

The Physics of Sense: Bruno, Schelling, Deleuze

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Abstract

Deleuze's work exists in a "minor" tradition of philosophy, alongside Giordano Bruno and F.W.J. Schelling, that entwines metaphysics with rhetoric and affect. Philosophy is a pragmatic art of choosing the most effective and affective means of concept-construction. We demonstrate these claims by situating Deleuze's assertion "I am a pure metaphysician" in a genealogy of metaphysical pragmatism leading from Bruno and through Schelling. At stake in all three thinkers' work is metaphilosophical reflection on the specific deployments of sense necessary to make philosophy happen.

Introduction: The Becoming-Archaic of Metaphysics

In his monumental, yet perpetually neglected account of the origins of human thought, Giambattista Vico makes a claim about the nature of metaphysics that can serve as a surprising cipher for the tradition in which Deleuze, F.W.J. Schelling, and Giordano Bruno must all be situated. Vico writes that "the Queen of the Sciences, metaphysics, began when men began to think in human fashion, and not when philosophers began to reflect on human ideas."¹ Metaphysics and becoming-human are here fatefully interlinked, such that the role of the metaphysician (no matter in what era she lives) is identified with a continual process of anthropogenesis—traversing and retraversing the human-inhuman divide in a conceptual rhythm. The metaphysician must situate herself on the boundary of the very becoming-human of thought—and it is precisely here that metaphysics is synonymous with (and not opposed

¹ Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, 347.

to) critique. Thought searches out its grounds, the conditions of possibility which first constituted it. Speculation is critique at the moment that philosophy becomes archaic.²

How does thought achieve this? How, that is, does the philosopher descend into these archaic depths to re-inhabit the inhuman/human boundary? And, what is more, how can one assess how successfully she does so? The answer that not only Vico but also Bruno, Schelling and Deleuze give is that thought must transform and mutate itself into that archaic condition. It is a case of a rhythmic intensification and de-intensification of thinking. We will consider Bruno, Schelling and Deleuze's reflections on this problem shortly; however, Vico puts it thus,

Now rational metaphysics teaches us that man becomes all things through understanding... But with perhaps greater truth, this imaginative metaphysics [of the first humans] shows that man becomes all things by not understanding... When he does not understand [all things], he makes them out of himself and, by transforming himself, becomes them.³

Construction, self-transformation and metaphysics are intertwined—and this intertwining (along with the added complications that the concepts of affect and rhetoric bring) forms the topic for what follows. What is at stake is the art of the metaphysician: the strategies, skills and practices that allows her to think the becoming-thought of thought.

On Vico's account, then, metaphysics began not in rational reflection, but when the gigantic, feral creatures who were our ancestors began to *imagine* themselves in relation to

² To our mind, this is precisely one of the most striking outcomes of Philip Goodchild's *Capitalism and Religion* (inspired in part by Deleuze and Schelling). Goodchild's discovery of the metaphilosophical criterion of piety to account for the sub-rational or super-rational differences between metaphysical perspectives (in terms of how they direct attention and the singular experiences to which they bear witness) can serve as a framework in which to understand our own explorations of Bruno, Schelling and Deleuze's rhetorics of affect. See especially Philip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion: The Price of Piety* (London: Routledge, 2002), 193-6.

³ Vico, *The New Science*, 405.

the powerful forces of the awful nature around them. Vico writes,

For providence ordained that the people with gigantic proportions and the greatest strength would wander the mountain heights like beasts with natural strength. Then, on hearing the first thunder after the universal flood, they entered the earth in its mountain caves, and subjected themselves to the superior force which they imagined as Jupiter. All their pride and ferocity was converted to astonishment, and they humbled themselves before this divinity.⁴

Metaphysics begins not reflectively, but poetically. It also begins in a kind of *piety*. Taking the awesome power of the lightening as an omen, our pagan ancestors crudely construe or “divine” its meaning and import as an auspice, a sign of an obscure and yet invested authority. Insofar as this piety issues immediately in a metaphorical conjecture, such conjecture is the first and last metaphysical gesture: metaphysics begins as an imaginative conjecture as to the ultimate nature of power (and power of nature). Vico simultaneously links divination (along with marriages and burial rites) to the essence of humanity: to be human is to construe, and to conjecture, from the known to the unknown. To be human, contemporary prejudices notwithstanding, is to be metaphysical.

But paradoxically, to be or become-metaphysical is not precisely to become rational, and humanity for Vico is not defined as a rational animal. In the concluding pages of the *New Science*, Vico avers that the ultimate ground of all human conjecture lies in the *affects*—specifically in affects of *wonder*, *veneration*, and *desire*.⁵ Because initial (and final) conjecture emerges from these affects, without the affects, we do not have metaphysics. And without such a metaphysics, conversely, we do not have humanity as we know it. There is

⁴ Vico, *The New Science*, 1097. The specific relation between the crisis of “the universal flood” and the genesis of philosophy is equally central to Schelling’s work, as we shall see.

⁵ Vico, *The New Science*, 1111.

thus an immediately ethical dimension to poetic and primordial metaphysics:

In their fear and reverence for such divine gods, [our ancestors] found themselves torn between the powerful restraints of fearful superstitions and the sharp goading of bestial lust, passions which must have been extremely violent in such people. Terrified by the aspect of the heavens, they checked their urge to sexual intercourse, and instead subjected their lustful impulses to a conscious effort. In this way, they began to enjoy human liberty, which consists in restraining the impulses of physical desire, and giving them a new direction.⁶

Affect is central to the emergence of metaphysics, and so a genuinely critical philosophy—one attuned to its own conditions of possibility—will therefore recover, repeat and redeploy affect, as such. This is, of course, a trope as old as the *Symposium*, but notice how Vico perverts the ascent which the desirous are meant to follow. It is no longer the case that desire withdraws us from bodily lusts in the name of intellectual visions; rather, desire (and affect generally) oscillates unstably between “the sharp goading of bestial lust” and abasement before the “fearful superstitions” of divine law. Desire deranges, fractures and degrades. And metaphysics is born out of such tension—not only for Vico, but also for Bruno, Schelling and Deleuze.

