

## Gilles Deleuze: From Philosophy and Non-philosophy to Heterogeneity and “Agencement”<sup>1</sup>

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I would like to begin with an advisory remark: what I have to present today is, in some respects, a heterodox approach to some Deleuzian central topics, firstly the one of philosophy and non-philosophy, and secondly the one of heterogeneity especially in its relations with “agencement”. From my point of view, Deleuze is an unconventional thinker, and his texts do not deserve the kind of merely repetitive reading we may not always find but in any case find quite often enough.

### 1. General remarks about the complex philosophy/non-philosophy

I will start *ex abrupto* with a Deleuzian passage that places us directly in the middle of the first topic that I wish to address here. In one of the *entretiens* gathered in *Pourparlers*, Deleuze says:

Now concepts don't move only among other concepts (in philosophical understanding), they also move among things within us: they bring us new *percepts* and new *affects* that amount to philosophy's own nonphilosophical understanding. And philosophy requires nonphilosophical understanding just as much as it requires philosophical understanding. That's why philosophy has an essential relation to nonphilosophers, and addresses them to. They may even sometimes have a direct understanding of philosophy that doesn't depend on philosophical understanding.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to notice that this passage occurs in a context where Deleuze refers to style in philosophy. Besides being a question of vocabulary and of new words, “style is always a matter of syntax”, and “[s]tyle, in philosophy, *strains toward the movement of*

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<sup>1</sup> The text of this lecture is a substantially modified version – specially in its last part – of a contribution to the 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop of the research project “Experimentation and Dissidence” that I coordinate at the Centre for Philosophy of the University of Lisbon. See <http://experimentation-dissidence.umadesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/From-Heidegger-to-Badiou.-3rd-Workshop-of-the-Project-Experimentation-and-Dissidence.pdf?v=2>, pp. 147-164.

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Lettre a Réda Bensmaïa, Sur Spinoza” (Lendemains, n.º 53, 1989), in *Pourparlers 1972-1990*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990, pp. 223-224. I quote from the American translation: “Letter to Réda Bensmaïa, on Spinoza”, in G. D., *Negotiations 1972-1990*, translated by Martin Joughin, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 164.

concepts”, that is, toward “something outside language”.<sup>3</sup> This is to say that the question of philosophy and non-philosophy depends on the *movement* of concepts. It is because the concepts of philosophy are necessarily in a need to move that philosophy has to establish relations with non-philosophy. But concepts are something outside of language, which means that, far from being mere linguistic entities, they have their own independent life, their own logic of movement, a logic however that would not exist if concepts would remain closed in themselves, not open to other ways of being, to other movements, namely the movements of *percepts* and *affects*.

There are at least three topics of significance in the quoted passage:

- (1) The concept moves also inside things and in us (“dans les choses et en nous”<sup>4</sup>).
- (2) There is a non-philosophical understanding of philosophy.
- (3) Non-philosophers may sometimes have a direct – non-philosophical – understanding of philosophy.

Let us begin by examining the very conception of *concept* in Deleuze, in order to understand the meaning of the movement of concepts. “[P]hilosophy,” says Deleuze, “is not a simple art of forming, inventing or fabricating concepts, because concepts are not necessarily forms, discoveries, or products. More rigorously, philosophy is the discipline that involves *creating* concepts. [...] The object of philosophy is to create concepts that are always new.”<sup>5</sup> Deleuze underlines the word “creating” precisely because the central point here is the *newness* of concepts, their decisive existence and intervention as outbursts of difference in opposition to the already-thought. In this context, I would like to put forward the notion of a *heterogeneity* of concepts, that is, of a mode of being of concepts that not only represents a radical openness to the real world, but also involves a multifariousness of directions of action which occupies a level superior to the one of diversity or multiplicity. I will come back to this terminology in a few moments.

As to the question of the openness to the real world, it is in fact, however in a relatively subterranean form, one of the main topics of this conference and it will

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Transl., *ibid.* The italic is mine.

<sup>4</sup> The American translation somewhat deflects the sense of the French original. From here on I shall avoid such footnote annotations and will only mention the French original in brackets when needed.

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1991, p. 10. I quote from the American translation: G. D., F. G., *What is Philosophy?*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 5.

deserve a treatment involving the relations between the philosophical and the non-philosophical that I will explore in more detail later on. Let it be said for the moment that Deleuze decidedly criticizes all forms of thought that adopt the point of view of the main trends of philosophy and establish as their privileged terrain the one of abstraction. As early as 1962, Deleuze points out the opposition between Hegel's dialectic and Nietzsche's philosophy in the following terms:

Nietzsche's work is directed against the dialectic for three reasons: it misinterprets sense because it does not know the nature of the forces which concretely appropriate phenomena; it misinterprets essence because it does not know the real element from which forces, their qualities and their relations derive; it misinterprets change and transformation because it is content to work with permutations of abstract and unreal terms.<sup>6</sup>

All the three reasons pointed out by Deleuze in this particular context have directly to do with the concrete character of experience and they indicate clearly enough the sense in which philosophy and its concepts have to be thought of and to move: away from abstraction, that is, away from the traditional positioning and endeavors which are directed to the creation of a realm of thought in itself, more or less coordinated by an old logicistic prejudice. In fact, we already can see here a strong Deleuzian tendency to think of philosophy as a field where the connections between thought and life have to be addressed in all their efficiency, and such connections are already aimed at a wide – potentially infinite – range of possibilities of philosophy itself for the cooperative relations with other fields of thought, experience and action, such as science and the arts.

