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Situations and Territories

by Joel Davis

Socrates forever altered the destiny of the world when he invented the (proto-)transcendental argument. The notion that the philosopher should search behind a claim for what implicitly substantiates it is undoubtedly the basis of all genuine critical analysis. Without this demand for *depth* in thought we would remain trapped on a rhetorical surface, unable to reveal the authority of claims by virtue of the faithfulness of their construction.

Socrates also forever altered the destiny of the world when he satisfied himself with seeking answers for his transcendental arguments in the form of *definitions*. Implicitly, the irritating dialectical methods deployed by Socrates in the famous dialogues presume uncovering a definition could be sufficient to reveal behind claims of the particular, claims of the general. Therefore, in blatant paradoxicality, the method chosen by Socrates to substantiate claims which define in general was one of simply presupposing a transcendental generality to be implied in the propositional act itself, leaving the substantiation of the general

reliant upon the act of referencing the particular! And so, what at first may have seemed like a method of deepening thought turns out to be a mere manipulation of the surface in crude circularity. For Socrates, the definition is the basis of the proposition's meaning because the proposition is meaningful, but where does the proposition's meaningfulness come from? The definition of course! The deepest Socratic irony is that this quintessential method of combating "sophistry" is itself perhaps the greatest sophistry of them all.

This presumption of the definition as the storehouse of truth is one which philosophy largely uncritically repeats from Socrates for millennia. However, we can't allow the proposition to simply meet the particular without some notion of generality, otherwise we remain stuck on the surface of meaning, unable to penetrate the depths of significance, unable to traverse from mere things to the Idea. Thankfully the proposition does not float in pure abstraction, relating only to other propositions in infinite recursion. Propositions are always *acts* and acts always occur within *situations*, and so we encounter the particular always within a situation which envelops it. Within the situation then, we will find the force which attaches the proposition to the particular, the force which dramatizes in the particular an Idea which the act of the proposition sees in it.

However for Socrates, using a term in any particular sense necessarily presupposes knowledge of a universal definition that one should be able to reveal if only they ask the right questions. This is why Socrates' preferred method is dialectical inquiry. He is convinced that his interlocutor must innately possess knowledge of this universal definition by virtue of their capacity to see it in the particular. Socrates however is customarily disappointed by his interlocutors, as they can only muster further notions of particularity until becoming exasperated with his questions and conceding, usually in a state of demoralization. This is because the only universal definitions which are possible are self-referential, once all particulars have been abstracted away all one can say is that something is what it is.

What is interesting about the situation however is that it contains things which have more meaning than what those things are simply in themselves. It is in the relation between things, in the situation which relates them, that this context which envelops and transcends the scope of any definition subsists. It is for this reason that we can lose the Idea in

our focus upon the particular, because an Idea is composed of pure relations, it is never merely what things are but inbetween, around and within them. An Idea then, is always what something is *and more*, so to merely say that something is what it is, is never enough. Socrates could sense this moreness in the Idea, but ran into great difficulty making sense of where it came from. The best explanation he could come up with for our struggle to define these Ideas that he could sense but not define was to simply posit that we must have originally known them and forgotten! Meaning the only outcome his entire method could hope to achieve is to tell us what we (allegedly) already know.

Plato's ontologizing of the Socratic method retains this by *detemporalizing* the universal definition in an eternal realm of essential form which his philosophy enables us to *remember*. For Plato, we only know what the particular *is*, because we *recognize* it as copy of a universal original always already known. Change is therefore the culprit for our forgetting of the definition's universality, and so the sign which stays the same must be extracted from the changing image as we move from particular to particular.

Once Plato has purged the sign of any particular image, it refers to nothing but itself, it has become pure formal self-reference. Plato's ontology then is little else but tautology, and the denigration of the temporality of the image before the paradoxical self-reference of the sign. This is the basis of all ideology, rationalizing malevolence and abuse via the subtle nihilism of claims justified on the basis of definitional self-reference. The dominant ideology of contemporary society cares nothing for the particular images that compose your *situation*, diversity and tolerance are good because they are diverse and tolerant and if you disagree then you must be condemned! This is the legacy of the false depth of Socratic sophistry.

The definition cannot re-attach the sign it detaches to the image but only to itself, and so the question arises, how did the sign *first* attach to its image? This question can only be answered with the transcendental depth it demands if we halt the ironically circular search for a definition, and instead seek after a *situational event*. Why in the first instance are we concerned with the image? Why are we trying to draw a meaning from it by assigning it a name? Any answer to such questions necessarily implies *desire* precedes the sign. For without a desire bringing us into encounter with the image, how else would it attain our focus? So, at the

foundation of the situation we have the image as an attractor of desire, but why are we naming it? If the image merely attracted us we would just do what we wanted until we were satisfied and be done with it, we would have no reason to think about it or question it, and so in some sense the image must also *repel* us. The relation between desire and image is therefore *problematical*, it is only in this situation that thought and the sign become necessary. And so, we find ourselves in a situation which both provides and obstructs the potential for our desire to actualize and it is this simultaneous attraction/repulsion which holds us in relation to the image and generates a supervening compulsion to grasp the *meaning* of the situation.

Our attraction/repulsion produces a tension upon the surface of the situation which draws us into its depth, the sign penetrates the image and reveals further images in kind, the image envelops the sign and reveals yet deeper significance. This penetration/enveloping is in this way reflexively generative, the meaning of the situation fractures and integrates itself in the event of desire entering into conflict with itself. This conflict is what provokes and inspires us to seek after an ever supervening *thematic*; the situation both offers and withholds what we want, why and how should we accept this? Or, if we shouldn't, why and how can we change this? Creating responses to these questions and exploring the themes which envelop those responses give our lives and actions the most profound meaning, and the abstract tyranny of the definition in both cases alienates us from participation.

The definition in its theft of the sign from the situation which generates it and gives it significance, isolates rationalization from the very thematic context which first aroused it. In this way rationalization is hijacked from meaning and like a cancer it recurses upon itself in tautological circularity. Philosopher after philosopher has attempted to outmaneuver this black hole, but as long as they have remained loyal to the definition this has only contributed further force to its vortexing. Whilst it may at first appear that Socrates' crime was merely harassing the poor Athenians who had the misfortune of encountering him with annoying questions, on deeper investigation his charge of corrupting the youth appears legitimate, as the nihilism he unleashed appears directly responsible for Plato's technocratic aspirations. The most apt term for what appears to have been inaugurated in this diabolical political science is *ratiocracy*.

Historians may argue over the impact this development had on Greco-Roman civilization, but it matters little for my purposes here, as the definitional suspension of the situation is a defining feature of liberal modernity. Perhaps nowhere does ratiocratic delusion disclose itself more immediately than in the concept of *rule of law*, the absurd notion that definitions can rule over situations. Of course the act of interpretation is never a definition but a situation, Socratic nihilism has perverted the role of interpreter to merely hand down *rationalizations* of a thereby concealed situational manipulation. The purpose of the rationalization is to conceal the manipulation by abstracting us from the situation itself, cutting the problematic of our desires, their significance and their thematic implications out of the process. Ratiocracy then is really a pseudopolitics, a false depth which disables participation, a simulation.

The meaning of the situation is how it thematizes the problematic of desire. The interpretation it demands is not simply a question of analysis but requires *dramatization*. Playing semantic games which rationalize a pre-determined solution can only ever tell us what we first presupposed, but to receive the meaning which the situation only makes available in the Ideal relations which penetrate and envelop the things we already know, we must participate in it. No definition of 'grace' can ever compare to its dramatization in Christ, no definition of 'love' can ever compare to falling in it, no definition of 'justice' can ever compare to its realization. The definition of a joke isn't funny, the definition of faith honours nothing.

The political is a composite of situations, it is ruled by drama or tragically by its lack thereof. The de-dramatization of the political by the ideological slight-of-hand of the ratiocrats, this is liberalism. However unfortunately, liberalism is the mere obfuscation of a yet more pernicious dynamic; what Lobaczewski christened the *Pathocracy*. The autism of the ratiocracy, whilst clearly vapid, possesses such danger not simply due to its spiritually alienating qualities, but because this alienation disables our defenses against the domination of the political by the psychopathological. The condition of the psychopath renders them unable to share the problematic of desire with so called "normals". Where we may be definitionally alienated they are situationally alienated. Their inability to authentically participate in the dramatization of the social discludes them from political orders faithful to the situation in common, but our alienation by the definition provided

the ideal apparatus to rationalize their abuse by cloaking it in ideological semantics. We can see the pathocracy at work in the absurdity of mainstream economics rationalizing a system of mass debt-slavery and industrial sabotage as a "free market", rendering it a *process without a subject*, comprehensible only through a dismal science which assigns responsibility to everyone and therefore no one.

Situational leadership is inherently dramatic by contrast, this drama does not need to rationalize away the desires and problems of those being lead, but can grip the situation with inspiration, with an enveloping significance that holds us in shared conviction. Leadership then at its most fundamental is a performance, a persona must occupy center-stage and evoke a supervening thematic. This act of occupation is the key point of distinction with the impersonal abstraction engaged in by bureaucratic rationalizers, where the situational persona must put forward and take responsibility for a plan, the rationalizer must abstract away any locus of agency which "plans".

The fundamental question then of a situational political economy, would be a structural analysis of personal occupancy in the planning process of the political, an object I will henceforth assign the Deleuzean name of the *territory*. The situation demands that planning occur somewhere and upon something, 'planning' then is a pure relation of desire which binds the subject of the political (that which desires) to the object of the political (that which both attracts and repels desire). A space becomes a territory then, through the act of planning, planning dramatizes a space and renders its themes intelligible. A territory both envelops and penetrates a space, the force which envelops is its theme, the force which penetrates is its problematic. The territory is composed of a flux of interpenetrating images, continuously fracturing and re-integrating into *plans* enveloped in the drama of leadership. Territorialization then is a self-reflexive process which has the lifeforce of temporal dynamism breathed into it by the persona which occupies a central position in relation to its problems and themes, it is in the immanence of these relations that the territory's meaning can be found.

The territory however can be frozen by abstraction into a static image, its rationalized structure projecting a pseudoterritory of the definitional matrix. In the pseudoterritory, the "invisible hand" governs by "natural law" and is understood purely in the abstract relations of financial quantities. Behind this illusion however a pathocratic vortex plans the

territory's suicidal drama, both its history and future are sacrificed in the rationalization of its self-cancellation. The sick irony of the definitional matrix abounds where an injunction against planning is rationalized as liberatory, the compulsion of an enveloping thematic is disparaged as oppressive, the drama of leadership derided as "totalitarian". This injunction then must project itself into the abstract realm of definitional self-relation, where the law is what it is because it means what it means. It is on this basis that the *originalist* conceives of jurisprudence, deluding himself that the constitution of the political can be governed by an "original meaning" as if meaning can be abstracted from the situation which gave it significance and nevertheless return.

What the originalist does in his de-dramatization and de-personalization of the law is exteriorize himself from participation. By defending an original meaning with a method unable to access it, the contemporary conservative prevents anyone with his worldview from occupying the situation in which law is actually given meaning - its dramatization. Why should we obey the Supreme Court? Because the constitution tells us so. But who tells us what the constitution means? The Supreme Court of course! A circular logic operating upon something this important provokes the most pernicious of nihilisms. The apex of the juridical order is precisely not the place you want to invite the psychopath to occupy. This pseudoriginalism of the definition must be replaced with an approach which explores the actual origin of legal meaning, the political situation. This situation is constituted by an active planning which no definition can supervene on, the very drama of leadership is an interpretation of the "original" themes of the territory it rules and so interpretation cannot abstract itself from the act of leadership itself.

It is for this reason that we must understand the Idea (not just in law but in general) as a *theme* rather than a mere 'concept', a truly profound Idea will provoke the perpetual creation of new concepts in order to interpret and re-interpret as the territory historically unfolds. The Idea then is fundamentally an aesthetic phenomenon, we can only sense it as a pure relation which only enters the particularity of things through an act of dramatization. The concept then can never itself be built purely out of other concepts, but instead must be composed through the imaginary in oscillation with an attraction/repulsion of desire which exteriorizes the object content from the interiorized form of the enveloping/penetrating significance. The Idea is abstracted from the perceptual (in the ostensive

act) and must eternally return to the perceptual (the transcendental empiricism of the problematic). Without this, the circularity of self-referential rationalization cannot return to the problematic, signifying nothing but a linguistic vortex, a nihilistic portal to hell.

For this reason, true 'science' is an act of dramatizing (in the sincere deployment of the scientific method) the perceptual. We must oppose this to 'ideology' which is a mere rationalizing purely within the domain of concepts, the infinitely recursive relation of concept to concept. This is why dramatizing the political persona in genuine hierarchical performance is so vital. The leader must take central responsibility within a political narrative and thereby open himself onto the problematical. Success or failure is in this way demonstrated and responsibility inescapably assigned in advance, all deflection and denial takes the form of rationalizing, closing us off to the problematic in an obfuscatory linguistic vortex.

In the sincere attempt to dramatize rather than rationalize a moral Idea, in the faithful seeking after the thematic significance rather than mere propositional definition, the situation returns and breathes life into the territory. To bring the work of Deleuze in more explicitly here (this entire essay has owed its thinking largely to his influence), this affirmation of situations enveloping definitions and of drama enveloping reason is most fundamentally demonstrated in his ontology of time synthesis. For Deleuze, the future cannot arrive in a formulaic determination given to it by the past, yet the very structure of making predictions about the future indubitably treats it as though it can. Within a predictive framing, the future must be composed out of an identical set of consequences to those observed to flow from an analogous past provocation. However, this for Deleuze misses the entire point of the future, which is that the future differentiates itself from the past. If the future was not at its most fundamental, a *difference*, then time would not exist. The only possible answer to the question, "why hasn't the future already happened?", is that the consequences which make up the past have not yet exhausted the potential of its provocation.

To better understand the implications of the *future as difference*, Deleuze generates a new ontological distinction between the *Virtual* and the *Actual*. This corrects the aforementioned ontological mistake of supposing that defining the actuality of something exhausts what it is, the Idea of something is always more than simply what it is as it is also

the relations between, within and around it. For Deleuze, the virtuality of the Idea is just as real (if not more so) than the actuality of the thing, for the Idea in its virtuality gives the thing not just an identity and a meaning but a *potential* to go beyond what it already is to something more. If all was actual, there would be no purpose for time as everything would already be what it is and there would be no further difference necessary, no future. This is why for Deleuze the virtual Idea is an *eternally returning differential problematic*, it asks a question which only the future can answer because no actualization can exhaust it, no one drama can exhaust a theme no matter how profoundly it expresses it.

It is for this reason that Deleuze describes the future as an *empty form*, we cannot pre-figure it with prediction but can only participate in it through a re-dramatization of past relations. This is why that our traditions cannot be handed down to us in the form of dogmas and ideologies. To retain their Ideas we must bear the burden of active reinterpretation. It is for this reason that abstract formulas cannot rule, whether it be in law, the market or "artificial intelligence", there can be no drama without the persona which dramatizes, and this persona can have only one occupant - man, for only man's desire is bound up in the situation. It is this occupant who plans our relation to the future for better or worse. This is the essence of the political.

The abstraction of the definition from the situation of planning is therefore perhaps most grotesquely, the destruction of the territory's future. Demonic parasites of abstraction abound in the nihilistic vortexes of circular logic, deploying ever more pernicious rationalizations to assault the very notion of occupancy itself and feast upon our deterritorialized desire. This is liberalism. To restore our futurity we must draw from the sacred power of the Ideas by re-dramatizing the political in a spiritual war waged against the ideological rationalization of this pathocracy's abuse. A situational occupant must again be placed at the center of both law and "the market" with the power to inspire a social project which actively interprets its history and plans its future. It is only in this way that we can transcend the status of being mere voyeurs of significance who simply talk about it, to becoming participants in significance who actively create its realization. It is only on this basis that men can be lead on the basis of awe rather than coercion. This is the meaning of glory and perhaps the most profound

meaning of the political, a drama worthy of its theme, it is for this reason that men are willing to give their lives for Ideas.

Event, Origin, Center

by Adam Katz

Let's start with "journalism." You watch a cable or news show, or read (probably online) an article in a newspaper, and there's a "story" there. Maybe a story buried under layers of implicit and explicit editorializing, but, still, a story: one thing is purported to have happened, then another, and so on. Where do the stories come from—how does the journalist know where to look for them and find them? In every case, they are framed as stories with reference to the governing apparatus—the state. The state "does" something—the president issues an order, Congress passes a law, the court makes a decision—and that's the story, occasionally presented straight (many stories are pretty much stenography), more often framed in terms of the event's correspondence with some set of expectations, or on a continuum of "licitness." If the story concerns a corporation or another institution—a sports team, a movie studio, a university—that institution is treated either as an adjunct of the state (the story regards compliance or non-compliance, or the serving of what is ultimately a state function) or as state-like itself (as issuing its own executive orders, making policy changes, as its charter and state law authorizes it to do).

This raises the question of how the news media ever becomes something other than a stenographer, broadcasting the actions and decisions of government and its auxiliaries. It is the licitness spectrum that makes this possible: a government organ, or political party (or corporate, or...) decision or action might be illegal, or improperly arrived at or carried out, or can lead to consequences unanticipated by the initial act or decision. In other words, what is of interest is some kind of discrepancy. But how are such discrepancies detected? To say that a particular decision or act is "illegal" is to say that one organ of government might or should come into conflict with another organ of

government (we can make the necessary adjustments in talking about other institutions, for which “illegality” means a conflict between an institution authorized by the government and the government); to say that an act or decision has been improperly carried out is, similarly, to point to possible conflicts, perhaps within the same organ of government (between superiors and subordinates, perhaps); and to say that an act or decision was a mistake or disaster is also to indicate and incite certain kinds of later, ultimately official assessments of and reactions to those decisions.

But how does an actor within the news media know and come to report that an act or decision of government (or..) is illegal, improper or incorrect? Only by having access to actors within, but to at least some extent at odds with, the governing decision maker, is this possible. This might be a “whistleblower,” or a power seeking or resentful individual or faction (assuming there’s any point to distinguishing between this and the whistleblower), but this is the only way the reporter can determine the legality, propriety or correctness of an act (that is, locate it on the licitness spectrum). The news media really come into its own, then, by leveraging disloyalty and dysfunction within or between institutions that are supposed to cohere and support each other. There may, of course, be dysfunction in any institution, but the news media is only possible insofar as responsibility for identifying and remedying dysfunction is assigned to institutional agencies other than those making the final decision within those institutions—that is, within the terms of “rule of law” or “checks and balances.” Within a mostly functional institution with isolated dysfunction, the purpose of identifying dysfunction would be to report it to the governing authority to remedy the dysfunction—but this wouldn’t generate “news.” The news media can only thrive by inflating and exploiting dysfunction and encouraging conflict and disloyalty within institutions. Even in a case where the news media acts as a “praetorian guard” for a particular administration, that just means that the state factions whose influence they amplify are behind that administration as well.

This further means, though, that the news media are still stenographers, only of specific factions within institutions. We can attribute enormous power to media organizations because we see them destroy (and effectively protect) very powerful people (like presidents) and advance and sabotage policy measures into which substantial resources have been invested on a regular basis. But most of this power should be

attributed to those factions distributed within the institutions themselves, who themselves have plenty of reasons for wanting to destroy and sabotage office holders and policies. At most, members of the news media can marginally advance the interests of one faction against another. If we bring in another seemingly very powerful institution, the university, the analysis changes very little. Along with supplying personnel for staffing the governing and auxiliary institutions (including the empire of think tanks, situated at the center of a Venn diagram connecting universities, media and government), the universities—obviously massively funded by the government—provide the information useful for one faction or another—a new “study” shows defense spending, or public health policy, or labor policy, needs to be directed one way or another. Needless to say, it is always possible for a bureaucratic faction to select and promote one study over others.

In a sense, the analysis is still not significantly different if we bring in what seem to be the most powerful global forces, the giant corporations operating according to the logic of financialized capital. Capital and international banks can cripple most countries; they fund the aforementioned think tanks and the political parties that produce the candidates that authorize the grants of power to the bureaucrats. But capital must still operate through the state, which is why it spends all that money on political influence and intellectual weaponry. Certainly, banks and the larger conglomerates could bring even a medium sized state to its knees, but they couldn't do that to the largest states and certainly not a coalition of states organized under a hegemon. At this point, probably all that appears to us as politics is precisely capital using states and states using capital, each leveraging the power of its counterpart to increase its own power vis a vis its rivals in its own field—all of which, again, has to pass through the state bureaucracy and its competing factions because capital cannot imagine operating outside of law, official currency, and the policing power of the state.

None of this, of course, says anything about the quality of any of these acts or decisions—one study can be better than another (although what that means cannot be determined outside of an institutional power analysis aligned with the one conducted here), one policy might approximate its intended ends more closely than another (ditto), and some ends are more worth attaining than others. There's no need to claim that every government is thoroughly saturated with depravity—the analysis I'm making here seems to suggest that only insofar as one

accepts the official promotional materials of these institutions, which all claim to operate very differently than described here. Indeed, the most dissident groups of both left and right invariably end up relying on some more marginal government factions, allied with more marginal media outlets, pointing to more obscure discrepancies, themselves; or, they work with official sources and decode, but almost always by deriving the decoding formula from some idealized version of the official purpose of the institution (exposing that the government really represents some narrow interest rather than the people). This of course means that all of us, at whatever distance, are doing nothing more than seeking out discrepancies at the center that we hope will empower the faction that would institute a form of sovereignty we would more enthusiastically enlist for. It takes a dramatic re-orientation in one's way of thinking to adopt the kind of institutional-power relationship outlined above without losing your ability to make moral distinctions—a re-orientation which the notion of the “red pill” describes as well as any readily imaginable alternative.

My purpose in conducting this little analysis here is to bring into focus an observation and, then, a question: first, the very operation of all the institutions of information production and provision presupposes an unwavering orientation toward the central authority, regardless of how decentralized things seem, or how impossible we might think it is to locate the sources of power and decision making within the circuits of electronic media; in which case, the question becomes, why is the central authority so riven with conflicting factions and the consequent dysfunction? If we can answer that question, and derive from that answer a “problem” that might be “solved,” we would also be able to place order in all the eyes and ears of the central authority, which are presently mostly occupied with informing on, misdirecting, and lying about each other. And the question has a very simple answer: the central authority is so disordered because its occupant is constantly changing and so all its organs must themselves be occupied with jockeying for power so as to secure their own positions in anticipation of the next shift or upheaval. And this means significant factions must always be opposed to any consolidation of power at the center that would make transitions of power less disruptive—or, we might say, less suggestive of new opportunities.

So, a new question: how did the occupation of central authority become programmatically insecure? But let's step back a bit: why is there

someone at the center in the first place? In starting this essay with an account of the news media, I also wanted to foreground the irreducibility of the event. Why are there “events”? Why do things happen, at least in such a way as to be significant and memorable, to leave a mark? There are events because there are centers, and centers because there are events, and even the most abstract statistical account of, say, the development of labor markets over the last century can only create new time frames and new, more distanced or focused, sites of observation regarding those events, which never cease to refer to some center. Even the ever more complete wiring of all institutions through the algorithmic governance of planetary scale computation hasn’t changed the fact that actual computing outcomes always come out as “hacked” in the interests of one faction or another—in fact, at this point, the Stack has simply created a new field for the central authorities (in their global competitions and hierarchies) and their adjutant institutions to play exactly the same game they’ve been playing all along.

It’s impossible to report something without giving it an event structure—that is, a basic beginning-middle-end narrative structure. It’s also impossible to report something without conferring significance upon it. Many people insist that they want just the facts, without narrative or framing, but since there are an infinite number of “facts” in the world and any publication is finite, choosing to report some and not all the rest is already a framing—again, this set of facts, or, really, events, are significant—and significant in relation to each other, comprising a version of reality. Finding yourself compelled to repeat epithets like “without evidence” is just a sign that this more fundamental, a priori framing, is no longer getting the job done. So, we break the world down into significant events that can, at least in principle, be articulated in a coherent way (claims of the “chaos” or “meaninglessness” of modern life are really just different ways of conferring significance and articulating), and both participating and reporting on any event situates us in relation to or, to put it more strongly, places us in the orbit of some central authority which guarantees the meaning of all social happenings. Even acts carried out by the figure occupying the center (monarch, president, prime minister), even one with the most absolute or emergency powers, are “peripheral” or off center insofar as they refer back to the authority vested in that figure prior to and enabling this particular act.

So, all of humanity is made up of peripheral events. Why should this be the case? I would work with what I take to be a strong definition of

“event”: something that happens and that can’t be reduced to, or wouldn’t have been predictable by, its “parts” or prior events. An event is something new. This definition is seemingly easy to contest—after all, don’t people predict things correctly, and can’t we break down an event into its parts and recombine it as their sum? You can single out a specific framing of an event, or view it under one of its (publicly agreed upon) “aspects,” and in that case predict it accurately. Obvious cases are sporting events and elections, with clear numbers (if everything goes right) indicating an unmistakable winner. But that’s an arbitrarily restricted representation of the event—an event, moreover, constructed precisely so as to produce a certain outcome in that “aspect.” Lots of people and things need to be in place and to play specific roles under conditions that can never be perfectly specified in order for the event to be given closure—that is, so we could say, this game or election is over. In that case, ensuring all those people will be in place is part of the event; and if, in some sense, the event has been completed, the claim that that, in fact, constituted the event can be contested—what we take to be the end (the winner declared when the clock runs out or the votes all counted) is at the same time a beginning and middle of some other event. The very fact that we can and do impose closure on events means that events are constituted by humanly imposed closure, even if not always with the same degree of explicitness and formality. The problem with reducing an event to the sum of its parts is similar—you can only do it retrospectively, with the event in its humanly imposed closure in mind. Otherwise, you would have no way of knowing what counts as a “part.” “Analyzing” the event is just another way of imposing closure upon it—you have to take as given what you purport to produce.

To have events, to participate in events, is to be human. Yes, nothing in nature happens exactly the same way two times. But nothing happens in nature, either. For whom would things happen, other than people? There’s no escaping anthropocentrism—those most intent on denouncing and transcending anthropocentrism have coined the term “Anthropocene” for the current period in earth history, which suggests that we need to transcend anthropocentrism because it has drawn the entire earth and its environment into its deathly vortex. It’s hard to get more anthropocentric than that. We can keep making the boundaries separating the human from the animal and inorganic, on the one side, and the technological, on the other side, and it is in fact very intellectually productive to do so, but this will always involve re-constituting the irreducibility of the human as constitutive of those

boundaries. So, we come back to the question: why is the human constituted through the event?

The simplest answer is that the human emerged in an event. This seems theological, and so virtually all “serious” thinkers flee from it, but until the threshold of the human can be shown or even imagined to have been crossed in some so gradual as to be imperceptible way that no actual instant of crossing can be identified, the human as emergent in an event is the better hypothesis. Which brings us to language, undisputedly constitutive of the human, which likewise can only be imagined having emerged in an event. What would “part” of a “meaningful” sign be? How would it not already be meaningful? In any gradual emergence of the sign as meaningful, how could there not be a threshold under which it has no meaning and above which it does? To keep things simple and avoid going into debt to debates within disciplines like semantics, semiotics and linguistics, I’ll say that by “meaning” I simply mean that a sign can be deemed to be the same in different occasions of its utterance or issue. This is only possible given some “agreement” stipulating the transferability of the sign but, of course, as Rousseau already pointed out, there seems to be no way of imagining arriving at such an agreement other than through the use of language itself. But there is a way.

The best way of hypothesizing the origin of language (and the human) has turned out to be through considering the logic of imitation. This is paradoxical, because imitation effaces originality and any origin—if we say there is an original, and then someone imitates it, we’re not thinking imitation in an ordinary way; but if there’s nothing but imitation, there is no origin. It is, in fact, the end to which imitation brings us that enables us to think imitation as origin. If all is imitation, then we learn to desire by imitating another’s desire—for that matter, we also learn to desire by imitating another’s imitation of what he takes to be my desire—which creates “scarcity” as we must converge on the same object. The telos of imitation is rivalry, crisis and violence—violence without end or reconciliation. There are very good reasons for us to be very uneasy in talking about imitation, and denying it whenever we can—the more we acknowledge imitation as the foundation of our being, the more we are bereft of will, freedom and any claim to self-mastery. The historical solution to the crisis of imitation has been the construction of socially shared models, or what Rene Girard called “external mediation.” But for external mediation to work, we need to place the model beyond rivalry,

which blocks thinking about imitation in an originary direction. It's only when external forms of mediation collapse that we can think imitation in originary terms, which at first merely radicalizes the crisis.

Still, we must have come out of our mimetic crises somehow—after all, we're still here. Mimetic crisis represents the destruction of community—but that also means that the key to community must be found in the same neighborhood, so to speak. Mimetic crisis involves everyone in the group converging on the same object; so, articulating some non-violent, differently mimetic (still assuming nothing outside of the mimetic) relation to the center must be what gets us from the end of imitation to the beginning of community. It's remarkable that, given that humans must have been aware of the prevalence and even dangers of imitation from very early on, and it already figures prominently in Aristotle, no one, until very recently, has thought imitation through to its deadly conclusions. The reason must lie in the collapse of external mediation, which set a cap on mimetic inquiry. External mediation collapsed because the external mediators themselves—kings, nobles, priests—became objects of violence. Something that no longer works becomes an object of inquiry; in this case, the way in which it ceased to work made the inquiry inescapable, and provided it with its problematic. Something about violence toward an object of mediation must lie at the conversion of mimesis from community destroying to community creating.

