman. Hoffman starts by telling us that, at first, he would only make the movie on the condition that he was able to go unnoticed on a New York City street dressed and looking like a woman. Thus, if passerby were to identify him as a "drag queen" or simply as a "freak", the movie would not get made. As a result, Hoffman underwent extensive "makeup tests". What Hoffman says after his supposed transformation was complete is interesting: he was shocked that he did not make a more convincing woman. He proceeded to tell the makeup artists that, although they had transformed him into a woman, they must now make him "beautiful". They replied, almost apologetically, "That's as good as it's going to get". Hoffman tells us that this moment marked an epiphany for him, for he found the character he was supposed to be playing, interesting, but knew that he himself—and most men also—would never really approach or care to engage with a woman who was not "beautiful". In

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<sup>69</sup> See "Dustin Hoffman on TOOTSIE and his character Dorothy Michaels," American Film Institute, lasted accessed July 9, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPAat-T1uhE>.

other words, something overcame him, something he in no way foresaw: an “impersonal”, feminine affect, arising from without. And its effect? Hoffman was *immediately* “rent” from his standard of nonconscious or automatic evaluation.

The experience is a moderately intense one, for Hoffman begins to cry and remains choked-up for the rest of the interview fragment. He claims that after that moment, his previous condition for making the movie was essentially null; he needed to make the movie *despite* his imperfect resemblance to a supposedly beautiful woman. Rather he needed to *express* the idea that the characteristically “male” standard of evaluation—that is, what constitutes a characteristically “male” thought process and a “male” series of emotions and behaviours—is perhaps, in a very important sense, flawed, insofar as it limits the ways in which men perceive and what affects might arise on the male body.

Hoffman thus *moves*, takes on a feminine affect, becomes-woman (if only momentarily), and is irrevocably changed through his experience. And this movement/becoming/transformation was precisely not a goal that he had set-out with; rather, movement happened *to* him and was not orchestrated “from above”—that is, by some sovereign will or agency that determines how things will unfold in advance.<sup>70</sup>

#### Expression #2: Karen Houle

In 2013, philosopher Karen Houle published a book on abortion and ethics entitled *Responsibility, Complexity, and Abortion: Toward a New Image of Ethical*

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<sup>70</sup> For those who might be wondering about the possible conflict between resemblance and becoming here, see Note 15. Remember, a successful becoming involves *not* “finding yourself” at the end of the process. In Hoffman’s case, we see precisely this: he resolves to make a particular movie—to create something—for an entirely different reason—or rather, on account of an entirely new desire—than the one he had started with—an event that could not have been predicted at the outset.

*Thought*. In it, she critiques the “reason-giving” discourse that so pervades and saturates the issue of unwanted pregnancy. Her question is this: when it comes to thinking about the ethics of abortion (and perhaps many other “ethical” issues also), is the strength of the reasons one has for endorsing a particular position all that matters? Houle’s argument is that we ought to resist thinking of the phenomenon in *solely* this way and moreover, to conceive of this thoughtful resistance as ethical.

Instead of *automatically* asking if the reasons are sound and if everything is rock-solid;<sup>71</sup> instead of operating with a mere “convenient caricature”<sup>72</sup> of abortion via possible lines of argument and their corresponding strengths and weaknesses; instead of treating abortion as merely an issue of “reasoned debate, logic, and resolution”;<sup>73</sup> instead of always “bee-lining for a single defensible answer”;<sup>74</sup> instead of all of these things, one ought to attempt to cultivate a different relation to the phenomenon of unwanted pregnancy, and one that will be, as a consequence, a more ethical one, or so argues Houle.

And why? Because the current dominant discourse on abortion is tired— affectively flat<sup>75</sup>—and works to perpetuate the idea that “all there is to feel, say, or think about [abortion] is contained in exactly two positions, one of which is “dead wrong” and one of which is “obviously right””.<sup>76</sup> This is an issue insofar as certain dimensions of human experience become closed-off as a result of thinking about the phenomenon this way. Houle gives an example of this closing-off effect when she recounts an experience

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<sup>71</sup> Karen Houle, *Responsibility, Complexity, and Abortion: Toward a New Image of Ethical Thought* (New York: Lexington Books, 2013), 4.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

she had many years before writing her book. A professor in the first year of a tenure-stream appointment with research interests in social and political philosophy and a woman with firsthand experience of abortion, Houle knew where she stood with regard to the ethics of abortion. But, after viewing a film that dealt with abortion in a rather unorthodox way, she came to realize that there were in fact uncooperative feelings that remained within her;<sup>77</sup> there was more—more than reason, logic, and an expert understanding on the abortion debate had led her to believe. This particular experience captures Houle's ethical impulse: she asks, essentially, how ethical is a discourse that does its absolute best to make a person believe that they must choose between two rival camps, and that thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that bespeak undecidedness and a sense of lived ambiguity are unacceptable? In other words, how ethical is the discourse that conspires to keep one from experiencing more?

It appears, then, that even some (or most, perhaps) university courses are complicit in the promotion of an inherently unethical discourse. Another example: Houle writes a paper in the final year of her undergraduate career and in it, defends a woman's right to an abortion. She receives an A+ on the paper. Perfect—now she knows all of her options in case she finds herself with an unwanted pregnancy, and will experience little to no self-doubt, ever, because she received that A+. In other words, the future is exhausted because it has been confirmed that she has those timeless reasons that make her impervious to intellectual defeat. But, again, this is an example of the kind of thinking that Houle regards as unethical, for conceiving of abortion in only one way—as a war zone, with winners on one side and losers on the other—leads to lost opportunities for

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 2.



learning and thinking.<sup>78</sup> In other words, such a conception of the phenomenon of unwanted pregnancy vastly reduces the range of affects we might experience with regard to that phenomenon, and thus, immobilizes us; genuine learning, development, and self-transformation—that is, becomings—become impossibilities.

### Expression #3: Alcibiades

In Plato’s famous dialogue *Symposium*, a group of men (including Socrates) gather to give speeches in praise of *eros* (meaning, very roughly, love, from which we derive the English “erotic”). A man named Alcibiades—a famous historical figure in his own right—crashes the party in a drunken stupor near the dialogue’s end. He ends up giving a speech on *eros* as well, but makes known his distress regarding his relationship with Socrates and philosophy. He says to his fellow Athenians, “Every one of you has taken part in the madness and Bacchanalian frenzy of philosophy,”<sup>79</sup> by which he means that the philosophical questions Socrates has for years (at the time of these speeches) been posing are, when “internalized”, disorienting and destabilizing—responsible for shifting the “ground” beneath one’s “feet”. Is an action pious because the gods will it, or do the gods will it because it is pious? Is virtue something that is independent of being born Athenian? Is the best life one spent in pursuit of wealth, reputation, or political power, or is the best life—the ethical life, the life worth living—spent doing something else? It is questions like these that thoroughly disrupt the inner life of Alcibiades, that do violence to him, take hold of him, and unsettle him. For Alcibiades lives one way but cannot but see that the way in which he lives cannot pass philosophical scrutiny; he sees

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Rebecca Goldstein, *Plato at the Googleplex: Why Philosophy Won’t Go Away* (New York: Vintage Books, 2015), 41. The line numbers for this passage in *Symposium* are 218a-b.

Socrates' logic as irrefutable but continues to live contrary to that very logic. This amounts to a lived contradiction. And indeed, as Rebecca Goldstein puts it, these kinds of (philosophical) questions that so disrupt Alcibiades, when taken seriously, *should* crack us open “to an entirely new variety of experience”<sup>80</sup> and moreover, that this “inner drama” “can only be compared to the transformations induced by erotic, religious, or artistic inspiration”.<sup>81</sup>

Expression #4: The Author of this Thesis

Let us rephrase one of Deleuze and Guattari's previously stated lines:

And the contradiction is real: Jamie chooses academia, in a choosing that exceeds him and comes from elsewhere, and in so doing breaks with the law of “rational”, Western, molar humanity according to which one should first be pragmatic and “marketable”.

It is true, I have molar wishes for an organized, perhaps Oedipal life, but these wishes are complicated by the pack that is myself—that is, by the lines that run-off in their own directions, stirred by molecular desires that cannot be so easily incorporated into any molar schema.

I am trying to say this: one can make definitive claims and speak of their reasons for those claims, but *who* decides if the reasons provided exert a definitive influence over the one making the claims? I can certainly rationalize, ‘After doing the calculations, I have determined that the “rational” life-choice involves quitting academia and pursuing a career in law, given job market and net-stress considerations’. This reasoning, however, which is formulated to settle a person, does not change the pull *I* feel in multiple

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<sup>80</sup> Goldstein, *Plato*, 43.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

directions, which are multiple competing, flowing desires, all of which, again, constitute the multiplicity that is myself. In other words, “reason” never guarantees absolute self-control; involuntary “mental” phenomena, in my case and in the three other previous ones, undercut such a guarantee. Becoming: the process of (perhaps “irrational”) desire (*TP* 272).

### Becoming as the Fundamental Philosophic Experience

I believe that Deleuze and Plato share *at least* one thing: a conception of the goal of philosophy. For Plato, philosophy is supposed to do “[n]othing less than [...] render violence to our sense of ourselves and our world, our sense of ourselves in the world”.<sup>82</sup> What the previously described expressions of becoming capture is precisely this kind of violence. Dustin Hoffman, Karen Houle, Alcibiades, the author of this thesis—all torn *between* a past and a future *identity*, and thus precisely moving: in-process and in-tension. Something complicates each of us—uproots, destabilizes, or overwhelms us—and it is our multiplicitous or fragmented nature that accounts for this experience, at least in part; for the pack was (and is) brought out in us, even if only by “a little detail that starts to swell and carries you off” (*TP* 291). And there are so many (contagious) details: a statement made by makeup artists, a film that casts the phenomenon of abortion in a strange light, an argument about the life worth living, a line in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and so on to infinity. Each of us infected and consequently *rent* from our major identities (291)—that is, from what we unreflectively take ourselves and others to be. To be rent, in this way, is to experience yourself as simultaneously choosing and not-having-chosen the thought or desire that so animates you. And to (truly) do philosophy is to find yourself

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

affected in much the same way: *taken-over* by something larger than you and yet simultaneously *compelled* to venture further, deeper, more intensely (and sometimes beyond *all* “reason”).

## IX. Conclusion

To both summarize and go a bit further, we will do four final things: (1) recall the principles of becoming we have argued for; (2) pose a “solution” to our initial problem—that of the voluntariness of becomings; (3) discuss the possible *value* of becomings; and (4) note several points we must always keep in mind.

(1) Becomings are passages or movements—lines—that traverse the in-between, that flow in the interim, between “cuts” or molar points. They thus defy representation (language, images); they indicate, rather, the purely qualitative, felt, singular. They involve the unexpected, as there is no script ordering their emergence in advance, and thus intensities unfold and materialize. They are disruptive, unsettling, transformative; one finds herself, *not* a neat unity with her life fully organized and accounted for (with everything right where it belongs), but in-process and in-tension, where the future remains precisely undecided and unknown—open. As Eugene Holland phrases it, “The ethical imperative [for Deleuze and Guattari] is to open ourselves up to experimentation with such lines of becoming, to leave home on the thread of a tune in order to improvise with the world and form meshwork with it”.<sup>83</sup>

(2) One thus cedes a (smaller or larger) degree of control in the process of a becoming. In other words, *there is always by necessity an involuntary element of becoming*; for it is through becoming that one is effectively depersonalized, finding

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<sup>83</sup> Holland, *Reader's Guide*, 106.

themselves a self dissociated from the self they unconsciously or *automatically* take themselves to be. This lived experience of becoming is one of being suddenly—seemingly out of nowhere—taken beyond oneself. And again, the experience emerges as involuntary, although it can (and hopefully will) be *productive*. Dustin Hoffman’s experiences affects of completely foreign nature, but they give him a new and (perhaps) more vital reason for making a certain film; Karen Houle is disrupted, but ends up *producing* a book that testifies to her becoming—that is, to her own self-transformation—and that provide a point from which to become further still.

My claim is this, then: one *can* voluntarily seek a becoming—that is, deterritorialization in search of freedom, “away from the suffocating reification of institutions”<sup>84</sup>—*but this stage is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for becoming*. Indeed, one can choose to experiment—to put their conscious body in strange relations that their conscious body has no script for, and for which their conscious body has no immediate resources for domestication, order, control—with the intention to no longer be the selfsame self they were prior to experimentation, but this effort might very well fail. Indeed, it could happen that nothing new comes to pass and that desire ceases to stir. In either case, the voluntary always gives way to the involuntary. What *is* necessary is the event of *losing oneself*. A choice to experiment might produce this effect, but again, there are other routes and other outcomes.

One might very well find themselves caught in-between and unsettled, having never had any explicit intention to experiment. It is at this point that any number of things can happen. Dustin Hoffman *embraces* the uncontrollable feelings he experiences that

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<sup>84</sup> Boundas, “Problem of Freedom,” 223.

disrupt his automatic self and *affirms* the fact that he can no longer be the person he was before his becoming (of course, the becoming ends insofar as he identifies with some “One” new, for the becoming is the in-between). Yet a becoming might also be of the Willard-variety, where *resistance* is what comes to characterize the experience, with fatal results. The question is always: given particular connections, which “I” will *emerge* on the borderline of the pack, on the surface that is consciousness? And similarly, how will that “I” relate to the pack of which it might or might not be a part?

