Common senses

Deleuze and Lyotard between ground and form

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'One day, perhaps, this century will be known as Deleuzian.' This is how Michel Foucault famously opened his admiring review of Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*.[1] Responding to the praise, Deleuze merely called attention to the hint of humour underlying Foucault's remark.[2] Yet to give it a serious meaning, one should place the remark in the context of French structuralism. Not only was Deleuze never particularly affected by the eminently Heideggerian topos of the 'overcoming of metaphysics', as he himself pointed out, but through his speculative enterprise he actively participated in the development of structuralism. In this context, *Difference and Repetition* constitutes a metaphysical repetition of the structuralist zeitgeist. This becomes clear if one notes the definite correspondence between the arguments of *Difference and Repetition* and the article, presumed to be written in 1967, 'How Do We Recognize Structuralism?', which first appeared in a 1972 volume on the *History of Philosophy* edited by François Châtelet.[3] Indeed, it could be shown that the structuralist metaphysics presented in *Difference and Repetition* conforms exactly to the claims advanced in that article.

However, the meaning of Deleuze's 'structuralism' requires some explanation. His speculative thinking or rethinking of structures hinges on their re-grounding in a fundamental differential genesis, which transforms them into the surface outcome of a deeper interplay of forces. Through this highly distinctive interaction between depth and surface one catches a first – one might call it Nietzschean – strategy for avoiding Hegelianism, since it is only on the surface that forces find themselves in opposition to one another.[4] The problem, however, is that by plunging into the depths Deleuze commits himself to the becoming or genesis of a single and unique individual – the 'depths of the immediate', as he calls them, are inherently solipsistic. He states this at the end of *Difference and Repetition* in a direct reference to Sartre. Here, the figure of the thinker, as the 'bearer' or 'vehicle' of a thought that is the outcome of a fulguration of force, is 'necessarily solitary and solipsistic'.[5]

In this way, the depth–surface relationship appears to restore Hegelianism's 'global model'. However much Deleuze might seek to play expression against dialectic, intuition against mediation, the result remains the same. He faces a dualism that he wants to reduce, but this reduction is equivalent to a dialectical operation.[6] Still, this problem only concerns us in so far as we wish to consider Deleuze's initial relationship to Sartre. Sartre, of course, builds on Hegel, and borrows from him the problem of the confrontation between separate consciousnesses, which he turns into a dialectical struggle for recognition. But this type of struggle, which is a particular species of opposition, only intervenes very late within the conceptual framework of *Difference and Repetition*. When a force completes its journey towards individuation, it comes across other forces. But, as Deleuze suggests, this is less a matter of opposition and more one of difference, because the active force now looms over the reactive force in all its difference and distinction. Deleuze here traces the source of the active force back to its deeper differential genesis, which precedes all fulgurating differentiation on the surface.

It is only then that this force – or the set of forces united around a dominant force – meets the other. And it is here, and not earlier, that Deleuze mentions Sartre. The question now is whether there can be a confrontation between individuals whose constitution rests on the becoming of one or several forces – just as there is opposition between forces through differentiation, a confrontation whose outcome would be known in advance because everything would already have been played out in the depth below, where at least one of the forces must go to find more forces before imposing itself on the others on the surface. The answer, for Deleuze, must

be no, since there can be no opposition between individuals whose individuation has taken place within the same field of forces. Deleuze eschews this type of confrontation by placing the other outside the field of forces, where only a single individuation can occur. In order for such a confrontation to take place, the other would have to be on the same plane of differentiation, and, within this field, there would have to be more than just differentiated forces in the process of integration – that is, other subjects operating as centres of other forces. In this situation, one would not only see the various forces of a single individual in the process of formation, but also the forces of other, separate, individuations occurring within the same plane. Then and only then could there be an opposition between different individuals, just as there is one between forces entering a process of individuation. Moreover, conceived in this way, one would perhaps also witness the opposition of certain individuals to forces engaged in processes of coalescence or concrescence, with these forces contributing to the individuation of other subjects.

Difference and Repetition presents a radicalization of the Sartrean concept of the transcendental field, where the relation to consciousness is understood as being merely *de jure*. *De facto*, there is no need for consciousness. But, for the question that interests us, what also emerges is an even more radical bracketing of other consciousnesses, an amazing short-circuiting of the problem of the multiplicity of consciousnesses or the existence of others. At the end of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze explains that Sartre's solution to the problem of the existence of others had consisted in making the other an object for me and I into an object for the other – that is, through the conflictual mode of a reifying gaze for each consciousness.[7] Now, Deleuze makes clear that this kind of correlation must be avoided, because the other cannot be grasped as a competing structure within the same field of immanence. As a structure wholly other from immanence, the other is thus outside the field and barely intervenes in the process of individuation. The other's role in this process is instead confined to guaranteeing intelligibility between subjects and to securing the nature of objects through a shared common sense. It is certainly possible to make do without this guarantee, and there may even be much to be gained from this, if one is willing to follow the claims pursued in the appendix to *Logic of Sense*, where Deleuze – referring to Michel Tournier's novel *Friday, or, the Other Island* – describes the other as a 'grand leveller', and

a 'world without the other' as a world open to the free circulation of singularities.[8] In other words, one must imagine a happy Robinson.

I propose a different connection to existentialism. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre had allowed the other into the transcendental field following the oppositional model found in Hegel. Deleuze, however, does not want opposition. His polemic against Hegelianism thereby reappears, along with a Nietzscheanism that one could scarcely distinguish as being either primarily anti-Hegelian or post-Sartrean. One thing is clear, however: Deleuze embraces the full and complete positivity of immanence at the cost of a purification of the field that leads to an expulsion of the other from the structure of individuation. At the same time, does the problem not derive from the way Sartre had originally conceived of the relation to others as being principally constituted through conflict, negativity and exclusion? Yet things look very different if one begins to see the relation of one consciousness to another not as negative – that is, as one of exclusion or opposition – but as positive: namely, as one of inclusion, envelopment and comprehension. In this way, the transcendental field can engage or involve multiple consciousnesses, many centres of individuation, without this distorting the positivity of immanence through an introduction of negativity or transcendence into it.[9] Indeed, it could be argued that the transcendental field is not so much impersonal as interpersonal, and that what is important is to return to forms and to attempt to institute forms able to adequately account for our common becoming. Even if one wishes to follow Deleuze's notion that everything within this field is pre-personal, it is still important to attend to the multiplicity of these forces, or, more precisely, to the fact that these forces emanate from multiple centres or poles of individuation.

