

IAPL 2009 Conference: **DOUBLE | EDGES**
RHETORICS-RHIZOMES-REGIONS, 1-7 JUNE 2009, Brunel University

INVITED PANEL: *DOUBLE EDGES OF KNOWING - BECOMING PRESENT TO A HORIZON OF RADICAL QUESTIONING* (Organiser and Chair: Dr Elizabeth Grierson)

Paper Title: *Between Time: Given Futures across Derrida and Deleuze*
Dr Maria O'Connor

Abstract

It is not common to find significance across the thought of Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze although there have been moments where some have sought to locate such lines of flight. One such line has been located in the region of an ethical impulse in their affirmation towards a future. While both Derrida and Deleuze are resistant to the teaching of the history of philosophy, clearly their different trajectories can be rhetorically folded and revealed. These differences might be too quickly summed up as, on the Deleuzian-hand, an innocent delight in doing philosophy afresh opposed to the Derridean cautionary one that discloses respect for the metaphysical legacy that has led to his reflexive awareness of his writing. Derrida himself even affirms this Deleuzian 'innocence' in philosophy as we hear in his 1995 eulogy to Deleuze: "Yes, we will have all loved philosophy, who can deny it? But, it is true—he said it—Deleuze was the one among all of this "generation" who did/made [*faisait*] it the most gaily, the most innocent" (Derrida 2001:193). This affirms Derrida's respect of all philosophers worthy of carrying such a name and particularly in light of this eulogy titled "I'm going to have to Wander All Alone" which evokes 'now' the remarkable proximity he locates between his own work and that of Deleuze.

This paper aims to draw both philosophers into proximity with respect to how each present a relation to time. Further, in doing so, the attempt will be to reveal how in their reconceptualisation of time, an ethics towards a future binds their thought. In this presentation, this ethico-political future is located in Deleuze's concept of the event and the syntheses of time described in *Difference and Repetition* and Derrida's concept of the gift and justice with respect to his notion of 'time out of joint' (*Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money, Specters of Marx*) that leads to a beyond-representation of time. A critical question that underpins the *between* of Deleuzian and Derridean concepts of time is how far removed or beyond Martin Heidegger's *ecstatic temporality* has either gone? It will be their different systems of language (poetics as such), including Heidegger's, which will here come to provide critical grounds for approaching questions of proximity and ethics between affirmations of time and being-in-the-world.

Keywords: *Derrida, Deleuze, Heidegger, Poetics, Ethics, Temporality, Affirmation*

Introduction: Heidegger's legacies

In a short article, "Absolute Immanence," in his book, *Potentialities*, Giorgio Agamben draws an important genealogy of the philosophical present. (*Potentialities* p. 239) On one side of the tree, under the heading "transcendence" we find Derrida and Levinas. On the other side, under the heading "immanence" we find Deleuze and Foucault. The "transcendence" side of things goes by way of Kant and Husserl. The

“immanence” side by way of Spinoza and Nietzsche. What is remarkable about this small diagram is that Heidegger is decisively located as that moment that is neither strictly transcendence nor immanence, that binds Derrida and Levinas to Foucault and Deleuze. Indeed, one of the strongest registers of relationality between Derrida and Deleuze is precisely the manner by which each takes up and moves from a Heideggerian legacy. Initially I want to provide a couple of markers of this differential legacy that will in some respects establish a better framework for approaching the question of time for Derrida and Deleuze. I then aim to conclude in a discussion of the ethico-political dimensions of their philosophical projects in terms that draw distinction between a Derridean future of the possible and a Deleuzian event of the actual.

Though Heidegger does not feature significantly in Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*, there does appear in a three page segment, in the crucial chapter “Difference in Itself,” an exploration of Heidegger’s Ontological Difference, and a reading of Heideggerian Difference as absolute immanence, in the sense that difference is not restricted to the difference between two entities Being and beings, but rather Being as such is difference in itself. That is to say, Deleuze reads Heidegger in the tradition he follows from Duns Scotus’s univocity of being, to Spinoza’s ethics as ontology of univocal being to Nietzsche’s eternal return as absolute immanence. Thus Deleuze suggests:

This difference is not ‘between’ in the ordinary sense of the word. It is the Fold, *Zwiefalt*. It is constitutive of Being and of the manner in which Being constitutes being, in the double movement of ‘clearing’ and ‘veiling.’ Being is truly the differentiator of difference — whence the expression ‘ontological difference.’ (*Difference & Repetition* p. 65).