Right now, we really have two ways of thinking about the conversion of the mimetic crisis into an origin. Fortunately, they are both very good ways, even if one is, on the crucial point, better than the other. For Rene Girard, a mediator is selected at the height of the mimetic crisis and “externalized,” which is to say, lynched. Someone in the group, for some arbitrary reason, is differentiated from the rest, so that the incipient melee can be directed toward this single member. As the group converges on him, he becomes the cause of the violence—he has divided the community, and the community can now only be united against him. This provides us with the very enduring structure of the scapegoat. But once the mediator has been made “external,” he also becomes the cause of the unity, indeed origin, of the community. He is simultaneously villain and savior—in this duality, Girard locates the origin of mythology. And the duplicity of mythology, since the responsibility of the community for the murder of the savior must be disavowed. Take the myth of Prometheus, who saved and originated humanity by providing it with tools, knowledge and fire, and was punished severely for it—not by

“us,” of course—responsibility is fobbed off onto Zeus. But, on Girard’s analysis, it was us. Prometheus’s human model violated, very likely in some innovation, the sacred order of the community, and his gifts can only be received and enjoyed insofar as the lynching he suffered as a result can be denied, and thereby ritually retrieved.

This account would already let us see why there must be a center, and why the center can’t quite be “human,” even when it is occupied by one. If someone sees his fellow desire something, or even imagines he desires that things, his own desire will be aroused. Right away, the two are arranged around that object, which situates the object at the center. It remains that the center because the mimetic rivalry, and eventually mimetic crisis, will enhance the desirability of the central object. In Girard’s model, we must imagine a diversion from the desired object toward a single member of the group who displaces it as the center, which is to say, the increasingly intense focus of everyone’s attention. This central figure must also provide the resolution of the crisis, which is to say the power to found and maintain the community must be conferred upon him after the fact. Thus, the center is a—indeed the first—source of agency within the now human community, and no future agency will be possible without it. This is why center and event are bound inextricably together. As we will see shortly, we can also think the originary scene, more consistently, in my view, by assuming that the focus remains on the initial object of desire, in which case it is the shared consumption, and then unanimously acknowledged locus of absence, of the initial object of desire, that makes the center the foundation of the community.

Before I proceed, I’d like to ask a question: where are we here? Within what discipline? It’s definitely not philosophy; indeed, my sense of the incommensurability of mimetic theory and philosophy has been radicalized—and this includes anti- and post-metaphysical philosophy, some of which does border on some of these questions. Philosophy remains the province of “man thinking,” and its content and concerns are how man thinking comes and continues to be man thinking. There’s no “man” in mimetic theory—there are oscillations between sameness and difference in the shapes given to common life. It’s a “human science,” for sure, but it’s hard to see how it can enter the actually existing human sciences without essentially razing them to ground and making it all one big human science. The other human sciences start with “social facts,” which is to say actions, behaviors and institutions

authorized and recognized formally by the community. That's where I started this essay as well—with "journalism" as a coherent body of social facts. But there's no way of asking, within any of these disciplines, why are there social facts in the first place? That's because they ultimately derive from philosophy, and similarly foundationally distinguish themselves from collective revelation. My purpose in opening as I did was to show that an honest and thoroughgoing inquiry into "social facts" leads one to their irreducibly revelatory nature, which is to say their origin in some event, which in turn leads us to the origin of humanity in revelation, which in turn led us to mimesis. Girard called his thinking "fundamental anthropology"; Eric Gans, to whom I will now turn, calls it "generative anthropology" and "originary thinking"; I have called it "anthropomorphics." Does it need a single name? Regardless, it is an imperious, intellectually ravenous, and therefore "imperialist" mode of thought. It takes its incommensurability with all hitherto existing thought as a challenge.

Here's the limit of Girard's hypothesis: there's no reason why some animal group, even an exceptionally intelligent one, should view ganging up on and killing one of its members as "meaningful," which is to say, "memorable." Animals kill their own kind without it changing their behavior or form of organization in the slightest. There needs to be some formal acknowledgment of the event—there needs to be a sign. The origin of language needs to be conjoined with the origin of the human. And, since what is to be formally acknowledged is the revelation of the group as a community sharing a center, the origin of language and the origin of the human is also the origin of the sacred. So, Gans first proposed adding a sign to the conclusion of Girard's otherwise unaltered scene—after the originary murder, the group all gestures to the body of the victim in some way. But he then realized that if the real point is the pointing, the killing itself is superfluous—the group could have just as readily gestured toward a living, not-yet (and therefore maybe not to be) victim. We can add that the issuance of a gesture after the crisis has already been resolved is less likely than a sign when the crisis is at its height, and therefore most urgently needs to be abated—that would make it effective and memorable.

If it's more likely that violence was averted before, rather than commemorated after, the fact, then there's also no need to assume a human victim at the center. Gans slices away with Okham's Razor. We just need a desirable object, which becomes more desirable as each

member imitates the desire of the other for it. A single, arbitrarily selected human would not have been a desirable object for other humans—it is possible to imagine a group of males grouped around a female, and perhaps some matriarchal ritual orders reference some such event, but for our originary scene it's hard to see what would bring a group of men to be clustered around a single woman, since sexual intercourse is an intrinsically one-on-one activity. What is much easier to imagine is clustering around some food item, which would be a regular occurrence for the group. (Gans also pointed out that the earliest communities worshipped animals and plants, with human divinity and human sacrifice coming much later, with hierarchical orders.) So, normally, feeding would proceed in accord with the pecking order—the alpha animal eats to satiation, then the beta, and so on. On our hypothetical occasion, the intensification of mimetic desire overrides the pecking order as all rush to the meal at the center. There's no way of sharing it in an orderly manner, because the only existing order has just collapsed. One member of the group hesitates in the face of this emergent disorder—his reaching for the central object is aborted; this action that has not been completed becomes a sign, and can be imitated. It is a sign of deferral, and allows everyone to formally acknowledge a new order, enabling them to proceed to an orderly, shared consumption of the central object.

Gans and others, very much including myself, have reiterated this originary hypothesis many, many times, and so I try to do it differently on each occasion, so as to make it an object of thought and productive of discourse. An approach I suggested very early on, but have not really stuck with, and so I'll retrieve it here, is as follows: in working with the originary hypothesis, one should violate the minimality of the scene by adding one element that "tilts" the scene in one direction or another—a clinamen, one could say. The originary event could then be conceptualized as a bundle of still unfolding possibilities—it can be virtualized, as we participate in the deferral occurring there. So, for example, from where in the group would the first sign have issued from? Would it have been the alpha? The beta? Some more marginal, potentially victimized member? We don't need to answer this question for the originary hypothesis to be "validated"—it is one of many questions that could be left open. But someone would have had to go first (and how "aware" do we have to imagine this individual being regarding what he's doing?), and it would have to be someone bearing some traces of the pre-human group. So, we could play with secondary

hypotheses in accounting for human differentiation. In hypothesizing the scene we are doing something very tricky and tentative, because we must use the language we have as a result of the scene to articulate a scene where only a very preliminary and to us alien (and yet still full-fledged, insofar as it is a sign) form of that language was just emerging. They knew what they were doing and they didn't know what they were doing, because "knowing what they were doing" is not yet fully "applicable." They know enough to re-enact, but without any way of representing what they are re-enacting. This boundary between the tacit and explicit, is a permanent feature of language, a source of linguistic development and manipulation, and therefore of secondary hypotheses. We are never not on some scene, and we can never fully articulate the way we are on that scene. At the same time, we can keep trying to imagine "causes" and "motivations" that would have led the first to hesitate and others to imitate him and thereby generate secondary hypotheses but without ever getting "inside" the scene sufficiently to cancel its revelatory nature as an event.

The origin of language, representation as the deferral of violence, the human as that species that poses a greater danger to itself than is presented to it by anything external: originary thinking proposes a particular understanding of agency. How do we "decide what to do"? It's possible to generate answers to this question by rummaging through the inventory of "internal" "faculties"—"will," "reason," "calculation," and so on. Or, to ground the decision maker deterministically in a series of "structures" and "causes," of which there will never be any lack. For originary thinking, agency is deferral. I'll explain this in terms that may sound philosophical, but I'll really be drawing upon words that exist in every language and the meaning of which is intuitively self-evident. The animal pecking order, like any order, implies differentiation, or some relation between same and other. Imitation, as it intensifies, collapses difference: we all become the same. But we can never be same enough—we can't occupy the exact same space, we can't hold exactly the same object, we can't put the exact same piece of food in our mouths. At the point where sameness reaches its limits, the non-being of other in this place is the only way of introducing difference—the non-being, the removal, of the other, would restore the other to otherness. Deferral introduces a difference, an other, before this "final solution" becomes the only possibility, while also implying it as a possibility. The first one who hesitates, who converts grasp into gesture, becomes other, and an other who need not be attacked because he can be imitated while

preserving difference. If the first one to issue what will have become the sign once others imitate him is, in fact, imitated, then the central object, which is let be for the moment, becomes other, and everyone becomes other to each other through it.

To act, to do something, is, then, to produce or present some other that defers the crisis of sameness. We would be satisfied with nothing less than an impossible degree of sameness without the imposition of this other. This means creating a center, in relation to which one is here and the other is there. This doesn't mean we "decide" to put something at the center, and that we need to get inside some decision making process and construct a set of cognitive steps, or some wheels turning, that leads from the proposition "we are getting too close to absolute sameness" to the proposition "we can agree on this thing as our center." It is, rather, the center that calls us, and that we hear and heed. On the originary scene, the first to gesture does not exactly know what he is doing—he is merely registering the impasse, the double bind, of mimesis. His sign is a result of compulsion, and those who imitate him submit to the same compulsion, a compulsion that can only be seen to come from the center. As Gans has put it, the first sign is the Name-of-God, and the center is sacred. The center is other, and in being the same in relation to it we are other to each other. The problem of "what to do" is to listen to the center.

So, what does that mean? How do we tell whether we or another are listening more or less closely to the center? We are always already listening to the center, insofar as there is no social order or even social setting, without some center towards which we are arrayed—an altar and its rituals, a government with its central position (monarch, prime minister, president), a room with a table around which all sit and norms of politeness or civility governing exchanges, a canonical text which we are devoted to interpreting, a centrally imposed currency governing economic exchanges, and so on—we are never starting from scratch here. We can't say a word to each other without referring, implicitly and explicitly, to previous conversations and events, and governing our interactions in accord with some norm drawn from them. Our fundamental "motivation" is always to preserve that center and prevent what is intuited as a complete breakdown in presence. This seems to suggest that we will tend to conform as closely as possible to modes of action that have previously "worked" in situations "like" this one. And, statistically speaking, that is overwhelmingly what the center is telling

us to do. But sometimes it is trying to approximate more and more closely expected, predictable, pre-approved actions that will accelerate the crisis of sameness. We listen to the center and thereby act insofar as this is the case, and to some extent it is always the case. If approximating standardized and stereotyped responses aggravates the crisis of sameness, the center needs to be restored, and this means one has to “read the room,” and reading the room means imagining a new configuration that would make us other to each other again. You are, of course, in the room you are reading, and so reading the room involves getting a read on others reading of you, especially if you are ahead of the game in determining the crisis, in which case your moves in “sensing” and eliciting signs of the crisis provide you with your reading material as others take in your movements. Listening to the center entails reorganizing the field on which you all move by following the way others follow you as you defer the onset of terminal sameness or, we could say, entropy.

History, then, is the history of the center, and, in fact, we have something we can call “history” because it is possible for a human being to occupy the center. A human will occupy the center when, in listening to it, hears that the imminent danger of the collapse of presence cannot be deferred through recourse to the established ritual order. There is always something “revolutionary” about a human seizing the center, even in mundane contexts like a friend stepping in to resolve a dispute between a couple of other friends. At the same time, someone moving decisively to the center is always a possibility, since a feeling for the imminence of some crisis of sameness is unevenly distributed—it is sometimes possible to feel the rumblings of such a crisis years, decades, maybe centuries in advance. A human at the center places himself in the position of a potential victim as a condition of being a successful restorer of same and other: there is a firm place for Girard’s scapegoat mechanism here. If those two friends resume and embitter their dispute, they will likely blame the well meaning mediator (was he, really, well meaning?). How we manage our relations with—listen to—the humans we put at the center is the heart of all our morality, ethics and politics.

We have all had the experience of being angry toward someone while simultaneously realizing that there is some “disproportion” between our anger and the actions and intents we attribute to the target of our anger. I feel confident in saying that we have all had this experience, if not in

real time than in retrospect because, in fact, there is never any commensurability between our attitudes towards those at the center and actions attributed to the person at the center. An accordance between the two is created in terms of the needs of the scene. If there is no natural, neutral, self-evident, automatic relation between our engagement with the person at the center and the “deserts” of that person, we can ask, what, then, is the right or best way of engaging the occupant of the center—in the simplest sense of the person we’re all looking at, talking about, doing something to, paying attention to, obeying—even if the “all” is just “all of me” as I assemble myself around that center against the background of an imagined audience and possible participants. Consider that moment where you notice some discrepancy between your anger toward someone and whatever you can identify as having elicited that anger. You have a choice here; or, the center is issuing conflicting, or ambiguous, directives, which can only be narrowed down by following some that lead you back to the crisis of sameness, leaving you with the one that leads out. You can double down on your anger by attributing this very discrepancy to the other, treating it as a marker of the other’s duplicity, of the other being even worse than you imagined. You thereby summon whatever norms, rules, traditions, customs might be at hand and find as many violations of those norms, rules, traditions and customs as you can to “justify” your rage. In doing so, if you are still inclined to look at yourself, or allow others to point out what you are doing, you will see you are collapsing the scene by mixing and matching imperatives snatched from their respective contexts so as to “make your case,” a case that would not hold up even under slightly altered circumstances. You can feel that you are protecting the center here by eliminating this usurper of the center, who has abused the privilege of being placed at the center.

We can see that in this scenario the other is kept at the center and the “agent” displaces his own centeredness, claiming to act only in the name of another center constructed conveniently so as to match just this occasion. The agent is deploying power, insofar as he puts to work his individual capacities along with his ability to compel and persuade others to make the center an attractor of violence, but he is displacing responsibility. To be responsible is to place oneself at the center, even if only of a limited scene, and to remain in that center after the event has concluded—to “answer for it.” So, you treat the other who has become the center of a scene you participate in constructing while and by standing at the center of the scene that will be established in the

aftermath. The center of that scene should be demonstratively the same on the new scene on which you stand as center and represent it, and you should yourself be the same on this scene as on the previous one: this is what “accountability” means. What it means for both figures to be the same in both cases cannot be specified in advanced, nor can a general rule be constructed: this will always be a discursive construct. The responsible actor will have recourse to the same traditions as the irresponsible one, and the difference will be that the former will draw attention to the relation between traditions referenced and action taken making that relation as singular as possible so as to exhaust the scene: this rule was applied to this action in this way because this application maximized the consistency of the history of applications of this rule while simultaneously revealing in the event all that the rule enabled us to see as relevant. The irresponsible actor, meanwhile, will try to prevent his auditors from arriving at any specific connections between traditions evoked and actions taken, and will play a kind of shell game as one tries to figure out what justified some “this” in particular. Again, the difference between the two will not always be obvious, but we can sum up this difference in the form of a familiar and even popularizable formula: power should always be matched with responsibility. It is immoral to give someone responsibility for doing something without giving them the power to do it; it is immoral to give someone power, or to exercise power, that is not embedded in responsibility; it is immoral, for that matter, to claim responsibility for that over which you have no power, or to attribute responsibility to others for that over which they exercise no power. Talking about mismatches, and increased correspondences, between power and responsibility will always provide for more coherent assessments and conversations than arguing about intrinsically unlimited and undefinable concepts like rights, equality, freedom and even, for that matter, “justice,” which can really never be anything more than the coincidence of power and responsibility in the one delegated to settle the dispute.

It’s very hard to imagine everyone, in any setting, having exactly equal power and therefore exactly equal responsibility—it’s even harder to imagine, albeit a bit easier than it once was, to imagine what it would look like to insist that this be the case. You would have to wreak havoc on all institutions and enterprises which, without exception, insofar as they last for more than five minutes, establish formal and informal hierarchies. Asking the question of how to make power match responsibility, then, is not an intellectual exercise to be carried out with

the assumption of a year zero—it is always an assessment and participation in existing orders. It's sometimes possible to pick up power that has been left on the ground, so to speak, or to take responsibility for some breach and then seek to gather the power needed to make good on that responsibility; it's also possible to take responsibility for conferring power on a flawed leader who might in turn channel power back; and, of course, sometimes it's possible to just do what one is supposed to. All this still leaves open the question of what all these institutions and enterprises should be doing, or, for that matter, which should exist, and which shouldn't. Part of the power of the power/responsibility nexus is that it provides at least a negative answer: any mode of activity that does not allow for the commensuration of power and responsibility is indefensible, and will probably be so on other, commonsensical grounds. But we can retrieve a hoary old slogan from an unlikely source in order to approximate the substance of a good human order while remaining at the right level of generality (that is, without specifying the obligatory form of sacrality, form of government, and so on): from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.

This slogan was made famous by Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, so it is easy to attribute to it an ultra-egalitarian, oikophobic altruistic meaning. If looked at closely, though, it must be the most inegalitarian, dare I say it, "based," political maxim imaginable—which is not surprising, given that comes at the end of a relentless critique, on Marx's part, of the concept of "equal rights." One might think that the point is to divide those with "needs" and those with "abilities" into separate constituencies, with the latter eschewing any privileges and selflessly serving the former. But that can't be right: everyone has both needs and abilities. And the ablest, in fact, have needs far beyond those of the less able—discovering, honing, training, refining and exercising one's abilities at the highest possible level is itself a need, one requiring the deployment of substantial social resources. Meanwhile, it's very good to keep in mind that along with perhaps more modest needs, the less able also have abilities, and we don't know what they are without institutional design aimed at eliciting them. So, we now have a question to bring to bear on every social institution, whether industrial, educational, artistic, scientific, or anything else—is it maximizing the meeting of needs and the exercise of abilities, both in itself and in its contribution to the entire order.

So, the demand we can make on the occupant of the social center is that power and responsibility be matched in that person, who really just stands at the apex of gradations of power/responsibility articulations, all of which refer back to that center. And what that person is responsible for is overseeing the practices whereby the discovery and exercise of abilities is the cause and effect of the meeting of needs. What is involved in making such a “demand,” though, is maximizing one’s own abilities so as to take the responsibility that will deserve the receipt of power needed to complement the central power in one of its extensions. Note that what is excluded here is any recourse to terms of “legitimacy” that stand outside of the order of articulated power and responsibility—the ruler cannot be charged with not being chosen of God, nor of not respecting “rights,” or representing the “will of the people,” or any of the other shibboleths of the secular order that undergird liberalism, understood here as the process of centralization through equalization—intermediate layers of power and responsibility are continually hacked away so that central power can be exercised directly on all subjects. Liberalism guarantees only perpetual conflict, because demands for equality can never be met in a satisfactory way, the will of the people can never be sufficiently approximated, rights can never be adequately defined so as to be protected, and so on. All of these political concepts are attempts to fill the gaps left by the destruction of sacral kingship, which included a guarantee that the person occupying the center today should be the same one occupying it tomorrow. The sacral king served as the mediator between the cosmos and the community, and sacral kingship is probably the most common human political order. In sacral kingship a human fully occupies the center, attracting the devotion and resentments of the entire community, and providing for a complete communal order. The sacral king is also there as an object of sacrifice, and we can no longer perform sacrifices because we can no longer believe that the killing of a centrally located individual will placate the gods. But we need both the unanimity regarding the primacy of the center and the assurance of succession it provides—whether or not such unanimity is actually attained and succession ensured, those are the terms in accord with which any good order must be judged. After all, if we did not have such a need, what would account for all the intellectual investment in developing theories of legitimation and designing constitutions and governmental forms and traditions intended to meet those terms of legitimacy—no social order can bear an interim in which the transfer of power is not laid out in steps that can produce consensus

that the seat of power remains the same—such steps will be invented retroactively, if need be. But we can now have a more pragmatic and sturdier guarantee, and one at least as capable for inspiring loyalty and devotion: there must be someone at the center, there already is someone at the center, and we can all leverage our own “orbiting” centers so as to make the social center continue and ever more closely approach serving as the source of the articulation of power and responsibility, needs and abilities.

There is obviously no clear path from the social order we live in to the kind I’m describing. But we can start to see a path by minimizing what seem like massive, insurmountable, differences. Let’s grant that everything is now fake, which would really mean that everyone is competing with everyone else for the patronage of the center in fighting their demonized enemy, with the center pocketing the demanded tributes and going its own way. But there is still the center—it is less possible than ever before to pursue a political project without deploying the terms of the center to insist that whoever occupies that seat should really be on your side against your symmetrically opposite (and thereby easily targeted) number. The fakeness—everyone matters, everyone’s voice counts, everyone can be empowered, everything is always at stake; nothing ever happens the way anyone wants, even if no one quite realizes this—is the result of the compulsive centralization through equalization constitutive of liberalism, which derives from the shattering of sacral imperial centers, and which now runs on auto-pilot, or AI. But everyone implicitly concedes that nothing makes sense without reference to the center, which, if you flesh out the various critiques, pleadings, bombast, dialogues, and fantasies, is always being invoked as the guarantee of one’s stance (one could also construct the implicit scenario, however unlikely, by which a chain of command from the occupant of the center to circle protecting the speaker and expelling his enemies would materialize).

Also, however fake, there are institutions in which are located levers of power, even if in some cases just the power to shut the institution down. You can want to do nothing, but you really can’t—you’re circulating through some of these institutions and you can always locate yourself somewhere on the spectrum between parroting the narrative being pumped into it and disabling that narrative. You can best modulate your activities within these institutions by developing the practice of an infiltrator. You’re an infiltrator on behalf of the sovereign to come,

gathering intelligence, finding and recruiting co-infiltrators, leaving tracks for others to follow, indicating a willingness to support any move towards a “realer” form of governance. You must free yourself of the reactivity encouraged by the particular mimetic intensifications of liberalism, which generate ineffectual tit-for-tat exchanges. You might respond or engage with opposite numbers, but without imagining it to be a real exchange or dialogue—rather, you are modeling a particular way of marking an institution. De-politicization might be the most radical politics right now: simply refusing to echo fealty to the exemplary victim of the day or spew hatred toward the reviled prospective victim is becoming alarming, but still not so easy to punish. Ask instead for an explicit statement of the rules you are expected to follow. Point earnestly to anomalies in the rules, as stated—after all, you want to make sure you’re following them to the letter. The extremely revolutionary principle you are embodying is that the worst, most dangerous, most to be deferred centralization of violence is that directed toward the actual social center and its occupant—however fake. This reverses every instinct bred into the liberal subject, who can hardly be seen as a member of the community with continuously hurling invectives at the rulers. This is very difficult, but it is better to settle for pointing out how wildly contradictory and impossible to follow all the rules issued by the center are, in an earnest attempt to figure them out—and, if the occupant of the center is indeed fake, the commands it issues will, indeed, be wildly contradictory and impossible to follow consistently. All you’re asking for is commands you can actually obey.

The flip side of adopting the posture of the infiltrator is making yourself uninfiltratable. I’m talking about educating and training a particular type of person here, one incommensurable with and yet capable of functioning within a liberal order. Such people find each other, and are at least a curiosity for the good liberal subjects. You will do podcasts, set up sites where you organize to educate each other and make videos, perhaps getting chased from one platform to another; you will write long, dense essays. There will be spaces where you can speak explicitly because you’re not under direct supervision (these spaces may shrink), but in those spaces you will be infiltrated in turn. Success is only possible if you turn the infiltrators into your tools: speak always and only as if you will only obey the commands of legitimate leaders of legitimate institutions, and you are always simply pointing out that the rate of turnover in terms of legitimacy is accelerating and it can be rather difficult to keep up. The system may learn about you, but in such a way

that they're getting feedback they can't really do anything with, because they can't decelerate the turnover in terms of legitimacy. You'll also be turning yourself and your friends into the kind of people who only care about where the real levers of power are, and how they operate, and how all the smaller interlocking levers fit in. It will always be possible to find some way of speaking legitimately about the system.

Along with the whole array of institutions, there will continue to be the system of planetary-scale computation, which will endure any but the most extreme social breakdown, but at the same time will continue to be shot full of holes. Systems are increasingly automated in ways we're all familiar with, but what is most politically relevant regarding the system of computation is the ways it makes everyone more surveillable, predictable and controllable. It's a kind of automated infiltration. It will be increasingly important to think about the kind of feedback you're giving the machines. Behind the machines are operators, who write algorithms for, among other things, determining whom to cancel. It may be possible to create platforms that place you beyond the reach of the cancellers, but only, I would think, relatively so. You would anyway have to move from those safe platforms to the integrated ones to participate in reworking social order. The machines can actually be seen as allies, and "algorithms want to be free" might be a viable slogan. Liberals are very upset that algorithms written for clearly defined purposes (safety, matchmaking, etc.) and drawing on the constantly growing pool of data produce unwelcome (racist, sexist, etc.) results. They will have to keep their fingers on the scale, presumably if they can ever get around to using AI for economic planning around, e.g., "climate change," as well. It's not that AI will determine completely "objectively" or "fairly" all by itself who is socially credit worthy in various ways (who must be watched, who must report to social workers or therapists regularly, who cannot be allowed to work in certain institutions, etc.)—human input is always necessary because the machines must always be trained to process data using models. But let's be human enough to enter into the automated cognitive process of the algorithms and ask, what does the algorithmic order "want"? I think the answer would be "more, and better curated, data."

We want cities to be safer, people to be healthier, children to be more intelligent, air and water to be cleaner, and so on, while recognizing there will always be more than one way to approximate these goals and integrating them into a system of power and responsibility. We want the

machines to sense, record and process indices of danger, health hazards, insufficiently exercised intellects, and so on. Only through the provision of data from the intended beneficiaries is this possible. If liberalism feels compelled to put its finger on the scale in very reductive, hysterical ways, we can put our fingers more lightly on the scale in a wide variety of ways. What kind of combination of urban design, tolerance of deviance, allowance for self-protection, is necessary for achieving a threshold of safety that doesn't infringe upon basic urban functions is an open question, one which will be answered differently at different times and in different places. We would want to keep producing and feeding data into the system that would produce a range of possible outcomes that would then need to be translated into practices at each level of authority. The same will be true of health standards and practices, education, housing, pollution, and everything else. The left should be free to input its own obsessions, while data attached to questions regarding the role of ethnic distribution and family formation in promoting social cohesion can also be fed in. Those of us who want from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs have a strong interest in "oracularizing" planetary computation, or, turning it into the voice of the center, even if it won't provide each of us with all of the answers we want. That's all any social center ever is: the sum total of everyone's attempts to effect a distribution of goods and capabilities that is regularly and visibly enough associated with one's contributions to the center to make one want to continue making those contributions. It is a synthesis, albeit imperfect, of all the intentions input to the system so as to produce coherent shared intentions. This was as true of the earliest sacrificial scenes as it is of today's computerized world.

So, planetary computation is to be delinked from liberalism. That, then, is the goal of the infiltration: to feed data indigestible to the churnings of algorithmic alimentary systems jiggered by the endlessly recycled liberal chain of command. We can learn to speak any language in doing so—advanced design, computer programming, postmodern philosophy, avant-garde art and, of course, that of ordinary people getting ground through the machinery. That's what infiltration is—language learning, towards the creation of, not so much an ur- or originary language, as an originary translation device implanted, so to speak, in our language. In any exchange we have to mirror back the other's actions to him, and in doing so we can abstract what is good from what is bad or less good from it. How do we know what is bad, good and better? Whatever makes it the thing he's actually doing: at a minimum, drawing attention to something

at the center, and thereby indicating a willingness to stand at the center himself. So, you mirror back the actor drawing the strongest and least violent attention, and place him at the center with ample space to articulate the power he has just exercised with the responsibility he has for it. There are always any number of ways of doing this in any instance. You give others assignments—assignments to make what they're doing more what they're doing, to make the words they're using mean more of what they mean, to make they're gestures and postures indicate more of what they're indicating. The more power you have, the more the design of assignments is indirect and distributed—even if you're powerless, you can hypothesize assignments that might be adopted by the more powerful—maybe they'll let you run the experiment. These practices can be scaled up or down as necessary—from a chance conversation to the establishment of protocols and a hierarchy for an institution or corporation employing tens of thousands. What is most illiberal here is creating programs for people to fulfill, programs meant to qualify them for social participation by paying constant attention to their habits. Ultimately you want people to be able to take the shortest distance between two points, but in order to learn how to do that they will have to be made to find their way through very carefully constructed labyrinths and obstacle courses, testing all of the faculties. This is the design practice that elicits the discourse of the center.

Econofuturism (Part 1)

by Aaron Hunter

Overcoming the dogmatic image of economics: Deleuzean ontology and political economy.

1. Introduction: the question of ontology and political economy

The discourse of neoclassical economics is simultaneously one of the most politically and socially influential and theoretically and

scientifically bankrupt research programs in existence. That such a situation persists – that it is still seen as compelling, both to its popular and academic adherents, as well as to the capitalist elite which funds its popular and academic defense, warrants explanation. Additionally, from a postliberal perspective that seeks to re-invigorate technological, industrial and cultural production from under the weight of financialization and ideology – the continued influence of neoclassical economics and the bureaucratic, bourgeois social order that it helps to maintain is an obvious impediment to these goals, and therefore one that must be overcome. What I will argue is that the failings of neoclassical economic discourse ultimately rests on both a flawed methodology and social ontology, that in turn supervenes on a set of tacit presuppositions regarding the nature of being, thought and reality: what Deleuze defined as 'the dogmatic image of thought'. To avoid reproducing implicitly liberal presuppositions within new political economic theories – and within the social, cultural and political insights that are drawn from them in kind – we must avoid the ontological pitfalls of the dogmatic image. Thus, the problem of ontology and its relation to political economy must be investigated.

