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Lecture 24: *Difference and Repetition* and After

Introduction

For this final lecture, I want to look at a couple of issues towards the end of *Difference and Repetition* before turning to the prefaces, where Deleuze sets out his view of the significance of the book. One of these prefaces was written substantially later than *DR* itself, so gives us a view of what Deleuze thought of the book after its publication, and after his later collaborations with Guattari. Before looking at those, I want to address a few issues in chapter five. The first, individuation, we looked at last term, so I only want to discuss briefly here. The second is the role of the other in *Difference and Repetition*. Beginning with Fichte and Hegel, the Other has played a fundamental role in our view of the constitution of the subject. For Hegel, for instance, it is in relation to another consciousness that we are able to develop a determinate view of ourselves as a rational subject. Deleuze's claim at the end of *Difference and Repetition* is that this view of the other emerges precisely because we cannot represent the real grounds for the constitution of the subject, but also recognise the inadequacy of the subject as its own ground. For this reason, the ground of the self must be posited as being outside of itself, in the other.

Individuation (244-256/305-319)

Turning to Deleuze's account of individuation, we have already seen that Deleuze takes up the claim that 'the world is an egg.' The aim of his account of individuation is to provide an account of grounds that do not have the same structure as that which they give rise to. We saw in chapter four that Ideas cannot be seen in terms of possibility, as to do so would give them the same structure as actual existents. Deleuze himself notes that seeing Ideas as solely responsible for the constitution of the world is a potential misstep in the philosophy of difference that we are prone to. 'In fact any confusion between the two processes, any reduction of individuation to a limit or complication of differenciation, compromises the whole of the philosophy of difference. This would be to commit an error, this time in the actual, analogous to that made in confusing the virtual with the possible. Individuation does not presuppose any differenciation; it gives rise to it.' (DR 248/308-9) Instead of the structure of the organism being governed by the operation of Ideas on passive extensity, Deleuze instead argues that it is governed by the interplay between the Idea and the field of intensity: 'Individuation is the act by which intensity determines differential relations to become actualised, along the lines of differenciation and within the qualities and extensities it creates.' (DR 246/308)

The process by which intensity generates extensity is governed by a fourfold structure which Deleuze describes as 'differentiation-individuation-dramatisation-differenciation.' (DR 251/313) As the first category suggests, differentiation is the moment of the calculus, in particular, the wider calculus of the Ideas that we looked at in the previous chapter. At this level, we are not dealing with anything resembling the kinds of entities we encounter in sensibility, and hence, Deleuze refers to this moment as being structured by 'pre-individual singularities.' (DR 246/308) The second moment is the moment of intensity. As we saw, intensity is understood as a difference between two potentials. It is this difference between potentials which allows work to be done in the

thermodynamic model of intensive quantities. To return to the example of the cell, we not only have the nucleus, which contains the genetic material, but also the cytoplasm, which appears to be a homogeneous field. Nonetheless, we find that the cytoplasm contains chemical gradients that determine differences between points within the egg. These differences set up potentials similar to the differences in temperature which allow the thermodynamic engine to function. This field of potentials is what Deleuze calls the 'field of individuation:' 'An intensity forming a wave of variation throughout the protoplasm distributes its difference along the axes and from one pole to another.' (DR 250/312) The interaction of these two moments, Deleuze calls 'dramatisation.' If we return to the archetypal model of the Idea: colour, we can see that the Idea can be actualised in a variety of forms, each of which excludes the actualisation of other forms. If we actualise the Idea of colour, it will have to take the form of a particular colour. Similarly, if we actualise the Idea of the unity of composition, we may get either a giraffe or a bison, but not both. It is the field of intensities which determines which form is actualised by determining the speed of development of various parts of the organism according to the distribution of intensities within the egg. Thus, the field of intensity determines how the relations between elements are determined in extensity. As Deleuze noted in chapter four, this process of dramatisation relies on movements by the embryo that are topological – that is, understood in non-metric rather than metric terms. While these movements are possible within the intensive field of constitution, they are not possible within the constituted field of extensity: 'Embryology already displays the truth that there are systematic vital movements, torsions and drifts, that only the embryo can sustain: an adult would be torn apart by them.' (DR 118/145) The process of dramatisation gives us the final moment: differenciation. The result of the process of dramatisation is the extensive form. We should note, however, that the intensive does not become extensive, but rather gives rise to it. To that extent, dramatisation is concomitant with differenciation.

