The Aesthetics of Movement
Variations on Gilles Deleuze and Merce Cunningham

Camilla Damkjær
Abstract

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study of the aesthetics of movement in Gilles Deleuze’s writings and in Merce Cunningham’s choreographies. But it is also a study of the movement that arises when the two meet in a series of variations, where also their respective working partners Félix Guattari and John Cage enter. It is a textual happening where the random juxtaposition between seemingly unrelated areas, philosophy and dance, gives rise to arbitrary connections.

It is a textual machine, composed of seven parts. First, the methodological architecture of the juxtaposition is introduced and it is shown how this relates to the materials (the philosophy of Deleuze and the aesthetics of Cunningham), the relation between the materials, and the respective contexts of the materials. The presence of movement in Deleuze’s thinking is then presented and the figure of immobile movement is defined. This figure is a leitmotif of the analyses. It is argued that this figure of immobile movement is not only a stylistic element but has implications on a philosophical level, implications that materialise in Deleuze’s texts.

Then follow four parts that build a heterogeneous whole. The analysis of movement is continued through four juxtapositions of particular texts and particular choreographies. Through these juxtapositions, different aspects of movement appear and are discussed: the relation between movement and sensation, movement in interaction with other arts, movement as a means of taking the body to its limit, movement as transformation. Through these analyses, the aesthetics of Cunningham is put into new contexts. The analyses also put into relief Deleuze’s use of figures of movement, and these suddenly acquire another kind of importance. In the seventh and concluding part, all this is brought into play.

Key words: interdisciplinary studies, Gilles Deleuze, Merce Cunningham, John Cage, Félix Guattari, Francis Bacon, dance, philosophy, movement, choreography, the body, heterogeneity, juxtaposition, representation, happening, chance.

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Opening

This is an interdisciplinary study of the aesthetics of movement in Gilles Deleuze’s writings and in Merce Cunningham’s choreographies. But it is also a study of the movement that arises when the two are confronted in a series of variations. A series of variations that are also inhabited by many more: most prominently by their respective working partners Félix Guattari and John Cage. But on our way we will also meet seemingly peripheral characters that suddenly play a part in the series.

It is a series of variations, but it is also a textual happening, where the random juxtaposition between seemingly unrelated characters and areas, Deleuze and Cunningham, philosophy and dance, gives rise to arbitrary meetings and connections. It is a textual experiment where the juxtaposition becomes a machine that produces its own connections and forces your sensation, imagination and thought in sometimes unforeseen directions. It is a study of that which cannot be compared, that which can only be confronted in a meeting, where the similarities and differences, the concordances and discordances, become happy instances of chance.

The programme of the experimentation that I will put into action consists of seven parts. Each is individual and yet relates to the whole. Between them non-linear lines are traced. Let us play.
Introduction

Methods and materials

“C’est peut-être que nous sommes en train de vivre d’une nouvelle manière les rapports théorie-pratique.” (ID, 288)

In these variations methods and materials are intrinsically related and intertwined. The method mimes the materials, learns from the way the materials relate to each other, and indirectly takes into account the context that surrounds the materials. These three aspects coexist and coincide. The smallest circuit sends us to the largest, which sends us back again. It is a methodological ritournelle.

Questions and answers

Deleuze (following Bergson) insists that the question of right or wrong does not concern the rightness of the answer, but whether the question is rightly or wrongly asked from the beginning. It is through asking the right questions, and not confusing things that should not be confused, that we get the right answers. The liberty of thought depends on the liberty to formulate your own questions (B, DR).

But the material, too, asks questions. For instance, it can ask us questions indirectly through making certain kinds of answers impossible. This is the case in the work of Merce Cunningham. By deliberately making answers that rely on narration and psychology impossible, he asks us, among other things, what signification and interpretation is. By blocking our usual answers, he forces us to ask our questions differently, and thereby to reflect upon the possible methods we can use to approach his work.

My temporary answer to the above question is a methodological choice that does not lead me away from Cunningham, searching for an explanation outside his work. It leads me into the core of his work (or at least one aspect of it) through a mimétique relation to some of his principles, namely, the principle of juxtaposing seemingly unrelated elements, such as dance and music, deliberately keeping them separate, and letting them create their own connections which do not refer to a master plot that defines the meaning. This choice, however, is not only an answer to a question Cunningham’s work asks me, but also a series of questions raised by my combination of materials. For how is it possible to deal simultaneously with something as different and heterogeneous as the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and the choreographies of
Merce Cunningham? Actually, this is probably the most important question that my materials have asked me, as it concerns the very nature of the combination I am working with.

Methodological mimétisme – a textual happening machine

We have in the humanities become accustomed to all kinds of interdisciplinary combinations of theory and aesthetic or social materials. But we are sometimes in danger of being blinded by this familiarity. We risk forgetting the very nature of the combinations and wiping out the differences between the materials. There is a risk that we take our method for granted and forget to explain what we are actually doing. I would like to insist on the differences between my materials, and reflect upon what this means for the possible ways in which they can be combined. And as a matter of fact, the materials themselves contain important reflections on this matter.

The work of Gilles Deleuze has already been frequently used in diverse interdisciplinary studies. His work invites it (especially his collaborations with Félix Guattari) as it is already in itself characterised by an interdisciplinarity that is hard to repeat and worthy of admiration. The work of Deleuze is increasingly included in the canon of contemporary theory.

But I would like to insist on the fact that the work of Deleuze is not a “theory”, but a philosophy in its own right, and I would like to consider it and treat it as such. This might sound paradoxical as I am myself working on Deleuze in an interdisciplinary context. However, my objection is not against an interdisciplinary approach to Deleuze – on the contrary – but it has to do with the way I consider my materials to be related to each other. His philosophy has to be considered as a work, an œuvre to be analysed in itself, and since it is so intrinsically related to his writing it should not be extracted from it. His philosophy is an object of analysis, not a theory to be applied. That is one reason why I have decided to work through concrete analyses of particular texts and not with an overall comprehension of his philosophy. The other reason is that I find that this is also the method that does most justice to the work of Merce Cunningham.

Whenever we are writing about dance, the practice of dancing is already in a tricky situation. As dance is a non-verbal phenomenon, it is hard to let it speak for itself. The work of Merce Cunningham is extremely complicated, advanced and obviously the object of serious reflection, and in order to do it justice, I believe we have to consider it in its own right – not only as something to be explained by theory. Choreography is a way of thinking, not least in the case of Cunningham, though it is more than hard to verbalise its philosophy.
There are thus two basic principles behind my choice of method: the insistence on the difference between my two materials, dance and philosophy, and an insistence on the equality of the two parts of my materials (Gilles Deleuze and Merce Cunningham). This is my attempt to answer the question of how we can treat such heterogeneous materials simultaneously without neglecting the difference between them.

At this point a method that is structurally mimetic in relation to my materials enters into the picture. For it is an inherent part of Cunningham and Cage’s aesthetics to reflect upon the relation between heterogeneous materials, and the possible ways of putting them together in a way that does most justice to all of them. Their answer is radical: one should not in any way try to coordinate the two, but keep them separate, thus giving each the liberty of developing freely. It is this kind of simultaneous coexistence that I hope for in creating a juxtaposition between dance and philosophy. Methodologically I try to mime the material in my work in a way that answers some of the questions the material poses.

This strategy, however, is not only structurally mimetic in relation to Cage and Cunningham’s aesthetics but also in relation to Deleuze’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy. On an over-all level it is a way of taking seriously, or perhaps taking literally, one of the central aspects of Deleuze’s philosophy, namely that being expresses itself equally in all attributes or in all things. Being, in this case, would thus express itself equally in philosophy and dance, and the one should not be put in a hierarchical relation to the other. It is a very hard principle to enact in practice, but it is a very important thing to keep in mind methodologically.

Equally, the idea of juxtaposed analyses does not only owe something to Cage and Cunningham. It is a textual happening that brings together heterogeneous materials to let them arbitrarily create their own connections. But it is also, following Deleuze and Guattari, a textual machine, in the sense of the word machine that they develope in L’Anti-Œdipe, which through its functioning creates connections between various elements, body parts and organs, to create an ever changing body of materials connecting. It works paradoxically, creating connections and trying to undo them again once they have become too natural, too much taken for granted. These are two models of the text as an aesthetic laboratory that I am using, two models or methods that the materials themselves offer. It is a textual movement machine.

Miming, however, is not imitating. Working on Gilles Deleuze, we already have an outstanding example of the difference between miming and imitating. Deleuze and Guattari, in the chapter of Mille plateaux on le devenir, produce a model of transformation that is a critique of mimesis, imitation, and representation. Nevertheless, one of the methods that
characterise Deleuze’s work almost throughout his career, is his subtle way of miming his materials. Miming in the manner almost of a ventriloquist, making his materials speak, making for instance Henri Bergson, Baruch de Spinoza, Friedrich Nietzsche and others speak, in a way that makes it hard to distinguish Bergson/Spinoza/Nietzsche from Deleuze and Deleuze from Bergson/Spinoza/Nietzsche in the particular texts. But this ventriloquism has nothing to do with imitation or even reproduction. Deleuze makes them speak with his own voice, his own choice of perspectives, his own arguments. He does not deform the material, but he forms his own material by making the material speak in his own way. This happens both on the level of the content in his way of explaining the arguments, but also stylistically through a very subtle kind of *style indirect libre*. He becomes one with the material and yet transforms himself and the material into something else. He himself describes it as “arriver dans le dos d’un auteur, et lui faire un enfant, qui serait le sien et qui serait pourtant monstrueux” (PP, 15).

I am not trying to imitate this kind of ventriloquism, but I find the distinction useful to explain that miming is not imitating, that using the methods of the material is not uncritical, but a paradoxically critical gesture that allows me to reflect on what I do with the materials and how the materials themselves propose methods of reflection. The way I practice *mimétisme*¹ is very different from that which Deleuze practices. Even if Deleuze almost always stays very close to the texts he is working on, he is truly a ventriloquist in the sense that it becomes almost impossible to tell that he is speaking for someone else. There is a *zone d’indiscernabilité* between the two. Deleuze structures the argument his own way, often more clearly than the original text, but he does not have that many references or quotations, and it is only when reading the text he is working on, that we become aware how close he stays to it. Here, however, I propose to stay close to the texts through analysing them explicitly, basing my analysis on short extracts and quotations, analysing as much as possible the workings of the text.

**Distance through close reading**

This kind of methodological *mimétisme* is an attempt to obtain distance through close reading. Staying close to the material in the very structure of my work allows me to reflect upon my own way of thinking. Through staying close, I gain distance.

¹ *Mimétisme* is a way of proceeding by imitation, illustrated for instance by the zoological meaning of the word designating species that imitate another species for example by taking on its colours in order to protect itself. Not to be confused with *Mimesis*, representation or expression. *Mimétisme* is miming not representing.
Deleuze is no easy philosopher to work with. Not only because his thinking and writings are difficult, but also because they are overwhelming and almost seductive (though not manipulative). Once you have become fascinated by his philosophy and the complexity of it, it is very hard to let go. The risk of becoming Deleuzian is never far away. Furthermore, it is a very particular philosophy. Though it is intrinsically intermingled with his interpretation of other philosophers, it is something completely its own. This is even more the case when it is considered within the context of his style and his vocabulary. It cannot be extracted from his writing, and if it is, it is in danger of becoming a vocabulary that has lost its foothold and an embellishment that has lost its meaning. When using only the vocabulary and the concepts, the risk of becoming Deleuzian without actually gaining something through the complexity of his thinking, is imminent.

Instead of staying as far as possible from Deleuze in order to keep the critical distance, I believe it is necessary (or at least the most productive way for me) to stay close to the texts. In order to keep the critical distance and not become too Deleuzian, I believe it is necessary to undertake close readings of the texts and analyse how the philosophy creates itself in the texts. By analysing the texts closely I would like to approach Deleuze’s philosophy in its particularity, thus gaining distance to his philosophy as something “general” that can be applied regardless of its context. By analysing closely how Deleuze’s philosophy is something that is particular to him and his writings, I want to insert a device that keeps me at a critical distance.

This strategy also springs from the conviction that his philosophy is incorporated in the texts. At a first glance, the most striking thing about Deleuze’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s style is that it is full of neologisms or rather new concepts. But their philosophy is more incorporated in the text than that. It is inherent in the struggle of the text, the struggle of the text to make sense or to not make sense, the struggle of thought to become incorporated in writing. Therefore it can only be studied through a veritable struggle with the text. It is when struggling with the text that we slowly begin to comprehend the philosophy. It is when struggling with the material – whether it be the texts or the choreographies for that matter – that we are forced to think. It is therefore deliberate if my analyses, hopefully, bear witness to this struggle – even when the struggle is unresolved and the text stays obscure to the reader. In my experience, sometimes it is even harder to understand the text once it has become too clear. Furthermore, some of the aspects that I am interested in analysing are figures where such struggles of the text become evident.
But Deleuze’s thinking is not only incorporated in his texts; it is deeply tied up with the French in which it is written. One has only to read a translation to realise that it does not have the same effect on the reader. Even if the translation is correct, it does not leave the same impression. Perhaps this is especially true of such writing as Deleuze’s, where nothing is insignificant, neither stylistics, etymology, levels, nor connotations. Even when the corresponding word in English is the same, it does not necessarily have the same history and connotations. Therefore I will keep the quotations and the central concepts of Deleuze in French. Hopefully, this combination of French and English is a compromise that is suitable. It includes the geographical and cultural difference that the materials present us with: the English of Cunningham and the French of Deleuze.

**Movement analysis**

The strategy of close reading not only owes something to Deleuze, but also owes something to Cunningham and to dance. What I propose to analyse in parts of Deleuze’s work, is his aesthetics of movement. It is through juxtaposing analyses of the aesthetics of movement of Deleuze (and Guattari) and the movement aesthetics of Cunningham (and Cage) in their respective materials that I hope to construct a text that produces connections between the two. Movement is the line of thought that I am trying to follow throughout the juxtaposition.

In order to analyse the aesthetics of movement of Deleuze, it is not enough to analyse what he explicitly says about movement. Deleuze’s thinking does contain ideas about movement that are explicitly explained. This is especially the case in his work on Bergson in the film books. These ideas might amount to a philosophy of movement but cannot be said to be stated as such. But it is also a philosophy in movement. Not only, as we might metaphorically say, because it is always on the move, always changing subjects and forms. But also, more concretely, because his writings contain many figures and procedures of movement. These are not explained in the texts, but in my opinion they are of great interest. They are figures of thinking where thought is struggling with itself. Sometimes they are even obscure points in the text, containing something that is unrevealed. In order to try to analyse and to understand these figures and procedures of movement, a movement analysis of the text is necessary.

And this is another attempt to put the analysis of Cunningham and of Deleuze on the same level. Not only do I try to consider both the philosophical and the choreographic material as ways of thinking, I also try to consider both materials as ways of moving, and I propose to do a movement analysis of both.
An arbitrary juxtaposition and the ghost of comparison

However natural it might seem once we begin to get used to the idea, the juxtaposition of Gilles Deleuze and Merce Cunningham is basically arbitrary. Their work is in completely different areas, they have lived in completely different contexts (though at approximately the same time), they have (probably) never met, Deleuze has hardly written about dance (though Cunningham is one of the few choreographers he mentions, but very briefly), and although Cunningham has been considered an abstract choreographer, he insists that his work is not abstract or philosophical.

Yet, when we begin to approach them, as we shall see, something happens. But what we need to think about is what happens, or how it happens. We have to put ourselves in a state of “Verfremdung” as to the way we approach things. This is another reason why I propose the idea of juxtaposition. “Application” does not do justice to the materials, and the word “comparison” too seems to be misleading. And yet it is very hard to escape.

When we approach two things, we tend to see them in comparison. We tend to compare the one to the other to see how they relate to each other in terms of resemblance and difference. Even if we do not deliberately want to compare, or even when we try deliberately not to compare, phrases and expressions that recall the structure of comparison sneak in before we know of it. This will also be the case in my text, no matter how much I have tried to be careful with these terms. It is almost impossible to get out of these structures, even when trying to enact a juxtaposition of separate things. Therefore we have to constantly remind ourselves of the basic difference of the materials. This is especially important when more and more connections will become evident, connections that always risk presenting themselves as resemblances. The juxtaposition that is completely arbitrary may possibly very slowly appear absolutely evident. Then we need a corps sans organes to disrupt this evidence.

The ghost of comparison has given me qualms of conscience for several reasons. Firstly, because comparison seems to be opposed to arbitrary juxtaposition. Secondly, because it seems to be in danger of being in opposition to some of the basic assumptions of Deleuze’s philosophy as it is expressed in Différence et répétition. Thirdly, because it is suspect that it sneaks in via language regardless of the will of the author.

In Différence et répétition Deleuze does not address the question of comparison directly. What he does address is what he sees as a basic misunderstanding of the nature of difference and repetition within philosophy. This includes a critique of representation. In the philosophy of representation, difference is subsumed under the identical/identity and thus both real
difference and real repetition (as a creation of something new) are misunderstood. But my doubt and question is whether this critique also concerns the procedure of comparison.

In *Différence et répétition* Deleuze attacks a four-fold idea of representation that he finds to be dominant. It is an image of thinking that renders it impossible to think what difference and repetition really is. It is an image of thinking that relies on representation. It is the “quadruple carcan de la représentation: l’identité dans le concept, l’opposition dans le prédicat, l’analogie dans le jugement, la ressemblance dans la perception” (DR, 337).

Representation subsumes difference under the unity of the concept (a concept defines and is defined as that which is always identical to itself), the analogy of judgement (introducing analogy to define something in relation to something else supposes sameness), the opposition of the predicates (the definition of something through its opposition to something else), and the resemblance of perception (the definition of something through establishing that one case resembles the other). So far, Deleuze has not included comparison in his critique, but we might say that it is implicitly present. For instance, it seems that it can be related to both identity (through comparing we might discover they are the same), to analogy (an analogy could be seen as a kind of comparison), opposition (through comparison we might also find that things are opposed to each other), and resemblance (when we see resemblances it is through comparison).

But at least once, it becomes apparent that comparison underlies these aspects of representation. For instance, it is present in the idea of opposition: “La détermination du concept implique la comparaison des prédicats possibles avec leurs opposés” (DR, 180). But it seems to be even more fundamental than that. Again Deleuze sums up the aspects of representation, but suddenly one more sentence is added:

Quadruple carcan où, seul, peut être pensé comme différent ce qui est identique, semblable, analogue et opposé : c’est toujours par rapport à une identité conçue, à une analogie jugée, à une opposition imaginée, à une similitude perçue que la différence devient objet de représentation. On donne à la différence une raison suffisante comme principium comparationis sous ces quatre figures à la fois. (DR, 180)

Suddenly the “principium comparationis” becomes the term that sums up the four aspects of representation, it becomes the underlying principle of the four aspects. In representation, difference is compared when defined through identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance. Difference is falsely thought of in terms of comparison, and thus real difference is neither accounted for nor understood.
One difficulty of Deleuze’s critique is whether he is criticising identity, resemblance, opposition and analogy only on a particular philosophical level, or if his critique is also directed against these same phenomena on a stylistic level. The question which is even harder to answer is of course how to avoid them. Even if Deleuze proposes an alternative on a philosophical level, it is hard to find concrete advice on how to avoid comparison linguistically. Indeed, in his writings he himself does sometimes, though with caution, use analogies, for instance from art, to describe something. We might say that there is a difference between using comparison stylistically and using it to build up a philosophical system, but as style and thinking are inseparable in Deleuze, this seems an inadequate answer.

**Likeness or chance – organic representation**

Already here we begin to be confronted with the problem of comparison that seems to be lurking every time we detect a likeness or a difference. For actually, even in the above passage on this very problem we have detected something that Deleuze and Cunningham have in common.

In *Différence et répétition* the idea of representation is linked to the idea of the organism. Representation is called “représentation organique”. The four aspects of representation were also called “le carcan de la représentation”. “Carcan” comes from “carcasse” and means “carcass” – a used or degenerated body, a yoke or shackles. This idea of “représentation organique” is spread out to a metaphorical net, and leads to such terms as “démembrement” (DR, 338), “carcan” and others. Difference cannot be thought in a “représentation organique”, difference is inorganic: “toute différence qui ne s’enracine pas ainsi, sera démésurée, incoordonnée, inorganique” (DR, 337). The attempt to escape representation, it seems, can lead us in two different directions: either towards the “orgique” (“Le plus grand effort de la philosophie consista peut-être à rendre la représentation infinie (orgique).” (DR, 337) or towards the “inorganique”.

To me this is in no way a negligible detail. Indeed, it is very striking that Deleuze introduces the organism in a work that does not actually deal with the body, or only very little. For in the work of Cunningham there is an obvious link between his fight against representation and against the organism as a pre-defined body. Cunningham’s fight against representation in the form of narration and signification is intimately linked with his attempt to decompose the body, to make it inorganic. In other words, it seems that Deleuze and Cunningham have in common not only the attack on representation, but also the fight against
the link between representation and the organism. What could have been a metaphorical detail in the text, becomes a significant connection in my combination of materials.

The question is of course how to deal with such connections, how we perceive them, and what kind of conclusions we draw from them. In the work of Cage and Cunningham, the connections that occur are perceived to “be” rather than to “mean”. They are arbitrary connections that occur in the simultaneity of time and space. But in the fictitious juxtaposition of Cunningham/Cage and Deleuze/Guattari, time and space do not always coincide.

**Space and time**

One very remarkable difference between the materials that adds to the arbitrariness of the juxtaposition is the geographical context. Gilles Deleuze worked all his life in France, mostly in Paris, and especially at the university Paris VIII Vincennes-Saint Denis. Merce Cunningham has been working in the United States, mostly based in New York, and even if Paris was to become the European centre of his touring, this does not change the fact that the context within which his aesthetics was formed is American. Even if both are within the Western cultural sphere, we are dealing with two very different cultural contexts and they play an important role in the juxtaposition of my materials and their relation to each other. It is part of their heterogeneity.

Contrary to what the word "nomade" could have indicated, Deleuze was not a great traveller. At least not in real time and space. Instead, he says, he has always known how to "voyager sur place", how to conduct these imaginary travels that move you even if you do not go anywhere else. One of the places he went was to Anglo-American literature, which seems to occupy a particular place in Deleuze’s imagination. In the part of *Dialogues* called “De la supériorité de la littérature anglaise-américaine”, he links this literature (or part of it) to the idea of *devenir* and *déterritorialisation*:

La littérature anglaise-américaine ne cesse de présenter ces ruptures, ces personnages qui créent leur ligne de fuite, qui créent par ligne de fuite. Thomas Hardy, Melville, Stevenson, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Wolfe, Lawrence, Fitzgerald, Miller, Kérouac. Tout y est départ, devenir, passage, saut, démon, rapport avec le dehors. (D, 47-48)

French literature, in this account, is too linked to history, to the system, to the past, to the roots:
Les Français sont trop humains, trop historiques, trop soucieux d’avenir et de passé. Ils passent leur temps à faire le point. Ils ne savent pas devenir, ils pensent en termes de passé et d’avenir historiques. (D, 48)

The cultural differences are used to oppose different aesthetic styles, different approaches to culture and history.

In spite of this interest, it actually resembles a clash of cultures when Deleuze goes on his one and only voyage across the Atlantic. At least he does not seem to have been carried away. The way it is described by François Cusset, it seems to have been an example of a non-meeting. Though everything seemed to be in favour of a fruitful meeting (the American admiration for the new French thinkers, the admiration of these for certain American – also contemporary – artists), it seems to have resulted in cultural misunderstandings.

In 1975, together with Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari were invited by Sylvère Lotringer to a conference on “Schizo-Culture” meant to prepare an issue of the review *Semiotext(e)*. But the result seems to have been chaotic. Deleuze and Guattari were attacked by the feminist Ti-Grace Atkinson “qui fend la foule et vient les insulter, Guattari et lui, les traitant de «phallocrates» et les empêchant de poursuivre.” (Cusset, 2003, p.77) It went no better for Foucault who was equally attacked “par un membre du comité syndicaliste-révolutionnaire Larouche, qui l’accuse d’être à la solde de la CIA” (Cusset, 2003, p.78). When they met American artists, the mutual understanding does not seem to have been any better: “Deleuze et Guattari rencontrent backstage Bob Dylan et Joan Baez – mais ceux-ci n’ont pas lu *L’Anti-Œdipe*, et ceux-là n’ont guère l’habitude de la marijuana.” (Cusset, 2003, p.78) Though it is possible to imagine many meetings, and though texts and cultural expressions seem to enter into dialogue, these physical meetings reveal a field of differences where many misunderstandings are possible.

Although Deleuze and Guattari, Cage and Cunningham have never actually met and have not been mutually inspired by each other, their roads have nevertheless indirectly crossed. John Cage and Merce Cunningham were part of the new culture to which the new French thinkers were to become the theoretical counterpart:

C’est la culture novatrice et spontanément politique des John Cage et des William Burroughs, culture déjà post-culturelle en quelque sorte, irréductible aux hiérarchies culturelles convenues, une culture dans laquelle se reconnaissent les rebuts autant que les agités de l’université, de part et d’autre des limites du campus – et pour laquelle les auteurs français jouent alors le rôle de pendants théoriques à l’«axe Duchamp-Cage-Warhol», avant-garde officielle. (Cusset, 2003, p.80)

Cunningham and Cage have toured the world. Actually, it was their first world tour in 1964 that gained them their breakthrough. Though their aesthetics was formed in an American context – but also in opposition to it – it was their recognition in Europe that made them known at home. This is not their only connection with Europe. Many European artists and academics had settled in America during the war – for instance Marcel Duchamp who became a friend of Cage’s, or Arnold Schönberg, with whom he had taken lessons. Although we are talking about two different cultural spheres, they are not hermetically closed.

Especially for Cunningham, but also to some extent for Cage, France and more specifically Paris seemed to be his European centre. Cage had been living in Paris, it was here he met Boulez, with whom he had a long correspondence, and he often returned. But he also had important contacts with Germany and Italy. For Cunningham, Paris became his European centre thanks to, among others, Michel Guy and the Festival d’Automne (which he was in charge of for a long time). That France and Paris meant the meeting with another culture becomes obvious.

When Cage speaks of France and America, it is not rare that it is in terms of the old world and the new world, tradition and experiment, even if it is of course more complicated than that. This actually goes for Europe in general. In one of the texts in *Silence*, with his usual sense of the anecdote and the paradox, he writes:

> Once in Amsterdam, a Dutch musician said to me, “It must be very difficult for you in America to write music, for you are so far away from the centers of tradition.” I had to say, “It must be very difficult for you in Europe to write music, for you are so close to the centers of tradition.” (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.73)

France in particular becomes related to the notion of “culture”:

> Except, when I speak to the French, they answer me by culture, they cling to their culture as property, and they can’t give up that property. It sticks to their skin. It separates them from other peoples with another culture. (Cage/Charles, 1981, p.180.)