(3) After all we have said, an obvious question remains: *why bother with becomings?* Sure, they might offer us freedom from ourselves, but at what price? We have consistently described becomings as experiences of ambivalence, anxiety, dissociation, tension, and so on, and for good reason: in a becoming, one suddenly feels their “foundations” eroded, and we cease to be able to live automatically, unreflectively. *And do we not justifiably desire (at least phases) of comfortable immersion?* How then can Deleuze and Guattari urge becomings? What makes their position preferable, or rather, why should we take-up a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective with respect to life, experience, and ethics? Indeed, is their philosophy not simply a “personal confession” (as Nietzsche would have it)? And insofar as it is, does this not compromise their philosophy

in a not unserious way?<sup>85</sup> One might find their ideas invigorating, but they hardly have universal value if they are simply ways of expressing personal preferences.<sup>86</sup>

Of course, it is probably safe to say that Deleuze and Guattari hardly care for a notion like “universal value”, and also that they would readily admit that their projects are always precisely (local) expressions of desire. They would say, ‘Take what you want, leave what you don’t’. But can we simply leave the concept of becoming—a concept seemingly to *A Thousand Plateaus*, if not their other projects, too? I will venture a single reason for the value of becomings, which might very well not resonate with everyone. To engage in a project of becoming is to “[take] Nature to the fullest” (*TP* 260), and to take nature to the fullest is to do justice to life and nature. It is, in other words, to always be searching for the vitality of life and to feel and experience this vitality firsthand. It is to simultaneously be full of life and actively in pursuit of exposing life’s vitality, such that everything is not always ‘just the way it is’. Confining yourself to a molar subject, as Deleuze and Guattari say, is dangerous precisely because it is a way of existing that arrests vital flows (276) and exhausts much of life’s vitality in advance. Taking nature to

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<sup>85</sup> Just to bolster what we have already stated, Gary Gutting speaks of Michel Foucault’s double book review of Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, where Foucault, despite his articulating his excitement for Deleuze’s thought, simultaneously states his awareness of the dangers inherent in it—that is, the possible “black stupidity” of Deleuzian difference. Gutting writes, “Certainly, anyone can appreciate the sort of limit-experiences evoked here if their effects are contained within a “theatre” clearly separated from “serious life”, if they occur in a world we can enter and leave at will. But if, as Foucault’s (and Deleuze’s) rhetoric suggests, the claim is that such separation must not be tolerated, that there is no ultimate worth to a categorical life, then it is hard to see the demand that we undergo the risk of “black stupidity” as anything more than a personal preference or, perhaps, obsession”. See Gutting, *Thinking the Impossible*, 101.

<sup>86</sup> Journalist Michael Pollan has recently written a piece in the February 9, 2015 issue of *The New Yorker* on the field testing of the use of hallucinogenic drugs in certain pre-approved, palliative care patients. A researcher he interviews ends up claiming that there is evidence to suggest that an overbearing, despotic ego might be the cause of depression, which hallucinogenic drugs might help alleviate due to its psychedelic, dissociative effects. If this is the case, Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy might very well have a kind of universal applicability, insofar as they might have been implicitly aware of the negative effects of the formation of such an ego, their philosophy expressing this implicit knowledge.

the fullest, by contrast, always requires asking, with fascination and intensity, ‘What might happen to and on my body in *this* possible assemblage? *And* this one? *And* this one? *And...*’.

(4) There are two additional points we must always keep in mind with respect to becoming. The first is that, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, there are *criteria* for becoming, but they are not to be used retrospectively (*TP* 251).<sup>87</sup> Memory is dull repetition, territorialization. Often, when one remembers (and is perhaps nostalgic), nothing new happens. In other words, to relive an experience in one’s mind is precisely not to become, for the experience is domesticated in advance. Becoming, then, as the lived process of real experience, as opposed to memory—that is, becoming as anti-memory.

And the second point we must keep in mind with respect to becoming: we do not know what we can make a rhizome with—that is, how our becomings might occur—so it is on us to experiment (*TP* 251).<sup>88</sup> For it is our freedom, our liberation at stake, and it is an endless task. Indeed, freedom, for Deleuze and Guattari, is something one *does*, not something one *has*. Thus, becoming is never a matter of transforming into *this* or *that*; rather, it is always about spontaneously growing outward, from the middle, in multiple directions. And if an experiment fails, it is likely not the end of the world, for “[e]ven the failures are part of the plane” (255).

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<sup>87</sup> ‘Did that thing that happened to me years ago *qualify* as a becoming? Let’s check for correspondence...’

<sup>88</sup> Compare Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 125: “...because no one knows ahead of time the affects one is capable of; it is a long affair of experimentation, requiring a lasting prudence, a Spinozan wisdom that implies the construction of a plane of immanence or consistency”.



## Chapter Two Destiny in Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy of Freedom?

### I. Introducing the Problem

As we have just seen, the notion of destiny appears in *A Thousand Plateaus*, but it also appears in Deleuze's earlier *The Logic of Sense*. With respect to the former text, recall that Willard (from the 1971 film of the same name) is said to experience "a pause in his destiny, in his *becoming-rat*" (TP 233); recall also that the contradiction between the various descriptions of becoming they provide is a contradiction "between the aleatory aggregate and a predestined choice" (244). Now consider, with respect to the 21<sup>st</sup> "series" of *LS* alone, that Deleuze refers to events that "wait for us and invite us in" (*LS* 148),<sup>1</sup> a quote that discusses one Joseph Bousquet and the fact that he was (apparently) born to embody his war wound (148),<sup>2</sup> and that *the* event "signals and awaits us" (149). In each of these quotations, we have either an explicit or implicit reference to the notion of destiny.<sup>3</sup>

Such references are interesting for a number of reasons, not least of which is the fact that the philosophy of Deleuze (and Guattari) seems certainly to be one of freedom. Indeed, Constantin Boundas claims that Deleuze's philosophy is "just as committed to freedom as Sartre's philosophy was";<sup>4</sup> Todd May argues that Deleuze's philosophy always turns on the question, "How *might* one live?"—a question that seems to indicate

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<sup>1</sup> Just as in Chapter One, when citing passages from *The Logic of Sense*, I will simply embed in the body of the text the pagination of Mark Lester and Charles Stivale's English translation from Columbia University Press. Moreover, I will often refer to *The Logic of Sense* by use of the acronym *LS*.

<sup>2</sup> The full quote reads, "[Events] signal us: 'My wound existed before me, I was born to embody it'".

<sup>3</sup> Destiny is also mentioned in the context of Stoic philosophy in the "Second Series of Paradoxes of Surface Effects", the "Twenty-Fourth Series of the Communication of Events", and the appendix of *LS*. See *LS* 4-11; 169-76; and 266-79.

<sup>4</sup> Boundas, "Problem of Freedom," 222.

the primacy of possibility, indeterminacy, or an “open” and “free” future;<sup>5</sup> the process of becoming, as discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, was argued precisely to be a process of liberatory movement and as involving an escape from (at least some of) the molar powers that compose us; and to take a most recent example, the international Deleuze and Guattari conference that just occurred in Greece this year (2015) bore the name “Refrains of Freedom”. Is it not obvious, then, that Deleuze, both alone and in his joint work with Guattari, is a theorizer of freedom? Or, put otherwise, that freedom—its possibilities and problems—is always one of his central preoccupations?

But even if freedom is a fundamental concern of his philosophy, we must specify *our* problem. It is this: how does a philosophy of freedom consistently incorporate the notion of destiny? For, on one common interpretation of the word, one is destined insofar as what transpires as reality is necessary, and therefore, determined from the outset (of any given thing’s birth or emergence). In other words, on this interpretation, one is precisely not free insofar as they are destined; the course every life takes, while perhaps *appearing* chosen from the individual’s perspective, is not. Rather, one silently moves toward their destiny, which is, on this view, a thing essentially given in advance. It could not have been otherwise that I am (re-)typing this chapter at this very moment, for I was destined to do so; *I have no other choice* but to (re)type it. And of course, if I “decide” to quit typing (in order to “prove”, perhaps, that I am, in fact, “free”), it could be argued, just the same, that this series of events was necessary all along. On this view, then, destiny is *only* a feature of a thoroughly determined world, in which freedom is *wholly* illusory. There is no escape via becoming, for necessity has already swallowed it.

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter One, Note 25.

We will call this interpretation of destiny “destiny-as-predestination” or “divinely-mandated-destiny”. In sum, this interpretation has it that the events that characterize any life are preordained or orchestrated in advance by prior causes, whether conceived of as divine or “merely” material.<sup>6</sup> On this view, it is as if there exists a tablet on which all events that will occur are written, and this tablet exists and is, in some sense, available at the very beginning of time. Thus, the outcome of all events has *already* been etched in stone.

Destiny-as-predestination is not the only interpretation of destiny on offer, though. There are many who might feel uncomfortable with the idea that they are not “in control” of their own lives and thus, on those (perhaps emotional or even unconscious) grounds, reject the idea of destiny altogether. Or so they think. For, in essence, what these people effectively do is merely substitute an external, possibly divine agency for an internal, “subjective” one—that is, they effectively say, ‘Only *I* choose my destiny through *my* free choices and decisions; no one or nothing else does’. We see here that the structure of destiny is not really done away with, but rather relocated. We will call this interpretation of destiny, “destiny-as-self-authored”. On this interpretation, individuals who feel oppressed by the prospects of destiny-as-predestination reject that view in favour of a personally chosen destiny.

We should be immediately skeptical of this second interpretation of destiny, however. Was it not precisely the conclusion of Chapter One of this thesis that such a rigid picture of self-authorship is simply not true to our experience? Indeed, was it not

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<sup>6</sup> For there are atheists—that is, those who deny the existence of the divine—that also identify as “hard determinists”. In other words, belief in divinity is not a necessary condition for belief in destiny-as-predestination; the immanent materiality of the universe and its observed functioning is, for some, enough to warrant the latter belief.

made clear that Deleuze and Guattari wish precisely to reject the picture of subjectivity that we have inherited from the Enlightenment that is intimated in the second interpretation? For Deleuze (and Guattari), we are not closed interiorities with well-delineated and rigid boundaries and a single, simple, inner “choosing power” (whereby we *either* fully choose *or* fully do not choose). Indeed, on a reinterpretation of Chapter One’s findings, we might say that our experiences can never easily be sorted according to the (strictly binary) voluntary/involuntary schema, for our condition is not one of pure and perfect freedom, autonomy, or agency. The process of becoming, which everything is engaged in to various degrees, is the process of finding yourself fragmented and precisely not self-sovereign—that is, of being pulled in multiple directions at once, on account of our multiplicitous porosities and passivities.<sup>7</sup>

So far, then, we have two interpretation of destiny, one of which (the latter) cannot be Deleuze’s. Deleuze’s conception of freedom must be a qualified one and not of the radical Sartrean variety (where subjectivity is characterized solely by choice), which is intimated in the view of destiny-as-self-authored.<sup>8</sup> But is Deleuze’s conception of freedom consistent with the view of destiny-as-predestination? The latter is also likely an inadequate interpretation of what Deleuze means when he uses the word destiny—that is, inconsistent with the picture of reality or nature that Deleuze attempts to sketch throughout this work. There is at least one reason for thinking this: in *LS*, Deleuze appropriates Stoic philosophy, reinvents it for his own purposes, and comes to claim that

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<sup>7</sup> We could say, following Spinoza, that humans ought not be conceived as choosing powers set over and against the world (“kingdoms within kingdoms”), but rather as part of and immanent to the world.

<sup>8</sup> This is, at least, the early Sartre’s conception of freedom, articulated most definitively in his *Being and Nothingness*.

the Stoics actually *opposed* destiny to necessity (*LS* 6; 169)<sup>9</sup>—two concepts treated as equivocal or interchangeable according to destiny-as-predestination. Moreover, Constantin Boundas suggests that it is the Stoic distinction between “bodies” and “incorporeals” that grounds this opposition and preserves freedom.<sup>10</sup> Thus, we are pointed to a conception of destiny and freedom as somehow compatible. And in order to elucidate this compatibility, we will turn to *LS*—the text in which Deleuze engages most seriously with Stoic philosophy, and where we might begin to see how the notions of freedom and destiny work together for Deleuze. Again, we know that Deleuzian destiny is not necessity, and neither is it self-authored; yet we also know that, despite his rejection of anything like self-mastery, Deleuze is concerned with articulating a philosophy of freedom. Our question, then—a seemingly natural extension of our investigation in Chapter One, which inquired into the degree to which becomings are voluntary, i.e. freely chosen—involves clarifying the mechanics of freedom and destiny in *LS*. In other words, we wish to know how exactly Deleuze’s appropriation of Stoic ideas provides him with the resources to construct a conception of freedom that is neither absent (via destiny-as-predestination) nor anthropocentric (via destiny-as-self-authored).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> On the latter page reference, Deleuze actually tells us that to affirm destiny and deny necessity is *the* Stoic paradox. What is also interesting about this problem of freedom in Stoicism is that Stoic philosophy is often conceived of as precisely a kind of *practical* philosophy—a view which seems to presuppose (at least the possibility of) freedom. See, for instance, Moses Hadas, introduction to *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca*, by Seneca, trans. Moses Hadas (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1968), 24: “[Stoicism] sought to give man self-sufficient freedom”.

<sup>10</sup> Boundas, “Problem of Freedom,” 225-30.

<sup>11</sup> *Another* way we might phrase this idea: our hypothesis is that, for Deleuze, there is no One static party—divine (e.g. God), mechanical (e.g. timeless laws of nature), or human (as a pure, total agency)—that orchestrates destiny in advance.

Before turning to our investigation, though, there is one thing we must note: the notorious difficulty of *LS*. Indeed, we must approach this text prepared to recognize “the complexity that the concept of freedom carries in the thought of Deleuze”.<sup>12</sup> Chapter One’s conclusion affirmed this recognition insofar as it knowingly attempted to do the impossible—that is, to make sense of a paradox or “lived contradiction”. The case is similar for Chapter Two: if we do it right, we will not escape paradox, but rather arrive at it.<sup>13</sup> Of course, as just suggested, to think paradox is no simple task, for our everyday life is often one that simply “makes sense”, no paradoxes involved. But if paradox is on the agenda for understanding *LS* (it is), then we also cannot expect it to be easy (it is not).<sup>14</sup> This is also to say that we cannot expect anything like a total understanding of *LS* through our necessarily limited engagement. We must keep in mind that like all good philosophy, there will always be obscurities. Even after decades of reading, writing, and teaching, it is unlikely a rare experience that professors are struck by certain lines in familiar texts that suddenly make sense in a way they had never before considered (if those lines were not previously simply skipped over). We can only hope for an “answer” to this one question: how can Deleuze be both a philosopher of freedom *and* destiny? Or, put otherwise: how might freedom work in *LS*? We turn, then, to our investigation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Boundas, “Problem of Freedom,” 221.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter One, Page 47.

