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Lecture on Gilles Deleuze: for PH2004 – “It Shouldn't be allowed”- 2003/2004, Semester 2

The role of the philosopher in relation to life.

This lecture is based on the last three sections of Chapter 3 of Nietzsche and Philosophy (NP) by Deleuze (Athlone Press, 1996). Chapter 3 is called 'critique' and deals with the way in which Nietzsche extends the Kantian project of critique to the point where it becomes anti-Kantian and quite different from that envisaged by Kant himself. The last 3 sections of Chapter 3 deal with 'thought and life (section 13), 'art' (section 14) and the 'new image of thought' (section 15). I want to discuss each of these three sections in turn.

A note on the name: Deleuze here understood as a sort of amalgam Deleuze-Nietzsche – Deleuze often uses this combination of his own voice with that of the author he is writing about. Immaculate conception (buggery) and Nietzsche being the one that turns round and buggers Deleuze back...NP has a special place in the overall works of Deleuze...we will call it Deleuze-Nietzsche or Deleuze for short in this context.

Section 13 – Thought and Life.

There are 3 key concepts at work here: Knowledge, Thought and Life

There are also a number of relations: reactive/active forces, dominance/submission, determination

The general argument is that the relation of determination between the concepts within something that might broadly be conceived as the Socratic tradition (the mainstream philosophical tradition) is specific and detrimental. Deleuze is with Nietzsche in opposing *something* inside the Socratic tradition...what is it they oppose? It is what he calls in DR the 'image of thought'...

An image of thought is akin to a horizon or place within which we think...think of it perhaps as an area of 'normality' which defines that outside of it as the 'abnormal' ... but from within the 'abnormal' how do things look? Perspectivism...Dominance...Tradition... The 'dogmatic image of thought'.

So, specific and detrimental...

Specific:

1) the specific relations between terms (concepts) is the following:

- (a) Knowledge dominant over Life
- (b) Life dominant over Thought

(a) Knowledge guides and constrains Life – if we know the good life, we lead the good life – gain knowledge to gain good life – problem of 'akrasia' or weakness of will which already exists (recognising the dominance of K over L) is a non-problem in Deleuzian reconfiguration, it is a problem that arises because of the skewed conceptual relation. Deleuze argues that this relation of determination leads to a concept of L that is a *particular* concept of L but which acts as though it were a *universal* concept of L. The 'whole of life' is determined by K...

(b) The concept of L in 1(a) is then used in the relation of determination of T, such that the second relation of L dominant over T becomes 'L (as dominated by K) dominant over T'. Thought is thus determined by L, but by a particular form of L. The problem here is that the relation of L dom. over T is aiming to make T *real*, to make it responsive to L, and yet this responsiveness will only be to a

particular form of L, not to an undetermined L.

The problem is that this Socratic determination of the relations between K, L and T leads to T being subordinated to K. Why is this a problem? Surely it seems entirely correct to assume that T is the means whereby we achieve K? (this is what Deleuze deviates from, as it were, following Nietzsche – the primacy of knowledge is put in question: but what is implicit in this notion of K? Distinction between *knowing-that* (propositional) and *know-how* (pragmatic))

Detrimental:

This *evaluative* stance relies upon the Nietzschean notion of forces (the world is a world of forces and things are but the result of the interaction of forces), the typology of which centres on a dualism between *reactive* or negative forces and *active* or *affirmative* forces.

It relies upon a concept of Life that rests on this Nietzschean notion of forces. Life is such, for Deleuze, that is in an *immanent principle* – that is, it arises from its instantiations. Life is a non-conceptual force or rather collection of forces. It is instantiated in the particular forces but is never simply a particular force. There is no separate 'force of life' but rather life is expressed through the forces that instantiate it. (Analogy with *meaning* which doesn't exist outside its instantiation in texts – however we take these – and is not ever fully given in the particular instantiations...meaning as excessive – Life as excessive, also more than etc).

How does it work in relation to K, L and T?

Go back to what we might mean by K? “*Knowledge is thought itself, but thought subject to reason and to all that is expressed in reason*” - sense of rational thought; the insane might be said to think but not in such a way that their T has any possibility of giving K. This is the hidden pre-supposition, the *hidden fourth term* – reason and the reasonable.