Thus again, national differences are used to oppose aesthetic choices.

Cunningham gives expression to a similar relation to France, even if he had become something in the nature of an adopted child of the nation. The encounter with culture and
tradition became particularly obvious in his meeting with the institutions, as when he was invited to create a choreography, *Un Jour ou Deux*, for the Paris Opera (1973). Having to work with the classical ballet, and, furthermore, not always having the full support of the institution, he felt that the project became difficult, and institutional, national and aesthetic matters became confused:

Yes, this entrance seemed scandalous to one of the ballet masters. I had told the dancers to come out and take their positions simply by walking, and the ballet master said, “That’s impossible, you can’t do that.” I said, “I want to show how the French walk.” And he repeated: “You can’t do that!” (Cunningham/ Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.182-183.)

When I point to the experiences of meetings and misunderstandings of culture, it is not only to underline a geographical difference. It is a methodological attempt to point out a geo-intellectual problem. We have become so used to seeing European thinkers applied to American phenomena, or American theory applied to European ones, that we tend to forget the cultural difference. This is another of the aspects of heterogeneity that I hope to deal with through the method of juxtaposition. Through keeping the different cultural contexts apart but letting them interact, I will try not to confuse them unwittingly.

Though we are dealing with two different geographical and cultural areas, we are dealing with the same period in time, the same era. Deleuze was born in 1925, Cunningham in 1919. Deleuze started publishing in the 50s, Cunningham started his collaboration with Cage, and with that his work as a choreographer, in 1948 and it really started taking shape in the 50s. This seems to be a similarity, but actually it would be more accurate to say that we have to do with a simultaneity.

It might seem easier to work with something that brings the materials closer, something that they have in common. It seems to legitimise the juxtaposition that we are at least dealing with the same period. Yet perhaps this is too easy a conclusion. When working with the same time period we might easily be misled into thinking that it is the same thing even if it might not be. The most habitual reflex would be to say that we have to do with the traits of the period. For instance that Deleuze and Cunningham are “post-modern” in their critique of representation; that they share ideas that are spreading throughout the world. But although I shall be happy if this thesis shows something about the period, this is not at all the main point.

The idea of a juxtaposition is also to question what it means or does not mean when two things happen at the same time. For instance, the time span between the 50s and the 90s could be seen as the time span that includes both Cage/Cunningham and Deleuze/Guattari in a
performance. Within this time span, connections may appear in their activities, but these are arbitrary, not causal, and they do not necessarily produce meaning. Furthermore, it is not only in this time span that these connections happen. Actually, they are connections that happen retrospectively. More specifically, they are connections that happen within the time- and space-frame of this text. The function of the text is to produce these connections, not to impose on them a meaning that might then become naturalised.

“Jouer à quatre mains”

There is an inherent and structural connection between the materials: both Deleuze and Cunningham are inseparable from their working partners Guattari and Cage. It is impossible to say Cunningham without saying Cage and it is impossible to say Deleuze without saying Guattari. As I am primarily pursuing questions of movement, I will be focusing on Cunningham and Deleuze, but inevitably Cage and Guattari will be present, too. So suddenly the question of “working partners” becomes part of the structural composition of my subject.

Cage and Cunningham met at the Cornish school, where Cunningham was a student and Cage was playing the piano. A few years later they started working together, and Cage encouraged Cunningham to leave the Graham Company and start as a choreographer on his own. They did their first performance in 1948. Since then, they worked together, Cage often composing the music for Cunningham’s choreographies, touring with the company, and acting as the musical director of the company until his death in 1992. Cage and Cunningham were partners in life and worked together for most of a lifetime.

Deleuze and Guattari met immediately after 1968. Deleuze was teaching philosophy and was the author of several books of philosophy, the most recent at the time being _Différence et répétition_. Guattari was working within psychoanalysis in a progressive psychiatric hospital and was attracted by the anti-psychiatry movement. He was also deeply engaged in politics on the left. Deleuze puts their meeting in these terms: “C’est Félix qui est venu me chercher. Moi je ne le connaissais pas”. And Guattari answers: “C’est moi qui suis allé le chercher, donc, mais, dans un deuxième temps, c’est lui qui m’a proposé le travail en commun.” (Guattari/Nadaud, 2004, p.10.) This resulted in _L’Anti-Œdipe_ in 1972, _Kafka – Pour une littérature mineure_ in 1975, _Mille plateaux_ in 1980, _Qu’est-ce-que la philosophie_ in 1991. This meeting changed the working lives of both of them.

One structural likeness between these couples is the fact that both of them are composed of differences. They work within different fields but their activities become related. Another structural likeness is that they underline, cultivate and preserve these differences within the
collaboration itself. This relation between the materials has also informed my way of approaching them. It is a closeness through distance, a way of meeting through and with the heterogeneous.

In the case of Cage and Cunningham this endeavour finds an expression in their aesthetics and their way of regulating their work together: co-presence of dance and music without prior coordination. And when they are confronted with a question concerning them as a couple in their private lives, too, they answer through this very same aesthetics, as when Cage says:

> Why do you always ask about the relationship or connection between us? Let me put it to you this way. Don’t you see that the fan is here and that the Norfolk Pine is there? How in Heaven’s name are they related? If you can answer that then you can answer these other questions. (Huschka, 2000, p.374.)

Just as there is no meaning that explains the co-presence of the dance and the music, there is no meaning that explains their co-presence. It is a question of chance. It is an answer that tries to avoid another kind of meaning: that their work should be entirely explained by their (homosexual) relationship. It can be (and has been) interpreted as a way of closeting their aesthetics. But in this context I will not concern myself with this interpretation, as it is counterproductive in relation to their work in that it reintroduces a meaning (i.e. their attempt to closet their homosexuality as the meaning of their work). Instead I would like to focus on the fact that the quotation shows that their aesthetics and their relationship are linked in another way: namely through a politics of co-presence and heterogeneity. In fact, the desire I am pursuing here is in the work itself, and it is also present in the work of Deleuze and Guattari.

Deleuze and Guattari in their texts merge their ideas in a way that makes it difficult to see which idea comes from which person. Their different competences introduce a heterogeneity of subjects and materials, but though they melt into one text, it is a text that does not reduce that multiplicity. In their working relation this respect for difference and heterogeneity has a very concrete consequence: they do not say “tu” to each other, but the more formal and distant “vous”:

> Gilles et moi avons une certaine propension à tutoyer quasiment tout le monde. Et pourtant, depuis plus de vingt ans, nous nous vouvoyons. Il y a entre nous une véritable politique dissensuelle, non pas un culte, mais une culture de l’hétérogénéité, qui nous fait à chacun reconnaître et accepter la singulirité de l’autre [...] Gilles est mon ami, non mon copain. (Guattari/Nadaud, 2004, p.15)
It is a kind of closeness through distance; it is a way of keeping separate and staying heterogeneous in order to let things blend all the more productively. S. Nadaud also describes their way of working together in such terms: “Étrange paradoxe qu’une différence totale et pourtant complémentaire...” (Guattari/Nadaud, 2004, p.26) In fact, the kind of relation that I hope can be brought to exist between Cage/Cunningham and Deleuze/Guattari.

It is both fascinating and hard to explain this kind of intense mutual exchange, this kind of unique intellectual and aesthetic synergy between two persons. Deleuze describes his meeting with Guattari in terms of “une rencontre”, but rencontre in his way of using the word is not simply a casual meeting, but one of exchange and enrichment. It can be a meeting with a book, a philosopher, an idea, an image or a living person. It is a meeting that adds up to a multiplicity of events and devenirs. Une rencontre can thus be many kinds of meetings; meetings that we normally tend to put into different categories:

Mais qu’est-ce que c’est précisément une rencontre avec quelqu’un qu’on aime? Est-ce une rencontre avec quelqu’un, ou avec des animaux qui viennent vous peupler, ou avec des idées qui vous envahissent, avec des mouvements qui vous émeuvent, des sons qui vous traversent ? Et comment séparer ces choses ? (D, 17)

It is not hard to imagine that the movements of Cunningham must have moved Cage, and the sounds of Cage must have traversed Cunningham. The meeting, then, is not only the meeting with a person, but with a multitude of persons and things that “people” (peupler) you. Actually, the subject is dissolved in the meeting with a multiplicity of other subjects. In the introduction to Mille plateaux, Deleuze and Guattari put it very poignantly:

Nous avons écrit l’Anti-Œdipe à deux. Comme chacun de nous était plusieurs, ça faisait déjà beaucoup de monde. (...) Pourquoi avons-nous gardé nos noms? Par habitude, uniquement par habitude. Pour nous rendre méconnaissables à notre tour. Pour rendre imperceptible, non pas nous-mêmes, mais ce qui nous fait agir, éprouver ou penser. (...) Non pas en arriver au point où l’on ne dit plus je, mais au point où ça n’a plus aucune importance de dire ou de ne pas dire je. Nous ne sommes plus nous-mêmes. Chacun connaîtra les siens. Nous avons été aidés, aspirés, multipliés. (MP, 9)

The subject is conceived not as a closed entity but as a temporary and moving instance that is constantly filled with other things than itself. But it is not just a philosophy on the (dissolved) subject, it is also a practice of writing.

Cage and Cunningham were also suspicious of the subject as an expressive entity, and tried to get away from their subjectivities in their own way. Not so much by letting themselves be invaded by other subjects through readings and writings, but through
transferring the will of decision from the subject to either structures or chance. This is another way of opening the subject to the world of multiplicities. This process was intensified in the artistic collaboration, for when putting together the different elements of the performance at random, the individual artist had even less control over chance.

Deleuze links this depersonalisation, which happens for instance when working with someone else and letting oneself be peuplé, to love:

Et puis il y a eu ma rencontre avec Félix Guattari, la manière dont nous nous sommes entendus, complétés, dépersonalisés l’un dans l’autre, singularisés l’un par l’autre, bref, aimés. (PP, 16.)

Deleuze is playing on the double sense of “amour” as love, but also as something that takes place between “amis” and through “amitié”. To Deleuze philosophy is closely linked to amitié (L’abécédaire, QP). And it is in this sense that Guattari is un ami. In fact, this implies a way of thinking together or thinking entre deux. It does not necessarily imply signs that are normally linked to intimacy, but it is deeply intimate. In fact, it is linked to desire. To the kind of desire that Deleuze and Guattari describe in L’Anti-Œdipe. The kind of desire that invests any domain of life. The kind of desire that does not coincide with the borders of what is private and public. The kind of desire that produces connections between people, things, ideas.

Silence and speech

In Cunningham’s work the first and most obvious obstacle for the interpreter is the insistence on the absence of meaning. Even if dance studies do not rely entirely on meaning and narration, the interpreter is deprived of a lot of his or her tools. You will constantly be confronted with your own inscriptions of meaning, at the same time as you have to try to invent ways of talking about the absence of meaning. Of course you can stay on the level of technique and style, but the art of Cunningham goes further, and this “further” is difficult to describe. His aesthetics has wide-ranging implications, but the language that describes them is non-verbal. It is silent. A second obstacle is that the verbal explanations that Cunningham has made public are extremely repetitious, and even if they are central to the comprehension of the basis of his aesthetics and very useful as such, they also produce a similar muteness in the interpreter. For this repetition forces us to repeat. As we cannot interpret the meaning, we can only repeat what Cunningham has already repeated again and again. Therefore I have decided to work on particular choreographies in an attempt to be as precise as possible. This, however,
will not eliminate the repetition completely. But instead I hope that I will be able to use the positive effect of repetition and displace\(^2\) it through juxtaposition; in the meeting with the philosophy of Deleuze, I will try to make Cunningham’s aesthetics speak.

Deleuze’s philosophy is very talkative and full of words, but this may have the effect of rendering the interpreter mute, too. The torrent of speech in the texts may take the words out of the interpreter’s mouth. Its eloquence says more than what the interpreter can say about it. The text, though it is open in all directions as to its subjects, is closed on itself as to its style. It already says it all in its own way. Therefore, instead of letting the text speak as little as possible, I prefer to let it speak for itself through quotations and analyse the workings of the text. I prefer to let the eloquence stay in the text and not simply take its words into my mouth.

This relation between a non-verbal and a verbal material makes it difficult to do what I endeavour to do, namely to put dance and philosophy on an equal footing. Deleuze inevitably speaks louder than Cunningham, and it is very hard even through the analysis of concrete choreographies to make Cunningham speak just as loud. Furthermore, there is from the beginning an imbalance between the two kinds of discourse, between the philosophical discourse and Cunningham’s discourse, which is that of an artist and meant to simply accompany the real work, that of his actions. Contrary to Deleuze’s case, the important thing is not only what he says but what he does. What he does, however, his dancing, has to be re-translated into words, and in this process its bodily complexity is hard to retain. I have tried to make up for this imbalance and to render Cunningham’s discourse more complex through the analysis of his works. Making up for this imbalance, however, remains a constant struggle.

But Deleuze has put up another obstacle for the interpreter, too, by explicitly saying that he does not want to build a school. He does not like masters and disciples. He does not want his thinking to become dogmatic. (D, 34) These remarks are of course polemical, and are probably mainly directed towards those thinkers who have made their own “schools”. But the remark has a wider meaning than that: he does not want people to use his thinking as a monolithic theory, but to use it to think on their own. This is of course no easy task, and it makes it difficult for the interpreter to justify her or his work. There is a risk that this imperative will make the interpreter mute too. However, we can also see it differently: Deleuze’s philosophy is a thinking in movement, and it is dangerous to convert it into a fixed or rigid philosophy, forgetting the radicality of the approach. It is important to show how it is constantly set in motion.

\(^2\) When I use the verb “displace”, it is in sense “to remove sb/sth from the usual (...) place” (ALD), and it is reference to the French verb “déplacer”, “changer (qch.) de place” (LPR).
Although I prefer to keep the particularity of Deleuze’s concepts and to insist on their embeddedness in the text, Deleuze does not hold them sacred and was not the first one to protest when they seemed to take other ways. Indeed, a fragmented approach to his philosophy is easily justified by reference to something he said in an interview with Foucault which is often referred to: “C’est ça, une théorie, c’est exactement comme une boîte à outils.” (ID, 290) It seems to give free rein to instrumentalising his concepts as you want. But when you look at what follows, it becomes clear that it has to be understood in the concrete *machinique* sense of *L’Anti-Œdipe*: “Il faut que ça serve, il faut que ça fonctionne.” (ID, 290) Indeed, it can only be understood within its contexts. The most important thing is that it produces something in the sense of the *machines désirantes* that produce connections. Though I hope to show the particularity of the concepts of Deleuze, I hope that through the juxtaposition they will also work as a concrete tool, more specifically as a bottle opener, which by creating connections can open up the hermetic aesthetics of Merce Cunningham.

In these remarks of Deleuze’s, many understandings and misunderstandings are possible. It is easy to accuse people of being too Deleuzian and thereby missing this imperative to create something new. But I think that we also have to learn from the experience of Deleuze: you cannot create something new if you do not try to go deep into the existing materials. Deleuze would not have been able to formulate his philosophy, if he had not worked intensively on Nietzsche, Bergson, Spinoza and others. If we want to learn something from Deleuze’s texts, we have to try to understand their complexity and intensity. If we want to create something new from Deleuze, we first have to understand what and how he creates. We are all apprentices.³ And here a reflective *mimétique* method can become an important tool, at least for a while. And at the same time as I believe that a close analysis must be the basis of understanding and the tool that lets Deleuze be Deleuze without the author becoming Deleuzian, I believe that the juxtaposition creates something of its own, too. Though I proceed in a different way from Deleuze and Guattari, I hope that my juxtaposition will create new connections between seemingly unrelated areas.

**Deleuze and dance**

The first thing that the juxtaposition produces is of course the juxtaposition itself, the idea of juxtaposing Cunningham and Deleuze, dance and philosophy. Deleuze did not write about Cunningham, neither did Cunningham read Deleuze. Deleuze is not yet much studied within

³ The title of Michal Hardt’s book on Deleuze is *Gilles Deleuze – An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*. The term apprenticeship seems appropriate.
dance studies, and he has not yet been much studied in relation to Cunningham’s choreographies.

It is neither far-fetched nor self-evident to work with Deleuze within dance studies. He has not written much about dance, it would not fill many pages even when put together, but movement plays a central role. It seems that with some delay he begins to make his way into this field of study, not least through the study of dance films, his books on film here becoming an obvious reference. This was the subject of a conference series that Véronique Fabbri arranged at the Collège Internationale de Philosophie in the spring of 2004. But his works offer other possibilities, too, and these are beginning to be explored, even if at the moment only sporadically. For instance, Valerie A. Briginshaw in her lecture at the Nofod conference in 2004 used Deleuze’s *Francis Bacon – The Logic of Sensation* to analyse Emilyn Claid’s choreography *Remember to Forget*⁴, and in an article published in *TOPOI* she analyses Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion’s choreography *Both Sitting Duet* with *Difference and Repetition*.⁵ Some have even seen a connection between Deleuze and Cunningham. For instance Roger Copeland makes a reference to Deleuze, speaking briefly of “The Body Without Organ(ization)”⁶, Véronique Fabbri mentions Cunningham as an example in her article on rhythm and Deleuze, “La danza e l’immagine-tempo: figure del ritmo nell’opera di G. Deleuze”⁷, and José Gil in the article “The Dancer’s Body” applies some “Deleuzian term[s]” to Cunningham, but without any reference to texts.⁸

But once you have made the connection between dance and Deleuze, between Deleuze and Cunningham, it almost seems too obvious. Just like the connections of desire described in the first chapter of *L’Anti-Œdipe*, they easily become naturalised, with all the dangers that this includes: becoming banal, becoming a cliché; with a blasé remark we reject it because we have already seen it. The field of humanities produces clichés just as quickly as the visual arts. We need to produce mechanisms within our work that denaturalise the connections as we make them, that keep them alive through cutting them off. This is what I hope the juxtaposition will help me to do. It is not only the idea of connecting Deleuze and

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⁵ Valerie A. Briginshaw: Unpublished manuscript (2004) of an article published in *TOPOI*: “Difference and Repetition in *Both Sitting Duet***.


Cunningham that is important, but also the reflections on how such connections can be produced and how we deal with them.

“French Theory”

This becomes all the more necessary because of the way Deleuze has been absorbed within the humanities. Together with a number of his contemporaries, he has been absorbed into the market of “theory” where the brands quickly go out of fashion. Or, if this seems too exaggerated: his work has entered into a global circuit of “theory” that has been built around the axis of the Atlantic, with France and America as the two poles. This has reinforced the trans-atlantic difference between my materials.

Deleuze is among the writers who have been included in the curious category of “French Theory”. This category, however, is an all-American product, as François Cusset describes in French Theory – Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze & Cie et les mutations de la vie intellectuelle aux États-Unis⁹. The authors included in it might be French (or write in French), but have very little to do with each other, did not work together or build a school of thought. It is not easy to say exactly who this category includes, but the most recurring ones are probably: Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, and Hélène Cixous. But when they land on American ground they go through a process that leads to the curious and imprecise appellation “French Theory”. They are imported pragmatically and enthusiastically through magazines, quick translations, circulating texts, etc. Later they are fragmentised through diverse “readers” that make of these authors’ œuvre something more easy to digest and use in class. From being a radical and rather underground movement on campus and also out of campus, they become integrated into the university curriculum. Often they are not treated within their own field (for instance philosophy) but imported into others. They are read in extracts, at best, or perhaps only known through summaries. What stays are a few concepts or ideas, but not a global view of the work of the author. In fact, the cultural context of the texts completely disappears, and in the new academic and political context something totally different is produced. Something that can then be exported to the rest of the world.

In France the picture has been very different. Though Deleuze and his contemporaries were much discussed when they first published their works in the 60s and 70s, they have remained marginalised in a curious way. There was a conservative back-lash in the 80s that

⁹ For the time being it seems to be the only book that approaches the question in a global way. Though it might have a polemical touch at times, it does explain some of these differences and their historical reasons.
tried to discredit the authors in different ways related to May 68. Also, their work has not been included in the curricula in the same way as in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, it seems they have stayed central and that they are often indirectly addressed in many kinds of discussions. In fact, it is a sort of heavy heritage that it is hard to surpass, but also hard to discuss as such. In recent years, though, it seems that the interest in their works is growing, even in the institutions which were first reluctant. When it comes to the studies on Deleuze, some of them are interdisciplinary, some are creative in a personal way, but most of them seem to be within philosophy, even sometimes written by his students or related to the passing on of his œuvre. Here the work of Deleuze is contextualised, but the wide range of it, and the wide range of possibilities it offers also for other disciplines than philosophy are not necessarily explored.

An abundance of words – but little movement

As I have chosen to let my method be guided by the materials, I have not used the critical works to construct my method. As I have decided to work through close analyses in juxtaposition, I do not focus much on the critical literature. But my gesture nevertheless takes into account the geo-intellectual difficulties. At a time when the danger of becoming a jargon detached from its foundation is present for the philosophy of Deleuze, I find that it is even more important to go back to the texts themselves.

It has been the writing which has guided my reading. It has been the juxtapositions themselves which have pointed to new areas to explore and new knowledge to be acquired. In the unfolding of juxtapositions, new readings become necessary. But these have not only led me towards the critical literature. They are connections that have led me to the sources or references of Deleuze/Guattari and of Cage/Cunningham. Therefore, we might suddenly bump into Marcel Duchamp or Søren Kierkegaard. I do refer to critical works in the course of the juxtapositions where they become relevant by connection. And in the bibliography I have included a somewhat larger selection of critical works on Deleuze than those I refer to. But in this introduction, a discussion of particular critical works does not seem to take me to the center of the methodological basis of my work. I have nevertheless included a few general remarks.

When reading critical works on Deleuze, you become aware that the text is of an extraordinary importance. Reading Deleuze is something that takes place over several years. It starts in complete confusion mixed with fascination. Slowly, spots of clarity begin to appear. Some reading principles, that is, traits of thinking in Deleuze’s philosophy, begin to
help you decipher the texts. It is hard to say when you begin to understand, and your understanding cannot be attached to one particular explanation of Deleuze found in the critical works either. You may find something helpful and clarifying in the critical works, but when you go back to the text you are equally confused. The text is so rich that you never finish trying to understand it. Even when you think you have explained it to yourself, you can go back and read it again and start all over.

Perhaps this is the primary lesson to be learned from the critical works. Through this particularly chaotic or even interrupted hermeneutic circle, they indirectly show (even when they do not say so) that you should not circumvent the materiality of the text. Whereas the texts draw you into the materiality of sense and non-sense through a centripetal movement, the critical works with a centrifugal movement throw you out to the level of a general understanding. In (most of) the critical works, the details are left aside in favour of the broader outline. The texts, however, create a thick tissue where the meaning is no longer only conducted by the argument, but also by the invisible non-linear lines between the details.

Of course it would be simplistic to divide the critical literature on Deleuze into Anglo-American and French research. A lot of work has been done throughout the entire world. Though it is both difficult and overwhelming, Deleuze’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of signification and representation has produced an absolute abundance of words. Furthermore, this production has taken place in the most diverse of areas. This is of course due to the versatility of the oeuvre. There are many ramifications if we were to try to characterise the different approaches to Deleuze. Staying with the most obvious, there are the purely philosophical ones and the interdisciplinary ones.

Within the philosophical approaches there are those that try to apprehend Deleuze globally. This is of course extremely difficult, if not impossible. There is perhaps not one homogeneous philosophy to be extracted from it. His writings are very diverse in spite of the recurring motifs. There is also an important difference between his work before he met Guattari and his work with and after Guattari. And it is almost impossible to decide which principles are the most important for the philosophy of Deleuze.

The philosophical approach to Deleuze is both necessary and insufficient. It is important to remember that Deleuze’s philosophy is one of extreme transversalité. He and Guattari attack a multitude of subjects and questions, from philosophy, to the arts, to psychiatry, to social and political sciences, to the natural sciences. Each branch of research has had to appropriate the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari, and test its possibilities. This is especially true of those subjects that they/he have/has addressed directly, such as literature, music, the visual arts, film
studies, and more. What is characteristic about the interdisciplinary research on Deleuze is that it is often conducted in a fragmented way subject by subject, or put together in anthologies. The number of anthologies is amazing. They show the range of possibilities that spring from the work of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari.

Though there is no opposition, it is hard to account for both Deleuze the philosopher and Deleuze the nomadic traveller. By insisting on the difference between Deleuze and Cunningham, I am trying to emphasise that we have to do with a philosophical material. But by juxtaposing them, I also hope to explore some of the possibilities of this transversalité. But what is most important about this work in relation to the research on Deleuze is something else.

In spite of the abundance of words, very little has been written about Deleuze’s conception of movement or his use of movement. Even if many scholars recognise or even write, metaphorically, that his philosophy is a philosophy of movement, no systematic attempts that I know of have been made to show what this means concretely even if Véronique Fabbri’s work might go in that direction. In dance, the attempt has rather been to apply Deleuze to dance (perhaps with the exception of the work of Véronique Fabbri). But this is not quite the same as analysing what movement means to Deleuze. Within other fields movement is touched upon too, especially on the basis of those parts of Deleuze’s work where it is most obvious. This is the case of film studies, or the studies on Bacon. But this is not quite the same as studying movement in Deleuze’s philosophy and writing for its own sake. This requires a different kind of approach.

The way it is referred to, the conception of movement in Deleuze’s thought and writing seems and stays very vague, sometimes even rather mystical. But in my opinion there is nothing vague about it; in fact it is quite precise, though abstract at times, and difficult to handle. Even if it may appear as a metaphorical element, there is a coherent (though not homogenous) logic behind it. Deleuze is not referring to movement accidentally. Many concepts, philosophers, thoughts, images meet in Deleuze’s use of movement. It contains many layers, but this only adds to its consistency (and its difficulty). In order to approach Deleuze’s conception of movement in a systematic and exacting way, two things have to be underlined: that Deleuze’s conception of movement is not explicitly stated as such, but part of several different traits and concepts of his philosophy, and that it is particularly incorporated in the style and the materiality of the texts. Therefore I will attempt to approach it not generally, but specifically, in order to begin to clarify these aspects, and uncover the layers of meaning implicit in Deleuze’s use of movement.
This juxtaposition is therefore not only an attempt to add something to the research on Cunningham, but also an attempt to add something to the research on Deleuze. So if Deleuze takes an important place, it is not that I have let myself be beguiled by “theory”. Deleuze’s philosophy too is a material of movement, which I propose to study. The movement analysis of Deleuze is equally important to dance. I propose to study the aesthetics of movement in both the philosophy of Deleuze and the choreographies of Cunningham.