This is the sense in which there is a fundamental 'intersubjectivism' in French child psychology.[10] Understood in this way, a child is nothing but a collection of forces engaged in a process of different(c)iation – a field of individuation on the way to producing the form of a human subject. Still, such a collection of pre-individual singularities must constantly deal with adults-to-be; with subjects who, while being already formed, are themselves the objects of a continuous genesis – parents, brothers, sisters, nannies, educators, and so on. So the whole process of individuation consists of both forces and forms. There exists no field of individuation onto which other fields in the making cannot encroach.

Deleuze's creative involution: Spinozian *and* Sartrean

It is possible to object that everything changed with the beginning of Deleuze's partnership with the psychoanalyst Félix Guattari at the turn of the 1960s/1970s. From then on, Deleuze began to work below the structures. In a sense, this had already been the case; but after meeting Guattari it was no longer a question of retracing the evolution of structures along a complex process of different(c)iation, but rather of a permanent 'involution' serving to keep the forces in the depth below – to keep them from giving form at the surface.[11] Through the concept of 'becoming', Deleuze tries to remain as close as possible to the process of genesis without further reviving structures.[12] What is striking is that *Deleuze will gradually need to qualify this permanent involutionary reserve in Spinozian terms*. One would have expected Nietzsche to be in charge here, given the new-found desire to stay as close as possible to forces without worrying about the forms they produce. Indeed, Deleuze will examine Nietzsche in this sense in 1972. In 'Nomadic Thought' he speaks of 'connections' between Nietzsche's aphorisms, which allow for the establishment of a type of direct communication from affect to affect, with the reader-receiver not needing to pass through an interpretation of form, but instead being immediately subject to the effect of the force delivered by the transmitter.[13] Yet, this re-examination is derivative and subordinate to a more important work on Spinoza. Its Nietzscheanism is actually related to his reinterpretation of Spinoza. Indeed, such a reworking is responsible for the so-called 'great Nietzsche–Spinoza equation', which Deleuze claims to have wanted so much.[14]

One must go into a bit of technical detail here. But what is important is the conclusion one is be able to draw from Deleuze's evolving interpretation of Spinozism – that is, that Deleuze will come to identify Spinoza with Sartre! More specifically, what Deleuze finds at the end of the inflexion he imposes on Spinozism are the first seeds of existentialism, and, perhaps even more profoundly, the original phenomenological outline of existentialism proposed in the text which Sartre had brought back from his stay in Berlin, *The Transcendence of the Ego*. In his involution, Deleuze thus retreated from the epistemological Spinozism of his contemporaries[15] to the proto-existentialism of his first teacher, Sartre, without for that matter ever leaving Spinoza.

In what sense could a philosophy of experience inspired by Spinoza lead back to a philosophy of existence? Everything here rests on the extent to which what is described through our experiences can be seen to constitute the very regime of our existence, an existence only narrowly extricated from the servitude of images and on the way to a freedom embodied in the infinite series of essences that comprise God for all eternity. But, from our point of view as finite modes, we cannot grasp ourselves as essences or according to our essence, but as powers. Deleuze is clear that power equals essence: to every essence correspond degrees of power, or more or less complete actualizations of our power. But does essence circumscribe a maximum of power? Does essence set an upper limit beyond which our power cannot extend? Even if this were the case, one issue is absolutely decisive here: as long as we evolve within the common order of nature – and this is always the case in so far as we remain, along with common notions, in the second of the three orders of knowledge that Spinoza distinguishes – we still do not have access to our essence so much as, precisely, to the variations in our power. Otherwise put, we cannot grasp our own singularity in terms of its essence any more than we are able to advance from essence to essence when encountering other singularities. We remain confined to testing our capacities, to experimenting with that which we cannot know *a priori*. This is because we can only form an idea of our capacities *a posteriori*; that is, only after having experienced contact with other bodies or other ideas, after having sensed whether their power can be reconciled with ours – namely, whether with some we can constitute more powerful wholes, capable of greater things, or whether, in the case of others, we would enter into relations of destruction, conflict or decomposition. It is in this sense that the Spinozism belonging to the second order of knowledge, later privileged by Deleuze, can be understood as a kind of existentialism.

If Deleuze's Spinozism is an existentialism, it remains crucial to ask whether this Spinozism can be understood as necessarily corresponding to Sartre's. A major objection can be raised against the hypothesis of a Sartrean Deleuze: Deleuze's aversion to consciousness, which contrasts greatly with the relative status this notion enjoys in Sartre. Deleuze, as a good metaphysician, asserts loud and clear that the transcendental field cannot be limited to consciousness. The Sartrean recourse to consciousness presupposes within immanence a unification founded in intentionality and retention, while Deleuze only wants differences – for him, no unity, whether of

consciousness or not, can be tolerated.[16] But does Spinozism not also presuppose the existence of a divine substance, the unity of the multiplicity of the modes that express it? From this standpoint it is not clear what one would gain by dispensing with the unity of consciousness if this lead to a recovery of the unity of substance. However, this is not the case if Nature is understood only as a collection of finite modes viewed in their diversity, as it was within the framework of Deleuze's collaboration with Guattari.[17] In this respect, the Spinozism of *A Thousand Plateaus* – an ontologically tempered Spinozism when compared to the one described in *Expressionism in Philosophy* – achieves a degree of immanence that Deleuze had attributed only to Nietzscheanism at the start of *Difference and Repetition*.[18] This is one of the outcomes, if not the means, of his so-called 'great equation'.