This linking of metaphysics to the affects (and thus to ethics) is a particularly important theme in Deleuze’s thought. In his book on Nietzsche, Deleuze avers that we have the truths we deserve based on the hour we watch over and the element we frequent.⁷ In *Difference and Repetition*, Nietzsche’s conception of eternal return is read as a *test* of whether

⁶ Vico, *The New Science*.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 1983).

one has the strength (viz. affective capacity) to endure the world as it is.⁸ Metaphysics begins not in an emendation of the intellect, but an emendation of the affects. The potential of *sense* (that is, meaning and value) derives from alterations and transformations at the affective level. Metaphysics is, for Deleuze, grounded in the possibility of a “physics of sense,” a genealogical and topological account of affective difference. Following Bergson, Whitehead, and Spinoza, Deleuze insists on understanding metaphysical capacity on the same plane of immanence as all other affective-based capacities (such as those of the tic or those of a war machine). But this is not the only tradition of affective immanence Deleuze inhabits: both Schelling and Bruno before him took up something like this position, and we must situate Deleuze in this line in order to broaden the scope of some of the most difficult questions about Deleuze’s system. Such is the task of this paper. What emerges from it is a “minor” tradition that invites us to ask an extremely difficult metaphilosophical question: what criteria can be used to evaluate metaphysical positions, given that such positions have an ultimate ground (or unground) not in reason but in the affects?

We bring Deleuze together with Bruno and Schelling, first of all, because they engage, cite and repeat each other. Deleuze refers implicitly but approvingly to Bruno in *Expressionism in Philosophy*⁹; he speaks in hints and riddles of Schelling's importance to him in *Difference and Repetition*.¹⁰ Schelling likewise makes Bruno “the patron saint of his philosophy”.¹¹ However, beyond such citation (and neither Deleuze nor Schelling were

⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 1994).

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone, 1990), 176. See further Joshua Ramey, *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Spiritual Ordeal* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 61-81.

¹⁰ See especially Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 240, 289, 346. On Deleuze’s use of Schelling more generally, see Alberto Toscano, “Philosophy and the Experience of Construction” in Jane Norman and Alistair Welchman (eds.), *The New Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2004), 106-27 and Christopher Groves, “Ecstasy of Reason, Crisis of Reason: Schelling and Absolute Difference”, *Pli* 8 (1999): 25-45.

¹¹ Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, trans. Peter Palmer (London: Merlin, 1980), 137. Schelling, of course, names an 1802 dialogue after Bruno, the protagonist of which, himself called Bruno, espouses Schellingian views. On the Schelling-Bruno connection, see further Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, “De la connaissance de Giordano Bruno à l’époque de l’idéalisme allemande,” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 76.4 (1971): 416-9 and Michaela Boenke, “Giordano Bruno dans la philosophie de l’identité de Schelling,”

particularly fulsome in their acknowledgement of sources) there is more significantly a conceptual structure which binds these three thinkers together in one minor tradition. They all foreground the role of the philosopher in constituting metaphysics; they all enumerate a series of practices and transformations for the philosopher to be initiated into metaphysics; in sum, they all (despite the many divergences and disagreements that exist between them) chart a physics of the sense of metaphysics.

Part One: The Figure of the Pure Metaphysician

In 1981, Deleuze confessed to Arnaud Villani, “I feel I am a pure metaphysician.”¹² One way of characterising our task over the next few pages is a commentary on this affirmation—to explicate and unfold what a “pure metaphysics” consists in. However, from the beginning we must be clear that this is *a* commentary and not *the* commentary. For Villani, Deleuze's outing of himself as a pure metaphysician is intended as a judgment on “the difficulty of doing justice to complexity, to multiplicity, to singularity”, a judgment on the fundamental “decision” that gives rise to “certain modes of thinking” (for with such decision comes “loss”).¹³ Indeed, we must acknowledge that at the same time as Deleuze's comments on pure metaphysics gives rise to our analysis of the becoming-archaic of philosophy, they also put it into question. This is, of course, implicit in our labelling the Bruno-Schelling-Deleuze trajectory a *minor* tradition.¹⁴

However, with that qualification in mind, we pose the question: in what does pure metaphysics consist? It consists above all, as Vico made clear, in an affective metaphysics—a

trans. Tristan Dagron in Dagron and H el ene V edrine (eds.), *Mondes, formes et soci et e selon Giordano Bruno* (Paris: Vrin, 2003), 197-208.

¹² Gilles Deleuze, “Responses to a Series of Questions”, *Collapse III* (2007), 42.

¹³ Arnaud Villani, “‘I Feel I Am a Pure Metaphysician’: The Consequences of Deleuze’s Affirmation”, *Collapse III* (2007), 52-3.

¹⁴ See, of course, Gilles Deleuze and F elix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 16-27.

thinking in which affects are liberated from regulation. Where Kant imposes the discipline of pure reason, Deleuze insists on the indiscipline of reason—a reason that is no longer pure, but mutates and contaminates itself in adventure. The purity of metaphysics is guaranteed by the impurity of reason. In short, pure metaphysics is attained once we stop predetermining in advance what reason can do (and to this extent, of course, the very question, “in what does pure metaphysics consist?” is inaccurate): once reason is no longer essentially X or essentially Y, once there is no longer even a felt need to describe what reason is (as if it were something given), then it can become what it wants. This liberation—an emancipatory feeling of constructive power—is the vector along which pure metaphysics is generated.

Evidence for such a description of Deleuzian metaphysics emerges in his “Letter to a Harsh Critic”, which (as Deleuze insists in the same Villani interview¹⁵) is to be taken as the definitive account of his development. One of Deleuze’s critics had accused him of merely fawning over the intense experiences and experimental voyages of others—“vaguely savouring their transports,” as Deleuze restates the charge.¹⁶ Deleuze’s response is profound. Rather than forswear his appreciation for the adventures of others, he points rather to his own experience, an experience he insists can only be spoken of indirectly, even *falsely*.

But what do you know about me, given that I believe in secrecy, that is, in the power of falsity, rather than in representing things in a way that manifests a lamentable faith in accuracy and truth? If I stick where I am, if I don't travel around, like anyone else I make my inner journeys that I can only measure by my emotions, and express very obliquely and circuitously in what I write.¹⁷

¹⁵ Deleuze, “Responses to a Series of Questions,” 40.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “Letter to a Harsh Critic”, available at: <http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdeleuze4.htm>. Last accessed: 13/04/12.

¹⁷ Deleuze, “Letter to a Harsh Critic”.

We know that Deleuze, like Kant and like Proust, was no great traveller. Apparently his journey to the U.S. with Guattari was a miserable one (even the picture of Deleuze on the beach in Big Sur figures him playing morosely with the sand).¹⁸ And yet Deleuze explicitly says here that his writing is a testament to emotional journeys, to affective states and experiences that cannot be the subject of direct representation. Given that Deleuze calls himself a “pure metaphysician,” what can be made of a metaphysician who disavows the representational power of concepts in favor of an indirect discourse on his experiences? Is the disavowal itself ironic? False?