**Repetitious muteness – the challenge of dance**

Somehow Cunningham’s work seems to travel more easily than Deleuze’s. Perhaps the abstract character of Cunningham’s choreographies is carried more easily across the waters. Perhaps the dance world is smaller. Or perhaps in the case of dance, the context is shared across the Atlantic to a larger degree. Cunningham is an important milestone even in European dance. But considering the fact that Cunningham is so well known, his importance so undisputed, it is curious that there is not more literature on his work. Of course, every dance history mentions him, of course there are plenty of articles on him or mentioning him, a chapter or a paragraph in this or that book. However, what is available is rather repetitious; repeating what Cage and Cunningham have repeated themselves. Only a few scholars have published books that get beyond that repetition, in fact, very few books indeed have been published about him. He is surrounded by a repetitious silence.

There are probably many reasons for this – historical, cultural, political – but none of them seems to completely explain this absence of literature. To begin with, it is fairly understandable in view of the shock he produced in the dance world including the critics and scholars. But now that his work is not only recognised but even canonised, this repetitious muteness is even more striking. Cunningham seems to have gone so far in his critique that he leaves us with an unsolvable riddle.

Unfortunately, the scarcity of work also has to do with the marginalisation of dance. Dance research is a small area, and even if it is often interdisciplinary, this does not necessarily mean that it is integrated into other disciplines. Cunningham is an important reference in the cultural history of the 20th century. But often in works that are not exclusively focusing on dance he does not get the attention he deserves and is often mentioned as if in a parenthesis, just in order to supply an example from dance, too. Despite many attempts already made, the case of Cunningham shows that we still need to try to get dance out of the reservation. For only a few attempts have been made to show in depth that Cunningham is of major importance, not only in dance but in the cultural history of the 20th century.
The number of studies that I refer to is as small as three. Cunningham’s archivist, at present and for many years, David Vaughan has published Merce Cunningham – Fifty Years (1997). Chronologically organised and describing as neutrally as possible the creations and activities of each year, it tries to present the simple “facts”. It is extremely useful because it contains archive material that is otherwise difficult to get access to, but it does not try to answer the questions posed by Cunningham’s aesthetics, or at least only by being true to the imperative of sticking to the matter-of-fact. Recently, Roger Copeland has published Merce Cunningham – the Modernizing of Modern Dance (2004). He tries to put Cunningham into a larger cultural context, through showing that his aesthetics is not only formed by his opposition to Modern Dance and ballet, but also by the importance of his links with contemporary musicians and painters. He suggests that Cunningham performs the same revolt againsts Modern Dance, as for instance Robert Rauschenberg against abstract expressionism. It is in many ways a polemical book (and at some points far too much), as Copeland also tries to show that Cunningham’s dance is not unpolitical but performs a politics of perception. Sabine Huschka in Körperkonzepte, Choreographie und Tanzästhetik (2000) also underlines the opposition to Modern Dance aesthetics but deliberately stays within the realm of dance. The historical perspective is introduced with a view to showing the radicality of Cunningham’s aesthetics, but also in order to show why the German reception of his work has been so negative. The means she finds to turn down the accusation that his dances are cold and mechanical, is an analysis that probes into the experience of the kinaesthetic and dynamic work of the body in class and on stage. She tries to get as close as possible to the bodily work of the dancer and the choreographer.

Each author in his or her way tries to answer the questions that Cunningham’s aesthetics raises. But how come that the French 20th century thinkers occupied with the critique of representation have caused so many volumes of writing, and Cunningham’s critique of representation so few? Somehow Cunningham’s critique has been almost too efficient. The difficulty of speaking of dance without signification is so tangible that it produces silence. And in spite of the above attempts, the question still remains open: how do you speak of and give an impression of the work of Cunningham in a way that does not introduce signification? And even more difficult: if Cunningham does not produce signification, then how do we describe and qualify what he produces instead?

My attempt to experiment with these questions goes in another direction than the authors mentioned. I believe that the juxtaposition with Deleuze is a good point of departure for trying to investigate what Cunningham produces instead, as both are up against the same enemy of
representation. I also believe that this is a way to recontextualise Cunningham’s work and show its importance in the cultural history of the 20th century, but by decontextualising it, by taking dance out of the reservation. If the problem of “French Theory” is that for instance Deleuze’s philosophy becomes too fragmented and decontextualised, one of the reasons why fairly little is done on Cunningham may be that he has so to speak not been sufficiently decontextualised from the dance scene. This does not mean that I want to take dance away from its medium. On the contrary, by insisting on the difference between Deleuze and Cunningham, philosophy and dance, I want to let Cunningham’s dance be what it is. However, I do not rely on a pure description of movement to show what Cunningham really produces. Instead, I hope to hint at this through different means. As writing cannot reproduce dance (especially not Cunningham’s) through a transparent representation, we have to search for other methods. By juxtaposing his work with Deleuze’s, and by transposing some of Deleuze’s and Cunningham’s principles to writing through a gesture which is mimétique-critique, I hope to capture his aesthetics by other means. Hopefully this will help make Cunningham’s repetitions produce something new.

Perhaps another reason for the silence around Cunningham is that no major thinker has tried to conceptualise his art as for instance Deleuze has done with his work on Francis Bacon. No one has managed or even tried to break through the wall of silence in a way that has captured Cunningham’s work. Perhaps this would have encouraged others. As Kenneth King puts it in a telling parenthesis:

“(We’ve had descriptive journalism instead of dance literature; Merce, though, is worthy of a Paul Valéry, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, or a Jaques Derrida)” (Kostelanetz, 1998 (1992), p.189.)”

Personally, of course, I would have liked to have seen Deleuze writing about Cunningham. But since he has not, it leaves me all the freer to explore and imagine connections to his philosophy. I will simply stage a fictitious meeting between the philosopher Deleuze and the choreographer Cunningham.

**Skeletal structure and muscles**

What I have been trying to describe in this introduction is what could be called the architecture of the thesis, the frame within which the writing develops. It is a juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements, a text-machine that produces connections rather than interpretations. It is based on an analysis on equal terms of the two objects: dance and philosophy. It tries to
learn from the insight that the material provides us with, it tries to deal with its spacial and temporal constitution, it indirectly takes into account the difficulties of the geo-intellectual landscape in which it is inscribed. But if this is the description of the skeletal structure, there is also a leitmotif, the flesh and the muscles, which is movement, and more particularly the figure of immobile movement. And at the same time other connections occur, appear and disappear and (hopefully) a material of its own comes into being.
Chapter 1:
Movements and images

Plato, in the *Timaeus*, says, “Time is the moving image of eternity.” Time, the very essence of our daily lives, can give to dancing one of the qualities that make it, at its most beautiful, a moving image of life at its highest.

A sea, a hill, and a Japanese wrestler

In Deleuze’s description of his collaboration with Guattari in a letter to Kuniiichi Uno from 1984, we find an example of his use of movement and we meet an example of one of those figures of movement that I will try to investigate:

Ou plutôt il faudrait le comparer à une mer : toujours mobile en apparence, avec des éclats de lumière tout le temps. Il peut sauter d’une activité à une autre, il dort peu, il voyage, il n’arrête pas. Il ne cesse pas. Il a des vitesses extraordinaires. Moi, je serais plutôt comme une colline: je bouge très peu, suis incapable de mener deux entreprises, mes idées sont des idées fixes, et les rares mouvements que j’ai sont intérieurs. J’aime écrire seul, mais je n’aime pas beaucoup parler, sauf dans les cours, quand la parole est soumise à autre chose. A nous deux, Félix et moi, nous aurions fait un bon lutteur japonais. (RF, 218)

Deleuze describes Guattari as movement through the comparison with the sea, through explaining how he is always on the move. He is a contrast to himself as the one who does not move or only inwardly. He compares himself to a hill. But not only does the passage contain words and verbs that indicate movement (“mobile”, “sauter”, “voyager”, “ne pas arrêter”, “vitesses”), it also becomes in itself a composition of movement, a figure of movement in which the opposition of movement and rest creates an image of immobile movement. An image that is summed up in the metaphor of a Japanese wrestler (a sumo wrestler). This relation between movement and immobility is a recurring figure with many variations in Deleuze’s texts.

If the juxtaposition is the structure of this thesis, there is also a *leitmotif* which is the aesthetics of movement in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and the choreographies of Merce Cunningham. Naturally, it is obvious that Cunningham’s work includes an aesthetics of movement. It is perhaps less obvious in the case of Deleuze. Therefore, I will try in this chapter to outline the presence of movement in Deleuze’s work, and try to define the constructions of movement that I am particularly interested in. But in this quest for the

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10 Quoted from David Vaughan, 1997, p. 61.
importance of movement, the question of images becomes important, too. Not only because Deleuze writes about movement in relation to images in the film books, but also because we have to examine whether the stylistic figures of movement are a kind of textual images, and how this relates to Deleuze’s ambiguous relation to both metaphors and images.

The above image of Guattari as the sea and Deleuze as the hill, combined in an opposition of movement and immobility is interesting for several reasons. Although it seems to be simply a metaphorical way of describing their working relationship, much more is at stake in this textual construction. Indeed, it is a construction that recurs frequently in the work of Deleuze, but it is not explained by Deleuze himself in any explicit way. Why is Deleuze so fond of this composition of movement and immobility? The question becomes all the more haunting as it is a combination that is particularly relevant to the aesthetics of Cunningham. For instance, as early in his career as 1951 he writes:

> But it is upon the length and breadth and span of a body sustained in muscular action (and sustaining immobility is an action), that dance evokes its image. (Vaughan, 1997, p.60)

But we meet with many difficulties when trying to clarify the importance of this phenomenon. First of all, it is not easy to define this construction, as it can take many different forms. Is it a metaphor, is it a figure, is it an image? By discussing these terms in relation to Deleuze, we might try to understand which function these constructions have in the text. For they are more than just a stylistic element, and they seem to contain something that intimately concerns the importance of movement in Deleuze’s philosophy.

In the texts of Deleuze there are many other figures of movement. Some that stretch over a short passage. Some that stretch over several pages. Some that stretch over entire books. I will analyse these as well as what he explicitly says about movement. But so far I would like to take these figures of immobile movement as a point of departure as they seem to contain in a condensed form something particular about the way Deleuze thinks and uses movement.

The general stylistic terms aside, it does not seem that there exists a particular name for this kind of figure and its particular combination of movement and immobility. For instance the “perpetuum mobile” does not quite seem to correspond to it. In the “perpetuum mobile” we have to do with movement that continues eternally, a perpetual motion machine. The idea of a machine fits well with Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking, but their machine does not only last eternally; even more important is the fact that it is running on the spot and thus that it is
immobile at the same time. It is both perpetual and arrested, it keeps stopping and taking off. This is not the case in the “perpetuum mobile”.

It would be logical to look for a term in Deleuze and Guattari’s own writings, but they do not seem to give it a name. However, we can extract a few suggestions from *L’Anti-Œdipe*. For instance it gives rise to suggestions such as “mouvement figé”, or “mouvement détraqué”, or we even find the expression “moteur immobile” (AŒ, 14). For it is a machine composed of forces so strong that they threaten to take the machine apart. Even if it sometimes has a much calmer appearance.

**Literal metaphors**

Metaphor is a word with many definitions and usages. Generally speaking, we can say that it has two kinds of definitions: the strict definition of the metaphor as a particular rhetorical figure, and the larger usage of metaphor to designate figurative meaning (which leads to expressions such as “metaphorically speaking”). The first understanding of metaphor is rhetorical or literary, the second understanding is more general.\(^\text{11}\)

The above passage both contains metaphors in the strict sense of the word, and constructs a metaphorical meaning in the larger sense of the word. It is based on the metaphor of the sea and the hill, and it contains many other metaphors that deepen the carrying metaphor (“toujours mobile”, “avec des éclats de lumière”, “Il a des vitesses extraordinaires”, “je bouge très peu”, “les rares mouvements que j’ai sont intérieurs”). And in the end this basic metaphor is transformed into a new one, the one of the “bon lutteur japonais”. There is a transportation of meaning from one domain to another; from nature or sports to intellectual collaboration.

Yet, the word metaphor is not wholly satisfactory for the textual construction I am trying to define. Firstly, it is not the individual metaphors themselves that I am interested in. They are part of a larger construction where movement and immobility are combined. It is this combination and the entity which delimits and contains it within a particular space of text which is important. Besides, the form of this entity can vary largely. Furthermore, we have to take Deleuze’s and Guattari’s view on metaphors into account.

\(^\text{11}\) The word comes from the Greek components “meta”, and “phora” which means “action de porter, de se mouvoir” (which is of course interesting from a movement point of view). Many definitions return to Aristotle who defined the metaphor as “changement, transposition de sens”. In this vein, a metaphor is a rhetorical figure in which the meaning of the word is transported to another level or another domain. (DHLF)
Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly refuse to see their writing as metaphorical, even if it might actually contain a lot of metaphors. They insist that they should be taken “literally”.\(^{12}\) It is not easy to interpret this insistence. Their reluctance concerning metaphors does not come from the classical mistrust of philosophy towards fictionalising elements. Rather, they insist instead on another, “literal”, understanding of metaphors. But even if this is an evocative idea, it remains obscure what they mean by it.

The literal metaphor introduces a kind of materialism of the text and the word. The word is what it says. They insist on the concrete sense of the word. This is not actually a refusal of metaphors as such, but a way of changing the understanding of their metaphors and thus reinforcing their importance. If we are to understand the word in its concrete sense, the idea is all the stronger. Guattari is the sea, Deleuze is the hill. This might seem exaggerated in such an example as this one, but it is imperative, for instance, when Deleuze and Guattari describe the workings of the unconscious as machines.

The insistence of Deleuze and Guattari seems to indicate that this is a question that goes beyond stylistics. It concerns the production of meaning. It tries to describe a production of meaning where there is no difference of level between the concrete and the metaphorical meaning, the entire meaning is there at once and on the same level. And through this way of fusing the levels of meaning, it also seems to be related to the idea of immanence. The idea, that is, that there only exists one level of being. There is no superior meaning of being, no level of the ideas, no transcendent level of any kind. Everything is compressed into one and the same level. This is a very important trait in the philosophy of Deleuze; he keeps searching for philosophers with whom and through whom it is possible to conceive of being as immanent.

Actually, this gives a particular resonance to Cunningham’s refusal/reinterpretation of what meaning is in dance. One can say that he refuses meaning as such, but perhaps we could also say that he insists that meaning is inherent in the action itself and that it means nothing but itself. Danced movement does not point beyond itself to another level, but only carries itself as meaning. There is only one level. As Cunningham says with reference to a metaphorical interpretation of movement: “The body shooting into space is not an idea of man’s freedom, but is the body shooting into space.” (Vaughan, 1997, p. 86) Immediately after, he reintroduces the same metaphor, but this time as something concrete that is included in the movement itself: “And that very action is all other actions, and is man’s freedom, and at

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\(^{12}\) This “littéralité” was the subject of François Zourabichvili’s seminars at Collège Internationale de Philosophie, during the spring of 2004.
the same time his non-freedom.” (Vaughan, 1997, p. 86) The action is literally what it means. But as if fearing that this could be misunderstood, he quickly takes away the seriousness and turns the proposition into a paradoxical nonsense: “You see how it is no trouble at all to get profound about dance. It seems to be a natural double for metaphysical paradox.” (Vaughan, 1997, p. 86)

Stylistics, in Deleuze’s and in Deleuze/Guattari’s writings, is not a question of surplus and ornament. And in their reinterpretation of metaphors it seems that they are searching for a stylistics of immanence. A way of writing that produces and is what it describes. A way of writing where idea and form become one. Therefore, we cannot simply reject the textual constructions of movement as a sheer question of style. For if Deleuze is so careful with metaphors, why does this stylistic element often recur at important moments of the text? If style is idea, then which idea is hidden in this materialisation of thought?

**Figures of movement**

I prefer to use the term “figures of movement” to designate the phenomena that I will be analysing. “Figure” is also a stylistic term, but it has a wider range than metaphor. It is more general but it does not have to be vague. We can speak of several levels of figures. There are figures of words which would, for instance, include different kinds of metaphors, symbols, allusions.13 There are figures of construction which are developed over a larger range of words and through the construction of phrases. This could for instance be chiasms, oppositions and parallelsisms. But there are also figures of thought such as antithesis, contradiction and other ways of structuring thoughts.14 All these levels are present in Deleuze’s figures of movement. For actually the three levels are related. In order to construct a figure of thinking in writing, a figure of construction is needed on the level of the phrases and the syntax in order to develop the form of the thought, and figures of words are needed in order to fill out the construction. Deleuze is constructing thought in writing, and what I would like to ask is what the figures of movement offer him, and possibly how they relate to his philosophy.

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13 Technically, these are also known as "tropes": Sometimes a distinction is made between "tropes" as constellations where the meaning of one or several words changes, and “figures” which are constructions of syntax where the meaning of the words themselves does not change.

14 These levels are taken from the definition of “figure” in LPR, p.1067.
Also, “figure” is a term that can be used and has been used in dance. In dance, a figure of movement would be the pattern that decides a sequence of movements. In other words, I believe that through using movement, as for instance in these figures, Deleuze constructs not only a set of words, but also a particular movement that he modulates through phrases, syntax, words. These figures do not only speak of movement, they also execute movement, and ask the reader to repeat it. The reader not only decodes the meaning, but even makes the movement.

If we return to the passage that describes the collaboration with Guattari, we might say that the figures that contain elements of metaphor are figures of words. These introduce, semantically or metaphorically, the theme of movement. But just as important, we have to look at the whole passage as a syntactical construction, a figure of construction. For here two things happen. Firstly, Deleuze develops a parallelism: first he describes Guattari, and then in a parallel he describes himself. First there are several phrases with the pronoun “il”, then several parallel ones with the pronoun “je”, the transition between the two being conducted by the slightly stronger expression “Moi, je…”. But through this expression he also introduces an opposition, or what seems to be an opposition: Guattari as that which moves, himself as the one who does not move. The opposition is already there between the figure of construction and the figure of thought, but it is developed through both the figures of words and of syntax. In fact, his whole characterisation of their collaboration serves to introduce the contrast between immobility and movement and to let them coexist in the metaphor of the Japanese wrestler. What characterises this passage is that Deleuze within a limited space opposes and merges movement and immobility. This is what delineates the figure and makes it stand out from the rest of the text. This is what makes of the figure a closed entity within which a particular tension is developed.

**Against l’image de la pensée – towards philosophy as l’art abstrait**

These reflections on the difficulties of definition point to one thing: something is at stake in this figure which goes beyond stylistics. For it is not only a question of defining it, but of examining its status in Deleuze’s texts, and its relation to the tissue of thought it is embedded in. What gives these figures their importance is not only their construction, but the material of thought that they are inscribed in. Thus, just like the word “metaphor”, the word “image” has

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15 Etymologically, “figure” coming from Latin “figura” has a bodily aspect because of the way it is linked to sculpture. “[E]mprunté (v.881) au latin figura, mot polysémique: «forme, aspect», d’où «représentation sculptée», «mode d’expression», «manière d’être». Figura est formé sur le radical de fingere «modeler (dans l’argile)» qui a abouti en français à feindre.” (LPR)
to be discussed not only in general but in relation to Deleuze’s use of it. For we could also call these textual constructions images. It leads us into some of the discussions that I believe the figures of immobile movement should be related to.

The word “image” has an ambiguous history in Deleuze’s work. Not so much, of course, in its most concrete senses (as when referring to a painting or a photo), but in its possible figurative senses. This is especially due to the negative evaluation he makes of “l’image de la pensée” in Différence et répétition (1968). Here l’image de la pensée characterises a trait in the history of philosophy or a particular tradition of philosophy that he rejects. But when we arrive at his and Guattari’s Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? (1991) the expression has changed sides and has been equipped with a much more positive tone. Perhaps this change has to do with movement, and perhaps this development can help us in the exploration of the figure of immobile movement.

In Différence et répétition the word image gets a distinctively negative ring through the expression l’image de la pensée. It is an image of thought which, according to Deleuze, underlies a major part of western philosophy. It is an implicit image that is never proposed as such, but is present and at the basis of philosophy. It is a “présupposé subjectif de la philosophie dans son ensemble” (DR, 172). It is a dogmatic image of thinking which establishes a set of conditions for philosophy. Conditions which prevent it from thinking difference and repetition and from thinking the creation of thought.

L’image de la pensée is related to representation. Not only in the sense that an image is a representation, but because Deleuze links l’image de la pensée to the fourfold “carcan de la représentation”. In fact, l’image de la pensée is representation. The image of thought in a way leads to representation since it establishes some of its conditions. The image of thought relies among other things on the identity of the subject, the subject’s recognition of the object, and the identity of the concept. It is a way of thinking that presupposes unity and identity, instead of difference and différenciation.

Deleuze criticises this image of thought for disregarding difference and repetition. As the image is based on the unity of the subject and its recognition of an object that stays the same, it misses both the internal difference of the subject (“le sujet fêlé”), the difference between things that seem to resemble each other, and the internal difference of the object itself. But this also has consequences for the way of conceiving la pensée as such.

For Deleuze, thinking is not based on recognition but on une rencontre. He believes thinking to be of a completely different and more violent nature. Thinking is not a peaceful
activity. One does not quietly sit down to think, but is forced to think by the meeting with something else:

Il y a dans le monde quelque chose qui force à penser. Ce quelque chose est l’objet d’une rencontre fondamentale, et non d’une reconnaissance. (DR, 182)

Une rencontre is a meeting with difference, not the recognition of that which one already knows. But it is also different from recognition because it is fundamentally “sensible”, that is it goes through the senses.\(^ {16}\) It is through the sensible meeting with difference that thought begins. It is at once “l’insensible” and “ce qui ne peut être que senti” (DR, 182) (“that which can only be felt”). Where recognition presupposes a meaning that is already defined, “L’objet de la rencontre, au contraire, fait réellement naître la sensibilité dans le sens.” (DR, 182) In the figure of movement where Deleuze describes his meeting with Guattari, it is such a difference and such a rencontre that he describes.

This is where the way to thought starts. It is not a smooth road, but a series of jumps between differences:

Ce qui est rencontré, ce sont les démons, puissances du saut, de l’intervalle, de l’intensif ou de l’instant, et qui ne comblent la différence qu’avec du différent. (DR, 189)

It is a series of reactions from sensation to imagination, from imagination to the phantasm, from the phantasm to memory, from memory to thought. It consists of jumps from one to the other where the different facultés (faculties)\(^ {17}\) are separated through their differences, and where at each point they are met with their own limit and difference, namely the insensible, the unimaginable, the not memorisable, the unthinkable. Difference is the object of the meeting. And through the whole series of faculties, sensation is brought to the level of difference:

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\(^ {16}\) The word “sensible” is an example that the meaning and the connotations in French and in English do not always correspond even when the word is the same. In French “sensible” can mean both “Capable de sensation et de perception” and “Qui peut être perçu par les sens”. It is in the second sense that Deleuze uses the word here. In English “sensible” can correspond to the first meaning, but in fact it means “having or showing the ability to make sound judgements; reasonable”, and thus it is closer to the French “raisonable”. (LPR/ALD)

\(^ {17}\) “Facultés” is a reference to the work of Kant though Deleuze proposes something completely different. It means the different functions or abilities of the human consciousness. Philosophically it is defined as “Fonction spécifique de l’être, considérée comme constituant un pouvoir spécial de faire ou de subir un certain genre d’action.” It has approximately the same meaning in English, “any of the powers of the body or the mind”. (LPR/ALD)
En effet l’intensif, la différence dans l’intensité, est à la fois l’objet de la rencontre et l’objet auquel la rencontre élève la sensibilité. (DR, 188-189)

What is produced in this meeting are “présentations de la différence”. Difference cannot be represented, but only presented. But what is most strange is perhaps that it seems that even opposition, resemblance, identity and analogy can be such presentations of difference:

Ainsi la différence dans l’intensité, la disparité dans le fantasme, la dissemblance dans la forme du temps, la différentielle dans la pensée. L’opposition, la ressemblance, l’identité et même l’analogie ne sont que des effets produits par ces présentations de la différence, au lieu d’être des conditions qui se subordonnent la différence et en font quelque chose de représenté. (DR, 189)

And these are exactly “figures”: 

Et c’est le plus important: de la sensibilité à l’imagination, de l’imagination à la mémoire, de la mémoire à la pensée – quand chaque faculté disjointe communique à l’autre la violence qui la porte à sa limite propre – c’est chaque fois une libre figure de la différence qui éveille la faculté, et l’éveille comme le différent de cette différence. (DR, 189)

It is perhaps such a figure, “une libre figure de la différence” that we are confronted with in the figure of immobile movement?  

But it seems that Deleuze does not search further for such figures in this chapter. Instead, he tries to refute l’image de la pensée to such a point that he refuses images altogether. In this text, it seems that the dogmatic image is so strong that it cannot even be changed for another and more just image. With Nietzsche he looks for a thinking without image:

Par là même, elle trouverait sa répétition authentique dans une pensée sans Image, fût-ce au prix des plus grandes destructions, des plus grandes démoralisations, et d’un entêtement de la philosophie qui n’aurait plus pour allié que le paradoxe et devrait renoncer à la forme de la représentation comme à l’élément du sens commun. Comme si la pensée ne pouvait commencer à penser, et toujours recommencer, que libérée de l’Image et des postulats. (DR, 173)

Only the paradox survives the destruction of representation and the image. (Perhaps the paradox, which even Cunningham evoked, is another figure to retain.) And thought is free to create itself from scratch over and over again instead of reproducing itself in a presupposed image. Antonin Artaud, too, is evoked in the search for a thinking without image. He is brought in to show how this thinking without image is linked to the impossibility of thinking itself, and the violence and difficulty of creating thinking from this very impossibility:
Artaud poursuit en tout ceci la terrible révélation d’une pensée sans image, et la conquête
d’un nouveau droit qui ne se laisse pas représenter. (...) Il sait que penser n’est pas inné, mais
doit être engendré dans la pensée. (...) Penser, c’est créer, il n’y a pas d’autre création, mais
 Créer, c’est d’abord engendrer « penser » dans la pensée. (DR, 192)

Thinking is born by itself, has to create itself in thought, and therefore it has no image. To
introduce this kind of thinking, however, a revolution is needed. A revolution against
representation. A revolution that Deleuze finds it most fit to present through an analogy with
the arts:

La théorie de la pensée est comme la peinture, elle a besoin de cette révolution qui la fait
passer de la représentation à l’art abstrait ; tel est l’objet d’une théorie de la pensée sans
image. (DR, 354)

Towards l’immanence as l’image de la pensée

Many years later Deleuze and Guattari come back to the expression l’image de la pensée,
but it seems that it has changed into almost the diametrically opposite. Whereas it was linked
to representation, but also transcendence in Différence et répétition (1968), it becomes the
expression of immanence and therefore something positive in Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?
(1991). Here l’immanence is l’image de la pensée. In an article in Le Vocabulaire de Gilles
Deleuze18 this change is followed gradually through his work, but here I’ll propose another
genealogy, though not exhaustive. For what is it that can cause such a radical change? I
venture the proposition that it has to do with movement.