<sup>14</sup> One of the reasons *LS* is difficult is perhaps explained by Deleuze himself: “So anyway, I got to work on two books along these meandering lines, *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*. I know well enough that they’re still full of academic elements, they’re heavy going, but they’re an attempt to jolt, set in motion, something inside me, *to treat writing as a flow, not a code*” (my emphasis). See Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 7.

<sup>15</sup> But is it not already underway? When did this investigation actually begin? Months ago when I came across Boundas’s essay and a few lines in it that stood out to me? Or has it not even started yet, as I have not yet written the text that will comprise the “actual” investigation? And even after I have written it, will I immediately stop thinking about it, as if the issue has been fully resolved, taken care of? Or, despite all we have said so far, have we always just been flowing through the middle? Of course, this middle would be new and different...

## II. Bergsonian Meditations and the Sorites Paradox

The first part of our investigation involves a return to Bergson—one of Deleuze’s primary philosophical influences—and for a simple reason: in *LS*, Deleuze is attempting to think process rigorously—that is, to conceive of reality or nature as process “all the way down”.<sup>16</sup> Of course, in doing this, Deleuze is appropriating perhaps *the* Bergsonian thesis—that is, that “reality is mobility”;<sup>17</sup> that the universe does not consist of things-made but rather of things-in-the-making;<sup>18</sup> and that there is not first a finite series of discrete, immobile objects *which then* move but rather a more fundamental movement or flow out of which “things” are perceived, individuated, identified. In other words, in *LS*, Deleuze is attempting to draw-out some of the implications of a world that is primarily becoming, not simply *Being*.

Now, Deleuze (and Bergson before him) is aware that this is a strange, even counter-intuitive idea. Are there not some things that *just are*—for instance, “a chair, a garden, the Great Pyramid over a fixed period or Adam once he has sinned: are these not identical over time?”<sup>19</sup> Yet, consider the following three claims, the first from Deleuze, the second from James Williams, and the third from Deleuze and Claire Parnet together: “everything is event”,<sup>20</sup> “An event is a process”,<sup>21</sup> and “It is not easy to think in terms of the event [...] it is terror but also great joy” (*D* 66).<sup>22</sup> We thus have this equation:

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<sup>16</sup> I borrow this phrasing from Sean Bowden’s *The Priority of Events*. See Sean Bowden, *The Priority of Events: Deleuze’s Logic of Sense* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 30.

<sup>17</sup> Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 49.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> James Williams, “Event,” in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Charles Stivale (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2011), 83.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>22</sup> I will embed in the body of the text the pagination of Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam’s English translation of Deleuze and Claire Parnet’s *Dialogues* from Columbia University Press, and will refer to it as *D*.

EVERYTHING = EVENT = PROCESS = DIFFICULT TO THINK IN TERMS OF.

Perhaps it is the case, then, that in order to “successfully” grapple with any rigorous process philosophy, we must risk undergoing this terrifying yet potentially joyful experience, even in the face of rather obvious objections.<sup>23</sup>

So, what “proof” do we have recourse to in order to establish the primacy of process over the view which takes reality or nature to consist of a collection of discrete stabilities? We will attempt to provide one (or several). Imagine, for instance, a cup of coffee sitting in front of you with its lid off. At time  $t_1$ , we measure the coffee’s temperature and the reading on our thermometer is  $70^\circ\text{C}$ . We measure the coffee’s temperature again at time  $t_2$  and our thermometer now reads  $69^\circ\text{C}$ . Our question, then, is basic: how do we explain the change? Does the coffee “leap” from one state of temperature to another, with no in-between state? Of course, this is absurd—there must have been an in-between state. Indeed, we could have just taken a temperature reading in-between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  in order to discover it. But a problem immediately confronts us: are we to perform this procedure to infinity? For we want to *explain* the change that did, in fact, occur, yet we fail to provide a totally coherent explanation if we do not include in our explanation the “gulf” between the states at  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , or the multiple (infinite) gulfs implicitly established in the subsequent (infinite) positing of additional states.

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<sup>23</sup> We must recall what was stated in Chapter One, namely, that thinking in terms of “stabilities” is an inevitable feature of practical life; it becomes a problem, however, if we maintain those habits of thought when we crossover into the domain of metaphysics. See Chapter One, Note 24. See also Peter Gratton, *Speculative Realism: Problems and Prospects* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 133: “by concentrating on things or objects, “we leave behind something untapped of the fluidity of the world,” the “movements, vibrations, transformations that occur below the threshold of perception and calculation.” This, however, is not “some fault,” but is in line with Darwinian adaptation: “we could not function ... without some ability to skelatize [the real], to diagram or simplify it””. Gratton is here quoting from Elizabeth Grosz’ *Time Travels*.



The problem is essentially this, then: within a seemingly finite amount of time, the coffee passes through an infinite number of possible states in-between 70 and 69°C. For there is nothing stopping us from dividing infinitely. But similarly, insofar as we *do* decide to embark on this project of division, *we will never avoid leaving unexplained the gaps in-between the stable points we posit*. This is the Bergsonian insight that Deleuze carries forward in his work.

How does Bergson “solve” it? His solution is elegant and, again, apt to cause headaches. With respect to our example of the slowly cooling coffee, the coffee is never actually “in” any of the temperature-signifying points we posit (e.g. 70°C, 69.5°C, 69°C, etc.). Rather, the coffee *flows through* any such posited points. Moreover, this flow is precisely indivisible and cannot be represented in a series of stable, unchanging signifiers. On this view of time and change, we seem to surmount the problem of discrete stabilities (e.g. temperature-states) and the chasms between them, for flows include what discrete stabilities cannot—that is, the *in-between*.

We can imagine an analogous situation that demonstrates the same point. A car is moving at 10 km/h at  $t_1$  and 30 km/h at  $t_2$ . Of course, the car cannot be moving at 10 km/h at one moment and 30 km/h *the very next moment*; the car *must by necessity* pass through every in-between speed in order to reach 30 km/h. Again, we miss the passage in-between the series of discrete, measured, and identified speed-states—which undoubtedly occurs—if we posit that series as the primary reality. For Bergson (and Deleuze), by contrast, any series of discrete, measured, and identified states is always secondary in relation to the more fundamental flow that underlies and explains the passage between those states.

Now, the term “flow” seems to suggest a certain kind of homogeneity. Indeed, insofar as we are speaking of indivisible flows, as opposed to various series of isolated differences, we seem to be speaking of flows that are precisely single, homogeneous. Deleuze, however, following Bergson, wishes to theorize flows that are heterogeneous. In other words, he wishes to theorize single, indivisible flows *that differ with themselves*—that is, flows that endure as differing internally. But how might this be possible? Are we not just substituting one paradox for another? How might a thing—that is, a flow—endure as differing with itself? We will have to say more.

The first thing we must ask is this: what is meant by “heterogeneity” in our usage? A homogeneous difference suggests a difference of degree or quantity, or a difference along the same, one-dimensional scale (e.g. the difference between 70°C and 69°C). By contrast, a heterogeneous difference suggests a difference in kind, nature, or of quality, or a difference that cannot be organized according to a single criterion that takes measure of the elements that are said to differ heterogeneously. These latter differences might be described as incommensurable. The question, of course, is whether or not there are phenomena that display *within themselves* and across time these latter differences. We do have cases of such phenomena. Take, for example, a kettle of water coming to a boil. Water flows through an infinite number of temperature-states on its way to 100°C, at which point the water changes nature from liquid to steam. But how might we account for this qualitative change? On the one hand, we have seemingly two separate flows (and not *merely* two series of discrete points)—that is, the flow of the liquid and the flow of the steam; on the other hand, we have a single, continuous, and undivided process. Thus, a paradox: one and two, simultaneously. For we wish to affirm that there are two

separate—heterogeneous—“things” that constitute the process of water coming to a boil, but we also cannot deny that it is only on the basis of “what” the steam “was” prior to becoming steam that we can account for the steam’s emergence at all. The paradox, then, consists in affirming what seems impossible: that the two flows are simultaneously (1) connected in a single and undivided flow (and thus not really two), *and* (2) genuinely separate from each other, insofar as they differ in nature from each other.

It is understandable at this point to wonder how we have made a problem out of something so common, everyday, “normal”. Indeed, is this not insanity? Let us simply discover the switch-point between liquid and steam and move on. At  $t_1$  the entity in question was measured at  $99.9^\circ\text{C}$  and was still “in” a liquid state, and at  $t_2$  it was measured at  $100^\circ\text{C}$  and was “in” a steam state. Done. Easy. In one instant, liquid, and in the very next instant, steam; *one thing, then another*. Of course, we already see how this explanation is deficient: we have yet to account for the flow between the instants that explains how the one became the other. Headaches.

And even more headaches await us. Might we posit an in-between state wherein “liquid” falls to one side as the instant immediately prior and “steam” falls to the other as the instant immediately following? But it appears that that move will not help us out either, for now we have three heterogeneous instants or “points”: first instant = liquid; the very next instant (the proposed switch-point) = neither liquid nor steam; and the very next instant after the second instant in our series = steam. This “neither-state” strikes us as absurd. Could the switch-point, alternatively, be an instance of “both-at-the-same-time”, just as Alice is becoming larger and smaller at the same time?<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> This is, of course, the puzzling trope that opens *LS*. Jay Lampert offers thirteen interpretations of what Deleuze could mean by this trope. See Jay Lampert, *Deleuze and Guattari’s Philosophy of History*

This is the problem we are grappling with, then: how might we theorize a “point of contact” between natures that *should* not have one? Just as Rene Descartes was immediately probed by his contemporaries on the specifics of how mind and body could interact if they were, as he claimed, ontologically distinct (i.e. qualitatively different, or different in nature), we are faced with what is essentially the same difficulty. For “objects” are said to differ in nature from each other insofar as there is no situation in which one *is* the other (e.g. steam is not water and neither is water, steam; they are two distinct “realities”). Descartes’s dualism appears to fail to be able to give a satisfying account of how the mental and the physical interact, which they most certainly seem to, as is evidenced in cases of the consumption of physical chemicals that undoubtedly alter our consciousness. Insofar as there is interaction, communication, or connection, though, it must be the case that there is indeed a situation in which the one is the other—that is, in which the physical (the first “heterogeneity”) *is* the mental (the second “heterogeneity”), or in our case, in which the water *is* the steam and vice versa.<sup>25</sup> Again, this illustration simply demonstrates that the problem of theorizing change over time—a problem dear to Bergson and Deleuze—involves the paradoxical positing of a point of contact (an inseparability, or a relation) and a qualitative distinction (a separability, or a non-relation).<sup>26</sup>

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(London: Continuum, 2006), 97-113. Moreover, in the same chapter, Lampert criticizes “flux” interpretations of Deleuze that take Deleuze to be arguing that becoming is “undifferentiated”. On such interpretations, Alice is *neither* larger nor smaller at the moment of becoming, even though Deleuze explicitly states that she is *both*. My line of argument perhaps demonstrates the grounds on which Lampert makes his criticism.

<sup>25</sup> For an excellent discussion of the problem of interaction in mind-body dualism, see John Russon, *Human Experience: Philosophy, Neurosis, and the Elements of Everyday Life* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2003), 23-4.

<sup>26</sup> Some foreshadowing: in *LS*, Deleuze refers to the Mobius strip—a so-called “non-orientable” object, which has the peculiar characteristic that it is impossible to definitively state the point at which the inside becomes the outside and vice versa, as the strip technically has only one side, even if there is always another point in the same position on the “other” side. See, for example, *LS* 11.

Now, we must realize that what we have just been considering—that is, the seeming fact of qualitative change and the impossibility of representing or stabilizing the moment of transformation—concerns *all that is*, and not just liquids heating and cooling, or cars accelerating and decelerating. To restate the claim we first made at the beginning of this section, and that was also made in Chapter One, reality or nature and all of its constitutive elements is/are *primarily* processual, flowing, becoming, and in precisely this paradoxical fashion. We reiterate this claim for the simple reason that our very lives must then be conceived as primarily heterogeneous “lines” and not *just* a series of discrete “points” or instants. Consider, for example, our psychic life. We tend to describe that personal, “mental”, “inner” experience as one of discrete “mental states”—e.g. *I felt this way, then had that memory, then thought this thought*, and so on. But this positing is precisely retrospective—that is, it is only *after* we have experienced all of those things that we order them in succession that way. In experience as it is lived, however, our “mental states” *interpenetrate*. It is not *strictly* a matter of autonomous images that line-up side-by-side; we must also always consider the indivisible flow that explains their emergence.

Of course, there is definitely a sense in which there is heterogeneity, novelty, or distinctness in our psychic life. Indeed, we do not wish to say—and this brings us back again to the paradox of internal difference—that the flow of psychic life is so smooth that it is entirely undifferentiated. Consider, as Bergson asks us to, the “interior”, conscious life of an individual who receives the exact same stimulus over time. Their consciousness cannot remain identical with itself for two consecutive moments, as we are *remembering* beings; each present moment will differ from every other previous moment of that

person's conscious life, for at each new moment, the past that conditions it and explains its emergence is slightly larger than the previous unity of all passed moments. For Bergson, as for Deleuze, the entire past *coexists* with the present at every moment, and because of this, every moment will by necessity differ with every other moment already-passed *and* yet-to-come. Christian Kerslake explains,

Mental representations must appear as part of a developing whole, which is in one respect enduring (it prolongs the experience of the past), and in another respect, open to novelty (the accumulation of the past in the present means that one tends to bring an increasingly complex mental background to what one experiences now, which makes experience of repeated events qualitatively different to their occurrences).<sup>27</sup>

We have thus encountered our problem. It is because of “memory”—that is, the flowing unity of the entire past (which is never fully, or even close to fully, accessible to our consciousness)—that the present appears as it does; and yet, it is for precisely this reason that what appears differs with every other conscious moment.<sup>28</sup> In other words, we always drag the entire past with us—which is unceasingly becoming larger—into the ever-new present, which is formed in part by that flowing past.<sup>29</sup> Both novelty and flow,

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<sup>27</sup> Christian Kerslake, *Deleuze and the Unconscious* (London: Continuum, 2007), 9.

