

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ORIGIN OF DIFFERENCE IN DERRIDA AND DELEUZE

1. Semiotics, semiology, and (ir)reconcilable differences

25

Let's start with a seemingly innocent question that may even seem to be completely out of place here: why is it that Derrida, an avid movie-goer to whom, by his own admission, movies sometimes spoke in a voice so profound, that not even books could mimic it (Peeters, 2013: 27), had never written about the cinema? Given the extraordinarily vast array of themes covered in his writings, this certainly is a strange omission. Of course, such a question – and this is precisely the point Derrida himself continually returned to in his work – is never *merely* of a bio-bibliographic nature, i.e., it cannot be reduced to a contingency exterior to proper philosophy, should such a thing exist. Therefore, Derrida's philosophy ought to have at least some pertinence to our question. Indeed, the very lack of works dedicated to cinema might be an indication of something important, if not crucial, in Derrida's philosophy. We shall propose a provisional answer shortly, but let us first take a look at the question of cinema from a different perspective. At the other end of the spectrum, we have Deleuze, who published two lengthy tomes on cinema, *Cinema 1 – The Movement-Image*, and *Cinema 2 – The Time-Image*. And yet, there is something very peculiar about these books – though

they mention well-known directors and are laden with specific examples found in real movies, it is hard to imagine a practicing cinematographer who, having read them, finds much practical use in them. To be sure, right from the start of these works, the reader is abundantly warned that what he is holding in his hands is in no way a handbook, or an introduction to the art of cinematography, but a philosophical treatise on cinema. One could argue, however, that the philosophical treatment of cinema contained in these books is so technical and ambitious in its projected consequences, that movies themselves take a back seat to what seems to be a sketching-out of an entire philosophical system.¹ So, when we are informed by Deleuze that what he's attempting is in fact a taxonomy of images and signs in cinema (Deleuze, 1986: xiv), we must always keep in mind that "the signs that Deleuze discovers in cinema are not abstracted from the collected images of different films", but rather that "they mark out the different potential experiences of a material subject" (Hughes, 2008: 16).

26

So, it would appear that, via their respective (non-)relation to cinema, we could plot a kind of a basic, albeit very formal and general, differentiation between the philosophies of Derrida and Deleuze. The latter is seeking a conceptual apparatus for describing the experiential structure of (material) subjectivity, and believes that it can be referred back to a formal order of images, the best examples of which can be found in cinema. Derrida, on the other hand, obviously didn't share the belief in the fruitfulness, or even the possibility of such a project. And while this most certainly doesn't mean that he wasn't interested in the question of the subject, very much on the contrary, it does at least imply that he didn't believe that the imaginary order of cinema provided the most apt setting for its description. Could this divergence in approach be an indication of a deeper divergence in their philosophy?

In search for further explication, we may turn to Deleuze himself, and again to the preface to *Cinema 1*, but this time the preface to the English translation of

1 At times, Deleuze's work on cinema might even look like a complete inversion of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, which develops at length a theory of the work of art practically without ever mentioning any specific works. Here we have the opposite: two books replete with examples and specific movies, that barely have anything to do with movies as works of art.