At this point, we can note the fundamental difference between Ideas and intensity. When we looked at Descartes' method at the opening to chapter three, we saw that Descartes based his method on clear and distinct ideas. The lack of separation between these two terms is, for Deleuze, a fundamental failing of representation: 'the weakness of the theory of representation, from the point of view of the logic of knowledge, was to have established a direct proportion between the clear and the distinct, at the expense of the inverse proportion which relates these two logical values: the entire image of thought was compromised as a result.' (DR 253/315) Now, as we saw in the previous chapter, (4.8) the terms, clear and distinct, do not need to be associated with one another. If we consider the noise of the sea, we can conceive of it clearly, in that we can recognise it. Nonetheless, we do not perceive the differences which make it up (the noise of the individual drops of water that make it up and are below our threshold of perception). In this case, our perception of the noise of the sea is both clear and confused. If we instead focus on the noise of the individual waves, we can conceive of these distinctly, even though we cannot form a clear idea of them as they are too small to perceive. Thus, in this case, we either focus on the waves, which are distinct, but obscure, or the sea, which we perceive clearly but confusedly. Similarly, the pure Idea, is distinct, in that it is completely determined. Nonetheless, insofar as it is only in relation to a field of intensity that it can determine *how* it relates to an actual organism (whether it will instantiate a bison or a giraffe), it is obscure. Conversely, intensity expresses some relations clearly only at the expense of other aspects of the Idea which, while still present in the organism, are only present confusedly, on the basis of the domination of certain intensive potentialities. Thus, the process of differenciation

can be seen as the movement from a distinct-obscure Idea to a clear-confused field of intensity. Likewise, the thinker, as an individual, is an intensive field. The thought he expresses, however, is the distinct-obscure of the Idea. What gives unity to the thinker is this intensive nature. Just as we cannot divide an intensity without changing its nature, a thinker cannot give up their unity without ceasing to be the particular thinker that they are. Nonetheless, as we saw in chapter two, everything thinks. Thus, the death of the thinker is not the end of thought, but merely a change in thinking's nature.

The Other (256-261/319-325, 281-282/351-352)

In the last few sections, Deleuze's concern has been to explore the processes of individuation and differenciation. A natural question to ask is, where do we locate the individual? We have already seen in our analysis of Feuerbach that the 'I' is a structure of the species (a claim implicit in Descartes' attempt to replace the Aristotelian definition of man with the 'I think') (3.2). As species are a transcendental illusion that emerge after the individual, the 'I' cannot be the seat of the individual. Similarly, the Self, when it is defined as Deleuze does here as 'the properly psychic organism, with its distinctive points represented by the diverse faculties which enter into the comprehension of the I,' (DR 257/320) cannot be identified with the individual, as in this case, we are dealing with a representation of the psychic system. In both cases, therefore, we are dealing with a representation of the individual, rather than the individual themselves. Rather than these structures, which are defined in terms of universal properties and extensions, we find the individual in the field of intensity that gives rise to these representational structures. It is the field of intensity, in relation to the Idea that is expressed within it, that forms the basis for the individual: 'These Ideas, however, are expressed in individuating factors, in the implicated world of intensive quantities which constitute the universal concrete individuality of the thinker or the system of the dissolved Self.' (DR 259/322)

At the close of chapter five, Deleuze introduces the last philosophical theme of *Difference and Repetition*: the other. As we saw in chapter one (1.11), Deleuze takes up Merleau-Ponty's account of the forgetfulness of our perspectivism. Now, one of the key moments in this account was the presence in the world of the other. It was the other that gave us an infinite number of possible perspectives of the object, thus leading us to take the object, as a given extensive object with properties, as essential, and our own perspective as inessential. Similarly, it was the other that made us fail to recognise the intensive quality of depth. Rather than seeing depth as the ground for the other dimensions, the presence of the other allows us to see it 'as a possible length,' (DR 281/352) i.e., what is depth for us is simply length from another point of view. Thus it is the other that presents us with the field of extended objects and properties, and allows us to develop the language to express 'our commonalities as well as our disagreements with the other.' (DR 261/324)