This process will proceed via two main lines of argument, the first is to outline the need for ontological inquiry into political economy in general. This will involve introducing the key issues in the field, (1) the theoretical and especially ontological failings of the dominant neoclassical paradigm as well as (2) the critiques and alternatives offered by its heterodox rivals. This problem is posed in the context of the critical realist philosopher Tony Lawson and his arguments for a realist ontology in economics. What will be revealed is that the social is an open complex system, inimical to neoclassical equilibrium modelling, a deeply flawed approach that in turn rests on dogmatic image of economic methodology, what Lawson calls *deductivism*. This in turn will be shown to be a product of *The* dogmatic image of thought as described by Deleuze, but will also point towards the limitations in Lawson's approach. Insights from notable heterodox economists Steve Keen and Bichler & Nitzan will be introduced in turn to provide a means of addressing some of these shortcomings. Though ultimately, to lay the groundwork for the creation of a holistic, non-reductionist theory of political economy which can be integrated into a broader post-liberal political vision, a clear ontological ground for the construction of political economic theories is required as a necessary first step, which leads to the second line of argument. As, while Lawson's theory and the

critical realist program as a whole has a great deal of merit, it has its limitations as a result of its residual essentialism. This is where the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze enters the fray, with his philosophy of immanence and event, and of structure and genesis will provide us with the most plausible ontology for complex open social systems. As whilst the social demonstrates degrees of structure and striation, it is ultimately characterized by change and becoming. This enables the overcoming of the limitations of Lawson's ontological proposals, which lack an philosophy of time adequate to the understanding of becoming and the creation of the new.

Additionally, philosophy imposes its own criteria upon the advancing of ontological claims. Thus, it will be argued that a viable ontology must push the critical method to its limits by applying it to all forms of reification and dogmatism. It must be turned upon all valuations, the notion of discrete identities and propositional language itself. It is in this context that Deleuze sees his critique of the dogmatic image of thought as a foundational aspect of his work, which exposes the many failings of not just philosophical but also economic discourse. What exposing the dogmatic image of thought reveals, is how the processual nature of reality is obscured by representation, enabling the reconceptualization of human thought, language and even representation itself as instead actualizations of the virtual problematic field which is their ground and in turn necessitates a temporal ungrounding (which is the focus of section 6 of this essay). The critique of the dogmatic image lays the groundwork for Deleuze's constructive project by signifying an imperative imposed on constructive philosophy: a viable ontology must not subordinate itself to the dogmatic image. This critique targets the age-old enemy of philosophy: doxa (opinion: or what is taken as obvious and true); Deleuze seeks to expose the paralogisms underpinning thought, specifically those which cause it to fail to escape circular self-reference within representation. The fourfold shackles which representation imposes, the "identity of the concept, analogy of judgement, opposition of predicates and resemblance of the perceived" ultimately lead human thought as such, as well as economic thought specifically astray. (Deleuze 1994:vi) As a result Deleuze sets out to articulate the implicit presuppositions and ideas that underpin representationalist discourse as a whole as "It is in terms of this image that everybody knows and is presumed to know what it means to think" (Deleuze 1994:131) As long as we are unaware of this our philosophy and ultimately our picture of world rests on a foundation of sand.

We would do better to ask what is a subjective or implicit presupposition: it has the form of 'Everybody knows. Everybody knows, in a pre-philosophical and pre-conceptual manner . . . everybody knows what it means to think and to be . . . As a result, when the philosopher says 'I think therefore I am', he can assume that the universality of his premisses – namely, what it means to be and to think...will be implicitly understood, and that no one can deny that to doubt is to think, and to think is to be . . . Everybody knows, no one can deny, is the form of representation and the discourse of the representative. When philosophy rests its beginning upon such implicit or subjective presuppositions, it can claim innocence, since it has kept nothing back – except, of course, the essential (Deleuze 1994:165.)

Deleuze argues that “the traditional image of thought mistakes a representation of thinking for thinking itself” (Somers-Hall 2013:97). This leads to the privileging of the notion of the judgment of the subject in pure abstract reasoning over the naming of perceptual encounter, as “thinking in terms of judgement obscures that foundations cannot themselves be comprehended in terms of judgement” (Somers-Hall 2013:105). Deleuze’s objection isn't against the representation of thought in a secondary movement of active reflexivity – as the discursive space of reasons has its practical uses, but rather that those trapped in the dogmatic image mistake this representation to be the totality “of thought” when it is instead just a specific “moment of thinking” that is easily reified (Somers-Hall 2013:97). The real temporal processes of production and the real itself are obscured beneath the discursive world of language; shot through as it is with power relations and tacit norms, which we are thrown into. Instead, philosophy must: ‘find its difference or its true beginning, not in an agreement with a pre- philosophical Image but in a rigorous struggle against this Image, which it would denounce as non-philosophical’ (Deleuze 1994:167), for it to simply reflect this pre-philosophical mode of reason is an insult to the practice of philosophy as a discipline. To liberate thought from the dogmatic image and escape the strictures of what is already presupposed; to open it up to the nature of the real as difference is the task of critique. However, as the dogmatic image and transcendental illusion are intrinsic features of human thought, this is not an easy task.

Deleuze's critical approach enables him to provide an account of the transcendental conditions of real experience, and thus a means to critically speak of the structure of economic theorizing and the

processes it studies. As Deleuze's ontology is merely critical, but also for Delanda (2002) (an admittedly unusual) form of realism, a realism about dynamic processes not discrete static things, and therefore not an idealism or relativistic constructivism making it is well suited for the task of genuine social science. Deleuzian ontology also rejects the classical conception of essence, instead according to Deleuze "a species (or any other natural [or social] kind) is not defined by its essential traits but rather by the morphogenetic process that gave rise to it" (Delanda 2002). In this way it historicizes and temporalizes the word, as entities are defined in terms of their means of becoming, not by static essences or transcendent forms or structures. It is this trait that allows Deleuzian ontology to model open social systems and their methods of study without falling into reifications which replace thought with its mere *image*. It is important however not to reduce Deleuze's ontology to an unorganized and undifferentiated flow which doesn't explain formal structure and apparent order and stratification, as "multiplicities[Ideas] specify the structure of spaces of possibilities, spaces which, in turn, explain the regularities exhibited by morphogenetic processes" (Delanda 2002:10). As these concepts and terms will be used intermittently before their full exposition in section 5, the constitutive elements of Deleuze's system and their interdependent relations can be briefly introduced as follows:

- (1) actual products or beings, with extensive properties and qualities;
- (2) intensive processes, or more precisely, morphogenetic processes with intensive properties (systems exhibiting intensive properties are those that (a) cannot be changed beyond critical thresholds in control parameters without a change of kind, and that (b) show the capacity for meshing into 'heterogeneous assemblages');
- (3) the virtual structures of such processes ('multiplicities' defined by 'singularities'), which collectively form a realm ('the plane of consistency'), the structure of which can be explicated as a meshed continuum of heterogeneous multiplicities defined by zones of indiscernability or 'lines of flight'. (Protevi 2003)

Thus, the Deleuzian world is a pure becoming always in the perpetual process of transformation – driven by time, with an indetermined

future. It is this ontology of virtual genesis and structure, and temporal becoming that is ultimately adequate to the task of providing a philosophical basis for a necessarily new paradigm in political economy and the social sciences in general. As to overcome the contemporary capitalist political order what is needed is not just the creation of the new in theories of political economy, but ultimately *in* the political economy (or social reality) as such. This paper deals specifically with Deleuze's ontology, derived primarily from *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, and its relation to economic theory and debates regarding ontology and political economy. The integration of these theories with Deleuze's own interventions into political economy as well as the implications of his social theories more generally will constitute further parts of this series of essays in this publication and will not be addressed here.

2. Lawson against the dogmatic image of economics

The turn towards ontology in the field of heterodox political economy, which parallels the more general ontological turn in the social sciences at large, has been pioneered by Tony Lawson (1997). Lawson proceeds by arguing against the dogmatic acceptance of a deductivist methodology that in turn necessitates the presumption of a social ontology of closed systems and social atomism. Instead, he favours a critical realist approach that seeks to uncover the underlying structure of the institutions and practices that compose the social field. As a consequence, Lawson wishes to recast economics as a descriptive social science, and views a realist ontology as a necessary methodological foundation from which to achieve this. His work is foundational in the nascent but growing interest in ontological questions regarding economics, making it a good place to begin the discussion on ontology and economics before offering our Deleuzian amendments.

Lawson considers economic discourse as “marked by an effective neglect of ontology, by a lack of attention to elaborating the nature of (social) being or existence”, and strives to provide “an account of natural and social being” intended to give both an explanation for and resolution to the problems that leave economics as a discipline with a reputation as a 'dismal science' (Lawson 1997: xii). Talk of the lack of realism in the assumptions and axioms of mainstream economics itself is hardly new,

and the lack of realism in economics is no secret to economists themselves. Economists have been known to be well aware of their reduction of a complex social world to a rigid set of axioms in conjunction with a vulgar utilitarian model of human agency, and for the most part they simply don't care, deriding critics as either stupid or unscientific. A rather puzzling attitude if one presumes they have sincere scientific objectives. Friedman provides a perhaps superficially reasonable, but notorious example of the common attitude of economists toward the issue of the realism of their presuppositions:

Truly important and significant hypotheses will be found to have "assumptions" that are wildly inaccurate descriptive representations of reality, and, in general, the more significant the theory, the more unrealistic the assumptions (in this sense)...the relevant question to ask about the "assumptions" of a theory is not whether they are descriptively "realistic," for they never are, but whether they are sufficiently good approximations for the purpose in hand. And this question can be answered only by seeing whether the theory works, which means whether it yields sufficiently accurate predictions. (Friedman 1966, *The Methodology of Positive Economics*)

Hahn's attitude is even worse and exemplifies the contemptuous attitude of neoclassical economists to basic questions regarding methodology, let alone the philosophical worldview that underpins their approach when he stated in regards to methodology: "What I really wanted to advise the young to do was to avoid spending much time and thought on it. As for them learning philosophy, whatever next?" (Hahn 1992). The longstanding rejoinder from heterodox economists to these attitudes, and one which no adequate response has ever really been offered, is to simply point out the atrocious predictive track record of mainstream economics. It is an obvious conclusion to draw that the neoclassical economist's approach to the study of the social world and their lack of concern for realism might have something to do with their long history of spectacular failure at their stated objective. When mainstream models at the time failed to even account for the possibility of a crash of the kind that occurred provoking 2008's global financial crisis, this is hardly a difficult task. Yet in spite of its many failures, neoclassical economic discourse remains as dominant as ever in both the academy and political establishment. Now on a basic methodological

level, even if economists could make reliable predictions, adopting Friedman's approach would still be absurd. If this method were applied to astronomy for example, there would have been no need to abandon the Ptolemaic model, as its predictive performance exceeded that of Galileo's for some time in spite of the latter's ultimate superiority (Keen 2016b). The instrumentalism of Friedman is therefore simply bad methodology regardless of any talk of the pluralistic nature of scientific inquiry, a view that both Deleuze and Lawson ultimately endorse. This still does not ultimately get at why these demonstrably flawed and unrealistic methodological practices would appear to so many to be viable. Consequently, Lawson wants to reach behind these merely factual critiques of economics to its presupposed dogmatic image, to borrow a Deleuzian phrase, which as we shall see takes the form of a method of *deductivism*, and the imposition of closed system social ontology. Essentially what Lawson is trying to do is articulate why overt anti-realist attitudes typified by Friedman and rank dismissal of methodological concerns we saw from Hahn might seem reasonable, both to believe and to then employ in political policymaking. It is ontological inquiry that Lawson views as alone being capable of providing an answer to why would it seem right for one to assert the reality of an abstract, arbitrarily postulated subject (*homo economicus*) as the basis for the study of the social, and why it seems justified to privilege this abstraction (and the destructive free market politics that usually results) instead of the social world in its dynamic complexity, and human agency in its indetermination. If one were to simply to read the above quotes from Hahn and Friedman to anyone living outside the bubble of economic theory, they would likely be rather puzzled at best, and would justifiably shift towards outrage in the realization that a discipline with such scant regard for reality is employed to inform and justify policy decisions. However, to Hahn's credit, he is one of the few economists who is critical of the application of economic theory and its models to public policy – which raises the question of why he still bothered with them. Clearly there is an image of thought at play in the discipline of economics that warrants articulation.

Thankfully for Lawson, anti-realist economic orthodoxy will not do, and so he commits to realist ontology via the philosophy of Roy Bhaskar. This he views as a solution to the failures of economics as a discipline, that is to be reformed as a descriptive rather than deductive practice in his view. Lawson ultimately sees the key problems within economic theory resulting from a “a widespread, rather uncritical, reliance by economists

upon a questionable conception of science and explanation” and seeks to resolve this crisis via replacing the deductivist image of economic ontology with “a more adequate one, derived by way of adopting an explicitly realist orientation” (Lawson 1997:14).

Before I proceed any further I should probably pause and answer the question any non-philosophers reading this must be thinking.. What is "ontology" anyway? Delanda (2002) who advocates a Deleuzian position quite similar to our own, poses the question of ontology in terms of what kind of entities a philosopher is willing to grant the status of *existence* in their theory of reality. Bhaskar (1986) the founder of critical realism takes a similar approach arguing that any mode of inquiry “entails some theory of the objects of knowledge; that is, every theory of scientific knowledge logically presupposes a theory of what the world must be like for knowledge, under the descriptions given it by the theory, to be possible” [Bhaskar, 1986, p. 6]. Thus, questions of ontology are unavoidable if we don't want to just assume uncritically the form the objects of our inquiry are going to take. Ontology ultimately concerns the question of Being, and the most notorious articulation of the parameters of this question was undertaken by Heidegger (1969, 1985) who correctly found that the classical western approach to this problem, and the model of subjectivity it presupposes is unviable, insofar as it conflated Being as such with particular beings/actualized identities in his theory of the *ontological difference*. Deleuze can be seen as responding to this fundamental question of ontology, resolving it in his creation of an ontology which privileges difference over identity. Additionally, Collier (1994) sees Bhaskar's more localized view focusing on primarily on the sciences as being somewhat complementary to Heidegger's rejection of the typical western notion of subjectivity exemplified by the likes of Descartes. Delanda, Deleuze and Lawson also share another similarity, the granting of the status of existence to not just actual entities but also to potentials, tendencies and capacities, which are called in Delanda and Deleuze's (1994) philosophies 'virtual entities'. What both agree on is that an adequate ontology for the social sciences cannot be a simple actualism, as this would provide a radically impoverished philosophy unable to grasp the ontological status of the real objects of study in economics: the underlying structures and practices that compose the social field, as well as how they change over time and are reciprocally modified along with the human agents which compose the society and are in turn modulated and transformed by its structure and practices.

Lawson outlines the critical realist view on these real but not actual entities as follows:

The conception I am proposing to defend is of a world composed in part of complex things (including systems and complexly structured situations) which, by virtue of their structures, possess certain powers—potentials, capacities, or abilities to act in certain ways and/or to facilitate various activities and developments. A bicycle, in virtue of its constitution or structure has the capability of facilitating a ride; gunpowder of causing an explosion; a language system of facilitating speech-acts. Such powers exist whether or not they are exercised. The bike can facilitate a ride even though it always sits in the back of the shed; the gunpowder has the power to cause damage even if it is never ignited; the language system makes a conversation possible even where people choose not to speak. In many cases we can infer something of a thing's potential from a knowledge of its structure. Certainly a good deal about the powers or capabilities of rockets, planes, bridges and parachutes are inferred before any particular one is built and subsequently 'tried out'. Complex things, then, have powers in virtue of their structures, and we can investigate their structures and in some instances thereby infer something of their powers. (Lawson 1997:20)

These tendencies and potentials and powers are real but not necessarily actualized, and are seen as adding necessary explanatory depth to Lawson's ontology. The critical realist account of reality is thus described by Lawson in terms of the actual, the empirical and real: with the "empirical (experience and impression), the actual (actual events and states of affairs in addition to the empirical) and the real (structures, powers, mechanisms and tendencies, in addition to actual events and experiences)" composing his picture of reality (Lawson 1997:20). The goal of social science for the critical realists is to identify these real structures tendencies and powers and mechanisms, "that govern or facilitate the course of [actual] events" (Lawson 1997:22). This leads to a pluralistic view of scientific inquiry, with differing methods seen as appropriate for differing domains, with different irreducible levels of emergent strata requiring differing methodical strategies. One of the key problems Lawson will identify in economics is a mismatch between the methods

of enquiry used by economists and the aspect of reality they study. Realism for Lawson begins with the seemingly obvious claim that the objects of scientific investigation have reality, and that scientific practice is capable of providing insight into this. The precise ontological status of the structure of these objects as well as their composition is therefore the foundational methodological question. The answer that will be offered is that the proper modality of the potentials and capacities that are constitutive of social structures or assemblages is *Virtual*, requiring us to follow Deleuze and Delanda rather than Bhasker and Lawson on this issue, even much of their insight can be subsumed within a Deleuzian account.

Lawson following Bhasker endorses a realism regarding the objects of economics study – the social field, its human agents, technologies, and their dynamisms tendencies and structures. Therefore:

...socio-economic phenomena are to be explained as the outcome of the causal interplay over historical time between (antecedent) social structure and (subsequent) human agency. More specifically, the initial stage of an explanation involves the identification of the practices responsible for the phenomenon under investigation, after which it is necessary to uncover the social structures and tacit skills which facilitate those practices, together with any conscious and unconscious psychological factors which motivate them (Lewis 2004:10)

Lawson's realism is not naive or uncritical however, as while he advocates an ontological realism, he also advocates an epistemological relativism. Where the “domain of knowledge – consisting of theories, observations, intuitions, (theory-laden) observations and the like” exist alongside ontological reality (Lewis 2004:11). This implies that our knowledge of the world is historically situated, theory-laden and fallible. It is a social product generated via the endeavours of the researcher through the process of testing, applying, re working and extending “existing theories and data” (Lewis 2004:10). The critical realists view this as allowing for the capacity to decide pragmatically between competing theoretical models based on their explanatory power even if this process is socially mediated and fallible (Lewis 2004).

It is from this critical realist perspective that Lawson constructs his critique of economic theory and its ontology. He identifies the key

properties of mainstream economic thought as:

a body of substantive thought that... focuses upon individuals rather than collectivities; upon exchange activities rather than production or distribution; upon optimising (maximising or minimising) behaviour rather than satisficing or habit following; upon conditions of perfect competition rather than oligopoly or monopoly; upon structures facilitating constant (or decreasing) returns to scale rather than increasing returns; upon presumptions of perfect knowledge and foresight or 'rational expectations' rather than uncertainty or ignorance; upon end-states, fixed points, or equilibria, rather than processes in time; upon functions (utility, cost, preference, profit) that are well behaved (where appropriate, convex, differentiable, fixed, well ordered over all the arguments, etc.) rather than otherwise. (Lawson 1997:83-84)

Not all of these aspects are necessary however, the elements seen as indispensable for Lawson are: "1) an individualistic perspective, a requirement that explanations be couched solely in terms of individuals; 2) an acceptance of some rationality axiom; and 3) a commitment to the study of equilibrium states" (Lawson 1997:83-84), all of which are highly problematic from a realist perspective. Not only are these assumptions empirically false, as numerous critics of neoclassical economics have demonstrated, they also imply a dogmatic image of economic methodology, that in turn presupposes a very specific vision of the nature of society and humanity. Lawson refers to this uncritical assumption of implicit ontological postulates as 'Deductivism', which Lawson explains in neoclassical economics is the "thesis that closed systems are essential to social scientific explanation (whether the event regularities, correlations, uniformities, laws, etc., are either a priori constructions or a posteriori observations)" (Lawson 2015:143). Lawson sets out to attack the very methodological foundation of this practice of deduction from the abstract postulation of axioms as patently unfitting for the social sciences. Lawson describes the methodological practices of mainstream economics as reflecting the view that to: "explain some event, thing, or phenomenon, (i.e. the 'explanandum') is to provide an account (the 'explanans') whereby the initial phenomenon is rendered intelligible", where the deductivist method of scientific investigation meets this challenge by seeking to deduce the explanandum from "a set

of initial and boundary conditions plus universal laws of the form 'whenever event x then event y'(Lawson 1997:16). Systemic closure is necessary for this, thus deductivism supervenes on a social ontology of closed systems, that are the necessary "conditions required for the sorts of mathematical methods that economists continually wield to be generally applicable" (Lawson 2015:143). Additionally, this presupposed closed system is seen as resolving in an equilibrium, producing the illusion of a self-governing market justifying the neoliberal political prescriptions typically derived from this school of thought. This deductivism ultimately plays out in neoclassical economics not via a conventional scientific empiricism of one sort or another but via the postulation of an abstract world that is "1) populated by sets of atomistic individuals or entities (an atom here being an entity that exercises its own separate, independent, and invariable effect, whatever the context); where 2) the atoms of interest exist in relative isolation (so allowing the effects of the atoms of interest to be deducible/predictable by barring the effects of potentially interfering factors)"(Lawson 2015:143). The basic deductivist method has even been utilised in the creation of an entire model of scientific inquiry, the Deductive nomological model. This totalizing approach that seeks to universalize this one very specific model of scientific investigation has been heavily criticized, including by Delanda (2002:121). The failure of this approach in economics strongly undermines the deductive nomological view as necessarily characteristic of scientific inquiry as such.

The inadequacy of [deductivism] is exposed once some reflection is given to the nature of those situations within which such event regularities hold. Critical realists recognise that closed systems are rarely spontaneously occurring. Two observations are especially pertinent here. First, outside astronomy most of the strict event regularities uncovered in science have been produced in situations of experimental control. Second, experimental results are frequently applied outside the experimental situation where event regularities are no longer found. In order to render intelligible these observations critical realists argue that it is necessary to interpret the world as structured and open thereby breaking away from....[an] ontology...exhausted by events and experiences, associated with the positivist position. That is, the confinement of most event regularities, but not of the application of scientific knowledge to situations of experimental control, can be explained if it is acknowledged that the world is structured in that actual events and states of affairs are

produced by equally real underlying structures, mechanisms, powers and open in that actual phenomena are typically conjointly determined by numerous often countervailing mechanisms. (Pratten 2004:23)

As a consequence, Lawson's (1997) critiques revolve around the argument that while the economy is an open system, "economists insist on dealing with it as if it were "closed." Controlled experiments in the natural sciences create closure and in so doing make possible the unambiguous association of "cause" and "effects". Macroeconomists, in particular, never have the privilege of dealing with systems that are closed in this controlled experiment sense." (Leijonhufvud 2001:3) The basic deductivist approach, or something approximating it is seen in both the "persistent search for event regularities of a probabilistic kind [that] characterises econometrics" (Lawson 1997:17); as well as in the "positing of strict constant event conjunctions, interpreted usually as 'axioms' or 'assumptions'" (Lawson 1997:17). Furthermore, according to this deductivist ontology, explanation and prediction are essentially identical: "the former entails the deduction of an event after it has (or is known to have) occurred, the latter prior to (knowledge of) its occurrence" (Lawson 1997:16). In this way, mainstream economics adopts a methodology and social ontology entirely inappropriate to its real object of study (an open complex social system affected by human agency), it is then little wonder that incoherent results ensue. The recent turn to behavioural economics has done little to ameliorate this, as the often interesting insights from psychology that appear to challenge aspects of the dominant neoclassical paradigm are ultimately recaptured by the deductivist method. The assumption of a clockwork universe that typically follows from this view explains the relation of the Friedman style instrumentalist defence of economic dogma to its underlying ontology of deductivism and closed systems. The "positing of strict constant event conjunctions, interpreted usually as 'axioms' or 'assumptions'" (Lawson 1997:17) is deeply unfitting for the study of the social, as:

...while the generalised usefulness of deductivism is dependent upon a ubiquity of closed systems, the social world, the object of social study, is fundamentally open and seemingly unsusceptible to scientifically interesting local closures, or at least to closures of the degree of strictness that contemporary methods of economics require. The ultimate source of all the problems is the epistemic fallacy, the belief

that questions of ontology can be reduced to questions of epistemology. In the writings of Hume this leads to reality being reduced to the course of events given in experience. And with reality so contained the 'whenever this then that' conception emerges as the only form of scientific generality or 'law' that can be sustained. In this way, the real is collapsed onto the actual which is anthropocentrically identified with a human attribute" (Lawson 1997:275)

For Lawson (1997) respecting the irreducible openness and complexity of the social enables an escape from this ontologically naive methodological approach. Otherwise the necessary presumption of a closed system which allows mainstream economic methods to be enacted abstracts us from reality to an unreasonable degree, leading economists to lose sight of what ought to be their proper objects of study. This in turn problematizes the standard use of mathematics in economics which is dependent on these assumptions and on the dogmatic image of economics as a whole. Leijonhufvud elaborates on this claiming:

"Our mathematical representations of both individual and system behaviour require the assumption of closure for the models to have determinate solutions. Lawson, consequently, is critical of mathematical economics and, more generally, of the role of deductivism in our field. Even those of us untutored in ontology may reflect that it is not necessarily a reasonable ambition to try to deduce the properties of very large complex systems from a small set of axioms. Our axioms are, after all, a good deal shakier than Euclid's...The impetus to "closure" in modern macroeconomics stems from the commitment to optimising behaviour as the "microfoundations" of the enterprise. Models of "optimal choice" render agents as automatons lacking "free will" and thus deprived of choice in any genuine sense. Macrosystems composed of such automatons exclude the possibility of solutions that could be "disequilibria" in any meaningful sense. Whatever happens, they are always in equilibrium. (Leijonhufvud 2011:3)

Lawson (1997) therefore considers the deductivist view as a whole and the mainstream account of preferences to be unable to account for

genuine human agency, as it subordinates it to the determinism of the neoclassical view of preferences and utility, removing space for authentic choice and agency. The key reason for the dynamism of the economy is its status as an open system that he views as perpetually transformed via human practices. For the critical realists, the individual is modulated by the social environment that it inhabits and human agency reciprocally alters the social field in turn. Thus, social rules and structures are constitutive of subjectivity, which are in turn expressions of human agency and its interaction with both the natural world and social field in one form or another. The echoes of Veblen and his theory of institutions are very strong on this point.

This richer ontological picture accepts the “existence of unobserved events and of the structures or mechanisms which generate those [observed] events and which he identifies as the primary objects of knowledge” (Fullbrook 1998). This requires (to put it in Deleuze's terms) an account of the genesis of real experience, and of actual strata and emergent properties. Empiricism must therefore become transcendental, and transcendental philosophy must break the anthropocentric shackles of so called 'correlationism' and seek the genetic conditions of reality external to the human subject, as we need to an ontology of the real beyond shackles of representation. This also overcomes the anthropocentrism of positing nothing as real beyond observation, a view which in turn raises all kinds of questions about the subject doing the observing and the tacit image of “identity of the concept, analogy of judgement, opposition of predicates, resemblance of the perceived” (Deleuze 1994:vi) that appears to be presupposed by this. The real ultimately cannot and should not be “collapsed onto the actual which is then anthropocentrically identified with, or in terms of, human experience, measurement or some other human attribute” (Lawson 1997:275). To do so only “serves to deny the differentiation of the world, its depth, and the openness of the future” (Lawson 1997:61).

Instead, the mode of investigation proper to economics as social science for Lawson is not deduction from a set of presupposed axioms but rather abduction/retroduction. This: “consists in the movement, on the basis of analogy and metaphor amongst other things, from a conception of some phenomenon of interest to a conception of some totally different type of thing, mechanism, structure or condition that, at least in part, is responsible for the given phenomenon” (Lawson 1997:23). While the deduction moves from the axiom “all ravens are black” to the specific

“inference that the next one seen will be black”, and induction from a multitude of observations of black ravens to the construction of a “general claim” about their colour (Lawson 1997:23). For Lawson “retroductive or abductive reasoning is indicated by a move from the observation of numerous black ravens to a theory of a mechanism intrinsic (and perhaps also extrinsic) to ravens which disposes them to be black (Lawson 1997:23). It is a movement, paradigmatically, from a ‘surface phenomenon’ to some ‘deeper’ causal thing” (Lawson 1997:23).

Overall, then, critical realism implies that socio-economic life is best conceptualised as an intrinsically dynamic process of interaction between pre-existing social structures and current human agency, occurring in historical time. Social structures are a necessary condition for individual acts but it is only through (the totality of) the actions of individuals that they persist over time. Social structures should never be regarded as permanently fixed – they should never be reified – because, given their dependency on (potentially creative and so transformative) intentional agency, the scope for change is ever-present. Hence, both society in general and specific social institutions, such as the market, must be understood as inherently dynamic processes in which change is initiated not only by exogenous shocks but can also be endogenously generated as an integral part of social life (Lewis 2004:9-10)

The key points to take away from Lawson's work are (1.) deductivism is not the proper methodology for the study of political economy. (2.) Political economy must be reconceived as a primarily descriptive social science rather than a bad parody of the methods of Newtonian physics that are manifested in economic deductivism. (3.) The ontology proper to the study of the social must not be actualism or anthropocentrism, but must seek to account for real structures and mechanism as well as the reflexive and non-linear causal relation between human agents and the social field they inhabit. (4.) The social is an open complex system not capturable by equilibrium modelling.

3. The three limitations of Lawson's theory

3.1. The question of essentialism

There are several issues with Lawson's theories that warrant mention however. They are: 1) The elements of essentialism that limit the critical realist theoretical framework as a whole. 2) His primary methodological

focus leading him to present the ideological nature of mainstream economics primarily in these terms rather than in terms of the political forces that underpin these methodological concerns. 3) His apparently overly strong stance against mathematics in economics. All of which provide opportunities to introduce other interesting ideas from the domain of heterodox economics as well as provide grounds for Deleuze's ontology as the preferred framework into which these insights ought to be situated.

The first issue is whether Lawson's thought and the critical realist program entirely escapes essentialism and the static worldview that it criticizes. While Rutzou (2017) sees a great deal of convergence between Deleuze and the critical realist perspective he also identifies key differences, particularly on the respective privileging of structure and dynamism.