the work. It is there that Deleuze tells us that the concepts (Deleuzian concepts, more precisely – as is well known, the very idea of philosophy, for him, is based on a certain reconceptualization of the concept as its central pillar) he expounds there are not linguistic, at least not in any way in which cinema could be called a “universal language”. Indeed, Deleuze seems to be dismissing the idea of a universal *language* altogether, at least insofar as it is understood as the fundamental and irreducible condition of experience, because it is precisely in the composition of *images* and signs that he sees the possibility for *pre-verbal* intelligible content, which would be the object of investigation of what Deleuze calls pure semiotics (Deleuze, 1986: ix). To pure semiotics he opposes semiology “of a linguistic inspiration”, which “abolishes the image and tends to dispense with the sign” (Ibid.). Images and signs, he points out towards the end of *Cinema 2*, form the utterable of a language system, and are, by that virtue, its necessary condition and correlate (Deleuze, 1989: 262). Deleuze draws a sharp dividing line between the pre-linguistic and linguistic half of experience, going so far as to proclaim them to be of different natures (Ibid.). It would seem that it is precisely this *difference*, upheld by the belief in the possibility of pre-linguistic experiential content, that Derrida dismisses as a remnant of traditional metaphysics, determined by presence. Language, constantly dissolving into two halves, only to be seamlessly patched up again; “It is at the price of this war of language against itself”, we learn, “that the sense and question of its origin will be thinkable”, and “[t]his war is obviously not one war amongst others” (Derrida, 1973: 14). What does this war owe its special status to? According to Derrida, there cannot be any sense-endowed *pre-linguistic* experience, and it is precisely those attempts to prove its existence that find themselves enmeshed in language the most. Therefore, in one of the most potent passages of *Speech and Phenomena*, we read: “A polemic for the possibility of sense and world, it takes place in this *difference*, which, we have seen, cannot reside in the world but only in language, in the transcendental disquietude of language. Indeed, far from only living in language, this war is also the origin and residence of language. Language preserves the difference that preserves language” (Ibid.). Let us not forget that the war motif is present in Deleuze’s work as well, and serves a function just as important. When trying to describe

the non-stop, close-to-chaotic movement that takes place on the plane of those pre-utterable singularities that he calls events, it is precisely battle that serves as the essential example, indeed as the Event itself. It is because “it is actualized in diverse manners at once”, because it “*hovers over* its own field, . . . [n]ever present but always yet to come and already passed”, that “the battle is graspable only by the will of anonymity which it itself inspires” (Deleuze, 1990: 100). If the god of war is the least permeable to prayers (Ibid., p. 101), this is because we lack a language in which to address him. Here we see a very different disquietude than that which characterizes the transcendentalism of language in Derrida at work. It is a terrifying transcendentalism of anonymity opposed to a constant, perhaps somewhat soothing presence of transcendent others.

28

It would seem, then, that we have come to a point of absolute divergence: Deleuze, the self-proclaimed pure metaphysician who turns to semiotics in search for conditions of experience more fundamental than linguistic ones, and Derrida, the thinker of the closure of metaphysics, who radicalizes semiology by recognizing a transcendentalism that is broadly linguistic, or perhaps archi-linguistic, in nature. And yet, we believe that, by this kind of a reading, we would be doing both of these authors serious injustice. Both of their philosophical positions are far more subtle and open for supplementation by the other one than might be first suspected because, and this is a point I shall try to make and defend in this paper, they develop from a common source – a Husserlian source. The relation of Deleuze, and especially of Derrida, to Husserl has already been explored at length, as well as their debt to phenomenology in general. However, these explorations usually serve a propaedeutic purpose, as necessary introductions in order to later show how they have moved *away* from Husserl. I will try to point in a different direction by exploring whether both Derrida’s and Deleuze’s philosophy could also be understood as a *continuation* of a philosophical project half-formulated, half-hinted at by Husserl. In order to do this, I will first take a look at how concepts of difference, developed in the works of Derrida and Deleuze, converge at two points: 1) the attempt at a reversal of Platonism as their common source, and 2) sense as the philosophical category they both need in order to attain this goal. Then, I will try to show how they both, and hence their conceptions of difference,

depend on a specifically Husserlian conception of sense. The fact that they arrive at two different conceptions of difference would then be explained by the fact that they follow two diverging paths branching from an ambiguity in Husserl's notion of sense. Between them it would not, therefore, be a matter of a fundamental, though closeted discord between a Husserlian and a Bergsonian, perception and memory, or between sign and image, semiology and semiotics, or transcendence and immanence, but of their fundamental acceptance and appropriation of the phenomenological heritage.