Hence, for Deleuze, there is no going beyond Being, no transcendence of or in Being and metaphysics is the radically open system of the multiplicities of Being’s immanent differences. There is no project or requirement for Deleuze to go beyond or outside of metaphysics in this sense.

We may contrast this in many ways with the manner whereby Derrida takes up Heidegger’s Ontological Difference in order to immediately exceed it in the sense of locating a difference at once more originary and more radical. Hence we recognise the significance for deconstruction of the abyssal grounding in *différance*.

Not only is *différance* irreducible to every ontological or theological—onto-theological—reappropriation, but it opens up the very space in which onto-theology—philosophy—produces its system and its history. It thus encompasses and irrevocably surpasses onto-theology or philosophy. (*Speech & Phenomena* pp. 135-135.)

We recognise from his early writings the extent to which Derrida takes up Heidegger’s project of the closure of metaphysics or the end of philosophy and the opening of the task of thinking. In as much as Heidegger was himself bringing about a destruction of a philosophical tradition of transcendence of Being, a Derridean or Heideggerian “going beyond” is hardly straightforward. Though in his *Différance* text, Derrida as well references the irreducibility of the trace of the other in Levinas (130), an otherwise than Being, that which comes before Being. One recognises an affinity of the Derridean trace in *Différance* to that of Levinas. And Levinas more clearly defines his thinking in terms of transcendence.

Derrida suggests in “Ousia and Gramme,” his text on reading Heidegger on reading Aristotle on time:

There may be a difference still more unthought than the difference between Being and beings. We certainly can go further towards naming it in our language. Beyond Being and beings, this

difference, ceaselessly differing from and deferring (itself), would trace (itself) (by itself)—this *différance* would be the first or last trace if one could still speak here of origin and end. (*Margins of Philosophy* p. 67).

In a text that focuses on transcendence and immanence in Derrida and Deleuze, Daniel Smith notes that Derrida is more “faithful” than Deleuze to Heidegger’s project, recognised from *Being and Time* to a questioning of the immanence of being and its transcendental horizon in temporality. Heidegger displaces this project, and recognises the limitations of thinking the ontological difference, with his increasing focus on *Ereignis* and the *es gibt* Being and *es gibt* Time as the radical transcendence of Being. Smith emphasises the extent to which Derrida follows this trajectory in the themes of revelation and promise. (*Between Deleuze and Derrida*, pp. 46-66, esp note 6 p. 64)

Tempus fugit (time flees)

In a text that wants to establish some resonances and differences between Deleuze and Derrida on time, Tasmin Lorraine opens “Living a Time Out of Joint” with, perhaps, too short a reference to Heidegger:

Each attempts a philosophy true to the differentiating movement of life rather than the reified fixation of a world construed in terms of the category of substance. Both go beyond Heidegger’s notion of human being-in-the-world as ecstatic temporality and gesture towards the dispersed self of a time out of joint. (*Between Deleuze and Derrida*, p. 30)

We have already attempted to tease out the complexity in thinking a notion of “going beyond” with respect to transcendence and immanence, and this would be no less so in working through the horizon of disclosure of Dasein’s worlding in resolute anticipation. However, we are able to recognise how each differs with respect to ecstatic temporality. It is interesting to note that at the conclusion of that small section on Heidegger in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze makes explicit reference to his divergence from Heidegger precisely on a reading of the Eternal Return of Nietzsche. This reading shows Deleuze there is something fundamentally limiting in Heidegger’s understanding of difference in ontological difference:

If it is true that some commentators have found Thomist echoes in Husserl, Heidegger, by contrast, follows Duns Scotus and gives renewed splendour to the Univocity of Being. But does he effectuate the conversion after which univocal Being belongs only to difference and, in this sense, revolves around being? Does he conceive of *being* in such a manner that it will be truly disengaged from any subordination in relation to the identity of representation? It would seem not, given his critique of the Nietzschean eternal return. (*Difference and Repetition*, p. 66.)