K dominant over L = K sets the limits of L

If K is RK (rational knowledge) then 1(a) becomes 'RK dominant over L' = limits of L are those of the *reasonable life*.

Thus L becomes RL and the final relation is that 1(b) becomes 'RL dominant over T' = limits of T are those of the RL

Thus the *reasonable life* becomes the absolutely dominant centre point of the relations = all limits, of either K or T, are established by this reasonable life.

We can of course investigate this notion of a *reasonable life* (normality etc and insanity = cf; Foucault on structures of sanity/insanity over history).

Deleuze is, however, interested in something slightly different: limits.

The real detrimental nature of the image of thought that Deleuze is attacking (Socratic etc) is not dependent on a Nietzschean notion of forces but arises from positing such a notion and then seeing what implications for the limits of thought arise. For Deleuze the Socratic/Traditional image of thought *cannot take thought to its limits* and the job of the philosopher, as thinker, is to be able to explore the territory of thought (the thinkable) which nec. Involves taking thought to its limits to find these limits. *What can be thought? How far can we think? Is this X unthinkable or do we rather push thought to think what might appear unthinkable?*

(Think of...examples of the unthinkable – seminar work?)

Deleuze wants to liberate thought – wants to allow us to push it towards its limits.

(NOTE: if time, not too irrelevant etc)

Limits: derive from Kantian notion of critique (CPR, CprR, CJ). Critique finds the limits of faculty in order to establish the transcendental conditions...what must be in order for the faculty to exist. Structure of determined-determination is converted into threefold structure of determinability-determination-determined where determinability establishes the *undeterminable*.

What model of thought does Deleuze want to propose?

Critique (Kantian) unleashes *new forces* capable of “*giving thought another sense*” - what sense?

A resonant relation (reciprocal perhaps) between T and L

Formula: “*Life would be the active force of thought but thought would be the affirmative power of life*”.

So L dom. over T still, but an undetermined L; L *expressed in* T

Of those expressions, those that *affirm* L would be the positive forces.

T would not then be a determined concept but rather a place *in which life expresses itself*. Can express range from reactive to positive and affirmative. It is at this point the choice/value of the affirmative comes to be crucial.

To really think *to the limit* would thus be to find ways to go to the limit of L and get it to express itself.

This is why “*Thinking would then mean discovering, inventing, new possibilities of life*”.

Thinking outside of the box, through living outside the box; thought can affirm the life outside the box.

Reactive life=inside the box.

This structure of “*the noble affinity of life and thought; life making thought active, thought making life affirmative*” that Deleuze proposes is what he sees as the *essence* of art. A practical, pragmatic notion of life (the highest value).

Section 14; Art

Two principles of art:

First principle; art as a stimulant to life.

If life is the active force is thought, what makes thought active then it is akin to the more general force that Deleuze elsewhere calls *that which forces us to think*. For Deleuze thought never arises from a passive attitude, from a sort of model of the contemplative thinker in front of the fire (though this is a valid image of the *activity* of the thinker, of a *how* it is done). Thought is not the activity of the thinker but the expression of something in life that forces us to consider it. Thought is, in this sense, always caused by a violence.

Art, then, is another aspect of life and its central role is not to act as a passive object of contemplation but rather as a spur or stimulant to life (and consequently to life).

(Example of Easter Island figures arriving in their desolation as result of competition between clans as to their artwork that led to a collapse of their civilisation through environmental

collapse/unsustainability...the relation of art to the sacred from the originations of both as in cave paintings/markings...)

Aesthetics of creation underlies this (rather than of the sacred or later representation). Pygmalion. Art as a skill of creating the new (not a craft).

Second principle; art as the power of falsehood.

Until we have the power to lie, we cannot tell the truth. The naïve child, incapable of lying because they have yet to find this concept, exists only for a short time. The ability to lie becomes, in effect, constitutive of the ability to speak and converse. Without the ability to lie we would be social incapacitated.

This power to lie=power of the falsehood, that is, the power of expression not tied to a pre-determined model of truth (ie; it cannot be an expression unless it is a true expression and it can only be a true expression by being in agreement with the real world/facts of the matter). The power of falsehood and the model of truth are distinct. In the Tractatus for example, the power of falsehood is *implicitly recognised* in relation to sense but tied to a model of truth as agreement of the statement with the way it says the world is.