<sup>28</sup> We are here positing an unconscious. For those who might be skeptical of such a thing, simply consider *any* of your experiences and how they are possible. Right now, I am sitting in my living room, and I occasionally glance outside at the backyard, and occasionally remember how many pages of my thesis I am responsible for writing today, as well as my trip to Toronto tonight, and so on. I am not explicitly aware of any of these things at any given moment—they are not “there” permanently in consciousness—but yet I am not surprised every time those thoughts do “resurface” (e.g. ‘Oh my god, when did that backyard get there?!’). Simply, my experience in the present can only appear as it does on the basis of the entire past, the smallest fractions of which occasionally become “present”—the rest “just is”, already “makes sense”, and as a mostly smooth continuation of all of the passed moments prior, which I am not explicitly conscious of.

<sup>29</sup> We might put this idea yet another way. Memory does not come after perception, but rather precedes it; and at the same time, what appears in perception will differ, even if only slightly, from all that is memory.

irreducibly linked but without an identity between them. And we must consider this view in contradistinction to the one that sees only isolated, juxtaposable mental states.

We might provide one last demonstration of the reality of heterogeneous flows, which drives home the claim about incommensurability. One of Bergson's contemporaries, Gustav Fechner, believed that there was a measurable relation between the application of a stimulus to a live body and that live body's "response".<sup>30</sup> Imagine, for example, a sharp knife's edge being slowly "applied" to your bare arm. The pressure applied to the knife's edge is increased at a consistent and measurable rate (e.g. one pound of pressure at  $t_1$ , two pounds at  $t_2$ , etc.). On Fechner's hypothesis, the sensations you would experience would increase in a measurably analogous way to the increase of the application of the stimulus. In other words, we would be able, at least theoretically, to represent the relation between stimulus and response on a single grid; the flow of the response would be a perfect function of the flow of stimulus. This is to say, then, that Fechner believed that both movements could be quantified. Bergson, however, denied this.

For Bergson, even if the stimulus could be measured, it would be impossible to discover a mathematical relation between it and the flow of sensations in us. What Fechner overlooked, according to Bergson, was precisely the heterogeneity of our experience—that is, the qualitative transformations that characterize our living. To continue with our example, then: when the pressure of the knife edge against our skin is slowly but consistently increased, the sensations we experience do not simply differ with themselves quantitatively or numerically; rather, we pass through various *thresholds*

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<sup>30</sup> See Kerslake, *Deleuze and the Unconscious*, 10-16, from where I take this example.

where our sensations take on irreducibly different characters. We might at first hardly notice the blade, *and* then find it irritating, *and* then painful, *and* then excruciating, and so on. These are, as Kerslake points out, “qualitative leaps” in sensation, which amount to changes of nature.<sup>31</sup>

There are thus two points we wish to make: (1) the (paradoxical) process of reality might be characterized as both indivisibly flowing and constantly self-differing; and (2) what we have been describing this whole time are versions of the sorites paradox, which, as Len Lawlor points out, are what drive Deleuze’s *LS*.<sup>32</sup> The sorites paradox has to do with the problem of identifying a moment of transformation. In its classical forms, we might ask when precisely a person went from non-baldness to baldness, or when precisely a “heap” of sand ceases being a heap. But the sorites paradox is, in a very important sense, everywhere, as reality is becoming (i.e. flowing and self-differing). We might ask (to take some accessible, “human” examples): *when* did she become depressed? Or, *when* will I understand Deleuze?<sup>33</sup> In the former case, we are effectively asking, ‘When did that flow transform into this one?’ And in the latter, our question is, ‘When will this flow transform into another?’ Or, put otherwise, “What happened?” and “What is going to happen?” *How did we get here and where are we going?* For there was (seemingly) a time of “stable” mental health; and with enough effort and patience, there will be a time of understanding Deleuze. And yet, in each case, there was or will be indivisible, imperceptible flow. Perhaps one wakes up one day and realizes that they are

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>32</sup> Leonard Lawlor, “What Happened? What is Going to Happen? An Essay on the Experience of the Event,” unpublished, 23, note 28, last accessed July 9, 2015, <http://plone4prod.la.psu.edu/philosophy/documents/>. See also *LS* 8, where Deleuze explicitly mentions the sorites paradox.

<sup>33</sup> And when will a fetus become a fully-fledged and rights-bearing human person?



depressed; but what happened in-between? What preceded this new “state”? We seemed to have never perceived this middle. Indeed, it was imperceptible.<sup>34</sup> And, in many ways, so is Deleuze (at least until he is no longer, at which point he will have *already* been understood, just as one might very well realize, in an instant, that they *have been* depressed for some time).

### III. In-Between Bergson and Deleuze

What, then, have we tried to establish up to this point, and where are we going with it? We have so far argued that Deleuze seems to want to theorize seemingly mutually exclusive explanations of the dynamics of time and reality (or, perhaps, the time of reality) *simultaneously*. For to claim that movement is secondary in relation to the primacy of “objectivity” is to fall prey to the very real problem of (infinite) “analysis”, which is, again, the method by which we reduce the reality of process to a series of successive “states” but leave unexplained, in turn, the passage between those states. To avoid this problem, Deleuze affirms the primacy of flow (or becoming), which is to say that he affirms the primacy of indivisible and unrepresentable movement. But just because he affirms this, it does not follow that the flow of reality is undifferentiated, entirely homogeneous, or of one unit of measure.<sup>35</sup> In other words, flow is primary, but flows also admit of succession. We attempted to demonstrate this with three examples: water coming to a boil, the dynamics of everyday psychic life, and the experience of the application of a steadily increasing stimulus. What each example tried to show is that all

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<sup>34</sup> Just as the transition states “between” water and steam are unavailable to perception.

<sup>35</sup> If we carry Deleuze’s logic to the limit on this point, we might say, for example, that any given speed is qualitatively (and not just quantitatively) distinct from all other speeds. Reducing the infinite range of qualitatively distinct speeds to one common measure—that is, number—obscures or flattens this qualitative difference. In essence, to quantify phenomena is to impoverish them.

things endure as differing with themselves—that is, that we must try to think the paradoxical thought that changes of nature or quality always arise on the basis of a prior flow and at the very same time distance themselves from that flow through their heterogeneity. Put otherwise, the imperceptible point marking the division between “natures” is also a point of contact (i.e. a point of “both-at-the-same-time”). This led us to consider the sorites paradox, which illustrates precisely this problem of pinpointing a moment of transformation. We then tried to show, albeit briefly, that the moment of transformation is always something that we are awaiting or something that is perceived too late. This last idea is central to Deleuze’s thought and is certainly a main theme in *LS*.

Now, hopefully, it is through this analysis that we are placing ourselves in a better position for understanding *LS* and its claims about destiny and necessity.<sup>36</sup> And how? Because one of the crucial distinctions that *LS* draws is the Stoic one between “bodies” and “incorporeals”, which, as Constantin Boundas claims, are “actual” and “virtual”, respectively.<sup>37</sup> Now, it is our hypothesis that the latter distinction between actual and virtual has already been suggested in what we have so far stated. Of course, we will have to parse out how this is the case, but the actual/virtual distinction is absolutely central to our investigation of Deleuzian freedom, for Boundas speaks of freedom being a quality of the virtual.<sup>38</sup> Thus, we will turn to this distinction, which undoubtedly constitutes a very large piece of the puzzle we are in the process of assembling.

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<sup>36</sup> Let us also hope that we eventually make the leap, or alternately, find ourselves having already leapt, from “positioning” to directly grappling. Or are we *already* past that? Have we already leapt?

<sup>37</sup> Boundas, “Problem of Freedom,” 225.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

#### IV. The Actual and the Virtual

Essentially, the difference between “points” and “lines” or succession and flow *is* the difference between the actual and the virtual. For Deleuze, in order to give an adequate account of reality, we need both—that is, reality must be both actual and virtual simultaneously, *even if there cannot be an identity between these two real dimensions*. Indeed, Todd May tells us that there is always a realm of “virtual difference” that is immanent to the *actual* present.<sup>39</sup> In other words, what *is* always has within itself a certain (“virtual”) potential to be(come) otherwise. But we must also emphasize, again, that these two dimensions are paradoxically distinct or heterogeneous, *even if they are of the same one world*.<sup>40</sup> Now, to be sure, this is a complex thought, but we will provide an example in hopes of illustrating the sense of it. Thus, to pursue further an experience we pointed to earlier, consider the process of “getting” Deleuze—that is, consider the experience of *insight*. One spends weeks reading Deleuze and articles on his philosophy, all along the way taking notes and experimenting with possible lines of connection and flight, but still there is “nothing”. Nothing resonates with anything else, nothing flows; all that exists, at least for this person, is a jumbled series of points with no intuitive lines in-between. Then, all of a sudden, like lightning, insight erupts and the points are no longer just points but are endowed with a larger significance that exceeds them.<sup>41</sup> One

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<sup>39</sup> May, *Gilles Deleuze*, 56.

<sup>40</sup> See *LS* 103: “Far from being individual or personal, singularities preside over the genesis of individuals and persons; they are distributed in a “potential” which admits neither Self nor I, but which produces them by actualizing or realizing itself, *although the figures of this actualization do not at all resemble the realized potential*” (my emphasis). See also *LS* 99: “The foundation can never resemble what it founds. It does not suffice to say of the foundation that it is another matter—it is also another geography, without being another world”.

<sup>41</sup> My comparison of the moment of insight to lightning striking is owed to Hanjo Berressem, who mentioned it in the excellent talk he gave at Trent University on March 13, 2014, entitled “Lightning and Philosophy”.

transitions, in an instant, from “nothing” to “something”, or better yet, from a kind of bare chaos to a tamed (but possibly still overflowing) dynamism. Here, we seem to have a clear-cut case of one event that is *immediately* followed by another event of a qualitatively different nature: non-understanding at one moment, and understanding the very next.

But, just like lightning striking, there is a continuous and imperceptible development that constructs in advance what only later results in a certain visibility or identity.<sup>42</sup> This is to say that there is indeed succession, but that there is also a flow that precedes and gives rise to it, which no one ever sees beforehand. So, to use the Deleuzian terminology, both insight and lightning are “actualized” at a particular time and in a particular space—they become perceptible, identifiable; but both phenomena—both appearances—are part of larger processes that precede them and that have a history of operation that stretches back long before anyone (or anything) takes note. It is this latter phase—continuous and imperceptible—that Deleuze calls the “virtual”. For Deleuze, it is always out of the field of the virtual that actualization emerges.<sup>43</sup>

There are at least two corollaries of this idea. The first is this: by the time insight is actualized, for instance, it is experienced precisely as already-passed, for one “sees” that the weeks of “nothing” were never strictly nothing. Indeed, there was a virtual flow into the present actualization of insight—that is, it was on the basis of the entire, coexistent past that the present of insight could be actualized at all. We might say, then,

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<sup>42</sup> As Berressem noted in his talk, the lightning’s path is “invisibly” constructed from the ground upwards, and not from the sky downwards, as one might at first think. Deleuze says as much in *Difference and Repetition*: “Lightning, for example, distinguishes itself from the black sky but must also trail it behind, as though it were distinguishing itself from that which does not distinguish itself from it. It is as if the ground rose to the surface, without ceasing to be ground”. See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 28.

<sup>43</sup> May, *Gilles Deleuze*, 52.

that actualization effectively amounts to a reorganization or recomposition of *what was already there*, and thus, that there is a paradoxical sense in which after the moment of insight, although reality has not (physically) transformed at all, it has yet transformed significantly (at the level of sense, meaning, or significance).<sup>44</sup>

The second corollary of our original sketch of the dynamics of the actual and virtual is this: with respect to our example of insight, there is a very important sense in which our insight is never final or total, for that very insight now belongs to a virtual flow whose outcome is yet to be determined, or whose re-actualization we are constantly awaiting. And is this not confirmed by the fact that *scholars* of Deleuze *continue* to read him, even after professing to understand him? They continue to read Deleuze because there is a virtual dimension to his texts that allow for infinite expression, that permit us to speak of the always yet-to-come of the sense of Deleuze. Deleuze: always to be inserted into other discourses and problems, and always for other times.<sup>45</sup>

Of course, there is an equally important sense in which actualizations cannot be undone, even if their sense is never fully stable. Indeed, Deleuze does not believe that we can roll back time and prevent what has already been actualized. Every time one opens their copy of *LS* to a particular page, the physical arrangement of words on that page will always be identical to the arrangement one encountered previously (on that page). Similarly, insight happened, lightning struck, a whole series of bodies collided on

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<sup>44</sup> Recall *A Thousand Plateaus*: a dimension added or subtracted from a multiplicity results in a change in nature for that multiplicity. Thus—and this is the point we are trying to establish—the smallest fragment—a single sentence, perhaps—could transform the sense of an entire thesis project.

<sup>45</sup> We should note here that the idea that the sense of a text is “inexhaustible” need not entail relativism (the position that would hold, in this case, that any interpretation is just as “good” as any other). There might very well be an infinite number of good readings of Deleuze, and similarly, an infinite number of not-so-good readings. For example, it would likely be extremely difficult if not impossible to persuasively argue that Deleuze’s philosophy is practically indistinguishable from mainstream Christian theology.