Still, it is tempting to object that given the human (all too human) nature of the second order of knowledge, it is not so clear how Spinozism could dispense with the concept of consciousness. It may be that our first knowledge of our power and other powers involves consciousness. On this score, Deleuze is only prepared to concede that the relation between the field of immanence and consciousness is at most a *de facto* one. *De jure*, however, the movements that run through immanence are independent of the intentions, protentions or retentions of a consciousness.[19]

Even so, beyond such restrictions – which represent one of the bolts by which the phenomenological assumptions underwriting Sartre's thought, including his 'ontology', can be blown open – one cannot fail to note that the Deleuzean concept of immanence is, notwithstanding its cosmological extension, coterminous with Sartre's. Indeed, it is Sartre, and no one else, whom Deleuze turns to in order to think or rethink immanence. After all, in *What is Philosophy?* does a 'small' Sartre–Spinoza equation not appear precisely where the authors come to outline the demands of a thinking of immanence?[20]

Once Deleuze's immanentist reception of *The Transcendence of the Ego* is taken into account, it becomes easy to track his transposition of the phenomenological plane into a metaphysical plane, and, along with this, the elaboration of a theory of existence that is as human as it is superhuman and subhuman, in so far as it comprehends becomings located far beyond the human form. Such a transposition, which corresponds to an extension of Sartre's first phenomenology, is already at work in Deleuze's earliest texts. Published in the journals *Poésie* and *Espace* immediately after the war, these texts stand alongside Sartre's writings and present themselves as variations on or extrapolations of Sartre.[21] Deleuze's determination from 1947 onwards to reverse the outcome of Sartre's phenomenological analyses in favour of a metaphysics of immanence has been noted.[22] But it is also crucial to signal that such a determination can itself be seen through a Nietzschean–Spinozian lens. This can be understood not only in the sense of a Nietzschean drive [*Trieb*] or a Spinozian striving [*conatus*], as if Deleuze had *desired with constancy* to be Sartrean, and been eager to remain faithful to his enthusiastic discovery of existentialism. From this perspective, one would have a Spinozian interpretation of Deleuze's relation to Sartre, with Sartre as the object of a kind of grasping that finds its model in Nietzsche or Spinoza. However, it is perhaps the inverse that emerges instead here, namely a Sartrean interpretation of Deleuze's evolving relation to Nietzsche and Spinoza – the attribution of the 'great Nietzsche–Spinoza equation' to existentialism itself. One of the upshots of Deleuze's determination or constancy is thus an equation of Nietzscheanism with a Spinozism that can itself be compared to Sartre's existentialism.

Giving a form: towards a transcendental analytic of stupidity

With this becoming in mind, it may be worth taking a measure of Deleuze's project as a whole. For, against Deleuze, and in spite of his creative involution in the company of Guattari, one can still strive to abandon the depths and to return to the surface, where it may once again be possible to produce forms that survey the plane of experience. This is because to resist a return to the surface and to continue sinking into the depths – as Deleuze does together with Guattari – is to run the risk that everything turn bad, both for oneself – suicide, experimentation of life as far as death – and for others, as would be the case where an intensification of one's power results in indifference towards the other, and thus occasionally, but inevitably, in an intensification that comes at the expense of the other. Here the problem of evil arises, understood principally in a biological sense. At the same time, pain and suffering reappear as the biological criteria for an ethics, of which Mikel Dufrenne provides the outlines in a proximity to Deleuze and Guattari that also does not exclude a certain distance and critique.[23]

The power of forms is not to be lamented on its own account. Technically speaking, this power

corresponds to that of an adequate survey [*survol*] of an ocean of forces, which it expresses by supplying these underlying forces with a form matching their potential range of effusion. More exactly still, every form possesses (in so far as it is) a framing or enframing power that is adjustable to the elementary stirring of forces. The frame [*cadre*] thus formed is not necessarily constraining or oppressive; it may simply be an expression of its own ground [*fond*], its most exact and precise manifestation. However, there is always a danger that the forms may come to exert their power [*pouvoir*] regardless of the powers [*puissances*] that they are supposed to express to the outside, namely, on the surface, where the forms can assert themselves without endeavouring to conform to the movements of the ground. The problem, then, is not that the forms are empty – that they evidently are – but that this empty assemblage should be applied to the vital plenitude of the ground [*plein de vitalité du fond*], with the latter made to conform to a frame that does not express it adequately. What is problematic, therefore, is not the existence of a power [*pouvoir*] of forms as such, but its potential non-coincidence with the elementary powers [*puissances*] of the ground – the presences, the existences, and their connections – that need to be properly re-presented. No power [*puissance*] exists without a form that has the power [*pouvoir*] to represent it. And the powers [*pouvoirs*] can inform the ground only if they have first been formed by it and thus correspond to it. Here we return to the question of intersubjectivity and to the causes that can lead us to harm one another. In fact, these may be avoided so long as we are able to communicate our experiences and to collectively determine a form that is somehow superior to our own particular forms and capable of comprehending all our experiences. Such an 'optimistic' idea must, in the last analysis, be founded on the possibility of a kind of communication that is fundamentally different, if not antithetical, to the Sartrean one or to that inherited from Sartre.

This involves going beyond the 'expressive' schema of the early Deleuze – the Deleuze before Guattari. If one details the conceptual ingredients constituting such a schema, what is revealed is an immanence populated by pre-individualized nodes of forces, a multitude of poles in the process of individuation, their reciprocal linkages looking for ways to express themselves through certain 'common senses'. Thus, while moving beyond Deleuze's pre-personal delimitation of the transcendental field, it is possible to posit *within immanence* what Deleuze here defines

as products falling outside of the plane: objects and (other) subjects. Indeed, what the objective relations of knowledge and the intersubjective relations of recognition – or, rather, relations between objects; that is, 'natural' relations independent of all knowledge or recognition – indicate, signify and express is a shared ground.