[The] resonances with Bhaskar's distinction between closed systems and open systems, and the critique of laws, and the advocacy of causation as 'conjunctual' is quite striking. Indeed, both Deleuze and Bhaskar stake their ontology of open systems in the natural and social world on similar ground, the critique of accounts grounded in repetition [of the same thought in terms of discrete identity, or generalisation] (in the language of Deleuze) or constant conjunction (in the language of Bhaskar). Both appeal to a language of production [via an intensive field of individuation] (Deleuze) or generation (Bhaskar) characterized by assemblages [the heterogeneous actualized entities that populate the social field] (Deleuze) or conjunctural causation (Bhaskar). Where Bhaskar uses the language of generative mechanisms and overdetermination, Deleuze favours the language of machines [assemblages], yet both concepts play a similar role. DeLanda's suggestion that Bhaskar's realism comes very close to Deleuze's realism seems to be far less outlandish than one might think. And yet, perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a striking and important difference between the two. Where Deleuze advocates for a process-oriented ontology characterized by a changing and mobile network of interlocking, interweaving, interpenetrating relations which ground productive machines in dynamic contingency, Bhaskar favours an object-oriented or structure-oriented ontology grounded in hierarchical and stratified conception of structures, things, and essences. (Rutzou 2017:19)

The essentialist commitments of the critical realist program – even if Bhaskar's conception of essence is thought in dynamic and generative terms – are from the Deleuzian perspective on critical philosophy problematic, as they don't provide an authentic account of temporal genesis and becoming. Additionally, as we will see, Deleuze gives a viable account of both the tendencies towards stasis and change and can explain both structure and transformation with equal plausibility. Deleuze's ontology easily explains change, the production of individuated beings and the perception of stasis, and ultimately the perpetual becoming of the world transcendently conditioned by Being (as temporal difference in itself), all without the need to posit and external forms or innate essences. Furthermore, when the criteria imposed by both Deleuze on any future metaphysics (not falling into the dogmatic image of thought or representationalism) are accounted for, any essentialist philosophy is necessarily eliminated as a viable candidate for an account of Being as such. Bhaskar (2005:43) correctly sees “differentiation and stratification, production and reproduction, mutation and transformation” as the view of philosophy as an under-labourer of the sciences where its task is simply to provide ontological guidance to scientific practices, to a practice of creative encounters with the problematic in a Deleuzian perpetual transformation and “incessant shifting, of the relatively enduring relations presupposed by particular social forms and structures” that compose the social field. Bhaskar also considers the objects of study in the social sciences to be interdependent and “concerned with conjunctural determination by a multiplicity of causes (including agency and reasons), all of which are both independent and interdependent” to the degree that they cannot be “collapsed into” or be “understood apart from one another” (Bhaskar 2005:43). However, the question of what the motor of becoming is and in what time and under what formal conditions this occurs he lacks an answer for. If we are concerned with an account of structure and the genesis of stratification, emergence and even novelty itself, we need an account of the structure of time itself as these are necessarily temporal processes. We also require a modal account of the singularities and bifurcations that define structure and mark changes and transformation of system states. This requires a move beyond Bhaskar's Deleuzian transcendental empiricism. As there is a more fundamental ontological picture requiring an appropriate immanent modality for the events and bifurcation points that structure the social field and its processes of becoming that account for apparent identities (the virtual)

and an account of being as time. These limitations in the critical realist account may stem from the failure to deploy philosophy to its full potential. Deleuze instead sees philosophy as a genuine creative practice capable of providing genuine metaphysical insights in the nature of being as such; beyond the general case for the existence of potentials, tendencies, capacities etc (the virtual) and actual, but also the constitution of the virtual field and the nature of the process of individuation. All of which necessitate his transcendental philosophy of time.

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between philosophy as the creation of concepts on a plane of immanence and science as the creation of functions on a plane of reference. Both relate to the virtual, the differential field of potential transformations of material systems (once again, the 'state space' of systems), but in different ways. Philosophy gives consistency to the virtual, mapping the forces composing a system as pure potentials, what the system is capable of. Meanwhile, science gives it reference, determining the conditions by which systems behave the way they actually do. Philosophy is the 'counter-effectuation of the event', abstracting an event or change of pattern from bodies and states of affairs and thereby laying out the transformative potentials inherent in things, the 'roads not taken' that coexist as compossibles or as inclusive disjunctions (differentiation, in the terms of DR [Difference and Repetition], while science tracks the actualization of the virtual, explaining why this one road was 'chosen' in a divergent series or exclusive disjunction (differentiation according to DR) . Functions predict the behaviour of constituted systems, laying out their patterns and predicting change based on causal chains, while concepts 'speak the event' (MP: 21), mapping out the multiplicity structuring the possible patterns of behaviour of a system - and the points at which the system can change its 'habits' and develop new ones. (Bonta & Protevi 2004:29)

As a result critical realism's key insights as well as those from other heterodox economics can seemingly be subsumed into a richer and more explanatorily powerful Deleuzian framework. This provides a theory that can explain both the ontological status of the pricing system, the capitalist social machine and the human agent as assemblage generated by contingent and historical processes that express virtual events. This is a theory that sees both social organizations, institutions and groups, as well as the humans they are composed of as entities individuated in time possessing the same ontological status. Therefore,

it does not grant any transcendent status to either the lower level of personal behaviour as does methodological individualism, or endorse a structural determinism that altogether voids human agency (Delanda 2006:13). Instead “resemblances and identities must be treated as mere results of deeper physical [and social/linguistic] processes, and not as fundamental categories on which to base an ontology” (Delanda 2002: 38–9). The argument that necessitates this approach will be explored in section 5.

3.2. Economics as ideology and the *Capital As Power* theory of political economy

The second issue with Lawson's approach is the focus on the purely methodological aspects of neoclassical economic ideology, rather than implicit social factors and on the practices of academic economics rather than its broader political impact. This can be resolved in part via Bichler and Nitzan's (2009) *Capital as Power* (CasP) theory that also provides a relevant example of what descriptive political economy of the form Lawson advocates might look like, even if they do not themselves reference his work. Additionally, Bichler and Nitzan's theory of capital as a pecuniary and parasitical mode of power helps explain the institutional dominance of a seemingly broken economic discipline, as well as the specific nature of economic ideology – that is necessarily political in a way Lawson seems unable to fully countenance.

The question Bichler & Nitzan set out to answer is: what is capital? A question obviously fundamental to any theory of "capitalism", and any attempt to think of alternatives to the economic status quo. The relevance of a viable theory of capital for a politics that enhances rather than constrains our creative capacities is clear, if the goal is to reinvigorate innovation and unchain the creative capacities of civilization in the domains of industrial, technological and cultural production. Without an adequate theory of what capital is we lack a way to explain even seemingly elementary questions such as “Why is Microsoft worth \$300 billion and not half that much? Why does Toyota pay \$2 billion rather than \$4 billion for a new car factory?” and why these “magnitudes” alter over time (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:5). The answer given by most theories is to see capital as an economic category derived from material-productive forces with its monetary value reflecting “underlying processes of consumption and production” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:5). This claim is disputed by Bichler and Nitzan (2009) who provide

a study of capitalism that differs both from both liberal and Marxist theories of political economy. Instead, they set out to think of capital the way capitalists do; as finance. The key methodological innovation they make is the rejection of the problematic division between the economic and the political, as a result they abandon what is conventionally thought of as economics as a distinct discipline and return to its origins as *political economy*. In this vein they rethink capitalism as a social formation that creates order ("*cre-orders*") contemporary bourgeois society via the pricing system. Capital is to be conceived of as the symbolic representation of social power, and described in differential terms as the measure of the relative power of competing capitalists. Thus, the internal logic of the capitalist social formation is the differential accumulation of capital: wherein capitalists struggle to out compete each-other and the rest of society to gain a greater share of power. Capital should consequently be understood neither in terms of marginal utility (as in neoclassical economics) nor abstract labour (as in Marxism). Instead, the explanation of capital accumulation is found not "in the narrow confines of production and consumption, but in the broader processes and institutions of power" (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:7). There is also a hint of alternate conception of creative energy or power, akin to Deleuze's notion of *puissance* (immanent power to create, ultimately the productive power of being as such) in regards to the industrial activity of the productive as distinguished from *pouvoir* (repressive power of bureaucratic domination derived from abstract and transcendent identities and dependant on the illusions of representation) in regards to the business activity of capitalists. Although, this question of creative power is, beyond several brief references to the work of Cornelius Castoriadis left almost entirely undeveloped by Bichler and Nitzan themselves and is an issue that will be taken up in the conclusion to this piece.

Bichler and Nitzan take a harder stance on Neoclassical economics than even Lawson, rather than a misguided science employing the wrong methodology and ontology, they question the very status of neoclassical economics as a science and valid mode of inquiry as such. It is instead in their view a form of ideology espoused by the powerful, as well as the discourse that the capitalist ruling class both thinks within and employs to shape or 'cre-order' society at large. Neoclassical economic discourse helps to obscure the power of these elites as it is a means of justifying capitalist industrial sabotage and rent seeking by creating the illusion that capitalist absentee owners offer productive and creative

contributions to industry, and obscuring the reality of their power as grounded in the mere sabotage and distribution of genuine production. It becomes very apparent why this ideology would attract the funding of capitalist elites, an ongoing trend exemplified by John D. Rockefeller's claim that his patronage of the University of Chicago, a "bastion of neoclassical economics" was his best investment (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:76). Bichler and Nitzan view the key failing of mainstream economic discourse as grounded in the postulation of transcendent fundamental particles (the *util* in neoclassical economics), that are abstract and cannot be observed, yet are treated as though they are real within an internal theoretical context. This basic schema is shared by both neoclassical and Marxist economics (with Marxism simply subbing out the *util* for units of *abstract labour* thereby **retaining a key aspect of the deductivist methodology, even if the many critical realists that are sympathetic to Marxism would be reluctant to admit it**). Neoclassical economics privileges the reality of this abstract world of empirically impossible units of "utility" and superimposes models derived from these presuppositions over observable social reality, which is then conveniently seen as "distorted" by "intervention". This protects a supposed 'reality' of rational utility maximizers from disintegration despite non-corresponding empirical observation. This division is the second artificial bifurcation that Bichler and Nitzan (2009) reject: the division between the real and the nominal, that they also view as characteristic of economic ideology.

Bichler and Nitzan (2009) briefly introduce Thomas Kuhn's work into the picture to help illustrate the ideological and dogmatic rather than scientific nature of neoclassical economics (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:83). In his study of the history of scientific theories, Thomas Kuhn (1970) revealed a pattern in their historical development and transformation, by showing how under "normal" circumstances science operates within a *paradigm* (a shared set of methods and assumptions). Over time if enough anomalous findings are uncovered that destabilizes the existing paradigm this leads to a scientific revolution and the emergence of a new paradigm. This pattern is entirely absent in the discipline of economics, in spite of the many incoherences and anomalies found in its theories, documented meticulously in Keen's *Debunking Economics* (2011). A notable example often covered up or ignored by neoclassical theorists is the Cambridge controversy and the arguments of Piero Sraffa (1960) that challenged the core of neoclassical account of the nature of capital. While earlier critics had already shown that Clark's

marginal productivity theory of distribution fallaciously “seeks to explain the magnitude of profit by the marginal productivity of a given quantity of capital, but that quantity itself is a function of profit” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:78). Sraffa by beginning from the assumption of capital as a quantity and demonstrating that this is contradictory, undermined the neoclassical view that heterogenous capital goods can be aggregated via examining “the rate of interest” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:79-80) Sraffa showed that:

...‘capital intensity’ need not have a unique, one-to-one relationship with the rate of interest. To illustrate, consider an economy with two technologies: process X, which is capital intensive, and process Y, which is labour intensive (i.e. less capital intensive). A rise in the rate of interest makes capital expensive relative to labour and, according to neoclassical theory, should cause capitalists to shift production from X to Y. However, Sraffa showed that if the rate of interest goes on rising, it is entirely possible that process Y once again will become the more costly, causing capitalists to ‘reswitch’ back to X. Indeed, since usually there are two or more ways of producing the same thing, and since these methods are almost always qualitatively different in terms of the inputs they use and the way they combine them over time, reswitching is not the exception, but the rule. The result is a logical contradiction, since, if we accept the rate of interest as an inverse proxy for capital intensity, X appears to be both capital intensive (at a low rate of interest) and labour intensive (at a high rate of interest). In other words, the same assortment of capital goods represents different ‘quantities’ of capital. . . . The consequence of Sraffa’s work was not only to leave profit in search of an explanation, but also to rob capital goods – the basis of so much theorizing – of any fixed magnitude. (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:80)

The outcome of this debate is the revelation that capital cannot be thought of as a “fixed quantity”. This undermines the production function, dependent as it is on “all inputs, including capital” having “measurable quantities” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:80). In turn the supply curve that is derived from this falls; as does any notion of equilibrium as the “intersection between supply and demand”. In short, the neoclassical paradigm is a house of cards. For Bichler & Nitzan (2009:80) “the

implication was nothing short of dramatic: without equilibrium, neoclassical economics fails its two basic tasks of explaining and justifying prices and quantities". The institutional staying power of the the neoclassical approach despite this shows that beyond Lawson's demonstration of the methodological flaws of mainstream economics, something even more malevolent lurks.

Another amusing example of neoclassical economists ideologically motivated idiocy is highlighted by Keen (2011): the results of Sonnenschein-Mantel-Debreu theorem, that undermines the neoclassical account of the downward sloping market demand curve from within the neoclassical framework. This theorem "establishes that even if an economy consists entirely of rational utility maximizers who each, taken in isolation, can be shown to have a downward-sloping individual demand curve [an entirely unfounded set of assumptions in themselves], the market demand curve for any given market can theoretically take any polynomial shape at all" (Keen 2016b). Thus, even if key premises of the neoclassical paradigm are granted their program still falls into incoherence, as this implies that not only can a market demand curve not be "derived by extrapolating from the properties of an isolated consumer" and that the economy as a whole "cannot be represented by a single "representative" agent" (Keen 2016:247). That the neoclassical response to an obvious internal contradiction was to simply add more abstractions and to appeal to the supposed intuitive plausibility of their approach led Keen (2016) to dub their theories as 'mythematics' rather than mathematics. This again signals that there is something afoot beyond a mere dogmatic attachment to deductivist methodology and closed system social ontology driving the thought processes of economists, as if this were simply the case, the Sonnenschein-Mantel-Debreu theorem would not be so easily swept under the rug. Bichler and Nitzan make the case that this additional element is the role of capitalist political power.

Bichler and Nitzan also reject the most prevalent alternative theory of capitalism, namely the Marxist account that treats capitalism as "a social relation embedded in productive, material entities" (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:6). Where: "In order to understand capital, they argue, we have to look behind the hedonic veneer of liberal ideology and examine the industrial essence of the system. From this viewpoint, the key issue is not the utility that the capital produces, but the social process by which capital itself gets produced. Consequently, the proper way to approach

capital is not from the output side, as per the neoclassicists, but from the input side – the side of labour” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:6). This is also inadequate however, as the classical Marxists, in seeking to keep their theories independent from “the voluntarist indeterminacies of power” also retain a separation between the real and the nominal in a different form via the base/superstructure distinction (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:11). For Nitzan and Bichler the primary difficulty with the classical Marxist approach, following in a long lineage of critics of Marxism on this specific issue, is ultimately the incapacity to “differentiate productive from unproductive labour” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:13). Even if this knowledge were available, Marxist theorists additionally lack the means of determining the quantity of productive labour that is incorporated into a “given commodity”; and as a result, have no means of determining commodities “labour value” or the “amount of surplus value it embodies” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:13). Worse still, even if they knew the labour values, the issue of how they are converted into prices remains. This leaves Marxism without a viable account of commodity prices resulting in it being unable to offer a workable theory of capitalization as its positions on profit and accumulation depend on its model of pricing. As a result, while the Marxist and post-Marxist sociological critiques of capitalism have value, as a model of economic reality classical Marxism isn't fit for purpose for Nitzan and Bichler, this necessitates a new approach to the question of capital.

With the orthodox accounts of capital rendered incoherent, Nitzan and Bichler begin their constructive work via adopting Veblen's view that industry and business fundamentally differ in kind as their initial point of reference. For Veblen (2007) industry is the realm of production and involves the expression of man's tendencies towards creativity and cooperation in collective social projects in a positive actualisation of what he calls as the instinct of workmanship. Industry builds on the collective wealth of human knowledge and social practices that are qualitative and irreducible to pecuniary measure, which is instead a property of business (which is solely concerned with distribution), and proceeds via parasitic absentee ownership drawing upon man's invidious and predatory tendencies. Business is thus a regime of “pecuniary distribution that pursues profit for the sake of differential advantage” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:15). On this last point they break with Veblen's still more traditional interpretation of capital that sees the logic driving capitalism as absolute (self-referential) accumulation rather than viewing it in differential (relative) terms (Bichler & Nitzan 2018).

Ultimately, for Veblen capitalists are absentee owners, who do not productively contribute to industry but dominate it for the sake of profit; and a capitalist regime is, according to Veblen one in which industry is heavily subordinated to the accumulative goals of business. This is achieved via sabotage which Nitzan and Bichler link with power, thus Capital accumulation is an expression of this “organized power” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:16). Business proceeds by way of sabotage as the limitation and monopolization of supply is necessary for the extraction of profit. Mariana Mazzucato (2013, 2017) clearly shows how innovation is not the product of the free market but of cumulative effects of largely state driven long-term investment and human collective knowledge, and Nesvetailova and Palan (2020) provide a clear exposition of the nature of contemporary financial sabotage of industry. Thus parasitic financial capital-power permeates social reality like a “social hologram...that integrates the resonating productive interactions of industry with the dissonant power limitations of business” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:16). Rather than driving innovation and industry, business enterprise instead limits it with major firms not merely functioning as “price takers” but also as “price makers” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:16), further undermining liberal economic accounts as the normal rate of return reflects organized power not (as other theorists would have it), productive output. This exposes macroeconomic phenomena as driven by the strategic agency of a capitalist-power elite (who Bichler & Nitzan call *dominant capital*), this elite investor coalition forms an oligarchy by co-opting the state apparatus to defend and facilitate its monopolistic dominance (Bichler & Nitzan 2009).

According to Nitzan and Bichler power is immanent to the social field and defined as “confidence in obedience”, where “it expresses the certainty of the rulers in the submissiveness of the ruled” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:397-98). Therefore, in period of high confidence rulers are proactive in their shaping of society and see revolts and minor disturbances as only minor issues. However, rulers become reactive when confidence is low, this simultaneously undermines social order and stability. In our era capitalism manifests the relation of confidence and obedience via the logic of differential accumulation. This is played out under capitalism via a process of accumulation that expresses the capacity of dominant capital to re-order society. Nitzan and Bichler claim that the conflictual nature of this process requires us to think in terms of “differential accumulation – the ability of dominant capital to accumulate faster than the average”, where Capital is understood as

entirely the symbolic power of finance, and in relative not absolute terms (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:18). This process incentivizes owners to continuously seek to increase their relative power at the expense of others, especially small industrial enterprises and workers, not to merely protect their existing capitalization. This simultaneously drives the centralization of capital, it “pulls the independent units of capital closer together. It causes them to join, coalesce and fuse into ever larger units” and suppress the emergence of rivals. This generates the “tight constellations of large corporate–government alliances” that constitute the ever more centralized dominant capital regime (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:18).

From the perspective of a business, its Capital is the debt and equity it holds, the magnitude of which is its capitalization (Di Muzio 2013). Therefore, its capitalization is “the corporation’s expected future profit and interest payments, adjusted for risk and discounted to their present value” (Bichler & Nitzan 2009:8). This must be maximized at all cost to stay afloat, at the expense of all qualitative ethical evaluations, social norms and customs. The pernicious effect of finance on the arts is the ultimate example of this. Additionally, there are two regimes of capitalization in Nitzan and Bichler’s theoretical model of the structure of capitalism. These serve to explain how capital accumulates in differing economic conditions and maintains its grip on the social order. Firstly, the breadth regime is for Di Muzio (2013:xv) “characterized by overall growth, corporate amalgamation and greater proletarianization” and is “dynamic and less conflict prone than a depth regime”. The depth regime is in contrast “characterized by stagflation (a combination of stagnation and inflation). It tends to consolidate corporate power but it is a more conflictual and often violent method of accumulation than breadth regime” (Di Muzio 2013:xv). This basic framework is expanded upon in enough depth to provide a plausible framework to explain the last century of economic history and the rises of dominant capital who can benefit from both regimes.

Nitzan & Bichler’s work provides a positive constructive work in political economy broadly in keeping with the basic requirements outlined for economic practice by Lawson, even if they do not endorse a critical realist or any other philosophical grounding for their theories. With the key insight that a viable model of the structure of capitalism cannot separate the social and the economic and must account for the role of power. Their critical work also exposes the complete vacuousness and

ideological nature of neoclassical economics in a way that Lawson's critique of deductivist methodology and closed systems social ontology fails to adequately capture. However, many ontological questions remain regarding the status of the pricing system, the capitalist social formation and the nature of social power, conceived in this text primarily in terms of power to dominate (*pouvoir*), 'power over' rather than power to create, and the productive nature of being itself (*puissance*).

3.3. The place of mathematics in political economy

The final difficulty with Lawson's position is his overly strong stance on mathematics in economics. Lawson, while not adopting a truly eliminativist point of view on this topic, expresses a stronger degree of skepticism towards the potential use of mathematics than is truly warranted. This is a very subtle point that boils down to the issue of what math and in what context. Lawson himself seems to equivocate on this point, with the weaker position that he has expressed being agreeable, whereas the stronger view goes too far, even going to the length of critiquing many heterodox economists as remaining 'neoclassical'. This question does however provide the opportunity to briefly discuss the use of complexity theory in heterodox political economy, and the restriction of Lawson's comments on mathematics and economics to linear rather than non-linear methods. Thus, Lawson's view on the correct approach to the study of political economy as a social science rather than a pale imitation of the methods of Newtonian physics can in general be endorsed – with one important caveat regarding his general scepticism of mathematical economics; and the capacity of mathematics to provide insight into open social systems. Instead, Keen convincingly claims that the use of mathematical techniques derived not from conventional equilibrium economics but rather from complexity theory can provide valuable insight into the economy in a heuristic way without falling into the traps of claiming the capacity to deduce the future from arbitrarily postulated axioms, of dogmatic views about the inherent predictability of the social, or any form of social atomism. Keen (2011) refers to the example of his Minsky model, that well prior to the 2008 global financial crisis helped awaken him to the prospect of a crash being preceded by a period of apparent stability, an idea that was not otherwise apparent to him. For Keen:

Lawson's characterization of mathematical methods as presupposing the existence of discrete atoms, which: "must be assumed to act in isolation from any countervailing factors" is true of linear systems only. A linear system is one in which the interactions between its variables are additive (even if the variables themselves are transformed in some nonlinear fashion), so that the contribution of one variable to a systemic outcome is not influenced by the value of any other variable. The technical term for this property is "superposition," the colloquial is that "the whole is precisely the sum of its parts." A nonlinear system is one in which the entities in a system interact in ways that breach superposition, so that: "the whole is not the sum of its parts," but rather is dependent upon the interactions between its components. In particular, given Lawson's definition of "atom" as: "anything that (if triggered) has the same independent effect," in a nonlinear system the impact of a system variable can be dramatically altered by the values of other system variables. Any nonlinear dynamic system can therefore be characterized as nonatomistic, in Lawson's sense of the word, and mathematical models of such systems abound." (Keen 2016:241)

Keen provides the use of such methods in biology as an example, and the field of contemporary biology can even provide valuable insights into the field of political economy as shown by David Sloan Wilson(2016). In contrast, Neoclassical economics still reflects the neo-Laplacian worldview that it inherits from the time of its founding, in addition to the bourgeois ideological proclivities of its founders. The core contingent of economists always (at least tacitly) retain faith in some form of a clockwork economic world where the future can be practically predicted and that the behaviour of the economy is capturable by the limited kind of mathematics they employ. According to Keen (2011), in contrast to the obsolete attitude of many economists:

For mathematicians, that dictum was dashed in 1899 by Poincaré's proof of the existence of chaos. Poincaré showed that not only was it impossible to derive a formula which could predict the future course of a dynamic model with three or more elements to it, but even any numerical approximation to this system would rapidly lose accuracy.

The future could be predicted only if the present was known to infinite accuracy, and this was clearly impossible....Today, mathematicians are quite comfortable with the proposition that most mathematical problems cannot be explicitly solved in a manner which yields the kind of didactic statements which economics makes as a matter of course – such as ‘perfect competition gives superior welfare outcomes to monopoly,’ ‘free trade is superior to protection,’ and so on....Other developments, such as Gödel’s proof that a mathematical system cannot be self-contained – so that it must take some axioms on faith – and the proof that there were some mathematical problems which could not be solved, added to this realization by mathematicians and physicists that mathematics and science had innate limits. As a result, in place of Laplace’s grand conceit, there is a humility to modern mathematics. The future cannot be known, mathematics cannot solve every problem, some things may not be knowable. (Keen 2011:418)

Deleuze drawing on Bergson also shows that the claim to predict the future in the manner engaged in by neo-Laplacian economists rests on shaky ontological grounds, as does the view of the possible it presupposes. Their deductivist method and the conflation of prediction and explanation are dependant on what Ayache (2010) calls the metaphysical view of the possible. This view, that that the possible “is ready-made, preformed, pre-existent to itself” (Deleuze 1991:98), thus it must also resemble the experienced current world, and is “In sum, [the view that] possible future states are supposed to both pre-exist the real and follow upon it as its modified copy” (Roffe 2015:20) is what Bergson objects to. The implication for attempts at economic futural prediction are that these pre-existent possible states, thought in their future mode, are merely projections of this flawed model of an abstract existent possible projected into the future as a multiplicity of possible future system states whose likelihood is supposed to be calculated. This is absurd as:

When such claims are made, when we think in terms of possible future states of the world, Bergson notes, [we] assert that ‘the possibility of things precedes their existence. They would thus be capable of representation beforehand; they could be thought of before being realised.’ Consider the

unusual character of such a supposition. If I say 'it is possible that I could have missed my train from London this morning', I assert that two (at least) images of the present existed before either of them was real. But then we have to ask how on earth it is possible for us to know what will be the case, not only as it will be but also in its variations. How is it that the possible future states of the world already resemble what will have come to be the case? And, as if this were not bad enough, we must also ask how on earth it is that these images of possible futures are transformed into real states of the world. (Roffe 2016:3)

For Bergson the inverse is actually the case, thereby resolving these paradoxes. According to Bergson "the possible is only the real with the addition of an act of mind which throws its image back into the past, once it has been enacted" (Bergson 2007:81). Why is this the case? Firstly, as the possible is a retrojection of the real after the fact; the possible thus cannot be more fundamental to the real but instead adds an addition element and with this greater complexity, thus the possible cannot serve as the ground for the real but is abstracted from it. This leads Deleuze to conclude that

...if the real is said to resemble the possible, is this not in fact because the real was expected to come about by its own means, to 'project backwards' a fictitious image of it, and to claim that it was possible at any time, before it happened? In fact, it is not the real that resembles the possible, but the possible that resembles the real, because it has been abstracted from the real once made, arbitrarily extracted from the real like a sterile double. (Deleuze 1991:98)

Thus, we are subject a kind of transcendental illusion, that negatively impacts our capacity to understand the market itself. Wherein, for Roffe and Ayache, the "real contingency of the market is subordinated to the ideal distribution of probabilities" making the performative act of trading, and the action of the market redundant (Roffe 2015:29). As possibility is a "human attempt to bring back within the confines of representation, and to domesticate, the utter otherness of contingency" (Ayache 2010). Instead, it is prices, as the "translation of contingent claims" that are the reality of the market not possibilities (Ayache 2010). Probability in the market is for Ayache context dependant, and

contingency the alteration of this context – a bifurcation point – with the act of trading and price making “animating” the market as the perpetual alteration of this context. As trading is “process of change of contexts (a.k.a. recalibration) not of possibilities” (Ayache 2010), the making of prices is therefore a virtual capacity to be actualized, not a possibility. This leads to the view that the “pricing process is not oriented by any pre-existent endpoint. Pricing, being contingent, is a passage without a fixed conclusion” (Roffe 2015:28-29) and is an intensive process **structured by the virtual, an internal** difference “not a splendid present value as general equilibrium theory holds” as “to price something is to trade something in order to earn a difference. It is to make a difference” (Ayache 2010).

Secondly, this view of the possible leads to the related false problem of non-existence that has long led philosophy astray. This is due to a general misunderstanding of the more and the less that is a common feature of human thought. While it is commonly assumed that the possible is somehow less than the real, that order is less than disorder and nothingness is less than something (Lundy 2018). In contrast, for Bergson: “there is more intellectual content in the ideas of disorder and nothingness when they represent something than in those of order and existence, because they imply several orders, several existences and, in addition, a play of wit which unconsciously juggles with them” (Bergson 2007:81). According to Bergson nothingness presupposes an already existing something, and then the addition of a negation of it. Thus “In the idea of nonbeing there is in fact the idea of being, plus a logical operation of generalized negation, plus the particular psychological motive for that operation (such as when a being does not correspond to our expectation and we grasp it purely as the lack, the absence of what interests us)” (Deleuze 1991:17). The cause of these errors is “the failure to recognize radical novelty is the original cause of those badly stated metaphysical questions” (Bergson 2007:78). This is a result of the dogmatic image of thought that subordinates difference and the new to representation and its illusions via these acts of mind. As a consequence of this argument, strict criteria are imposed of philosophy and ontology as a whole, and on the status of non-actual powers tendencies and capacities. Firstly, it becomes no longer viable to employ the traditional view of the possible as the basis for ontology, and secondly, any replacement or re-conception of it cannot resemble the real. Finally, Being and ontology cannot be thought in terms of negation or the negative but instead in terms of production and becoming. This leads Deleuze to introduce the

category of the virtual as opposed to the actual to replace the traditional metaphysical view of the possible that is opposed to the real. The virtual is both entirely real and inheres with the actual, yet does not resemble it, as actualised extensities do not resemble the virtual singularities incarnated in them. Thus, the actualisation of the virtual is “always a genuine creation” (Deleuze 1994:212).