As to the multifariousness of directions involved in concepts, I would like to begin by characterizing my point of view on the very category of heterogeneity. As I said, heterogeneity is not to be confused with diversity and multiplicity. All of these are modalities of difference, but heterogeneity involves what I have called an outburst that is not characteristic either of diversity or multiplicity. Diversity can be characterized as a variation along one line, on one and the same plane. Multiplicity

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<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962, p. 182. English translation, G. D., *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson, London, New York: Continuum, 1986, p. 158.

exists on different planes, but the relations between them, even though they are relations of movement and of an occasionally high complexity, do not surpass a finite number of directions. Now, the situation with heterogeneity is completely different: the expansion of the heterogenic cannot be reduced to the kind of elucidation contained in a geometrical model; on the contrary, the heterogeneous explosion implies an infinite range of levels each of which has its own elements and rules. When we say that concepts are heterogeneous we are referring to their potential infinity and to their qualitative otherness. Concepts open to a plurality of dimensions, which has a negative property: its total non-unity. And this is, in my view, the point where the Deleuzian conception can attain one of its utmost dissident expressions in relation to the philosophical tradition. The heterogeneity of concepts allows us to think about the question of universals in completely new terms. Universals are no longer anything similar to what they were in the abstract sense, but instead they are an experiencing result of a *jump* out of a previous more or less straight line of thought into the largest imaginable plurality of dimensions. This philosophical jump has its historic antecedents, for instance in Kierkegaard, but for reasons of brevity I will have to put that genealogy aside at the present moment.<sup>7</sup> For our present concerns, let us just say that universals are the product of discontinuities of reasoning that end up in heterogeneous formations. Such discontinuities of reasoning have the effect – and the advantage – of completely avoiding any type of metaphysical grounding or foundation.

## 2. Heterogeneity and the plane of immanence

Being heterogeneous, concepts are necessarily not confined to philosophy. They represent the most inner aspect of philosophy in its creativity, and in this sense they are specific of philosophy, but they are open to other realities. From here on an important part of my interest will be to characterize this openness in its modes of existence and action. We will have to roughly address the applicability of concepts in the most varied domains – which, let it be said, is a rather passive way of looking at concepts and their counterparts –, but especially the productive relation between non-

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<sup>7</sup> The reader can see my article on the Deleuzian reception of Kierkegaard: José Miranda Justo, “Gilles Deleuze: Kierkegaard’s Presence in his Writings”, in Jon Stewart (ed.), *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Philosophy*, Tome II: Francophone Philosophy, Farnham / Burlington: Ashgate, 2012, pp. 83-110.

concepts and concepts, the instigation of the concepts by means of non-conceptual realities. How does this happen? In order to answer this question we will have to address first Deleuze's "*plan d'immanence*". I quote:

Philosophy is a constructivism, and constructivism has two qualitatively different complementary aspects: the creation of concepts and the laying out of a plane. Concepts are like multiple waves, rising and falling, but the plane of immanence is the single wave that rolls them up and unrolls them. The plane envelops infinite movements that pass back and forth through it, but concepts are the infinite speeds of finite movements that, in each case, pass only through their own components. [...] Concepts are events, but the plane is the horizon of events, the reservoir or reserve of purely conceptual events; not the relative horizon that functions as a limit, which changes with an observer and encloses observable states of affairs, but the absolute horizon, independent of any observer [...].<sup>8</sup>

Besides the introduction of the notion of "plane of immanence", let us retain for the present purposes that there are two types of infinity to be distinguished here: the infinity of the movements comprised in the plane of immanence and the infinity of speed of concepts. The first is eminently spatial (and to be treated under visual metaphors), the second is non-spatial, if we admit that an infinity of speed of concepts is something completely outside of space. These two infinities will have their consequences when we come to the relations between the concepts of philosophy, on one hand, and the non-philosophic entities, namely percepts and affects, on the other.

A few pages later Deleuze introduces the topic of non-philosophy:

If philosophy begins with the creation of concepts, then the plane of immanence must be regarded as prephilosophical. It is presupposed not in the way that one concept may refer to others but in the way that concepts themselves refer to a nonconceptual understanding. Once again, this intuitive understanding varies according to the way in which the plane is laid out. [...] In any event, philosophy posits as prephilosophical, or even as nonphilosophical, the power of a One-All like a moving desert that concepts populate. Prephilosophical does not mean something preexistent but rather something *that does not exist outside philosophy*, although philosophy presupposes it. These are its internal conditions. The nonphilosophical is

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<sup>8</sup> G. Deleuze, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, pp. 38-39. G. D., *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 35-36.

perhaps closer to the heart of philosophy than philosophy itself, and this means that philosophy cannot be content to be understood only philosophically or conceptually, but is addressed essentially to nonphilosophers as well.<sup>9</sup>