It is rare for the ground to pass entirely into forms and for the forms to be capable of conveying or expressing the whole ground. Expression is a struggle. There is no guarantee that the whole ground can manage to find its form or forms; and it is perhaps also not desirable that one and only one form can claim to apply to the entire ground. But a phenomenality beyond the grasp of all cognitive framing does not seem particularly worthy of interest. For this reason, a ground that fails to take form is no more acceptable than if a single form comes to be imposed on it. It is therefore necessary to recognize that the ground always remains irreducible to form, even when one finds the means for a temporary adequate expression. The political consequences of these speculative considerations are significant. It must be acknowledged that, at bottom – that is, on the ground – a lived community exists, but that, at the same time – that is, beyond the ground – the senses of what is lived must be articulated and expressed. The whole question is thus to understand how this ground and these senses can be connected as best as possible, given that their adequation can never be secured once and for all, and that their unity is never completely guaranteed – except in the case of theoretical *coups de force* (the imposition of an arbitrary form) or strange and sad states of confusion (caused by the raw upflow of ground).

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze considered the case of the upflow of a ground that is unable to find the forms necessary to express itself. There, Deleuze noted that stupidity [*bêtise*] and wickedness [*méchanceté*] would spread freely on the surface.[24] As his friend Jean-Pierre Faye has recalled, one of the young Deleuze's projects had been to set out a transcendental analytic of stupidity.[25] On this score, one finds in him above all a concern for the aesthetic conditions of emergence of thought from a ground that, if left to its own devices, will only generate idiocy and cruelty. In this context, Deleuze's thesis offers less a transcendental analytic and more a transcendental aesthetic of stupidity, and an aesthetic without concern for any additional formal or analytic framing. It is quite surprising, and rather disappointing, then, that Deleuze, turning further towards the

ground with Guattari, should have pursued this aesthetic dimension while completely neglecting the analytic, having resolutely turned his back on it once and for all. It could certainly be argued that his final, violent, rejection of 'analytic' philosophy be grasped in this light.[26] From this perspective, Deleuze differs greatly from Jean-François Lyotard.

Not giving up on the ground: common senses
In a late interview, Lyotard explicitly denied that the continuity between his *Discourse, Figure* and *Libidinal Economy* or *The Differend* could be conceived in terms of a 'dynamic metaphysics' or a 'metaphysics of energy'.[27] Regrettably, it is this metaphysics that receded from view after *Libidinal Economy*, while continuing to animate the thought of Deleuze, who, for his part, unfortunately refused to enter into those very grievances and disputes – in a word, into the domain of evil – that would have risked disturbing the forms.

Lyotard passed through the two extremes of this dispute: from a ground without form (a formless ground, as it were) responsible for the evil that one does to oneself and to others, to a return to forms accompanied by a forgetting or repression of the ground that they were supposed to express. In other words, between *Libidinal Economy* and *The Differend* Lyotard moved from Deleuze to Ludwig Wittgenstein. Despite this transition he did not believe in the possibility of establishing a link between the metaphysics of desire of the former and the philosophical grammar of the latter. Indeed, despite the efforts exerted in his last writings, 'The phrase-effect' or 'Emma', Lyotard never managed to bridge the gap between these two moments in his work.[28] In fact, it seems that, on the contrary, he did everything to sever this link, and that he engaged all the more strongly with the 'formalism' of phrases [*phrases*] the more he found himself intimately 'compromised' in the domain of the ground, at the level of libidinal intensity.[29] Across his two successive careers he appears to have maintained the notion of an incompatibility between the deep desire and the formal superficiality of the genres of discourse or regimes of phrases. In this way he served to legitimate, or at least set the stage for, the reciprocal loathing between Deleuzeans and Wittgensteinians in France.[30]

However, one can still enquire into the psychological or anthropological bedrock necessary for the deployment of phrases and the fashioning of gestures, while focusing on the inventory and exploration of these same phrasal or gestural forms as outlined in Wittgenstein's philosophical grammar. This is because, between desire and grammar, there is no real choice: one must rather choose both, and make visible their interlacing and mutual support. In this way, desire gives form and consistency to our expressions, first by determining and then, at an ideal level, by animating our corporeal gestures and utterances. By the same token, forms only possess sense by reference to the sensations or affects that originate them and that ensure the legitimacy of

their outward expression. Such an enterprise must involve the bringing together of the two separate sides of Lyotard's work into a single project.

Wittgenstein's concern for language games is grounded on an awareness of the mental cramps that can result from certain linguistic habits, or rather bad habits. To become sensitive to language games therefore means finding ways to grasp the sense of our common linguistic habits, to carry out an analysis of these habits or of common sense. But there are several ways to grasp common sense within the framework of a philosophical grammar. Lyotard, for instance, attempts to formulate a conception of common sense on the Kantian model of the *Critique of Judgement* by relying upon a Wittgensteinian conception of language games. From here, ethics and politics must in turn be thought on the model of reflective judgement. The maxim or proposition 'it is good' must be understood in the manner of 'it is beautiful' or 'it is sublime', which come under the purview of the faculty of judgement [*Urteilskraft*]. The agreement of the faculties and between subjects is required or desired without, however, being fixed *a priori*, the *sensus communis* being 'in aesthetics what the whole of practical reasonable beings is in ethics'.[31] A judgement arrived at this way has sense by reference to a community to come. It represents a call or appeal aimed at a resolution of conflicts, expressing the demand for a good politics that would make possible debate about the nature of the good, without quarrel. A conception of common sense is thereby achieved, which is placed before us as the ideal of a future politics.

However, it is equally possible to undertake a description, psychological and historical, of the conditions of the constitution of existing common senses; that is, of the environments or milieus in which languages originally acquire their meaning. In this case, the task must be to 'relate words back to their texts and contexts, restoring to texts and contexts their social settings and subjective frames'[32] – as Maxime Chastaing, one of the first readers of Wittgenstein in France, puts it.[33] Still, it could be objected that the future to which Lyotard appeals can be built only by recovering the fraternal community in which we all participate in a nascent, child-like or 'infantile' way. This primordial community can always be recovered within us as that which has always supported our coexistence, and we have a responsibility to articulate its sense through an elucidation of that which we fundamentally share. There are certainly overlaps between the common senses

just described (as originary participation and historical common sense) and common sense as conceived by Lyotard (the judgement 'it is right' as an appeal to a political community). But there is also a great difference between the relation to time and the idea of what is given, between the conception of history and the awareness of an anthropological foundation. We share a common history and a common past, and it is important to recover them in so far as they constitute us. Not everything depends on what we are capable of creating in the future. Or, rather, what we are capable of constructing together depends in great part on our capacity to reactivate our basic collectivity and shared sedimentations.

