

Lecture Fourteen – The Third Synthesis of Time

Introduction

Last week, we looked at the first two passive syntheses of time, and saw how they corresponded to the active syntheses of apprehension and reproduction. This week, I want to look at the final synthesis, which relates to the transcendental unity of apperception in Kant's system. Rather than looking at the transcendental deduction, Deleuze draws on another part of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, however, the paralogisms, to show that an understanding of the self as substantial involves a 'transcendental illusion', and that it in fact depends on time as a transcendental principle. What is central to the third synthesis is therefore the conception of time that Kant develops, both in order to explain how the first two syntheses are related to one another, and to show why we are able to take the subject as the source for synthesis. I want to begin by looking at Deleuze's characterisation of Kant's intuition of time as being 'out of joint', before moving on to Kant's account of the paralogisms. Finally, I want to relate the insights Deleuze draws from Kant's conception of time back to Deleuze's own three syntheses.

A. Time is Out of Joint

Key to Deleuze's analysis of Kant is the claim that for Kant, a notion of time is introduced which is 'out of joint'. Now, this is central to both Deleuze's attempt to overturn the traditional view of active synthesis, and the understanding of the third passive synthesis. Deleuze introduces the idea that time is out of joint with the following cryptic claim:

The joint, *cardo*, is what ensures the subordination of time to those properly cardinal points through which pass the periodic movements which it measures (time, number of the movement, for the soul as much as for the world). By contrast, time out of joint means demented time or time outside the curve which gave it a god, liberated from its overly simple circular figure, freed from the events which made up its content, its relation to movement overturned; in short, time presenting itself as an empty and pure form. (DR 111)

So, I want to look at this quote in three stages. First, what does it mean for time to have not been considered 'out of joint' (what is the 'standard view')? Second, how does Kant put time (and, indeed, space) 'out of joint'? And third, what is the structure of time 'out of joint' (what is the 'pure and empty form of time')?

I. Time in Joint

What is the view of time that Deleuze is here opposing? Well, as we might expect, it is in fact represented by a whole series of philosophers. Well, Deleuze gives the following account in the 1978 lecture:

Cardinal comes from *cardo*; *cardo* is precisely the hinge, the hinge around which the sphere of celestial bodies turns, and which makes them pass time and again through the so-called cardinal points, and we note their return: ah, there's the star again, it's time to move my sheep!

What Deleuze is referring to here is the account of time given in Plato's *Timaeus* of the nature of time. The *Timaeus* tells the story of the creation of the world by the creator (Demiurge), who seeks to create the universe by imposing form on chaotic matter. Now, 'finding the whole visible sphere not at rest, but moving in an irregular and disorderly fashion, out of disorder he brought order, considering that this was in every way better than the other.' As the creator himself is perfect, he desires to create the universe as far as possible as an image of himself. As he wants to create the most perfect world possible, the world has several key attributes. First, as it cannot be less intelligent than the creatures within it, it is an animal. Second, as unity is an attribute for perfection, the world is composed of just one animal. Third, as the sphere is the most perfect form, the universe is formed as perfectly spherical. Finally, the creator himself is eternal, but given the nature of the world as already in motion, he can only create the world as a likeness to eternity:

Now the nature of the ideal being was everlasting, but to bestow this attribute in its fullness upon a creature was impossible. Wherefore he resolved to have a moving image of eternity, and when he set in order the heaven, he made this image eternal but moving according to number, while eternity itself rests in unity; and this image we call time. (*Timaeus*)

The universe is here seen, therefore, as a sphere in motion. Now, at this point, we can already note the first important point in this myth. Time is here seen as a structure of the realm of appearance. While the world itself is a copy of the creator, time has no place in relation to the eternity of the creator himself. So how does time come about? Well, the first thing to note is that before the universe is organized according to time, it is still in motion, although this motion is 'disorderly'. Thus, motion is not dependant on time, which appears afterwards. In fact, Timaeus believes that time is grounded in the elements which are most perfect in the universe. That is, the celestial bodies. Plato writes as follows:

Time, then, and the heaven came into being at the same instant in order that, having been created together, if ever there was to be a dissolution of them, they might be dissolved together. It was framed after the pattern of the eternal nature, that it might resemble this as far as was possible; for the pattern exists from eternity, and the created heaven has been, and is, and will be, in all time. Such was the mind and thought of God in the creation of time. The sun and moon and five other stars, which are called the planets, were created by him in order to distinguish and preserve the numbers of time; and when he had made their several bodies, he placed them in the orbits in which the circle of the other was revolving—in seven orbits seven stars.