In the chapter on l’image de la pensée in Différence et répétition, movement is scarecely
present. The only movement present is merely indicated, but very timidly and almost
indetectably in the jumps between the faculties when Deleuze tries to dismiss l’image de la
pensée. But the dogmatic image de la pensée that he refuses contains no movement at all, or
only false (faux) movement. However, when Deleuze and Guattari reappropriate l’image de la
pensée, the image itself has changed radically, and it now includes movement. The chapter
“Le plan d’immanence” in Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? is full of movement. Much more
and more explicitly than many of Deleuze and Guattari’s other texts. Is it a coincidence that
movement occurs so noticeably in connection with this subject, which is so much in the centre
of Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking?

What characterises philosophy, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is that it creates concepts (concepts). But it also does something else:

La philosophie est un constructivisme, et le constructivisme a deux aspects complémentaires qui diffèrent en nature : créer des concepts et tracer un plan. (QP, 38)

It traces “un plan” (a plane), the plan d’immanence. Tracing, by the way, is a movement verb. But even more interestingly, Deleuze and Guattari illustrate this with a metaphor or an analogy that leads us back to the description of their collaboration:

Les concepts sont comme les vagues multiples qui montent et qui s’abaissent, mais le plan d’immanence est la vague unique qui les enroule et les déroule. (QP, 38)

The sea, this time, becomes an illustration of the multiple which is nevertheless one. But the metaphor of the sea is not only chosen because of this, but also because it includes movement. This is already present in the verbs “enrouler” and “dérouler”, which mime the movements of waves. And it is made explicit in what follows:

Le plan enveloppe les mouvements infinis qui le parcourent et reviennent, mais les concepts sont les vitesses infinies de mouvements finis qui parcourent chaque fois seulement leurs propres composantes. (QP, 38)

The movements back and forth (“parcourent et reviennent”) refer to the waves of the sea and repeat the movements of “enrouler” and “dérouler”. But the idea is rendered more complex through the use of the opposition of “infini” and “fini”. In the first part of the sentence, “infini” refers to the infinite movements of the waves of the sea, the plan includes an infinite number of waves. But the second time we meet the word “infinies” it refers to another and even more abstract kind of movement. “Vitesses infinies” is an expression that Deleuze often uses, and that refers to the invisible movement of intensity. This is the kind of intensity present in “les vitesses infinies de mouvements finis”. The concepts are finite movements, but they contain the infinite speed of l’intensité.

In these few phrases Deleuze and Guattari build up and dissolve the opposition between the concepts and the plan at the same time. First the plan is a unique wave, and the concepts are multiple waves. Then even the plan contains infinite movements that come and go, it contains all the waves/concepts. But the concepts, too, contain infinite movements, not in number but in intensité. Thus, the opposition between the concepts and the plan is an
opposition that in fact is not one, where the two also contain each other. Therefore it resembles the non-opposition and l’intensité of the figure of immobile movement.

But one metaphor is not enough for Deleuze and Guattari to describe the plan d’immanence; they need several layers of metaphors. One of them refers to the organism:

Les concepts sont l’archipel ou l’ossature, une colonne vertébrale plutôt qu’un crâne, tandis que le plan est la réspiration qui baigne ces isolats. (QP, 39)

In fact, this sentence constructs a transition from the metaphor of the sea to the one of the body. The word “archipel” is linked to “ossature”, as if the body was also constructed of islands. This doubleness is confirmed through the word “baigner”, which refers to both the waves of breath and the waves that wash the shores of the islands, and through the word “isolats”, which can refer both to isolated islands in the archipelago and to the different isolated parts of the body. Curiously, in a text by Cunningham we find a passage that echoes both the image of the sea and the parallel to the body. He starts with an image of movement and resistance concerning the wind and the sea:

Buckminster Fuller, the architect, once spoke of his feeling that man had migrated around the globe via two means: with the wind, that is under sail and perhaps eastwards generally; and against the wind, that is across the land. (Vaughan, 1997, p. 87)

And he makes of this an analogy to the tension between stillness and movement in the work of the dancing body. Furthermore, even in his description, this concerns the relation between the different “isolats” of the body and the spine:

This image of movement and resistance somehow makes me think of how an idea of mobile and static could be witnessed in the ways a dancer can be trained. The prime motivation can either be made a static one, that is by letting the position of the torso come first within the possibilities of its flexibility, and then to that adding the activity of the legs, or the prime motivation could be put in the legs, making a mobile situation upon which the back and upper limbs rest. This all presumes that a relationship runs up and down the spine into the arms and legs, to begin with, and that the base of the torso where the legs join the back both stops the action of the limbs and allows it to continue. (Vaughan, 1997, p. 87)

But many other metaphors and images follow in the paragraph describing the relation between the concepts and the plan. From geometry, to machines, to l’événement and the horizon, to bricks, to deserts and more. A whole series of metaphorical descriptions of the relation between the concepts and the plan is laid out before us. Is it a coincidence that so many metaphorical images precede the first phrase of the next paragraph? :
Le plan d’immanence n’est pas un concept pensé ni pensable, mais l’image de la pensée, l’image qu’elle se donne de ce que signifie penser, faire usage de la pensée, s’orienter dans la pensée... (QP, 39-40)

Le plan d’immanence is l’image de la pensée, it is the image that thinking has of itself and which precedes it, its conditions. The concept from Différence et répétition has been turned 180 degrees. However, it is not very clear in which sense it is an image. The word remains vague, and perhaps metaphors are the only way to approach it.

But the image has changed. It is not a dogmatic or moral image that predefines thought. It is an image that moves. What defines l’image de la pensée is that it contains movement:

La pensée revendique «seulement» le mouvement qui peut être porté à l’infini. Ce que la pensée revendique en droit, ce qu’elle sélectionne, c’est le mouvement infini ou le mouvement de l’infini. C’est lui qui constitue l’image de la pensée. (QP, 40)

To Cunningham, dance is “a moving image of life at its highest” (Vaughan, 1997, p. 61) To Deleuze and Guattari, le plan d’immanence is the moving image of thought.

What we are dealing with is not any image, and perhaps not an image at all in the static sense of the word, but an image that includes movement. The movement it includes is “le mouvement infini ou le mouvement de l’infini”. It is the movement of the infinite, it is infinite movement, movement of infinite speed. But the function of the adjective infinite is, perhaps, also to indicate that it is not a movement of something, it is not movement defined as positions in space, but movement in a much more abstract sense:

Le mouvement de l’infini ne renvoie pas à des coordonnées spatio-temporelles qui définiraient les positions successives d’un mobile et les repères fixes par rapport auxquels celles-ci varient. « S’orienter dans la pensée» n’implique ni repère objectif, ni mobile qui s’éprouverait comme sujet et qui, à ce titre, voudrait l’infini ou en aurait besoin. Le mouvement a tout pris, et il n’y a nulle place pour un sujet et un objet qui ne peuvent être que des concepts. (QP, 40)

Movement includes everything. It is not someone or something that moves. (This passage is a reference to the film books and the concepts of movement that Deleuze develops through Bergson.) But the movement is also infinite because it is double.

Deleuze and Guattari return to the back- and forth-going movement, the double movement that was present already in the rolling of the waves. This back- and forth-going movement is described in several different ways. For instance, it is an “aller et retour”:
Ce qui définit le mouvement infini, c’est un aller et retour, parce qu’il ne va pas vers une destination sans déjà revenir sur soi, l’aiguille étant aussi le pôle. (QP, 40)

Perhaps the needle and the pole is a reference to navigation at sea. The returning movement shows that the infinite movement is not a line from here to eternity. It is infinite because it keeps turning and returning, not because it follows a line that never ends. It keeps departing and coming back. It is the destination (le pôle) and the departure (l’aiguille) at the same time. It is a kind of perpetual movement on the spot (“l’aiguille étant aussi le pôle”).

This doubleness that they are trying to describe as infinite movement, however, is not a fusion of opposites as in a synthesis, but something quite extraordinary:

Ce n’est pas une fusion toutefois, c’est une réversibilité, un échange immédiat, perpétuel, instantané, un éclair. (QP, 40-41)

It is an immediate exchange, it is a double movement that happens at once, two movements at the same time. Instantaneous and perpetual at the same time, it is a movement on the spot. Deleuze and Guattari try to catch this in the metaphor of the lightning, probably in reference to the first chapter of *Différence et répétition*, where Deleuze uses it to exemplify difference in itself.19 The movement of l’image de la pensée, infinite movement, is an instantaneous and perpetual double movement, a movement on the spot which includes a difference so intensive that it produces a lightning.

The last part of the description of infinite movement as double, is the characterisation of it as a “pli”. It is double because it is bent in a fold, but it is also multiple as the pli contains many other folds:

Le mouvement infini est double, et il n’y a qu’un pli de l’un à l’autre. (...) C’est pourquoi il y a toujours beaucoup de mouvements infinis pris les uns dans les autres, pliés les uns dans les autres, dans la mesure où le retour de l’un en relance un autre instantanément, de telle façon que le plan d’immanence ne cesse de se tisser, gigantesque navette. (QP, 41)

*Le pli* is a reference to Deleuze’s work on Leibniz (*Le pli – Leibniz et le baroque*), and it is a figure of multiplicity. Here it is a movement which is folded in a back and a forth and which

19 “Mais au lieu d’une chose qui se distingue d’autre chose, imaginons quelque chose qui se distingue – et pourtant ce dont il se distingue ne se distingue pas de lui. L’éclair par exemple se distingue du ciel noir, mais doit le traîner avec lui, comme s’il se distinguait de ce qui ne se distingue pas. On dirait que le fond monte à la surface, sans cesser d’être fond. Il y a du cruel, et même du monstrueux, de part et d’autre, dans cette lutte contre un adversaire insaisissable, où le distingué s’oppose à quelque chose qui ne peut pas s’en distinguer, et qui continue d’épouser ce qui divorce avec lui. La différence est cet état de la détermination comme distinction unilatérale.” (DR, 43)
contains many other movements. It is instantaneous and perpetual at the same time as it keeps relaunching itself. And it is such movements which construct, “tissent”, le plan d’immanence. All these folded movements construct a fractal plan which folds the multiple into one:

Chaque mouvement parcourt tout le plan en faisant un retour immédiat sur lui-même, chacun se pliant, mais aussi en pliant d’autres ou se laissant plier, engendrant des rétroactions, des connexions, des proliférations, dans la fractalisation de cette infinité infiniment repliée (courbure variable du plan). (QP, 41)

Le pli is also another way of repeating the image of the waves, the waves being folds in the ocean. This interpretation becomes all the more possible with the metaphor of the “gigantesque navette” (referring to le plan d’immanence) which leads us back to it. The pli becomes the concept that can show the double movement which is nevertheless one and which contains a multiplicity of other movements. The concept of the pli performs the same movements as the metaphor of the sea. L’image de la pensée is constituted by infinite movement, and this infinite movement is a double movement, back and forth, but at the same time, instantaneous and perpetual, which contains difference in intensité. Thought is a movement on the spot, thought is a figure of immobile movement. And when Deleuze describes his collaboration with Guattari in such terms, he describes not only their work, but how their work is a procedure of thought itself, a movement of difference.

Starting from Bergson

In the chapter of Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? which deals with l’immanence as l’image de la pensée, the idea of arrested movement is not only included in the double instantaneous movement, but in the very idea of movement being arrested in the “coupe” of a concept. If the plan is the plan of infinite movement, the concepts arrest une coupe of this movement:

Mais, en réalité, les éléments du plan sont des traits diagrammatiques, tandis que les concepts sont des traits intensifs. Les premiers sont des mouvements de l’infini, tandis que les seconds sont les ordonnées intensives de ces mouvements, comme des coupes originales ou des positions différentielles : mouvements finis, dont l’infini n’est plus que de vitesse, et qui constituent chaque fois une surface ou un volume, un contour irrégulier marquant un arrêt dans le degré de prolifération. (QP, 42)

It is a finite cut of the movements of the infinite, but they contain the infinite not in extension but in intensité, in speed. This kind of coupe is a reference to Deleuze’s work on Bergson and to the film books.
And indeed, it is towards Bergson that we need to go now. For it is obvious that something has happened between l’image de la pensée of Différence et répétition and l’image de la pensée as plan d’immanence in Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? And the reason why Deleuze no longer attacks l’image de la pensée is not that he has calmed down with time. I believe it has to do with the introduction of movement. The image of the plan d’immanence is an image of movement, an image-mouvement. But to trace how this image emerges, we have to look at the development of the more explicit thought on movement in Deleuze’s thinking and here his work on Bergson leads the way.

Deleuze’s interest in movement seems to be closely linked to his inspiration by Bergson. But it is hard to know if it was this interest that took him to Bergson or Bergson that brought it to him. In an interview about his books on cinema he says:

j’aimeais des auteurs qui réclamaient qu’on introduise le mouvement dans la pensée, le « vrai » mouvement (ils dénonçaient la dialectique hégélienne comme un mouvement abstrait) (RF, 263)

Bergson is probably the most important among the thinkers he is referring to. Indeed there is a similar passage in Le Bergsonisme, where he refers to Bergson’s critique of Hegel’s dialectics: “Bergson reproche à la dialectique d’être un faux mouvement, c’est-à-dire un mouvement du concept abstrait, qui ne va d’un contraire à l’autre qu’à force d’imprécision.” (B, 38)

Deleuze’s first book on Bergon, Le Bergsonisme, was published in 1966, but already ten years before, in 1956, he published two articles: “Bergson, 1859-1941” in Les Philosophes célèbres, edited by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and “La conception de la différence chez Bergson” in Les études bergsoniennes. (Both republished in L’Île déserte et autres textes.) In Cinéma 1: L’image-mouvement and Cinéma 2: L’image-temps from 1983 and 1985 he comes back to Bergson, but in fact he has been following him all along in between.

Deleuze speaks of movement in connection with Bergson and as a result of his inspiration by Bergson in many different ways and through several different concepts. It is hard or in fact impossible to speak of one concept of movement in the philosophy of Deleuze. Rather, movement is something that is used to explain and illustrate other things, or something that is

Michal Hardt in Gilles Deleuze – An Apprenticeship in Philosophy proposes to see the critique of Hegel as the decisive factor that guides Deleuze through his apprenticeship with Bergson, Spinoza, Leibniz and others. And this aspect is also present in the quotation. But where Hardt focuses on Deleuze’s critique of the negative definition of being (being is defined in opposition to non-being), this quotation points to another critique of Hegel which has to do with the way of thinking movement.
part of the processes he is trying to describe. It is perhaps in the film books that we come the
closest to a conceptualisation of movement itself, but even here movement cannot be
understood without its other connotations.

In Deleuze’s early work on Bergson, movement seems to be present mostly in a very
abstract sense. Movement is not the centre of interest in the analysis, but it is an inherent part
of some of the processes that he is trying to describe through Bergson. The use of the word
movement therefore has a quite abstract or metaphorical character. Most of the time
movement does not refer to concrete physical movement conducted by a human body. It is an
invisible movement conducted in an abstract sphere, but nonetheless concrete and real, and
very central to Deleuze’s philosophy. It is related to some of the most important principles of
Bergson’s thinking, which he uses to develop his own.

**La durée and l’espace**

Movement enters already into the basis of Bergson’s universe as Deleuze describes it in *Le
Bergsonisme*. One of the ways of asking the right questions, is to divide things into their right
constituents, even if they might be mixed in the way we perceive them. The fundamental
division is the division between the two “*tendances*”, between space and time, “*espace*” and
“*durée*”, that being constantly divides itself into. This division is the fundamental difference.
These tendencies are also described as movements:

> Seul ce qui diffère en nature peut être dit pur, mais seules des *tendances* diffèrent en nature.
 Il s’agit donc de diviser le mixte d’après des tendances qualitatives et qualifiées, c’est-à-dire
d’après la manière dont il combine la durée et l’étendue définies comme mouvements,
directions de mouvements (ainsi durée-contraction et la matière détente). (B, 12)

Even physical movement itself is a mix of these two tendencies:

> En effet, le mouvement comme expérience physique est lui-même un mixte : d’une part
 l’espace parcouru par le mobile, qui forme une multiplicité numérique indéfiniment
divisible, dont toutes les parties, réelles ou possibles, sont actuelles et ne diffèrent qu’en
degré ; d’autre part le mouvement pur, qui est *altération*, multiplicité virtuelle qualitative,
telle la course d’Achille qui se divise en pas, mais qui change de nature chaque fois qu’elle
se divise. (B, 42)

Whereas Bergson/Deleuze conceptually divide *espace* and *durée*, Cunningham physically
experiences that they are connected: “The fortunate thing in dancing is that space and time
cannot be disconnected, and everyone can see and understand that.” (Vaughan, 1997, p. 66)
As Bergson says, physical movement is a mix of time and space. And it is perhaps also the
line of his explanation that makes the way Cunningham continues coherent: “A body still is taking up just as much space and time as a body moving.” (Vaughan, 1997, p. 66) Usually we would say that the still body takes up less space than the moving one. But what Cunningham wants to say is that still movement, i.e. movement which only moves in time and not in space, is just as intense. It is just a different kind of movement, one of altération, it is purely qualitatif. Or as Cunningham expresses it: “Dance is movement of the human body in time and space. With the two, time and space, I find the first to be more flexible.” (Vaughan, 1997, p. 100)

And here we also see which characteristics are related to l’espace and la durée. Space is actuel, it has a concrete extension. It is therefore divisible, and numerical. The differences in space are only différences de degré (difference of degree, that which differs in degree). La durée on the other hand is virtuelle and qualitative. It is différence de nature (difference of nature, that which differs in its nature): it always changes. It cannot be divided; or rather it divides itself all the time, but when it is divided it changes. It is difference itself because it is alteration, “mouvement pur”. Thus the difference is not only between two tendencies, between la durée and l’espace, but between différences de nature and différences de degré:

C’est la durée qui comprend toutes les différences qualitatives, au point qu’elle se définit comme altération par rapport à soi-même. C’est l’espace qui présente exclusivement des différences de degré, au point qu’il apparaît comme le schème d’une divisibilité indéfinie. (…) Il n’y a donc plus différence de nature entre deux tendances, mais différence entre des différences de nature qui correspondent à une tendance, et des différences de degré qui renvoient à l’autre tendance. (B, 94)

However, la durée and l’espace are not only separated through their difference, they are also related through the Bergsonian image of the cone standing on its tip (thus inverted). They are two extremes of the same universe. They are virtuellement coexistent in different degrees of contraction (contraction) or détente (relaxation/decontraction). They are not mixed, but they are respectively the most contracté and détendu degree. When la durée is extended through l’actualisation, it turns into material, and finally into space:

Considérons les degrés de détente et de contraction, tous coexistants: à la limite de la détente, nous avons la matière. Et sans doute la matière n’est pas encore l’espace, mais elle est déjà étendue. (…) Il suffirait de pousser jusqu’au bout ce mouvement de la détente pour obtenir l’espace (mais précisément l’espace serait alors trouvé, au bout de la ligne de différenciation, comme ce terme extrême qui ne se combine plus avec la durée). (B, 88-89)
Deleuze shows that these two aspects – la durée and l’espace as respectively opposite and interrelated – are not contradictory. In fact, this difference, or difference in itself becomes what relates them to each other. What they show is the internal difference of la différence, the endless differences within la différence:

La durée, la mémoire ou l’esprit, c’est la différence de nature en soi et pour soi ; et l’espace ou la matière, c’est la différence de degré hors de soi et pour nous. Entre les deux, il y a donc tous les degrés de la différence ou, si l’on préfère, toute la nature de la différence. La durée n’est que le degré le plus contracté de la matière, la matière est le degré le plus détendu de la durée. Mais aussi bien, la durée est comme une nature naturante, et la matière, une nature naturée. Les différences de degré sont le plus bas degré de la Différence ; les différences de nature sont la plus haute nature de la Différence. (B, 94)

The inverted cone is the principle in the philosophy of Bergson which describes the relation between several opposite and yet related parameters: l’espace – la durée, la matière – la mémoire, le présent – le passé, le virtuel – l’actuel. The further up we get in the inverted cone the more contracted la durée, la mémoire or le passé is. And at the point of the inverted cone the détente is so great that it is released into espace, matière or le présent. The process of détente, the transformation from durée into espace, or passé into présent, from virtuel into actuel, is called actualisation. In Le Bergsonisme, l’actualisation is especially explained when it comes to the actualisation of mémoire. This shows the workings of the inverted cone, and it also shows that movement is very much involved in this process.

L’actualisation

Mémoire in the way that Deleuze explains Bergson, is not something that is stored in the human mind. Instead, it is an ontological mémoire that exists outside the human mind, and is in fact, being. La mémoire is virtuel, it is an impersonal and not psychological “inconscient”, it is “l’être tel qu’il est en soi” (B, 50). So when Deleuze with Bergson speaks of “actualisation de souvenir” it is not only searching at the back of your mind. Instead, it is a “saut”, a jump into the past itself, “Nous sautons réellement dans l’être, dans l’être en soi, dans l’être en soi du passé.” (B, 52)

In the cone of ontological past, the contraction is how the past is organised in relation to the present. What the inverted cone represents is the coexistence of all time, “La célèbre métaphore du cône représente cet état complet de coexistence.” (B, 55) The past does not pass, but is contemporary with the present it has been; it is “le paradoxe le plus profond de la
mémorie: le passé est «contemporain» du présent qu’il a été” (B, 54). The past is all time, the past is, while the present passes:

Le passé et le présent ne désignent pas deux moments successifs, mais deux éléments qui coexistent, l’un qui est le présent, et qui ne cesse de passer, l’autre qui est le passé, et qui ne cesse pas d’être, mais par lequel tous les présents passent. (B, 54)

At each level of the cone, the whole past is contracted. Not so that one level represents a particular past, but so that every level contracts the entire past: “Il s’agit de ces niveaux distincts, dont chacun contient tout notre passé mais dans un état plus ou moins contracté.” (B, 57) In the ontological cone of the past, the degree of contraction does not depend on, for instance, how far back we are in the past. It simply expresses the difference from one level to another, “La contraction plus ou moins grande exprime donc la différence d’un niveau à l’autre.” (B, 60) That is also why Deleuze dismisses the misunderstanding that a souvenir in order to become actualised has to pass through all the levels of the cone in order to come to its final point, the present:

Le contresens en effet serait de croire que, pour s’actualiser, un souvenir doit passer par des niveaux de plus en plus contractés pour se rapprocher du présent comme point de contraction suprême ou sommet du cône. (B, 61)

The souvenir keeps its individuality at its particular level, and only this particular level enters into a process with the present in which it is actualised:

Voilà pourquoi le mouvement de translation est un mouvement par lequel le souvenir s’actualise en même temps que son niveau : il y a contraction parce que le souvenir devenant image, entre en « coalescence » avec le présent. Il passe donc par des « plans de conscience » qui l’effectuent. Mais il ne passe nullement par les niveaux intermédiaires (qui l’empêcheraient précisément de s’effectuer). (B, 61-62)

But this one level of the ontological past, passes through different “plans de conscience” in order to be actualised into a psychological image. The levels of consciousness are not the same thing as the levels of past in the cone, and they should not be confused:

D’où la nécessité de ne pas confondre les plans de conscience, à travers lesquels le souvenir s’actualise, et les régions, les coupes ou les niveaux du passé, d’après lesquels varie l’état du souvenir toujours virtuel. D’où la nécessité de distinguer la contraction ontologique, intensive, où tous les niveaux coexistent virtuellement, contractés ou détendus ; et la contraction psychologique, translative, par laquelle chaque souvenir à son niveau (si détendu qu’il soit) doit passer pour s’actualiser et devenir image. (B, 62)
It is very important to distinguish between the contraction of the ontological past, and the contraction of psychological memory. When an image of memory takes shape in the consciousness it happens through actualisation, but it is not the _souvenir pur_ that we get access to, but only an _image-souvenir_. Therefore, Deleuze distinguishes between “l’appel au souvenir” and “le rappel de l’image” (B, 59). The “appel” is the _saut_ by which one leaps into _la mémoire_, that is the ontological past. The “rappel de l’image” is what transforms one level of the past into an _image-souvenir_, which is a psychological image of the past in the human consciousness. It is in this process that the _souvenir_ traverses different levels of consciousness. This happens through movement.

*L’actualisation* of memory into an _image-souvenir_ happens through movement, namely through “la contraction-translation” and “l’orientation-rotation”. Deleuze quotes from Bergson and emphasises the movement by his use of italics:

«La mémoire intégrale répond à l’appel d’un état présent par deux mouvements simultanés, l’un de _translation_, par lequel elle se porte tout entière au-devant de l’expérience et _se contracte_ ainsi plus ou moins, sans se diviser, en vue de l’action, l’autre de _rotation_ sur elle-même, par lequel elle _s’oriente_ vers la situation du moment pour lui présenter la face la plus utile» (B, 60)

In the psychological *actualisation* of memory, the past is actualised in relation to a present situation for which it is needed. Perhaps we can say that the _contraction-translation_ directs the _souvenir_ towards the present, and through the _orientation-rotation_ memory is turned towards the task for which it is needed.