Let us be clear that at this point there could be two ways of understanding common sense, both, however, irreducible to Lyotard's Kantianism. The way opened up by Chastaing would be the more radical, going back before Kant to his sceptical awakener, David Hume, and his predecessors, George Berkeley and Thomas Reid.[34] From this standpoint, there would be no rule, no laws, no table of categories, but rather habits stipulating senses or meanings that are always different, even if open to a form of description that would rely on the historical circumstances of enunciation and the subjective commitments of speakers. This interpretation is as radical with respect to Kantianism as it is to the domain of historical psychology, which it would consider, disparagingly, as both a historicism and a psychologism. Yet, it could be argued that a historical psychology worthy of its name should itself be sceptical rather than Kantian – empirical and not critical. Only on this condition would it be capable of attending to both the contingency of history and to the decisions of individual actors. If tempted instead into the net of a table of categories, it would end up divorcing itself as much from historicity (embracing the conceptual transhistoricity of a survey [*survol*]) as from the singularity of individual decisions (with the rules of the constitution of meaning understood as supra-individual, social or even universal, linked to either a particular group or an entire species). This was the way advocated by the founder of 'historical, objective, comparative psychology', Ignace Meyerson, namely that of a minimal Kantianism, accepting only 'objectivation' as a 'category', and proposing that a table of psychological functions be opened up to all possible 'objects' – that is, to all possible historical objectivations.[35] Unfortunately, having set out these principles, Meyerson did not undertake such an analysis, one which would have been at once historical (the life of groups), psychological (the reaction of

an individual to this life) and linguistic (the construction of a group or an individual). Luckily, Chastaing, who was inclined towards greater concreteness, did exactly this.

The language of nature: the elementary concepts of mimology

In order to understand how Chastaing, though close to Lyotard, nonetheless successfully confronted the difficulties with which Lyotard had struggled, it is best to return to a quarrel that had pitched Lyotard against his friend, the philosopher Mikel Dufrenne.[36] In this quarrel, all the arguments appeared to be on Lyotard's side. Indeed, it could be argued that Dufrenne's answers fell short of Lyotard's challenge. Not that the theses advanced by Dufrenne were weak. But the means employed to defend his positions were. Dufrenne did not manage to find (or refused to look for) a sufficiently powerful and technically precise response to counter Lyotard's position. Yet, as we will see, such a response did exist. It was actively put to use by Chastaing, who, while being in fundamental agreement with Dufrenne, never made the effort to engage directly with Lyotard.[37]

In his dispute with Dufrenne, Lyotard of course focused on the status of language. Broadly speaking, his objection to Dufrenne consisted in rejecting the existence of a language of nature. As he had already insisted, nature may be one thing, but the nature of language is another. Language and nature are not linked, however much one might attempt to rely on a theory of expression. Lyotard writes this in 1969, but comes back to it in the 1990s – in a last 'homage', as it were – in the form of a philosophical assassination.[38] He criticizes Dufrenne for confusing signification with designation and for misunderstanding the referential function. It is only on the basis of this erroneous conflation that Dufrenne can claim that 'it is Nature that speaks' – as if there could be a relation of immanence between signified and designated, while the relation of immanence is in fact that of the sign to the signified, and the signified's reference to the named. The referential function thus consists in a kind of referential distance; that is to say, in a discontinuity or transcendence of the sign to that which the sign expresses (which the sign also at the same time conceals).

Dufrenne sought to reply to Lyotard on this point, adopting the concepts that Lyotard had borrowed from analytic philosophy, such as those of sense, reference and representation.[39] Dufrenne also insisted, against Lyotard, on the linguistic power of designation, the force of language's referential function. On this basis, Dufrenne entrusts the power to speak Nature to poetry and to the images it conveys or produces. However, it is surprising to see him take up Gaston Bachelard's account of images here – surprising to the extent that Dufrenne's own approach to texts thereby becomes as incantatory as the texts to which he appeals for his argument. After all, Bachelard the poïetologist [*poïéticien*] is also a dreamer who weaves 'poïetic' reveries onto poetic reveries – those dreams that poets themselves tend to put into images. Such an approach doubtless provides the foundations for a thematic critique. However, while being fairly suggestive, this approach fails to grasp the detail of textual operations and only generates abstract readings. In fact, Dufrenne goes even further in his speculative survey [*survol*] of poetic flight, creating something of a higher-order *poïetics*. He offers very few concrete examples of poetic images, and fails to analyse either the conditions of their effect on the reader or the conditions of their creation by a poet in the first place. He clearly knows Bachelard well, and the material imagination is thoroughly thought and rethought. But he only proposes a philosophical reflection on the Bachelardian reveries for polemical purposes. From this standpoint, it is only through metaphor – as Lyotard himself concludes – that Nature can be claimed to 'speak' 'in images'.[40] This is because actual images are not the same as discourse, as they remain foreign to the syntactical and semantic constraints of language, to the complexity of its coded, differential organization.[41] Nevertheless, it is possible that a concrete or prosaic analysis of texts, and in the first place a study of texts of narrative prose, could generate different conclusions. What actually is a history? Or, more precisely, what is a novel? What are the rules of linguistic habit guiding those who claim to write histories (which since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the West one has called 'novels')? The question can be restated in pragmatic terms that are compatible with Lyotard's 'pagan' mode of theorization.[42] A novelist is an addresser who writes in order to be read by a public – his addressee – and communicate to it a certain sense that serves to mobilize certain references. Yet communication is effective if and only if the addresser is also able to translate the nature of things through his style.