In the first place, Deleuze disavows that he is speaking from a position of “privileged” experience. In fact, he explicitly says there is something “bad and reactionary” about making arguments from such a position. He continues,

The question's nothing to do with the character of this or that exclusive group, it's to do with the transversal relations that ensure that any effects produced in some particular way (through homosexuality, drugs, and so on) *can always be produced by other means*. . . It's not a question of being this or that sort of human, but of becoming inhuman, of a universal animal becoming—not seeing yourself as some dumb animal, but unraveling your body's human organization, exploring this or that zone of bodily intensity, with everyone discovering their own particular zones, and the groups, populations, species that inhabit them.¹⁹

Presumably what one discovers in such experiments is a properly *universal*, rather than exclusive, domain of experience: the “Planomenon,” the Unknown Natures that traverse

¹⁸ See Dosse, *Biographie Croisée*.*

¹⁹ Deleuze, ‘Letter to a Harsh Critic’.*

individual organisms, species, groups, even societies.²⁰ We might risk the proposition that what Deleuze means by metaphysical language is the language of what, at the most abstract level, “*can always be produced by other means.*”

One of the most important things to notice in the above passage is the conjunction of zones and lines. On the one hand, everyone has her “zone,” but on the other hand, there are transversal lines that cross the zones. Presumably the language of metaphysics, for Deleuze, is the language of those lines. But the criteria of the adequacy of the names of the lines is not whether they accurately or correctly represent what the lines are, but the degree to which they encourage, relay, or continue what the lines *may be*. That is to say, the critical question becomes, how do names such as “rhizome,” “becoming-animal,” “fold,” “difference-in-itself,” “metaphysical surface,” bear witness to the specific singularity of zones *and* provoke more of the zones, groups, and populations that may yet become? What do such names *do*? It is this constructivism, or even pragmatism, in Deleuze's use of metaphysical language to which we return in the second half of the paper: words make metaphysics for Deleuze. And, to this extent, the “physics of sense” denotes the mapping of the specific rhetorical strategies that generate metaphysical entities.

Somehow metaphysical language, to be both referential and pragmatic, must have an irreducibly *rhetorical* dimension. There is a rhetoric specific to metaphysics. Since being is becoming, and since for Deleuze the becoming of language and concepts is not different in kind from the becoming of events, metaphysical language does not so much identify as *provoke* or continue events. At stake in metaphysics, therefore, is a knot between three terms: event, rhetoric and affect. The conscious manipulation of this knot and so the perpetual reconfiguration of metaphysics in relation to events, affects, and rhetoric is, above all, what marks out this minor tradition of metaphysics, the one in which Bruno, Schelling and Deleuze

²⁰ *A Thousand Plateaus*, *

participate.

Part Two: Philosophical Frenzies

If, then, the above provides a broad account of the framework of pure metaphysics, what is required, in addition, is an enumeration of the various, specific practices of mutation by which it is constituted. One such practice is, as we have just delineated, rhetorical—and we return to it later in the paper. However, even more fundamental is a practice which (in divergent forms) governs all metaphysics undertaken in this tradition. Deleuze's version of it is presented in the closing pages of *Bergsonism*:

It could be said that man is capable of rediscovering all the levels, all the degrees of expansion and contraction that coexist in the virtual Whole. As if he were capable of all the frenzies and brought about in himself successively everything that, elsewhere, can only be embodied in different species.²¹

Deleuze here repeats an old image: what exists *explicate* in humanity exists *complicate* in nature, or man is a microcosm of the All. It is an image that has been redeployed for metaphilosophical purposes in modernity, where it is the metaphysician above all who is able to rediscover the All, to express every frenzy in herself. According to Bruno, for example, this is the ideal of the *omniformis*: a philosopher who transforms herself perpetually into minerals, animals and gods. It is an ideal of the metaphysician as a sage who, by continually becoming-other, attains a knowledge of the whole.²² This ideal continues into German

²¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone, 1988), 106. See also Christian Kerslake's discussion of this passage in his *Deleuze and the Unconscious* (London: Continuum, 2007), Chapter Six.

²² For an analysis of the *omniformis* ideal in Bruno's work, see Alfonso Ingegno's "Introduction" to Giordano Bruno, *Cause, Principle and Unity*, ed. and trans. Robert de Lucca (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Note Deleuze's explicit invocation of "frenzy" in the above passage; this concept will soon play a central

Idealism, where Schelling too idealises the philosopher as a figure able to repeat nature within herself. The above passage from *Bergsonism* situates Deleuze in a specific tradition of philosophy that passes through Bruno and Schelling. It is a tradition of pure metaphysics which cultivates and constructs frenzies (affective reason become productive) in order to repeat nature's own frenzies.

Bruno was perhaps the first modern philosopher to be explicit about the connection between the cultivation of frenzies and metaphysical insight. Whereas there had been a long Neo-Platonic tradition of *ecstasy*, Bruno's notion of *frenzy* hints at a to-ing and fro-ing within the world, an incessant alternation that is not quite the same as Neo-Platonic notions of *elevation* toward the One. Given Deleuze's cryptic but admiring mentions of Bruno, and his somewhat more substantial if equally cryptic nods to Bruno's ancestor Nicholas of Cusa²³, it is worth more than simply mentioning Bruno as a kind of dark precursor to Deleuze (as well as to Schelling) in terms of such a metaphysics of affects.

Heroic Frenzies establishes the centrality of frenzy to Nolan metaphysics most firmly. The metaphysician becomes "a furious lover"²⁴ who is urged on to wilder deliberations by desire "decked in divers forms."²⁵ Affect and cognition become indistinguishable to the extent that the guiding imperative to metaphysical practice becomes: "Render your affect so fervent!"²⁶ The key to Bruno's metaphysical reconstitution of frenzy is his theory of bonding. Relationships (whether physical, mental, metaphysical or affective) are all collapsed into a theory of different types of bonds or "different kinds of knots."²⁷ The subject of knowing is

role in this paper. Bergson's use of frenzy should also be borne in mind, see Kerslake, *Deleuze and the Unconscious*, 165-9.

²³ On Cusa, see Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 175-9 (especially the notes). See further Ramey, *The Hermetic Deleuze*, 44-7.

²⁴ Giordano Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, trans. L. Williams (London: Norman and Son, 1889), 133. We follow a more literal translation in rendering this work, *Heroic Frenzies*.

²⁵ Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 134.

²⁶ Giordano Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, trans. Arthur D. Imerti (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 190.

²⁷ Giordano Bruno, *A General Account of Bonding in Cause, Principle and Unity and Essays on Magic*, trans. Richard J. Blackwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 145.

knotted in a specific way to the object of knowing, just as the lover is knotted in a very similar way to the beloved—and such similarity is precisely what the image of the metaphysician as “furious lover” represents. Philosophical bonds are creations of love: they are attractive or “heroic bonds”²⁸ which draw the object to the subject. The task of the philosopher, according to Bruno, is therefore to, first, understand and enumerate all the particular forms of bonding in existence (and this is what Bruno himself does in *A General Account of Bonding* and *On Magic*) and, second, to exploit this knowledge in order to manipulate bonds in the name of knowledge—in other words, to turn bonds that repel or keep the object at a distance into attractive bonds. The task of the metaphysician, here, is to make the world fall in love.