In fact, there are several kinds of movements at stake. There is a circuit between the past and the present, and within this circuit there is a kind of rotation. It is a circuit between the _image-souvenir_ and the _image-perception_ of the situation:

C’est alors, en effet, qu’il entre non seulement en « coalescence », mais dans une espèce de _circuit_ avec le présent, l’image-souvenir renvoyant à l’image-perception et inversement. D’où la métaphore précédente de la « rotation », qui prépare cette mise en circuit. (B, 63)

What the _image-perception_ and the _image-souvenir_ have in common and what allows them to enter into this circuit is movement:

Quel est le cadre commun entre le souvenir en voie d’actualisation (le souvenir devenant image) et l’image-perception? Ce cadre commun, c’est le mouvement. (B, 64)
And once in the circuit, memory can even be prolonged into a bodily action. The *souvenir* is transformed into corporal movement, through the last two movements of *actualisation*: “le mouvement dynamique” and the “mouvement mécanique”. Where the first two movements of actualisation were psychological, the last two are physical:

Voilà donc quatre aspects de l’actualisation: la translation, et la rotation, qui forment les moments propresment psychiques; le mouvement dynamique, attitude du corps nécessaire au bon équilibre des deux déterminations précédentes; enfin le mouvement mécanique, le schème moteur, qui représente le dernier stade de l’actualisation. Il s’agit, en tout ceci, de l’adaptation du passé au présent, de l’utilisation du passé en fonction du présent – de ce que Bergson appelle « l’attention à la vie ». (B, 68)

In *l’actualisation* it thus becomes clear that the image of the inverted cone contains several kinds of movement. There are the movements that are inherent in it, namely *la contraction* and *la détente*. These organise the ontological relation between the past and the present. But there are also the movements that are started in *l’actualisation*, when the past enters into a circuit with the present, and when the past is directed towards the present through the psychological movements of translation and rotation to finally become one with the physical movement of the situation. In the work of the dancer this process is particularly important as each movement reactualises the prior movement experience. But the work of the dancer also shows that this process is particularly fragile. For instance, a movement is never learned once and for all. It does not suffice that it exists in the past; it needs to be constantly put into circuit with the present in order to live:

The dancer spends his life learning, because he finds the process of dance to be, like life, continually in process. That is, the effort of controlling the body is not learned and then ignored as something safely learned, but must and does go on, as breathing does, renewing daily the old experiences and daily finding new ones. Each new movement experience, engendered by a previous one, or an initial impress of the action of the body upon time, must be discovered, felt and made meaningful to its fullest in order to enrich the dance memory. (Vaughan, 1997, p. 60)

**La différenciation**

But it is not only *la mémoire* that can be actualised. *L’actualisation* happens in other processes, too. What is common to these processes is that they are *l’actualisation* of something *virtuel*, and that they work along with the movements of the inverted cone. For instance, another kind of *actualisation* is the one of biological life, the one where *la durée* is turned into *matière*, the one where the species are created. This one is also treated in *Le*
Bergsonisme. And in that description another aspect of l’actualisation becomes prominent, namely “la différenciation”.

In fact, the principles explained concerning l’actualisation of la mémoire are valid in a much larger and more general sense. The principles of l’actualisation, le virtuel and l’actuel become inherent to Deleuze’s philosophy and are in some way present in most of his writings. They inform his way of thinking about the creation of beings, art and thought itself. In fact, already in Bergson Deleuze finds that the principle of the cone and the coexistence of all times, the relation between the actuel and the virtuel, is extended to many other processes, indeed to the whole universe:

L’idée d’une coexistence virtuelle de tous les niveaux du passé, de tous les niveaux de tension, est donc étendue à l’ensemble de l’univers : cette idée ne signifie plus seulement mon rapport avec l’être mais le rapport de toutes les choses avec l’être. Tout se passe comme si l’univers était une formidable Mémoire. (…) la vie elle-même est comparée à une mémoire, les genres ou les espèces correspondant à des degrés coexistants de cette mémoire vitale. (B, 76-77)

This is what Deleuze also calls the “Gigantesque mémoire” or “cône universel” (B, 103). But in Le Bergsonisme the example of biological life is not only used to show how these principles are extended to the universe, to an entire ontology, but also to introduce and explain another important aspect of l’actualisation, namely la différenciation.

Already the two tendencies or movements, la durée and l’espace, contain difference in the way they relate to each other, and because la durée is différence de nature in its very ontological character, it constantly changes. But difference also becomes part of a movement when the virtuel becomes actualised. L’actualisation with respect to difference is called différenciation. Différenciation is an aspect of actualisation. In Le Bergsonisme this is especially explained in relation to biological evolution, but it is equally present in other kinds of actualisation as well.

Différenciation is a movement of splitting. The virtuel passes into the actuel by splitting itself. In fact, and this is where the vitalism of Bergson and also that of Deleuze comes into the picture, this movement is the movement of life:

Tout se passe comme si la Vie se confondait avec le mouvement même de la différenciation, dans des séries ramifiées. (B, 96)

It is la durée which becomes actualised, it is la durée which is inserted into material or into space, and this movement is life:
Sans doute ce mouvement s’explique-t-il par l’insertion de la durée dans la matière : la durée se différencie d’après les obstacles qu’elle rencontre dans la matière, d’après la matérialité qu’elle traverse, d’après le genre d’extension qu’elle contracte. (...) Précisément, la Durée s’appelle vie, quand elle apparaît dans ce mouvement. (B, 96-97)

Life comes into being through this split movement. The movements of *différenciation* also follow the movements of the cone, it is split according to the degrees of *contraction* and *détente*:

Par exemple, la pure durée, à chaque instant, se divise en deux directions dont l’une est le passé, l’autre le présent ; ou bien l’élan vital à chaque instant se dissocie en deux mouvements, l’un de détente qui retombe dans la matière, l’autre de tension qui remonte dans la durée. (B, 98)

Thus, it is through *différenciation* that the *virtuel* extends itself into the *actuel*, the *virtuel* is prolonged into divergent lines of the *actuel*. This is, for instance, how biological life comes into being and becomes divergent:

Dans les exemples les plus connus, la vie se divise en plante et animal; l’animal se divise en instinct et en intelligence; un instinct à son tour se divise en plusieurs directions, qui s’actualisent dans des espèces diverses ; l’intelligence elle-même a ses modes ou ses actualisations particulières. (B, 96)

Thus, these “séries ramifiées”, branched series, come about. Life is a movement of *actualisation* where the *virtuel* differentiates itself, where difference as an internal force creates being.

It is important, however, to point out how the *actuel* relates to the *virtuel* through this process. *Le virtuel* is not a platonic level of forms that are waiting to become material. This is prevented exactly through the way *actualisation* contains difference, through the way *le virtuel* changes in *la différenciation*. The *virtuel* is not something “possible” that has to be “realised”; the *virtuel* is already real, “le virtuel n’est pas actuel, mais possède en tant que telle une réalité.” (B, 99) *L’actualisation* does not reproduce the *virtuel*, it is not a representation of the *virtuel*:

Le virtuel au contraire n’a pas à se réaliser mais à s’actualiser ; et l’actualisation a pour règles, non plus la ressemblance et la limitation, mais la différence ou la divergence, et la création. (...) tandis que le réel est à l’image et à la ressemblance du possible qu’il réalise, l’actuel au contraire, ne ressemble pas à la virtualité qu’il incarne. (B, 99-100)

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21 Normally ”differentiate” is written with a ”t” in English, but in order to avoid confusion in relation to Deleuze’s terminology, I have decided to spell it with a ”c”.
La différenciation is not imitation, but the creation of something new.

Tensions and intensity

As it has become evident, movement is intimately related to many of the concepts Deleuze explains in Bergson. Even if movement at a first glance might seem to be used in a rather vague and metaphorical way, it turns out to be an integral part of the processes. It is not physical, bodily movement, but it is nonetheless real. This is important not only to show the presence of movement in Deleuze’s early work, but also because these concepts and ideas are some that he takes with him and incorporates in his own philosophy.

The question is if these aspects of movement are related to the figure of immobile movement. Indeed, we have not seemed to encounter any examples of the figure in the early work on Bergson. There is one that resembles a figure of immobile movement, but the immobility is almost presented as something negative. In the passage describing how the movement of life becomes actualised in the material, Deleuze writes:

la vie comme mouvement s’aliène dans la forme matérielle qu’elle suscite ; en s’actualisant, en se différenciant, elle perd « contact avec le reste d’elle-même ». Toute espèce est donc un arrêt de mouvement ; on dirait que le vivant tourne sur soi-même, et se clôt. (B, 108)

This figure seems to introduce an opposition between movement and form. But Deleuze’s analysis actually points to something else: the form comes into being through movement. What the above quotation shows, is that the species do not contain all the virtuel. The virtuel différenciates itself into forms, but these in their turn do not contain all the virtuel. The virtuel is always more than the actualised forms. This is something positive: even if the forms are closed, since the virtuel is open, there are always many other différenciations and creations possible.

Besides, the above quotation differs from the figures of immobile movement in an important way: the movement is completely still. In the figure of immobile movement, on the other hand, the movement is stopped and not stopped at the same time, it is simultaneously stopped and continued, it is a perpetual, arrested movement on the spot. Perhaps we only find the form of this figure in the works that are to follow. But the movements present in Le Bergsonisme are nevertheless important in order to understand the figure of immobile movement. For they explain some of the tension that it contains.
What is central to the movement present in Deleuze’s explanation of Bergson, is that it is built around the image of the inverted cone. It is an inherent aspect of the cone that it is constituted by two opposite movements: contraction and détente, contraction and decontraction\textsuperscript{22}/relaxation. These two are simultaneously present in different degrees. It is not so that one is movement and the other immobility, but the two movements somehow counterbalance each other into the image of the cone. The cone in itself perhaps becomes a figure of immobile movement. It contains movements and tensions but it stays upright, standing on the tip, as if it was rotating. Is this what the last words of *Différence et répétition* (which also refer to Nietzsche and l’éternel retour) hint at with the curious expression “pointe mobile” (DR, 389)?

Furthermore, the cone is linked to the relation between the *virtuel* and the *actuel* and is meant to describe it. These are concepts that Deleuze continues from Bergson, and they are discretely but surely linked to movement. Firstly, as the *virtuel* is *durée*, mémoire, it is movement, it is that which is indivisible, or changes when it divides itself, mouvement pur. Secondly, it actualises itself through the movement of différenciation. The *virtuel* and the *actuel* are perhaps never far from the figure of immobile movement, if only in the way the figure contains the tension of the opposite movements of the cone, and in the way it contains and exemplifies l’intensité. For intensité is also linked to difference and to the *virtuel*, as it becomes obvious in the way Deleuze continues the concepts of différenciation and actualisation in *Différence et répétition*. Here we discover that actualisation not only has to do with memory and biology, it is even inherent in thinking.

**Différen-c/t-iation and intensité**

*La différenciation* and l’*actualisation* of the *virtuel* are some of the aspects that Deleuze continues in his philosophy, and which find a form of their own in *Différence et répétition*. Here Deleuze develops the ideas further, adds a lot of new material, and complicates or differentiates them even more. For instance, Deleuze transforms the concept of différenciation into the concept of “differen-c/t-iation”.

What happens when the concept of “differen-c/t-iation” is formed, is that it takes on materially what it is supposed to illustrate, namely difference. The word phonetically mimes what it means, it literally incorporates it: “Le *t* et le *c* sont ici le trait distinctif ou le rapport phonologique de la différence en personne.” (DR, 270) But it is not only a phonetic and

\textsuperscript{22} “Decontraction” does not exist in English, but it seems to be more suitable than “relaxation” as opposition to “contraction”.

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stylistic sophistication; *différentiation* and *différenciation* describe two different parts of the process: *la différentiation* is the difference on the *virtuel* level, *la différenciation* is the difference as it develops in the passage towards the *actuel* level:

Tandis que la différenciation détermine le contenu virtuel de l’Idée comme problème, la différenciation exprime l’actualisation de ce virtuel et la constitution des solutions (par intégrations locales). La différenciation est comme la seconde partie de la différence, et il faut former la notion complexe de différen-t/c-iation pour désigner l’intégrité ou l’intégralité de l’objet. (...) Tout objet est double, sans que ses deux moitiés se ressemblent, l’une étant image virtuelle, l’autre image actuelle. (DR, 270-271)

When we see the word *Idée*, as in this quotation, we should not see a Platonic totality waiting to be incorporated into shadows. The *Idée* in Deleuze’s terminology is that which is essentially difference, “problématique”²³ and multiplicity. It is *différence* and it is *intensité*. *Idée* and *Problème* are *virtuel* forms that can be actualised for instance in biological forms. But the words also point to the fact that the same process is inherent in thinking, they can become thoughts. Thinking proceeds through the processes of difference: the internal difference of *l’Idée* as *problématique* (*différentiation*), the *différenciation* of *l’Idée* as it becomes *actuel*. Thinking is creating with and through difference. In fact, just as all things are consciousness for Bergson, all things begin with the *Idées* and all things think:

Tout corps, toute chose pense et est une pensée, pour autant que, réduite à ses raisons internes, elle exprime une Idée dont elle détermine l’actualisation. (DR, 327)

And what the thinker has to do, is to go in the opposite direction and discover the differences, the intensities, the *Idées* from which all things are made:

Mais le penseur lui-même fait de toutes choses ses différences individuelles ; c’est en ce sens qu’il est chargé des pierres et des diamants, des plantes « et des animaux mêmes ». (DR, 327)

His meeting with the *virtuel* level of differences and *Idées* springs from sensation:

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²³ The broadness of Deleuze’s argument is even indicated in this word. It refers to “problème”, in the ordinary sense as something to be solved (for instance by the mind), but it also refers to and continues Gilbert Simondon’s use of the “problématique” to designate the pre-individual level of (biological) being. “La catégorie du «problématique» prend, dans la pensée de Simondon une grande importance, dans la mesure même où elle est pourvue d’un sens objectif : elle ne désigne plus en effet en état provisoire de notre connaissance, un concept subjectif indéterminé, mais un moment de l’être, le premier moment pré-individuel.” (ID, 122)
Il est vrai que, sur le chemin qui mène à ce qui est à penser, tout part de la sensibilité. De l’intensif à la pensée, c’est toujours par une intensité que la pensée nous advient. (DR, 188)

It is in the meeting with l’intensité in sensation that the faculties of the thinker’s consciousness are confronted with their own difference and limit and forced to think as described in the critique of the dogmatic image de la pensée. It is in the meeting with intensité that we are confronted with the virtuel and our Idées start to se différencier.

Whereas movement in Le Bergsonisme was used to produce the intensity of the virtuel and the relation between the virtuel and the actuel, in Différence et répétition Deleuze goes directly to the definition of the concept of intensité. L’intensité is defined as différence:

L’expression «différence d’intensité» est une tautologie. L’intensité est la forme de la différence comme raison du sensible. Toute intensité est différentielle, différence en elle-même. (DR, 287)

L’intensité has three characteristics, according to Deleuze. Firstly, l’intensité contains difference in itself:

la quantité intensive comprend l’inégal en soi. Elle représente la différence dans la quantité, ce qu’il y a d’inannulable dans la différence de quantité, d’inégalisable dans la quantité même : elle est donc la qualité propre à la quantité. Elle apparaît moins comme une espèce du genre quantité que comme la figure d’un moment fondamental ou originel présent dans toute quantité. (DR, 299)

L’intensité is not just a quality that is added to the forms of being, but the foundation of being itself. It is from intensity, from the quantités intensives that being is made. It is “la figure d’un moment fondamental”, this fundamental moment is the inherent difference in the quantité. In fact, Deleuze re-nominates what Bergson calls quality and which belongs to la durée. He insists that Bergson already found the quantités intensives but called them by the name of quality:

Mais ainsi Bergson a déjà mis dans la qualité tout ce qui revient aux quantités intensives. Il voulait libérer la qualité du mouvement superficiel qui la lie à la contrariété ou la contradiction (c’est pourquoi il opposait la durée au devenir) ; mais il ne pouvait le faire qu’en prêtant à la qualité une profondeur qui est précisément celle de la quantité intensive. (DR, 308)
Perhaps it is these quantités intensives that Cunningham believes the dancer can obtain. At least the intensity of the brilliant dancer is strong enough to “melt steel”, that is, change a material from within, make it differ from itself:

It is that blatant exhibiting of this energy, i.e., of energy geared to an intensity high enough to melt steel in some dancers, that gives the great excitement. (...) The dancer knows how solidly he must be aware of this centering when he dances. And it is just this very fusion at a white heat that gives the look of objectivity and serenity that a fine dancer has. (Vaughan, 1997, p. 86)

In Deleuze’s intensité the opposition of qualities is exchanged for la différence dans l’intensité. But perhaps certain oppositions of movement can convey it. Perhaps they can become “la figure d’un moment fondamental ou originel présent dans toute quantité”.

The second characteristic of l’intensité is that it affirms difference, “comprenant l’inégal en soi, étant déjà différence en soi, l’intensité affirme la différence.” (DR, 301) In fact, it affirms all differences, “Parce que l’intensité est déjà différence, elle renvoie à une suite d’autres différences qu’elle affirme en s’affirmant.” (DR, 302) The third characteristic of l’intensité is that it is “impliqué” and not “expliqué”, it is virtuel not actuel. It is “une quantité impliquée, enveloppée, «embryonnée» (DR, 305). It is a quantity but it has not got extension. It exists in another way:

 Nous devons concevoir l’implication comme une forme d’être parfaitement déterminée. Dans l’intensité, nous appelons différence ce qui est réellement impliquant, enveloppant ; nous appelons distance ce qui est réellement impliqué ou enveloppé. (DR, 305)

L’intensité is a virtuel quantity, “C’est pourquoi l’intensité n’est ni divisible comme la quantité extensive, ni indivisible comme la qualité” (DR, 305-306) Indeed, it is indivisible or does not divide itself without changing its nature, “Une quantité intensive se divise, mais ne se divise pas sans changer de nature”. (DR, 306) (The likeness with la durée or with movement is obvious.) But this also means that when the intensité becomes actuel, it is reduced. L’intensité is virtuel and through the actualisation it gets an extension, but the quantités intensives are covered by a quality:

L’intensité s’explique, se développe dans une extension (extensio). C’est cette extension qui la rapporte à l’étendue (extensum), où elle apparaît hors de soi, recouverte par la qualité. La différence d’intensité s’annule ou tend à s’annuler dans ce système ; mais c’est elle qui crée ce système en s’expliquant. (DR, 294)
But we can also turn this around, and say that when *l'intensité* appears we are approaching the *virtuel* level, even if we might first see it in its *actuel*, extended, and reduced form constituted of a difference in quality.

***“L’être « du » sensible” and the paradox***

When explaining *l'intensité* Deleuze several times chooses examples or metaphors that are interesting to study in relation to the figure of immobile movement. In order to describe how *l'intensité* affirms all differences, from the highest to the lowest, Deleuze adds the following metaphor:

> Il faut la puissance d’une Cascade ou d’une chute profonde pour aller jusque-là, pour faire de la dégradation même une affirmation. Tout est vol de l’aigle, tout est surplomb, suspens et descente. Tout va de haut en bas, et, par ce mouvement affirme le plus bas – synthèse asymétrique. (DR, 302)

The distance between high and low, as in a fall or a waterfall, illustrates *l’intensité*. The opposition between the two terms does not equalise the difference but stays asymmetric, and that is what makes it *intensive*. Perhaps the figure of immobile movement is constructed along such a principle of asymmetry that is supposed to affirm difference?

Only, it is not the opposition as such that is important, as in Plato’s “le sensible-contraire” which Deleuze discusses. Neither is it an opposition that finds a synthesis as in Hegel’s *faux mouvement*. Deleuze shows that “l’être «du» sensible” is not linked to the opposition of qualities, but to the *quantités intensives* of difference. Oppositions are only qualities which take shape in extension, and thus they also cover the *intensité virtuelle* and reduce it:

> C’est la différence dans l’intensité, non pas la contrariété dans la qualité, qui constitue l’être « du » sensible. La contrariété qualitative n’est que la réflexion de l’intense, réflexion qui le trahit en l’expliquant dans l’étendue. C’est l’intensité, la différence dans l’intensité, qui constitue la limite propre de la sensibilité. (DR, 305)

So if the “contrariété” of movement and immobility do convey something of the *virtuel*, it is not because they are opposite qualities, but because they might convey some of the intensity of difference, *les quantités intensives*. This is not easy, however, as the extended forms of intensity – as for instance in a material textual form – tend to cover and reduce the *virtuel* when it becomes actualised into a form which has extension. But Deleuze seems to be looking for something that can convey *la différence dans l’intensité* or the *quantités intensives*,

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something like a “figure d’un moment fondamental” or une libre figure de la différence that can produce intensité all the way from sensation to thought.

In another example describing the characteristics of l’intensité, it seems as if Deleuze uses movement to describe this intensité virtuelle which is not extended. It is movement that takes him the closest to it. The difference between fast or slow movement illustrates how difference is not a difference in extension, but a difference in intensité. Difference is constituted by a distance between heterogeneous components that enter into “une relation asymétrique indivisible”:

Ainsi l’accélération ou le ralentissement d’un mouvement définissent en lui des parties intensives qu’on doit dire plus grandes ou plus petites, en même temps qu’elles changent de nature et suivant l’ordre de ces changements (différences ordonnées). C’est en ce sens que la différence en profondeur se compose de distances, la « distance » n’étant nullement une quantité extensive, mais une relation asymétrique indivisible, de caractère ordinal et intensif, qui s’établit entre séries de termes hétérogènes et exprime à chaque fois la nature de ce qui ne se divise pas sans changer de nature. (DR, 306)

It seems that movement, and more particularly the differences between vitesses of movement, slow or quick, still or fast, has the potential of showing how difference is not a difference in extension, nor in quality, but in intensité. This is because movement, to Deleuze, is not something that is measured in extension through points in space, but that which cannot be divided and only divides itself through changing. It is la durée or the quantités intensives. The differences within movement show the internal difference of les quantités intensives, it shows l’intensité virtuelle. Perhaps the figure of immobile movement is such a relation asymétrique indivisible that illustrates the profoundness of difference, une libre figure de la différence that puts sensation into movement. This also explains why it has to be on the spot. If it is not, the risk that it might become an opposition resulting in a synthesis is imminent. If it is completely simultaneous and perpetual, it contains its difference in an asymmetrical figure.

L’intensité, l’être « du » sensible is in itself a kind of relation asymétrique indivisible composed of oppositions that cannot be synthesised: it is that which can only be felt and which at the same time cannot be felt. It is the limit of sensation:

Aussi a-t-elle le caractère paradoxal de cette limite : elle est l’insensible, ce qui ne peut pas être senti, parce qu’elle est toujours recouverte par une qualité qui l’aliène ou qui la « contrarie », distribuée dans une étendue qui la renverse et qui l’annule. Mais d’une autre manière, elle est ce qui ne peut être que senti, ce qui définit l’exercice transcendant de la sensibilité, puisqu’elle donne à sentir, et par là éveille la mémoire et force la pensée. (DR, 305)
L’intensité is that which cannot be felt and can only be felt, that which leads to “l’exercice transcendant” when the shocks of difference go through the different levels till it reaches thought. L’être «du» sensible is itself a figure of an unresolvable opposition. It is a paradox. But perhaps it is also the figure of the paradox which can lead us to it, which can show l’être «du» sensible.

The paradox seems to be a form that appeals to Deleuze. In Différence et répétition it is an alternative to the “bon sens” of representation, “La manifestation de la philosophie n’est pas le bon sens, mais le paradoxe.” (DR, 293) It seems that the paradox has this ability to lead the sensibility to its limit, lead thought to its limit, to difference:

Subjectivement le paradoxe brise l’exercice commun et porte chaque faculté devant sa limite propre, devant son incomparable, la pensée devant l’impensable qu’elle est pourtant seule à pouvoir penser, la mémoire devant l’oubli qui est aussi son immémorial, la sensibilité devant l’insensible qui se confond avec son intensif...(DR, 293)

A paradox is needed that confuses the senses, or distorts them, that cancels representation and restores difference. The paradox is une libre figure de la différence. If the figure of immobile movement is such a paradox, it might if not completely convey, then at least hint at l’intensité, distorting the senses, and forcing the faculties of the mind and the body to their extreme, confronting us with the intensité of l’être «du» sensible.

Returning to Bergson

What goes through both Le Bergsonisme and Différence et répétition is the image of the world as a Bergsonian cone, where le virtuel is being actualised into forms and thoughts. In this image, movement is an inherent part of the machine. When Deleuze comes back to Bergson much later in the film books, the world as a cone is still present though it gets another form, the world as cinema, and the movement has become central, though strictly related to the image and to time. Still it is movement in the rather abstract sense of all that moves, changes and is transformed, but it is also an analysis of the concrete movement of the pictures in film.

The connotations from Le Bergsonisme, Différence et répétition, to say nothing of the work with Guattari, are breathing in the text. But Bergson is not only present in the form of connotations. Indeed, in this work, Deleuze returns to Bergson, but with another focus. Even if Bergson dismissed the cinema for repeating the fault of all perception, namely trying to
reproduce movement with the help of still pictures, Deleuze sets out to show that another interpretation is possible, that the cinema, at least in its later forms, is indeed Bergsonian.

Deleuze’s work on the cinema consists of two volumes: *Cinéma 1: L’image-mouvement* (1983) and *Cinéma 2: L’image-temps* (1985). The two titles correspond to the two kinds of pictures that Deleuze detects in the cinema. These two kinds of signs are related to different periods (even if Deleuze insists that it is not a history of cinema that he is writing), *l’image-mouvement* being typical of early, classical cinema, and *l’image-temps* being typical of modern cinema (dating approximately from the Italian neo-realism and the French Nouvelle vague), though they can be present regardless of the period. For moreover and more importantly, the *image-mouvement* and the *image-temps* are also part of an attempt to invent a terminology (“une taxinomie, un essai de classification des images et des signes” (IM, 7)) that fits the material that cinema is made of: movement and images.

Deleuze has been criticised for being inconsistent when he insists that there is no difference in value between the two kinds of images, that one is not better than the other, as it seems that he has a preference for the *image-temps*, its way of condensing time, possibly even constituting an *image cristalline*. For what differs between the two kinds of images is not whether they contain movement or time, they always contain both, but the relation that exists between time and movement in the image. But perhaps this possible imbalance is equalised if we focus on the analysis of and the role of movement. For this is what is interesting in relation to the figure of immobile movement: in the cinema books, movements and images are not conceived as being apart but, following Bergson, as being combined.

*L’image-mouvement*

Since its beginning film has had a close connection to dance, even if it seems that it is only in recent years that this is beginning to be explored in research. Dance was a privileged subject for the lens of film camera. As dance is movement, it emblematically showed what the new technology was capable of. Once film (and later video) had become more accessible and easier to use, Cunningham was among the first choreographers to adopt it for their own use. Not only did he engage in dance film and dance video productions in cooperation with first Charles Atlas and later Elliot Capland, he even tried to get as acquainted as possible with the technology himself in order to explore its potential for dance. For instance, in his video *Westbeth* from 1974 he tried to ask some fundamental questions of the camera and explore them in a methodological way. But Cunningham does not only seem to see the connection to dance as obvious because film is images in movement; he also thinks dance is visual
“About ten years ago, it struck me that there was bound to be a close connection between dancing and TV, because dancing is visual.” (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p. 190)

*L’image-mouvement* is what the cinema consists of, images in movement, mobile cuts of movement. It is the basic unity of the cinema. To get to this conclusion, however, Deleuze needs to turn Bergson’s view on the cinema 180 degrees. And this is what he does in the first chapter of the first book, the first of the four chapters explicitly dedicated to Bergson (“Thèses sur le mouvement – premier commentaire de Bergson”).

Bergson only knew the early cinema, but was not carried away by the new technology. He dismisses it as only repeating the oldest of illusions: that movement can be reproduced by immobile cuts. This old illusion he calls “l’illusion cinématographique”. Whereas the antique version of this illusion consists of the idea that “poses” or “instants privilégiés” (IM, 13) can reproduce movement, the modern version proceeds by assembling images that are equally distant from each other in time (“instants quelconques” (IM, 13), “L’instant quelconque, c’est l’instant équidistant d’un autre.” (IM, 15)) But though the modern way of proceeding is analytical, this does not prevent, according to Bergson, that movement itself, that which cannot be divided (*la durée*), still escapes. The film proceeds at 24 images per second, but the movement in between still disappears.