One commentator has suggested that Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* is his response to Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, that pure immanence, pure difference, is Being in its univocity and repetition, engaged principally through an understanding of the eternal return is time. While Heidegger engaged extensively with Nietzsche on will-to-power and the eternal return, he vehemently held to the position that Nietzsche did not break in any fundamental way from an Aristotelian understanding of time as a series of ‘now’ moments. Derrida draws a distinction between himself and Deleuze precisely on his reading of Nietzsche. Derrida suggests that he engages Nietzsche via a Heideggerian Nietzsche as well as Heidegger’s *Nietzsche*.

Derrida’s Future to Come

We have already mentioned Derrida’s neologism “*différance*” in relation to a “going beyond” Heideggerian ontological difference, and the legacy of transcendence that this implies, though at the formal level of a structure of transcendence that undergoes deconstruction. *Différance* presents the radicality of a Derridean temporality in the undecidability of differ and defer implied by the term:

The verb “to differ” seems to differ from itself. On the one hand it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of a *spacing* and *temporalising* that puts off until “later” what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible. (*Speech and Phenomena*, p. 129.)

We are able to emphasise two aspects to this brief citation:

(i) The first engages a fundamental questioning of temporality in relation to a question of spacing. This will in part be a preoccupation of Heidegger’s in *Being and Time*, and indeed through to his essay “Time and Being.” However, Derrida will take this up principally in a deconstruction of a metaphysics of presence in the work of Heidegger, precisely where Heidegger wants to most distance himself from such a tradition. Derrida’s understanding of temporality cannot here be separated from his understanding of *archi-écriture*, or writing as a trace-structure or spacing:

And it is this constitution of the present as a “primordial” and irreducible nonsimple, and , therefore, in the strict sense nonprimordial, synthesis of traces, retentions, and protentions (to reproduce here, analogically and provisionally, a phenomenological and transcendental language that will presently be revealed as inadequate) that I propose to call protowriting, prototrace, or différance. The latter (is) (both) spacing (and) temporalising. (*Speech and Phenomena*, p. 143)

(ii) The second point picks up on an engagement with deferring in the sense of the impossibility of the possible that appears particularly in Derrida’s work, perhaps starting with his text *Given Time*, and developing in his writings on justice, the law, negotiation, forgiveness and the promise, in general with what he will come to mean by the expression “a future-to-come.” This relation between the possible and the impossible may equally be read as a relation between the conditioned and the unconditional, and can be related to, though differing from, Kant’s Ideas of Reason. And crucially, there is always already a future politics at stake. Between the possible and the impossible, between the conditioned and the unconditional there is what Derrida has named a “time-out-of-joint.” We recognise in *Given Time* that Derrida is again engaging, if obliquely, with the radicality of Heidegger’s *Ereignis*, or “event,” “event of appropriation,” sometimes “appropriation,” and more recently “enowning,” the “it” of the *es gibt*, the “it” that gives Time and Being, the gift that cannot for Heidegger simply be the transcendent ‘good’ or transcendent ‘one’ that comes before being. Hence the temporality of the gift, the pure gift as the impossible: the gift outside of all exchange in the sense that the donor would be unaware of giving and the recipient unaware of receiving, without reciprocity, acknowledgement or thanking/thinking. This time of giving is a time outside of time, the time of the pure event that Derrida discusses in his text on Augustine’s confessions, *Circumfession*.

This understanding of time opens a political space for philosophy or a philosophy to come. Thus, as Paul Patton discusses in his text on Derrida and Deleuze, “Future Politics,” Derrida will present an understanding of democracy distinguished from its more-or-less adequate or inadequate realisations. This idea of democracy is not strictly speaking a perpetually deferred ideal as transcendent principle. It is subtly different to this more Kantian reading. Patton suggests:

However, whereas Deleuze might have referred to the pure event of democracy irreducible to its incarnations in any existing political system, Derrida prefers to speak of a perpetually inaccessible ‘democracy to come’ where what is important is not so much ‘democracy’ as the ‘to come.’ In the same way that justice is not a determinate ideal, ‘democracy to come’ is not the name of any future democracy but the paradoxical combination of a promise, which implies deferred presence, with the effectivity of the event of that promise in the singular now that is irreducible

to any present. This is the concept of democracy understood in terms of the logic of *différance* or iterability which, according to Derrida, characterises any event. (*Between Deleuze and Derrida*, p. 24.)