2. The undermining of Platonic transcendence through difference

While it obviously meant different things for different people, including philosophers, it could be argued that, for Derrida and Deleuze, "*le moment '68*" predominantly consisted in developing strategies for displacing Platonism as *the* philosophical paradigm. Considering the fact that, by the early seventies, they had already published many of their most important works, and had therefore already developed the majority of the most important principles of their thought, we can say that the attempt at overthrowing Platonism remains one of the underlying themes of their philosophies in general. However, the philosophical meaning of the term "Platonism", and therefore the corresponding strategy for coping with it, is understood in different ways in Derrida and Deleuze. Let us attempt to reconstruct these different, though occasionally similar interpretations of Platonism that we find in them. In doing so, we are going to focus on the new concepts of difference that both thinkers see as necessary to develop in order to

tackle the inherent restraints of Platonism.²

30 While it is quite clear that Deleuze's thought unfolds along the lines of a Nietzschean project of *reversing* Platonism, Deleuze also must have been wary of the fact (analyzed in depth by Heidegger) that reversing Platonic hierarchies still means staying within the horizon of Platonism. Since this means retaining the category of transcendence in philosophy, a new form of thinking has to be found, one that would overturn Platonism and allow for a purely immanent account and grounding of reality. Or, as Deleuze put it, we must find a new image of thought. If this image of thought is to be completely new and purged of any kind of transcendence, then its primary task must be breaking free of the shackles of the Platonic decision, "that of subordinating difference to the supposedly initial powers of the Same and the Similar" (Deleuze, 1994: 127). For Deleuze this is not, however, merely a matter of abandoning the philosophical concepts of representation and sameness-based identity, but is, in fact, a renouncing of an entire moral worldview. Since the main use for an Idea is hunting down Sophists and pretenders of any kind (Ibid.), for Plato metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, aesthetics and ethics all converge in the essentially moral fabric of the Idea. So the Platonic divided line and the distinction between model and copy, or Idea and image, are in fact understood by Deleuze as ways of creating and maintaining a strict hierarchy between (transcendent) reality and (immanent) image of it. But, as we've said, it is not simply a matter of reversing the two and claiming that images are the only knowable reality because that would still mean subjugating them to the Platonic ideals of sameness and similarity, and therefore to thinking that is essentially Platonic. A new image of thought is necessary, and a new image of *thought*, as Miguel de Beistegui puts it, for Deleuze means a new thought of

2 It is worth noting that both Derrida's now-famous lecture *Différance* and Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* appeared and were published in 1968. Having already published three major works in 1967., Derrida followed this by publishing *Dissemination* in 1972., which contains one of his most sustained readings of Plato, the text *Plato's Pharmacy*. Deleuze, on the other hand, published *Logic of Sense* in 1969., which included an appendix titled *The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy*. It is also an interesting coincidence that Derrida and Deleuze both return to Plato in 1993., by publishing *Khōra* and *Plato, the Greeks* (in *Essays Critical and Clinical*), respectively.

the *image* (Beistegui, 2012: 55). Interestingly enough, he finds the seeds of such an image already planted deep inside Platonism itself, as the inherent “power of the false” emanating from within it: the “anti-Platonism at the heart of Platonism” (Deleuze, 1994: 128). For Deleuze, the embracing of the false in Platonism, an embracing in which we can hear clearly the echo of Nietzsche, happens through an embracing of the *simulacrum*, which is understood here not as a mere copy of a copy, but as an image without a model, always bearing only an illusory resemblance, and being, in fact, an image or model of pure difference in itself (Ibid.). It is a singularity without universality other than difference itself. It is these simulacra that form the cornerstone of a new metaphysics, one that overthrows Platonism, because they subvert the philosophical supremacy of the Identical, the Similar, and the Analogous by opposing to them a system of pure and constant becomings – perhaps a kind of a metaphysical system of heterogenesis (Deleuze, 1993: 7). A system of simulacra, we read in *Difference and Repetition*, is a system “in which different relates to different through difference itself” (Deleuze, 1994: 277). This is a system of pure horizontality, i.e., a system in which simulacra relate to each other on a surface of immanence in which resemblance is an effect of difference, and not the other way around. So for Deleuze, the simulacrum is the vessel for a new thinking of difference, which, in turn, is a way to avoid the Platonic imposing of transcendence upon philosophy.

We shall not go into the intricacies of Deleuzian difference here. For our present purposes, it is enough to note its inextricable bond with the image, albeit a type of image traditionally avoided, repressed or subjugated in philosophy. In any case, it is clear that, for Deleuze, escaping Platonism means rethinking difference. Let us now turn to Derrida’s version of the same rethinking, before we look for what they might have in common.