Deleuze turns this point of view upside down in two ways. First, by saying that even if film is still technically part of the illusion, it might not be so in the perception of film. Deleuze proposes that the cinema can in a way “correct” the natural perception which is trapped in the illusion:

> Et d’abord la reproduction de l’illusion n’est-elle pas aussi sa correction, d’une certaine manière ? Peut-on conclure de l’artificialité des moyens à l’artificialité du résultat ? Le cinéma procède avec des photogrammes, c’est-à-dire avec des coupes immobiles, vingt-quatre images/seconde (ou dixhuit au début). Mais ce qu’il nous donne, on l’a souvent remarqué, ce n’est pas le photogramme, c’est une image moyenne à laquelle le mouvement ne s’ajoute pas, ne s’additionne pas : le mouvement appartient au contraire à l’image moyenne comme donnée immédiate. (IM, 10-11)

The film, Deleuze states, does not offer us an immobile image to which abstract movement is added, but it directly offers us an “image-mouvement”, a mobile cut of movement, “une coupe mobile”:
Bref, le cinéma ne nous donne pas une image à laquelle il ajouterait du mouvement, il nous donne immédiatement une image-mouvement. Il nous donne bien une coupe, mais une coupe mobile, et non pas une coupe immobile + du mouvement abstrait. (IM, 11)

Deleuze opposes two ways of reproducing movement: instant images with added abstract movement, or “mouvement comme coupe mobile”, which is like a cut which includes its own movement. It is this second kind which is able to access movement and capture that which is inherent in movement, namely the changement qualitatif. For in the film books, movement is still closely related to la durée, shows la durée, almost is la durée, or at least shares the same qualities. It is that which cannot be divided, that which changes whenever it divides itself, movement is a mobile cut of la durée:

le mouvement est une coupe mobile de la durée, c’est-à-dire du Tout ou d’un tout. Ce qui implique que le mouvement exprime quelque chose de plus profond, qui est le changement dans la durée ou le tout. (IM, 18)

It is a block of movement, “un bloc d’espace-temps, puisque lui appartient chaque fois le temps du mouvement qui s’opère en lui” (IM, 87). Time is thus already included in the image-mouvement, it is a sequence of time or durée within the block. The cinema, being image-mouvement, thus already includes time. The film has potential, it has the possibility of expressing movement, la durée and time, it has access to the universe. And this is the second critical gesture of inversion that Deleuze executes: he proposes that the images in movement of the cinema correspond to what Bergson in the first chapter of Matière et mémoire discovers as “l’image-mouvement”.

L’image-mouvement, as the name shows, contains both images and movements. But not only in the sense that the image contains or shows a sequence of movement. Deleuze with Bergson goes further than that: movement and images become interchangeable, movement is images and images are movement. This is based on the theory which Bergson proposes in the first chapter of Matière et mémoire, where he conceives of the world, everything included, as images in movement. All things, atoms, plants, beings, are images in movement that act on each other and react to each other. Even the human consciousness or the human brain is a moving image, but an image with the particular characteristic that it introduces an interval between the action and the reaction. Everything is conceived on an ontological level, dissolved into movement, “C’est un état trop chaud de la matière pour qu’on y distingue des corps solides.” (IM, 86). (It could also be this fluid material of the world that Cunningham’s dancer obtains through the steel-melting intensity and white heat.) The unities we perceive are
only perceived as unities because our perception retains but a small part of the movement of the images. “C’est un monde d’universelle variation” (IM, 86), it is a way of thinking le plan d’immanence.

This also means that not only images are conceived as movement, but even matter is conceived as movement:

Cet ensemble infini de toutes les images constitue une sorte de plan d’immanence. L’image existe en soi, sur ce plan. Cet en-soi de l’image, c’est la matière : non pas quelque chose qui serait caché derrière l’image, mais au contraire l’identité absolue de l’image et du mouvement. C’est l’identité de l’image et du mouvement qui nous fait conclure immédiatement à l’identité de l’image-mouvement et de la matière. «Dites que mon corps est matière, ou dites qu’il est image...» L’image-mouvement et la matière-écoulement sont strictement la même chose. (IM, 86-87)

But not only movement, images and matter are equivalent, so too is light:

L’identité de l’image et du mouvement a pour raison l’identité de la matière et de la lumière. L’image est mouvement comme la matière est lumière. (IM, 88)

Le plan d’immanence is images as movement or matter as light, everything is fluid, everything is movement. When the images of the cinema are images-mouvements they are thus a window to this ontological universe where everything is in movement. But at the same time the workings of the images in cinema become the picture of how the immanent plan consists of such relations of movement, “c’est l’univers comme cinéma en soi, un métacinéma” (IM, 88).

L’image-mouvement as immobile movement

At a first glance it might seem as if the cinema books do not contain many figures of immobile movement similar to the one describing Deleuze and Guattari’s working relationship. This, however, is not because Deleuze has abandoned it. On the contrary, it seems to be entirely integrated into the material and the procedure of thinking that leads him to his taxonomy of images.

The very idea of image-mouvement is a combination of immobility (the image) and movement. Even if Deleuze argues that it is not a still picture but a mobile picture, it does not annul the instance of immobility, it is more true to say that it completely integrates the movement and the image. The immobility is also maintained in the idea of a cut, though it is transferred from the instant picture to the sequence. The word bloc, which is a metaphor that
could be referring to both stone and concrete, also contains immobility. Even if a bloc d’espace-temps contains movement, it is confined and arrested within a limited unity.

Movement is also that which links the parts or sequences together. It makes the link between “les parties” and “le tout”, as it becomes obvious for instance in the montage. This makes movement the link between the immobility of the parts, and the open movement of the whole:

Ainsi le mouvement a deux faces, aussi inséparables que l’endroit et l’envers, le verso et le recto : il est rapport entre parties, et il est affection du tout. D’une part il modifie les positions respectives des parties d’un ensemble, qui sont comme ses coupes, chacune immobile en elle-même ; d’autre part il est lui-même la coupe mobile d’un tout dont il exprime le changement. Sous un aspect, il est dit relatif ; sous l’autre, il est dit absolu. (IM, 32)

The relative movement is the one that concerns or takes place within the closed “ensembles”, the absolute movement is the coupe mobile that shows the transformation of la durée.

Even in its very origin in Bergson the image-mouvement is a combination of immobility and movement. As Deleuze describes it in the fourth chapter of the first book (“L’image-mouvement et ses trois variétés – second commentaire de Bergson”), it is an attempt to find a solution to a problem of the period:

La crise historique de la psychologie coïncide avec le moment où il ne fut plus possible de tenir une certaine position : cette position consistait à mettre les images dans la conscience, et les mouvements dans l’espace. (IM, 83)

Bergson, as Deleuze describes it, discovered that the images in the mind and the movements in space had to be linked:

Comment expliquer que des mouvements produisent tout d’un coup une image, comme dans la perception, ou que l’image produise un mouvement, comme dans l’action volontaire? (...) Et comment empêcher que le mouvement ne soit déjà image au moins virtuelle, et que l’image ne soit déjà mouvement au moins possible ? (IM, 83)

The question of images and movement becomes a junction where Bergson tries to overcome both the conflict between materialism and idealism and the dualism of the mind and the body. Bergson’s answer was to conceive of everything as images in movement, both the consciousness and the objects it perceives, and to make images and movements equivalent. In other words, to come up with a concept of movement that includes immobility, immobility that is moving, a figure of immobile movement.
**L’image-temps**

The potential of cinema as expressed in the first volume of the cinema books, is that it has a privileged relation to movement, being able to show *l’image-mouvement*, and to time, as *l’image-mouvement* expresses *la durée*. However, the *image-mouvement* only shows time indirectly. In the *image-mouvement* time is subordinate to movement, time is shown as a consequence of movement. Quite simply, we might say that movement takes time and therefore includes and shows time. These images of time are linked to what Deleuze calls “le schème sensori-moteur”, the physical laws of movement. In these images actions follow ordinary physical laws of movement, and time is a function of this movement.

In the second volume Deleuze concentrates on what he calls *l’image-temps*. In these images the image of time is direct. It is movement which is subordinated to time, movement is now a function of time. These images do not have as object situations that are *sensori-motrices*, but situations that are *optique-sonores*. *L’image optique-sonore* dwells on the object or situation exploring its optic, auditive and tactile qualities intensely. It corresponds to what Bergson called “reconnaissance attentive”, whereas the image *sensori-motrice* corresponds to the “reconnaissance habituelle”. Instead of passing on from one thing to the other, the attention is focused on one thing, to explore it on different levels, in different dimensions. It is interesting in this connection that Cunningham believes that the ability to move even when being still comes with attention so that “one goes on to something else”:

> I don’t know a particular way to do that [moving when still] but I think that if it is to develop, then one develops it by working with that in mind daily, even in class, even in technique class, so that although one comes to positions, positions which must be clear, one does not stay there, one goes on to something else. I think it develops simply, first of all, by being conscious of a possibility of rest, not as rest, but as activity in inactivity [.] (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p. 129)

Therefore it seems that *l’image optique-sonore* is related to a slowing down of the movement. The lingering of the camera is often immobile, “d’une certaine manière ils [les créateurs] arrêtent le mouvement, redécouvrent la puissance du plan fixe” (IT,33). But Deleuze insists that the movement is not stopped, only changed. What he is looking for is not a still image, but an image that still includes movement though differently:

> Les images optiques et sonores pures, le plan fixe et le montage-cut définissent et impliquent bien un au-delà du mouvement. Mais ils n’arrêtent pas exactement, ni chez les personnages ni même dans la caméra. Ils font que le mouvement ne doit pas être perçu dans une image sensori-motrice, mais saisi et pensé dans un autre type d’image. (IT, 34)
The movement is exchanged for other forces, it accumulates into other forces. The image sort of thickens with dimensions, “L’image-mouvement n’a pas disparu, mais n’existe plus que comme la première dimension d’une image qui ne cesse de croître en dimensions.” (IT, 34)

Perhaps the slowing down of the movement introduces an interval like the one in the brain, it opens the way for reflection, “Il fallait qu’elle [l’image] s’ouvre sur des révélations puissantes et directes, celles de l’image-temps, de l’image lisible et de l’image pensante.” (IT, 35)

The movement, however, is not only an immobile movement because it is slowed down, but also because it enters into a circuit on the spot. What seems to happen, is that the movement that was progressive and moving horizontally from one thing to another, becomes arrested and starts circulating:

La situation purement optique et sonore (description) est une image actuelle, mais qui, au lieu de se prolonger en mouvement, s’enchaîne avec une image virtuelle et forme avec elle un circuit. (IT, 66)

The movement becomes a circular movement on the spot, based on the Bergsonian model of the cone. It is a movement that links not several actuelles images, but an actuelle and a virtuelle image. And the spot on which the circuit is circulating, is really a spot, it is so small that the actuelle and the virtuelle images become indiscernible.

L’image-cristal

The circuit that arises can be small or large. It can be a circuit between an image-souvenir and an actuelle image as in the dream, or it can be expanded to what Deleuze calls “un mouvement du monde”, where the movement is no longer executed by the characters but by the world itself. But the one where Deleuze finds the essence of the circuit, is also the one where we can find the concentration of a figure of immobile movement. This is in the images where the circuit between the actuelle and the virtuelle image is condensed into the smallest circuit possible, into a movement entirely on the spot. Here the movements within the circuit also become obvious. And this image, l’image-cristal, is in many ways presented as the most important of images, this is where cinema fulfils its potential. This might, perhaps, tell us more about the importance of and the connotations of the figure of immobile movement.

L’image-cristal is such a small circuit that the two images, the actuel and the virtuel that it consists of, can hardly be distinguished. They are so closely related that they enter into “coalescence” (IT, 93). They reflect each other. It is not the actuelle image and any virtuelle image, but “l’image actuelle et son image virtuelle” (IT, 93). The two images are
“indiscernable”, “Mais ce point d’indiscernabilité, c’est précisément le plus petit cercle qui le constitue” (IT, 93). *L’image-cristal* has two sides that cannot be distinguished from each other though they are not identical. They are reversible:

L’*image-cristal*, ou la description cristalline, a bien deux faces qui ne se confondent pas. (…) Tandis que l’indiscernabilité constitue une illusion objective; elle ne suprime pas la distinction des deux faces, mais la rend inassignable, chaque face prenant le rôle de l’autre dans une relation qu’il faut qualifier de présupposition réciproque ou réversibilité. (IT, 94).

But the two faces can also be described as a double movement of capture and liberation, as Deleuze does it with a comparison to still images that enter into rotation:

C’est comme si une image en miroir, une photo, une carte postale s’animaient, prenaient de l’indépendance et passaient dans l’actuel, quitte à ce que l’image actuelle revienne dans le miroir, reprenne place dans la carte postale ou la photo, suivant un double mouvement delibération et de capture. (IT, 93)

The circuit takes place in a limited space, “le cristal est une scène, ou plutôt une piste, avant d’être un amphithéâtre” (IT, 97). As examples of crystals in cinema Deleuze for instance mentions mirrors and boats. He actually describes it as a movement (in circuit) on the spot:

C’est un circuit sur place actuel-virtuel, et non pas une actualisation du virtuel en fonction d’un actuel en déplacement. (IT, 107)

That *l’image-cristal* is a figure of immobile movement could not be much clearer, it is a “circuit sur place”. The movement in the circuit is a double movement between the *actuelle* and the *virtuelle* image:

Ce qu’on voit dans le cristal, c’est donc un dédoublement que le cristal lui-même ne cesse de faire tourner sur soi, qu’il empêche d’aboutir, puisque c’est un perpétuel *Se-distinguer*, distinction en train de se faire et qui reprend toujours en soi les termes distincts, pour les relancer sans cesse. (IT, 109)

It is a movement which is perpetual, which is always recommenced (“relancer sans cesse”), but which is also arrested (“qu’il empêche d’aboutir”). The doubleness is a “*Se-distinguer*” – a word formed from the reflexive form. It is a reflexive movement, not unlike the double movements described in *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie*?
But the “dédoublement” which the crystal shows is not only between two images. It is the movement of time. It is the “dédoublement” of time as it constantly splits itself into a present and the past of this present (again Deleuze comes back to his analysis of Bergson):

Ce qui constitue l’image-cristal, c’est l’opération la plus fondamentale du temps: puisque le passé ne se constitue pas après le présent qu’il a été, mais en même temps, il faut que le temps se dédouble à chaque instant en présent et passé, qui diffère l’un de l’autre en nature, ou, ce qui revient au même, dédouble le présent en deux directions hétérogènes, dont l’une s’élance vers l’avenir et l’autre tombe dans le passé. (IT, 108-109)

Time does not split into a present and a past which is forever gone, but into a present and its past which coexists with it (as in the Bergsonian cone):

Le passé ne succède pas au présent qu’il n’est plus, il coexiste avec le présent qu’il a été. Le présent, c’est l’image actuelle, et son passé contemporain, c’est l’image virtuelle, l’image en miroir. (IT, 106)

Time does not progress linearly leaving itself behind in a long line. It splits itself on the spot into a circuit where past and present coexist as a virtuelle and actuelle image that reflect each other. It is the circuit between the present at the tip of the cone and the entire virtuel time it contains. It is a circuit between the present and a particular level of contraction of the past. The movement of time is a splitting, a différenciation:

Il faut que le temps se scinde en même temps qu’il se pose ou se déroule : il se scinde en deux jets disymétriques dont l’un fait passer tout le présent, et dont l’autre conserve tout le passé. Le temps consiste dans cette scission, et c’est elle, c’est lui qu’on voit dans le cristal. (IT, 109)

Time splits (“se scinde”), at the same time as it is arrested into presents (“se pose”), and it contains a fundamental difference, the one between le présent and le passé. It is not a division on a line, but an asymmetric movement of différenciation. Moreover, it is a movement which is never ended but always recommenced:

Seulement, ajoute Bergson, cette scission ne va jamais jusqu’au bout. (...) C’est l’échange inégal, ou le point d’indiscernabilité, l’image mutuelle. Le cristal vit toujours à la limite, il est lui-même « limite fuyante entre le passé immédiat qui n’est déjà plus et l’avenir immédiat qui n’est pas encore (...), miroir mobile qui réfléchit sans cesse la perception en souvenir ». (IT, 109)
This scission of time is difference in itself, or the *différenciation* of life, “Ce qu’on voit dans le cristal, c’est toujours le jaillissement de la vie, du temps, dans son dédoublement ou sa différenciation.” (IT, 121). *L’image-cristal* is a “miroir mobile”, a still image in movement which shows life as time. Or as Cunningham says (as quoted at the beginning of the chapter): “Time, the very essence of our daily lives, can give to dancing one of the qualities that make it, at its most beautiful, a moving image of life at its highest.” (Vaughan, 1997, p. 61)

Where *l’image-mouvement* contained time as a function of the movement, *l’image-cristal* contains time because it shows the scission of time, the *différenciation* of time. It is a *mise-en-abyme* of time. But though it is tempting to see *l’image-cristal* as more perfect, it is interesting to remark that both images are figures of immobile movement, though in different ways. *L’image-mouvement* is a figure of immobile movement because it is a mobile cut of *la durée*. *L’image-cristal* is a figure of immobile movement because it is a movement on the spot, a circuit of time where time is produced. *L’image-mouvement* refers to the whole of time because it refers beyond the parts of the cuts. *L’image-cristal* contains all time because it contains its production, it contains the *différenciation* of time. The forces at work in it are condensed. And this is possibly what is most important in the figure of immobile movement, that it condenses the forces into a circuit on the spot.

**Putting thought into movement**

It is thus most poignantly with the cinema books that the image changes in Deleuze’s thinking, and that it gets to contain movement, becomes one with movement. The *plan d’immanence* has all along been in movement. But in the film books he follows Bergson and conceives of *le plan d’immanence* as a *plan* where everything is images in movement, a *plan* that the cinema can show us through its *images-mouvement*. Then *le plan d’immanence* can become *l’image de la pensée* as in *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?*. And at the same time he can fulfil a wish expressed in *Différence et répétition*, a wish of putting thought into movement.

In order to put thought into movement, the cinema not only has to produce *images-mouvements* or *images-temps*, but it also has to do it in a way that shocks the perception to think the unthinkable. It is the same kind of shock as described in *Différence et répétition*, where sensation confronts perception and thought with a series of differences that lead the faculties to their limit, lead the thought to think the unthinkable. The cinema should not give us something to think about, but it should show us the impossibility of thinking itself, the way Artaud conceived of the impossibility of thought:
s’il est vrai que la pensée dépend d’un choc qui la fait naître (le nerf, la moelle), elle ne peut penser qu’une seule chose, le fait que nous ne pensons pas encore, l’impuissance à penser le tout comme à se penser soi-même, pensée toujours pétrifiée, disloquée, effondrée. (IT, 218)

Such a shock seems to be produced when the cinema breaks with the situations sensori-motrices, to produce images of time. Breaking the situations sensori-motrices as we know them, is part of a rupture between the world and man. And in this break the unthinkable becomes that which needs to be thought:

Or cette rupture sensori-motrice trouve sa condition plus haut, et remonte elle-même à une rupture du lien de l’homme et du monde. La rupture sensori-motrice fait de l’homme un voyant qui se trouve frappé par quelque chose d’intolérable dans le monde, et confronté à quelque chose d’impensable dans la pensée. Entre les deux, la pensée subit une étrange pétrification, qui est comme son impuissance à fonctionner, à être, sa dépossession d’elle-même et du monde. (IT, 220-21)

It is when one is petrified, immobilised, that thinking is forced to think the unthinkable, that thinking is forced into movement.

In a certain way, Cunningham also seems to react to the crisis of le schème sensori-moteur. He sees it less dramatically as a change in the movement conditions:

One of the things we have now is this enormous technology... The immense speed and immense power made possible with technology have given us a totally different idea, from say, the horse, as to how we can move. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.129)

But still it is a change in the living conditions of man:

In life, also, we see suddenly that all sorts of things we thought were stable are not so at all, and we can’t function that way any more. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999(1991/1985), p. 130-131)

His reaction has been strong. Perhaps stronger than any other choreographer of his time. Cunningham produces a revolution in dance that perhaps goes beyond even the revolution of modern cinema when it comes to movement. He uses it to produce a new reflection on the human body, to create a new body. He uses it to produce such shocks to sensation that thinking about it has been petrified for many years. His choreographies are still impossible to think, and as such they have a potential for setting thought in motion. And through the
between Cunningham and Cage, Deleuze and Guattari and their differences, I hope a new movement of thought will be produced.

Even if Deleuze did not define *l’image de la pensée* as an *image-mouvement* in *Différence et répétition*, he did already feel the necessity to put thought into movement. Actually it is part of the programme of philosophy that he sets out with: instead of producing an image of thought, thought should be set in motion. Already in the introduction Deleuze credits Kierkegaard and Nietzsche for wanting to produce movement, wanting to reproduce movement in a way that is not mediated. Movement becomes a means of transgressing representation:

Or ce qui est en question dans toute leur œuvre, c’est le mouvement. Ce qu’ils reprochent à Hegel, c’est de rester au faux mouvement, au mouvement logique abstrait, c’est-à-dire à la «médiation». Ils veulent mettre la métaphysique en mouvement, en activité. Ils veulent la faire passer à l’acte, et aux actes immédiats. Il ne leur suffit donc pas de proposer une nouvelle représentation du mouvement ; la représentation est déjà médiation. Il s’agit au contraire de produire dans l’œuvre un mouvement capable d’émouvoir l’esprit hors de toute représentation ; il s’agit de faire du mouvement lui-même une œuvre, sans interposition ; de substituer des signes directs à des représentations médiates ; d’inventer des vibrations, des rotations, des tournoiements, des gravitations, des danses ou des sauts qui atteignent directement l’esprit. (DR, 16)

This is what Deleuze sets out to do in their footsteps and this is what I propose to see as the programme of Deleuze’s philosophy. He attempts to set his philosophy in motion. Through confronting his ideas with difference, through following the movements of the *virtuel* and its *actualisation*. Through letting his concepts be always in movement, never become completely fixed. But also through working with textual figures of movement which condense the forces that he discovers in his philosophy, which enact the dance and jumps of thought. This is where Deleuze meets Cunningham. They both set out to “faire du mouvement lui-même une œuvre”, “produire dans l’œuvre un mouvement capable d’émouvoir l’esprit hors de toute représentation”.

rencontre
Chapter 2

*L’athlétisme of the material - Logique de la sensation and Torse*

*Archäischer Torso Apollos*

Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt,  
darin die Augenäpfel reiften. Aber  
sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber,  
in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt,  
sich hält und glänzt. Sonst könnte nicht der Bug  
der Brust dich blenden, und im leisen Drehen  
der Lenden könnte nicht ein Lächeln gehen  
zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug:  
Sonst stünde dieser Stein entstellt und kurz  
unter der Schultern durchsichtigem Sturz  
und flimmerte nicht so wie Raubtierfelle;  
und bräche nicht aus allen seinen Rändern  
aus wie ein Stern: denn da ist keine Stelle,  
die dich nicht sieht. Du musst dein Leben ändern.

(Rainer Maria Rilke, Paris 1908)24

*Still pictures in movement*

Just before Deleuze started work on the film books and on pictures in movement, he was working with still pictures, namely the paintings of Francis Bacon, which he wrote about in *Francis Bacon – Logique de la sensation* from 1981.25 But the question of movement is present even here. Where film by definition consists of movement between the pictures, painting contains movement differently and paradoxically. The Bergson inspiration is much less present, and the question of time is not in the foreground. Instead movement becomes related to bodies, colours and sensation.

Deleuze applies some of his concepts to the paintings of Bacon, or rather develops his concepts through the analysis. His text is an analysis of and accompaniment to a selection of Bacon’s paintings in reproduction which follow in a second volume. Deleuze lets his thinking start off from the paintings and develops both the analysis and his philosophical concepts further, through the work with the material. His writing becomes an illustration of the paintings and an interpretation of the aesthetics of Bacon.

In some ways this work seems different from his other writings – which are also very different *entre eux*. Whereas some texts are highly philosophical, heavy with vocabulary, or

25 I will be quoting from the paperback edition from Seuil (2002) as it is more easily available.
full of wild ravings (as in the collaboration with Guattari), this one seems amazingly accessible. But the simplicity is only on the surface and the text is very intricately structured. There is a clear progression, as he himself points out in the avant-propos, from the simple to the complex. As he keeps returning to and developing the same elements, more and more levels are added and result in a thick tissue of thinking. Therefore the complex structure is hard to retain, as memory has to struggle to keep clearly in mind the detailed progression of each argument.

Bacon too is working with a mixture of complexity and simplicity. In an interview from 1974 he said to David Sylvester, that he “increasingly wanted to make the images simpler and more complicated” (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.120). Here simplicity and complexity have to do with an attempt to do something at once very precise and very ambiguous. In Deleuze the complexity does not have to do with a willed ambiguity but with the will to render the complexity of his object, here obtained through the progressive development of the elements. The same could be said of the simplicity and complexity of Cunningham’s choreography in Torse, where through the chance addition of apparently simple movements he arrives at something extremely complicated. This could be the first place where the analysis of Deleuze’s text, Bacon’s paintings, and Cunningham’s choreographies begin to accidentally blend.

Watching the paintings of Francis Bacon, nothing seems further away from Cunningham. In the paintings, bodies lose form and structure to let the flesh appear in the form of boneless meat, visible bones or body parts of blood. One only has to be a little sensitive to pull back at the violence, which appears as an internal violence of the body. Cunningham seems just the opposite. Bodies strive to keep upright and whole, even when they twist and turn and seem to enter into positions where the loss of balance is not far away. They are always clear and clean, contrary to Bacon’s bodies which are half blurred, half melted away and are losing their line.

Nevertheless, in Gilles Deleuze’s analysis of Bacon’s paintings, we discover several points of discussion that inform us also on Cunningham. Some of the most important questions one encounters when juxtaposing Deleuze and Cunningham are raised through Deleuze’s analysis of Bacon. What is movement and where is it at its most vibrant? Where is the borderline between transgression and destruction? What is rhythm and sensation? Some of these questions will also recur in the following chapters, but then in relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s more theoretical explanation of their concepts. Here, instead, we see how Deleuze finds it possible to apply these concepts and how he sees them as suited for incorporation in his analysis. In that sense, this chapter will be a juxtaposition of Deleuze and Cunningham
through Bacon. More precisely, it will be a juxtaposition of an analysis of Cunningham’s choreography in *Torse* (1975), Bacon’s paintings, especially *Three Studies of the Male Back* (1970), and Deleuze’s analysis of Bacon’s paintings. I will not be analysing Deleuze’s entire text on Bacon, but I will proceed through a selective choice of themes and motifs. The motif of the torso is one of the central points of encounter. In this meeting different openings become possible; sometimes they are accidental, but none the less important.