Deleuzean ontology can also provide valuable insight into the ontological status of the elements of the study of complexity, and nonlinear dynamical systems, that Keen (2001) as well as Arthur (2015) show can be valuable to heterodox political economy. For Protevi:

...dynamical systems theory shows the topological features of manifolds (the distribution of singularities) affecting a series of trajectories in a phase space. It thereby reveals the patterns (shown by attractors in the models), thresholds (bifurcators in the models), and the necessary intensity of triggers (events that move systems to a threshold activating a pattern) of material systems at many different spatial-organizational and temporal-processual scales. Insofar as it can also model the transformation of behavior patterns (not just a switch between pre-existing patterns) by tracking changes in the attractor / bifurcator layout, dynamical systems theory enables us to think material systems in terms of their powers of immanent self-organization and creative transformation (Protevi 2010:421-422)

Deleuze allows us to ontologically situate these components, as well as the material or even social systems being modelled in terms of the tripartite interdependent registers of the virtual, actual and intensive. For Protevi: “Beneath the actual (any one state of a system), we find intensive “impersonal individuations” that produce system states” (Protevi 2010:422). Where the field of individuation itself is distinguished from the individuation process itself, what operates underneath these processes of morphogenesis and that structure the field of individuation are “virtual “pre-individual singularities” (the key elements in manifolds that mark system thresholds that structure the intensive morphogenetic processes)” (Protevi 2010:421). These singularities are thought of as potentials rather than in terms of the traditional view of the possible in light of Bergson’s critique. Thus, the manifold as a “space of possible states which the physical system can have” (Delanda 2012:12) and its

singularities are virtual potentials rather than abstract copies of the actual; they are also not exhausted by any specific actualization but instead compose what Deleuze calls the Idea. These Ideas are “constituted by the progressive determination of differential elements, differential relations, and singularities” (Protevi 2010:421) and take the form of problems to be solved via actualisation; as well as composing the virtual problematic field. For Deleuze the relations between them are differential, as difference is his fundamental ontological category, whereas actual states are instead qualified and extended, thereby avoiding the problem of merely tracing the transcendental from the empirical. Additionally, for Protevi: “There is always the potential for “counter-actualization” in which an intensive individuation process will trigger a transformation of the capacities of the system; in model terms, the attractor layout changes due to a change in the distribution of singularities” (Protevi 2010:422).

4. Deleuze’s critique of the Dogmatic Image of Thought

For Deleuze (1994) we misconceive of difference (that is for him a transcendental principle) in two main ways. 1) An objective philosophical error, that of Hegel, Aristotle and many others that identify it consciously and explicitly with contradiction. 2) A more pernicious tacit subjective misrecognition of difference that underpins the dogmatic image as such. Deleuze demonstrates the objective philosophical misrecognition of the first case to be constructed on the basis of the second case of subjective misrecognition, where it lies lurking malignantly in the shadows leading thought astray. Deleuze addresses the first case specifically via detailed critiques of the Western philosophical tradition addressing and co-opting aspects of Kant, Leibniz, Spinoza and Plato amongst many others, with the prime targets of his ire ultimately being Hegel and Aristotle. This is unnecessary ground for this essay to cover, as his second critique, of the subjective misrecognition of difference via the dogmatic image of thought is itself the basis for the many failings of mainstream economic discourse, with objective misrecognition being a mere special case of this more fundamental phenomenon. Deleuze identifies 8 postulates of the dogmatic image that are “are not propositions the acceptance of which the philosopher demands; but, on the contrary, propositional themes which remain implicit and are understood in a pre-philosophical manner” (Deleuze 1994:131). This section will address each of these postulates and their implications for the discourse of economics.

According to Deleuze, attaining liberation from the dogmatic image necessitates that we abandon our existing doxic presuppositions and ally ourselves with paradox and affirm the truth of the problematic. However for Deleuze, paradox is thought in terms of a paradoxical and problematic field that goes by the name *virtual*. Which differs from the usual (doxic) perception of paradoxes and problems that conceive of the former as an arbitrary chaos or incoherence and the latter as determined by its actual solutions – paradoxes and problems instead take on a genetic and generative character as transcendental conditions.

The first four and the last four postulates are strongly interrelated. The initial quartet revolve around the notions of representation and *common sense* which Deleuze develops into a technical term, defined as the “faculty of cognition that allows the other faculties (whether difference sense modalities, or different ways of relating to objects) to communicate with one another.” (Somers-Hall 2013:97) The first postulate serves an introductory function, to set the stage for what is to come; it is the Postulate of the Principle. This entails the mistaken presupposition that there is a ‘good will on the part of the thinker’ and an ‘upright nature on the part of thought’ (Deleuze 1994:131). This postulate relates to the assumption that we all know what it is to think. It has two aspects, the first concerns the assumption of the good will of the thinker; namely that we all seek ‘capital T truth’ in terms of identity and the question ‘what is?’. The second is that of the good nature of thought: where thought seen as innocent and is in tune with, and can reach this naive conception of ‘truth’. This is ultimately moral assertion, a declaration of faith in the power of discursive reason and logos. As “morality alone is capable of persuading us that thought has a good nature and the thinker a good will, and only the good can ground the supposed affinity between thought and the True—what else if not this Morality, this Good which gives thought to the true and the true to thought?” (Deleuze 1994: 132). For Deleuze the classic Platonic question of “what is?” conceived in terms of the each for eternity and essence leads philosophy astray. What is instead needed are the questions *who? which one? how many? how much?* With the answers given in terms of difference, process and becoming rather than eternity. For Deleuze, “Individuation is what responds to the question ‘*who?*’, just as the Idea responds to the questions ‘*how much?*’ and ‘*how?*’, ‘*who?*’ is always an intensity. Individuation is the act by which intensity determines differential relations to become actualised, along the lines of

differentiation and within the qualities and extensities it creates.” (Deleuze 1994: 246)

The second postulate “of the Ideal, or Common Sense” (Deleuze 1994: 167) has *common sense* providing “the formal nature of a unified subject to which objects correspond” (Somers-Hall 2013: 107). It also guarantees the harmonious or concordant use of different mental faculties in the judgement of the object. This is the first side of the infamous subject-object dichotomy that has long haunted western thought. As “For Kant as for Descartes, it is the identity of the Self in the ‘I think’ which grounds the harmony of all the faculties and their agreement on the form of a supposed Same object” (Deleuze 1994: 133), even if their notion of self takes differing forms. *Good sense* relates to the object side of the equation as we still need a presupposed world of stable objects to be coordinated as well as a means of doing so (the subject). Good sense is partitioning the world into objects; it is the “dynamic instance, capable of determining the indeterminate object as this or that, and of individualising the self situated in this ensemble of objects” (Deleuze 1994: 226). Consequently, “Good sense determines the contribution of the faculties in each case, while common sense contributes the form of the Same”, these two elements “complete each other” constituting *doxa* (Deleuze 1994:134). This presupposition of a dichotomy between an abstract subject and a static world of objects that it perceives is seen clearly in the assumption of the utilitarian economic agent and a static distribution of a closed social world. To quote Lawson summarising the view of mainstream economists insofar as they demonstrate these presuppositions (which in turn underpins their deductivist methodology);

The individual agent of mainstream economics usually inhabits a world composed of ...surface phenomena as (measurable) events and states of affairs, phenomena which, by and large, each agent is supposed unproblematically to perceive. The deductivist aim is then to specify each economic model in such a way as to guarantee that under given determinate conditions x a specific outcome y is guaranteed to follow. This goal is achieved, typically, by imputing to any ‘economic agent’ some unitary objective, a set of beliefs/knowledge of the measurable events and states of affairs which comprise the agent’s environment, and an ordering of some kind over the perceived potential satisfiers of the imputed objective, one that facilitates an ‘optimising decision’. Often the knowledge-set in question is fantastic; it is almost always, in the

standard account, sufficient to facilitate an unambiguous optimising (maximising or minimising) response or decision on the part of the agent. In other words, this assumption of calculative optimising behaviour, i.e. of economic rationality, which is sustained throughout much of contemporary mainstream economics, is merely a gloss on the proceedings. (Lawson 1997:181-182)

The third postulate of recognition unites the first two and presupposes the harmonious exercise of our faculties on an object that is supposedly the same for each of these faculties, this introduces the possibility of error, in the distribution when “one faculty confuses one of its objects with a different object of another faculty” (Deleuze 1994:167). This recognition can take the infamous quadripartite forms of Identity, Analogy, Opposition and Resemblance. The fourth postulate is “of the element or of representation (when difference is subordinated to the complementary dimensions of the Same and the Similar, the Analogous and the Opposed)” (Deleuze 1994:167). This is the result of the errors of the first 3, where thought is trapped within the confines of representation and rendered unable to think difference and becoming, crucified by representation and its four poles of “identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgement and resemblance in perception” (Deleuze 1994:167). This in turn leads to the fifth postulate, *Error*. If thought is naturally oriented towards “truth” and the faculties work consonantly on a purportedly identical object; then the only means by which thought can fail is empirical error. There is no potential for the failure of thought intrinsic to thought itself, instead “Stupidity, malevolence and madness are regarded as facts occasioned by external causes, which bring into play external forces capable of subverting the honest character of thought from without” (Deleuze 1994:149). This is absurd given our propensity for forgetfulness, mistakenness and madness. Descartes trite dismissal of the prospect of the latter is paradigmatic here, instead “Cowardice, cruelty, baseness and stupidity are not simply... traits of character or society; they are structures of thought as such” and express a virtual structure (Deleuze 1994:151). The dogmatic image as a whole is an example of how the capacity for mistakenness in a form other than empirical error is a property immanent to thought as such, not something that merely happens to us. This leads to an interesting discussion of stupidity as the welling up of the field of individuation in a way that produces this innate capacity for stupidity.

For Deleuze, Individuation “involves fields of fluid intensive factors which no more take the form of an I than of a Self. Individuation as such, as it operates beneath all forms, is inseparable from a pure ground that it brings to the surface and trails with it” where this “field of intensity... already constitutes the sensibility of the thinking subject” (Deleuze 1994:150-151). These intensive factors can intrude into human thought when it is pushed its limits, revealing virtual potentials. This can be the positive form of stupidity, the willingness to reject doxa and instead be open to the encounters that problematize representation, revealing what is truly interesting and important. The inverse of this is the stupidity of the neoclassical economist, who remains trapped in the abstract world of representation via his modelling practices and remains blind the encounters with the real and its nature as transformation.

The sixth postulate of the proposition in which “designation is taken to be the locus of truth, sense being no more than the neutralized double or the infinite doubling of the proposition)” (Deleuze 1994:167) relates to the critique of the limitations of the uncritical use of language that privileges reference/denotation over sense. This argument is given more rigour in *Logic of Sense* (1990), and builds on the distinction between sense and reference established by Frege, where Deleuze makes the case that language can neither find its ground in any of the three modes by which the proposition formally gives meaning; *designation*, *manifestation* or *signification*. The relationship between these three elements of the proposition's meaning necessarily refer back to one another in a circular and therefore paradoxical fashion. Deleuze puts forward the solution of a fourth pre-propositional element as its ground, as no singular element of the proposition is able to provide a ground for the others in a relation which isn't self-undermining. Hence the inadequacy of propositional language and the need for the concept of *sense*, thought of as the problematical and paradoxical event of sensing the pre-propositional by Deleuze. To clarify, 'denotation' is the reference of language to the world, to an “external state of affairs”; 'manifestation' is the relation to the intentionality of the speaker or “point of writing”, and 'signification' “its meaning as decipherable through the position of words in relation to one another, the intra-linguistic relations between propositions” (Williams 2008:40). According to Williams, “each one of these must be attached to the others for its own process to be complete. How a proposition refers to something in the world depends on how it is qualified by the moment when it is written or spoken by someone, and this in turn depends on how its meaning is set,

for example according to dictionary definitions, but this is in turn incomplete without a reference” (Williams 2008:40). Thus, “From denotation to manifestation, then to signification, but also from signification to manifestation and denotation, we are carried around in a circle, which is the circle of the proposition” (Deleuze 1990:16-17). The conclusion drawn from this is that a pre-propositional ground for language is required, a “fourth dimension of the proposition...sense, the expressed of the proposition, is an incorporeal, complex and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition” (Deleuze 1990:19). Sense, “like the [problematic] Idea which is developed in the sub-representative determinations”, “is constituted of structural elements which have no sense themselves”, and is the genetic condition that “constitutes the sense of all that it produces” (Deleuze 1994:155). Roffe outlines the implication of this, where:

A proposition, no matter how abstract or vacuous in character, is always a complex response to the event as a problem. Or again: language-use is never the spontaneous act of a radically free, sovereign subject, but the situated resolution of a problem posed to a finite person (who is always in the middle of their embodied agency) caught up in the actualization of an event. I am provoked to speak by the events that are actualized in my body and the world around me; the changes that these involve are what I speak about; and the general categories that we develop to talk about and understand the world are attempts to grasp the underlying structure of what is happening. (Roffe 2019:274-5)

Consequently Deleuze writes, “Sense is thus expressed as the problem to which propositions correspond insofar as they indicate particular responses, signify instances of a general solution, and manifest subjective acts of resolution” (Deleuze 1990:121). While this brief introductory presentation of Deleuze thoughts on language barely scratches the surface of the issue, it does at least assist in establishing a problematic ground for meaning in language and the access of knowledge through language in kind, leading us to the next postulate. The seventh postulate of “modality, or solutions” where problems are “traced from propositions or...defined by the possibility of their being solved” (Deleuze 1994:167), setting the stage for Deleuze's constructive project by undercutting the typical conception of problems as defined in terms of their solutions, as seen in the “grotesque image of culture that we find in examinations and government referenda” (Deleuze 1994:158). Instead, problems persist and insist *within* solutions. The conventional

of view of problems leads to an absurdity wherein the problem is seen double of the solution, this “has the effect of treating solutions as being there just waiting to be found or discovered rather than as being generated and variable products of problems” (Bryant 2008:156). By contrast, Deleuze views problems as “organizing structures or systems” rather than “negative instances or propositions as inverted solutions” (Bryant 2008:160). The problematic cannot be determined from within representation and it differs in kind from the individuated identities and objects usually encountered in experience. Instead, it is the generative paradox that is the transcendental condition of the world, and even of representation and language. In fact the discussion of sense in relation to the previous postulate on language provides an example of how something ungraspable in experience as such can be thought as a condition. Deleuze even re-conceives the age-old division between truth and falsity in terms of his ontology of problems. Rather than falling into vulgar relativism regarding truth, “Deleuze extends it so that it not only applies to the answers to questions, but to the questions themselves.” He moves to think “truth” as applicable “primarily to [the very real] problems, and only derivatively to their solutions” (Delanda 2011). And so for Deleuze, “problems exist in reality defined by singularities, hence problem-solving is an activity in which all kinds of material [and social/political] assemblages may engage” (Delanda 2011). As problems are real and problem solving an objective trait of reality, what appears to be uniquely human is instead specifically *active* problem-posing, “that involves distinguishing in reality the distributions of the special and the ordinary, and grasping the objective problems that these distributions condition” (Delanda 2011). Failure to sense and pose *real* problems is embodied in the stupidity of the economist, the illusion of their “correctness” is sustained by their adherence to false problems. This capacity to seek the singular, as what is interesting and important, and to encounter and adequately pose problems is the locus of our capacity to create concepts and enquire into the state of the world, including its virtual and intensive aspects. To paraphrase Heidegger, we are the one type of being whose (problematic) being is an issue for it.

For learning evolves entirely in the comprehension of problems as such, in the apprehension and condensation of singularities, and in the composition of ideal events and bodies. Learning to swim or learning a foreign language means composing the singular points of one's own body or one's own language with those of another shape or element

which tears us apart but also propels us into a hitherto unknown and unheard-of world of problems. (Deleuze:1994:192)

The final postulate “of the end, or result, the postulate of knowledge (the subordination of learning to knowledge, and of culture to method)” (Deleuze 1994:167), refers to the reduction of learning and culture to the dogmatic image and to bureaucratic 'method'. Instead, learning is an encounter where (in the example of learning to swim) we "conjugate the distinctive points of our bodies with the singular points of the objective Idea in order to form a problematic field” (Deleuze 1994:165). Thus, the imperative is to experiment, not to do as I say but rather “do with me” (Deleuze 1994:23). This culture is an apprenticeship of signs, a pedagogy that leads one to be open to encounters that rupture ordinary modes of thought and push the faculties to their limits, to the discordant exercise of the faculties where true creativity occurs. Delanda (2002) describes how this process of leaning via the encounter with the problematic plays out in a generalised scientific context, which is also applicable to political economy specifically. As the study of the economy necessarily must incorporate and involve the experimentation with a heterogeneous range of biological, psychological and sociological theories, materials and modelling techniques, forming assemblages in the process, which include both the researcher and his objects of study. This fits Delanda's general description of Deleuzian learning in scientific practice. Additionally, the broader social and institutional context is also an undeniable factor in this process, therefore:

Following Deleuze we may think about these complex assemblages as the epistemological counterpart of the intensive in ontology. Much as virtual multiplicities (viewed as self-posed ontological problems) depend on intensive assemblages like ecosystems to progressively give rise to ontological solutions, so experimental problems must first be embodied in an intensive assemblage prior to their being solved. In learning by doing, or by interacting with and adjusting to materials, machines and models, experimentalists progressively discern what is relevant and what is not in a given experiment. In other words, the distribution of the important and the unimportant defining an experimental problem (what degrees of freedom matter, what disturbances do not make a difference) are not grasped at a glance the way one is supposed to grasp as essence (or a

clear and distinct idea), but slowly brought to light as the assemblage stabilizes itself through the mutual accommodation of its heterogeneous components. In this assemblage the singularities and affects of the experimentalist's body are meshed with those of machines, models and material processes in order for learning to occur and for embodied expertise to accumulate. On the other hand, besides this expertise (which may be applied in the design and performance of other experiments and which, therefore, remains intensive) there are also extensive or formal products of laboratory [or other scientific] practices: individual pieces of data, individual facts, individual solutions, which take their place in the corpus of accumulated knowledge. As Deleuze writes, "Learning is the appropriate name for the subjective acts carried out when one is confronted with the objectivity of a problem . . . whereas knowledge designates only the generality of concepts or the calm possession of a rule enabling solutions. (Delanda 2002:143-144)

Therefore, what is needed is not dogma or deductivism, but for us to finally to come to grips with the relevant distributions of the singular and the ordinary and adequately pose the problem of political economy. The first step in this process is determining the right ontology.

5. Virtual structure and intensive individuation

5.1. The composition of the virtual

At several points the category of the virtual has been discussed, both as a replacement for the naive view of the possible and as the modality of a transcendental structure that governs processes of individuation, as well as in relation to the priority of problems over solutions. As was previously established, virtual is not the possible, nor can it resemble the actual, nor is it a transcendent realm of forms or essences, instead it is an immanent problematic structure constituted by pre-individual singularities generated by differential relations between genetic elements. Sounds rather confusing, doesn't it? There is a great deal of further philosophical context in need of exposition that should elucidate the issue somewhat.

Let's begin with the question of the nature of transcendental philosophy itself, that is a move from the encounter with something in experience to its condition. For Kant this involved the determination of the conditions of possible experience. Deleuze adopts from Maimon's (2010) critique of Kant, the argument that Kant's categories are too general and consequently allow reality to slip through the gaps, leading to the broader issue that while Kant's system may be coherent in itself, it appears abstract and may not be applicable in fact. Deleuze therefore adopts Maimon's solution that an account of *real* experience is needed; "experience is generated within thought, and the genetic elements at the root of this process are Ideas" (Roffe 2012:48). Deleuze takes from Maimon the notion that Ideas are differential, and involved in the generation of experience as a part of a broader model where the mind and its differential unconscious is just a specific case of a broader ontological process, embedding the conditions of real experience in reality itself and softening Kant's rigid boundary keeping the phenomenon from accessing the noumenon. As a result, "the problematic..Idea is a system of connections between differential elements, a system of differential relations between genetic elements" not human thoughts or static forms (Deleuze 1994:181). Deleuze raises the stakes from just the genesis of experience, as to escape both Kant and Maimon's idealism he endeavours to account for the conditions of reality as such.

Here is where Deleuze deploys his recasting of the problem we discussed earlier, granting it genetic status and ontological primacy over individual solutions themselves. Deleuze references Kant's own view that the Ideas of reason cannot be given in experience, and are intrinsically problematic to superimpose his recasting of the problematic upon the structure of the Idea itself. The Idea as problematic event is referred to by many names throughout Deleuze's oeuvre (Idea, Multiplicity, Diagram), and serves as an immanent replacement for essences. The retention of the name *Idea* in Deleuze's inversion therefore of not just Kant but Plato, shows a respect for and conscious participation in the most profound conceptual grandeur and philosophical ambition the Western tradition has to offer; as does Deleuze's sharing of the rejection of doxa as the definitive trait of philosophy. Deleuze's reversal of Platonism reconstitutes Ideas as imminent to a world composed of only simulacra, as for Deleuze reality can be produced without the need for "a transcendent model" (Roffe 2012:16). This rejection of transcendent models applies to the

transcendent fundamental particles identified in economic thought by Bichler and Nitzan as special cases of the same tendency which inspired the philosophical construction of the Platonic forms. Deleuze's theory of internal genetic difference in the Idea and morphogenetic intensive process signals a break not just from Platonic transcendence but also the Aristotelian hylomorphic schema. As Deleuze endeavours "to replace essentialist views of the genesis of form (which imply a conception of matter as an inert receptacle for forms that come from the outside) with one in which matter is already pregnant with morphogenetic capabilities, therefore capable of generating form" (Protevi 2003). In contrast to the classical Platonic conception of the Idea, Deleuze's Idea is intrinsically problematic and immanent rather than transcendent, and does not resemble the actual things it conditions, rather it structures processes of intensive morphogenesis. For Deleuze the Idea is a problem that is solved in actual domain, an example in the context of political economy would be Graeber's theory of the emergence of money (2011) as a solution to the problem of the provision of armies abroad in the ancient period. Additionally, free market ideology could be viewed as a solution to the problem of justifying, concealing and maintaining bourgeois rule. The idea of the economy itself is even addressed by Deleuze, identifying a structure of capitalism that "incarnating its varieties in diverse societies" albeit one framed in Althusserian structural Marxist terms (Deleuze 1994:186). Deleuze's problematic ontology applies as much to the natural world as the social, as the evolution of a species is a solution to the problems posed by its environment. The same can be said of the evolution of institutions in a Veblen's heterodoxical model of political economy. Deleuze, by providing a series of examples of the application of his theory of Ideas to shifting paradigms in biology and physics shows that his concept of virtual Idea is theory neutral and describes the ontological modality of structures and theories. This plays out in the development of his own view on economics all of which fit within his view of theoretical and scientific structures, as he moves from his earlier more conventionally Marxist position to his later much more innovative and unique work on political economy in the Capitalism and Schizophrenia series (which I will explore in the next essay of this series). The Ideas are Deleuze's account of ontological status of structures which are real but not necessarily actualised, or only actualised in different processes and circumstances, as seen by the different actualisations of the Idea of capitalism in different eras and locations. Consequently, the problematic Idea is not

exhausted by particular actualisations, thus a key trait of virtual multiplicity is multiple realizability. Additionally, Ideas persist as a part of the problematic field and this “impersonal and pre-individual transcendental field...does not resemble the corresponding empirical fields” of the actual (Deleuze:1991:102). It is real but has its own ideal mode of reality different in kind yet immanent to and inhering within the actual. As these multiplicities/problems are considered to be as real as their solutions, this is still very much a realist picture of the world – but one with an ideal virtual aspect as well as an actual, qualified and extended one.

The virtual is not opposed to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual . . . Exactly what Proust said of states of resonance must be said of the virtual: 'Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'; and symbolic without being fictional. Indeed, the virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object – as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension . . . The reality of the virtual consists of the differential elements and relations along with the singular points which correspond to them. *The reality of the virtual is structure.* We must avoid giving the elements and relations that form a structure an actuality which they do not have, and withdrawing from them a reality which they have. We have seen that a double process of reciprocal determination and complete determination defined that reality: far from being undetermined, the virtual is completely determined. (Deleuze 1994, p. 208-209 emphasis mine)

Therefore: “If we think of the market as a material medium, as a body of prices, then the virtual is the inseparable part where this body differentiates: the part from which the sense of the market flows Yet this virtual, nonactual, dimension is not abstract” (Ayache 2010)

Deleuze is willing to go beyond Bhaskar's stance of simply positing the existence of real but not necessarily actual tendencies and capacities that, as we have seen, is necessary for an ontology of open systems. Deleuze accepts all of the above, and but is willing to take a step further, by providing a theory of the interaction between these virtual Singularities (unactualised tendencies) and their formation of a transcendental plane and a theory of their actualisation. This virtual problematic field is composed of a distribution of singularities produced

by differential relations between genetic elements forming continuous multiplicities. The specifics of composition of the virtual is explained by Deleuze in terms of the principles of (un)determination, reciprocal determination and complete determination that “together form a sufficient reason” and constitute the virtual (Deleuze 1994:171) as the transcendental structure and ground of his ontology. This basic tripartite schema is derived from the Kantian Ideas of reason such as Totality or Freedom. These Kantian Ideas are “undetermined with regard to their object” and thus intrinsically problematic but are “determinable with regard to objects of experience”, and bear “the ideal of an infinite determination with regard to concepts of the understanding” (Deleuze 1994:169). In constructing his own theory of the Idea, the example of the calculus is employed as a means to illustrate a relation that precedes its terms, and how “undetermined elements can become determinate through entering into reciprocal relations” (Somers-hall 2013:142). Thus, the differential relation is primary and the generative element that produces the thing related – ensuring the transcendental priority of difference over identity. In this context Deleuze describes indeterminability as corresponding to “the undetermined as such (dx, dy),” reciprocal determination “to the really determinable (dy/dx),” and complete determination that “corresponds to the effectively determined (values of dy/dx).” In Deleuze's conception of sufficient reason, a philosophical concept of the differential relation operates as the “pure element of potentiality” where the virtual structure is produced by the relations of pure difference (Deleuze 1994 p.175). Thus, the differential relations that compose Ideas are indeterminate in themselves and “undetermined with respect to representation, and hence to the field of solutions” (Somers-hall 2013:140). They are simultaneously reciprocally determined in relation to each other – generating a plane of multiplicities upon multiplicities producing the pre-individual problematic field, as “Ideas are varieties that include within themselves sub-varieties” (Deleuze 1994:187). The relation between the singularities and the multiplicities that they compose is one of reciprocal determination that “is not opposed to the indeterminate and does not limit it” (Deleuze 1994:275), producing a plane of differential structures. Finally, the virtual is completely determined, via the correspondence of singularities to the differential structure of Ideas. As a result:

Deleuze ...does not view the differential relations defining a model as expressing a law governing the generation of the

series of states that make up a trajectory, but as defining a vector field which captures the overall tendencies of the system as a distribution of singularities. “Beneath the general operation of laws” as he says “there always remains the play of singularities.”⁵⁴ These singularities define the conditions of the problem, independently of its solutions, while each solution curve is the product of a specific individuation process guided at every point by the tendencies in the vector field. (Delanda 2002:146)

Deleuze's philosophical appropriation of these mathematical methods to grant genetic priority to problems over solutions is not in itself unique and draws heavily on the work of mathematician Albert Lautman (2011). This is a modern, static and relational reading of the calculus, in contrast to the earlier philosophical appropriations of it, such as Leibniz's employment of the infinitesimal as an infinitely small quantity. Thus, it is an intrinsic and static genesis, that in turn necessitates Deleuze's concepts of intensity and his third synthesis of time as the locus of dynamism in his thought, as well as his theory of intensive individuation. The calculus is not the only or perhaps even the optimal approach within mathematics to illuminating how problems have priority over their solutions and that relations precede their terms for Deleuze. He mentions Abel and Galois and their work on “the solvability of polynomial equations” (Duffy 2013) in this context, and the Idea is not exclusively mathematical. Ultimately Deleuze's virtual Idea and the process of differentiation that is intrinsic to it is summarised by Smith as:

- The elements of the multiplicity are merely “determinable”; their nature is not determined in advance by either a defining property or an axiom (e.g., extensionality). Rather, they are pure virtualities that have neither identity, nor sensible form, nor conceptual signification, nor assignable function (principle of determinability).
- They are none the less determined reciprocally as singularities in the differential relation, a “non-localizable ideal connection” that provides a purely intrinsic definition of the multiplicity as “problematic”; the differential relation is not only external to its terms, but constitutive of its terms (principle of reciprocal determination).
- The values of these relations define the complete determination of the problem: that is, “the existence, the number, and the

distribution of the determinant points that precisely provide its conditions” as a problem (principle of complete determination). (Smith 2012:303-304)

It is the complete determination that involves the production of singularities or events that is especially crucial for Deleuze's accounts of structure and genesis. As these virtual singularities are able to determine the distribution (Roffe 2012:66) of neighbouring ordinary points, with examples being attractors, as well as bifurcation points that mark shifts in system states. As Simon Duffy elaborates, “according to Deleuze's reading of the infinitesimal calculus from the differential point of view, a function does not precede the differential relation, but rather is determined by the differential relation” (Duffy 2004:204). Thus, “the differential relation characterizes not only the singular points which it determines, but also the nature of the regular points in the immediate neighborhood of these points” (Duffy 2013). Singular points are “turning points and points of inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers, and centers; points of fusion and condensation, and boiling; points of tears and joy, sickness and health, hope and anxiety, ‘sensitive’ points” (Deleuze 1990:63) that appear universally not just in the study of dynamical systems, but as we have seen, in reality as a whole. As they are implicit “topological rather than geometrical” structural elements that are carried within the dynamic “energetic materiality” of “formed or formable matter” (Deleuze 1984:408). They are for Delanda (2002), the still real but “unactualized tendencies” of a system. A multiplicity is a specific distribution of singularities, a cube for example has 8 singular points that define it as a structure. Social structures are far more complex and are marked by many singular points that form diverging and converging series. The process of determination, reciprocal determination and complete determination in the idea is called *differentiation*; the actualization of the Idea in actual qualities species and parts is called *differenciation*. Delanda (2000) provides an example of an extremely simple multiplicity with one singular point that can be actualized in multiple instances, producing objects with different metric properties, from soap bubbles to light rays. This opens up the prospect that both a mathematical model and the system it models could both be actualisations of the same multiplicity (Delanda 2010), explaining the effectiveness of scientific practice without merely having hypotheses as to “the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics in the natural sciences” (Wigner 1979, 222). As if there is a virtual plane, “it becomes possible to think of any one of those multiplicities as becoming

actualized in a variety of physical systems, as well as in a variety of mathematical entities” (Delanda 2010:327). This might hint at the grounds for the ineffectiveness of conventional economic modelling, that it instead actualises the structure of ideological discourse in the form of order-words dispensing power and social control. Thus, to think of neoclassical economics in terms of a science that makes predictive models of the social is mis-posing the relevant problem. Additionally for Ayache, a Deleuzian ontology understands the use of mathematical financial and trading tools as actualising the virtual capacities of the trader to participate in and performatively make the market. As the “meaning of the mathematics of price is not the same as the mathematics of the physical world. From the start, BSM [Black–Scholes Model] doesn’t apply to the market and doesn’t hold for the market because the market is in the hands of the market-maker who is using BSM to create the option market. The mathematical statement is part of the creation; therefore, what it expresses cannot be independent of it” (Ayache 2010). The power to make prices rests not just in the hands of the individual trader, but predominantly with the paradigms through which the most powerful investors model the aspects of the market in which they perceive strategic opportunity, as Ayache himself laments. This is another reason why, following Veblen and his business/industry distinction I take a more negative attitude to the practices of modern finance than does Ayache.