It seems obvious that the pre-philosophical character of the plane of immanence and the topic of non-philosophy (and non-philosophers) are closely related here. In order to understand this relation it is necessary to observe that “the plane of immanence is like a section of chaos,”<sup>10</sup> and “chaos is characterized [...] [by] the impossibility of a connection between [two determinations].”<sup>11</sup> If chaos is this impossibility, instead of being a mere absence of determinations, then we can understand that the plane of immanence is populated with all sorts of determined entities that – being non-conceptual, as they are – offer themselves to the creation of concepts. This calls our attention to another type of heterogeneity, the one of non-concepts. Non-concepts are heterogeneous in that their determinations appear without any connection whatsoever. But each non-concept has its determination; non-concepts are the non-philosophers’ forms of understanding.

Now, in the same context, Deleuze says that the plane of immanence implies a “groping experimentation” (“*expérimentation tâtonnante*”). The passage is worth quoting:

Precisely because the plane of immanence is prephilosophical and does not immediately take effect with concepts, it implies a sort of groping experimentation and its layout resorts to measures that are not very respectable, rational, or reasonable. These measures belong to the order of dreams, of pathological processes, esoteric experiences, drunkenness, and excess.<sup>12</sup>

Being pre-philosophical, the plane of immanence carries nonetheless in its womb the potentiality of philosophy; this is to say that it is detected from the point of view of a philosophy-to-be, which is not yet philosophy but prepares the terrain for philosophy. But this preparation is far from systematical. It implies a “groping experimentation”, which means that the mode of existence of the non-philosophical in its inability to

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<sup>9</sup> Id., p. 43. Transl., pp. 40-41.

<sup>10</sup> Id., p. 44. Transl., p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> Id., pp. 44-45. Transl., p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> Id., p. 44. Transl., p. 41.

connect determinations is precisely a territory of non-directed experiments, of “unreasonable” essays that, in their disorientation, grope after possible ways for creating concepts. But this kind of disorientation is not a matter of the responsibility of non-philosophers; non-philosophers do their jobs, meaning that they develop their multifarious types of understanding, creating the type of entities they deal with. These entities are namely those of science and those of the arts. And philosophy will have to find a way out of the pre-philosophical disorientation in order to develop its own type of understanding, its specificity in the domains of thought.

Here we can recall the topic of the movement of concepts. Since non-concepts are chaotic from the point of view of what I have called the philosophy-to-be, then, from this very same perspective, they are in constant movement. The absence of connection between the determinations means that the plane of immanence is absolutely not inert. It moves all the time and in all possible directions. (It moves infinitely, as we have seen.) And this absence of inertia is inchoative in relation to the creation of concepts that will follow the pre-philosophical state of the plane of immanence. The creation of concepts will have to be put in movement out of the plane of immanence. The expression “out of the plane of immanence” conveys here the very movement of the creation, of the emergence of the concepts. Concepts are born in the endless movement that the philosopher-to-be constantly inaugurates in the direction of philosophy. As we have seen, this movement is, at first, groping, but such groping cannot remain unchanged in its unfathomable and formless native state. Sooner or later, out of the very movement of non-concepts, the seed of a concept emerges, a seed that has its own movement, in fact initially propelled by the force of non-concepts, but then maintained and developed by the being-concept of the very concept. Concepts are in constant movement because they are born out of non-concepts, but each of them is in itself a force, a monad, and in this sense concepts actively perpetuate and enhance the movement that they have acquired at the time of their birth.

That concepts are in constant movement also means that they are in mutation. It is not only the fact that they are in contact with other concepts that is responsible for their transformation. The relation of concepts to the pre-philosophical plane of immanence does not cease to be effective after the eruption of a concept. On the

contrary, concepts are permanently affected by non-concepts; they are always submitted to the proliferating effect of their antecedents that actively populate the plane of immanence. In this sense, concepts inevitably change in time; they are effective at the level of philosophical understanding precisely because they constantly take up new non-concepts in order to develop new relations and to give birth to other concepts. Here we can better understand why Deleuze says that “the concept moves also inside things and in us”. On the one hand, the movement “inside things” means that the concept always goes back to the plane of immanence in order to revitalize its own strength, so to say. A concept that does not move inside things is a frozen entity, incapable of providing any new understanding, any understanding that goes further than the already-thought. On the other hand, that the concept moves “in us” means that the philosopher – as well as the non-philosopher – constitutes a terrain in which concepts and non-concepts are in constant communication, preventing the stagnation of the concept.

At this point we are finally ready to address the topic of the “non-philosophical understanding of philosophy.” This is a crucial aspect of the relation between philosophy and non-philosophy. Philosophy does not exist in a confined territory. Non-philosophy permanently surrounds the activity of philosophy, and this means that non-philosophy constantly enters the domains of philosophy and exerts an action over concepts. This action, to a certain extent, can be classified as predatory, since it comes from outside of philosophy and takes the concepts needed for other activities, transforming concepts into surrogates of concepts. From my point of view, however, this is not the most important aspect of the non-philosophical understanding of philosophy. What seems crucial in this particular aspect is the fact that the action exerted by non-philosophy is, before anything else, precisely an *understanding*, a thought appropriation, which signifies that it takes the concepts at a certain moment in their movement and moves along with them setting its non-concepts in an interactive relation with concepts. The result is that this action of non-philosophy stimulates the very movement of the conceptual activity of philosophy. Philosophy does not stay immune to the non-philosophical understanding; on the contrary, it is constantly being permeated by the action of non-philosophy, and once again we can see that the movement of concepts has its inchoative substratum in the non-concepts



populating the plane of immanence of a philosophy-to-be that is always in its displacement towards philosophy, always in a becoming philosophy.