**Between figuration and abstraction**

One of the pivotal points of Deleuze’s argument is the attempt, following Bacon himself, to situate Bacon between abstraction and figuration. Contrary to many of his contemporaries, Bacon is not an abstract painter. His paintings are full of figures that are to some extent recognisable, though often twisted and blurred. But he is not a figurative painter either. He makes enormous efforts to avoid the painting becoming representative of something and to avoid a narrative element appearing. This is an endless battle, for the painter is always up against all the images that haunt the canvas and the mind. It is perhaps open to discussion whether Bacon manages or not. Just as narration, psychology and mood are hard to cast off in dance and always risk showing up at least for a split second, so narration, representation and figuration are hard to avoid in painting.

Interestingly enough, Bacon has a discourse that reminds us of Cunningham: keeping to the fact, “s’en tenir au fait” (FB, 12). What is perhaps hard to see, is what this fact is, harder than in the case of Cunningham where it is always the movement itself. The figure is a fact, the relation between several figures or between the figure and other elements has to be a matter of fact, and the painting itself is a fact: “le tableau est une réalité isolée (un fait)” (FB, 12). To avoid figuration one has to keep to the fact, but as soon as relations enter into the picture this becomes more difficult. To a large extent it is the same problem as the one Cunningham is struggling with, just exchange the word “Figures” with “dancers” and it makes sense:

Évidemment le problème est plus compliqué: n’y a-t-il pas un autre type de rapports entre Figures (dancers), qui ne serait pas narratif, et dont ne découlerait nulle figuration ? (FB, 12) (my parenthesis)

The question is how to make figures or dancers “[pousser] sur le même fait, qui appartendraient à un seul et même fait unique” (FB, 12). This is not easy, as human beings
have a tendency to make up relations and spin a story around them. It is hardly possible to say in which art it is the easiest, painting or dance.

Despite this resemblance, the juxtaposition with Cunningham actually shows that there is a limit to Bacon’s opposition to figuration or narration which Deleuze does not emphasise. Bacon believes that it is precisely the tight-rope walking between figuration and abstraction that is important in painting:

One of the reasons why I don’t like abstract painting, or why it doesn’t interest me, is that I think painting is a duality, and that abstract painting is an entirely aesthetic thing. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.59)

His objection to the story is not absolute. He just wants to avoid the boredom of the telling and to get directly to the sensation:

I don’t want to avoid telling a story, but I want very, very much to do the thing that Valéry said – to give the sensation without the boredom of its conveyance. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.65)

Equally, one might say that Cunningham’s objection to the story is not complete either. Though he has no story to tell, he does not prevent the spectator from making up his own thoughts – though he would prefer that they were not in the form of a story. Contrary to Bacon, he does not try to control what sensation comes across from the work to the spectator.

Surely, Deleuze’s argument is not only to show that Bacon wards off narration and figuration, he also wants to show that he constructs something else, namely what he calls (in reference to Lyotard who coined the concept in *Discours, Figure* (1971)) “le figural”. This does not only consist in focusing on the figure, but also in creating the sensation of the figure. Abstract painting, says Deleuze, is the style and form that addresses itself to the brain, the structure. Bacon’s painting addresses itself to the body (not the organism), it speaks directly to the senses.

*L’Athlétisme*

Deleuze speaks of “l’athlétisme” (the athletics/the athleticism)26 of Bacon’s paintings. This is of course a treat for someone working on movement. *L’athlétisme* has more than

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26 "Athlétisme" strictly speaking means “athletics”. (“Ensemble des exercises physiques individuels auxquels se livrent les athlètes : course, lancer (...) saut.”(LPR))’”physical exercises and competitive sports, especially running and jumping”’ Via the adjective “athlétique” (“Qui a rapport aux athlètes”, “Fort et musclé” (LPR)), which has a broader and qualitative sense, l’athlétisme can be translated by “athleticism” (the fact of being “physically strong, healthy and active”, “relating to physical exercises and sports” (ALD)). This is how it has
strong connotations of movement and training. Through Cunningham’s focus on the sheer
movement of the body there is a strong element of athletic qualities: force, endurance, agility.
It is curious what it is that leads Deleuze to speak of *athlétisme* in Bacon, for it is hard to
recognise any athletics in the ordinary sense of the word in Bacon’s paintings.

Cunningham would most likely refuse the connotations to sports where the rules are fixed,
and gymnastics where the exercises are to a large extent pre-defined. *L’athlétisme* of his
choreographies lies in the ability and capability of the bodies. Although there is something
awkward about the bodies in Cunningham’s choreographies, due to the constraints and the
attempts to prevent the movement from becoming habitual, their capability and mastering of
the body is amazing. In Bacon’s paintings as described by Deleuze, *l’athlétisme* almost refers
to the opposite. Granted, it refers to a certain effort of the body, but this effort is not one of
control, but one of, one would almost say, agony – if we can somehow imagine agony as a
physical condition and not as a psychological state of the mind. But furthermore *l’athlétisme*
is linked to a series of other words in Deleuze’s text, and together they build a meaningful
tissue.

*L’athlétisme* is linked to movement in Bacon’s paintings. It is linked to the movement
between the three elements of the painting: the figure, the structure and the contour. The
movement can go from the structure to the figure, or from the figure to the structure. The
contour can be used as an apparatus, like a gymnastics apparatus or an athletics apparatus:
“Ou bien le lieu, le contour deviennent agrès pour la gymnastique de la Figure au sein des
aplats.” (FB, 23). “*Gymnastique*” is one of the words in the series of *l’athlétisme*. Another one
is “*spectacle*”. But it is not just any kind of spectacle/performance, it is a spectacle without
spectators, it is the *spectacle* that is taking place in the effort of the waiting of the figure:

> le seul spectacle est celui de l’attente ou de l’effort, mais ceux-ci ne se produisent que quand
> il n’y a plus de spectateurs. (FB, 22)

It is a kind of “*cirque*” (another word in the series), but more in the sense of Kafka’s artists,
the swimmer who does not know how to swim for instance (FB, 22). There is something
absurd about it, it is “un athlétisme dérisoire” (FB, 23) – that is, ridiculous or insufficient.
However, the humour is not harmless but violent, (“*au violent comique*” FB, 23). It is a
violent athlétisme of the body, an attempt to do the impossible, not through ability, but

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been translated by Daniel W. Smith in *Francis Bacon – The logic of sensation*. However, I believe that Deleuze
deliberately uses this very concrete word, even if he manipulates it through the context. Therefore I prefer the
translation into “athletics”.

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through a hysteric ("hystérique") effort, where the organs of the body are protheses, and the apparatus seems to surround the figure. *L’athlétisme* is not a practice to shape the body, but a spasm of deformation.

Added to this chain of meanings in Deleuze’s text, which is entirely sufficient to create an independent concept of *l’athlétisme*, there is also the intertextual connection to Artaud, the heritage of Artaud’s use of it in a text from *Le théâtre et son double*, namely “Un athlétisme affectif”. It is a text that speaks of the work of the actor, and characterises it as the bodily athletics of emotions. The emotions are situated in the body and worked by the actor through the body, hence the parallel to the athlete:


But as in Deleuze’s description of Bacon’s painting, it is not an effort of the body which is extented to the surrounding physical world, but an effort which returns to the body in a spasm:

> Là où l’athlète s’appuie pour courir, c’est là que l’acteur s’appuie pour lancer une imprecation spasmodique, mais dont la course est rejetée vers l’intérieur. (Artaud, 1998 (1964), p.200)

Deleuze does not follow all aspects of Artaud’s text 27, but he does introduce an analogy between Artaud’s actor and Bacon’s figures, and a connection between Artaud and Bacon.

**Movements**

Deleuze analyses the internal relations and working of the paintings, and basically they are described as two movements going in opposite directions. The relation between the structure, the figure and the contour consists of two kinds of movement. The first movement or *athlétisme* goes from the structure to the figure. It is the structure or environment that closes in on the figure, forms itself around it, isolates it, it forms a cylinder, a circle, an enclovement:

> La structure matérielle s’enroule autour du contour pour emprisonner la Figure qui accompagne le mouvement de toutes ses forces. Extrême solitude des Figures, extrême

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27 For instance we find very little trace of “le souffle”, the distinction between feminine, masculine and neutral aspects of “le souffle”, or the affective body as being the double of the physical body.
This enclosure is part of an isolation that tries to cut off narration and representation. By isolating the figure, Bacon tries to avoid narrative relations arising between the different elements. The second movement comes from within the figure that struggles to take form and become figure:

And once it has become figure it even goes beyond its own borders and limits to dissolve into the structure in a spasm. These spasms are evident in many of Bacon’s paintings, for instance the paintings with the washbasin such as *Figure au lavabo* from 1976. The body is contracting in a spasm in front of or around the washbasin as if it would disappear through it. The washbasin is the point of escape through which the figure seeks to dissolve into the structure. But any object can act as a point of escape: an umbrella, a mirror, an organ.

The two movements go in separate directions, they are in opposition, but they do not eliminate each other. Instead they result in a third, or rather in a single and particular movement, a movement on the spot, an arrested movement, a figure of immobile movement:

The movements collide in a paradox that reinforces the *intensité*. It is in no way a docile game of oppositions, but movements in which the formation and the deformation of the figures are at stake. It is an *athlétisme dérisoire* (FB,23), a pathetic, laughable *athlétisme*, but it is also deadly serious. Deleuze uses the figure of immobile movement to accentuate the deformation and twisting of the figures and bodies in Bacon’s work. It is a way of making these invisible forces seen and explain their *intensité*. Only by describing the oppositional movements and the paradoxical static state they result in, can we see exactly how powerful the energy transforming the bodies is. It is a way of understanding what otherwise appears as a destructive moment in Bacon’s paintings without resorting to psychology or narration.
The movements that Deleuze describes in Bacon’s paintings are in other words not actual movements, executed movements. Neither are they represented movements. Though Bacon’s figures often seem to move, it is not a particular movement through a clearly defined space. Instead, Deleuze is talking about relations between different parts of the picture that take place through a kind of imaginary movement, and about an inherent movement or tension in the figure. The two opposite movements to and from the figure are a way of illustrating this tension. They are not extensive movements, but intensifs movements.

Cunningham rarely speaks about oppositional movement, but it has become his well-known trademark that immobility is contained within movement. It is one of the basic rules of his and Cage’s common terminology: there is silence within music and there is immobility within movement. Cage most obviously stated it with his silent piece(s)\(^{28}\), but Cunningham also works with the opposition. Thus, for Cunningham movement and immobility are not opposition, they contain each other and can coexist paradoxically. The immobile movement does not come from anything else, no other forces, no contradictions. The use of immobility in Cunningham’s choreographies takes the form of slowness, sculpturelike poses, stillness. Those are moments when the spectator has the time to see the energy and movement that pass through even the still body. It is an intensive state and it takes quite a lot to “fill” such a static moment. The invisible effort and energy become visible. However, these forces do not deform or threaten the composition or contours of the body. Being immobile demands just as much discipline as any difficult movement. Movement and immobility contain each other but do not compete with each other. The immobile movement is silent rather than violent.

The opposition between the movement coming to the body and the movement coming from the body is not particularly central in Cunningham’s aesthetics. To Cunningham the movement always comes from the body – and not from the music or any other exterior force. But at one point Cunningham speaks of two opposite movements going through the spine:

> If the spine is taken as the center of radius, much as the animal makes it his physical conscience, then the action proceeds from that center outwards, and also can reverse the process and proceed from outward back to the center. (Vaughan, 1997, p.60)

The spine projects movements into its surroundings through the members of the body, but the movement also comes back from the exterior to the spine. This is perhaps the closest we get to the two opposite movements in Bacon’s paintings, but this opposition does not result in a spasm, though it can result in an arrested movement.

\(^{28}\) Most noticeably of course in the legendary piece: 4’33 (1952).
Cunningham’s choreography in *Torse* from 1976 is in many ways, like several of Cunningham’s other choreographies, an almost programmatic piece. Or at least one can see it as a self-reflective piece that has as its subject matter (if ever there is such a thing in Cunningham’s works) Cunningham’s own technique and his aesthetics in itself. Not only has he used the numbers of the *I Ching*\(^{29}\) and chance to decide the continuity of the choreography, he has also used his own technique as the basis of the movement vocabulary. As David Vaughan says:

In a sense, the subject of *Torse* was Cunningham technique itself, especially the five basic positions described, and his version of the directions of the body that are found in ballet, and the sequences of foot exercises done in those directions. (Vaughan, 1997, p.197)

One of the particularities of Cunningham’s technique is that it has not only five positions of the feet, as in ballet, but also five positions of the torso: upright, curve, arch, twist and tilt. It is these five positions and their possibilities in combination with other movements that *Torse* investigates. It is an investigation of the possible movements of the torso. Or as Cunningham himself says:

I was thinking about the torso, as the title indicates, and I retained mainly the range of body movements corresponding to five positions of the back and the backbone, positions with which I mostly work: upright, curve, arch, twist and tilt. Those five basic positions are very clear and the leg and arm positions in relation to those are clear, too. When you assemble all this to form the phrases, the possibilities are numerous though they stay within a certain vocabulary. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.22)

The five basic positions of the torso come from the flexibility and the dynamics of the torso itself. Through the energy of the torso the contour of the body is changed. And through combining the torso movements with the positions of the arms and the legs, the way the body reaches into space and forms itself in relation to space is modulated.

The flexibility of the torso is due to the spine, and Bacon too is fascinated by the spine. However, if the possibilities of the spine interest Bacon, it is in quite a different way. For instance he is fascinated by the picture of a dancer (!) by Degas, where the spine of the young girl “semble sortir de la chair, tandis que la chair en est d’autant plus vulnérable et ingénieuse,

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\(^{29}\) The Chinese divination book that Cage and Cunningham often used for chance procedures. It consists of 64 hexagrams, i.e. three lines with each two lines in them that can be either broken or unbroken, which in the Chinese tradition should be interpreted. Cage and Cunningham use only the principle of the numbers, not the possible symbolic content.
acrobatique.” (FB, 28) In fact, Degas has painted the girl’s hand drying her neck in such a way that the hand and the towel make the connection between the spine and the head invisible. Bacon himself puts it this way:

And you will find at the very top of the spine that the spine almost comes out of the skin altogether. And this gives it such a grip and a twist that you’re more conscious of the vulnerability of the rest of the body than if he had drawn the spine naturally up to the neck. He breaks it so that this thing seems to protrude from the flesh. Now, whether Degas did this purposely or not, it makes it a much greater picture, because you’re suddenly conscious of the spine as well as the flesh, which he usually just painted covering the bones. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p. 46-47)

And it is not hard to find pictures of his own where the spine literally leaves the flesh. Cunningham’s subtle work on the spine remains within the body but shows through the modification of the contour and the surface of the body. Bacon’s work shows what Deleuze calls a confrontation between the flesh and the bones in which “la viande” (the meat) appears:

La viande est cet état du corps où la chair et les os se confrontent localement, au lieu de se composer structuralement. (FB, 29)

This confrontation is an extension of the athlétisme of the body: “L’athlétisme du corps se prolonge naturellement dans cette acrobatie de la chair.” (FB, 29) It is not only the body that uses the apparatus around it for gymnastics, it is the flesh that uses the bones as apparatus: “Bien au-delà du sadisme apparent, les os sont comme les agrès (carcasse) dont la chair est l’acrobate.” (FB, 29) It is not only an athletic exercise but a veritable acrobatic exercise where the bones and the flesh climb in the air on the ropes or trapezes of the bones: “Dans la viande, on dirait que la chair descend des os, tandis que les os s’élèvent de la chair.” (FB, 29) This state of confrontation between the flesh and the bones is la viande. And in la viande, humans join the animals, something animal appears in the human: “La viande est la zone commune de l’homme et de la bête, leur zone d’indiscernabilité.” (FB, 30)

The bones are the structural parts of the body, and the spine in particular has a structuring function, keeping the body upright, so it is not surprising if the confrontation between flesh and bones often happens around the spine. In the middle section of the Triptych from 1976, for instance, the body becomes transparent, so that the spine shows through as in a piece of meat. There is even a circle around the spine that serves as a looking glass to see the interior of the spine, it seems. The human figure is twisting around the spine, but almost loses its human character in order to become meat or animal. In another painting, Three figures and
portrait from 1975, the spine literally seems to do what Bacon was fascinated by in the painting of Degas, it literally “semble sortir de la chair” (FB, 28). Apart from the head, the spine is the only clear part of the figure’s body, the rest is wiped out or sponged out into blurry circles. Head down and the torso bent over, the flesh seems to descend from the spine and slip off towards the head, it glides off the bone of the spine.

Another work of Bacon’s where he is obviously studying the human back and spine is the triptych *Three Studies of the Male Back* (1970), which is also reproduced in the second volume that Deleuze’s text accompanies. In this triptych, the modulations of the back are explored, both through form, line and colour. In all three pictures the figure is sitting on a chair, but the positions and modulations of the back change. In the left section the figure is lying back relaxed in the chair. The spine is hidden by the flesh and the skin, but a few lines of black and blue mark not so much the structure of the spine as the presence of the muscles of the back. A shoulderblade shows through as well. In the middle section the upper part of the spine becomes visible as through an x-ray but the entire spine is not shown, rather it stops abruptly midway down the back. It is only followed by a rather pale lilac line where one supposes the spine should have been, and by a much more visible dark line that goes across the back to the lower stomach where one would not suppose the spine to be in a seated position. Only the upper part of the right shoulder and the leg from the knee down have kept their fleshy colour and the rest of the back is blue and lilac almost as if transparent or invisible. The arms and the legs are harder to distinguish than in the left section of the triptych. Also in the right section, the arms and the legs are hard to distinguish; indeed, an arm springing from the lower part of the back seems to continue into a leg. The members of the body are interchangeable. The back is short and bent, and a black line indicates either the spine or the curve of the back at the same time as a light blue covers several areas of the back. In the paintings of this triptych the spine does not spring out of the flesh, even if the flesh descends from the spine. Rather we have to do with a study of the modulations of the torso. And while Cunningham’s modulations come from the inside but only appear on the outside, here we get an image of the modulations of the inside of the torso, the modulations of *la viande*.

In Cunningham’s aesthetics the spine is in many ways at the centre, and its function is structural. The spinal column is the centre of the structure that the dancer has to discipline and master. It is the centre of the body, it holds it upright, the members of the body are attached to it, the centre of balance goes through it. It is through mastering the spinal column that one has access to the possible combinations of the body. It is exactly through not letting the flesh fall
off the spine that the movement possibilities of the body become available to the dancer. The arms and the legs are just a manifestation of the back, and the spine puts them into relation:

The legs and arms are only a revelation of the back, the spine’s extensions. Sitting, standing, extending a leg or arm, or leaping through air, one is conscious that it is to and from the spine that the appendages relate and that they manifest themselves only so far as the spine manifests itself. Speed, for instance, is not a case of the feet or arms twiddling at some fantastic tempo, but speed comes from the diligence with which the spine allows the legs and arms to go. At the same time, the spine can allow rapid action in the legs and feet, and by the control centered in it, allow serenity in the arms – seemingly still and suspended in the air. The reverse too is possible. (Vaughan, 1997, p.60)

Through mastering the spine an opposition between quick movements and slow movements in different parts of the body becomes possible – reminding us of a possible intensive combination of movement and immobility, here obtained through a discipline that is a forming rather than a deforming force.

But though the spine holds the flesh in place, it lets another kind of animality through: it is pure physical thinking; “much as the animal makes it [the spine] his physical conscience” (Vaughan, 1997, p.60); it is the automatic thinking of the body, it is the nervous system of the spine thinking on its own. It is not la viande that unites the animal and the human, but the automatic movement-thinking of the body. It is not la viande that becomes independent of the structure, but the spinal column that holds and manages la chair of the body and guides it in space. It is the spinal column that becomes independent, but in mastering la chair, not in letting it glide off the bones and become viande.

But even with this structural function the spinal column is not a fixed and unbendable structure. It is also a possibility of subtlety and combination. It is not only the basis for holding the body, it is also the basis for manipulating it and creating different kinds of movements:

The spine, moreover, acts not just as a source for the arms and the legs, but itself can coil and explode like a spring, can grow taut or loose, can turn on its own axis or project into space directions. (Vaughan, 1997, p.60)

In fact, the spinal column is the combination of mastering and liberty that Cunningham searches for in discipline. It is at once stable and fixed and flexible and subtle. It is the centre of balance:
If one uses the torso as the center of balance and as the vertical axis at all times, then the question of balance is always related to that central part, the arms and legs balancing each other on either side in various ways, and moving against each other. (Vaughan, 1997, p.60)

But it is also the point of departure for an infinity of movement through the change of weight and balance. It is not surprising that Cunningham has chosen the torso as the theme for one of his choreographies.

That the torso is the whole body or that the rest of the body is the extension of the torso becomes evident in *Torse*. In the poem of Rilke quoted at the beginning of the chapter, inspired by a sculpture by Rodin – a torso, deliberately made without arms, legs or head (and not as the ancient torsos where the members of the body have disappeared with time) – the torso becomes a fragment which is all the more perfect for being partial. In an earlier letter to Clara Rilke he writes that: “alles weniger ganz wäre, wenn die einzelnen Körper ganz wären. Jeder dieser Brocken ist von einer so eminenten ergreifenden Einheit, so allein möglich, so gar nicht der Ergänzung bedürftig” (Rilke, 1996, p.958). But with *Torse* it becomes evident that we cannot understand the dancing torso without the rest of the body.

If we were expecting to see only the movements of the torso, isolated from the rest of the body, we would be wrong. Granted, isolation (of each body part) is a principle of Cunningham’s, but isolation does not mean exclusion. From the very beginning it becomes clear that we cannot isolate the torso. In fact, at the beginning of the choreography it is to a large extent the combinations of the feet that catch the eye, while the combinations of the torso are slowly added. Actually, throughout the choreography the work of the legs and the feet play an important role. It is in combination with the legs and the feet that some of the movements of the torso arise; through the positions of the legs, the torso is changed. The same goes for the arms. Through the positions of the arms and their movements, the torso is modified. Only through taking into consideration the whole body does the entire range of movement possibilities for the torso become visible.

There is also another reason why, at a first glance, one can get the impression that the torso does not move much. The movements of the torso itself are subtle and not particularly apparent. The movements of the arms and legs take more space and are more spectacular. Though the torso is much more bendable than in ballet, the movements of it are almost so subtle that they become invisible. They consist of small modifications and an intricate muscle work going on within the body and only showing through the contour. In this sense, the
movements of the torso are intensive (intensifs) rather than extensive. The movements of the torso are a matter of tensions rather than extensions.

**Single/multiple figures**

Both in *Torse* and *Three Studies of the Male Back* we have to do with the modulations of not only one torso, but of several. The complexity of the modulations is increased in *Torse* through the number of dancers whose modulations are all different, and in *Three Studies of the Male Back*, though the identity of the figure in the three paintings is probably the same, we nevertheless have to do with the modulations of three backs, or three different examples of modulations of the same back. In other words we have to be aware of the play and exchange going on between the single and the multiple figures.

Quite often Bacon is only working with a single figure in a painting. As soon as there are several figures present, they run the risk of making the painting narrative, which he tries to avoid. That is why Bacon tries to isolate the figures from each other, so instead of putting several figures on one canvas, he finds that the best thing is to put them on different canvases, as he does in the triptychs:

> They [the vertical breaks between the canvases of the triptych] isolate one from the other. And they cut off the story between one and the other. It helps to avoid story-telling if the figures are painted on three different canvases. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.23)

Yet, it is puzzling that this works, for we need not search long to find other expressions where the succession of pictures does carry a story, as in cartoons or even in film. But somehow Bacon’s triptychs do not become an elaboration of a time span where the pictures present different states that succeed each other; they are still simultaneous, or rather the time is within each picture, not between them.

But even before the triptychs, there are the paintings with two figures, “figures accouplées”, sometimes engaged in intimate or sexual acts. But rather than constituting a separate logic, Deleuze says that they work along the same principle as the single figures; even if there are two figures, they only build a single fact:

> l’accouplement des sensations à niveaux différents fait la Figure accouplée (et non l’inverse). Ce qui est peint, c’est la sensation. Beauté de ces Figures mêlées. Elles ne sont pas confondues, mais rendues indiscernables par l’extrême précision des lignes qui acquièrent une sorte d’autonomie par rapport aux corps : comme dans un diagramme dont les lignes n’uniraient que des sensation. Il y a une Figure commune des deux corps, ou un «fait » commun des deux Figures, sans la moindre histoire à raconter. (FB, 65-66)
And even the single figures resemble them, because here too we have to do with different levels of sensation that are confronted. It does not matter, after all, how many figures there are, for the multiplicity is already there in the levels of sensation:

Loin de contredire au principe d’isolation, il semble que la Figure accouplée fasse des Figures isolées de simples cas particuliers. Car même dans le cas d’un seul corps ou d’une sensation simple, les niveaux différents par lesquels cette sensation passe nécessairement constituent déjà des accouplements de sensation. (FB, 66)

It is sensation that makes the complexity of one or several figures, and the levels of sensation that take shape in either one or several figures. But whereas “le rythme” of sensation in a single figure takes the form of vibration, in the double figures it takes the form of resonance:

Mais dans la sensation simple, le rythme dépend encore de la Figure, il se présente comme la vibration qui parcourt le corps sans organes, il est le vecteur de la sensation, ce qui la fait passer d’un niveau à un autre. Dans l’accouplement de sensation, le rythme se libère déjà, parce qu’il confronte et réunit les niveaux divers de sensations différentes : il est maintenant résonance (…) (FB, 71)

But it is not only the double figures that become the model for the single figures, it is the triptychs that become the model for the others, too.