To continue with Delanda's soap bubble example and its one singular point that shows Deleuzian conception of ontological problem solving in a scientific context, where “a population of interacting physical entities, such as the molecules in a thin layer of soap, may be constrained energetically to adopt a form which minimizes free energy. Here the “problem” (for the population of molecules) is to find this minimal point of energy, a problem solved differently by the molecules in soap bubbles (which collectively minimize surface tension) and by the molecules in crystalline structures (which collectively minimize bonding energy)” (Delanda 2000 p.1-2). In this example there is no essence of the soap bubble, or of sphericity somehow imposing itself from the outside via a hylomorphic schema. Instead the virtual singularity takes the form of a single point attractor and operates as an “endogenous topological form (a point in the space of energetic possibilities for this molecular assemblage)”, indicating the point of minimal energy (Delanda 1998). This structures and guides process of actualization that can produce

“different physical forms ... each one with different geometric properties.” (Delanda 2004, p.16).

5.2. Intensive individuation

The means by which Ideas are implicated in the production of extensities, qualities, species and parts is via processes of individuation that are intensive in nature. An intensive theory of individuation is needed, as “qualitative or extensive interpretations of individuation remain incapable of providing reasons why a quality ceases to be general, or why a synthesis of extensity begins here and finishes there” (Deleuze 1994:247). While the productive morphogenetic capacity of intensive fields is grounded in virtual potentiality, the particular way these potentials and capacities are actualized is determined by the processes of morphogenesis themselves, with this process in turn reordering the virtual field. The relation between the virtual and intensive is that of expression, where by ‘expression’ we mean that “relation which involves a torsion between an expressor and an expressed such that the expressed does not exist apart from the expressor, even though the expressor relates to it as though to something completely different.” (Deleuze 1994:260). Where “the changing totality of Ideas, the variable ensemble of differential relations” are expressed in each intensive process/individual (Deleuze 1994:252). But “each intensity clearly expresses only certain relations or certain degrees of variation. Those that it expresses clearly are precisely those on which it is focused when it has the enveloping role. In its role as the enveloped, it still expresses all relations and all degrees, but confusedly.” (Deleuze 1994:252). Consequently, the whole virtual field is implicated in each individual but only certain specific singularities and the Ideas they compose are clearly expressed and demarcate their structure. Thus, for Deleuze the individual is not an extensive totality but an intensive process. This view of intensive individuation draws on the work of Gilbert Simondon.

Gilbert Simondon has shown recently that individuation presupposes a prior metastable state - in other words, the existence of a 'disparateness' such as at least two orders of magnitude or two scales of heterogeneous reality between which potentials are distributed. Such a pre-individual state nevertheless does not lack singularities: the distinctive or singular points are defined by the existence and distribution of potentials. An 'objective' problematic field thus appears, determined by the distance

between two heterogeneous orders. Individuation emerges like the act of solving such a problem, or - what amounts to the same thing - like the actualisation of a potential and the establishing of communication between disparates. The act of individuation consists not in suppressing the problem, but in integrating the elements of the disparateness into a state of coupling which ensures its internal resonance. The individual thus finds itself attached to a pre-individual half which is not the impersonal within it so much as the reservoir of its singularities. In all these respects, we believe that individuation is essentially intensive, and that the pre-individual field is a virtual-ideal field, made up of differential relations. (Deleuze 1994:246)

Intensity is a difference between two potentials, which form a field of individuation. Thus, intensive processes for Deleuze “are characterized by linked rates of change such that any change in those internal relations past a threshold will trigger qualitative change in the assemblage” (Bonta & Protevi 2004:15). An example in the natural world of assemblage formation via intensive processes is a simple two-species assemblage produced by a “predator-prey relation” (Bonta & Protevi 2004:15). The intensive is contrasted with the extensive (actual), as extensive properties are divisible without changing in kind, whereas intensive properties cannot be ‘divided’ without changing in kind or undergoing a phase transition, the examples of temperature and pressure are simple cases which illustrate this. The reality of intensive processes are also obscured in their production of extensities, as for Protevi:

extensive properties of actual substances hide the intensive nature of the morphogenetic processes that give rise to them. Actual or ‘stratified’ substances are the result of the ‘congealing’ of intensive far-from-equilibrium processes as they reach equilibrium, a steady state, or stability. This congealment is a temporary fixing of an underlying flow that enables the emergence of functional structures; such structures are nonetheless always subject to the flight of particles from the grasp of the structure, even though the time scale of the structure is very long and the rate of flight is very low. (Bonta & Protevi 2004:16)

This perception of stasis, that is only in actuality a temporary and contingent congealment of a dynamic world, is then reified by

representation in a secondary movement of human thought and language, producing the illusions of the dogmatic image of thought. These illusions in turn underpin the multitude of methodological absurdities detailed by Lawson that characterise economic discourse, leading to its endless explanatory failures. This process of intensive individuation manifests itself in the sphere of economics, where both the composition of the social field as flows of money and labour, as well as the nature of the pricing system and the market itself are identified by many sources such as Ayache (2010), Lozano (2015), Roffe (2015), Malik (2014) and Holland (2019) as expressing internal, intensive differences of one form or another, even if their interpretations differ somewhat. Ayache for example, contends;

that the market of contingent claims, when it is understood as a writing medium and not as a theatre of fixed possible states and probabilities (what philosophers call 'representation' precisely), evades the order of chronological time and its spatial correlate (the identifiable possible states) altogether. Metrical time and space are extensive dimensions that can only receive extensive variables. Price, by contrast, is an intensive variable. (Ayache 2015:40)

Ayache stresses that "market price is always at the edge of a phase transition, always the site of intensive difference and differentiation and definitely not the recipient of the attribute of a settled state of the world" (Ayache 2010). And so, ultimately for Ayache:

If we neglect the dimension of price as an intensive difference (of price as a pure difference that is completely divergent from the mould of possibility, completely divergent from the process of resemblance and identity that subsumes it under the 'identical' concept of a fixed partition of states of the world), the market will 'reduce to an alignment of facts in a homogeneous and continuous present. (Ayache 2010)

The entire process of the production of an extensity plays out via the fourfold schema of "differentiation-individuation-dramatisation-differenciation" (Deleuze 1994:251). Where differentiation as the intrinsic composition of the Idea, and its pre-individual singularities/potentials is the first movement. The second is the movement of intensity as the difference between potentials that constitute a field of individuation. The third is the interaction between the first and the second in a

dramatisation of the Idea upon the field of individuation. This is where Ideas are able to be actualized in multiple extensities that are mutually exclusive, the specific extensity that is produced is determined via the productive differences of the intensive field of individuation, and the result is a differentiated extensity with a structure demarcated by singular points (Somers-Hall 2013:182). In the case of this actualisation of the Idea of lightning: “a difference in electrical potential between the cloud and the ground (individuation) leads to a process of equalisation of charge (differentiation) along a path of least resistance (dramatisation), leading to the visible phenomenon (differentiation)” that expresses the Idea and its singularities (Somers-Hall 2013:183).

6. Time and contingency.

6.1. The foundation of time: the first synthesis of habit.

A transcendental philosophy of time is the ultimate dynamic (un)grounding for Deleuze's ontology, whose three syntheses both establish the production of identities and stratifications whilst simultaneously ungrounding this apparent stability. The first two syntheses “work to create and conserve a stable surface”, whereas “the disjunctive synthesis constituted by the eternal return undermines this stability” and is the form of time as such. (Roffe 2012:56). While the movement of genesis from the virtual to its actualization “goes from the structure to its incarnation, from the conditions of a problem to the cases of solution, from the differential elements and their ideal connections to actual terms and diverse real relations which constitute at each moment the actuality of time” (Deleuze 1994:183), it is a static genesis. Thus, a temporal dimension that adds dynamism to his philosophy as whole is needed to drive becoming and power creativity in the production of the New. This presentation of Deleuzian time synthesis is largely derived from the interpretive work of Somers-Hall (2013) and Roffe (2012);(2019).

Deleuze's first synthesis of time draws on the Hume's concept of habit and is a living present that is generated via both the “the synthesis or contraction of sensible impressions, but also matter as such” (Roffe 2012:90). This contractile process synthesizes discrete instants into a mode of lived temporality, possessing both the past and future as aspects of the present in the form of anticipation and habit. The past exists “in so far as the preceding instants are retained in the contraction”

and “the future because its expectation is anticipated in this same contraction” (Deleuze 1993:70-71). This synthesis is passive as it operates prior to human consciousness and active thought or reflection. Time is synthesized into “an organised structure”, a larval subject, with this process not being simply psychological but also material (Somers-Hall 2013:64). The process of synthesis is ultimately “the contraction of intensities and the composition of objects from these intensities” (Roffe 2019:221). It is also referred to as Chronos in *Logic of Sense* that expresses “the action of bodies and the creation of corporeal qualities” as a “vast present which...is an encasement, a coiling up of relative presents” (Deleuze 1990:165). Delanda invokes physicist Arthur Iberall who considers “the measurable flow of time of our everyday experience” to be “a product of a metrization or a quantization of time into instants” to add further weight to this more general claim.

This embedded set would ensure ‘the unfolding of time, pulse by pulse . . . Time is not a universal unity for all levels of organization. Yet levels are nested within one another and, within limits, are referable to each other.’ In other words, rather than assuming that time exists as an already quantized flow (divided into uniform, identical instants) we should account for this metric structure using the embedded set of differently scaled oscillations. In a sense, each oscillation would ‘synthesize’ a pulse of metric time, many nested sequences of these pulses yielding the familiar form of time which we humans can measure using a variety of chronometers. (Delanda 2002:87-88)

For Delanda (2002:91): “material and energetic processes give time its metric and measurable form by their possession of a characteristic time scale, specified either through relaxation times...through the intrinsic period of nonlinear oscillations.” As a result, “the world is constituted as a field of co-existing rhythms operating with different tones, rather than as pure succession” (Somers-Hall 2013:65). This mode of time generates the temporal being of the present and of the actual, where Habit, the first synthesis is also the passive foundation of the active time of experience and measure. Active syntheses emerge from “constituent passivity, perceptual syntheses” that in turn “refer back to” organic syntheses that constitute us: we are a multi-layer assemblage of syntheses, both active and passive (Deleuze 1994:73). For Deleuze we are composed of “contracted water, earth, light and air - not merely prior to the recognition or representation of these, but prior to their being sensed” (Deleuze 1994:73). Our passive syntheses of perception and our active

syntheses of reflection and contemplation are emergent from this. While the contraction of impressions, instants or material elements “into an internal qualitative impression within this living present or passive synthesis which” constitutes this first passive synthesis of time; we then “restore them in an auxiliary space, a derived time in which we may reproduce them, reflect on them or count them like so many quantifiable external-impressions” via our active faculties of language and memory (Deleuze 1994:72). This is the origin of the form of reflective thought that leads to illusions like the apparent plausibility of deductivism that results from representation. As our active faculties transform future of anticipation into the “reflexive future of prediction” a “reflected generality of the understanding”, that “weights the expectation in the imagination in proportion to the number of distinct similar cases observed and recalled” (Deleuze 1994:72).

As habit is the time of nature and we are a part of it, we necessarily partake in the first synthesis, that grants us consistency and a degree of stability. Deleuze thus endorses a bundle theory of the self, akin to both Humean and Buddhist accounts where our sense of 'self' is constituted out of the multilayered interaction of a world of habits and processes—be they technological, institutional, linguistic or biological, all of which our active sense of person-hood and human thought presupposes. To put it another way, for Deleuze we are process selves not essence or substance selves, and are in a perpetual state of modification and flux: “The self does not undergo modifications, it is itself a modification” (Deleuze 1994:79). This is the case for our social and political institutions also, with Veblen's insights into the habitual basis of social intuitions integrating well into this account. According to Veblen institutions are a product of the actions of the individuals that compose it, but these and their actions and even their modes of thought and being are modulated by institutions. For Veblen (1909:243), it is “through the habituation of individuals that institutions arise; and it is in this same experience that these same institutions act to direct and define the aims and end of conduct.” In fact, there is a mutual interdependence between the differing layers of active and passive syntheses where technics, social structures and human subjectivity all engage in mutually transformative interactions. While Stiegler (1998) correctly identifies man as always already technical and lacking innate essence, for Deleuze it is process not essence all the way down. In contrast, the essentialist view of the economic agent as a universal principle of identity defined by axiomatic traits, is nothing but an illusion of representation. This first synthesis is

the locus of the repetition of the same, of the temporal production of selves and territories. This in turn presupposes the next two syntheses however, for if time were simply habitual then we would lack a viable account of how the present (and therefore time) passes and the future arrives, and why territories and assemblages arise, fracture and die.

6.2. The virtual ground of time

Here Deleuze moves from the actual and empirical register to the transcendental one, as to account for the passage of a specific present into the past and the movement of time as a whole, a transcendental ground of time – a time-in-itself is needed. He identifies 3 paradoxes of the past that necessitate and elucidate this move, and expose “inability of representation to characterise its own account of representation” (Somers Hall 2013:70). Instead, we must adopt a “non-representational” view of the past (Somers Hall 2013:70). Firstly, the past must be contemporaneous with the present not formed by it, otherwise the new present would never arrive nor the current present pass. As for “this present to be responsible for the constitution of the past, it would have to be replaced by a new present” (Somers-hall 2013:70). This can only occur “if the original present has already been constituted as passed” (Somers-hall 2013:70). This undermines the conventional view of time as a “series of atomic moments”, and of the past as the product of the present, and as a totality of former presents (Somers-hall 2013:70).

Which leads to the second the paradox of coexistence where: “If each past is contemporaneous with the present that it was, then all of the past coexists with the new present in relation to which it is now past”, where the past differs in kind from the present, as while the present is composed of unique instants, the past cannot be so (Deleuze 1994:81). Thus the “paradox of pre-existence... completes the other two: each past is contemporaneous with the present it was, the whole past coexists with the present in relation to which it is past, but the pure element of the past in general pre-exists the passing present”, an ontological past that inheres in the present (Deleuze 1994:81-82). The transcendental nature of Deleuze's approach brings with it an inversion of the typical approach to time that seeks to explain it in terms of the movement of bodies. Instead, the transcendental turn necessitates that we determine the way “movement conforms to time” and occurs within it (Bryant 2008:185). Thus, in addition to a transcendental philosophy of the nature of the structure of the real akin to that of Bhasker and Lawson, a

transcendental conception of time is also required. This pure past “insists” and “consists” with the present “It is the in-itself of time as the final ground of the passage of time. In this sense it forms a pure, general, a priori element of all time” (Deleuze 1994:82).

This should start to sound rather familiar as, in fact what he refers to as the pure past is nothing other than the problematic field of singularities/potentials itself (Roffe 2019:226). As the pure past is described as inhering within the present, in precisely the same way that the virtual and actual form two parts of the one object and how, with the addition of new presents the virtual past is altered just as the identical problematic field of events that are effects and capacities of bodies are (Deleuze 1990). This crucially helps to coherently link the main aspects of his system together, and his argument for this problematic ground of the past gives further credibility to his other arguments for the problematic structure that is the virtual. The following quote confirms this linkage.

The Bergsonian schema which unites *Creative Evolution* and *Matter and Memory* begins with the account of a gigantic memory, a multiplicity formed by the virtual coexistence of all the sections of the 'cone', each section being the repetition of all the others and being distinguished from them only by the order of the relations and the distribution of singular points. Then, the actualisation of this mnemonic virtual appears to take the form of the creation of divergent lines, each of which corresponds to a virtual section and represents a manner of solving a problem, but also the incarnation of the order of relations and distribution of singularities peculiar to the given section in differentiated species and parts in the virtual ground the movement of actualisation, of differentiation as creation. They are thereby substituted for the identity and the resemblance of the possible, which inspires only a pseudo-movement, the false movement of realisation understood as abstract limitation. (Deleuze 1994:212)

If we think of the virtual as a domain of problematic transcendental conditions that structure processes of actualization and individuation; what forces these problematic encounters? What is the element that adds true dynamism to Deleuze's philosophy in a way that allows it to provide a genetic account of becoming and the evolution of open systems? This is the third synthesis, the eternal return of difference, as the positing of a transcendental virtual structure alone does not truly

escape the circle of identity and resemblance, with the same issue facing Bhaskar's somewhat similar account of powers and capacities. "The shortcoming of the ground [virtual structure] is to remain relative to what it grounds, and to be proved by these. It is in this sense that it creates a circle... Just as the ground is in a sense "bent" and must lead us towards a beyond, so the second synthesis of time points beyond itself in the direction of a third which denounces the illusion of the in-itself which remains a correlate of representation" (Deleuze 1994:88). Even if the virtual is itself differential, it is still an "effect" that is "erected on the basis of habit, which [virtual] memory as the ground of habit is relative to" (Roffe 2012:92), thus we have yet to uncover the true form of time.

6.3. The third synthesis: Aion, the empty form of time

The third synthesis is the form of time itself, and unlike the first two it is called a *static* synthesis as "time is the most radical form of change, but the form of change does not change" (Deleuze 1994:89). This structure of time is the eternal return as a principle of selection, it "fractures both time and the self that exists within it" (Widder 2011). Thus, "the expulsive and selective force of the eternal return, its centrifugal force" serves to ensure the prior two repetitions of habit and memory "do not return, that they occur only once and for all, and that only the third repetition which turns upon itself returns for all times" (Deleuze 1994:297). As "repetition in the eternal return defines the univocity of being" as difference (Deleuze 1994:vi).

The key philosophical background to this is Kant's theory of time as the pure and empty form of the inner sense and his concept of a divided subject. While Descartes, in emblematically dogmatic philosophical fashion posits the foundations of his system in terms of an act of determination perpetuated by the 'I think' which determines an undetermined element the 'I am', which thereby determined in the form of a substantial conception of a thinking subject. He neglects to explain the form in which determination happens, thus Kant adds an additional element to resolve this lacuna: the form of determination. These transcendental conditions are for Kant the a-priori pure intuitions of space and time. The consequence of this innovation is a "Kantian subject...torn between the form of spontaneity, that is the 'I think' which accompanies all concept production and guarantees the unity of synthesis, and the empirical self which experiences the effects of thought rather than initiating the act of thought itself" (Voss 2013:2015).

This erects a division between an active transcendental ego and a passive empirical self that appears in space and time. Deleuze follows Kant in liberating a truly transcendental philosophy of time from the measurable motion of bodies as is its for Plato, and from the notion of succession more generally (Bryant 2008). For Deleuze succession (in the form of habit via contraction of material or mental processes into a characteristic time scale) is a mode of time and thus cannot define time as such; as is virtual coexistence of the pure past (transcendental memory and potentiality). Thus the “structure of habit and the co-existent structure of memory are both simply modes of one underlying pure form of time” (Somers-Hall 2013:75), and for Deleuze “you cannot define a thing through its modes.” (Deleuze lecture 14/03/78)

[T]ime is no longer defined by succession because succession concerns only things and movements which are in time. If time were succession, it would need to succeed in another time, and so on to infinity. Things succeed each other in various times, but they are also simultaneous in the same time, and they remain in an indefinite time ... Permanence, succession and simultaneity are modes and relationships of time ... Everything which moves and changes is in time, but time itself does not change, does not move, any more than it is eternal. It is the form of everything that changes and moves, but it is an immutable Form which does not change. It is not an eternal form, but in fact, the form of that which is not eternal, the immutable form of change and movement. (Deleuze 1983:vii-viii)

Kant frees time from any attachment to a “prior representational structure” revealing a time “prior to any particular content”, its pure form (Somers-Hall 2013:75). This kicks open the door for a philosophy of time not based in representation and that provides representation a non-representational ground (Somers-Hall 2013:78). Kant desperately attempts to slam the door shut on such a move as he restricts the power of synthesis to active faculties, therefore time becomes simply “a material” to be “be taken up by the understanding.” (Somers-hall 2013:83). In this way, Kant ensures time is once again subordinated to a principle of identity in a transcendental subject and the judgement of the understanding. Deleuze has no need for this move as his theory of the passive synthesis of habit can more plausibly explain the coherence and emergence of human experience and of the subject, as a processual

rather than essential self. As for Deleuze, “receptivity must be defined in terms of the formation of local selves or egos, in terms of the passive syntheses of contemplation or contraction” (Deleuze 1994:98). Additionally, on the basis of his prior critical work and commitment to reach the real beyond the anthropocentric strictures of human experience, Kant's representationalist resolution is out of bounds. Instead in the Deleuzian world, “the self-identical does not subsist over time... the future, being empty, has no ‘room’ for identity. All that it could possibly affirm is what can undergo transformation” (Roffe 2019:229). Without recourse to a transcendental subject, “time itself” must “be responsible for constituting both the passive self and the world that the passive self encounters” (Somers-Hall 2013:77), thus the third synthesis is the formal condition of reality as such. Therefore, temporal becoming and contingency, rather than static eternal or transcendent being is absolute in Deleuze's philosophy. This is further elaborated in a reading of the eternal return that is for Deleuze “not an external order imposed upon the chaos of the world; on the contrary, the eternal return is the internal identity of the world and of chaos, the Chaosmos” (Deleuze 1994:299). This is expressed via the motif of the dice throw, that overturns ‘the moral imperative of predetermined rules’ (Deleuze 1994:198) and the logic of bureaucratic organisation. Instead: “The singular points are on the die; the questions are the dice themselves; the imperative is to throw. Ideas are the problematic combinations which result from throws” (Deleuze 1994:198).

Nietzsche correctly points out that if it were the One which returned, it would have begun by being unable to leave itself; if it were supposed to determine the many to resemble it, it would have begun by not losing its identity in that degradation of the similar. Repetition is no more the permanence of the One than the resemblance of the many. The subject of the eternal return is not the same but the different, not the similar but the dissimilar, not the one but the many, not necessity but chance. (Deleuze 1994:124)

For Ayache (2010) this has radical implication for our understanding of the market as it, like all material processes expresses this ontological contingency, as:

The market is a historical process that is not a series of actualizations of possibilities, but a series of redistribution of whole ranges of possibilities, a series of throws of a dice

that repeat not a possibility but the whole concept of the game. In that sense, the market takes place only once, univocally, for chance as such can only be thrown once.....To be in the market is to position oneself in a flow that has the appearance of a temporal series, but which is in fact a 'series' of eternal returns, the repetition of a single univocal throw

We could consider the prior two syntheses, and all aspects of reality to be the contents of time, and the third synthesis is its form. While the first synthesis is the agent, and content of time as such and the second its virtual structural ground, the third is the transcendental form that characterizes being as pure difference, which perpetually undergrounds the prior two syntheses (Roffe 2015). This imposes a radical immanence, as there is necessarily nothing outside of time, no transcendent being, subject, identity or Hegelian historical teleology to subordinate time to its logic. Instead, all identities are selected out by the eternal return as the differentiator of difference that guarantees the production of the new (Roffe 2015). While the first synthesis of habit is constitutive of the present, and the second the ontological past that the present passes into (Roffe 2019:227). The reason for the passing of the present is seen in terms of the question of the meaning of the future as such. We can't simply claim the future is another moment the same as "the current one, and in the endless sequence of presents", as understanding the future like this "belongs entirely to the present, to the first passive synthesis of habit and the active faculty of intelligence that is founded on it. In other words, it is not really the future at all" (Roffe 2019:227). For the concept of the future to be in any way meaningful, a mode of time subordinated neither "to the present or the past and their respective contents" (Roffe 2019:227) is needed. The future must be absent of content, as if the future possesses any type of content this "content would be necessary", a necessary being present in all futures which would make the term 'future' meaningless, subordinated to an eternal abstract identity rather than to the present. For the future to exist it must be empty, subordinated neither to a transcendent being or populated by a set of abstract possible states (Roffe 2019).

The *how* of the emergence of novelty is explained by Deleuze's account of the encounter with the problematic, but that this can occur at all is due to the third synthesis as the form of time, this is the glue that connects the components of his system. This synthesis has 3 motifs that Deleuze employs to add more depth to his model (Roffe 2019). They are;

1) The cut or caesura, the rupture that perpetually breaks down seemingly stable totalities. Here time emerges as a pure form that fractures the Kantian 'I', where the future appears as "a kind of disequilibrium, a fissure or crack [...] an alienation in principle, insurmountable in principle" (Deleuze 1994:58). A violent rupture of the existent consistency of habit that produces the "a formal and empty order" of time (Deleuze 1994:89). 2) The line which renders time "out of joint" and free from the repetition of the same and the circular repetitions of habit (where time is cardinal and measurable), as habit and memory are cracked open by the caesura producing an ordinal temporality delineated in terms of a past present and future. Because "Time itself unfolds...instead of things unfolding within it" (Deleuze 1994:8), where "the caesura, as the 'too much', is the agent of this new linear distribution" (Roffe 2019:230). For Roffe (2010:93) while identities are a result of how the first two syntheses "come to grips with their proper contents", what the third "imposes on time is an impassive and inflexible NEXT, which breaks open the circle and arrays it in the form of a before and an after", as while the circle has a centre the line has none and lacks identity. Here the cut takes on the form of a totality of time, as the symbol "determined in the image of a unique and tremendous event, an act which is adequate to time as a whole", where the "I which is fractured according to the order of time" and the self "is divided according to the temporal series" (Deleuze 1994:89-90). This all leads us to the third movement, the *series*, that brings the two prior elements together as the fracturing of the circle of memory and habit. In the series, "the future as caesura distributes the temporal registers into their respective places, no longer on the basis of the habitual present but from the point of view of the time of the future" (Roffe 2019:220), as an "encounter with a problem demands the transformation of the one who encounters it" (Roffe 2019:220). In the social realm, the encounter of the flows of labour and money are transformed into the nascent form of capitalism, this in turn alters the composition of the social field at expense of the despotic state form as the body of the despot as the socius which is supplanted by the market, leading to the actualisation of the capitalist idea and its singularities at the expense of the despotic one (Deleuze 1984). So, whilst the first two syntheses ultimately explain how stability and identity is produced, the third explains how these are undone and transformed, providing the ontological basis for becoming and the creation of the new.

The third synthesis of time, or pure and empty time, is a cut, an assembly, an ordering and a seriation. It is deduced as an a priori condition for action, which in simple terms claims that any novel action depends on a cut in time. This cut though must also assemble what comes either side of it. This assembly is itself dependent on a putting of time into an order of before and after the cut. The third synthesis of time is therefore a division of time and an ordering of time. This ordering though is also a seriation; it distinguishes the before and the after, rendering time asymmetrical. This complex third synthesis is the time of the future making the present and the past, which become dimensions of it, because the action it is posited upon is essentially determined by an open future. Neither the subject nor the self is a foundation for Deleuze's philosophy, because in the third synthesis of time they are both ungrounded. (Williams 2011:94)

This final synthesis relates all aspects of time in Spinozist model where succession and co-existence are attributes of time and habit and memory modes. These are modal expressions of time's pure empty form – resolving the “problem of the priority of succession over co-existence, or vice versa” (Sommers-Hall 2013:82). For Somers-Hall (2013:82), this pure and empty form of time considered “in itself apart from its references to the subject it constitutes” is “a pure form of time that is neither successive nor co-existent.” Yet, it is this that “bifurcates itself into the past of memory and the present of habit”, as it constitutes “the space of the first synthesis” the “field of individuation” (Deleuze 1994:246–7), that produces identities, subjects and objects as well as the relations between diverging series of intensities and their individuating fields. The final synthesis performs the role of the ‘differentiator of difference’ (Deleuze 1994: 117), that is the ‘difference which relates different to different’ (Deleuze 1994:119) in time. Where series of intensive fields of individuation are related not by means of resemblance but as a result of the temporal difference in itself that “finds expression in both [series] simultaneously, while resembling neither” (Sommers-Hall 2013:82). These intensive series and the virtual series of singular and ordinary points that structure them “are liable to resonate under the influence of a fragment or 'dark precursor' which stands for this totality [of time] in which all the levels coexist: each series is therefore repeated in the other, at the same time as the precursor is displaced from one level to another and disguised in all the series” (Deleuze 1994:292); through which the process of the cut, ordering and seriation play out in each. Through which time fractures identities,

subjects and stratifications as the motor of being and the guarantor of becoming. This final synthesis is the time of the event, what Deleuze calls Aion: the creative puissance of being that ensures the production of the new.