At first sight such a thesis is both monumental and crude, general and banal. What kind of nature might be at stake here? Human nature, in so far as it is quite simply anchored in Nature; that is, in so far as it is in our nature, or more precisely in the

nature of our language, to express Nature. To propose such ideas involves running counter to a conception that we owe to structuralism, and that structuralism claims to borrow from Saussure: the thesis of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign. This conception is precisely what Lyotard opposes to Dufrenne's 'naturalism', and it is by relying on it that he criticizes his friend and colleague for having raised the possibility of a 'co-naturality' of language and Nature, of the fundamental natural motivation [*motivation*] of the linguistic sign. But the modern development of psycholinguistics allows for an escape from this vague notion through the soundness of experimental and statistical proof. On this basis it becomes possible to defend an authentic 'verbal symbolism' or 'phonetic mimetism' – the idea that if sounds can convey sense or meanings, there is also sense in employing certain ones rather than others. We are not very familiar with these approaches, having been naturally conditioned to embrace structuralism's hostility towards such modern versions of 'Cratylism'.[43] However, a rapid immersion in the history of linguistics should encourage us to be more open-minded. The thesis of the arbitrariness of the sign has been overtaken by studies that tend to demonstrate the motivation of linguistic signs. Indeed, how is it possible to state without contradicting oneself that all words are mere conventions while describing some as 'symbolic'? Once the 'artificial nature of language' became fully accepted, it was possible to start reflecting on the 'apparent "motivation" of "arbitrary" terms'.[44] Motivation finally outstripped arbitrariness, and verbal symbolism took off after the Second World War.[45] Our natures agree with each other by agreeing with Nature, something which our languages express phonetically.

Phonetic naturalism can shed a light on the nature of a novelist's style. From this perspective, the labour of style appears as one of the forms of engagement – 'one of the manifestations of responsibility', as Chastaing puts it.[46] This is because the writer receives and collects people's words; he seeks to let these people come into view and allow their words to be heard and understood. He will keep his word only if his style manages to give or restore words to others. But how does he achieve this? The novelistic pact that unites the author to his readers is honoured only because communication among humans is a communication in and by Nature. It is through phonetico-linguistic means, which are natural or founded in nature, through the nature of sounds and sonorous connections, that style can produce its effects and the novelist can keep his or her promises.

The Swiss writer Ramuz writes in his *Journal*: 'My style should echo the manner of my characters.' To do this, the novelist assumes the role of a speaking character, and, playing this role, he goes on to describe the manner and tone of the other characters. But – and this is the essential point – his style must mimic these manners or dispositions through phonetic, lexical and syntactic means so as to achieve genuine 'novelistic truths'.[47] Take a passage in Ramuz's novel *La Guerre aux papiers*, where the writer attempts to convey the manner of the peasants from his region, the Vaudois: 'Round here, we're slow to take on a task, and once undertaken, cautious.' [*C'est qu'on est lent, chez nous, à entreprendre et, une fois engagé dans l'entreprise, prudent.*] How does Ramuz's style, through its own properties, express the properties of the Vaudois peasants' character? First, through an intensive but considered usage of nasal phonemes, which in themselves symbolize slowness. Scattered throughout the sentence in great number, they are repeated with insistence into a skilful series of rhythmic assonances (*dans*, *prudent*, for example). Second, through the repetition of words, which also constitute lexical and syntactical echoes: from *entreprendre* and *entreprise* to the insertion of *lent*, which is also contained in *l'entreprise* and adds to the sought-after stylistic effect.

The consequences of the mimological attitude to our understanding of other 'language games' are no less important even with respect to those which, at first sight, appear to embody a failure in communication. That rites of interaction such as interjections and interpellations foster, and above all express, communication is clear in the case of 'hypocoristics'; that is, the sweet little words such as those exchanged between lovers, or between parents and their children. To call someone a 'kid' or 'honey' is to re-establish relations of the kind that bring together babies or infants, relations which child psychologists such as Daniel Stern have described, and which Edward T. Hall's studies on 'proxemics' have also examined. Here are attempts to secure a genuine communication and, perhaps, to convey a belonging to the same community: a tribe, a school group, a party, a sports team, places where one often hears expressions such as 'You're one of us'.[48] But those effects that are produced by such caress-words [*mot-caresses*] are not confined to them. Hence the feeling of liberation that a lover feels when whispering tender words to his dearest: he retreats from others, detaches himself from others in order to unite himself with this one other alone.[49] Now, these feelings of union (in a couple, within a group) as well as

liberation (from an other group) are also typical of rude behaviour. Swearers feel all the more pleasure in throwing their insults when they behave '*as* protesters', for instance, and so experience 'the pleasure of grouping together *with* these people, to feel integrated in a group which has as its specific insignia insults or swearwords'.[50] Such is the psychosocial scope of signification. If I throw an insult or a swearword, this conveys a meaning to my fellow human beings – it serves to create peers for me, partners or accomplices. In this way, the insult can be considered as a 'social fact',[51] or, more precisely, as a means of socialization.

With respect to Lyotard's conclusions, two points must be stressed. The diversity of language games is irreducible, and narrative – understood here as the modern, Western, form of the novel – does not enjoy any privilege. On this point we can agree with Lyotard, and in this case emphasize the applicability beyond the regime of 'general literature'[52] of a 'generalised expressionism'. This is just as well, since the logic of the sign or of expression is a logic of motivation. What is signified or expressed is always motivated. However, motivation can be of two orders. The first is human. Here the psycholinguistic approach makes it possible to understand the psychosocial import of 'forms of life'. But, as a result of this, there is also a relation to the natural order in advance of the human, since the human order is always embedded within a general order of Nature. If the intonations and phonations of insults or shouts have a sense or meaning, this is because human communities are natural communities. One should not hesitate in advancing a genuine 'mimology' here. The nature of words – whether in the prosaic unfolding of some novels or in the most everyday rites of interaction – succeeds in expressing Nature by articulating a community of nature that is primarily ours, and that never ceases to be ours through the diversity of constituted or constitutable common senses.