In most general terms, we could say that for Derrida, as well as for Deleuze, the possibility of eluding, overturning, or reversing Platonism lies in a radical rethinking of the relation (or *difference*) between the model and the image, or between the original and the copy. As for Deleuze, we could also say that overturning Platonism for Derrida doesn’t simply mean reversing the hierarchies of Platonic terms. Rather, as in Deleuze, it means disrupting them by means of

32

a very non-Platonic aberration that seems to haunt Platonism and constitute an infinite Otherness within it. This aberration, as in Deleuze, is the simulacrum. Yet, it has a very different meaning for Derrida, at least at the first glance. Whereas for Deleuze Platonism primarily means a constant effort to expel the false, the illusory, and subordinate experience to an ultimate reality of ideal Sameness, that is, to introduce a reality of transcendence into the inferior immanence of lived experience, Derrida understands Platonism as a prolonged effort to ontologically fully separate the two. In other words, to deny the very possibility of their mutual contamination. This is the Platonic decision that determines every further development, including the famed distinction between speech and writing. It is a decision older perhaps even than Plato himself, and certainly one that conditions his philosophy as much as it is made by or in it. Thus we read in *Plato's Pharmacy*: “It could no doubt be shown . . . that this blockage of the passage among opposing values, is itself already an effect of “Platonism,” the consequence of something already at work . . . in the relation between “Plato” and his “text”” (Derrida, 1981: 98). The reference to text here invites a host of meanings attributed to it in Derrida’s earlier work, especially in *Of Grammatology*; in other words, not only is it the case that Plato’s (or anyone else’s) philosophy could never be reduced to an essential core outside, behind or beyond the text that carries it, but it was Plato himself who was already confronted with and preceded by a certain “Platonism”. In this context, it is quite clear that Derrida equates Platonism with the essential way metaphysics in general functions, and that means, first and foremost, a desire for fixed identities and an aversion for any kind of equivocation or undecidability. Therefore, we can say that Derrida, like Deleuze, understands Platonism as a philosophical decision that is as much ethical as it is ontological, the main task of which is to impose a purity that opposes any kind of blend of heterogenous entities or terms. This is where his understanding of Platonism differs from Deleuze’s: whereas for Deleuze Platonism means an imposition of the Same and an introduction of transcendence into immanence, Derrida finds in it a constant, underlying desire for total separation of various aspects of being. Thus, “we must say that, for Derrida, the father (the unparticipated) is not the same but pure heterogeneity, and the false suitor, the simulacrum, is not difference in itself but

the same – but here understood as contamination” (Lawlor, 2012: 69). The bearer, or source of this contamination, is *pharmakon*, which in Derrida plays a role akin to that of simulacrum in Deleuze. It is an aggressor, a housebreaker (Derrida, 1981: 128) that threatens to break every opposition that Platonism rests upon by introducing the element of play and playfulness into it. That is way the *pharmakon* is the main enemy of the philosophical state (or republic), and that is why one of the rules of the very game it puts into play is that the game “should seem to stop” (Ibid.). It would seem that philosophy has been rather successful at this game though, because we can only occasionally catch a glimpse of the *pharmakon*, as if we were witnessing a trace of it, as in the case of Plato’s text. Then it appears as a bridge between, and older than the opposites it connects (Ibid.), like in the case of “poison” and “remedy”.

It is not insignificant that the traces of the *pharmakon*, *khōra*, or simulacrum, appear, throughout the Platonic corpus, interwoven with its very tissue, i.e. its *text*. Indeed, as Derrida is at pains to show in all of his works of the period, they seem to point to a very special interweaving, a *texere* that goes beyond the oppositions of Platonic metaphysics: to a structure of the textual scene that is a structure without an indivisible origin (Derrida, 1995: 119). The *pharmakon* can only appear in Plato’s *writings* because it is itself part of an archi-writing, “the trace, writing in general, common root of speech and writing” (Derrida, 1997: 74). The relation between the two systems of writing is problematic, paradoxical, and unresolved, but only so because the question of origin (of one or the other) seems to be always already plagued by a non-originality or non-presence that threatens to contaminate the source, the pure heterogeneity of Sameness. Derrida’s name for this non-originality, or original impurity and contamination of the source is the neologism *différance*. It is, in fact, the name of the aforementioned “transcendental diquietude of language”. This diquietude, disrupting the metaphysical order by exposing itself only through writing, manifests itself as a constant double movement of differing and deferring within language, which, for Derrida, effectively means within the whole of experience. Overturning Platonism for him, therefore, doesn’t mean embracing the power of the illusory and the false of the simulacrum, but recognizing that the very concept