In the direct sequence of the non-philosophical understanding we have the topic of non-philosophers having a direct understanding of philosophy. This topic is not exactly coincident with the previous one only because we have here two supplementary aspects that deserve to be treated in their own right: the question of directness, on the one hand, and the fact that here we are dealing with the subjects of non-philosophy and philosophy, on the other. It is to be noticed that non-philosophers have their own fields of understanding; in these fields they develop the non-conceptual entities they deal with. These entities have their own properties and their own movement. This movement has its own heterogeneity in each field of understanding, and the consequence of this is that one of the multifarious directions that non-philosophers can take enters the territory of philosophers and grasps concepts in their conceptuality. Non-philosophers are – or at least they can be – constantly open to new ways of understanding, and one of these ways is the conceptual one. In such cases the understanding of philosophy is direct in the sense that non-philosophers do not cease to be what they are; they do not transform themselves into philosophical apprentices, but they establish a dialogue with philosophy and philosophers which is characterized by the co-presence of differences and specificities that are not to be effaced in spite of the directness of the relation. This directness is in fact nothing but the very counterpart of the way in which conceptual work deals with non-concepts. The dialogue can be said to be a double movement from philosophers to non-philosophers and vice-versa.

Deleuze is perhaps not very explicit in what concerns such a dialogue. On some occasions he even seems to refute this idea. For instance, when he deals with the status of science in its relation to philosophy he writes: “Science does not need philosophy for these tasks.”<sup>13</sup> The tasks in question are “to reflect and communicate.” But nevertheless Deleuze immediately adds the following:

On the other hand, when an object [...] is scientifically constructed by functions, its philosophical concept, which is by no means given in the function, must still be

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<sup>13</sup> Id., p. 111. Transl., p. 117.

discovered. Furthermore, a concept may take as its components the functions of any possible function without thereby having the least scientific value, but with the aim of marking the differences in kind between concepts and functions.<sup>14</sup>

One particular feature deserves attention here: Deleuze expressly speaks about the “philosophical concept” of a “scientifically constructed” object. The communication going from the work of the non-philosopher – in this case the scientist – to the task of the philosopher is not at all interrupted. On the other hand, the fact that the concept has no “scientific value” is far from meaning that concepts in general are of no use for scientists; it only means that the very conceptuality of the concept in its specificity is not appropriate for any use other than philosophical, in the sense that scientists, having as we have seen the possibility of a direct understanding of concepts, do not transform that understanding in a direct manipulation of concepts inside their disciplines. This is to say that a direct understanding is not equivalent to a direct use. We are then confronted with the possibility of an indirect manipulation of concepts on the part of non-philosophers. In the case of science this indirect use has to be understood on the basis of the common, but nevertheless divergent, “multiplicities or varieties” that Deleuze discovers between philosophy and science. Deleuze writes:

*Concepts and functions thus appear as two types of multiplicities or varieties whose natures are different. [...] It is true that this very opposition, between scientific and philosophical, discursive and intuitive, and extensional and intensive multiplicities, is also appropriate for judging the correspondence between science and philosophy, their possible collaboration, and the inspiration of one by the other.*<sup>15</sup>

“Collaboration” and mutual “inspiration” are the consequence of a divergence that nevertheless contains a common element. And this element resides in two types of heterogeneity that can communicate precisely because they are both heterogeneous: the heterogeneity inherent to the scientific plane of reference and the heterogeneity of the pre-philosophical plane of immanence.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Transl., p. 117.

<sup>15</sup> Id., p. 121. Transl., p. 127. The italics are Deleuze’s.

### 3. Different sorts of non-concepts

I will dedicate this next part of my paper to the different sorts of non-concepts: functions, on the side of science, and percepts and affects, on the side of the arts. In fact, I will insist much more on affects and percepts than on functions. I would like to begin by quoting a passage at the end of the chapter “Functives and concepts” from *What is Philosophy?*:

[T]he fact that there are specifically philosophical perceptions and affections and specifically scientific ones – in short, *sensibilia* of the concept and *sensibilia* of the function – already indicates the basis of a relationship between science and philosophy, science and art, and philosophy and art, such that we can say that a function is beautiful and a concept is beautiful. The special perceptions and affections of science or philosophy necessarily connect up with the percepts and affects of art, those of science just as much as those of philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