The celestial bodies thus occupy something like a mediating position, as on the one hand, they are similar to the eternal, whereas on the other, they are the ground for time. In what way do they form the ground of time? Well, the planets move in an orderly manner, which is what allows time to be related to measure (the star that represents the time to move the sheep in Deleuze's example). This represents the Greek notion of time (although Aristotle does have a slightly more nuanced position), in that time is fundamentally subordinated to motion. Aristotle presents a somewhat similar position in the *Physics*, arguing that time requires change, as without change, we would not be able to determine that time had passed.

Thus then, and for this reason the night and the day were created, being the period of the one most intelligent revolution. And the month is accomplished when the moon has completed her orbit and overtaken the sun, and the year when the sun has completed his own orbit. Mankind, with hardly an exception, have not remarked the periods of the other stars, and they have no name for them, and do not measure them against one another by

the help of number, and hence they can scarcely be said to know that their wanderings, being infinite in number and admirable for their variety, make up time. (*Timaeus*)

Time here is simply the measure of motion. On the Platonic model, therefore, we cannot have something like an understanding of the pure form of time, as time is a way in which something else (in this case, the number, or measure of motion) presents itself. Time is simply an imperfect way in which the eternal patterns of the world present themselves. To put time out of joint will therefore be to move to an understanding of time that is not based on this kind of Platonic subordination of time to intelligible motion. Now, although we might feel that rejecting something like the Platonic conception is not a particularly radical move, we can see that the subordination of time to an eternal, intelligible, and also, representational, model of time is central not just to Plato's conception, but also to pre-Kantian philosophy in general. Leibniz, for instance, argues that the notions of space and time are simply ways in which we, as finite intellects, perceive what are essentially a series of intelligible relations between things:

As for my own opinion, I have said more than once that I hold space to be something purely relative, as time is – that I hold it to be an order of coexistences, as time is an order of successions. For space denotes, in terms of possibility, an order of things that exist at the same time, considered as existing together, without entering into their particular manners of existing. And when many things are seen together, one consciously perceives this order of things among themselves. (Leibniz Clarke Correspondence)

Space and time are simply 'well founded phenomena' by which we inadequately perceive the true 'conceptual' order of things. As such, time is really a mode in which the essential structure of succession appears to us. In this case too, therefore, time is secondary to a rational, conceptual, and representational way of ordering things. Time is predicated on a prior representational structure. To be 'in joint' is therefore to be hinged, tied to cardinal numbers, and tied to a prior representational order. In what sense, therefore, does Kant make time 'out of joint'?

II. Time Out of Joint and Intuition

The key innovation in the Kantian system which Deleuze picks up on is the division between intuition and the understanding. As we saw at the start of this term, Kant uses this distinction to show that rather than our knowledge conforming to objects, the structure of objects must conform to the structure of our cognition. He argues that relating to an object involves the active faculty of the understanding taking up what is given in passive intuition. The key problem for Kant was how to relate these two faculties together. Why was this a problem? Because, as we saw at the start of last term, these faculties dealt with the object of cognition in ways that are different in kind from one another. Now, we have already dealt with this in terms of space. As Kant showed, if we look at an object such as a glove, even if we understand all of the relations between the parts of the glove, it is still the case that we cannot determine whether this glove is left or right handed. In this case, therefore, Kant writes that 'there are no inner differences here that any understanding could merely think; and yet the differences are inner as far as the senses teach.' (*Prolegomena*, sec. 13) So, the argument from incongruent counterparts shows that space cannot be seen as a mode of presentation of conceptual relations in the way that Leibniz proposed, and Kant makes similar arguments in the *Critique of Pure Reason* for the difference between time and succession. Kant's distinction of concepts and intuition therefore has the consequence that time cannot be seen as the moving image of eternity, as it is no longer the expression of an underlying representational structure, whether the 'number of movement' or the true 'order of things'. Clearly, however, we do see space as involving co-existence, and time as involving successive states. How, therefore, does

Kant's view that time is non-conceptual relate to conceptual determinations, then? Or, what is the pure and empty form of time?