of the Platonic simulacrum is problematic, given the fact that within *every* lived experience lurks a non-presence that threatens to delay or divide the sense of the experience *ad infinitum*. Therefore, either there are no simulacra, since there are no “real”, undivided and pure images nor models, or, as in Deleuze, everything could be said to be simulacra.

34

Both Deleuze and Derrida try to overcome Platonism, though with different goals in mind. For Deleuze, overcoming Platonism is the first step towards building a new metaphysics – one founded on an original, non-Platonic conception of *difference*. To him, Plato is the enemy to be beaten. For Derrida, overcoming Platonism never means actually abandoning it (it is questionable if he even thought that was possible), and certainly not repairing it with a new metaphysics in mind, but remaining vigilant to its inner fluctuations that constantly threaten to absorb it into a contradiction, but never quite do so. The vessel of these contradictions is *différance*. To Derrida, Plato is the enemy that can never be beaten, but must always be fought: whilst Deleuze wants to beat Plato by banishing transcendence from the immanence of experience, Derrida wants to constantly prove that the two contaminate each other.

Both of these conceptions of difference, however, would remain incomplete without a common supplement – repetition (Deleuze), that is, iteration (Derrida). Here too, however, we seem to arrive at a divergence: Deleuze is careful to remind us that repetition is not generality, but is, in fact, related to singularities (Deleuze, 1994: 1) or *events*, that it opposes re-presentation and is *formless* (Ibid., p. 57); Derrida, on the other hand, seems to be concerned with showing precisely the opposite: in Husserlian terms, that there could never be a primordial presentation (a *Gegenwärtigung*), or a singularity, without an already existing form, or a representation (a *Vergegenwärtigung*), because “a purely idiomatic sign would not be a sign” (Derrida, 1973: 50). This iteration that produces formality is, for Derrida, fundamentally linguistic in nature. Deleuze, on the other hand, understands repetition not as an imitation of the paradigm in the image, but as “a tortuous circle in which Sameness is said only of that which differs” (Deleuze, 1994: 57). This doesn’t mean that it is not expressible in language, though. Indeed, the two orders of reality in Deleuze – the informality of events and the formality

of propositions – are intextricably bound or “essentially related” (Deleuze, 1990: 12). Both Derrida and Deleuze rely on language, specifically on the category of *sense*, to develop their theories of difference, and not just because they, by definition, form their theories in language; if they cannot do without sense, that is precisely because it is “the frontier, the cutting edge, or the articulation of the difference” between things and propositions (Ibid., p. 28), or between the world and language.

The Derridean and Deleuzian attempts at dealing with Platonism have led us to their different formulations of difference, which in turn have led us to language and sense as their point of convergence. Let us now, therefore, turn to their respective conceptions of sense.

3. Noema as the bearer of difference

Though Derrida’s philosophy falls under the rubric of “critique of metaphysics”, abandoning metaphysics, or casting it aside, is never his goal. Indeed, the supplementary character of *différance* means that it is always in need of a metaphysical “host”; since it can be understood solely on the basis of a sort of “hold” (“*une sorte de “prise”*”) (Derrida, 1973: 16) it has over philosophy, and thinking it means appealing to *unheard-of* thoughts (Ibid., p. 102) that we lack the names for (Ibid., p. 103), rather than directly meditating upon the form of this “hold”, Derrida always opts for showing it already at work (Ibid., p. 16). The primary field for this bringing out of *différance* (trace, *pharmakon*, or simulacrum), for Derrida, is always Husserlian phenomenology. This is not only evident from the obvious fact that many of his works of the period are dedicated explicitly to Husserl, but is also the case because of the fact that, according to Derrida, it is precisely in Husserl’s phenomenology that an allegiance to traditional metaphysics always runs parallel with an essential rupture through which it could be surpassed, even if for a moment, before diving back into metaphysics. “*That is why a thought of the trace can no more break with a transcendental phenomenology than be reduced to it*” (Derrida, 1997: 62). It is this constant contamination, or