Thus, as Bruno writes, “The inclinations of all bonds can be actuated by a skilful effort.”²⁹ Metaphysics is an art: it is the art of knowing what is the appropriate form of the attractive bond to be deployed in a certain situation. What will become increasingly crucial as our exposition of Bruno continues is his Aristotelian contention that “what is appropriate” is context-sensitive. One cannot predict in advance the type of bond which will reap knowledge: a good metaphysician is not she who continues to repeat the same method no matter what, but she who responds to the specific, concrete circumstances in which knowledge is to be gained.³⁰ The cultivation of bonds of attraction between the metaphysician and the object of knowledge is subject to finesse, a kind of pragmatism that we will see more clearly in Bruno's account of metaphysical language.

What is more, this metaphysical practice is the very definition of magic for Bruno. The magician “manipulat[es] active and passive powers”³¹, maintaining bonds between objects and also creating new ones. In particular, the magician, like the metaphysician, relies

²⁸ Bruno, *Account of Bonding*, 157.

²⁹ Bruno, *Account of Bonding*, 172.

³⁰ For a pertinent linguistic example, see Bruno, *Account of Bonding*, 167.

³¹ Giordano Bruno, *On Magic in Cause, Principle and Unity and Essays on Magic*, trans. Richard J. Blackwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 105.

on “the use of words, chants, calculations of numbers and times, images, figures, symbols, characters or letters”³² to achieve this. Indeed, the minor tradition of Bruno, Schelling and Deleuze we identify in this paper could be helpfully characterised as a tradition of magical metaphysics, to the extent that the role of the metaphysician is to produce new relations between objects and, indeed, to do so (as we shall see) by transforming her own self-relation to the world. For Bruno, Schelling and Deleuze, the metaphysician is also a magician.

Bruno's writings, one must conclude, emphasise the role of the philosopher. In opposition to a formalist current of metaphysical thought which erases the role of the subject of knowing in favour of a pure, subject-less inscription of reality, Bruno envisages the behaviour of the philosopher as a key ingredient in the constitution of metaphysical reality. No longer, therefore, is the Platonic text a book on which reality writes itself, instead, Bruno writes, “Plato went twisting and turning and tearing to pieces and placing embankments so that the volatile and fugacious species should be as it were caught in a net.”³³ The philosopher is the active ingredient in the creation of attractive bonds: through twisting, turning, ripping to shreds and erecting obstacles, Plato manages to cultivate precisely those bonds of love which bring reality to knowledge, like iron filings to a magnet. Indeed, in the final dialogue of *Heroic Frenzies*, Bruno idealises the philosopher under the figure of Circe, the magician who transformed humans into pigs, who created her own transitions between the human and the inhuman. Circe is the conceptual persona of a heroic philosopher able to reconstitute bonds at will. Bruno writes, “Oh might it please heaven that in these days, as in the past more happy ages, some wise Circe might make herself present who, with plants and minerals working her incantations, would be able to curb nature.”³⁴

The heroic metaphysician thus turns humans into pigs and pigs into humans; she affirms weird, inhuman becomings in the name of knowledge. Humans become gods,

³² Bruno, *On Magic*, 105.

³³ Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 176.

³⁴ Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 210.

minerals and animals—there is no hierarchy here, only assemblages.³⁵ What is more, in contrast to Circe, the metaphysician does not merely transform others but primarily *herself*. The metaphysician must in some sense derange herself. The opening to *The Ash Wednesday Supper* insists upon this need for perpetual becomings:

Become heroic and humble; master and disciple; believer and unbeliever; cheerful and sad; saturnine and jovial; light and ponderous; miserly and liberal; simian and consular; sophist with Aristotle, philosopher with Pythagoras; laugher with Democritus and weeper with Heraclitus.³⁶

The Nolan universe is one of subjects in motion, transitioning repeatedly from one form to another; there is no stability, but “continuous mutation”³⁷; no central *archē* around which motion is anchored.³⁸ All that exists is hybrid, destabilised and deranged becoming.

And such conscious derangement is done for the sake of the ideal of an omniform metaphysics. By means of such successive formations and reformations, “man in all his powers displays every species of being”³⁹ and so envelops in herself all of reality. The universe is internalised through the power of self-transformation. Therefore, Bruno (as a philosopher) himself attempts to cultivate this dynamic heterogeneity. He deranges himself and his texts in order to capture the whole. As he puts it in *Heroic Frenzies*, perfectly capturing the knotting together of affect and transformation in his work, “At once I tremble,

³⁵ See (for example) Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, 78.

³⁶ Giordano Bruno, *The Ash Wednesday Supper*, trans. Edward A. Gosselin and Lawrence S. Lerner (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 67-8. As Deleuze puts in, “We have to counter people who think ‘I’m this, I’m that,’ ... by thinking in strange, fluid, unusual terms: I don’t know what I am—I’d have to investigate and experiment with so many things.” (‘Letter to a Harsh Critic’).

³⁷ Bruno, *The Ash Wednesday Supper*, 214.

³⁸ Hence, the importance of the Cusan maxim: “the centre is the circumference”. See Giordano Bruno, *Cause, Principle, Unity in Cause, Principle and Unity and Essays on Magic*, trans. Richard J. Blackwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 89.

³⁹ Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 86.

sparkle, freeze and burn; am mute and fill the air with clamorous plaints.”⁴⁰ These are the “exercises” Bruno refers to in *Heroic Frenzies*⁴¹: exercises which include inducing visions, trances, occult experiences and also, we contend, rhetoric. Such exercises are necessary to transform the self and envelop reality. Metaphysicians must be “artificers”⁴², Bruno writes a few pages later—and with that sentiment we are back with Deleuze's *Letter to a Harsh Critic*.

Part Three: What Lurks Beneath

Early in his agenda-setting *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling spells out a basic epistemological presupposition:

Whoever takes the theory of physics as his point of departure and knows that the doctrine of “like is recognised by like” is a very ancient one... such a one will understand that the philosopher... alone comprehends the god outside him through the god within himself by keeping his mind pure and unclouded by evil.⁴³

The subject of knowing must resemble the object of knowing. To remain faithful to this injunction is, Schelling adds, “training in philosophy”. Such training is enjoined (both explicitly and implicitly) throughout Schelling’s philosophical trajectory: the necessary identity of subject and object produces the absolute I of *Vom Ich*, it makes possible the whole metaphysical apparatus of the *Identitätssystem* and even undergirds the later lectures. What is of interest to us here, however, is its metaphilosophical implications: *the philosopher must become what she would know*. Metaphysics is governed by the affect of empathy—an

⁴⁰ Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 40.

⁴¹ Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 49.