Deleuze's Multiplicities

For both Derrida and Deleuze philosophy is less a project concerned with truth than it is a project concerned with an ethics for an indeterminate future, what Derrida has called a “future to come” and what Deleuze, and in collaboration with Felix Guattari, have named “a new earth and people that do not yet exist.” (*What is Philosophy*, p. 108) But here we need to understand something of how Deleuze thinks the ‘concept’ in relation to the notion of ‘pure event.’ Doing philosophy is inventing concepts. Crucially and as Deleuze made clear in *Difference and Repetition*, a philosophy of immanence makes a break with all representation, in the sense that representation requires a fundamental transcendent moment of analogy that the univocity of being shatters. Pure difference implicates the concept as multiplicity. The opening page of *What is Philosophy* already says this, as does the final page of *Difference and Repetition*:

All that Spinozism needed to do for the univocal to become an object of pure affirmation was to make substance turn around the modes – *in other words, to realise univocity in the form of repetition in the eternal return.* (*Difference and Repetition*, p. 304)

Where Derrida presents a notion of the impossible (Justice, Forgiveness, Gift and so on) in a temporality of the promise that constitutes the event of a here-and-now irreducible to a metaphysics of presence or a now-time temporality, Deleuze (and Guattari) present an understanding of ‘becoming’ in the sense of the unconditioned ‘pure’ event and the conditioned of analogy, representation, or what Deleuze and Guattari also call History:

But becoming is the concept itself. It is born in History, and falls back into it, but is not of it. It itself has neither beginning nor end but only a milieu. It is thus more geographical than historical. Such are revolutions and societies of friends, societies of resistance, because to create is to resist: pure becomings, pure events on a plane of immanence. What History grasps of the event is its effectuation in states of affairs or in lived experience, but the event in its becoming, in its specific consistency, in its self-positing as concept, escapes History. (*What is Philosophy*, p. 110.)

We get a sense that for both Derrida and Deleuze the future is both given and not given, or rather, in different ways the future is synonymous with resistance. In one respect we could trace both thinkers back to something fundamental in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* with respect to thrownness and possibility. However, what I hope I have indicated, if sketchily and somewhat briefly, is the manner by which Derrida and Deleuze each approach philosophy as a becoming other or becoming different of the concept and hence a becoming-other-than-Heidegger (with Derrida) or a deterritorialising becoming-Heidegger (with Deleuze). We note that Derrida has questioned the ease with which Deleuze has suggested philosophy is the inventing of concepts, where we will remember that, for Derrida, *différance* was not a concept. Indeed Derrida needed to pose the notion of quasi-concepts precisely in the project of going beyond, where Deleuze’s radical immanence found nothing to quibble over with respect to metaphysics and the concept. The mistake would be to want to have them at some essential or profound level to be saying the same thing. This would indeed be the greatest betrayal of a thinking of difference and *différance*, as if the radical play or radical opening suggested here would allow us to find analogy between them, which is to say, to present them at the level of representation. As Deleuzians we might locate the plane of consistency or plane of immanence in the univocity that is their multiplicities of difference; as Derrideans, we would recognise the infinite deferral of every context that would confirm or support their identity, and the differing from itself of every identity presented. But we are neither, or we are already more than this.

Rather, they are concepts enabling us to set up new events from things and beings: nothing more or less than the possible as event.

Maria T. O'Connor

May 2009

Some prompting questions

- (i) The panel's concern with "double edges of knowing" seems to be articulated differently for Derrida and Deleuze. "Becoming present to a horizon" articulates the immanence-transcendence difficulty that the paper seems to be posing. But is the paper ultimately caught up, in settling on this theme, in a repetition of a Kantian epistemology concerning the transcendental as the immanence of an "I think" that establishes the limits to experience as legitimate transcendence, or is it negotiating the difficulty of a post-Kantian transcendental empiricism?
- (ii) The panel theme is concerned with "a horizon of radical questioning." If for Derrida the "double edge" concerns the unconditional and the conditioned whose relationality or jointure is the time of the promise as a time out of time, is the promise the radical gift of the question, or is the question an impossible condition of the promise?
- (iii) The paper's concluding comment seems to open more so to Deleuze than Derrida, in as much as it fails to address the extensive engagements by Derrida on the name, the proper name in its singularity and untranslatability. It rather offers these names as "concepts" in Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of that word. Would the name for Derrida be analogical in Deleuze's sense, and hence be the becoming-open to History, to representation and reterritorialisations; or would the name be one of many in univocal Being and hence open the singularity of the pure event?