This passage condenses the whole of the relations that are at stake when we deal with philosophy and non-philosophy. The percepts and affects of art, due to their intrinsic openness, can establish connections with the “*sensibilia*” of the concept and those of the function. To elucidate these “*sensibilia*”, Deleuze speaks of “partial observers” on the side of science, and “conceptual personae” on the side of philosophy. “[*I*]deal partial observers are the perceptions or sensory affections of *functives* themselves. [...] Partial observers are *sensibilia* that are doubles of the *functives*.”<sup>17</sup> At this point it is worth remembering that *functives* are “the elements of functions”<sup>18</sup>, that the first *functives* are “the limit and the variable”<sup>19</sup>, and that “*functives* are not concepts but figures defined by a spiritual tension rather than by a spatial intuition.”<sup>20</sup> This means that the so-called partial observers are the perceptivity and sensorial affectivity of scientific figures moving inside a spiritual tension inherent to the scientific praxis and theoretical mode of existence. These figures are themselves subjects of perceptions and sensory affections, and in this sense they are exposed to what I have called the

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<sup>16</sup> Id., p. 126. Transl., p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> Id., pp. 124-125. Transl., p. 131.

<sup>18</sup> Id., p. 111. Transl., p. 117.

<sup>19</sup> Id., p. 112. Transl., p. 118.

<sup>20</sup> Id., p. 119. Transl., p. 125.

openness of the affects and percepts, that is to say, to the newness which is typical of art.

On the other hand, “conceptual personae are philosophical sensibilia, the perceptions and affections of fragmentary concepts themselves: through them concepts are not only thought but perceived and felt.”<sup>21</sup> That concepts are “perceived and felt” is of major importance in this context: it means that, besides the active relation that concepts must have with reality from the point of view of their constitution, they also have a passive relation with surrounding realities, namely with non-philosophical realities which are able to perceive and feel concepts and extract from them the possibility of their percepts and affects; these non-philosophical realities, once again, are those that belong to the territory of the arts. The fact that Deleuze speaks of “conceptual personae” as “the perceptions and affections of fragmentary concepts themselves” only stresses that concepts are subjects of the perception and affection at the same time as they are perceived and felt by the subjectivity of non-philosophy, namely that of the arts. And this is the embryonic form of an extremely significant criticism of a traditional way of envisaging the subject-object relation; the duplication of the subject that we can detect here carries with it a reformulation of the object precisely as an active/passive subject.

In this context I have to dedicate a word to the affects and percepts that are typical of the arts. Percepts are not perceptions, and affects are not affections. Deleuze writes: “Sensations, [that is] percepts and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived.”<sup>22</sup> The fact that the validity of these beings “exceeds any lived” is crucial from the point of view I adopt here. This means that, on the one hand, percepts are not to be mistaken with the perceptions of any living creature, and, on the other hand, affects are not to be confused with the affections or sentiments of any human being. In my opinion, what Deleuze calls the “lived” is to be understood as the crystallized already-experienced, i.e. that part of experience that is totally unproductive because it corresponds to the non-communicative instance of particulars. In the abovementioned text contained in *Pourparlers* we can read: “Style in philosophy strains toward three different poles: concepts, or new ways of thinking;

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<sup>21</sup> Id., p. 125. Transl., p. 131.

<sup>22</sup> Id., pp. 154-155. Transl., p. 164. Deleuze’s italic.

percepts, or new ways of seeing and hearing; and affects, or new ways of feeling. [...] you need all three to *get things moving* [pour faire le mouvement].”<sup>23</sup> What Deleuze stresses here is the “new”, the inventiveness not only of concepts, but also of percepts and affects. As I have written elsewhere, “percepts are, at the level of seeing and hearing, what escapes to the receptive repetition of the ‘same’. [...] [A]ffects are, at the level of experiencing or sensing, what escapes the reiteration of the subject as a constituted sentimental life, as [definitely] acquired and organic sentimentality.”<sup>24</sup> All of Deleuze’s interest goes toward the topic of *becoming*: the becoming sensation, the becoming subject of those entities that, as highly functional and creative in themselves, like percepts and affects in the arts, cannot be reduced to mere objects of a vulgar subject who is traditionally supposed to be man. And such a becoming has to be considered as the first and last spring of the *movement* inherent in concepts, percepts and affects.

One question remains, however. What is the relation between affections and affects, on the one hand, and between perceptions and percepts, on the other? And, in the aftermath of this question, there is still a problem to be treated: what is, from the point of view of affects and percepts, the horizon of the two types of infinity that we detected when dealing with concepts? Both questions are intimately connected with one another, as we shall see.

I quote a passage from *What is Philosophy?*:

By means of the material, the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a block of sensations, a pure being of sensations. [...] In each case the style is needed – the writer’s syntax, the musician’s modes and rhythms, the painter’s lines and colors – to raise lived perceptions to the percept and lived affections to the affect.<sup>25</sup>

Deleuze’s terms are elucidative: “to wrest” (*arracher*), “to extract”, “to raise”. There is in fact a relation between perceptions and percepts, and between affections and

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<sup>23</sup> G. Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, op. cit., 224. Transl., p. 164-165.