III The Pure and Empty Form of Time

As we saw in the first week of this term, Kant's claim is that the understanding actively synthesises the manifold of intuition on order to make knowledge possible. As we saw, the transcendental deduction details how succession is imposed on the spatiotemporal manifold. The procedure involved three syntheses. First, the manifold is 'run through' by intuition. In order for it to appear as connected, however, these connections need to be taken up by the imagination, as we need to not simply reproduce past moments, but also to recognise them as reproduced. Finally, to provide coherence to these various moments, they need to be seen as moments related to the same object. This final stage therefore relies on a conceptual determination of the experience as the successive presentation of the same object. In this sense, succession in the case of time, and co-existence in the case of space are imposed upon time and space, rather than determining them. Kant therefore reverses the order of determination that we found in the previous model. Rather than time being a mode of the appearing of an underlying succession, for Kant, succession is a way of synthesising a prior intuition of temporality. This opens the way to escaping from an understanding of the temporal as a derivative form of representation, and grounds representation instead on something fundamentally non-representational. Succession is now a determination of a notion of an intuition of time which is not inherently successive. Now, because Kant associates all synthesis with an active subject, time is simply a material which can be taken up by the understanding. This means that he cannot fully develop the implications of this move. But there is another interpretation of this notion of time which I want to return to in the final part of the lecture.

B. The Paralogisms

Before moving on to Deleuze's own interpretation of time, however, I want to follow Deleuze and talk a little about the difference between the Kantian and Cartesian cogitos. Now, Deleuze claims that Kant's theory of the 'I' is the 'element of the Copernican Revolution' (DR 109) itself. The section he is referring to is the paralogisms, and it is here that Kant mounts his attack on Descartes' principle of the *cogito* (I think therefore I am). In essence, what Kant is objecting to is the inference Descartes makes from the fact that I think to the fact that I am a thinking thing, that is, a substance. Kant argues that the logical structure Descartes' inference is really something like the following:

1. That, the representation of which is the *absolute subject* of our judgements and cannot therefore be employed as determination of another thing, is *substance*.
2. I, as a thinking being, am the *absolute subject* of all my possible judgements, and this representation of myself cannot be employed as predicate of any other thing.
3. Therefore I, as thinking being (soul) am *substance*. (CPR A348)

Now, this seems to be a valid inference, in that the premises seem to lead us to the conclusion that the subject is a substance. Why is it that we cannot make the inference from 'I think' to 'I am a thinking thing'? Kant's claim is that the argument confuses a premise which is about how cognition relates to objects and a premise which is simply a logical truth. Starting with premise 2, this really states that the 'I' should be seen as the *logical subject*. This just means that we apply predicates to the 'I', but don't in turn say that 'I' is a predicate of something else. In this sense, it is analytically true. The first statement instead refers to the way in which we talk about objects. It is a transcendental claim. Really, what it is saying is that if a given object is the subject of judgements, and cannot be taken to be the predicate of something else, then that object is a substance. As such, it is really a statement about the relation between representation and objects (a claim about how

objects must be constituted in order for judgements to be able to relate to them). There is thus an equivocation in Descartes' argument between two different uses of the term, logical subject.

Here we come to Descartes' essential problem. Objects conform to our cognition, and in this sense, the category of substance is something we use to construct a world that is amenable to judgement. It is one of the categories that the transcendental deduction shows makes thinking about objects possible. Now, Descartes is attempting to apply a determination ('I think') to an object that is undetermined (the 'I am'), but according to our notion of substance, substance is a way of organising something which is given. According to Kant, the mistake is that Descartes hasn't considered how the object can become determinable (under what form it can be given). For Kant, the answer is that objects are given in intuition, and therefore that the 'I am' can only be determined provided it is given to us by the intuition of time. But clearly the 'I am' that Descartes is introducing as a thinking thing is not an object which is given to us in intuition. As Kant notes, when we introspect, we don't find the self as a given object: 'No fixed and abiding self can present itself in this flux of inner appearances.' (A107) Descartes is therefore guilty of attempting to apply a determination outside of its proper sphere of application, by not using it as a form of synthesising intuitions, which leads him into error.

This brings us to the split in Kant's philosophy. We can see what is going on here by relating the situation back to the one we found in the transcendental deduction. There, Kant made the claim that 'it must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all my representations.' (B131) What made this possible was a prior synthesis by the transcendental unity of apperception. Now, this prior synthesis was something that we couldn't say anything about, as it was the ground for the categories (it was prior to notions such as substance). Now, Descartes' error therefore emerges because he conflates two different levels: 'the unity of apperception, which is subjective, is taken for the unity of the subject as a thing' (*Reflexionen* 5533).