⁴² Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 51.

⁴³ F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, trans. James Gutmann (La Salle: Open Court, 1936), 8.

attractive bond, in Bruno's terminology, which draws the philosopher and her subject matter together.

What is more, the above passage insists that the metaphysician who engages in such practices of identity-formation has a mind “unclouded by evil”. This is certainly true of the Platonic metaphysician ascending towards the good; yet, it must be asked, does it ring true of the Schellingian philosopher? Indeed, does it ring true of Schelling's own philosophical practices in a treatise explicitly orientated towards knowing the possibility and actuality of *evil*? If like is known by like, evil is known by evil—or at least (and this qualification is essential) by those who resemble evil. And so it seems incumbent upon Schelling and Schellingian philosophers to cultivate a mind *clouded* by evil (or what resembles evil), rather than the reverse. Empathy with evil is a prerequisite for embarking on the metaphysical project of the *Freiheitsschrift*.

The contrast with two-world Platonic metaphysics is worth pursuing.⁴⁴ Schellingian metaphysics consists in “the solicitation of the depths”⁴⁵, rather than a flight into the heights. It is, moreover, not that such depths should be identified with evil in the way that the heights are often equated with the good; rather, for Schelling, to neglect the depths is to impoverish reality: it is to fail to comprehend what reality can do, the extent of its productivity. Such is the reason Schelling berates all philosophers who have failed to appropriate nature, the unruly and all less potentiated phenomena into their systems. A guiding methodological principle throughout Schelling's oeuvre can be reconstructed as: what is foreclosed from philosophy necessarily weakens it. Such is what Grant dubs “the extensity test”⁴⁶ and it motivates Schelling's violent criticisms of idealising metaphysics:

⁴⁴ The qualification “two-world” Platonic metaphysics is necessary so as to not obscure Schelling's affirmation of a one-world Platonic physics derived from the *Timaeus*. See Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2006), 26-58.

⁴⁵ Schelling, *Inquiries*, 79.

⁴⁶ Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 19-21.

Where the ideal principle really operates to a high degree but cannot discover a reconciling and mediating basis, it gives birth to a dreary and fanatic enthusiasm which breaks forth in self-mutilation or—as in the case of the priests of the Phrygian goddess—in self-emasculatation, which in philosophy is accomplished by the renunciation of reason and science.⁴⁷

At stake therefore in the Schellingian ideal of “reason and science” is an absolute metaphysical system in which everything from the unruly depths to the ideal heights is enfolded. And, as has already become clear, the cultivation of an affective bond with evil is a prerequisite for such absolutisation.

In consequence, Schelling positions himself in the same tradition of omniform metaphysics as Bruno and Deleuze: the philosophical text must embrace every modality of power, every modification of what is. It must repeat reality in all its potencies. Schelling's metaphysical practice is therefore one of repetition and the basis of his *modus operandi* can be discerned in the following,

The potencies pass through all the positions and relations to each other which they had in the process of nature... The process that repeats itself... is the universal and absolute process, and thus the true science of mythology is accordingly the one that presents the absolute process in it.⁴⁸

The philosopher is she who repeats, she in whom all the potencies of reality reoccur. The art of the metaphysician is the art of total repetition. To construct a system enveloping everything, the metaphysician must become like everything. She must cultivate resemblances

⁴⁷ Schelling, *Inquiries*, 31.

⁴⁸ F.W.J. Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger (Albany: SUNY, 2007), 150-1.

and carry on repeating.

The philosopher must follow reality into depths as well as heights.⁴⁹ Schelling's fidelity to this principle is most clearly visible in the natural history sketched towards the end of the *Freiheitsschrift*, where he describes the continual potentiation of reality into ever higher and more rarefied regions of being (spirit emerges, then love). However, reality does not merely potentiate itself; it also periodically plunges down into the depths—and to think otherwise is to be tempted by precisely the ascetic idealism Schelling so violently criticises. Thus, the *Freiheitsschrift* not only narrates the becoming rational of reality, but also its diseases, crises and absurdities:

Because the principle of the depths can never give birth for itself to true and complete unity, the time comes in which all this glory decays as through horrible disease, and finally chaos again ensues.⁵⁰

Such is the significance to Schelling of these concepts of “disease”, “crisis”, “cission” and “flood”⁵¹: they designate an essential moment of reality. Absolute metaphysics must make manifest such essential moments of return to the depths.

Part Four: Schelling's Geological Etymology

One of the problems to which Schelling returns repeatedly is the following: if absolute

⁴⁹ The journeying of the philosopher above and below is insisted upon in a 1799 poem (often misdated to 1809) in which the philosopher's heart enjoins her thus, “[You] must try to overleap many rungs / Thereby coveting the impossible, / Attain heaven, fired by thirst for the sun, / Then descend and let loose eternal night. / Dissolving the force of unknown magic... / Can be achieved by him who loves these words: / ‘The first ground of everlasting evil / Is known by him who joins to the abyss. / The ground of good can only be attained / By him who dares climb to the source of light.’” F.W.J. Schelling, *Werke*, vol. 10, ed. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856-61), 447-9; translated by Judith Kahl and Daniel Whistler.

⁵⁰ Schelling, *Inquiries*, 56.

⁵¹ On the latter three terms, see Schelling, *Inquiries*, 57-8.

metaphysics must speak of the depths as well as the heights, how does it do so? That is, the depths are precisely that which do not make themselves manifest, but remain hidden beneath phenomena. The problem is a geological one: strata of reality lie hidden below phenomena and the task of the philosopher is to dig them up. The philosopher becomes a geologist.⁵²

It is within this problematic that Schelling's philosophy of language is to be situated. Schelling's later writing often turns to philology, precisely because language is one of the ways in which the depths become manifest as depths. The unruly appears through language—and so study of language is absolutely key for the formation of an absolute metaphysics. Indeed, one of the basic theses of the *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* runs: the crises and floods that throw the earth into turmoil are repeated in the formation of language. Poetry, above all, embodies such disruption: “The crisis through which the world of the gods unfolds... is not external to the poets. It takes place in the poets themselves, forms their poems.”⁵³ Texts are central to Schelling's work, because they manifest traces of the depths.⁵⁴

Hence, a philosophy that truly intends to include the depths in its system—an absolute metaphysics—must pursue (at least some of the time) a geological etymology. As Schelling himself puts it, “In the formation of the oldest languages a wealth of philosophy can be discovered.”⁵⁵ Schelling's clearest statement of this project of geological etymology occurs in his 1811 *Report on Schmid's Attempt at Pasigraphy*:

One may ask whether there are not homologous language formations, like there are mountain formations that can recur in quite different places in the world independently of each other... When one cognises the physical in language, and

⁵² See Grant, *Philosophies of Nature*, 201-4 and Daniel Whistler, “Language after Philosophy of Nature: Schelling's Geology of Divine Names” in Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler (eds), *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), 349-50.