<sup>24</sup> José Miranda Justo, “O fundo comum do pintar e das palavras” [The common background of painting and words], preface to G. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon – Lógica da Sensação*, translation and preface by J. M. Justo, Lisboa: Orfeu Negro, 2011, pp. 7-28, in particular p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?*, op. cit., pp. 158, 160. Transl., pp. 167, 170.

affects. But this relation is not pacific, as if perceptions and affections could give birth to percepts and affects in a natural way. On the contrary, an action is needed for that transition, and such an action is aggressive; it is a matter of a forcible attack on the part of the artist against perceptions and affections. And such a movement is not triggered by the artist in her quality as a human being who has behind her a memory of the lived perceptions or affections, but rather by the very stylistic activities in which the artists are, so to say, embedded; once again, here the subjects are no longer the human beings but the actions themselves. Now, the aggressive character of the action triggers a radical transformation of the lived into those forms of the un-lived which are percepts and affects. In this sense, the non-philosophical entities, i.e. percepts and affects, become ready to act in their own artistic fields, and they become ready to establish their interplay with the concepts of philosophy. At this level, the one of this interplay between concepts and non-concepts (affects and percepts, but also functions), our attention is inevitably called back to the types of infinity that are at play here.

Above, when I treated the plane of immanence of philosophy, I have distinguished two types of infinity: the infinity of speed of concepts and the infinity of the movements comprised in the plane of immanence. Now, something similar occurs at the level of the arts, but not in science. Deleuze writes:

What defines thought in its three great forms – art, science, and philosophy – is always confronting chaos, laying out a plane, throwing a plane over chaos. But philosophy wants to save the infinite by giving it consistency: it lays out a plane of immanence that, through the action of conceptual personae, takes events or consistent concepts to infinity. Science, on the other hand, relinquishes the infinite [*renonce à l'infini*] in order to gain reference: it lays out a plane of simply undefined coordinates that each time, through the action of partial observers, defines states of affairs, functions, or referential propositions. Art wants to create the finite that restores the infinite [*L'art veut créer du fini qui redonne l'infini*]: it lays out a plane of composition that, in turn, through the action of aesthetic figures, bears monuments or composite sensations.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Id., p. 186. Transl., p. 197.

If philosophy saves the infinite in its two forms, and science renounces the infinite because reference and infinitude are antagonists, art, in turn, works with a very special form of finitude – one that “restores” infinity anew. What does it mean to “restore” infinity anew? In the same context, Deleuze also uses other expressions: “opening out or splitting open, *equaling infinity* [*ouvrir ou fendre, égaler l’infini*].”<sup>27</sup> What seems important here is the fact that in the arts infinity – contrary to what happens in philosophy where it is a given fact at the two levels that we have distinguished – is obtained by the means of a process that, starting with a wish for finitude and constructing the finite, tears apart (*fendre*) this very same finitude in order to radically conquer an infinitude that largely surpasses the terrain of the lived, of homogeneity and of the slow motions of science. This is the destination of the plane of composition where sensations (affects and percepts) dwell, instantly moving and interfering with the concepts of philosophy. This means that the infinity at stake here can be envisaged from the same two angles that we have found in philosophy: in this case, the infinity of the velocity of the sensations and the infinity of the movements comprised in the plane of composition.

In this chapter, one last word should be dedicated to the concreteness of Deleuze’s understanding not only of philosophy, but also of the relations between philosophy and the arts. That exceptionally significant characteristic of Deleuzian philosophy that I have mentioned at the beginning of this paper, i.e. the need to escape the level of mere abstraction, and to establish a permanent contact between philosophy and life, has two meanings in the present context. On the one hand, the cooperation between the conceptual and the non-conceptual, **particularly in** the arts, is already an important level of what I call the concreteness of theoretical endeavors. But on the other hand, Deleuze’s view of philosophy, being as it is extensive to the territories of non-philosophy, also begs the question of the relations between the fields of non-philosophy (science and the arts) and the concreteness of experience. If these relations are perhaps more discernible in the case of science, they are quite often problematic from the point of view of the arts. Deleuze completely avoids a utilitarian perspective that would put the arts in the service of non-artistic instances, but the way in which he treats the topic of sensations is very transparent in what

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Transl., p. 197.

regards his conception of artistic experience. *Artistic experience is life*. And, if sensations are unavoidable, as they seem to be, then the opposite is also true: *life is artistic experience*. And this means that, at the end of all the effort that Deleuze spent with his fundamental problem, there is a synthetic answer to the question “What is philosophy?” In the largest sense of the word, philosophy is, in the order of thought, the counterpart of every experience and every life, including philosophy itself and non-philosophy.

#### 4. The concept of “Agencement”

My purpose in the final part of my lecture is to interrogate the connection between the topic of philosophy/non-philosophy and the concept of “agencement”. In order to do this, it is first necessary to elucidate – although briefly – the concept at stake. But before doing this, I will have to say something about the terminology itself.

In an article titled “*Agencement/Assemblage*”, published in the magazine *Theory, Culture & Society*<sup>28</sup>, John Phillips discusses the pertinence of the usual English translation for the French “agencement”. The common translation is “assemblage”, and it was first introduced in 1981 by Paul Foss and Paul Patton in their translation of the article “Rhizome”. “Assemblage” has subsequently been used in the translation of the volume *A Thousand Plateaus*, by Brian Massumi. Since then the term “assemblage” has gained a very widespread usage, including in many Anglo-American commentators of Deleuze and Guattari. Phillips tries to briefly outline certain aspects of the concept of “agencement”, and develops a short appraisal of the common translation adopted in English for the term.