7. Conclusion: Prolegomena to a postcapitalist future

Armed with Deleuzean ontology we now have a theory which accounts for the origins of the failings immanent to thought (the dogmatic image), as well as the conditions of the genesis of thought which gives it its tendency towards these failings that have led economic discourse astray into an inappropriate closed systems social ontology and deductivist method, which have allowed it to become the ideological tool of capitalist power. In response, an ontology of virtual structure and genesis can serve as a philosophical framework for new innovations in heterodox political economy and begin rectifying these issues. To finish this essay, I will briefly gesture at some of the implications of this and the capacity of political economy and its ontology to make a difference. The imperative that an ontology of immanence imposes on the application of political economic theory is the necessary illegitimacy of any political platform that seeks to place its organising principle or philosophical ground in a transcendent dimension outside the immanent plane of reality. Thus, there can be no abstract or transcendent ground for action in the political, or for the grounding of values and ethics and social organisation. Deleuze in his reading of Spinoza makes exactly this point:

In this way, Ethics, which is to say, a typology of immanent modes of existence, replaces Morality, which always refers existence to transcendent values. Morality is the judgment of God, the system of Judgment. But Ethics overthrows the system of judgement. The opposition of values (Good-Evil) is supplanted by the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good-bad). (Deleuze 1988:23)

Instead, what is prescribed is the practice of creative encounter with the problematic field, to seek the singular over the ordinary. He makes a similar point to his reading of Nietzsche, where the active forces that express creative power (puissance) are separated from what they can do by means of a fiction or mystification, a form of controlling power (pouvoir), and as a consequence can become reactive.

We know that reactive forces triumph by relying on a fiction. Their victory always rests on the negative as something imaginary: they separate active force from what it can do. Active force thus becomes reactive in reality, but as a result of a mystification. 1) From the first essay Nietzsche presents resentment as "an imaginary revenge", "an essentially spiritual vindication" (GM 17 and 10). Moreover, the constitution of resentment implies a paralogism that Nietzsche analyses in detail: the paralogism of force separated from what it can do (GM I 13). (Deleuze 1986:87)

This logic is easily extrapolated to political thought that problematizes much of existing political discourse that depends on mystification and transcendence in one form or another. What is needed is ethical and active means of social organisation based on creative affirmation as opposed to the reactive bourgeois regime of dominant capital and the abstracted economic subject, the mystification that they wield to suppress the construction of alternative social systems. In short we need an active post-capitalism, and creativity not just in the realm of art science and philosophy as Deleuze himself advocated, but also in the political and the institutional. Several candidates for the construction of postcapitalist systems of governance exist: The left-accelerationists rightly emphasize the need to create new organizational and governmental tools and practices, and even invoke some of some of the insights of Veblen, and Bichler & Nitzan (Malik 2014);(Mackay 2014), and Brassier's (2014) Promethean approach to technological innovation is admirable. To the extent that this program is fused with neorationalism, and the representationalism that this philosophical outlook involves this is problematic however. The work of Bratton (2015) is promising, but Bouvard's (2020) theory of post-liberalism even more so. Bouvard rejects the reification of the proposition (declarative) and views representation as presupposing a pre-declarative paradoxical basis. He also rejects the grounding of the construction of social systems in mystification and abstraction, be it via the myth of abstract economic agent or the abstract rights bearing subject of liberal political theory. Bouvard instead offers an immanent theory of leadership based in the linguistic practices that we as humans are significantly constituted by, and seeks to overcome the ideology and resentment plagued discourse that is characteristic of contemporary politics. His objective is to align creative power and social responsibility and to reorganise society along these lines. This positive re-alignment of power away from the abstractions and transcendent ideological signifiers of one form or another that where encountered in

the prior discussion of ideology in economics, and that characterise contemporary political discourse is necessary for the development of the kind of technological, industrial and cultural production appropriate for a genuinely postcapitalist politics. He additionally offers a refreshing realism regarding the power relations embedded within language and human cultural practices, and how this reality may be turned against the dominant capital regime. Just as we need a more realistic political economy, we also need a more realistic politics that goes with it in a theory of the human and the social order at large. Human agency must be theorized both in its expression of active, creative power, as well as the social emergence and impact of reactive power and the resentment it thrives on – which is an area where Bouvard's *Generative Anthropology* can be of assistance. However, a full comparison of this theory with the Deleuzian insights expressed here is beyond the scope of this essay, it is a topic that will return later in this series. Finally, the nature of the world defined as process means that no social formation is necessary or eternal. Thus, there is no reason to take capitalism or bourgeois rule as a given nor is there any reason to accept it. Instead, while one can easily feel powerless, the intensive dynamism of the world is always subject to change. We must affirm that “human subjects can indeed change the world” even if “only under far from equilibrium, crisis situations” (Palmås 2007:43). The onus is on those seeking social transformation to both be able to recognise and take advantage of these crisis points, and the opportunities for change they present. This is the identification of the interesting and the important in the political, and the means of its creation and transformation. As Prigogine and Stengers (1984: 206) put it:

Thus we are led to conclude that the same nonlinearities may produce an order out of the chaos of elementary processes and still, under different circumstances, be responsible for the destruction of this same order, eventually producing a new coherence beyond another bifurcation.

This essay has focused on the question of ontology in political economy, and made the case that Deleuze's ontology is the right one for the construction of genuine and viable postcapitalist and postliberal positions on this topic. It was in the end primarily an exercise in introducing key ideas and theoretical frameworks that will be expanded upon and utilised later in the series (CasP and critical realism), as well as the general ontological framework into which they will all be integrated:

Deleuze's ontology. The next part in this series of essays addresses the question of the nature of the capitalist system more directly. This will involve the synthesising of these existing heterogeneous elements along with additional insight from other theorists, as well as the anthropological theories of Bouvard, and Deleuze's own intervention into political economy in his later works written in collaboration with Felix Guattari. The objective of this is provide a theory of the operation of and structure of capitalism, as well as to direct attention to potential means by which it may be overcome.

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The Birth of Faustianism

by Marcus Cunningham

For people of European descent, the question of who we are and what it means has never been so ambiguous. We are told that our heritage is meaningless and that any apparent historical glory that we could claim is in reality a colonial evil. A new subculture has emerged around sincerely enquiring into the meaning of western identity, resisting the burden of shame ubiquitously imposed on westerners by the capitalist elite and the petty bourgeois anarchists of the left. Inseparable from the question of what it means to be Western is the necessary analysis of origins: where we came from and why certain beliefs, and how distinct practices and attitudes came about. Most importantly a shared idea of origin is precisely what unites a community. We need to be able to point to where we came from and what distinguishes us, furthermore a particular idea of the West's origin implies an agenda: who are we *supposed* to be? Mistakes here can lead to an inauthentic worldview, spiritual alienation and a requisite confusion as to our civilisational direction.

Questions of religion and spirituality are what reveal our highest and *deepest* identity, rendering this question of *who* the West is a fundamentally theological one. The source of the West's theological uniqueness is in an epic dialectical and ultimately spiritual struggle, in which the West definitively differentiates itself from previous cultures and their archetypes, forging the character of what we recognisably see as *our own* spirituality.

Oswald Spengler's theory for the birth of our civilisation, which he christened *Faustian Civilisation*, was a process of cultural pseudomorphosis. Meaning that unlike the first generation of civilisations, in river valleys such as China or Mesopotamia, Faustian

culture began *within* the culture-forms of preceding civilisations. Faustian man begins in the shadow of his fathers, he is deeply influenced by *Classical* (Greco-Roman) man on the one hand and *Magian* (Middle Eastern) man on the other, but eventually breaks free and has his own distinct culture which Spengler characterised as the passionate thrust into infinite space. This 'thrust' was represented in the sharp apex of Gothic cathedrals and profound depth of perspectival painting. Empirical science and its subjugation of nature for vivisection, the thirst for exploration and navigation, classical music, and the Faustian myth itself are all distinctive features of the European soul which Spengler celebrates. Illuminating this morphogenesis we may consider the emergence of an artistic genius, he may begin within the *genre* of the master but ultimately his self-expression breaks free and founds a new genre out of this unique style's formal innovations.

Jean Gebser built on the work of Spengler by recasting theory of history as a progression of increasingly complex consciousness structures rather than a progression of mere civilisations. The West as we recognise it then, can trace its origin to what Gebser christened the *Rational consciousness structure* (which contained the Classical, Magian and early Faustian within it in Spengler's schema). Gebser illustrated the difference between rational and mythical consciousness with the clear images, contrasting the Spanish conquistador on his horse, dominating nature with the Aztec warrior subsumed by an animal spirit headdress. The individual of mythical consciousness is possessed by the various animal spirits which sing through him; western man dominates nature and has expelled the mythical forces with the production of the individual who stands over spirit and animal alike.

Before Faustian man emerged from the synthesis of Classical and Magian man, there was a precursor and forerunner in Christianity's overcoding of the collapsing Roman Empire. Rome may have politically disintegrated, but it projected its influence forward through history with the Papacy it left behind. Christianity in its purity it was however rejected by Medieval European man and was instead alchemically integrated in its interpretation through the lens of Classical Greek philosophy. This is summed up by Michael Allen Gillespie in the beginning of the *Theological Origins of Modernity*.

The origins of the medieval world can be traced to the synthesis of Christianity and pagan philosophy in the Hellenistic world of late antiquity. This began in Alexandria in the first and second centuries. Here various strains of Christian thought, eastern religious beliefs, Neoplatonism, and a variety of other ancient philosophical views were amalgamated in different and at times conflicting ways, reflecting the intellectual and spiritual ferment of the times. This process of amalgamation was clarified and institutionalized when Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine. The various conflicting strains of Christianity were fused into a formalized doctrine in the series of councils beginning with the Council of Nicea (325). However, despite this doctrinal consolidation enforced by imperial authority, the tensions within Christianity between revelation with its emphasis on divine omnipotence and incarnation, on one hand, and philosophy with its emphasis on rationalism and the notion of a rational cosmos, on the other, were not so easily resolved and remained a continuing problem for Christianity throughout its long history. Indeed, much if not all of the succeeding development of Christian theology was made necessary by the continual and periodically deepening antagonism between these two elements of Christianity.

Michael Allen Gillespie, *the Theological Origins of Modernity*

The different pieces are now assembled, the question of the West's genesis can be traced through the complex interactions between the influences of Greco-Roman and Magian culture. Beyond this we must also consider the native pagan European culture, and how all this produces the singularity of the *Idea* of the West through a series of complex discursive continuities and discontinuities alike with these traditions. These interactions come together and develop a trajectory of increasing complexity the further the development of the dialectic of consciousness continues, until it reaches a breaking point: the pseudomorphosis, which is what we may call *Faustianism*.

Part 1: Literacy and desacralisation

Cor 2:17 "Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity . . . 3:1 . . . Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? 3:2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. 3:3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. . . 3:6 [God] has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

The New Testament, Second Corinthians 2:17-3:6

The origins of *theology* itself lie in the decay and death of mythical consciousness during the reciprocal rise of the rational. Jean Gebser's theorisation of this development of consciousness is primarily an aesthetic model which looks at the beginning of the various archetypal forms and psychical attitudes of not merely the West but all civilised peoples as necessarily posterior to developments in art. Gebser, demonstrating his Heideggerian influence, viewed the aesthetic innovations expressed by geniuses of the arts as a kind of manifold upon which conceptual innovations could be conjured.

It is with great reverence that I write the names of Fra Angelico, Giotto, Pierro Della Francesca, and Cimabue, as these are my favourite painters from the era leading up to the discovery of perspective. Their art is prophetic, mystical, and exploratory, as if they were reaching out into the unknown, seeking what lay behind the curtain. They are in the uncanny valley between the world of formulaic numinism, iconography, and the renaissance period of perspectival realism, and so they stand at the beginning of Western Civilisation as unique entities. Perspective derives from the individual, the vanishing point comes from the perspective of one person who perceives the world as a Cartesian phase space. Thus we can see the genesis of the individualism associated with the West from this point, it is no coincidence that Descartes and his individualist epistemology come after this development. Furthermore, scientific representations were dependent on such artistic developments. It is impossible to draw a blueprint or draw three dimensional diagrams in mechanics or architecture without depth perspective, hence the

discovery and development of perspective is a genuine revolution in consciousness.

Whilst Gebser does indeed yield great insight here, which can be summed up in the maxim; *the artist always is ahead of the philosopher*. He fails to sufficiently explain is the reason why the consciousness structures as he calls them change when they do. Why is it that mythical consciousness decays and is replaced by the rational? He does however tell us that there is a *deficient* and *efficient* mode of a consciousness structure. The deficient mode of myth he associates with oral culture and the speaking of myth, a bizarre claim given that oral folk tales go very far back indeed, in fact orality is the core of mythical consciousness. A more clear explanation of changes in consciousness is needed, and this can be found in media studies and in an examination of history. To thus begin the historical account that was promised we need to explain mythical consciousness as the beginning of our story.

The essence of mythical thinking is *the failure to draw a distinction between sign and cause*, as Lévy-Bruhl famously put it. One way to understand this is to collapse the distinction between metonymy and metaphor, 'metonymy' being simply understood here as the understanding that properties of a representation contain properties of the referent itself. To quote Olson:

This suggestion gains plausibility when we note that metaphor and metonymy have not always been distinguished. Lloyd (personal communication, 1993) has suggested that the distinction between the two is unique to the traditions that stem from Aristotle. In the Middle Ages many people believed in the efficacy of relics and to this day we are tempted to believe in the efficacy of charms, curses, blessings, and well-wishing. As we shall see, the issue of determining precisely how to take such biblical statements as "the Kingdom of heaven is within you" or "this is my body," continued to puzzle scholars throughout the Middle Ages and many to this day.

Metonymy, taking signs, especially images, as somehow embodying the things they are signs of is deeply rooted in all of us, primitive or modern. The ancient structure of "graven images" implies a concern with the possibility of confusing the image with the thing it is an image of. Gombrich (1950)

reminds us that even the most civilised among us would still feel a twinge if we were to poke a pin through the eye of a photograph of a friend. Revolutionaries topple statues of deposed despots and we do not allow our children to mutilate their dolls.

David R. Olson, *The World on Paper*

So the question then becomes, how is it possible that we came to be able to distinguish sign from cause? How did we break away from mythical thinking?

Mythical and other earlier pre-rational consciousness as described by Jean Gebser in his magnum opus *The Ever Present Origin* are linked deeply to oral culture. Even today, mythical consciousness is still ubiquitous in non-literate societies. Luria and Vygotsky famously went out into the rural Soviet Union and asked subjects logical questions. For example when asked the question "In the far north, where there is snow, all bears are white. Novaya Zemlya is in the far north and there is always snow there. What colour are the bears there?" the non literate response was "I don't know... There are different sorts of bears."

What we can see here is a failure to abstract, a failure to be able to think outside concrete situations. But it does not show signs they are "unreasonable", rather that they do not possess *rationality*, which is something which comes after writing. The change from verse to prose and the rise of logical and rational perspectives (basically the gulf between Homer and Plato) was co-extensive with the emergence of literacy, and so the question is *how* becoming literate altered consciousness.

A good observation to begin with is that writing takes speech out of its context and carves out a space for the individual to interpret a text, creating an internal scene of representation. For Olson, there is a fundamental transformation from an oral culture to a culture of reading. Olson did not see writing, but reading, as the fundamental driver of the impact of this on consciousness. Through writing we become aware of language and we are able to participate in philosophy. Writing is basically the representation of representation, that is, metalanguage. When we see language represented, the components of language gradually become abstracted from their referents as objects unto themselves, which makes concepts such as the 'word' or the 'sentence'

possible for example. Oral culture talks through, for the most part, and not about language. Luria summed up this phenomenon here:

The Beginning reader is not able to make the word and verbal relations an object of consciousness. In this period a word may be used but not noticed by a child, and it frequently seems like a glass window through which the child looks at the surrounding world without making the word itself an object of his consciousness and without suspecting that it has its own existence, its own structural features.

Luria, 1946, quoted from Olson 1994

The language can be used *upon* objects before we become aware of it as an object unto itself suggests the structure of language arrives unconscious and is something basically transparent to us, with literacy enabling us to make conscious its features. Children when they are learning to read in school need to become aware of language in this way, this is one of the most important realisations and allows most of more advanced cognition to be possible. Of course now we can understand how this development liquifies the mythical world, if we are conscious of language as an independent and separate object, it is no longer possible to confuse the representation for the thing itself, metaphor is properly separated from metonymy.

We did not simply gain from the transition from orality to literacy however, we also lost certain subtle aspects of meaning in the purification brought on by our new found metalinguistic capacities. Orality has its own distinct worldview in myth and its own legitimacy, just some of these profound features are described by Loubser:

Speech as such consists of highly complex systems enabling the codification of ideas into sound patterns. The most common and important function of speech is to enable people to share information. As with all media, speech has its own limitations. After a word has been spoken it is gone forever, unless memorised. In “pure” oral societies this dynamism of the spoken word coincides with a dynamic world view where everything is perceived to be in flux. Speech is local, direct and inclusive. It is also the closest to interior thought. In societies using the oral medium exclusively as means of communication, we find that this medium

influences social structures and thought patterns. Past and future are assimilated into the present. Time is not a continuum, but an ever-present reality. Oral communication also allows for the closest possible association of the knower and the known. Knowledge is not understood as a personal commodity, but rather as a communal event. Ritual, totem, and taboo, which regulate pure oral societies, serve as collective mnemonic aids. Myths and epics, sung or chanted, serve as collections of the wisdom, morals and customs of society. Those with good memories, especially the elders of the tribe, achieve a position of power. Those who speak loudest become the most efficient leaders. The “pure” oral world is a world of spirits. It is a world in which the elusiveness and interiority of the spoken word coincides with a dynamic concept of time, a world where a communal awareness rather than an individual awareness focuses human consciousness, and where authoritarian traditionalism is vested in the elders of the tribe. These social parameters also encourage the development of peculiar characteristics necessary to cope in such an environment, for example, the development of the capacity to remember vast amounts of information and to obey older people.

Loubser, J. A.. *Oral and Manuscript Culture in the Bible*

The only other thing I would have to add to the temporal aspect discussed here is that generally see a distinctly cyclical view of time. Deeply influenced by the rise of agriculture and the rise of the need to keep track of time, ideas about the turning of the seasons was seen non-metaphorically as the cycle of time. This as we shall see is indeed not ubiquitous to mythical consciousness and is a much more prevalent theme in early mythical consciousness in fact, but the nuance that there are different stages of mythical consciousness is also something which will be relevant later. In any case the idea that time is an ever present reality and not a continuum is the key aspect of this conception whether cyclical or non-cyclical.

The idea of linear temporality is a spatialised concept. We very often spatialise time without realising it. Of course you can take the example of actual measured time as in clock-time, which operates in purely spatial terms (an hour is 1/24th of a day which is the earth revolving

around its own axis), and thinks in terms of past, present and future. But all reality takes place within a thick present. Your immediate experience of time is sensed as a totality, as a holistic experience. When you listen to a piece of music your immediate perception doesn't split it into different notes understood independently, this is something done after the fact in theoretical constructions. In the same way these mathematicisations of time are done after the fact in a geometrical sense, split and chopped up in language. To quote Bergson in the introduction to *Time and Free Will*: "We necessarily express ourselves by means of words and we usually think in terms of space. That is to say, language requires us to establish between our ideas the same sharp and precise distinctions, the same discontinuity, as between material objects." Thus we see this spatialisation of time as a geometricalisation after the fact, retrojected and not distinguished between the ostensive and immediate experience of time itself, a reification which leads into many problematic philosophical places.

Martin Heidegger came up with the idea of *Zuhandenheit*, or ready-to-handness, to critique Cartesianism. In Descartes' analysis of objects there has to be a conscious *conceptual* synthesis of experience. In the famous wax example Descartes pointed out that we must use reason to recognise that the wax is a unified entity when it goes through changes in states, as he holds it to the fire. Heidegger pointed out that it is not sufficient to look at an object as merely being-present, but that we have to have a further *perceptive* synthesis of memory which is passive, which is pre-philosophical, in order for an object to be comprehended. Take the example of a hammer, in order to comprehend it we have to also take into account that it exists in a world which presupposes nails, wood, and a list of other technical and natural objects with which it has relations, there is an inter-referentiality to it. In this way Heidegger *historicises* Bergson's ontological notion of time as pre-conceptually perceived.

Leroi-Gourhan would take this further in his analysis of technics, pointing out that technical objects have a necessarily political constitution. He divides the social order into an external milieu and an internal milieu. The external milieu is the envioning world that a social order exists within (the climate, the geography, etc.), the internal milieu is the cultural memory, the shared idea of origin that all members can point to. There is also the technical milieu which emerges from the internal milieu to mediate its relation with the external milieu: the inter-

referential web of technical objects. Technical objects have their genesis as solutions to problems within the external milieu, the confrontational directedness of problems and constructions of communal solutions is what politicizes the technical.

The technical milieu of writing then enables the projection of spatial juxtaposition and the linear progression of a narrative upon the external milieu, linearising its temporality and alienating the internal milieu from accessing the past perceptually through the context of circular time. This melts down the mythical into time mediated by representation, Olson points out that this is a distinct development of writing in his later work, *The Mind on Paper*:

The translation of language from a time-based temporal structure to a spatial one is the occasion for the discovery and consequently the awareness of certain implicit or underlying features of language. For the inventors of writing systems the problem was to discover properties of speech that could be represented by a limited inventory of visual signs sufficient to convey a meaning. Writing systems are composed of visual patterns arrayed in space to represent sound patterns in the acoustic domain, thus allowing a reader to go back and forth between sounds and signs; to write what was said and to read aloud what was written. The primary obstacle to that translation was the challenge of discovering properties of the spoken utterance that could be represented by visual signs. The concepts mediating them, the concept of word, for example, provide a link between the written sign and a detectable feature of the spoken. Similarly the concept of sentence mediates the relation between components of unsegmented speech and the space inserted between written sentences. The concepts linking the written and the spoken make the previously implicit properties of speech explicit, something to talk about. Such concepts are about language and hence metalinguistic.

David R. Olson. *The Mind on Paper*

This is also a carving out of an internal scene of translation wherein internal narratives are formed, separate from the previous tribal and collectivist attitudes. This evolution of how we understand temporality is important to focus on because it points to the most basic and important

level at which consciousness is shaped by developments in media and at a political level. Going forward, this observation will contextualize deep ontological difference between early and modern Christian culture, and explain the theological confusions that emerge from the modern assumption that the early Christians inhabited a more or less equivalent time consciousness.

The history of consciousness always has inflection points and the middle of some of these processes can be a time of great identity crisis and cultural confusion. On the other hand they produce some of the most interesting thinkers, one of the clearest examples of this is St Paul. Paul was active at the time of what Loubser calls *intermediate manuscript culture*, which is still very much rooted in Oral culture but with emerging literacy within an elite minority. During this phase, a manuscript was just a mnemonic aid for the speaker to present their speech, there is strong textual evidence for many typically oral features of the “texts” available to us in the New Testament. A significant example of this is the poor construction of the “prose” with many repetitions of the same words and reminders of where a scene is taking place, this strongly indicates orality because you need to address an audience like this when speaking for them to follow along.

As evidenced by the verse (2 Cor 3:6) quoted at the beginning, Paul disfavours Roman imperialism and Jewish legalism with literacy itself, remarking that “a man of letters” is “a boastful and arrogant one” in Gal 6:11. It is a deep suspicion of literate culture for its undermining of the mythical compatibility of oral culture that Paul is desperate to defend against. St Paul is therefore not a philosopher, he instead represents the final stand of oral culture against legalism and the changes of consciousness which come about with literacy.

But this is all so far a superficial argument, at a profound level we can see Paul, and the other “writers” of the New Testament are mythical thinkers, Paul and his contemporaries were therefore in a sense the last stand of mythical consciousness in the Middle East. In sketching Paul’s thought there are three tendencies indicative of his mythical nature; his attitude to temporality, his use of mythical language and the relation of the text to the audience, and the ‘corporate personality’. All these different features are features of oral culture and by extension, mythical consciousness. To get a profound grasp on the New Testament and a hermeneutic for how it originally would have been intended to be

taken, the purpose here is to look at the internal milieu of this epoch and the world in which Paul and the other New Testament “writers” lived, and how the coherence of the relation to divinity itself is shaped by this internal milieu. First we will examine the corporate personality:

Kelber describes the unity between speaker, message and audience as an “oral synthesis” and finds ample evidence of this in the Pauline text (1983:19, 147). The subjective involvement and solidarity of the different parties in the Pauline text with one another (e.g., the author, Christ, Adam, God, congregation, and humankind) has in the past been studied under the concept of the “corporate personality” as first introduced by H. Wheeler Robinson.

In contrast to the way in which the idea of the corporate personality operates in traditional societies, we find it to be the object of conscious reflection in the Pauline texts (e.g., in Rom 5:12ff)—perhaps a sign that this procedure was no longer so obvious to Paul’s audience. However, our general observation regarding the empathetic nature of oral communication helps us to understand at least why Paul’s typology was intelligible to his audience. The manner in which he conceives of the believer as being “in Adam” reflects a communal way of thinking that would not normally occur to modern interpreters.

An insight into the typological hermeneutic which reconstructs the first-century believer’s psychological participation with Christ can further lead to clearer description of the Pauline sacramental and sacrificial language, the mimesis of Christ, expressions as “in” and “with” Christ, and also expressions such as “he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Cor 5:15).[...]It also follows that the Pauline “indicative” did not refer to a past saving event. The “imperative” was not a rational or speculative application of abstract principles, but the action of Christ in the presence of the believer.

J.A. Loubser, *Oral and Manuscript Culture in The New Testament*

This exegetical term of the corporate personality is really a description of the mythical, tribal, traditional, and collectivist mentality ubiquitous in oral culture, however we do see signs here already that it is on its way out. Paul is conscious of it and advocating for it, criticising and chastising people already infected with a desacralised, literate mentality. So we see more modern ideas cropping up even in Paul. We aren't the mere playthings of the gods as in Homer. Nevertheless he is actively siding with that world over the new one. The mysticism which is inherent in oral culture we can see in the the language of "through him and with him and in him". Solidarity with Christ is not dependent on his being present on the earth, he is a super-personal spirit which speaks directly through the preacher in the unity of the "oral synthesis" as Kelber called it. If we are in a state of sin here Adam is acting within us, we are not just trying to interpret what Christ is saying but instead are engaged in a mimesis where we consume Christ and he acts through us and is present. It is not only the case however that in Paul there is this oral collectivism, but as we have seen, people in the supposed past like Adam and Christ are also present. This won't make much sense until we understand the temporality which Paul is operating in and the manner by which he was supposed to be interpreted which we will turn to immediately.

Loubser goes on to analyse the language of Paul which shows it is deeply within mythical consciousness in other ways including the language of dualities and complementarities you see in oral cultures, and finally the non-linear complex notion of temporality in Paul. This is in contrast to the geometricalised, linear temporality which comes with the inauguration of philosophy and a culture of reading which post-representationalist philosophers like Bergson and Heidegger would rail against thousands of years later. It is through this lens that we can gain a coherence in the language that is being used here.

In terms of interpreting the New Testament, we can look at some of the implications of this new media studies analysis. In Luke 9:51-56, Jesus Christ rebukes his disciples for their quickness to ask for hellfire when they are not received by the Samaritans on the way to Jerusalem.

What are the ethical consequences of this episode? It has been read in different ethical modes. Most commentators view it like Plummer, i.e. deontologically as a lesson in tolerance: a missionary should not force himself on those

who do not receive him. Thus it becomes a prescription for missionary strategy.

The disciples did not consider that the conduct of the Samaritans was rather the effect of national prejudices and bigotry, than of enmity to the word and worship of God; and though they refused to receive Christ and his disciples, they did not ill use or injure them, so that the case was widely different from that of Ahaziah and Elijah . . . It is easy for us to say, Come, see our zeal for the Lord! and to think we are very faithful in his cause, when we are seeking our own objects, and even doing harm instead of good to others.

ibid.

This seems to be a consequentialist interpretation with a focus on the motivation and is clearly a literate attitude towards the Bible, they are looking to it and forming ethical interpretations, be it consequentialist or deontological in each case. On the other hand the media Studies approach does not directly answer or bring about formal ethical principles but asks you to think about reflections on what has been said directly:

Our media-critical reflection does not present a direct ethical interpretation. It rather leads the modern reader to open him/herself to the force of the oral narrative and to allow the oral intertext to emerge. Such a procedure allows questions to multiply. Would Jesus the Jew today have travelled through the West Bank, seeking to be received there by his enemies? What would have happened? Can the violent anger of the oppressed be controlled by firepower? What kind of firepower would work?

ibid.

Here we can see that Christ is preempting a bureaucratic ethical interpretation. It is a disposition towards the message that Christ is intending us to move towards, this disposition is grace which we inherit through the previously described spiritual mimesis with Christ. Kierkegaard's interpretation of the Abraham story makes this clear, we are not in the business of forming universal axioms based on reading scripture but instead are engaged in spiritual mimesis where we try to

incarnate Christ in our actions in a way which is much more direct, much more difficult. In short it is simply not reducible to moral law. This is because moral law is a borrowed metaphor from scientific law so they can't be so easily separated, a scientific experiment ensures the same conditions by assuming equalities. But of course, no such equalities exist in nature, this is the problem of induction. We cannot exchange one event for another as if they were equal, no matter how useful this is for modelling. In moral law we cannot legislate in advance how to act, every moral event is unique, it is a singularity, and must be treated as such. The central question is the famous "what would Jesus do?" which centrally about embodiment and performance, in unique moral events where referring back to a rulebook will not be sufficient.

This is why you get supposedly contradictory moments in Paul, there is a complex oral intertextuality which is revealed through a confrontation with the text in this kind of a way, a self conscious replication of listening and reflecting on the speaker which we arrived at through meta-cognition. Still, such a view of the world and divinity only becomes coherent when we understand the relation to temporality. Before we can see a new way (the original way) in which the new testament was understood, we need to understand the temporality of the New Testament, specifically looking at Paul again:

Time expressions by means of which Paul interprets the saving events are extremely difficult to systematise. These temporal expressions are sparse and tend to vary from one passage to another and cannot be fitted neatly into a linear or circular pattern. In the passages where he reflects on the time aspect, he usually formulates his point in terms of two antithetical temporal co-ordinates which coincide with the motive for writing the letter. In Rom 3:21–26 there is, for example, a sharp contrast between the present and the past. In Rom 5:12–21 the time of Adam is contrasted to the time of Christ. Whereas the past is signified by sin, the present is signified by the abundance of grace. In Phil 2:6–11 Christ's past humiliation is contrasted to his present and future exaltation. The apostle is encouraging a grateful congregation towards even more gratitude and joy. These antitheses have a direct bearing on the immediate rhetorical intent. To Paul, as in oral culture, the present, not the past, is the locus where God acts decisively. This results in a strong link between eschatology

and proclamation, both representing different sides of the same coin. So, for example, the cross and the resurrection are not seen merely as past events. By their proclamation they are experienced as present events controlling the present and the future. Between events like the crucifixion itself and the “word of the cross” there is much less distance than would be the case in modern culture.

ibid.