September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001—these things are now necessities. The point we wish to emphasize, though, is that despite this necessity of past events, their effects are always as yet unknown. And as a consequence of this, events come to depend for their sense on the unknown future where they continue to have unforeseen effects, just as much as they depend for their sense on their necessary actualization in the past. Consider the following two examples. First example: the event (read: the process) of a year-long struggle to finish a thesis project. The sense of this event is always under construction, always in the process of becoming even after the struggle is technically over. For if the thesis is completed, one comes to interpret the event of the struggle as “worth it” and “character-building” and so on, but if it is not completed, the sense of the event is entirely different, becoming “a waste of time”, “pointless”, “time that would have been better spent doing other things”, and so on. This is the inescapable “yet-to-come” or openness of the event, granted to us by the indeterminate future. The second example, which I take from Slavoj Žižek, demonstrates the same phenomenon, except at the level of world-historical events.<sup>46</sup> Žižek speaks of the October Revolution at the time of its happening (1917) and then at the time of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. The sense of the event at the time of its happening might reasonably have been regarded (at least by a good number) as something of a milestone in progressive politics, but by the time of the Soviet Union’s disintegration many decades later (and with the alleged global triumph of liberal-capitalism), its sense has transformed dramatically and is much more likely to indicate

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<sup>46</sup> In his remarkably clear foreword to Molly Rothenberg’s *The Excessive Subject*, Žižek, although not a Deleuzian, frequently makes use of Deleuzian ideas. See Slavoj Žižek, foreword to *The Excessive Subject: A New Theory of Social Change*, by Molly Anne Rothenberg (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010), ix-xxi.

the beginning of utter catastrophe and a failed political experiment. As Žižek puts it, it “is no longer the same historical event”.<sup>47</sup>

There are four summary points that we wish to make, then, with respect to this important distinction (which plays a large, although covert role in *LS*). The first is this: there is a certain layering, folding, or coiling of the virtual within the actual, even as these two dimensions of reality are ontologically distinct. The actual emerges from the virtual, yet the latter is not exhausted by its actualization, and remains excessive to its actualization.<sup>48</sup> In other words, the two dimensions coexist with each other, in a relation that is also a kind of non-relation. Moreover, as Jack Reynolds suggests, the actual is what is created or produced, while the virtual is the process of creation or production.<sup>49</sup> This entails that the actual creation *exists* (in the present), while the process of creation, strictly, does not, but can rather be said to *inhere* or *subsist* (in past and future, and) in what exists (we will return to this point about temporality in the next section). The second summary point is that this actual/virtual relation might be demonstrated through the example of the phenomenon of insight. For we must always account for the virtual, continuous, and flowing past inhering in the present that explains the actualization that is the (involuntary) flash of insight, which thus marks (1) the *middle* of a process that started long before that actualization, and (2) a qualitative transformation of what *is*. The third summary point is that this “stability” of virtual sense in an actualization is itself subsumed in the flow of becoming, insofar as the indeterminate future can come to

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<sup>47</sup> Žižek, foreword, xvii.

<sup>48</sup> Todd May puts it like this: “the virtual actualizes itself [...] but it is not actual”. See May, *Gilles Deleuze*, 48.

<sup>49</sup> Jack Reynolds, “Wounds and Scars: Deleuze on the Time and Ethics of the Event,” in *Deleuze Studies* 1, no. 2 (2007): 146.

*express* the event of that insight differently. The fourth summary point is that actualizations cannot, strictly, be undone, even if the indeterminate future comes to offer us alternate interpretations of them. And there is also an additional fifth point we can make, too (that is not exactly a repetition): for Deleuze, the actualization is the “accident”, but the pure, virtual sense-event is not. Deleuze, for example, publishes a book, which is an actualization or crystallization of his thought in a particular space and time, in the present. Yet, the words that fell on the page that constitute that book were by no means the only ones that could have expressed Deleuze’s thought. Indeed, it was only by chance that his book became actualized as it did, as the pure and immaterial expression of his thought could have taken any number of actual, corporeal forms. This is why Jack Reynolds tells us, as Deleuze does also in *LS*, that the eternal truth of the event is *irreducible* to the (actualized) bodies that happen to express it.<sup>50</sup> There is, in other words, a part of the event—the virtual part—that forever remains un-actualizable, which is to again emphasize the heterogeneity of, and connection between, the two dimensions of reality.

## **V. Introducing *The Logic of Sense* and the Body/Incorporeal Distinction**

Now, we have spoken of actuality and virtuality at length for a simple reason: the distinction maps onto the Stoic one found in *LS* between “bodies” and “incorporeals”. In other words, for Deleuze, (material) bodies are actual, whereas (immaterial) incorporeals are virtual.<sup>51</sup> There are three initial points we must make with respect to this distinction, so as to introduce *LS* and some of its themes. The first, to repeat, is that both the Stoics

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 154. See also *LS* 161, where Deleuze suggests that the truth of the event should not be confused with its inevitable actualization.

<sup>51</sup> In *LS*, as far as I can tell, Deleuze never actually refers to “actual bodies” or “virtual incorporeals”. This is why we referred above to the actual/virtual distinction as covert.



and Deleuze see the distinction as preserving freedom (*LS* 6; 169); it is thus quite important for the investigation at hand. The second has to do with Deleuze's basic thesis in *LS*, which has already just been suggested, namely, that incorporeality (i.e. sense, meaning, or significance) is irreducible to corporeality, either in the form of a signified body or a linguistic signifier (written or vocalized). In other words, in any given proposition, both the object denoted and the object's representation are themselves bodies, but sense "can never itself be bodily",<sup>52</sup> even if sense must be *expressed through* corporeality, and is thus dependent on it. It is in this way that sense is said to lie "at the boundary between propositions and things" (21), without ever wholly merging with either. *LS* wishes to give an account or an ontology of sense, then, wherein sense is precisely *non-existent*.<sup>53</sup>

In his *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation*, Joe Hughes offers an excellent discussion of this second point that gives the context we need in order to make better sense of what precisely Deleuze is up to in *LS*.<sup>54</sup> According to Hughes, Deleuze essentially inherits the legacy of transcendental phenomenology as it was practiced in France at the time of his writing. The task of this phenomenology "was to describe how meaning could be produced out of completely meaningless corporeal experience".<sup>55</sup> On this point, Hughes refers to Freud, who, while not a phenomenologist, proposed two radically different accounts of why we are the way we are. Is the answer to be found in the Freud of (what has become essentially) pop psychology, wherein the dynamics of

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<sup>52</sup> Lampert, *Philosophy of History*, 105.

<sup>53</sup> John Sellars, "An Ethics of the Event: Deleuze's Stoicism," in *Angelaki* 2, no. 3 (2006): 157.

<sup>54</sup> See Joe Hughes, *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* (London: Continuum, 2007), 20-47, for an extremely clear and rigorous discussion of Deleuze's project in *LS*.

<sup>55</sup> Hughes, *Genesis of Representation*, 44.

psychic life are explained in terms of *meanings* (e.g. the intelligible Oedipus complex); or is the answer to be found in the Freud of biological and chemical—that is, purely physical and mechanical—reductionism, wherein meanings are essentially meaningless when it comes to our psychic constitution? Or perhaps both accounts are correct, but if that is the case, how would we ever sort out *the relation* between the two—that is, “between a meaningless libidinal economy and a meaningful psychology”?<sup>56</sup> In *LS*, Deleuze is concerned with precisely these relations, the *genesis* that allows one to emerge from the other, and the (paradoxical) link that would account for the genesis.<sup>57</sup>

The third point with respect to the distinction between bodies and incorporeals has to do with its function, at least in the hands of Deleuze. For it is not entirely clear why Deleuze would appropriate (at least parts of) a fairly antiquated ontology, given his interest in contemporary math and science, among other things. Six pages into *LS*, however, Deleuze suggests that the Stoic “causal cleavage”—that is, the causal relations that obtain between bodies and incorporeals—is “genius” and amounts to “an upheaval in philosophy” (*LS* 6). Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, this distinction is an expression of the first “reversal of Platonism” (7). Several years later, Deleuze and Claire Parnet express the same idea in different words: the Stoic cleavage is “[a] new way of getting rid of the IS” (*D* 63). And how? Through its mobilization, we might no longer speak of what *is* in terms of “limited and measured things” (*LS* 1), of fixed qualities and immobile essences, but are rather able to do so in terms of “the language of events”—that

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>57</sup> We might put the point in the form of a series of questions: simply, how does the actual arise out of the virtual? Or, how does the “solid” and representable arise out of the “fluid” and imperceptible? Or, again, how does the product relate to the process of production? It should be noted that ever since Kant’s famous “Copernican Revolution”, most European philosophers have taken as their starting point the idea that the world of “ready-made things” is a product, and Deleuze is (at this point, obviously) no exception.

is, “the verbs of pure becoming” (3). For Plato spoke of *eternal* Ideas amidst materiality in process, but Deleuze wishes to theorize process of *both* sides, process all the way down. Thus, Deleuze believes Stoic theory captures this dynamic, which emphasizes “attributes” over (stable) qualities or properties (of stable subjects or objects).<sup>58</sup> Verbs in the infinitive, or attributes, express limitless becomings.

## VI. Bodies and Incorporeals: In More Depth

Perhaps we moved a bit fast through that last introductory section. And to be sure, we still do not know how freedom works in *LS*, even if we know that a certain Stoic distinction is what allegedly guarantees it. In fact, the body/incorporeal distinction is itself not fully fleshed out, even if it we know that it closely resembles the distinction between the actual and the virtual. And similarly, what of the *causal* cleavage? We have yet to discuss causality at all. It is this section that aims to set the record straight, as best we can.

The basic structure of Stoic ontology that Deleuze rehabilitates in *LS* is as follows. For the Stoics, the highest ontological term is not *Being*, but rather *Something*, under which is included *Being* and *Nonbeing*. For them, existent things are physical bodies (*somata*), whereas non-existent things are meta-physical non-bodies, incorporeals (*asomata*). The Stoics identify four incorporeals, but Deleuze is interested in only one of them—*lekta*, or “sayables” (i.e. sense).<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Deleuze is concerned to interrogate the (strange) relations that characterize the interactions between bodies and sayables. In a

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<sup>58</sup> To take a favourite example, “Gilles is heterosexual” is a proposition that seems to imply the stability of both subject and predicate. “Gilles” is taken to be a stable subject and the predicate “heterosexual” is taken to designate a stable quality or property. A rigorous process philosophy would have to deny the stability of both and speak of the process of each—that is, of the process of materiality and conceptuality.

<sup>59</sup> The other three incorporeals are “void”, “place”, and “time”. For a brief description of these other incorporeals, see Bowden, *Priority of Events*, 19-26.

nutshell: bodies *cause* incorporeals, but incorporeals are not themselves causal; the latter are, however, “quasi-causal”. In other words, Deleuze articulates a Stoicism that theorizes two different causalities, one for each “realm”, which, in a very special (and paradoxical) way, work in tandem with each other (Deleuze refers to a “double causality” in *LS*<sup>60</sup>). We are already beginning to see a certain theme recur here—that is, of a strange dualism that is at the same time a monism, or of a relation that is also a qualitative separation. Let us go a little further to see how exactly this might be so.

On the one hand, then, we have bodies. They are physical, exist in “the depths”, are “substances” or “happenings”,<sup>61</sup> have a “thickness” (*LS* 5), in their various collections are referred to as “actual states of affairs”,<sup>62</sup> are causes (4), and are “force” (5). Moreover, “*Everything* is a compound of bodies” (*D* 62, my emphasis), and these bodies constantly “interpenetrate, force each other, poison each other, insinuate themselves into each other, withdraw, reinforce or destroy each other” (63). Examples of these interpenetrations and withdrawals proliferate in Deleuze: a drop of wine in the ocean and liquid poured out of a vase (*LS* 5-6); the fire’s penetration of iron, the consumption of organic matter, and the rubbing of genitals in the act of love (*D* 63); a knife cutting the flesh, the ingestion of something a body “perceives” as toxic (and the corresponding bodily reaction), stubbing one’s toe, and skin making contact with a germ that results in a pimple (65); even Nietzsche’s insanity and death are described in terms of “general paralysis, a corporeal syphilitic *mixture*” (*LS* 108, my emphasis). All that *exists*, for the Stoics as for Deleuze, are bodies that are constantly mixing and un-mixing.

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<sup>60</sup> See *LS* 94-9.

<sup>61</sup> Boundas, “Problem of Freedom,” 226.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

But, on the other hand, there are the *non-existent* things we have to account for, too. These are incorporeals, which go by many other names. They are the ideational or meta-physical effects or results (of bodily actions and passions) (*LS* 5); they are events, sense, or the expressed;<sup>63</sup> they are “extra-Being” (7), frolicking at the surface (of *Being*) (5); they are logical or dialectical “attributes”, or verbs (in the infinitive), or “ways of being” (5); they are themselves impassive, sterile, or causally inefficacious; they are *without substance*, skimming over physical things in the depths (*D* 65); they imply a becoming-unlimited (*LS* 9); they are also virtual, not actual.<sup>64</sup> But, in light of the last clause, we have to revise what we were just saying: incorporeal sense-effects or virtual sense-events precisely *are not*, insofar as they do not strictly exist, but rather “subsist” or “inhere” in what is (5). Incorporeals, as processes: “Never present but always yet to come and already passed” (100), expressing the becoming underlying the actual—that is, the becoming from which the actual originates and the future that it is becoming, and where its effects are as yet unknown. Deleuze refers to the “non-yet actualized event” (144) for this very reason: incorporeal sense-events are precisely not actual, qualitatively distinct from the actual (even if, to repeat, both are real). And once again, what occurs (i.e. what becomes actualized) is said to be an accident, whereas the event is “inside what occurs, the purely expressed” (149).

Now, Deleuze offers several examples of incorporeals (read: sense-events or sense-effects), but making sense of them seems more difficult than does making sense of his examples of the interactions in the domain of corporeality. An event could be going

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<sup>63</sup> *LS* 167: “Sense and event are the same thing”; *LS* 145: “...only incorporeal events constitute *expressed* sense” (my emphasis).