Phillips writes:

As an imaginative resource for framing objects and operations of the social sciences, *assemblage* remains suggestive. Its use as a translation of *agencement*, though not entirely without justification, is nonetheless in danger of missing what is really forceful with regard to knowledge in Deleuze and Guattari’s usage. (Phillips 2006:109)

Besides the fact that I cannot agree that the common English translation for the term “agencement” is “not entirely without justification,” this commentary contains two

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<sup>28</sup> *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23 (2-3), pp. 108-109, May 2006; accessible in [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249725977\\_AgencementAssemblage](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249725977_AgencementAssemblage), seen on October 27, 2018.



other propositions that I oppose. First, there is sufficient ground to consider that the English translation “assemblage” is far from “suggestive,” at least in philosophical discourse, which, by the way, should not be mistaken for “social sciences”; what “assemblage” suggests is in many respects very different from “agencement” – I will develop this topic in what follows. Second, the reductive characterization of Deleuze and Guattari’s concerns, namely in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in terms of “knowledge” is far from acceptable, and this fact also has consequences from the point of view of understanding the term “agencement.”

In what regards the usage of “assemblage” my preliminary remark is simple, but it has important consequences. The French term “agencement”, in its own formal characteristics, but especially from the point of view of its use by Deleuze (and Guattari), is obviously the designation of a *process*, of an activity which is in movement; it is an inchoative designation. On the contrary, the English term “assemblage” – exactly as the French term from which it is taken – designates the *result* of an action, the action of “assembling”. Besides the fact that it is rather strange that one chooses to translate a French term by means of another French word, quite different from the original, it is also unacceptable that the translation deviates from the original in what concerns one decisive aspect of its denotation.

Let us examine the use that Deleuze and Guattari make of “agencement”. In my quotations, in spite of using Massumi’s translation, I naturally will avoid the term “assemblage” and substitute it with “agencement”. I quote from the chapter “Postulates of Linguistics” of *A thousand Plateaus*:

We may draw some general conclusions on the nature of “Agencements” from this. On a first, horizontal, axis, an “agencement” comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a *machinic “agencement”* of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a *collective “agencement” of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Then on a vertical axis, the “agencement” has both *territorial sides*, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialization*, which carry it away.<sup>29</sup>

This passage is not exactly a definition of “agencement”, but it is synthetic and clear enough for us to take it as a condensed and dynamic way of putting the concept into

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<sup>29</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, p. 112; English translation, G. D., F. G., *A Thousand Plateaus*, transl. and foreword by Brian Massumi, Minneapolis / London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 88.

words (and action) without betraying its very becoming, its fundamental movement. In a very adequate reading of this passage Manuel DeLanda interprets its main technicalities:

In this definition [which as I said I don't consider to be a definition – JMJ], the term “segment” is equivalent to “composing part”, the term “machinic” designates the synthesis of heterogeneous elements, and the term “enunciation”, far from being limited to discourse, designates every expressive act including those formulated by animal entities (such as the animals with territories) or inorganic entities: for instance, the atoms of a given chemical species emit a trail of radiation playing the role of a digital print or signature, expressing the identity of the atom. The use of the term “machinic” shows that heterogeneity plays for Deleuze an essential role in the definition of the “agencement”. In fact, along with Guattari, he prefers to use the term “stratum” to designate the sets with a homogeneous composition. Nevertheless, the strata can be considered as “agencements” whose level of territorialization is relatively high.<sup>30</sup>

In this commentary by DeLanda we have, in an abridged form, some of the main keys for understanding how far the concept of “agencement” can reach. For instance, when DeLanda says that “the term ‘machinic’ designates the synthesis of heterogeneous elements” he is referring to an outstanding characteristic of the “agencement”, namely its deeply rooted relation to the plane of consistency. This relation is well documented in several passages of *A Thousand Plateaus*. The “agencement”, as I have emphasized above, is not a mere result of a process; on the contrary, it is a movement, a process in itself, or, to put this problem in a more distinctive manner, the “agencement” is a multifariousness of moving relations. And these inescapable movements happen constantly not exactly *on* each of the different planes (the plane of consistency, the plane of immanence, the plane of reference, the plane of composition), but in a heterogeneous multitude of *relations with* each plane, in particular with the plane of consistency; these relations are active forms of abandoning chaos and entering the domains of chaosmos, i.e. that kind of proto-organizational territories where heterogeneity is far from having disappeared completely, but where diverse types of synthesis emerge in their effort of breaking through. The plane of consistency – as we have seen before in the case of the plane of immanence – is a simultaneity of partly heterogeneous and partly homogeneous or semi-homogeneous entities; from this perspective, the plane of consistency is the playground of “destratification” and

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<sup>30</sup> Manuel DeLanda , « Agencements versus totalités », *Multitudes*, 2009/4 (n° 39), p. 137-144. DOI : 10.3917/mult.039.0137. URL : <https://www.cairn.info/revue-multitudes-2009-4-page-137.htm>

“deterritorialization”, which are the modalities of life in its most dynamic sense. To put it simply, destratification and deterritorialization are the movements that thwart the totalitarianism of the unified ONE, the imperial hegemony of the homogeneous, and the monopoly of the abstractive generalization. As DeLanda says: “The use of the term ‘machinic’ shows that heterogeneity plays for Deleuze an essential role in the definition of the ‘agencement’.” It is *heterogeneity*, in the largest sense of the term, which is responsible for the simultaneously critical and creative efficiency of the processes of territorialization and deterritorialization, of stratification and destratification.