Such analyses have decisive political consequences. One need not rely on some poetic images in order to construct a good world in common. One need not place one's trust, as Dufrenne wanted to, in a utopia based on an abstract 'surreal' that is both hard to imagine and barely possible in practice. Open a good detective novel, and you will find not the call to a community to come, but an actual community instituted through the relations between the detective, the criminal and the reader of their adventures. Is this a reactionary community if order prevails? It is no doubt possible that a 'classic' detective novel could be conservative.[53] One can think here of what

Deleuze writes in his text 'The Philosophy of Crime Novels', published just after the homage he paid to Jean-Paul Sartre in another text entitled 'He Was My Teacher'.[54] To be sure, the classic detective novel is grounded in a 'psychology of truth'. But to this model one would be entitled to oppose – as Deleuze the good Nietzschean does – the revolutionary effects of the 'power of the false'. Such a conception deserves to be explored if it entails a true power of subversion, and on condition that it maintains the experience of a concrete study of the means of communication of subversion – linking not only the criminal or the deviant with the detective, but all three of these figures with the readers themselves.

Translated by Giovanni Menegalle

Notes

1. M. Foucault, 'Theatrum philosophicum', *Dits et écrits*, vol. 2, Gallimard, Paris, 1994, p. 76; 'Theatrum philosophicum', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1977, p. 165.
2. G. Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, Minuit, Paris, 1990, p. 12; *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, p. 4.
3. G. Deleuze, 'À quoi reconnaît-on le structuralisme?', in *L'île déserte et autres textes*, Minuit, Paris, 2002, pp. 238–69; 'How Do We Recognize Structuralism?', *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, trans. Michael Taormina, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2004, pp. 170–92.
4. Cf. F. Fruteau de Laclos, 'Le *Hegel* que Deleuze n'a pas écrit', in A. Cherniavsky and C. Jaquet, eds, *L'art du portrait conceptuel. Deleuze et l'histoire de la philosophie*, Classiques-Garnier, Paris, 2013, pp. 107–22.
5. G. Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, PUF, Paris, 1968, p. 361; *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, Bloomsbury, London, 2014, p. 369.
6. Cf. A. Badiou, *Deleuze, la clameur de l'Être*, Hachette, Paris, 1997, pp. 54–63; *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2000, pp. 34–9.
7. Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, p. 334; *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 338–9.
8. G. Deleuze, 'Michel Tournier ou le monde sans autrui', in *Logique du sens*, Minuit, Paris, 1968, pp. 350–72; 'Michel Tournier and the World without Others', in *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester, Continuum, London, 2004, pp. 341–59.
9. Such a solution is explicated by Maxime Chastaing, who is discussed later on. Cf. F. Fruteau de Laclos, 'La métaphysique des forces et les formes du psychisme. Deleuze, Sartre et les autres', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 207, 2015, pp. 149–68; and 'Maxime Chastaing, le souci des autres', Introduction to M. Chastaing, *Les autres comme soi-même. Le faux problème de la connaissance d'autrui*, Classiques-Garnier, Paris, 2016, pp. 25–53.
10. Cf. F. Fruteau de Laclos, *La psychologie des philosophes, De Bergson à Vernant*, PUF, Paris, 2012, pp. 138–47.
11. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, 'Souvenirs d'un bergsonien', in *Mille plateaux*, Minuit, Paris, 1980, pp. 290–92; *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Continuum, London, 2004, pp. 261–3.
12. Cf. F. Fruteau de Laclos, 'Ce que Deleuze doit à l'art (et à Guattari)', *Revue d'esthétique* 45, 2004, pp. 67–77.
13. Deleuze, 'Pensée nomade', in *L'île déserte*, pp. 351–64; 'Nomadic Thought', in *Desert Islands*, pp. 252–61.
14. G. Deleuze, 'Sur la philosophie', *Pourparlers*, p. 185; 'On

Philosophy', *Negotiations*, p. 135.

15. A Spinozism that Deleuze discusses in *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, Minuit, Paris, 1968; *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin, Zone Books, New York, 1990.

16. Deleuze, *Logique du sens*, p. 120 n5; *The Logic of Sense*, p. 114 n5.

17. G. Deleuze, 'Spinoza et nous', in *Spinoza, philosophie pratique*, Minuit, Paris, 1981, pp. 164–74 ('Spinoza and Us', in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1988, pp. 122–30), discussed in *Mille plateaux*, pp. 310–18 (*A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 280–87).

18. Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, pp. 58–9; *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 51–3.

19. G. Deleuze, 'L'immanence: une vie…', in *Deux régimes de fous et autres textes*, Minuit, Paris, 2003, pp. 359–60; 'Immanence: A Life', in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews, 1975–1995*, trans. Ames Hodges and Michael Taormina, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2007, pp. 384–5.

20. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, Minuit, Paris, 1991, pp. 49–50; *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, pp. 47–8.

21. G. Deleuze, *Lettres et autres textes*, Minuit, Paris, 2015, pp. 253–87; and M. Tournier, 'L'impersonnalisme', *Espace* 1, 1946, pp. 49–66. Cf. F. Fruteau de Laclos, 'Le postmoderne expliqué aux anarcho-désirants. D'un différend deleuzo-lyotardien', in C. Enaudeau and F. Fruteau de Laclos, eds, *Différence, différend: Deleuze et Lyotard*, Encre marine, Paris, 2015, pp. 233–51.

22. Jonathan Soskin, 'De Sartre à Deleuze: dérive pour être à l'heure du monde', *Études sartriennes* 15, 2011, pp. 171–203.

23. M. Dufrenne, *Subversion, perversion*, PUF, Paris, 1976, pp. 106–8, 127–9.

24. Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, pp. 194–8; *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 195–9.

25. J.-P. Faye, 'Philosophe le plus ironique', in Y. Beaubatie, ed., *Tombeau de Gilles Deleuze*, Mille Sources, Tulle, 2000, p. 92.