The other is therefore a precondition for representation, but how does our understanding of the other develop? Deleuze's claim is that once we note that both the I and the Self are bound up with extensity, representation needs to explain how there can still be a development of the psychic system itself. This process of individuation cannot be attributed to either the self or the I, as these are both extensive or qualitative moments. Rather, the process of individuation is attributed to something seemingly outside of the system of the psyche: to the other. While the self is seen as something given (the Cartesian cogito), the other cannot be reduced to a set of properties. Rather,

'the Other cannot be separated from the expressivity which constitutes it.' (DR 260/323) When we look at, to use Deleuze's example, a terrified face, we see this face as expressing a world that is terrifying for the subject. Just as extensity differs in kind from intensity, the terrified face differs in kind from the terrifying world it expresses. As such, the Other presents an analogue for the process of individuation. There is a key difference, however. Whereas the intensive is in principle inaccessible to representation, the world expressed in the face of the other is understood by the psyche as only *de facto* inaccessible. It is merely the same world viewed from another perspective. Rather than providing an understanding of individuation, the Other allows representation to occlude the process of individuation, and thereby establish a world of pre-existing qualities and extensities. It's worth noting at this point that Deleuze is here talking about the Other as a structure within the psyche itself, rather than a particular individual, and in fact, Deleuze leaves space for the possibility of a genuine encounter with others (see DR 139/176 on the encounter with Socrates, for instance). Nonetheless, the role of the philosopher is still one of the renunciation of the 'everybody knows', and with it, the Other:

> ...departing from the subjects which give effect to the Other-structure, we return as far as this structure in itself, thus apprehending the Other as No-one, then continue further, following the bend in sufficient reason until we reach those regions where the Other-structure no longer functions, far from the objects and subjects that it conditions, where singularities are free to be deployed or distributed within pure Ideas, and individuating factors to be distributed in pure intensity. In this sense, it is indeed true that the thinker is necessarily solitary and solipsistic. (DR 282/352)

After *Difference and Repetition* (xv-xxii/xiii-xx)

I want to conclude these lectures by taking Deleuze's advice and turning to the two prefaces to *Difference and Repetition* last. The first preface is to the English edition, which was written in 1986, 18 years after the book's publication in France. The second accompanied its original publication. In this final section, I want to briefly consider how Deleuze's view of *Difference and Repetition* changed after its publication.

In the later preface, Deleuze draws a distinction between his intentions in writing his earlier works, where he 'stud[ied] the arrows or the tools of a great thinker, the trophies and the prey, the continents discovered' (DR xv/xiii) and *Difference and Repetition*, his first attempt at 'doing' philosophy. As such, whilst *Difference and Repetition* is permeated by the history of philosophy, it is the history of philosophy as '*collage*' (DR xix/xx) which provides the material for Deleuze's positive philosophy. As well as presenting a transition in Deleuze's philosophical development, in 1968, Deleuze believes that *Difference and Repetition* is a work on the cusp of a new approach to philosophy more generally, and a concomitant new mode of philosophical expression: 'The time is coming when it will hardly be possible to write a book of philosophy as it has been done for so long: 'Ah! the old style .. .'.' (DR xxi/xx) The original preface is replete with assertions about the dangers of invoking pure differences, and claims about what philosophy *should be* (rather than what it is). These changes were necessary, as Deleuze noted 18 years later, because 'the majority of philosophers had subordinated difference to identity or to the Same, to the Similar, to the Opposed or to the Analogous.' (DR xv/xiii) If philosophy was to continue (and Deleuze is clear that any notion

of an end of philosophy is simply 'idle chatter' (WP 9)), a new mode of expression needed to be found. Does *Difference and Repetition* supply this new mode of expression?