⁵³ Schelling, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 18.

⁵⁴ See further Schelling, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 162.

⁵⁵ Schelling, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 39.

pursues and arranges the facts of the history of peoples and language in connection with or at least in analogy to the geological, what wondrous and (at present) unbelievable regularity and lawfulness will then appear before our eyes!⁵⁶

“Cognising the physical in language” is not merely a matter of recognising the materiality of the signifier, but also of thinking the linguistic “in connection with” the geological. Schelling establishes a geological model for linguistics based on language's capacity to make present the depths.

The significance of this insight for his philosophical project can be discerned from the very procedure of *The Deities of Samothrace*. *Deities* takes the names of the gods from the Samothracian mystery-cult as sediment to be stripped down, so as to reveal “a primordial system older than all written documents, which is the common source of all religious doctrines and representations.”⁵⁷ The unruly depths of reality are, in fact, what is made present through this geological-philological operation; for example, the name *Axiokersus* contains the Hebrew root *hrs* which, in turn, is connected to fire, and, in this way, it manifests the Heraclitean truth that “the world is an eternal living fire”.⁵⁸ The catastrophic unruliness of nature is implicitly contained in these names, and to etymologically analyse the names is also simultaneously to reveal the workings of reality itself.

As *Deities* shows in practice and the 1811 *Report* teaches in theory, to become an absolute metaphysician requires a focus on language; it requires learning philological practices of excavation. An absolute metaphysical text must oscillate perpetually between a language of the depths and a language of the heights. To become a metaphysician, one thus requires the appropriate rhetorical strategies. Schelling refers to such strategies in *The Deities*

⁵⁶ Schelling, *Werke*, vol. 8, 452-3. On this passage (and the next couple of paragraphs in general), see Whistler, “Language after Philosophy of Nature”.

⁵⁷ F.W.J. Schelling, *The Deities of Samothrace*, ed. and trans. Robert F. Brown (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 37.

⁵⁸ Schelling, *The Deities of Samothrace*, 34.

of Samothrace:

Through the consecrations received, the initiate himself became a link of that magical chain, himself a Kabir, taken up into the unbreakable relation and *joined* to the army of the higher gods, as the old inscription expresses it. In *this* sense the Cabiri or their servants might well be called inventors of magical singing, as Socrates says the child in us must continually be exorcised and must be healed with magical singing until it is free of the fear of death.⁵⁹

Both magic and metaphysics⁶⁰ consist in a form of singing that transforms the singer into that about which she sings (in this case, a god). To know the gods, one must sing like the gods; likewise, to know evil, one must sing “deeply”. Moreover, the key to such linguistic imitation is (in part) the practice of magical and occult exercises—as it is for Bruno. Hence, the 1811 *Report* describes in detail occult practices by which the true nature of language is revealed.

The following is an extract from this discussion:

We know of a quantity of cases where people in a somnambulant condition have produced poetry which they were never again able to produce in a wakeful state... In the *Actis Naturae Curiosum* there is the story of a woman who in the condition of pregnancy fell into an ecstasy in which she sang unknown songs and talked in foreign tongues... All this is surely sufficient to prove that the source of language lies in man and, like so much else which hides in him, emerges more freely under certain

⁵⁹ Schelling, *The Deities of Samothrace*, 20.

⁶⁰ And this is why Schelling is one more exponent, alongside Bruno and Deleuze, of a magical mode of philosophising.

circumstances and is developed into a higher, more universal sense of language.⁶¹

The extreme affects brought on by illness, frenzy and ecstasy engender the extreme affects of language, its heights and its depths.⁶² Once more, metaphysics, affect and rhetoric are knotted together.

Part Five: Bruno's Affective Pragmatism

Giordano Bruno's philosophy of language consists for the most part in a critique of grammar. Just as Schelling polemicizes against idealists for neglecting the depths and thereby emasculating themselves, so too Bruno vehemently criticises grammarians along the same lines:

Having grown old... in anatomising phrases and words, [they] have sought to rouse the mind to the formation of new logic and metaphysics, judging and sentencing those which they had never studied nor understood... They fast, they become thin and emaciated, they scourge the skin, and lengthen the beard, they rot... [With] vile thoughts they think to mount to the stars, to be equal to gods, and to understand the good and the beautiful which philosophy promises.⁶³

Linguistic attitudes have physical, ethical and even metaphysical symptoms. What the grammarians do wrong, of course, is erect normative models for good language use; they

⁶¹ Schelling, *Werke*, vol. 8, 450-1.

⁶² On the role of the occult and, more generally, for an illustration of the metaphysics-rhetoric-affect knot in Schelling's work, see F.W.J. Schelling, *Clara or, On Nature's Connection to the Spirit World*, trans. Fiona Steinkamp (Albany: SUNY, 2002).

⁶³ Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 170-1.

regulate and discipline the way words are employed, prohibiting a deranged use of language. “Slaves of definite and determinate sounds and words”⁶⁴, they establish a priori forms which are not context-specific. In contrast, Bruno insists on linguistic pragmatism: a pragmatism which does away with all forms of regulation (including linguistic good sense) in the name of radical experimentation with rhetorical strategies. He cultivates linguistic disorder.

One of the basic differences between the grammarians and Bruno concerns signification; in short, Bruno marginalises it. While the grammarians judge language according to internal meanings, Bruno places stress on the external effect of words. To concentrate on the meaning of words is to limit their potential. Bruno is profoundly suspicious of such a move: when one does not determine in advance what language can do, language becomes capable of much more—and it is precisely what language does (the effect it has in the world) which is at issue. *What matters is effect*. And the possible effects of language are, of course, affective. At this juncture we return once more to the affect-rhetoric-metaphysics knot: what words do is “cause various effects and passions.”⁶⁵ This is perhaps best exhibited in the very first stanza of the *Heroic Frenzies* which invokes the Muses as those deities who occasion “verses, rhymes and exaltation”⁶⁶: rhetoric and frenzy are assembled into the same list. The Muses inspire a form of language which elevates the subject into frenzy, which creates and maintains attractive bonds of love. Hence, Bruno concludes a few pages later by explicitly bringing together the linguistic practice of poetry and the manipulation of affects: “Enthusiasm is born, by ploughing the field of the Muses and scattering the seed of his thoughts and waiting for the fruitful harvest, discovering in himself the fervour of the affections.”⁶⁷ Rhetoric is an optimal strategy for the creation of those bonds by which the world is disclosed to the subject; it is therefore a crucial tool for both the

⁶⁴ Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, 72.

⁶⁵ Bruno, *On Magic*, 119.

⁶⁶ Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 25.

⁶⁷ Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*, 33.

magician and (what is almost the same thing) the metaphysician.