<sup>64</sup> Boudas, “Problem of Freedom,” 225.

for a walk, insofar it is allegedly not a being, but a way of being (*LS* 147). Of course, it must also be noticed that the walk acquires a body insofar as a material body—the physical linguistic signifier and its corresponding physical utterance—comes to represent it. Yet, we might say that the walk has an “eternal truth” (100) independent of its “representations-bodies” that can only ever be expressed, and thought or intuited, insofar as all processes evade representations. Deleuze also writes, with respect to possible examples of incorporeals, “Why is every event a kind of plague, war, wound, or death?” (151), and speaks at another time of “the battle” as not only “an example of an event among others”, but perhaps also as “the Event in its essence” (100). Moreover, just like our previous example of the event of going for a walk, Deleuze goes on to distinguish between the battle’s “temporal actualizations” and its neutrality with respect to those actualizations (100).

As we just previously indicated, it might be hard at this point to concretely see the difference between the entities on either side of the Stoic distinction, at least with respect to the examples we have provided. For is walking not a bodily endeavour? Our feet contact the solid ground that keeps us upright, our muscles continually contract and relax, oxygen comes to mix and coexist within our corporeality, and so on. We could describe plagues, wars, wounds, deaths, and battles in the same manner, too—that is, as corporeal mixtures and not necessarily as incorporeal events. Perhaps the issue, then, is that bodies and incorporeals can only be separated in thought, and not in practice. Love, for example, “is in the depth of bodies, but also on that incorporeal surface which engenders it” (*D* 65); similarly, “The wound is something that I receive in my body, in a particular place, at a particular moment, but there is also an eternal truth of the wound as impassive,

incorporeal event” (65). Of course, we must remember the point we have repeatedly made: the actual and virtual entertain a simultaneous coexistence, even if they are distinct from each other, insofar as the virtual *subsists* or *inheres* in the actual, and has a reality *only through* its skimming of the actual depths, on which it depends for its reality.

Now, there are two other (quite significant) elements of the Stoic distinction that have heretofore been largely ignored: time and causality. It is true that we noted that bodies are causes—indeed, we could refer to bodies as “bodies-causes”—and that incorporeals, or virtual sense-events, are mere effects or results of the interactions of bodies-causes. We also noted, albeit briefly, that the actual, insofar as it exists, does so in the present, whereas the virtual, insofar as it does not exist, is never fully realized or accomplished (in space-time), but is rather synonymous with “a becoming in itself which constantly both awaits us and precedes us” (*D* 65).<sup>65</sup> Thus, the actual *is*, insofar as it has an identity through its spatio-temporal coordinates, but the virtual *is not*, insofar as it lacks any such coordinates. But we must say more with respect to both glossed elements. First, we will say more about time.

#### Time in *LS*: Chronos and Aion

Deleuze’s discussion of time in *LS* is in one sense fairly straightforward, but in another sense, quite complicated, and the latter for the simple reason that Deleuze seems to leave a lot left unsaid about his precise aims and theses. As we have previously remarked, with Deleuze, that is often par for the course. Indeed, it is usually the reader who is left with the daunting task of discerning what Deleuze is doing and arguing. Still, there are a few things we might be able to hold onto. Right at the beginning of *LS*,

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<sup>65</sup> Compare *LS* 151-2: “On one side, there is the part of the event which is realized and accomplished; on the other, there is that “part of the event which cannot realize its accomplishment””.

Deleuze states explicitly, “There are not three successive dimensions, but two simultaneous readings of time” (*LS* 5). In other words, it is not as if time is simply a matter of past, present, and future; rather, time might be conceived of in two different ways. In *LS*, one repeatedly encounters these two readings: time as Chronos and time as Aion. On the “straightforward” account, it is according to Chronos that only the present exists (e.g. 70°C and then 69°C), while it is according to Aion that the present is precisely what does not exist, as it can only be an “instant without thickness and without extension, which [endlessly] subdivides each present into past and future” (164)—that is, into already-passed and not-yet. The latter is “an empty present which has no more thickness than a mirror” (150); the present of Chronos, by contrast, is of varying thicknesses. Moreover, we also know that “Aion is the locus of incorporeal events” (165), and as Boundas tells us, that “[e]vents insist in a temporality defined by contemporaneity rather than succession”.<sup>66</sup> We might reason, then, that insofar as Aion is defined by contemporaneity or simultaneity, Chronos must be the time that is defined by succession. And we would be right, but only to an extent. For in fact, Chronos plays two different roles in *LS*, and it is this aspect of Deleuze’s discussion of time that is perhaps the least straightforward (at least in the text itself).

We must recall the question posed when we introduced *LS* above: how does sense, meaning, or significance emerge from the purely material?<sup>67</sup> *LS* is, among other things, an investigation of this question, which means that in order to properly account for the genesis of sense, Deleuze must begin with the purely material, or what he calls “the becoming-mad of the depths” (*LS* 164). It is in the becoming of the depths that

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<sup>66</sup> Boundas, “Problem of Freedom,” 225-6.

<sup>67</sup> And moreover (and again), how do seemingly stable identities emerge from flowing, virtual sense?



Chronos plays its first role. We will see how shortly. First, we should note that the corporeal depths consist purely of the chaos of the clash and flow of *meaning-less* and unindividuated bodies.<sup>68</sup> The infant, for example, lives in this “world of sensation”,<sup>69</sup> and thus, we all emerge from the corporeal, processual depths (even if the vast majority of us end up leaving those depths to “occupy” the realms of sense *and* representation, and for good). Indeed, Joe Hughes claims that this realm of undifferentiated matter in flux is “Deleuze’s description of our body’s participation in the physical world and what that participation would feel like and look like from the point of view of the body itself”.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, it is in this originary corporeal realm that *the present does not pass*—that is, where there is no succession and where “everything is simultaneous” (163). Deleuze calls this the eternal, divine, or cosmic present: “What men grasp as past and future, God lives it in its eternal present. The God is Chronos: the divine present is the circle in its entirety, whereas past and future are dimensions relative to a particular segment of the circle which leaves the rest outside” (150). In other words, from the perspective of the Chronos of the depths, everything occurs in a single, vast present.<sup>71</sup> It is in this sense that Chronos is *not* associated with succession.

And as we already know, neither is Aion. Aion, rather, is linked with the becoming of the surface—that is, the becoming that *is* the incorporeal or virtual sense-event. Somehow it happens that our experience changes nature at some indefinite point and out of the world of undifferentiated corporeality emerges a world of (flowing) sense,

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<sup>68</sup> Hughes, *Genesis of Representation*, 23-6.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>71</sup> See also *LS* 163: “The greatest present, the divine present, is the great mixture, the unity of corporeal causes among themselves”.

a world of meaning beyond (but still in some sense connected to) materiality's simple communication with itself.<sup>72</sup> This is why Deleuze maintains that “sense is essentially *produced*” (LS 95), for it is not merely given, but has its origins in a qualitatively different realm (which, we should point out, does not simply disappear when the world of sense comes on the scene). Still, both realms are of becoming; the essential difference lies in the ontological status of each kind of becoming, as well as their relations to time: the first is the time-less becoming of bodies, while the second is the temporal becoming of incorporeals. Of course, it bears emphasizing that although incorporeal sense-events “have” a time, this time is not the present. For, as Deleuze puts it, “The infinitely divisible event is always *both at once*. It is eternally that which has just happened and that which is about to happen, but never that which is happening” (8). Sense can only be thought or intuited—it is a pure, immaterial event—which entails its subsistence or inherence in past and future, and not its (represented) existence or being in the present. That is to say, and to repeat, that sense, as indivisible process emerging from the virtual past (the event as already-passed) and open to the new, as of yet unknown determinations of the future (the event as not-yet), precisely evades the representations of the present that come to be taken as stable, fixed, or transcendent identities. This is also why Deleuze claims that “Aion stretches out in a straight line, limitless in either direction” (165); the virtual is always what precedes and awaits us.

This brings us to the second Chronos. The world of sense emerges from the world of (immediate) sensation, but from the world of sense is produced “the living present” (LS 164)—that is, our everyday, ordinary, and mostly automatic world where things *just*

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<sup>72</sup> Hughes, *Genesis of Representation*, 24.

*are what they are*. It is in this world that becoming essentially disappears; subjects, objects, and concepts have stable, repeatable identities, and most everything simply *is*, in an individuated and recognized permanence *in the present*, here and now.<sup>73</sup> This process of rigidification into identity is the process of actualization out of the virtual.

Accordingly, actual bodies come to have their identities through their spatio-temporal coordinates. It is in this way that our everyday world is one of succession—that is, of seemingly discrete bodies appearing along a successive timeline in which the events that are constitutive of and constituted by those bodies appear themselves discrete and autonomous also. Of course, the world of the actual seems to do an excellent job of concealing its process of production, and of denying becoming, but this is a theme that we will take up in the final section. Before we get there, we must first discuss the “quasi-cause”.

### Quasi-Causality

Of sense-effects, recall that “[t]hey are pure, impassive, incorporeal events, on the surface of things, pure infinitives of which it cannot even be said that they ARE, participating in an extra-being which surrounds that which is” (*D* 63). What is important to notice about this quotation is the use of the word “impassive”. In another context, Deleuze speaks of the impenetrability, sterility, or inefficacy of the sense-effect or event (*LS* 95). And what does this amount to? It amounts to saying that incorporeal sense-events cannot cause anything, precisely insofar as they are “*always only effects*” (8). Only bodies are causes, in relation to each other (as pure immediacy, pure action and passion), and in relation to the incorporeal effects they cause. Zizek puts the point thusly: “Deleuze

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<sup>73</sup> See *LS* 164, where Deleuze refers to Plato’s *Parmenides*: “for to be present would mean to be and no longer to become”.

is not an idealist; Sense is for him always an ineffective sterile shadow accompanying actual things”.<sup>74</sup>

Now, with respect to this idea of a two-tier, supposedly one-way interaction, we must make two additional (and very important) points. The first is this: it seems to be a paradox that one “realm” (that of bodies-causes) could *give rise* to another that is qualitatively distinct from it (that of incorporeal effects). This returns us to the problem that haunts all dualisms that we identified earlier: how is it possible that two separate “natures” share a point of contact? In our case, we might ask how it is that the realm of meaning-less corporeality—of pure and immediate action and passion—is connected (for they must be in some sense connected) to the qualitatively distinct realm of incorporeal meaning or sense. In other words, how do materiality and immateriality communicate or interact? We seem to have discovered a relation that is simultaneously a non-relation. Perhaps we might say that—just as Deleuze conceives of the sky that does not separate itself from the lightning, even if the lightning separates itself from the sky<sup>75</sup>—that even though thought (incorporeality) separates itself from materiality, materiality does not separate itself from thought. For Deleuze undoubtedly emphasizes the effect’s *irreducibility* to its cause (*LS* 94), or put otherwise, the heterogeneity or difference in nature of cause and effect (4; 94-5).

The second point we must make about the relation between bodies-causes and incorporeal sense-effects is this: “the” Stoic paradox consists in the idea that *there is a second causality*, beyond “the single causality of bodies in the depth” (*LS* 94). Deleuze calls this second causality “quasi-causality”, which is the causality proper to virtual

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<sup>74</sup> Zizek, foreword, xiv.

<sup>75</sup> See Note 42.

sense-effects. Thus, the paradox is that incorporeal sense-events are supposed to be precisely non-causal—that is, again, mere effects, different in nature from their corporeal causes (and thus neither active nor passive); and yet, incorporeal events are *also* said to quasi-cause other incorporeal events (94). This is “double causality”. We have an incorporeal, meta-physical, or ideational “surface” of sense that is the result of bodily mixtures—those mixtures being the element that the surface depends on for its reality; but at the same time, “Senses determine the meanings of, and in the way, quasi-cause what there is”.<sup>76</sup> In other words, *incorporeal senses themselves have effects* (even though they are [supposed to be] impassive, sterile), insofar as they are responsible for giving the sense to (i.e. quasi-causing) bodies (e.g. signifiers, vocalizations, objects, affections of all kinds, etc.). Incorporeal sense-events, then, are both quasi-caused (by other events) and quasi-causal (quasi-causing other events), even as all quasi-causes are dependent on corporeality for their reality.

It seems that the paradox is this: how could the incorporeal or purely ideational come to affect the corporeal? For “the sense-effects in question cannot cause anything—they are just the content expressed in propositions, and they cannot push bodies from one place to another”.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, it might be said that sense merely “defines” bodies—that is, gives them (incorporeal) meaning. Yet, the power of definition is also a power of corporeal organization or composition. We might provide an example of this power.