Before ending this paper I will dedicate a few words – though in an abbreviated manner – to a treatment of the relation between the heterogeneity of the plane of consistency and the “agencement”, on one side, and the complex philosophy/non-philosophy, on the other.

We have seen that philosophy is a creation of concepts out of a plane of immanence. We have also seen that philosophy needs non-philosophy in order to create its concepts. And it is sufficiently clear that the concepts of philosophy are not inert entities, i.e. they are not dead products created once and for all times. Concepts are always in a process of changing through actions of determination and indetermination. This is the movement of concepts. And these movements, which add determination but also indetermination to the concepts, are – to a certain extent – a result of the contamination of concepts by non-concepts, i.e. by affects and percepts, and by functions. Now, this picture of the interplay between philosophy and non-philosophy is certainly identical to what we have described under the designation of “agencement”. This is to say, on the one hand, that the work of philosophy can be identified as an “agencement”, and, on the other hand, that “agencements” will not only be detected at levels of actuality – as some commentators seem to believe –, but also at levels of fundamental virtuality as we find precisely in the case of philosophy.

Besides this last remark, it seems important to have in mind that an “agencement”, exactly because it greatly appeals to heterogeneity and because it does not lead to any definitive strata, does not have a “distinctive history” properly speaking, and does not have “a finite lifespan”, contrary to what Jane Bennet

peremptorily declares, for example.<sup>31</sup> This fact has an overwhelming significance for the topic I am dealing with in this final moment of my intervention. The plane of consistency where we have seen the kind of multifarious movement (“in all directions, like beacons,” as Deleuze and Guattari say about the rotation of the strata<sup>32</sup>) of “agencements” is not a singularity totally apart from the plane of immanence where philosophy evolves in its relation with non-philosophy. Different types of planes are in a relation with one-another exactly by means of the global heterogeneity that crosses them all. From this point of view, in their profound mobility the “agencements” *jump* – and this is the right word in Deleuze’s vocabulary – from plane to plane, and can even develop their activity in several planes at the same time. In this sense, they are not limited to a unidirectional timeline; they inhabit the different planes at the level of simultaneities and instantaneous velocities, not at the level of any kind of “history”. This also means that the “agencement” that we can detect at the level of the interplay between philosophy and non-philosophy cannot be accessed as a finite movement, a movement restrained according to a conception of time that is alien to Deleuze and Guattari’s thought, and would not be compatible either with their multiple uses of the concept of plane or with the concept of heterogeneity that I have tried to develop in this text. And it also means – to return to my brief criticism of Philips stated above – that Deleuze (or Deleuze and Guattari) does not deal with “knowledge” (something that, in the traditional sense of the word, was always a manner of relating an active subject to an inert object): what Deleuze does is deal with actions, with transformations at the level of concepts and non-concepts, which also signify the destitution of the almighty subject and the simultaneous elevation of the object (as well as the actions themselves) to explicit degrees of activity and creativity or, as I like to say, important degrees of subjectivity.

Let me close this presentation with the following remark. The concept of heterogeneity, as I understand it, is perhaps one of the most important tools for developing a kind of thought that can be profoundly creative, in the sense of putting an infinite number of modalities of creation inside philosophy and outside philosophy

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<sup>31</sup> Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter*, Durham / London: Duke University Press, 2010, p. 24: «An assemblage thus not only has a distinctive history of formation but a finite life span.»

<sup>32</sup> Deleuze, Guattari, id., p. 93; transl. 73.

into play, and, at the same time, deeply critical in relation to those forms of thought that, abiding by generality, abstraction and logicism, completely open their arms to the negation of life and the real world. From my point of view, it is this heterogeneity – meaning the *concept* and the *practice* of heterogeneity – that can save us from the evils of negativism, relativism and reductionism.

#### Abstract

Properly speaking, non-philosophy is not a mere complement of philosophy. It is above all the heterogeneous and infinite field where the concepts of philosophy find the reason and the motifs for their movement. In this paper I will begin by developing three Deleuzian themes: (1) the fact that concepts move not only among other concepts, but also inside things and in us; (2) the fact that there is a non-philosophical understanding of philosophy; and (3) the fact that non-philosophers may have a direct understanding of philosophy. The second part of the paper treats the topic of heterogeneity in its relation to the plane of immanence and the articulation of philosophy and non-philosophy. The third part is especially dedicated to the artistic sorts of non-concepts (percepts and affects) in their modes of existing and acting, but also in their infinity. Our concluding remarks are dedicated to the Deleuzian concept of “agencement” in its relations with the complex philosophy/non-philosophy and in particular in its absence of “history” and “finitude”.