There is no rhetoric which is a priori effective (or affective); rather, language must be experimented with; it must be deranged, upended and reconstructed. Hence, Bruno's own rhetorical project consists in the pragmatic reconfiguration of philosophical discourse: it is why his texts are such unique assemblages of satire, dialogue, doctrine and nonsense. The pedant, Prudenziio, might cry out, "It seems to me you take little account of words"⁶⁸, but Bruno revels in his eclecticism:

[*The Ash Wednesday Supper* does] not appear to constitute a single topic, but appear[s] here like a dialogue, here a comedy, here a tragedy, here poetry and here rhetoric, here praise, here vituperation, here demonstration and teaching; here we have now natural philosophy, now mathematics, now morals, now logic; in conclusion, there is no sort of knowledge of which there is not here some fragment.⁶⁹

Bruno is as innovative rhetorically as he is metaphysically—and for exactly the same reasons. The philosophical text is a site of pragmatic experimentation, just as the subject is the site of myriad becomings. Bruno's metaphysical language is just as subject to the practice of "pantomorphosis"⁷⁰ and the ideal of omniformis as is his universe.

Part Six: Deploying the Physics of Sense

For Deleuze (if for a moment we just concentrate on *The Logic of Sense*), the primary goal of the metaphysician has now become the capacity to "stretch our skin like a drum"⁷¹—the

⁶⁸ Bruno, *The Ash Wednesday Supper*, 83.

⁶⁹ Bruno, *The Ash Wednesday Supper*, 72.

⁷⁰ Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, 166.

⁷¹ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (London: Continuum, 1990), *REF.

capacity to create spaces in which multiplicities of meanings can be re-engendered. The problem is not, as with Schelling, how to plumb depths, or, with Bruno, how to contain worlds in oneself, but rather how to create diagrammatic lines of flight. Proliferation becomes the act of piety and, in turn, piety becomes attention to how to allow as many hybrids and mutations as possible to proliferate. But the “as possible” has no measure; the virtual is infinitely fecund.

Nevertheless, continuities with Bruno and Schelling are legion. Bruno's stress on pragmatics is of course repeated in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly flag up “the necessity of a return to pragmatics”.⁷² Indeed, pragmatics must be, they claim, the central, orienting plank of any theory of language; it is “the presupposition behind all of the other dimensions and insinuates itself into everything.”⁷³ Moreover, pragmatics is closely linked—as in Bruno—to the idea of becoming-animal and magic. In “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible”, which Kerslake has dubbed “a late modern occult treatise”⁷⁴, Deleuze and Guattari write that the pragmatic utilisation of multiplicities is, in fact, the very definition of sorcery.⁷⁵ Magic, the occult and a pragmatic linguistics once again form a nodal point around which the thought of Deleuze, like that of Bruno and Schelling, revolves.

Moreover, it is not just in *A Thousand Plateaus* that such a pragmatic rhetoric is espoused. *Anti-Oedipus* is equally committed to it. Here too language works, rather than means: what matters is what it does and the effects it has, rather than what it represents.⁷⁶ Language, Deleuze and Guattari write, “should not be conceived of in terms of representation; it refers instead to the class of ‘effects’: effects that are not a mere dependence

⁷² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 110.

⁷³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 78. Jean-Jacques Lecercle's working through of a Deleuzian pragmatics is thus invaluable, see his *Deleuze and Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 154-73.

⁷⁴ Kerslake, *Deleuze and the Unconscious*, 169.

⁷⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 506.

⁷⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley *et al* (London: Continuum, 1984), 109.

on causes, but the occupation of a domain, and the operation of a system of signs.”⁷⁷ In order to realise this ideal, Deleuze and Guattari write about (and, importantly for our purposes, also produce) “a stream of words that do not let themselves be coded, a libido that is too fluid, too viscous: non-sense erected as a flow, polyvocality that returns to haunt all relations.”⁷⁸

Language takes place on a plane of immanence alongside all other forces—and because it is the force most proximate to both the philosopher and the psychoanalyst it takes up a privileged position in their work.

The metaphilosophical significance of this conception of language is what is key to the argument of this paper—and perhaps the best way to bring it out is through a reading of the Eighteenth Series of *The Logic of Sense*, “The Three Images of the Philosopher”. Deleuze here distinguishes between Platonic heights, Nietzschean depths and Stoic surfaces in a way that repeats much of the rhythm of a magical metaphysics, ascending and descending across that threshold by which thought becomes human.

Thus, on the one hand, in Platonism, “the philosopher is a being of ascents; he is the one who leaves the cave and rises up”⁷⁹, whilst, on the other hand, “the pre-Socratics placed thought inside the caverns and life in the deep... [and so recognised] the absolute depth dug out in bodies and in thought.”⁸⁰ To return to an earlier argument, such is the duality by which *Schelling* measures the extensity of his metaphysics: to be able to be both Platonist and pre-Socratic. However, Deleuze adds a third orientation which appears in Stoic and Cynic thought:

This is a reorientation of all thought and of what it means to think: *there is no longer depth or height*. The Cynical and Stoic sneers against Plato are many. It is always a

⁷⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 86.

⁷⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 133.

⁷⁹ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 145.

⁸⁰ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 146-7.

matter of unseating the Ideas, of showing that the incorporeal is not high above, but is rather at the surface.⁸¹

He continues,

The autonomy of the surface, independent of, and against depth and height; the discovery of incorporeal events, meanings, or effects, which are irreducible to “deep” bodies and to “lofty” ideas—these are the important Stoic discoveries against the pre-Socratics and Plato.⁸²

This surface is that on which sense occurs as an effect. Meanings “frolic on the surface of being, and constitute an endless multiplicity of incorporeal beings.”⁸³ Such is what the Stoics found. In consequence, each philosophical text is envisaged as a surface on which sense is produced—“a machine for the production of incorporeal sense.”⁸⁴ As Deleuze makes clear, different texts chart different surface effects: each philosophical singularity is generated from specific operations on the textual surface. Hence, *The Logic of Sense* is devoted to the description of a specific set of surface operations employed by certain philosophers which he dubs, the “Carroll effect”:

Sense is always an *effect*. . . or, even better, a surface effect, a position effect and a language effect. . . It is a product which spreads out over, or extends itself the length of, the surface. . . Such effects, or such a product, have usually been designated by a proper and singular name. . . Thus physics speaks of the “Kelvin effect”, of the

⁸¹ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 148.

⁸² Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 150.

⁸³ Bréhier, quoted in Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 8.

⁸⁴ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 82.

“Seebeck effect”, of the “Zeerman effect”, etc.⁸⁵

The specific set of operations of the Carroll effect consists in paradoxes which give rise to heterogeneous series.