36

mediation – that is, as we are warned in *Speech and Phenomena*, always guarded in and by language (Derrida, 1973: 14) – that is the reason why Derrida, when discussing sense, always appeals to the Husserlian notion of the noema. Because the noema, which for Husserl designates a kind of an idealized intended sense of the object of experience, occupies neither world, nor consciousness (it is neither *real* nor *reell*), it always presupposes free movement between the two. It at once bridges and subverts the opposition between the world and consciousness. In this respect, noematic sense for Derrida functions as the properly linguistic manifestation of *différance* within experience. With the discovery of noema, Husserl was on the right track, but simply didn't follow through, so to speak: he still remained trapped by the metaphysical presupposition that sense conceptualized in language, what Husserl calls *Bedeutung*, must always be founded on originary intuition, i.e. on intuitive sense. It is important to note here that for Husserl, *Sinn* always primarily implies sensory experience which serves as the basis for higher levels of experience. What he wasn't aware of was that the two always contaminate each other. That is why the opposition between expression and indication from the *First Logical Investigation* falls apart as well – there cannot be a pure Husserlian expression since it necessarily must pass through a form that must be iterable if it is to function within the confines of a language. This is why the concept of the noema is so important to Derrida: it introduces a split, an opening into transcendental subjectivity that forever prevents its *lebendige Gegenwart* from happening *im selben Augenblick*; that is, it forever delays the process of bestowing the world with meaning. Since the noema, i.e. sense introduces an infinite Otherness into the transcendental subject, the very idea of transcendental *Sinnbildung* and *Sinngebung* collapses under the pressure of this *proto-stage* (Ibid., p. 84) of noematic disquietude. Thus we read: “The concept of *subjectivity* belongs *a priori* and *in general* to the order of the *constituted*” (Ibid.), and even “the very concept of constitution must itself be deconstructed” (Ibid., p. 85).

Here we see how the Derridean notion of *différance* is based on a potent and highly original reading of Husserl's theory of sense. And, though he criticizes Husserl, Derrida always sees him as an ally. Indeed, it could be

argued that, to Derrida, it is Husserl, and not Heidegger, who is the most important Janus-faced philosopher, one who, at the same time, epitomizes traditional metaphysics and opens up a path for disrupting it.

Husserl occupies a similar place in Deleuze's work. At first sight, Deleuze's relation to Husserl seems to be one of hostility.³ On closer inspection, however, it is revealed that Deleuze's work benefits greatly from phenomenology, to the extent that it could be said, as Alain Beaulieu does, that "the most decisive proposals of Deleuze's thought, from its conceptual creations to its most particular relationship with the history of philosophy, were decided in an energetic, virulent and drawn-out struggle with phenomenological propositions" (Beaulieu, 2009: 264). This is, perhaps, nowhere more clear than in the case of Deleuze's analyses of sense. Like Derrida, and, though in a different and far more implicit way, Husserl, Deleuze starts with recognizing the fact that experience never comes in neatly separated layers that stack one atop the other. There is always already a coincidence (what Husserl referred to as *Deckung*) of the two senses of "sense", the intuitive and linguistic sense: "one does not proceed from sounds to images and from images to sense; rather, one is established "from the outset" within sense" (Deleuze, 1990: 28). This "from the outset" doesn't simply refer to a quasi-Heideggerean, hermeneutic recognition of the fact that we always operate within a certain