Think of the history of industry and the rise of “capitalism”. We could say that the shift from pre-capitalist to capitalist societies in parts of Western Europe was by no means immediate (i.e. a matter of immediate succession); rather, there was a

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<sup>76</sup> Lampert, *Philosophy of History*, 101.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

homogeneous flow or undivided process whereby the way in which people were employed and the “freedom” they enjoyed was slow, gradual, and unconscious. Now, obviously there were also milestone achievements that we could say were actualized at certain points along the way. For example, certain bills passed and certain political decisions were made, announced, and effected, and so on. But *as it is happening*, none of the participants are aware that *what is happening* is the rise of a new “kind” of social organization that will change the course of history. An historian reviews a whole series of records and comes to proclaim that “capitalism” was the structure of *these* particular societies in Western Europe in this particular time period—that is, that there were a whole series of principles that came to dominate the way people worked and lived then. But again, no participant had a name (or signifier) that collected all of these principles, methods, and ways of being into a single synthetic (and seemingly fixed) unity. And moreover—and this is the most important aspect of the dynamics of definitions to note—the very idea of “capitalism” comes to organize bodies subsequently (i.e. after the historian has given the flow or becoming a name, a stable body by which we can refer to it<sup>78</sup>). (Is there not a sense, then, in which the historian *creates* history, even if they are accurate in their descriptions of what was “there all along”, which no one had yet noticed?) So, for instance, Kevin O’Leary comes to host a show where he continually refers to the superiority of capitalism and how its principles should be the ones that organize society; similarly, business owners come to decide how they should run their businesses on the basis of the unveiled principles of capitalism (that, again, were not a unity the first time around). And of course, *the sense of “capitalism”* is itself in a state of

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<sup>78</sup> See *Ibid.*, 100, where Lampert speaks of “a single sense [that] gathers states of affairs into a common becoming”.

becoming, as workers might come to resent the bodily states of affairs in which they find themselves, which are orchestrated by their bosses keen on *expressing* the ideas central to capitalism as best they can (by engaging with corporeality in certain ways, i.e. actualizing in particular spaces and times expressions of traditionally “good capitalist” behaviours, e.g. keeping wages low, caring only to satisfy the interests of shareholders, etc.).<sup>79</sup>

Thus, it is in this sense that simply defining something indefinite (for it is a singular, unrepresentable flow) is also *productive*. Giving a stable name to a becoming—that is, placing certain flows under a concept in order to capture them—comes to affect (1) the way in which we *think* about past, present, and future events (e.g. we come to see history in terms of “capitalist” and “non-capitalist” societies, and conceive of the future in terms of these concepts also), and (2) the way in which *bodies* interact (e.g. we act so as to express our conviction in the superiority of capitalism, or, to express our rejection of it, or something else). This, again, is the paradox of quasi-causality. The incorporeal gets actualized and there is thus an ideational “cutting-up” of corporeality—individuations, the drawing of distinctions, representations, and so on. At this stage, we are merely describing *what there is* in terms that might be repeated, made sense of in different contexts. But the Stoic paradox lies in the fact that our descriptions cannot but affect *what there is*. Sterile incorporeality is paradoxically productive, genetic—it becomes quasi-causally responsible for subsequent bodily states of affairs.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> See Žižek, foreword, xiv, for a different example that expresses a similar dynamic: “Think about a group of dedicated individuals fighting for the Idea of Communism: in order to grasp their activity, we have to take into account the virtual Idea. But this Idea is in itself sterile, has no proper causality; all causality lies in the individuals who “express” it”.

<sup>80</sup> Perhaps this accounts for the fact that in his later career, Deleuze places much emphasis on the task of creating concepts. For, again, (incorporeal, ideational) concepts might be said to actually *create* the reality in which we live, even if we are unconscious of this. Might we also say, then, that for Deleuze, thinking *is* ethics, and vice versa?

We see, then, that we have arrived at the contradiction that we said we would. Deleuze suggests we cannot reconcile these two contradictory aspects (*LS* 96); he writes, “At the heart of the logic of sense, one always returns to this problem, this immaculate conception, being the passage from sterility to genesis” (97). But as Constantin Boundas tells us, this is not such a bad thing, for “Deleuze [effectively] situates freedom in the space of contradiction between the sterility and impassiveness of the virtual event and the event’s resourcefulness in engendering actual states of affairs”.<sup>81</sup> In other words, it is through the quasi-cause—that is, an affirmation of a double, and not a single, causality—that we might have our freedom. It is this theme that we will take up in the next and final section.

## VII. Counter-Actualization as Freedom

In essence, this whole chapter (and in fact this whole thesis) turns on the question of freedom in the philosophy of Deleuze (and Guattari). In this chapter’s previous sections, we have (at least) gestured toward the mechanics of freedom in *LS*—that is, of how precisely Deleuze conceives of the phenomenon of freedom and its operation. Moreover, this gesturing has grown gradually more sharpened as we have proceeded, starting as we did with a consideration of static representation (*Being*) and flowing process (becoming), moving through a parallel consideration of the Deleuzian concepts of actual and virtual, and then finally arriving at the body-incorporeal distinction that animates *LS* and the notions of quasi-causality and double-causality that are linked with that distinction. With respect to the latter cluster of points, we ended up suggesting that a Deleuzian notion of freedom must have something to do with his paradoxical theorization

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<sup>81</sup> Boundas, “Problem of Freedom,” 223.



of the incorporeal sense-effect as both sterile and (quasi-) causal. In other words, for Deleuze, freedom must have something to do with the idea that virtual sense can, in a very important sense, alter actual bodies—that it can have a (productive) relation to the actual that is also a non-relation, the latter (paradoxically) guaranteeing its independence from the very realm it depends on. This is all to say, then, and to repeat, that the virtual always remains *excessive* to the actual, and helps to determine it; and insofar as the virtual is this excessive and determining power, it can allow for new and different actualizations. Thus, it is through tapping-in to the virtual that we might be liberated—that is, that we might *counter-actualize*. Freedom, at last.

To understand the Deleuzian notion of counter-actualization, we will begin by providing an extremely illuminating passage from Deleuze and Claire Parnet: “Between the cries of physical pain and the songs of metaphysical suffering, how is one to trace one’s narrow, Stoical way, which consists in being worthy of what happens, extracting something gay and loving in what happens, a light, an encounter, an event, a speed, a becoming?” (*D* 66). There are too many things one can say about this line, but we will try to extract just a few important ideas. The first danger we by necessity live with, as identified by Deleuze and Parnet, stems from the fact that we are fundamentally embodied, physical beings. Indeed, we can never transcend this aspect of our existence, and it is often decisive in our lives, insofar as it is through the power of the corporeal depths that we are ailed and killed, despite possible incorporeal protestations. And moreover, it is the becoming of deep materiality that, for Deleuze, renders the incorporeal

surface so fragile;<sup>82</sup> for recall, the surface of incorporeal sense depends for its reality on the depths, but there are so many exchanges in the depths that are out of our hands.

The second danger is no less significant, and involves transforming the event into a “phantasm” (*D* 65-6). And who exactly is the person that succumbs to this danger? Simply, he is the one who comes to believe and live as if the sense of the event is closed and permanent, and precisely not in a state of becoming. An event gets actualized—it is the accident. The material accident, though—that is, the chance collision and mixture of bodies—is an event insofar as it has an incorporeal sense. An event, then, might very well be traumatic, might very well *wound* and haunt us.<sup>83</sup> And in the case of the “histrionic”—the one who’s suffering is metaphysical—he is indeed wounded, haunted, tormented. *But is it our fate to be so haunted, to suffer in this way?* In other words, can we change the event—that is, actualize the event differently?

Deleuze believes we can; we *can express* events differently, “replay them differently”,<sup>84</sup> give them another sense.<sup>85</sup> And of course we can, for the generative field out of which the actual initially emerges *always overflows* the actualization. To resuscitate a previous example: the sense of the event of a thesis (e.g. of writing, reading, and of “doing” philosophy) is not closed, precisely insofar as it is conceived of *as* an event. In other words, events are much less objects with stable identities that we might

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<sup>82</sup> See *LS* 94: “The fragility of sense can be easily explained...”. See also *LS* 154-61 for a discussion of the incorporeal “crack” and its relation to bodies in the depth.

<sup>83</sup> It is interesting to note that, in contrast to human animals, many nonhuman animals appear not to be afflicted by anything like “metaphysical suffering”. For instance, many dogs missing a limb (or two), but who have had the proper surgery and remain physically healthy, *seem* to be just as lively post-accident.

<sup>84</sup> Williams, “Event,” 87.

<sup>85</sup> See Reynolds, “Wounds and Scars,” 152, where he suggests that counter-actualization is closely linked with Deleuze and Guattari’s later concept, deterritorialization. See also *D* 72-3, where they characterize the latter’s operation: “it liberates a pure matter, it undoes codes, it carries expressions, contents, states of things and utterances along a zigzag broken line of flight, it raises time to the infinitive, it releases a becoming which no longer has any limit, because each term is a stop which must be jumped over”.

*grasp* than processes that might be expressed in any number of ways. Thus, just because certain events were actualized in a particular way in particular times and spaces, it does not follow that the event's actualization *is* that event's *identity*. Although its representations have a certain stability (insofar as they are physical bodies) and a certain mixing (or non-mixing) of other physical bodies occurred that (partially) constitute it (and that comes to be attached to certain bodily representations), the incorporeal sense at the boundary between the two is always free to flow differently. *We are, at least to an extent, free to make sense differently*; or to put it more accurately, different sense *can always* be made of the events of one's life (to say nothing of our "choice" to make sense differently). To affirm process is to engage in this activity of coming to constitute sense differently, which amounts to counter-actualization, the becoming of thought, or liberation of the event.<sup>86</sup>

But again, those who suffer from their (incorporeal) wounds fail to apprehend them as events or becomings. They express, in and through their existence, the idea that the event has some *transcendent* meaning, which is precisely what leaves them crippled and bitter. Indeed, they are *afflicted* by an occurrence (an accident) and perceive it as foreign to or outside of them, spoiling their subjectivity and exhausting their future in advance. There are two things we must notice here: the first is the temporal matrix through which we are so afflicted, and the second is Deleuze's implicit practical or ethical philosophy.

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<sup>86</sup> See *LS* 161, where Deleuze puts it most succinctly: "To the extent that the pure event is each time imprisoned forever in its actualization, counter-actualization liberates it, always for other times". See also *D* 75, on the only goal of writing, which is "to extract from the event that which is not exhausted by the happening, to release from becoming that which will not permit itself to be fixed in a term".

With respect to time's relation to the wound, notice that it is the wounded that often wish to return to some previous, supposedly untarnished state, as if the accident that had befallen them remains in some way external to their subjectivity, hindering them against their own wishes, imprisoning them from without. Also notice that the sense of an event, insofar as it is (wrongfully) grasped as transcendent, makes claims about the future. In other words, the afflicted individual's expressions of incorporeal suffering are also expressions of an event's exhaustion, completeness, or finality—precisely its lack of a future. These observations of the inherently temporal nature of the wound and our corresponding suffering leads Jack Reynolds to claim that “what has occurred is never wounding because of any particular actuality, whatever it may be, but that we are wounded because of the prospect of a worse ‘to come’ or because of the relation that any given actuality bears to the complex of temporal syntheses that is our past”.<sup>87</sup>

We must therefore conclude that through counter-actualization of the event, the event's relation to time shifts in a dramatic way. No longer is the event perceived as a threat to or distinct from our subjectivity; it is rather incorporated into us as an indispensable element of the process that is our life.<sup>88</sup> Put another way, we might say that the emphasis on rigid succession that was present prior to counter-actualization has been (fluidly) replaced by a lived sense of undivided becoming. Like Joseph Bousquet, we come to say, “My wound existed before me, I was born to embody it”. We embrace the accidental as essential (*LS* 157). But what does this sentiment entail for our sense of the future, then? As opposed to an exhausted future—that is, more of the same, dull

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<sup>87</sup> Reynolds, “Wounds and Scars,” 149.

<sup>88</sup> See Sellars, “Ethics of the Event,” 161: “The task for Bousquet was to transform the event of the wound from a tragic external assault that afflicted him into a vital and necessary event in his life that made it possible for him to discover himself as a writer, to become who he already was”.

repetition, a certain constraining rhythm that serves to primarily block flows—we have an open, indeterminate future, where we still do not know what a body is capable of, what exactly to expect, or what lies in store for us (and the universe).

Now, through these considerations of the incorporeal wound and its potential counter-actualization, it is apparent that *LS* posits a kind of ethical philosophy. We ask: ‘Where is freedom? How might we be free? How does one become free, achieve freedom?’ In response to such questions, Deleuze speaks of counter-actualization. He writes, “It is true only of the free man, who grasps the event, and does not allow it to be actualized as such without enacting, the actor, its counter-actualization” (*LS* 152). Of course, even this claim is opaque with respect to the chronology of events; must one first be free *in order* to then counter-actualize, or is one free at precisely the moment that they do? But beyond this concern is an aspect of Deleuze’s ethical philosophy that is perhaps even more important, and deserves to be emphasized: counter-actualization is *not* resignation. Deleuze must not be misunderstood on this point, for he states quite explicitly: “What does it mean then to will the event? Is it to accept war, wounds, and death when they occur? It is highly probable that resignation is only one more figure of *ressentiment*, since *ressentiment* has many figures” (149). It is with this quotation that we can speak most definitively of the process of counter-actualization. Counter-actualization is a process of liberation insofar as we are liberated from our “sad affections” (as Spinoza would have it). We might feel wronged, owed something, a victim of injustice, and bitter or perhaps suffering through what is perhaps an even worse incorporeal becoming (e.g. hatred, envy, helplessness, depression, etc.) as a result. We then say to ourselves, ‘What choice do I have but to suffer, but to be a victim, but to find fault in and blame either

others or myself for what has occurred?’ This is overt *ressentiment*—to merely feel the effects of, or to suffer from—that is, to merely *react*—and to do so blatantly, outwardly. Such an attitude is undesirable from any perspective, but what is important to understand is that rejecting *that* attitude does not automatically entail *passively accepting* what does occur. The latter attitude, for Deleuze, is merely covert *ressentiment*, and a denial of our powers to *act*—that is, to counter-actualize.

What we are saying is this: the ethical philosophy implicit (or perhaps to some degree explicit, although certainly fragmentary and by no means systematic) in *LS* is concerned with removing the power of *ressentiment* (*LS* 152). Deleuze’s concept of counter-actualization—that is, of actively tapping-in to the virtual resources of the already-actualized event so as to actualize it differently—performs this function through its affirmation that we are not fated to simply receive or react as mere mechanisms or automata. Counter-actualization is precisely a breaking-free of mechanism, an act of leaving one’s volitional signature on the event that did befall us from without, the event whereby we become worthy of what happens to us (149), and the process that gives us “the chance to go farther than we would have believed possible” (161).