What are we to make of the Eighteenth Series in this regard? Were Plato and the pre-Socratics *wrong* to affirm the heights and depths respectively? This surely cannot be Deleuze's point: not only because the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project takes up once more the Nietzschean project of sounding out the depths, but also because the “final task” of *The Logic of Sense* itself consists in “the history of depths.”⁸⁶ It would therefore be odd to read philosophies of depth (and philosophies of height) as falsifications of the surface on which sense occurs. Rather, they are *perversions* in the very technical sense Deleuze gives this term at the end of the Eighteenth Series: “Perversion implies an extraordinary art of surfaces.”⁸⁷ A footnote to an earlier passage provides a gloss on this definition: for Nietzsche, Deleuze insists, “Height is but a mystification, a surface effect.”⁸⁸ In other words, height and (presumably) depth are effects produced on the surface of sense; they are perversions and, as such, specific ways in which philosophers have configured surface effects. The innovative art of each new philosopher gives rise to a new idea of sense, to a new effect (the Plato-effect, the Empedocles-effect in analogy to the Kelvin-effect and the Seebeck-effect). The conjunctions and disjunctions that litter the surface of sense are rearranged. When Bruno speaks of Plato “twisting and turning and tearing to pieces and placing embankments so that the volatile and fugacious species should be as it were caught in a net”, Deleuze similarly speaks of the Plato-event as a redeployment of sense.

In short, to trace each of these deployments of sense which give rise to images of

⁸⁵ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 82.

⁸⁶ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 214-5.

⁸⁷ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 151.

⁸⁸ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 152.

philosophy is to embark on a “physics of sense”. It is to understand philosophy in terms of its rhetorical productivity: to explicate the Plato-effect and the Nietzsche-effect alongside the Carroll-effect. And this is precisely what we have been embarking on in this paper: not just a redescription of the theory of a physics of sense, but a performance of such a physics itself. What has been at issue is the genealogy of the Deleuze-effect. [**For a further example of this kind of analysis, see Daniel Whistler, “Improper Names for God: Religious Language and the ‘Spinoza Effect’,” *Speculations* 3 (2012 forthcoming).]

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What, then, does this mean for the philosopher? What is at stake—affectively, ethically, physically—in the perversion of sense? In a strange and unexpected way, we return here to Vico’s giants: for Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*, what is at stake in the polymorphous production of sense is a question of *divination*—divination as the art of the metaphysician. In *The Logic of Sense*, the moral problem of the Stoic sage is how to become the quasi-cause of the incorporeal event.⁸⁹ To oversimplify, this is a matter of selective interpretation: one selects the *most limited possible present* within which to entertain a maximum of sense (and nonsense). The inclusion of nonsense is highly precise, and theatrical: Deleuze indicates that it is the *mime* that gives us the clearest image of what to do. The mime does not imitate a specific gesture (walking, climbing, eating) as performed by someone in particular, but selectively presents Walking, Climbing, Eating as if they were a pure, “incorporeal” medium in which the body operates. What the mime does, effectively, is allow the mind to *focus*. This is no small achievement, since in principle there is an infinity of sense, or at least an unlimited dimension of sense (and non-sense) within every event. Metaphysics is immediately ethical, from this perspective, in the sense that metaphysical discourse is not an attempt to comprehensively describe being as such, but to *limit* the

⁸⁹ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 166-7.

potential overflow or superabundance of sense and nonsense in a particular way—namely, in a way that is productive of a specific configuration of surface effects. The metaphysician thereby *identifies* with sense or, more accurately, with the aleatory aspect of sense:

The Stoic sage “identifies” with the quasi-cause, sets up shop at the surface, on the straight line which traverses it, or at the aleatory point which traces or travels this line. The sage is like the [Zen] archer. . . the Bowman must reach the point where the aim is not the aim, that is to say, the Bowman himself; where the arrow flies over its straight line while creating its own target; where the surface of the target is also the line and the point, the Bowman, the shooting of the arrow, and what is shot at.⁹⁰

The problem from this point of view, of course, is that it can appear as if the sage is in fact completely determined by physical causes—not actively identifying with the “quasi-cause” of sense itself, but rather wholly determined by physical causation, in the depths of bodies. But there is for Deleuze, as for the Stoics, a freedom proper to a certain usage of representation itself: “representation and its usage intervene at this point.”⁹¹ At what point? At the point of the “most limited possible present.”⁹² Here one somehow is incorporeally incorporated (Deleuze speaks of the birth of the sage as a kind of “immaculate conception”) by the very *difference* between two kinds of time, *Aiôn* and *Chronos*.⁹³ What one does once one achieves this state is literally beside the point, since the whole point, ethically speaking, is to *occupy* the instant and prevent it from overflowing. Divination is not a matter of selecting among possible meanings, possible senses, but *grasping sense itself* as the possibility of any continuity, any survival, any sustainable surface that can escape the warring

⁹⁰ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 166.

⁹¹ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 166.

⁹² Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 166.

⁹³ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 164.

determinations of the depths.

Hence, we attain to a version of absolute knowledge, and metaphysics becomes ethics as divination. The physics of sense names the selective and transforming power of a word that has become adequate to a present moment, an instant which that word alone can grasp. We can now appreciate Deleuze's question, "How could the event be grasped and willed without its being referred to the corporeal cause from which it results, and through this cause, to the unity of causes as *Physics*?"⁹⁴—and, as we have argued in this section, this is a question about the status of metaphysics as much as of ethics.

Here divination grounds ethics. In fact, the divinatory interpretation consists of the relation between the pure event (not yet actualized) and the depth of bodies, the corporeal action and passions whence it results. We can state precisely how this interpretation proceeds: it is always a question of cutting into the thickness, of carving out surfaces, of orienting them, of increasing and multiplying them in order to follow out the tracing of lines and incisions inscribed on them. Thus, the sky is divided into sections and a bird's line of light is distributed according to them; we follow on the ground the letter traced by a pig's snout; the liver is drawn up to the surface where its lines and fissures are observed. Divination is, in the most general sense, the art of surfaces, lines and singular points appearing at the surface. This is why two fortune-tellers cannot regard one another without laughing, a laughter which is humorous.⁹⁵

Can two metaphysicians regard one another without laughter? Let alone our three—Bruno, Schelling and Deleuze? We would hope so! If laughter is humor, and humor is the essence of health, then Vico was right to discern the becoming-human of the giants in a poetic

⁹⁴ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 163.

⁹⁵ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 163.

metaphysics of divination. Vico was right again, in the face of looming catastrophe during the nadir of civilizations, to continuously remind humanity of its initial divinatory emergence, its becoming-pious. This re-emergence is simultaneously poetic, metaphysical, and religious, such that it binds heaven and earth—sense and nonsense?—to avoid being overwhelmed by chaos. In this sense metaphysics has nothing to do with an after-thought of life, but names human survival, as such.

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