26. This assumes an account of the continuity between the Kantian analytic, as it is still employed in *Difference and Repetition*, and the sense of the analytic developed by the tradition stemming from logical positivism. See Jöelle Proust, *Questions de forme. Logique et proposition analytiques de Kant à Carnap*, Fayard, Paris, 1986; and Alberto Coffa, *The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap: To the Vienna Station*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

27. 'Examen oral. Entretien avec Jean-François Lyotard', in N. Brügger, F. Frandsen and D. Pirotte, eds, *Lyotard, Les déplacements philosophiques*, De Boeck-Wesmael, Brussels, 1993, pp. 139–40.

28. J.-F. Lyotard, *Misère de la philosophie*, Galilée, Paris, 2000, pp. 43–95.

29. Cf. F. Fruteau de Laclos, 'Lyotard contre Lyotard. Politiques de la sensibilité', in F. Coblence and M. Enaudeau, eds, *Lyotard et les arts*, Klincksieck, Paris, 2015, pp. 133–45.

30. G. Deleuze, *Le pli, Leibniz et le baroque*, Minuit, Paris, 1988, p. 103; *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley, Athlone, London, 1993, p. 76.

31. J.-F. Lyotard, *Le différend*, Minuit, Paris, 1983, p. 243; *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988, p. 169.

32. Chastaing, *Les autres comme soi-même*, p. 192.

33. Cf. M. Chastaing, 'Wittgenstein et les problèmes de la connaissance d'autrui', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 150, 1960, pp. 297–312, discussed in P. Bourdieu, J.-C. Chamboredon and J.-C. Passeron, eds, *Le métier de sociologue. Préalables épistémologiques*, Mouton Bordas, Paris, 1967, pp. 180–93. Cf. equally J. Bouveresse, *Rationalité et cynisme*, Minuit, Paris, 1985, pp. 156–63.

34. M. Chastaing, 'Berkeley, défenseur du sens commun et théoricien de la connaissance d'autrui', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 72, 1953, pp. 219–43; 'Reid, la

35. Cf. Fruteau de Laclos, *La psychologie des philosophes*, pp. 55–75, 95–109.

36. Cf. F. Fruteau de Laclos, 'Esthétique et politique. De Dufrenne à Lyotard et retour', *Nouvelle revue d'esthétique* 7, 2011, pp. 199–208.

37. Chastaing did not show much more agreement with Dufrenne. However, one can assume genuine affinities on the basis of Chastaing's review of Dufrenne's *La personnalité de base, Un concept sociologique* ('Sociologie et psychologie ou l'arbre de la science objective', *La vie intellectuelle* 5, 1954, pp. 51–78). He was also approving of the work of Paul Ricœur, who was co-author with Dufrenne of *Karl Jaspers et la philosophie de l'existence*.

38. J.-F. Lyotard, 'À la place de l'homme, l'expression', *Ésprit* 383, July–August 1969, pp. 155–78; discussed in 'Langage et nature', *Revue d'esthétique* 30, 1996, pp. 45–9.

39. M. Dufrenne, 'L'imaginaire', *Esthétique et philosophie*, vol. 2, Klincksieck, Paris, 1976, pp. 120–25, 130–32. Cf. also M. Dufrenne, 'Gaston Bachelard et la poésie de l'imagination', in *Jalons*, M. Nijhoff, The Hague, 1966, pp. 174–87.

40. Dufrenne, 'Gaston Bachelard', pp. 172, 174–5.

41. It is not surprising that Ricœur, from whom Lyotard borrowed the Fregean distinction between signification and designation, sense and reference, criticizes Dufrenne on a similar front: Dufrenne is right to look for the sense of poetry in 'great cosmic images … but does he not miss another idea of sense if he fails to examine the poem as "phrase" or "discourse"?' P. Ricoeur, *Lectures 2, La contrée des philosophes*, Seuil, Paris, 1999, p. 345.

42. J.-F. Lyotard, 'Dissertation sur une inconvenance', *Rudiments païens*, Klincksieck, Paris, 2011, p. 159.

43. Cf. G. Genette, 'Mimologie restreinte', *Mimologiques. Voyage en Cratylie*, Seuil, Paris, 1976, pp. 451–90.

44. M. Chastaing, 'Le symbolisme des voyelles. Significations des "i"', *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique* 55, 1958, p. 403–4.

45. Cf. J.-M. Peterfalvi, *Recherches expérimentales sur le symbolisme phonétique*, CNRS, Paris, 1970; and I. Fónagy, *La métaphore en phonétique*, Marcel Didier, Ottawa, 1980.

46. Chastaing, 'Notes sur le style du roman', in *Les autres comme soi-même*, p. 299.

47. M. Chastaing 'Vérités romanesques', *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique* 77, 1983, p. 133–4.

48. M. Chastaing, 'Fonction des hypocoristiques', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 185, 1995, pp. 298–300.

49. Ibid., p. 304.

50. M. Chastaing and H. Abdi, 'Psychologie des injures', *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique* 77, 1980, pp. 37, 53. Cf. also M. Chastaing, 'Psychologie des jurons', in *Les autres comme soi-même*, p. 252.

51. M. Chastaing and H. Abdi, 'Psychologie des injures', p. 48. The same holds for insults: Chastaing, 'Psychologie des jurons', p. 253. Cf. also the analysis of the social function of 'muttering' of women in the South of France in M. Chastaing, 'Que font des hommes qui disent faire de la psychologie?', in *Les autres comme soi-même*, p. 188.

52. J.-F. Lyotard and J.-L. Thébaud, *Au juste*, Bourgois, Paris, 1979, pp. 63–70, 85ff. (*Just Gaming*, trans. Wald Godzich, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999, pp. 32–6, 44ff.), and the overcoming of this regime in J.-F. Lyotard, 'Notice Cashinahua', in *Le différend*, pp. 219–23 ('Cashinahua Notice', in *The Differend*, pp. 152–5).

53. Cf. M. Chastaing, 'Le roman policier "classique"', *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique* 64, 1967, p. 325. Cf. also M. Chastaing, 'Roman policier et psychologie de la vérité', *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique* 35, 1938, pp. 210–29.

54. Deleuze, *L'île déserte*, pp. 109–19; *Desert Islands*, pp. 77–85.