3 Much more so than in the case of Derrida, we should add. Unlike Derrida, whose philosophical breakthrough was marked precisely by a novel reading of Husserl, Deleuze never dedicated an entire work to the great master of phenomenology. In fact, when he does mention Husserl, they are usually disparaging remarks. This, among other things, has made the attempts at rereading Deleuze in respect to the extent and importance of his Husserlian background notoriously difficult to accomplish successfully. Not all attempts, however, follow this direct approach. Some, like Stephan Günzel's, weave an intricate phenomenological web around Deleuze by tracing his other influences and showing their relation and indebtedness to Husserl – influences such as Sartre, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. This, in fact, proves to be a fruitful endeavour, because it does more than merely show how Deleuze was indirectly, or passively, influenced by Husserl. It also helps to pinpoint the exact gestation of those ideas that others had initially found to be of the most importance in Husserl's vast phenomenological legacy. This holds especially true in France, where there has always been a lot of talk about "the early Husserl", the "later Husserl", "the early Heidegger", etc. In this respect, Deleuze could, indeed, be said to be a follower of the later Husserl, and his transcendental empiricism a sort of a reaction to the late phenomenological philosophy of Husserl. (Günzel, 2013: 154ff.)

presupposed understanding of the world surrounding us. Rather, it points to an essential immediacy of events or surface effects that characterize, or, rather, *are* the pure becoming that is the product of eternal repetition of difference, and sense (Ibid., p. 12). In other words, Deleuzian difference is necessarily endowed with sense. Now, if we are to understand sense as the *frontier* or the *articulation of difference* between things and propositions, between denotation and expression (Ibid., p. 28), then we are getting increasingly closer to understanding it once again in terms of the free-moving sense-bearer that both bridges and subverts the said opposition – the one we saw Derrida recognize in Husserl’s notion of the noema. If sense for Deleuze is “*the expressed of the proposition*”, an “incorporeal, complex, and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition” (Ibid., p. 19), and cannot be said to exist either in things or in the mind (Ibid., p. 20), doesn’t it correspond exactly to the inscrutable ontological status of the *ireell* noema in Husserl?

38

Deleuze was aware of this similarity. Indeed, it could be argued that *Logic of Sense* can be understood as a long answer to the question Deleuze himself asks: could phenomenology (and in Deleuze’s use, “phenomenology” always seems to mean “Husserlian phenomenology”) be the much needed rigorous science of these complex events at the surface of things that he recognizes as sense (Ibid., p. 21)? Again, as was the case with Derrida, Deleuze believes that Husserl was on the right track. Husserl’s rediscovery of the Stoic inspiration (Ibid., p. 20) means an ontological reevaluation of sense accomplished by removing noemata from sensible qualities as well as from their representations in the stream of consciousness; the entirely different ontological status of the noema “consists in *not* existing outside the proposition which expresses it” (Ibid., p. 21). This is precisely the defining quality of sense for Deleuze: that it does not in any way exist, but subsists in the proposition. Or, in Husserlian terms, sense, the noema, is *ireell*, but transcendental in respect to meaning.

Thus we see clearly how Deleuzian difference is also based on a potent and original reading of Husserl’s theory of sense. Unlike the Derridean reading, in which *différance* inheres in singular, originary experiences, as their non-source, or the always present possibility of their iteration, Deleuzian reading focuses on