For example: a statement that is factual (about a state of affairs in the world) *must be* capable of being either T or F in order to have sense. If it is *only* T (or F) then it is T or F in virtue of its meaning alone – tautology or contradiction. So the ability to be false is necessary to any ability to have sense.

Deleuze follows Nietzsche in taking the power of falsehood to be the power of fiction...it can be simple error (the statement is wrong) but it can be taken further in the creation of fictions and *appearances* that are themselves *selections from life* that, through selection, *affirm life*.

The novel with the character that speaks to us, the film with the mood of love or beauty, the play with the inspiration of an epoch or the intimacy of a relationship, the music with the rhythms and tones of exultation (Henry Cowell – Exultation...).

A work of art is a selection from life, which by selecting, affirms life. The work of art thus becomes not a selection from life but the selection of *a life* (one amongst many). The good work of art thus presents not life in general but *a life* which is affirmed.

The distinction is between *the life* of an individual and *a life* that is pre-individual. In the last essay, often seen as a sort of coda to Deleuze's work, (Immanence, a life...) - example of Dickens character: the life of the individual in the death bed is hated by those around him, until life seems to be passing away, in its final moments, then there is the real concern expressed in contrast to the previous dislikes, a concern however that is not for *the life* but for *a life* passing. Life is *pre-individual* (pre-instantiation).

The artist is brought together with the thinker; distinct (concepts and affects) activity of each but similar directions of the affirmative...("In Nietzsche, 'we the artists'='we the seekers after knowledge or truth'='we the inventors of new possibilities of life'.")

Section 15; the new image of thought

Dogmatic image of thought;

1) thought and truth are intimately connected. Truth is wanted by the thinker and derivable from thought itself. Truth is the 'natural state' of thought or its natural direction.

- 2) error is thus the confusion of thought, the diverting of thought from the truth by sensations, bodies, passions – we are not *merely* thinking beings and the unthinking side of us causes errors.
- 3) a good method will enable us to avoid error and maintain the path to the truth through enabling us to identify the causes of error and remove them.

NOTE IF TIME AND RELEVANT:

in chapter 4 of DR, also called the Image of thought and described by Deleuze at one point as the most succinct summary of what he opposes, there are 8 postulates, a more developed model therefore, which relies upon a combined notion of common sense and a good will. With regard to thought this might be summarised as the idea that (i) thought is a common sense, the common sense is thus central to thought – problem of homogeneity and (ii) thought is naturally endowed with a good sense – good thought will naturally tend to the truth – Deleuze opposes both. Thought is (i) diverse and (ii) cannot be trusted. Simply because reason takes us somewhere, or because something is 'well thought out' doesn't imply it should be trusted. The *forces* that are primary are expressed through thought and without an awareness of these forces the assumption of a good will to thought is nothing more than an *unwarranted* assumption.

These three ideas form the dogmatic IOT. They are combined with a notion of truth as an *abstract universal*. (Again, a hidden 'fourth idea' or implicit presupposition of the dogmatic IOT).

Just as in the section on the relation of life to thought, it is this 'hidden presupposition' that is central to the Deleuzian attack. Thought is no longer to be tied to a notion of truth as its central determining purpose (just as in the first section we saw that it was not to be tied to knowledge) but is conceived of as having *sense* and *value* as its main goals. The element of thought, Deleuze calls it, is not to be truth but sense and value. This means that what we are doing when we are thinking (the element) is not finding truth but sense and value, including the sense and value *of truth*.

This is expressed in terms of a change of categories: thought no longer judged as to its truth or falsity but according to the sense and value of its expressions. This sense and value is akin to the notion of *selection* central to the idea of Art.

Specifically;

- 1) it is not *error* that is the danger to thought but *stupidity*:
- 2) thought is not a universal but temporal, relation to time (untimely)
- 3) thinking occurs *in* thought and is the affirmation of thought through selection of forces
- 4) we do not need a method, therefore, but a culture of intelligent selections
- 5) culture is the battleground of active and reactive forces
- 6) the role of the philosopher therefore is the increase of active forces, selection out of reactive
- 7) the aim of the philosopher is to affirm life *in its pre-individual flow*

(“It is up to us to go to extreme places, to extreme times, where the highest and the deepest truths live and rise up. The places of thought are the tropical zones frequented by the tropical man, not temperate zones or the moral, methodical or moderate man”.)