#### Destiny vs. Necessity

How is it, then, that the Stoics affirm destiny and deny necessity? For that is the paradox we started with and that has guided our investigation. The answer, at this point, is somewhat simple. For Deleuze, it simply is *not* the case that we live in a wholly deterministic world—that is, a world characterized solely by brute material causality, “bare repetition”, or pure necessity. Rather, our world is like a Mobius strip, insofar as there are two tiers that are simultaneously—and of course, paradoxically—one. To be

sure, there is a realm of immediate corporeal mixing, but there is also another realm that is both distinct from and connected to corporeality, and that is the realm of virtual incorporeality and the quasi-cause. It is the existence of this latter realm that allows for the Stoic affirmation.

Deleuze uses Nietzsche to demonstrate the point. For is it simply the case that one's immediate affections, which *are* the mixings in the corporeal depths of our bodies, fully determine our existence?<sup>89</sup> For Deleuze, Nietzsche goes beyond the immediacy of the corporeal symptoms of his illness(es)—his pain, sickness, and suffering—and gives them a “new causality” (*LS* 108). In other words, Nietzsche tries with all his might to counter-actualize the event—that is, to incorporate it into his life, to create or improvise with it, to use it in some productive way, to allow it to drive his philosophy. Simply, Nietzsche engages in a process of *making sense* of his affections in order to cease to be imprisoned by them. And moreover, this process (which constitutes a breaking-free of mechanism) is only possible on the basis of the autonomous and irreducible realm of virtual, incorporeal sense-events—these events being paradoxically causally efficacious (i.e. in an important sense constitutive of the actual).

Yet, do we have the power to simply *choose* a positive, affirmative sense *ex nihilo*? Did Nietzsche or Bousquet, for example, immediately just align themselves with some self-chosen destiny? And even if they might have, can *we* expect to counter-

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<sup>89</sup> Joe Hughes clearly and precisely describes these immediate affections: “The corporeal depths are the disorganization and fragmentation of physical objects as they affect us, the way in which the object is nothing more, at the tips of our fingers for example, than the sensory nerves it excites, or the way in which a sound is nothing more than an activation of the motor neurons in our ear”. See Hughes, *Genesis of Representation*, 29. The point we have been trying to make throughout this whole chapter, of course, is that sense-events maintain a special independence from the corporeal depths, and are, as James Williams puts it, “resistant to causal determinism and to a systematic restriction of possible significations”. See Williams, “Event,” 86.

actualize that way also? We will here perhaps echo what was claimed in the previous chapter. The process of counter-actualization—which, we must remember, is precisely a *process*—voluntarily/involuntarily brings about a new world. Both at the same time, and nothing less. Indeed, counter-actualization, as a process of liberation, seems to be a strange mix of activity and passivity, of effort and undergoing. For there must be an attempt to produce difference in refusal of *ressentiment*, but this attempt is an open one, without (even close to) full knowledge of how exactly difference will be produced, if at all. In other words, the break from established, ready-made sense is *not* ours to choose; the break comes involuntarily, from without, but often after much work, activity, effort, or engagement. Through action (as opposed to reaction), one finds herself already having leapt. Thus, we are not simply masters of sense, meaning, or significance, but neither are we fated to suffer in a state of *ressentiment*, either overt or covert. For again, incorporating *what does occur* (the accident) into a life is a process, and through that process, the chance event becomes the very thing that gives us a sense of freedom—that is, becomes our destiny. It is in this way that counter-actualization *is* the process of becoming.



## Conclusion

Recall the discussion that opened Chapter One. We spoke there of what is essentially the terror and joy of writing. We can say with better accuracy now what that terror might consist in: simply, the fact that a writer cannot connect every dot for the reader, cannot make the intuitive leap for them, cannot perfectly spell-out the flow in-between the points that *is* the (incorporeal) sense of what is written, in excess of those points. One attempts to do this and embarks on an impossible, never-ending journey. For there is *always* more to say. If Deleuze and Guattari have taught us anything, it is that.<sup>1</sup>

Bergson is profound and insightful with respect to this point that we wish to make about the task of writing. He effectively asks, ‘What happens when we *really* write? How would we best describe the experience of *really* writing?’ Imagine a situation: one has read for weeks, taken notes, organized those notes, and then sits down to write. At this stage, does our writer simply *copy* their notes? Or, do they just assemble their notes in a different order? Bergson claims that, in opposition to these other possible conceptions of what writing consists in, (*really*) writing involves placing ourselves “directly at the heart of the subject” and seeking “as deeply as possible an *impulse*, after which we need only let ourselves go”.<sup>2</sup> Thus, to write, for Bergson, is a matter of intuiting a flow, even if that

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<sup>1</sup> There are two closely related things we should note here. The first is this: writers can still do a better or worse job at helping their readers understand what it is that they are trying to communicate. In other words, just because it is impossible to guarantee that every one of your readers will grasp the sense of your text, I do not believe it follows that we no longer have grounds for critiquing certain pieces of writing for their lack of clarity. The second point has to do with a pedagogical maxim that expresses a similar idea. The maxim is this: one cannot make someone else learn, but what they can do is create a space where learning might happen. The quality of a teacher, then, will likely be a function of how effective they are at creating educational spaces (e.g. those spaces where one is broadsided, unsettled, stirred, or otherwise animated by a thought or idea, as from without).

<sup>2</sup> Bergson, *An Introduction*, 61, my emphasis.

flow happens to be an incorporeal idea.<sup>3</sup> And if writing is about intuition, there must be a sense in which what is written always evades analysis—that is, always escapes the capture of a bodily representation, or a certain series of them. We see, then, that the very source of writing’s potential terror—that we cannot perfectly freeze our thought in a representation—is at the same time the source of writing’s potential joy. For one might actually come to express themselves with perfect precision, even if the words that carried our expression were, in a sense, accidental.

Now, why do we say this? Perhaps, first and foremost, because we started Chapter One with the wrong method or approach. Despite warnings from several people, our (unconscious) goal was to write a thesis that would contain the perfect and timeless reflection, stabilization, or crystallization of Deleuze and Guattari’s thought—the *One* Deleuze and Guattari for all times. How un-Deleuzo-Guattarian. We even wrote before concluding Chapter One that it was essential for our purposes to cease the project of attempting to get Deleuze and Guattari right “in theory” first, before doing anything else—that is, to keep the concept of becoming at an abstract distance from us, before experimenting ourselves. We came to realize that the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari is interested primarily in *expression*, and not representation.

But what does one *do* with this information? Indeed, how do we enact Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy? How do we experiment? These were our guiding questions for Chapter One (and even for Chapter Two, to an extent), which were expressions of an

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<sup>3</sup> See Valentine Moulard-Leonard, *Bergson-Deleuze Encounters: Transcendental Experience and the Thought of the Virtual* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2008), 13, where the development of Bergson’s philosophy is elaborated as follows: “Duration [i.e. becoming] is no longer restricted to the realm of consciousness and instead coincides with the movement of life itself—that is, external things do endure in their own way, *independently* of our psychological experience [...] and duration is shown to be *immanent* to the universe”. See also *TP* 238, for a passing reference to this idea.

obvious and practical concern. Now, it feels strange to say this, but becoming—or, the type of living to do or to be that Deleuze and Guattari seem to value and advocate—is rather simple (although, admittedly, it took years to get to this point). As we now see it, a becoming is expressed through any truly creative act. And what, for us, constitutes such an act? To create is to take leave of any transcendent rules that would structure the emergence of the creation, or at least to not be bound artificially by such rules. It is to venture out on one’s own (with innumerable others), or, to engage deeply with something and develop an original perspective on it. It is to express a certain independence, to *find out for yourself*, and to not be concerned (at least primarily) to reproduce something given in advance (a concern that often takes the form of, perhaps obsessively, checking for correspondence between some still image prescribed by certain “authorities” and the creation in question).

We might offer several possible expressions of becoming to add to our list in Chapter One. (1) The becoming of the sense of Deleuze and Guattari: after engaging with a text by Deleuze and Guattari, one writes an essay on it, but not with the intent to simply *copy* them or to regurgitate their claims, but to flow with or alongside them. The latter would involve intuiting the sense of their philosophy—apprehending the dynamic in-between—and most significantly, extracting what one finds interesting, remarkable, or important about it, in order to *extend* their ideas that much further, in perhaps new and unforeseen directions.<sup>4</sup> (2) The becoming of the philosophy lecture: one must give a

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<sup>4</sup> On this point, it is worth remembering one of Deleuze’s favoured images of thought—that of the surfer. As opposed to reactivity and judgement, which either speak from, or wish to arrive at, a point of immobility, the thinker’s task might better be characterized as primarily involving the riding of waves; better to ride the wave of Deleuze’s thought than attempt to pin it down once and for all. The image of the surfer also connects, even if obliquely, to what Eugene Holland takes to be one of the central questions animating *TP*: “How can thought operate in such a way that it thinks with the cosmos instead of about it [...]?” See Holland, *Reader’s Guide*, 33.

lecture on philosopher *x*, but the one they give is not the same old tired lecture that has been given year after year without modification, growing more stale each time it is repeated; rather, the becoming of the lecture would involve spontaneous insertions and deletions, in keeping with current political events, recently learned pedagogical techniques, previous misreadings, new connections, and so on.<sup>5</sup> In fact, insofar as the lecture is in a state of becoming, it might very well bear little resemblance to the “same” lecture given the year before as well as the one given the year after. (3) The becoming of philosophical discussion: oddly enough, becoming might well be exemplified by the figure of Socrates, and for the simple reason that many of his conversations (at least as I read them) feel improvised. In other words, it is not as if Socrates ever prepared a script before any one of his encounters with certain interlocutors, memorized certain arguments as best he could, and then merely repeated those arguments verbatim when it came time to actually talk *to* people. On the contrary, we get the sense that Socratic conversations often *take on a life of their own*, that something passes *in-between* Socrates and his interlocutors. We also get the sense that Socrates never reaches a place, in thought or in life, where thinking stops, or when the question of living is put to rest, no longer needing to be asked. Socrates: a life of becoming, insofar as he *expresses* a refusal of “automatic” thinking and living.

One never “masters” the text, the lecture, or the conversation, and to ever believe that one has reached a place of firm mastery is precisely what cuts-off the flow of desire, brings becomings to a halt. This is why a strange dynamic characterizes the process of becoming—that is, why the question of agency in becomings is “objectively” ambiguous.

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<sup>5</sup> And as we already know, adding or subtracting even one dimension of the multiplicity amounts to a change of nature for that multiplicity.

We ask if they are voluntary and might very well be disturbed by the prospect that they might not be, but the truth is that experiences of the involuntary are expressions of a very particular kind of freedom: freedom from the self of unreflective habit. By their very nature, then, becomings cannot be controlled or planned by “the self” (e.g. ‘*This is how I will become*’), for they must come from without, sweeping or carrying us away, taking us over. And do we not, at least to an extent, desire these experiences? Do we not wish to be affected, struck from beyond, infected, upheaved, driven by impulses that seem, at times, to come from elsewhere? To not be masters of ourselves or of nature, but neither to pretend that we are the mere slaves of some far greater, divine power; to come to express the necessary modesty that we do not have already have it all figured out or that we know what is coming; to always be in the process of learning and to always be open to surprises; to always have a small plot of new land at all times.

We can see, then, that the texts of Deleuze and Guattari are themselves enactments of their philosophy. For we might, at least at first, dislike what appears to us to be needlessly obscure, excessive, or pretentious prose, but it is by no means certain that there was any other way to write *given their philosophy*. Again, we might ask if writing is a task concerned primarily with clearly representing what *is* or with establishing indubitable conclusions from indubitable premises; in other words, we might ask if philosophy texts should consist only of clearly stated chains of reasoning (Premise One: ‘Socrates is a man’; Premise Two: ‘All men are mortal’...). And undoubtedly, philosophy texts must make arguments, *but what is the point of a text that changes nothing?* We are disoriented in our initial encounter with Deleuze and Guattari (and are likely disoriented in subsequent encounters, too)—that is, we are disturbed, angered,

frustrated, unsettled. This experience, however, is, or at least could be, the very thing that puts us in process. For we read something and it may seem that there are only two possible responses: *either* (a) ‘Yes, I already knew that, so there was little point in reading’, *or* (b) ‘This simply does not make sense, does not correspond to what I already think or believe, so I will stop reading’; yet becoming is the in-between. We do not know—we are confronted by something problematic, something that does not mesh with us—*but then go further in spite of ourselves*. This is becoming, of which disorientation is a necessary feature.

What are we trying to say? Perhaps that the process of becoming involves a double-transformation, insofar as (in this case) the reader transforms as much as the once-frustrating text does. For there is a certain aggregate, which consists of the power of the text to affect a reader *and* of the power of the reader to make sense differently. These powers might very well commingle and something might pass in-between. Concretely, seemingly stable interpretive capacities might be shocked by a certain actualized text, but the becoming consists in the speed one is traveling—that is, in the counter-actualization of the encountered text, the creation or production of a perspective on it, which allows one to travel even further. Infinite becoming, but only through activity and the perseverance through disorientation.

But what of destiny, then? How does destiny fit into all of this? As we suggested at the beginning of Chapter Two, destiny is often associated with a telos. But we have emphasized time and again that becomings name the movement in-between and cannot be mistaken for either an origin or an end. Destiny, then, must refer to something non-teleological. And indeed, how else could we make sense of something like Bousquet’s

wound? Are we to imagine it as issued in advance by divine providence? Or, on the contrary, are we to see in this event a strange combination of chance and quasi-willful creation? For in this event, as in all becomings, there is a certain *going further*, beyond the chance actualization. One continues to work with the event, aiming to extract something from it, so as to transform both the event and themselves. Thus, despite the theoretical problems of describing events in linear succession, we might say that there is the chance actualization, *then* there *might* be a process of becoming (or working-with, or improvising) that results in a counter-actualization, which *then* allows for still more becomings, or, more opportunities to enhance affective capacities and to feel joy. *That* is freedom, and that also explains the role of destiny in Deleuze and Guattari: one comes to flow *with* the event through a kind of active experimentation that *allows one* to perceive the event as something they were born to embody, a source of overflowing vitality from which their life comes to spring.

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