the event character of the noema and disregards its ideality and formality: always a singularity, an event, and always on the surface of things, like a film coating them, the noema, or sense, is the immediate and essential follower of repeating difference. It could be argued that this reading of the noema is far more opposed to Husserl than that of Derrida. Indeed, whereas Derrida, in many respects, understands his reading of Husserl as a *radicalization* of Husserl, Deleuze sees his project as, amongst other things, a *rejection* of Husserl. In this respect, he wants to show that Husserl falls short of commanding the new conception of sense opened up by his own notion of the noema. Because sense is a pure event, “*on the condition that the event is not confused with its spatio-temporal realization in a state of affairs*” (Ibid., p. 22), that is, an incorporeality, it must always be characterized by becoming, or, as Deleuze would put it, its linguistic form must be a verb in the infinitive. This is precisely the kind of radicality Husserl seems to avoid though, because his notion of the noema, though *ireell*, presupposes a transcendental nucleus which, for Deleuze, “is nothing other than the relation between sense itself and the object in its reality” (Ibid., p. 97), and this, in turn, means the need for a transcendental constituent, since this nucleus is understood as the object of support or principle of unification of noematic *predicates*. If nucleus-metaphors are disquieting (Ibid., p. 98), it is because they presuppose the idea of a kind of layering of experience that is meant to be abandoned by both Deleuze and Derrida. Still, it is not quite clear whether Husserl himself believed that experience could be neatly compartmentalized, by levels or degrees, in this way. What Deleuze calls “the rational or rationalized caricature” of the true bestowal of sense (Ibid.) might not have even been Husserl’s position. Deleuze’s grasp of Husserl in *Logic of Sense* is, no doubt, limited, since there he deals only with *Ideas I*. Indeed, in his later work, Husserl becomes increasingly more interested in going beyond transcendental subjectivity, and into transcendental impersonality. We cannot deal with this now, though. It is enough to note that, throughout *Logic of Sense*, Husserl remains the enemy to be reckoned with the most, precisely because he came closest to formulating, in terms of modern philosophy, what Deleuze himself tries to formulate: a theory of sense bound with a theory of genesis of experience.

Both Derrida and Deleuze, then, have a complex relation to Husserl. For both, Husserl is perhaps the last great representative of the Western philosophical

40

tradition stemming from Plato. They both try to come up with ways to disrupt this Platonic tradition, though for different reasons, and they see Husserl as both an enemy to defeat and an ally to consult in this attempt. Their ambiguous relation toward Husserl arises primarily from the fact that Husserl himself oscillated between structural and genetic phenomenology, or, in his terms, between descriptive (*beschreibende*) and explanatory (*erklärende*) phenomenology. The rift between the two occasionally seems so great that siding with one mode of phenomenology effectively means choosing between idealism and realism, understood not only as epistemological, but also ontological positions. This is the reason why even the most basic questions, such as whether Platonism (of different sorts) could be ascribed to Husserl, still remain largely contested and unresolved in Husserl scholarship. This is also the reason why both Derrida and Deleuze draw upon those elements in Husserl which are difficult to classify, and which escape the usual oppositions that belong to the more traditional dimension of his phenomenology. In many respects, then, their relation to Husserl is one of appropriation of those elements of his philosophy that seem to subvert it from within. As we've seen, this is the pattern they both generally employ when trying to conceive philosophy outside of the framework of traditional metaphysics – and this means wresting it from its Platonic grip. And even though neither of them simply equates metaphysics with Platonism, it is clear that it is the Platonic paradigm they both seek to overcome. For Deleuze, this means abandoning the representationalist account of experience and reality in favor of a metaphysical system based on difference, and for Derrida, it means throwing light on the inherent impossibility of pure and unmediated experience because its totality is always delayed through the work of *différance*. Whilst overcoming Platonism for Deleuze means disposing of all traces of transcendence within immanent experience through difference as the only, paradoxical system of selection, for Derrida it means showing that the source in its self-immanence, whatever it may be, is never pure and original, but contaminated and plagued by a trace of non-originality within it that is *différance*, i.e. an infinite transcendence of Otherness.

Hence, their conceptions of difference are usually understood as diametrically opposed. We have seen, however, that they share not only a common goal – a

disruption of Platonism that is not a mere *reversal* – but also a common medium, language, and a common means, a conception of sense that, through its essential dis-placement, or non-regionality, subverts the metaphysical oppositions of model-copy, mind-world, language-world, etc. They both find a useful formulation of this conception of sense in Husserl’s theory of the noema. Indeed, for both, Husserlian phenomenology turns out to be a wellspring of tools for their own philosophical projects. Thus, when considering their relation to Husserl, the question we need to ask is not “Are Deleuze and Derrida phenomenologists?” but “In what ways do they utilise phenomenological groundwork laid out by Husserl?”. When asked in this way, the question offers a multitude of answers, one of which, without doubt, is that they both delve deep into a phenomenology of source, in order to discover within it a bottomless differentiation. One does not exclude the other. Indeed, if we were to take one more cue from Derrida, we could say that neither of them really ever had any choice in the matter (Derrida, 1997: 62).

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42

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