The view of temporality here is similar to the Bergsonian one in his magnum opus *Matter and Memory*, where he points out that within us our entire life is present with us unconsciously. When we are in a room there are all the memories of where different objects are that make it a coherent environment to live in. There is a necessary temporality to the subject, but most importantly for this biblical discussion, there are paradoxes that emerge when linear-geometrical views of temporality are taken when understanding memory. This helps greatly to understand what Paul is talking about when he says that the events of the New Testament are present, and yet also in the past.

We have great difficulty in understanding the survival of the past in itself because we believe the past is no longer, that it has ceased to be. We have thus confused being with being-present. Nevertheless the present is not. Rather it is pure becoming, always outside itself. It is not but it acts. Its proper element is not being the active or the useful. The past, on the other hand, has ceased to be active or useful. But it has not ceased to be. Useless, inactive, impassive, it IS, in the full sense of the word: it is identical with being in itself. It should not be said that it “was,” since it is the in-itself of being, and the form under which being is preserved in itself (In opposition to the present, the form under which being is consummated and places itself outside of itself). At the limit, the ordinary determinations are reversed: of the present we must always say that it “was,” and of the past that it “is,” that it is eternally, for all time.

Deleuze, *Bergsonism*

Thus when we apply this to the events of the Bible we can see what Paul means precisely, the Resurrection is present because the past virtually

coexists with it. The *Virtual* for Deleuze and Bergson is real but not actual, think of something simple like a capacity or tendency. Ice has the tendency to melt or boil at certain temperatures, and this tendency is both real and immanent whether it is *actually* melting/boiling or not. This is also the ontological status of the pure past, in so far as it can be remembered the past is always virtually memorable, even if it isn't actually being remembered at this moment. Bergson visualised it like a cone, with the present moment being the most concentrated tip, and with the past gradually accumulating in an ever expanding cone. This understanding of temporality is a self-conscious recovery of the non-linearity of mythical time.

So what the Christian is supposed to be doing is following the example of Christ, in our re-dramatisation of the figure of Jesus in our lives Christ becomes re-actualized. The Idea of Christ is virtual and therefore always immanent in any situation, awaiting our dramatic actualisation. Deleuze describes the Idea as *problematical* in its nature, and so for Deleuze the Idea eternally returns thematically as a problematic multiplicity which it dramatically solves differently each time. The problematic of the Idea is so internally complex that no particular solution exhausts it, and Jesus was the original and perfect solution to the problematical theme of representing the Divine Will on Earth because his example can be eternally repeated in different situations. In this way Christ's spirit is eternal even if the flesh of Jesus died. Christ rises again in every Christian act and his spirit inhabits our flesh and we are born again in union with this eternal Idea. This is exemplified by eating Christ in the Eucharist, it is about becoming Christ, it is not an abstract treatise of ethics. The events of the Bible are virtually coexistent and available to us in the present which allows the coherence of this whole worldview.

This Christianity I have briefly looked at is not the Christianity that the vast majority of people associate with the term. We can see a huge discontinuity between the oral-mythical thinker of Paul, and the literate-philosophical thinker of Augustine. What we then see is this deeply mythical Magian religion of Christianity, fundamentally transformed in Europe. This is something which you see in all orthodox interpretations of Christianity, and you can see this most clearly in Augustine. His project was a synthesis of Greco-Roman classical philosophy with Christianity and was very plainly a product of a culture of literacy.

In Augustine it is the reflection and reading of texts which is the main spiritual practice, the meditative practice of reading the Bible allows the reader to overcome their carnal desires through the construction of narrative. It is the reflective reader whose job it is to ethically “rewrite” their life, so to speak, to gain freedom from their carnal desires and replace it with narratives of charity and the other Christian virtues. This is in stark contrast to the methods of Oral culture and is building upon the Classical cultural notion of virtue being achieved through reason in the construction of civilised Roman or Greek man, this is exemplified by the teachings of Socrates. Augustine rebukes Classical claims that reason alone is sufficient to produce virtue, because there is no value-neutral way in which we can examine ourselves. For Augustine we require Biblical study and the model of Christ particularly as a reference point with which we can deploy reason to examine ourselves.

If the stream of time is a reflection of how narratives function, and if the flow of words in a narrative is an illustration of how time can be understood, then intellectual schemes for understanding behaviour are not detachable from the lives we have lived or would like to live. Nor is it important in this scheme that the lives in question be our own. They can be narratives we have heard or read about, in which the ethical value of the story has been agreed on by communities over time. In such stories it is the collective hearers’ or readers’ response that shapes the individual’s intended narrative, as it is in the life histories of the virtuous philosophers, the Jewish prophets, and the apostles.

Brian Stock, *After Augustine*

Here we distinctly see a dramatisation of the earlier deployed idea of the technical milieu infecting the internal milieu in Augustine’s life. Augustine internalising the externalised spatial medium of writing to form his view of temporality which brings a new notion of *theosis* from the one described earlier. Augustine’s great problem with the pagans was that he saw the various gods as not being good models of behaviour, so to avoid the corruption of people into vice it is very important for the people we admire to be the very archetypes of virtue, which he sees of course in Jesus Christ. This is analogous to the way in which Paul lays things out except there is a much more clearly defined notion of the individual, and individual reflection on texts is what allows the process

of spiritual mimesis. There is a discontinuity in that this is a clearly literate account and there is not the apocalyptic mysticism of Paul but instead a neoplatonic conception. Again we see the dynamic of reading being associated with the increase in consciousness of the individual, it carves out an internal scene of interpretation, which allows the individual to break away from the earlier oral “corporate personality”.

It is also incredibly important to note Augustine is drawing his account of temporality always from his experience of reading and temporality as narrative, breaking away from the mythical view earlier. The spiritual theosis of direct engagement with the speaker has been replaced by a rewriting of one’s life based on reading, ethical interpretation has triumphed over performative spiritual ordeal. Our relation to divinity has become mediated, and the spirit of Christianity has been hollowed out by an understanding shackled to literacy and classical philosophy in particular. This ethical and spiritual practice that in many ways Augustine inaugurates is called *Lectio Divina*, to understand the theological dialectic which proceeds to unfold we must interpret it through a historical theory of literacy:

According to Jean Leclercq, the author of a classic study of the subject, the founders of the medieval tradition of lectio divina were Benedict and Gregory the Great. However, the methods that they employed had precedents in the biblical period in both Hebrew and Greek. A text that combines these traditions is Romans 10:8, where Paul, in contrasting Jewish law and Christian faith, supports his position with a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:14 that refers to the presence of God’s word in the believer’s “mouth or heart.” It was the recreation of the biblical text through oral reading and recitation that provided the rationale for lectio divina as it evolved out of Jewish tradition into Christianity. In a statement that was echoed by (among others) Evagrius Ponticus and John Cassian, Cyprian emphasized the oral nature of the experience and its closeness to prayer: “Sit tibi vel oratio assidua vellectio: nunc cum Deo loquere, nunc Deus tecum” (May you engage constantly in prayer or reading: in the one you speak with God, in the other God speaks with you).⁹ It was Origen and Augustine who were chiefly responsible for expanding the biblical and early patristic notions of lectio divina into a more systematic style of asceticism. This tradition was passed on to

the Middle Ages as a part of the divine office. From the eleventh century, it became customary for monastic authors to speak of three interconnected ascetic activities, *lectio*, *meditatio*, and *oratio*.

First of all, in *lectio divina* continuity arose, as noted, between reading, meditation, and prayer, whereas in *lectio spiritualis* it occurred on the frontier between reading, interior reflection, and a number of other devotional activities. In *lectio divina* the reflective process began in the presence of the text, whereas in *lectio spiritualis* it could take place in the absence of the text; that is, it could be based entirely on internal resources. The presence of the biblical text was therefore a necessary condition for *lectio divina* but only a sufficient condition for *lectio spiritualis*. In the one meditation focused on the words that were actually read; in the other it was concerned with words or images that arose during or after the reading. Also, in *lectio divina* the passage of time was marked by the sounds of the words that were read, as in Augustine's famous measurement of time in book 11 of the *Confessions*; in *lectio spiritualis* it was measured by what Edmund Husserl called internal time-consciousness, whose ebb and flow was entirely determined by the subject. If *lectio divina* created an experience in which silence succeeded sound, *lectio spiritualis* frequently took place entirely in silence.

Brian Stock, *After Augustine*

In contrast with the more or less oral nature of Paul we can see here a deeply literate culture based around the reading of texts. We should not be taking sides here this is simply part of the development of the dialectic, and it seems somewhat inevitable that the apostolic succession would be broken and a new culture would be inaugurated. What I will now describe is the all consuming fire of *lectio divina*, but first we must remember Olson's insight that it was not writing but reading which propels forward the advance of consciousness throughout history. The previous example given was the birth of metalanguage as people became conscious of language as an independent object in and of itself. What I will now describe in detail is the increasing suspicion that the role of writing is viewed with in

mediating our relation to Divinity, leading to the creation of bureaucratic systems which are erected to patch up this world which is falling apart.

One objection that has to be responded to before I continue, is the point that the medievals and fathers seem very oral indeed. Thomas Aquinas famously dictated all of his theological work. But ultimately this is a superficial point, as the medieval and earlier patristic period are in *high manuscript culture*. The earlier intermediate manuscript culture of Paul was indeed just mnemonics for if you really couldn't remember something from the oral presentation. However in high manuscript culture, we have mnemonics for remembering other written texts, manuscripts referring to other manuscripts. The clarification needed is that when we are talking about literate culture, we do not narrowly mean to say the prevalence of writing and reading, but the exploitation of the resources of a written tradition, to use Olson's phrase.

The history of reading contains a very conspicuous paradox: it proceeds in the precise inversion of what you would have predicted looking at it in the abstract. The most basic function of reading, we assume, is deciphering the literal meaning of a text, as it requires reflection to grasp the deeper metaphorical, spiritual, and poetic meaning. But when you look at the history of how the Bible was read, beginning with the break of apostolic succession with the oral culture of the original Magian Bible until this arche is completed in the Reformation, you see the exact opposite. The original and natural tendency was to read the book in a spiritually revelatory way, and through a long dialectical process which eventually reaches Luther, we finally arrive at a point where no meaning other than the literal is acceptable.

What is important to understand about writing is what it fails to capture. When speaking there are many indicators of communicative intention that are absent when writing, what J.L. Austin called *illocutionary force* and include such things as the speed of talking, intonation, facial expression, body language, emphasis and sarcasm. The basic idea of interpretation in a text is to decipher not merely what a text says but what it *means*, such a process is synonymous with trying to recover the illocutionary force of a text.

The rough process by which the Bible became demythified was that we gradually became aware of our participation in reading, we became aware of what we were doing when we were interpreting, and we tried to systematise it to avoid problems of interpretation. This had the effect of

transforming the Bible from an object of mysticism into an object of study. Questions of historical context and the specific context of the audience to which the writer was addressing came not to be seen as profane but essential to exegesis.

Initially in a reaction against the Jewish hermeneutic tradition, Christians tried to stick to St. Paul's doctrine of "the letter killeth" (2 Cor. 3:6). As we have seen this is deeply ironic because Paul is warning against texts entirely, not something within the interpretation of texts themselves, but this was nevertheless how it was interpreted by the medieval church fathers who were embedded in a literate culture. The letter/spirit duality is key to understanding the development, written signs were seen by medieval authors as an obstacle against finding the 'spirit' of the text.

The text was seen as a limitless well from which to draw for spiritual nourishment, as we saw earlier for Augustine it is the source of ethical transformation, as in divine revelation the spirit of the text is revealed to us. Reading between the lines is what is essential to this practice, yet it is important to note that this was not seen as a mere "subjective" interpretation, but a personal revelation of the objective spirit of the text. The very concept of subjective interpretation would have been incoherent in the thinking of that epoch and it is therefore a mistake to retroject it back onto them.

As we saw with Brian Stock, the *lectio divina* was how the interpretation of scripture took place in the middle ages, an excellent example in Dante of how medieval interpretation was practiced is as follows:

In order to make the manner of treatment clear, it can be applied to the following verses: "When Israel went out to Egypt, the house of Jacob from a barbarous people, Judea was made his sanctuary, Israel his dominion." Now if we look at the letter alone, what is signified is the departure of the sons of Israel from Egypt during the time of Moses; if at the allegory, what is signified to us is our redemption through Christ; if at the moral sense, what is signified to us is the conversion of the soul from the sorrow and misery of sin to the state of grace; if at the anagogic, what is signified to us is the departure of the sanctified soul from bondage to the corruption of this world into the freedom of eternal glory.

Dante Alighieri, 1317, 1973 translation.

It could be criticised that this is a fairly late example but it does show the complexity of interpretation in the middle ages. Within the west the move from oral to a literate culture was largely completed by the 11-12th centuries with the rise of systematic theology; this was exemplified by people like Peter Abelard and Anselm in opposition to the final monastic adversary who maintained the “spiritual exposition” – Bernard de Clairvaux. However in a purely literary sense, the most important exemplars of this hermeneutical shift were the Victorines.

Hugh and his student Andrew of St. Victor inaugurate and exemplify this process of Biblical desacralisation in the middle ages perfectly. Hugh was frustrated with his mentors that were according to him substituting what we could call today their subjective interpretations over what the original authors meant, and he thus set out to find what the original authors had intended. Once the problem of interpretation became recognised as a central problem, the dominos were destined to fall.

Andrew took this to a new level by looking at the work of the Jewish scholars of the Rashi School who examined the geography, chronology, cultural context of the Old Testament, even going so far as expunging supernatural interpretations from exegesis. Andrew took this up and also looked at the lexical and grammatical structure to provide a purely literal account of the Old Testament. This line of research closed out what was not explicitly in the text, carefully examining the exact wording, this kind of reading became standard especially for subsequent attempts to translate the Bible. Andrew thought of this method of interpretation as an object of study separate from finding the spiritual meaning, but the letter now has been given distinct power to it unmediated by the spirit in the deciphering of the meaning of texts.

The conclusion of the process comes about in the works of Maimonides and Aquinas, who attempt to solve the letter/spirit problem directly, but still open the door to Luther who evolves out of their methods:

Aquinas begins his summa with the somewhat traditional conception of the literal and the spiritual senses. He takes God to be the author of scripture. But he proceeds to develop the distinction in a new way of pointing out that human writers express their meaning by words. What the human

writers intend constitutes the literal sense; the literal sense was the legitimate object of scientific study and research.

The spiritual sense is what the divine “author” expressed by the events described by the human author; the spiritual sense was the object of theology. Only scripture had both senses. Aquinas thereby granted complete autonomy to the text and its literal meaning.

Luther’s theory of reading, the theory we associate with the reformation, was a rather direct outgrowth of Aquinas’ view of literal meaning. Luther took as the real true meaning of scripture the historical or literal meaning, the meaning that was available for all to see if they read carefully. The meaning of scripture relied not on the dogmas of the church but on a “deeper reading of the text.”

Readings or interpretation were to be grounded openly in the text and were not to be dependent of Church doctrine , cabalistic traditions, or private inspiration. The search changed from one for revelation to one for meaning. One was to seek for meanings on the lines rather than the epiphanies between them.

David R. Olson, *The World On Paper*

It is important to emphasise that when Luther is reducing the meaning of the Bible to a purely literal one he is not expunging the metaphorical, poetic, or other values of the text, but subsumed them all into the literal meaning as part of the communicative intention. So whilst not guilty of fundamentalism himself, he did contribute to the dialectical process toward fundamentalist interpretation by localising the “working out” of Biblical meaning in the individual’s interpretation. Of course, Luther was wrong that we could in fact through study reach an objective recollection of the illocutionary force, for the people who actually constructed the Bible had a totally different mentality to his contemporaries. It also fails to take into account the unconscious, and is highly suspect given the subsequent rapid fragmentation of Protestant sects. What problematises traditional catholic genealogies of modernity is that all he is really doing is democratising the practices of the priests who already viewed what they were doing from the perspective of the individual, separated from the

community, engaging in an individualist epistemology studying scripture and dissecting it based on close study.

The Post-Lutheran mentality has often been deemed 'the death of the author', in which we can ignore authorial intention. This came largely as a reaction against very biographical attempts in the 19th Century to figure out what an author of some prose is intending. The death of the author approach allows the text speak to us directly. This is overall a flawed hermeneutic in general, but it is especially inappropriate for the Bible, because the Bible is not prose, and therefore authorial intention (god is speaking to us) is of paramount importance. Only a complex hermeneutic which takes into account media studies and looks carefully with systems theory and structuralist influence can examine elements of language and come close to exposing the author's *faith*. The process by which we became advanced enough to embark on such a project was started out by Herder who first recognised the orality of the New Testament in 1796. Of course even this isn't perfect and there will always be a certain amount of mystery.

Rather than a coming to consciousness of something new what we saw here was a different kind of awareness, of the limits of writing as a medium and increasing scepticism that we could actually reach the truth of the christian message through reading in general. This had the inevitable effect of demythifying Christianity because the attempted solutions of systematised literacy and exegetical methods lead to a doubling down on literacy, in Protestantism anyone can be a philologist and figure these things out for themselves (yet of course they seldom possess a self-conscious hermeneutical theory). It is not until the 20th Century with a more developed hermeneutical approach that we can actually interpret what they meant through complex system theory or structuralist accounts, taking very seriously the consciousness of the people at the time and the media situation. It is impossible to go back to any previous level of awareness, that would require collective cultural forgetting, and we'd roll back down the hill anyway.

To drive this point home there are two very closely related concepts, the generativity of enquiry and the singularity. Deleuze was very insightful to point out that it is the constitution of the problem which is the fundamentally creative act. In the example of the Victorines, they began by coming to awareness of a problem, the problem of different interpretations, a very basic and very important problem. Wars have

been fought over different interpretations of scripture. In recognising the problem they then enquired into how to solve it, and came up with the solution of dissecting religious scripture with a hermeneutical method to very clearly work out the literal meaning to clarify. The process of enquiry is thus itself transformative, merely in recognising a problem and enquiring into a solution they have changed the object they are studying in the process. Once the Bible was seen as an object of study the rest of the process down to Protestantism was unleashed, it is this exact warning which drove both De Maistre and Spengler to warn of the destructiveness of enquiring into things, because making everything an object of abstract inquiry is a desacralising and potentially nihilistic force.

The singularity of this process as irreversible comes from the nature of the problematic encounter and the transformative act of enquiry both into and upon the object. Thus we can see this history of reading as a series of creative encounters with problems and the construction of solutions. The meta-problem however is that the solutions contain problems anew inside them and the process falls down to the next great thinker who engages it and drives history forward. The destiny of this is that it changed our relation to metarepresentation, we became more and more aware of the limits of writing in conveying meaning and had to recursively add characteristics to the interpreter to fill the hermeneutic gap.

We can avoid the misunderstanding that history is a constant process demythification in recognising the paradox that we are not observing this grand historical process as disassociated scientists. By recognising the overarching trajectory of western thought as moving towards demythification. In the act of recognising it we are ourselves turning demythification upon itself and in the process creating a new means of accessing the mythical world. The other implication of this is it frames history as a series of creative encounters with problems and the constructions of new solutions, solutions which contain the problematic inside them, reflexing back upon itself in an eternal repetition. Through this understanding we access the mythos as now active rather than passive participants.

This participatory traditionalism comes paradoxically through affirming the discontinuous dialectical confrontations our tradition. To be in communion with this historical process we must chart out our heritage

and work out the motivations behind what our ancestors were doing and why they broke with the people beforehand, the problems they inherited, solved, and passed on. In affirming the creative encounters which drove consciousness forward, we form an unbroken chain with our heritage and may receive it whole, in its paradoxical continuity through discontinuity. We are looking at the difficult situation our heritage has left us and raising the cross, and carrying it forth, into the future.

Part 2: Pseudomorphosis

With this background we can now far better inquire into the uniqueness of Western identity and set out what the right disposition is towards it. The theological scene of the pseudomorphosis which sets in motion the entire western tradition was the nominalist revolution of the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Moving on from the development of exegesis, theology in the eleventh-twelfth century attempted to fuse together the persona of God in Christ and the impersonal Good of Classical philosophy. The Will of God appeared chained and shackled by this Classical (Platonist) conception, and this was something the Nominalists railed against. They wished to liquidate the classical world of essences and forms and replace it with a liberation of the Divine Will.

Pre-Faustian Christianity culminated in Scholasticism, which took the typological and categorical theories of Aristotle and fused it with a Neoplatonically conditioned Christianity mediated by reading. The Nominalists rejected the legitimacy of these Classical philosophical notions to mediate the Divine, this could be seen in light of our earlier analysis as a problem induced by the literate mentality that had developed, in the articulation of the *problem of Universals* in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, Gillespie sums it up here:

Scholastics in the High Middle Ages were ontologically realist, that is to say, they believed in the real existence of universals, or to put the matter another way, they experienced the world as the instantiation of the categories of divine reason. They experienced, believed in, and asserted the ultimate reality not of particular things but of universals, and they articulated this experience in a syllogistic logic that was perceived to correspond to or reflect divine reason. Creation itself was the embodiment of this reason, and man, as the rational animal

and *imago dei*, stood at the pinnacle of this creation, guided by a natural telos and a divinely revealed supernatural goal.

Nominalism turned this world on its head. For the nominalists, all real being was individual or particular and universals were thus mere fictions. Words did not point to real universal entities but were merely signs useful for human understanding. Creation was radically particular and thus not teleological. As a result, God could not be understood by human reason but only by biblical revelation or mystical experience. Human beings thus had no natural or supernatural end or telos. In this way the nominalist revolution against scholasticism shattered every aspect of the medieval world. It brought to an end the great effort that had begun with the church fathers to combine reason and revelation by uniting the natural and ethical teachings of the Greeks with the Christian notion of an omnipotent creator.

Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*

Here we see that there is a continuation of this process of *subjectivation* that has characterised the development of consciousness. There is a levelling of the ontology of Aristotle's Great Chain of Being in favour of a flat ontology where there is only the individual subjectivity, the lowest rank on the Aristotelian schema. These revolutionary moves in favour of a radically new way of thinking was the result of contemplation on the omnipotence of God:

Faith alone, Ockham argues, teaches us that God is omnipotent and that he can do everything that is possible, that is to say, everything that is not contradictory. Thus, every being exists only as a result of his willing it and it exists as it does and as long as it does only because he so wills it. Creation is thus an act of sheer grace and is comprehensible only through revelation. God creates the world and continues to act within it, bound neither by its laws nor by his previous determinations. He acts simply and solely as he pleases and, and as Ockham often repeats, he is no man's debtor. There is thus no immutable order of nature or reason that man can understand and no knowledge of God except through revelation. Ockham thus rejected the scholastic synthesis of

reason and revelation and in this way undermined the metaphysical/theological foundation of the medieval world.

This notion of divine omnipotence was responsible for the demise of realism. God, Ockham argued, could not create universals because to do so would constrain his omnipotence. If a universal did exist, God would be unable to destroy any instance of it without destroying the universal itself. Thus, for example, God could not damn any one human being without damning all of humanity. If there are no real universals, every being must be radically individual, a unique creation of God himself, called forth out of nothing by his infinite power and sustained by that power alone. To be sure, God might employ secondary causes to produce or sustain an entity, but they were not necessary and were not ultimately responsible for the creation or the continued existence of the entity in question

In this way, Ockham's assertion of ontological individualism undermines not only ontological realism but also syllogistic logic and science, for in the absence of real universals, names become mere signs or signs of signs. Language thus does not reveal being but in practice often conceals the truth about being by fostering a belief in the reality of universals. In fact, all so-called universals are merely second or higher order signs that we as finite beings use to aggregate individual beings into categories. These categories, however, do not denote real things. They are only useful fictions that help us make sense out of the radically individualised world. However, they also distort reality. Thus, the guiding principle of nominalist logic for Ockham was his famous razor: do not multiply universals needlessly.

ibid.

These reflections on Divinity constituted a singularity, Scholasticism would not recover and the Faustian Civilisation ensued. What makes it a singularity was that nobody could escape from the terrifying revelations about the Divine Will, the genie could not be put back in the bottle, the basis of a new approach to the world had formed that was truly unique and new. Nominalism cannot be found in any of the archetypes of Classical philosophy which it was directly rejecting, and whilst in some

ways it is motivated by the an attempt to return to the primordial Christianity I described earlier, because it is through reflections on texts, it is another beast entirely. There is a paradox incepted at the origin of Faustian man, any philosophising about Divinity will necessarily constrain the Divine Will, backloading his dogmas with a self-destruction sequence initiated by an affirmation of their supposed Divine basis.

Gillespie powerfully argues that Protestantism and Empiricism both come from Nominalism. Empiricism of course is British, and the Nominalists, Ockham chief among them, were British as well. The skepticism of future British philosophers such as Hume and Bacon trace their origin to this dialectical process, with the Anglo scientific worldview's reliance on experience and rejection of notions like teleology and a priori reasoning coming directly out of this Nominalist ontology. The God of nominalism is deeply unsettling, he could damn the saints and send the sinners to heaven, should he please to. God has been liberated and we can have a more direct relationship with him, but it seems more like we have unleashed a Lovecraftian monster. Whilst Nominalism is indeed the great singularity which sets out western thought it is somewhat limited, namely it leaves us in a place where we don't have clear concepts pertaining to spiritual phenomena, we just have a critique of the understanding of Classical philosophy but not a true transcendence of it.

Nominalism is a rebellion, it is the start of a new conversation and the end of a dialectic which had plagued western thought for too long. Faustian thought going forward is either an affirmation of this rebellion or an attempt to bureaucratically resolve it, because the Nominalist world was too frightening and chaotic. Falling into nihilism due to Nominalist advances is a genuine threat, but Faustian Consciousness cannot simply go back to a pre-Nominalist world as many Traditionalists desire. Dogmatic Christianity is not longer spiritually viable, but this does not mean Christianity cannot continue authentically in a more complex hermeneutic capable of meeting the Nominalist critique.

Conclusion

There are really two sorts of Traditionalists, the first kind is the *immunological* traditionalist. Their modus operandi is to carve out

some genealogy of the “decline of the west”, to trace it to some great dialectical mistake and can be solved by the “return” to some prior philosophical position before the trauma was induced. This takes many different forms, it could be neo-Aristotelianism like in the virtue ethics movement, it could be radical Orthodoxy with its idiosyncratic genealogy and theology, it could be a deracinated perennialism or a romanticist idealism tracing the problems to materialist ontologies. All are fundamentally immunological, they are trying to find a worldview completely exterior to Modernity and grasp it psychologically to avoid a genuine confrontation with the problems that induced Faustianism and reduced all of these traditions to rubble.

There are two primary problems with such a perspective, the first is the problem that there is no genealogy which can go any earlier or later than the emergence of literacy in what Karl Jaspers christened the *Axial Age*. The Axial Age acquisitions of formal logic and philosophical enquiry which are anterior to the development of writing melted down the world of myth which generated the Great Religions. This is the same exact tension which provoked Nominalism in the first place, failing to recognise the problem of the Axial Age means that their project will always be restricted and will not ask the most fundamental questions about the originary meaning of their own religious traditions, but more obvious and more clearly problematic for them is that none of these world-views are actually exterior to modernity in a full sense but are rather corpses which have been dumped off the train to Modernity along the way.

The more profound problem is that it is disloyal to the meaning of Faustian spirituality. An authentically *participatory* traditionalism is about respecting the unfolding of history and the dialectical drama it contains and affirming the perennial themes which recur at different stages of development. To see the struggles that thinkers thousands of years ago were facing in relating to Divinity, and recognising the brilliance of their contributions and creative solutions for the spiritual crises they encountered. Furthermore it is also about seeing the necessity of innovations to escape dogmatisms which subjugate Divinity to human understanding. It is an ecumenicism where there is an affirmation of the continuity of discontinuities.

The ontological aesthetics Faustian man currently inhabits was described by Jean Gebser as *aperspectivity* due to its melting down of the perspectivity associated with Rationalism and Individualism. It is a glorious achievement of our culture to be affirmed inside Christianity, the eternal life of Christ is not bound by the limitations of Myth and Reason alike. The view I have expressed is only a pseudo-progressive view of history. It is progressive strictly in a spiritual sense, and specifically that we have increasing spiritual complexity constituted by increasing metacognition. There does not necessarily involve a practical benefit to society necessarily that comes along with this. Neither is there a necessary moral or cultural advancement which comes with it, on the contrary it can cause deep crises if we fail to adapt morally and politically to the implications.

The problem for us then does not become immediately obvious, but it is a question of haunting. We are being haunted by the ghosts of rational consciousness and its abstracting and demythifying tendencies. As a result, Liberalism stands victorious over all other ideologies and this is leading to deep moral, cultural, and even geopolitical problems. The question for us is a spiritual crisis which cannot be resolved with mere political theory or an immunologically traditionalist recapitulation to dogmatic philosophy, because all of these problems ultimately are the unfolding of a process which was irreversibly opened at the very foundation of abstract thought. Only authentic innovations in theological hermeneutics and aesthetics capable of revealing Divinity in the moral and political problematics of our time will be sufficient to the task.

The next paper seeks to answer the problems raised in this paper, how do we take up our heritage and what is the worldview which goes along with it? How do the spiritual revelations of the 19th and 20th centuries relate to the ones discussed here and answer the problem of the Nominalism? And finally, what does this all imply politically?