When we looked at Bergson, we noted that the self was merely the expression of the actualisation of the past in relation to the future. That is, the self is merely an epiphenomenon of a deeper process. In fact, Kant seems to have ended up at a similar position here. Synthesis is really conducted on a transcendental level that is presupposed by the fact that we can apply the 'I think' to all of our experiences. As we can only be given to ourselves in time, when we reflect, what we observe isn't the activity itself (which is transcendental), but merely the empirical after-effect of it (the 'I think' is merely an analytic result of an underlying process of synthesis):

The spontaneity of which I am conscious in the "I think" cannot be understood as the attribute of a substantial and spontaneous being, but only as the affection of a passive self which experiences its own thought...being exercised in it and upon it but not by it. (DR 108)

This brings us to the final point in our discussion of Kant's three syntheses. What is it that makes the final synthesis possible, that is, the synthesis of recognition? Kant argues that in order for us to be able to accompany all of our representations by an 'I think', there must be a prior, active synthesis, as the unity of the manifold is experienced through the passive form of time. This inference to the conditions of possibility of the 'I think', however, rests directly on the notion that time is simply passively given, and that all synthesis takes place by an active self. Given the passive nature of the 'I think,' which is determinable under the form of time, Kant is therefore obliged to posit a transcendental ego which makes the 'I think' possible. Deleuze has an alternative explanation of how we are able to confront a unified world, which is to recognise that syntheses can also be passive. In this regard, what makes the 'I think' possible is 'a synthesis which is itself passive (contemplation-contraction).' (DR 109) In this sense, Kant posits the third synthesis simply because he has ruled out a constitutive role for time itself by assigning all organisation to the understanding.

C. The Pure and Empty Form of Time

Finally, I want to turn to Deleuze's final synthesis itself. The key questions are, what is the pure form of time for Deleuze (I don't have much of an answer to this, I'm afraid), and second, what is the role that it plays? We can give a schematic answer to the first question by noting the revolutionary result of the Kantian theory of intuition. That is, that rather than time being a mode of succession, succession is rather a mode in which time appears to us. In fact, succession is simply a way in which we organise time for Kant. Deleuze puts this point forward as follows:

Time cannot be defined by succession because succession is only a mode of time, coexistence is itself another mode of time. You can see that he arranged things to make the simple distribution: space-coexistence, and time-succession. Time, he tells us, has three modes: duration or permanence, coexistence and succession. But time cannot be defined by any of the three because you cannot define a thing through its modes. (14/03/78 lecture)

The talk about modes is important here, and is, I think, a reference to Spinoza and substance. As we saw briefly last term, Spinoza held that all attributes, such as thought and extension, were equally expressions of the same substance. This allowed him, for instance, to overcome the difficulty Descartes had of explaining how the mind and body interacted. Here, Deleuze is suggesting that succession and co-existence are simply different 'attributes' of time. The pure and empty form of time therefore has the same relationship to succession and co-existence as the attributes for Spinoza have to substance.

Finally, it's necessary to ask why the third synthesis is introduced, given that habit and memory seem to give us everything we need to explain the synthesis of time. Well, I think that there are two reasons for this. The first is that memory 'still remains relative to the representation that it grounds.' (DR 110) That is, memory ultimately orients itself to actuality. As such, it is ultimately understood only as what allows us to deploy representations. We therefore risk collapsing back into a prioritisation of identity as that for which memory is. The second reason, which I infer from the text, is that we need to explain the interaction of the two very different forms of time themselves. The question of how memory is able to relate to habit is much like Kant's question of how two different faculties can relate to one another. Deleuze's answer to this question in terms of time is ultimately Spinozist. Habit and memory can relate to each other because they are simply different modalities or expressions of the form of time itself. As such we can think (somewhat figuratively) of memory and habit as simply being different ways of presenting the same underlying form of time itself. By taking this approach, the problem of the priority of succession over co-existence, or vice versa, is put out of play. They are both expressions of the same ontologically prior temporal form, which in itself is neither successive nor co-existent. The pure and empty form of time is therefore that which bifurcates itself into the past of memory and the present of habit. Next week, I want to explore this further by talking a little about Deleuze's use of Nietzsche and the Eternal Return.