In the later preface, Deleuze makes that claim that 'All that I have done since is connected to this book, including what I wrote with Guattari.' (DR xv) In this guide, we have seen *Difference and Repetition* provides a critique of judgement, together with a positive metaphysics founded on difference and repetition as the 'actual categories of our thought.' (DI 142) It is the critique that is taken up by Deleuze in his later works. For this reason, Deleuze claims that 'It is therefore the third chapter which now seems to me the most necessary and the most concrete, and which serves to introduce subsequent books up to and including the research undertaken with Guattari where we invoked a vegetal model of thought: the rhizome in opposition to the tree, a rhizome-thought instead of an arborescent thought.' (DR xvii) In spite of the importance of *Difference and Repetition*, in many of Deleuze's later reflections on it, we can detect a certain ambivalence in his attitude. In the preface to Jean-Clet Martin's book on Deleuze's thought, written in xxxx, Deleuze writes, ', it seems to me that I have totally abandoned the notion of simulacrum, which is all but worthless.' (TRM 362) What is indicative in this comment is a rejection of the more positive project of *Difference and Repetition*. The simulacrum is a key moment in Deleuze's efforts to overturn Platonism, and with it, the model of judgement, but in the process, Deleuze develops a mirror image of Plato's own philosophy, even if, as with Lewis Carroll's looking glass, 'everything is contrary and inverted on the surface, but 'different' in depth.' (DR 51) Thus, at the very moment when, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze appears to break with classical philosophy, he finds himself operating within those same structures:

> For my part, when I was no longer content with the history of philosophy, my book *Difference and Repetition* still aspired nonetheless toward a sort of classical height and even toward an archaic depth. The theory of intensity which I was drafting was marked by depth, false or true; intensity was presented as stemming from the depths (and this does not mean that I have any less affection for certain other pages of this book, in particular those concerning weariness and contemplation). (TRM 65)

Deleuze's reflection here makes clear his later attitude to *Difference and Repetition*. While it cleared the ground for the new task of philosophy, *Difference and Repetition* is still a work in the 'old style' which at the time he thought he had left behind. As such, *Difference and Repetition* itself is a text which Deleuze might consign to the history of philosophy. Perhaps, rather than seeing *Difference and Repetition* as the beginning of a new phase in Deleuze's development, it might be better to see *Difference and Repetition* as the last (at least until his late book on Leibniz) of his great works on the history of philosophy, and a work itself of the history of philosophy. It is in his later collaborations with Félix Guattari that Deleuze draws out the implications of *Difference and Repetition*, in order to attempt to develop a philosophy that thinks in terms of 'multiplicities for themselves' (TRM 362) rather than 'difference in itself'. There, Deleuze replaces the logic of genealogical enquiry and selection with a thinking in terms of the rhizome and horizontal connections. As he puts it in conversation with Claire Parnet:

> In my earlier books, I tried to describe a certain exercise of thought; but describing it was not yet exercising thought in that way. (Similarly, proclaiming 'Long live the multiple' is not yet doing it, one must do the multiple. And neither is it enough to say, 'Down with genres'; on

> must effectively write in such a way that there are no more 'genres', etc.) With Félix, all that became possible, even if we failed. (D 16-17/13)

Now, we may follow Deleuze in seeing his work with Guattari as the proper way to conduct philosophy. In which case, *Difference and Repetition* may appear as a milestone on the way to a new mode of philosophical expression. It is not the case that everyone has followed Deleuze this far however. As well as those who remain with *Difference and Repetition*, there are also those who reject Deleuze's approach to philosophy altogether. For philosophers such as Zizek or Badiou, *Difference and Repetition* is the site of their primary engagement with Deleuze. This is perhaps because it is here that Deleuze sets out the reasons for his rejection of judgement, and the basis for his move to the kind of philosophy found in *A Thousand Plateaus*, for instance. For these thinkers, the hybrid nature of *Difference and Repetition*, as a text in the old style that opens out onto what they deem the excesses of the later work, makes it the ideal point to engage with Deleuze, and possibly to critique him. Perhaps a final approach to *Difference and Repetition* would be, like Deleuze, to see it as a text with two projects. The first, a critique of classical philosophy gives us the imperative to approach the world in a new manner. Even if we reject, the second, more positive project of *Difference and Repetition*, it is this critique of our traditional image of thought that opens the way to non-classical, but also perhaps non Deleuzo-Guattarian, possibilities for expression that truly belong to the future of philosophy.