That le rythme in the single figures is vibration (tension within one body), and in the coupled figures is resonance (tension between several), is not so hard to imagine. But in the triptychs something happens that seems to exceed this logic and to take us to another level of abstraction:

Avec le triptyque enfin, le rythme prend une amplitude extraordinaire, dans un mouvement forcé qui lui donne l’autonomie, et fait naître en nous l’impression de Temps : les limites de la sensation sont débordées, excédées dans toutes les directions ; les Figures sont soulevées, ou projetées en l’air, mises sur des agrès aériens d’où tout d’un coup elles tombent. Mais en même temps, dans cette chute immobile, se produit le plus étrange phénomène de recomposition, de redistribution, car c’est le rythme lui-même qui devient sensation, c’est lui qui devient Figure, d’après ses propres directions séparées, l’actif, le passif et le témoin… (FB, 71)

What happens echoes the formulations in the chapter on la ritournelle; le rythme becomes autonomous, it builds its own sensation, its own figure. Interestingly, this happens within a figure of immobile movement (“chute immobile”). But within this movement, mouvement forcé, there are several other movements or rythmes, the active, the passive and the witness. Therefore there is an increasing level of complexity.
The first “élément de compléxité” is “la fonction-témoin” or le rythme that is a witness. This witness has nothing to do with a spectator, though it can be incarnated in a figure; it is a sort of constant in the picture, therefore also identified with a horizontal aspect. The second element of complexity is the fact that la fonction-témoin circulates and is exchangeable with other functions, so that the same figure can be respectively active, passive or a witness. The third element of complexity concerns the active and passive rythme. This concerns the vertical element of the painting, but not exclusively. The active and the passive can take the form of diverse oppositions, but do not coincide with them and they are not identical with each other: descente-montée, diastole-systole, nu-habillé, augmentation-diminution:

Si l’on atteint ici à une grande complication, c’est parce que ces diverses oppositions ne se valent pas, et que leurs termes ne coïncident pas. Il en résulte une liberté de combinaison. Aucune liste ne peut être arrêtée. (FB, 77)

What might seem surprising, but makes sense in relation to l’intensif and to the figure of immobile movement, is that the active is identified with the fall, with “la chute”, because sensation makes itself felt in la chute, and because it is in la chute that the difference of levels makes itself felt:

Bizarrement, l’actif, c’est ce qui descend, ce qui tombe. L’actif, c’est la chute, mais ce n’est pas forcément une descente dans l’espace, en extension. C’est la descente comme passage de la sensation, comme différence de niveau comprise dans la sensation. (FB, 78)

It is not necessarily une chute downwards in space, but it is une chute in the sense that it is a tension in relation to the level zero (as it is also described in the chapter on le corps sans organes). La chute is where sensation is most alive, where sensation includes difference intensively.

The movements in the triptychs are therefore complicated. There is the movement of la fonction-témoin that moves around in the picture, there is the active and passive rythmes that also change places with la fonction-témoin, there are a number of variables that verge on each other without coinciding. The law of the triptychs is the movement of movement:

Les tableaux de Bacon sont tellement parcourus de mouvements que la loi des triptyques ne peut être qu’un mouvement de mouvements, ou un état de forces complexe, pour autant que le mouvement dérive toujours de forces qui s’exercent sur le corps. (FB, 80)

Cunningham is confronted in dance with the same problem as Bacon in painting. As soon
as you introduce two dancers, two figures on stage, there is a relation, and as soon as there is a relation there is a risk that a story might appear. Cunningham does not consistently separate and isolate the dancers, but there is always a neutral relation between them, where no emotions are allowed to cross, either through the movements or in the facial expressions. But *Torse* is actually one of those choreographies where you might say that there is quite a lot of isolation and relatively little work in pairs. This possibly adds to the minimalist impression and the non-narrative quality of the choreography. This, however, does not mean that each body is considered separately from the others. It is considered both as a singularity and as part of a group, a multiplicity:

> Say you have eight people each of whom is doing different sequences, all of whom are being soloists. That is immediately far more complex. (…) You immediately see that you can go to the extreme: you can take all sixteen and have each dancer doing clearly different movements. That would be done not just to be complex but to open up unexplored possibilities. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.17)

Every body is considered in itself and can become a soloist, or is almost one all the time:

> And though the general feeling throughout is that the dance remains a dance of ensembles, it is very individualized as well, each dancer at one point or another has a chance to appear outside the group. It’s subtle enough; it doesn’t happen in an obvious way or place, but I’m sure it’s felt. Or it may come about that there are not groups on stage, just two solo dancers. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.19)

Even when the dancers are in a group they are individualised, and even when there are two dancers on the stage they are not necessarily coupled but two soloists. Yet, Cunningham considers all the dancers as a multiple whole, where the number of bodies increases the number of possibilities and where in between the bodies a complexity arises. The dancers or different groups of dancers make the same movements but in different combinations, in different space constellations and with different rhythms:

> Suppose you now take the dimension of time. Our eight dancers can be doing different movements, they may even do them to the same rhythm which is all right, there’s nothing wrong with any of it! (laughter) – but there is also the possibility that they can be doing different movements in different rhythms, then that is where the real complexity comes in, adding this kind of material one on top of and with another.” (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.18)

The number of dancers is used to increase the complexity. The risk of narration gives way to the advantage of the number. The complexities are added on top of each other without
coinciding: the complexity of the movements, the complexity between the single dancer and the group concerning the sequences, the use of space, the use of rhythm.

The complexity of *Torse* can almost be understood mathematically. But though there is a similar complexity in the triptychs as concerns the relation between the single figure and the multiple figures and concerning the addition of different *rythmes* and oppositions that do not coincide, Deleuze nevertheless has to extract this complexity in an analysis that takes its base in concrete analyses of the paintings but jumps to another level of abstraction in a way where it is sometimes hard to see what comes in between. While the rhythm in dance is related to the use of time, in painting it is somehow less graspable, though no less important.

**Chance**

These complexities of *Torse* are multiplied again through the use of chance. Bacon too uses chance, though it is conceived and brought about differently. However, both ways of using chance stay within the range of the same paradoxes. One of them is well expressed by Bacon: “you see, it’s impossible to talk about chance when you don’t know what it is.” (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.100) It is possible to some extent to discuss chance, but there is always a point which escapes, the very moment of pure chance. Much as we can predict the possibilities of chance, it still remains somehow unknown. Pure chance lies beyond the calculation of probability.

Both in the case of Cunningham and of Bacon, chance operates within a paradox or a dualism. Chance is never just chance, but a combination of chance and choice. In Cunningham’s aesthetics this is expressed in the ambiguous word “chance methods”. In Bacon’s discourse it is expressed in terms of accident and preservation, accident and manipulation, or accident and criticism. The painter would smear paint on a canvas where the image is beginning to take form or has taken form; in order to disrupt the figuration the painter resorts to an act of chance, only to regain control and decide what to do with the accident, which part of it to preserve, how to manipulate it. Though the accident is an act as free from the conscious as possible, the manipulation of it is directed by the painter’s consciousness or criticism. Yet Bacon sees the result as detached from him, as if he were simply a medium for it:

I think that accident, which I would call luck, is one of the most important and fertile aspects of it, because, if anything works for me, I feel it is nothing I have made myself, but something which chance has been able to give me. But it’s true to say that over a great many years I have been thinking about chance and about the possibilities of using what chance can
give, and I never know how much it is pure chance and how much it is manipulation of it. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.52)

To him, chance seems to come from the outside, it is something he receives, rather mystically. But at another point he seems to think that it can come from within, from the unconscious:

It seems to come straight out of what we choose to call the unconscious with the foam of the unconscious locked around it – which is its freshness. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.120)

It is hard to say if this is a slip of the tongue (a Freudian slip?), but though Bacon most of the time refuses to talk of psychology or biography, elements of it sometimes come through even in his discourse. What is certain is that this last view of chance is in stark contrast to Cunningham who uses chance, among other things, to escape from psychology. That does not mean that it is a completely rational process; even if it seems minutely mathematical, there is still something vague about it. Even if the I Ching is in a certain way demystified and used purely mathematically, there are still shadowed zones that are hard to understand for someone who did not figure out the system.

Cunningham is as disciplined with chance as he is with everything else. Chance for him has nothing to do with letting loose (indeed it seems that he never does in his work) but with making systems for producing complexity. It is through discipline that one can escape the will. Though Bacon says that, for instance, being drunk does not really work for painting by accident, there is nevertheless an instant of letting loose, letting go of the grasp of consciousness:

If anything ever does work in my case, it works from that moment, when consciously I don’t know what I am doing. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p. 54)

But at the same time there is also an element of discipline in Bacon’s procedure or at least in what he wants to obtain. He does not like painting that looks “chaney” and neglected:

For instance, I would loathe my paintings to look like chancy abstract expressionist paintings, because I really like highly disciplined painting, although I don’t use highly disciplined methods of constructing it. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.92)

Though Bacon’s work seems less disciplined and ordered than Cunningham’s, he still has an ideal of order, art as that which orders chaos:
I think that great art is deeply ordered. Even if within the order there may be enormously instinctive and accidental things, nevertheless I think that they come out of a desire for ordering (...) (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.59)

In other words Bacon wants something both accidental and ordered, “I want a very ordered image but I want it to come about by chance.” (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.56) The same could be said of Cunningham.

Deleuze divides chance in Bacon’s works into two parts: the pre-pictural and the act of painting, the virtuelles possibilities of the canvas and the manual act of chance doing something improbable:

Car il divise ce domaine en deux parties, dont l’une est encore rejetée dans le prépictural, mais dont l’autre appartient à l’acte de peinture. (FB, 88)

The aspect of chance that is prepictural, has to do with probabilities and possibilities. Before starting, all the positions in the canvas are equally probable, but through the painter’s idea of what he wants to paint some of them become more probable than others, therefore the probabilities are both “égales” and “inégales”, “Il y a donc sur la toile tout un ordre de probabilités égales et inégales.” (FB, 88) This is not unlike the way Cunningham thinks about the space of a choreography where all the spaces of the stage are equally possible. However, Cunningham does not assign a probability “inégale” to some of the positions. Instead he lets only chance decide. He has no idea of figuration that intervenes. All positions in space are equally possible, and this is also the case in Torse:

I used to be told that you see the center of the space as the most important: that was the center of interest. But in many modern paintings this was not the case and the sense of space was different. So I decided to open up the space to consider it equal, and any place, occupied or not, just as important as any other. In such a context you don’t have to refer to a precise point in space. And when I happened to read that sentence of Albert Einstein’s: “There are no fixed points in space”, I thought, indeed, if there are no fixed points, then every point is equally interesting and equally changing. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.17-18)

This conception of space, where all possibilities are equal, is well suited for chance procedures, and in Torse too the possibilities of space are actualised through such procedures:

I numbered the space with sixty-four squares, eight by eight. Then I used the I Ching as it comes out: the hexagrams come out double most of the time, one over the other, for example thirteen over fifteen, that means phrase thirteen along with phrase fifteen. (…) I did the same with the space they occupied, numbered as you remember from one to sixty-four:
someone was standing in space thirteen and someone in space twelve. I would choose how many dancers would come in those two spaces, and to go to forty-nine in terms of space – forty-nine is a specific place – they all go in that direction, but they can do it by such or such a detour according to the phrase they have to dance. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.21)

The dancers are distributed in space according to the chance procedures of *I Ching*. It is evident is how complicated this chance procedure becomes in combination with the one for the movement sequences, the timing, the number of dancers etc.

Bacon too tries to disrupt the distribution between the equal and non-equal possibilities, says Deleuze. Not least to avoid the cliché. This is where the chance of the act of painting comes in, in order to disrupt the beginning figuration. This is the second aspect of chance. It is the intrusion of the improbable, “*l'improbable lui-même*” (FB, 89). This chance does not have to do with mathematical probabilities but with the manipulation of an accident:

D’un bout à l’autre l’accident, le hasard en ce second sens, aura été acte, choix, un certain type d’acte ou de choix. Le hasard, selon Bacon, n’est pas séparable d’une possibilité d’utilisation. C’est le hasard manipulé, par différence avec les probabilités conçues ou vues. (FB, 89)

Deleuze compares this intrusion of chance to an instant of roulette, referring to Bacon’s interest in gambling and particularly gambling at the roulette:

Pour Bacon, il s’agit de la roulette; et il lui arrive de jouer à plusieurs tables à la fois, par exemple trois tables, exactement comme il se trouve devant les trois panneaux d’un triptyque. (FB, 90)

This is a reference to Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche and chance, where chance is conceived as a *jeu divin* of pure chance played between the tables of heaven and earth.30 This is in opposition to *le jeu humain* which is guided by the probabilities of winning and losing. In the *jeu idéal* one single *coup* (blow, throw) affirms chance as such; in the *jeu humain* a series of *coup* fragments chance and makes it calculable. (LS, pp.74) Therefore it does not affirm chance (and life) to the same extent. But in Deleuze’s interpretation of Bacon’s use of chance, he follows Bacon to say that a manipulation of chance is necessary.

The probabilities are prepictural as they come before the painting, the moment of chance is a-pictural:

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30 “Le jeu a deux moments qui sont ceux d’un coup de dés : les dés qu’on lance et les dés qui retombent. Il arrive à Nietzsche de présenter le coup de dés comme se jouant sur deux tables distinctes, la terre et le ciel. La terre où l’on lance les dés, le ciel où retombent les dés :” (NP, 29)
En revanche, le choix au hasard à chaque coup est plutôt non pictural, a-pictural: il deviendra pictural, il s’intègrera à l’acte de peindre, dans la mesure où il consiste en marques manuelles qui vont réorienter l’ensemble visuel, et extraire la Figure improbable de l’ensemble des probabilités figuratives. (FB, 90)

Though this chance is non-pictural, it has to become pictural through the manipulation of it, but it becomes pictural in a non-figurative way and therefore helps to extract the painting from the realm of the figurative. Chance, however, cannot do this on its own, it has to be manipulated:

Or c’est dans la manipulation, c’est-à-dire dans la réaction des marques manuelles sur l’ensemble visuel, que le hasard devient pictural ou s’intègre à l’acte de peindre. D’où l’obstination de Bacon, malgré l’incompréhension de ses interlocuteurs, à rappeler qu’il n’y a pas de hasard que « manipulé », d’accident, qu’utilisé. (FB, 90)

This manipulation is literally a manipulation (by the hand, from lat. “manus” = hand), in the sense that it is the hands of Bacon which manipulate the paint on the canvas. Cunningham also manipulates chance, though not through his hands. First he manipulates it through the way he puts up the system within which chance works. Then he manipulates it by making decisions for the problems that arise in the process, where one has to decide how chance comes out in a situation that was not foreseen by the system. Perhaps this problem of predicting all cases of chance and dealing with those that were unpredicted is the reason why there often seems to be a mystical moment in Cunningham’s chance procedures, where one no longer understands if it has to do with system or with choice.

Cunningham’s procedures for Torse, we might say, resembles a game of chess rather than a game of dice. This kind of game might seem less based on chance and more on combinations. There is a thrilling number of combinations which the brain is unable to calculate. And even if the phrases when put together by chance through the numbers of I Ching come to resemble the chance of a chess game, each time a number is chosen it is through a chance that resembles that of the roulette. Although chance is fragmented into many coups, each coup is still arbitrary. Even if chance is fragmented into many coups it is impossible to calculate all possibilities. In fact, Cunningham multiplies the number of coups to make chance less predictable. But if the element that pulls Cunningham back into the jeu humain is the number of coups that fragments chance, the element that retains Bacon in the jeu humain is the way his manipulated accident resembles improvisation.
Meat, humans and animals

In some cases it seems clear which zones of the painting have been subjected to chance, in other cases it is less clear. In *Three Studies of the Male Back* there is no final evidence. It could be the black and blue mass that is flowing from the chair in the middle section of the triptych, the shadow that is detached from the body. It could also be some of the blue- and reddish zones of the torso described earlier, the modulations of the torso could in part be the work of chance. Such zones take multiple functions in Bacon’s paintings, and not least in Deleuze’s analysis of them.

Blue and reddish colours are central in *Three Studies of the Male Back*. The skin or the body is not only light beige, but they also have tones of red, and the blue is surprisingly dominant. Blue and red, according to Deleuze, are the colours of *la viande*:

Quand la coulée de couleurs est polychrome, nous voyons que le bleu et le rouge y dominent souvent, qui sont précisément les tons dominants de la viande. Pourtant ce n’est pas seulement dans la viande, c’est plus encore dans les corps et les têtes des portraits ; ainsi le grand dos d’homme de 1970 (...) (FB, 141)

*La viande* is the point where *les os* and *la chair* meet, and *la viande* is also where the human and the animal meet. Bacon is very interested in the animal traits of humans, or rather the points or moments when an animal trait appears. He wants “to make the animal thing come through the human” (Sylvester, 2000, p.49) Deleuze calls this likeness “*une zone d’indiscernabilité*” where the animal and the human cannot be distinguished:

*c’est une zone d’indiscernabilité, d’indécidabilité, entre l’homme et l’animal. L’homme devient animal, mais il ne le devient pas sans que l’animal en même temps ne devienne esprit, esprit de l’homme (…) Ce n’est jamais combinaison de formes, c’est plutôt le fait commun: le fait commun de l’homme et de l’animal. (FB, 28)*

In some of Bacon’s paintings the animal traits become visible through the distortion of the face or the body, changing the human contour into something different, but even through the use of colour an animal trait becomes possible, as it is the case in *Three studies of the Male Back*. Though there is no other indication of something animal, the colours (blue and red) convey that we have to do with a body made of bones and flesh, that which we have in common with animals (*la viande*). Bacon at one point puts this in a more violent way in relation to his use of the motif of butchers’ shops and hanging meat, which is particularly relevant in relation to his crucifixion pictures:
Well, of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher’s shop I always think it’s surprising that I wasn’t there instead of the animal. But using the meat in that particular way is possibly like the way one might use the spine (…) (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.46)

But though this likeness seems cynical and almost macabre, it also gets another and more positive expression. For Bacon is also interested in animal movement:

animal movement and human movement are continually linked in my imagery of human movement (…) (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.116)

And thus, all of a sudden, Bacon’s interest in animals is not that different from Cunningham’s. Cunningham is particularly interested in animal movement because of the movement possibilities it offers even to the human. If an “animal thing” comes across in Cunningham’s choreographies, it is through the human movement containing traces of animal movement, or having the movement in common with the animals. However, whereas Bacon focuses on what the animal and human body have in common, namely the meat, Cunningham points out what they do not have in common, namely the structure. Though the human movement can be inspired by animal movement, we can never move exactly like an animal because we have a different structure:

To begin with, the human body has clear and defined limitations. We cannot move as the serpents do, and what is more we cannot quite understand how they move, (…) we cannot move as the antelopes, or the elephants, or even the dogs that inhabit our world so familiarly. The structure of the human body permits of certain circumscribed actions. They are limited in species, but, within the species, infinite in variety…(Vaughan, 1997, p.100)

And Torsé is such an example of how the movement with quite small means can vary infinitely within the structure of a single species.

**Systole/diastole – the rhythm of the organism?**

The use of colour in *Three Studies of the Male Back* also conveys different rythmes:

Ou bien, peut-être, ce sont les «Trois études de dos d’homme » de 1970 qui montrent le plus subtilement, par les lignes et les couleurs, l’opposition d’un large dos rose et décontracté à gauche, et d’un dos contracté rouge et bleu à droite, tandis qu’au centre le bleu semble s’établir à un niveau constant et même couvrir le miroir sombre pour marquer la fonction-témoin. (FB, 76)
The blue and the red do not only mark the body as *viande*, they also show it in different states of contraction. That the left one is more red and rose, Deleuze relates to the fact that it is more relaxed and *decontracté*. In the right one, on the other hand, the blue mixed with red conveys a state of contraction. Contraction and *décontraction* are two of several possible variations of the active and passive *rythmes* in the triptychs. These are also related to what Deleuze calls the diastole and the systole:

Mais c’est déjà comme un cas particulier d’une autre opposition *diastole-systole* : là c’est la contraction qui s’oppose à une sorte d’extension, d’expansion ou de descente-écoulement. (FB, 76)

The systole and diastole is a bodily metaphor, as, in their ordinary sense, they refer to blood circulation and blood pressure. Metaphorically, they refer to the contraction and *décontraction* of the figures, the expansion and diminution, but they also have connotations to the Bergsonian ideas of extensive forms and intensive forms. They describe the figures as bodies with a circulation, but also the painting as an organic entity with a circulation of energy. Furthermore, systole and diastole are no other than the two opposite movements that we saw going to and from the figure:

Tout se répartit en diastole et systole répercutées à chaque niveau. La systole, qui serre le corps et va de la structure à la Figure; la diastole qui l’étend et le dissipe, de la Figure à la structure. Mais déjà il y a une diastole dans le premier mouvement, quand le corps s’allonge pour mieux s’enfermer; et il y a une systole dans le second mouvement, quand le corps se contracte pour s’échapper; et même quand le corps se dissipe, il reste encore contracté par les forces qui le happent pour le rendre à l’entour. (FB, 37-38)

But whereas these opposite movements were previously described as succeeding each other, though colliding in the immobile movement, here the image is slightly different. In fact, the movements contain each other. The diastole is already present in the systole and the other way around. That is also a way of explaining the image that unites the two movements. However, it is interesting to notice that this new image seems much more calm and organic. It is the picture of a breathing body with a heart and a blood circulation, it is almost a living organism.

Dance discourse, at least when it concerns modern dance, has been full of images of the living organism. For instance “energy” and “life”, these at once self-explanatory and mystical entities, are often conjured in dance. Even Cunningham’s very matter-of-fact discourse is not devoid of it. To him, dance is a primary human activity, it contains and transmits energy, it is
a pure expression of life. It does not have to force itself to reveal this, it is included in its very being:

For me, it seems enough that dancing is a spiritual exercise in physical form, and that what is seen, is what it is. (…) Dancing is a visible action of life. (Vaughan, 1997, p.67)

Cunningham also refers to the circulation within the body. Not that of blood circulation, but that of respiration:

dance is most deeply concerned with each single instant as it comes along, and its life and vigor and attraction lie in just that singleness. It is as accurate and impermanent as breathing. (Vaughan, 1997, p.87)

This is an organic and vitalist image of dance. But nevertheless the energy is liberated from psychological forces. Movement is its own energy. Through the technical ability and discipline, this image of life itself emerges independently of the dancer and the choreographer, in the sense that he does not have to search for the image for it to appear. Through the work itself and a complete concentration on the movement, moments of exaltation and revelation will arise:

Our extacy in dance comes from the possible gift of freedom, the exhilarating moment that this exposing of the bare energy can give us. (Vaughan, 1997, p.86)

This imagery and its attempt to describe the indescribable is not at all foreign to dance and has appeared and keeps appearing in relation to all sorts of dance in different periods. Yet it is a particularly modernist image. Cunningham rejects much of the discourse of the modern dance preceding him, especially when it comes to the expression of human feeling and archetypal structures of the human psyche. But still, surprisingly, he retains some traces of the organic imagery.

It is equally surprising that the image of the systole-diastole seems to introduce an almost harmonious image of the body in Deleuze’s text on Bacon. This is in stark opposition to the dismantling of the organism that goes with the concept of le corps sans organes. Through this concept and many others, he is indeed a postmodern philosopher. And yet there is a strong trait in his thinking and writing that leads us back to modernism and a certain kind of imagery. In order to speak of the mystery of life and the body, which the organism cannot explain, he adopts a vitalist tendency. It is “l’élan vital” of Bergson, it is the forces of life, it is life itself, it is “l’onde”, it is le rythme. But thinking of Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of le
rythme as heterogeneous and irregular in the chapter on *la ritournelle*, it is not surprising that though the *systole-diastole* seems to speak of an organic body, we do not have to wait long before Deleuze puts Bacon along with *le corps sans organes*, and harmony gives way to chaotic forces.

**Violence and sensation**

One’s first impression of Bacon’s pictures is that they contain violence. But Deleuze follows both Bacon himself and his close friend and critic David Sylvester, who do not see this violence as an expression of physical or psychological violence (though Bacon’s life was full of it), but as something else. Indeed, it is quite hard to both account for the violence in the pictures, which I think should not be denied, and understand that it is not just any kind of violence, but a violence of sensation, of life, also in a positive sense. There is something ambiguous about the violence of Bacon’s pictures, and this ambiguity also concerns the attitude to the psychological. David Sylvester comments on this ambiguous use of the word “violence”:

> Bacon constantly used the word “violence” to designate a quality that he greatly valued in art. He knew that it was an ambiguous word and that his use of it provoked priggish disapproval of his art. What he meant by “violence” in art was that the energy pent up in things was being conveyed in a very immediate way. (Sylvester, 2000, p.212)

This understanding of “violence” is quite striking in a commentary Bacon made on Van Gogh:

> Van Gogh got very near to the violence of life itself. It’s true that when he painted a field he was able to give you the violence of grass. Think of the violence of the grass he painted. It’s one of the most violent and abominable things, if you really want to think about life. (Sylvester, 2000, p.243)

Deleuze strongly underlines the difference between the subject matter of Bacon’s painting and the violence of it. The violence is not in the subject matter (the painting is not narrative), and Bacon does not paint the horror, but the scream, he argues. When Bacon looks back on these paintings of screams, he seems to be more ambiguous, however:

> You could say that a scream is a horrific image; in fact, I wanted to paint the scream more than the horror. I think, if I had really thought about what causes somebody to scream, it would have made the scream that I tried to paint more successful. Because I should in a
sense have been more conscious of the horror that produced the scream. In fact they were too abstract. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.48)

There is evidence that he is aware that there is something violent going on even in the act of painting. For instance, one of the reasons why he did not paint directly from models, or rather, often worked on the painting after the models had gone, was the fact that he did not like to commit the act of painting when they were there:

They [the present models] inhibit me because, if I like them, I don’t want to practice before them the injury that I do to them in my work. I would rather practice the injury in private by which I think I can record the fact of them more clearly. (…) Because people believe – simple people at least – that the distortions of them are an injury of them – no matter how much they feel for or how much they like you. (…) But tell me, who today has been able to record anything that comes across to us as a fact without causing deep injury to the image? (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.41)

Bacon does, of course, distinguish between the violence of the world and the violence of the painting, though he does not deny that the violence of the world might have influenced him; he did, among other things, live through two wars. But he does not completely reject that his paintings are related to how he perceives things through his particular psyche:

It’s concerned with my kind of psyche, it’s concerned with my kind of – I’m putting it in a very pleasant way – exhilarated despair. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.83)

A psyche that, as he himself puts it, is sensitive to despair, i.e. “one’s basic nature is totally without hope, and yet one’s nervous system is made out of optimistic stuff” (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.80). It is in a way the suspension between life and death that Deleuze and Guattari are talking about in certain extreme experiences:

But then, perhaps, I have a feeling of mortality all the time. Because, if life excites you, its opposite, like a shadow, death, must excite you. Perhaps not excite you, but you are aware of it in the same way as you are aware of life, you’re aware of it like the turn of a coin between life and death. And I’m very aware of that about people, and about myself too, after all. I’m always surprised when I wake up in the morning. (Bacon/Sylvester, 1975, p.78)

Also for Deleuze, it seems that Bacon’s paintings are working in this borderland between life and death, but instead of seeing this as something violent and nihilistic, he sees it as an affirmation of life, as life that cries out to death. It becomes a necessity. Only when the invisible negative forces become visible through the battle of the body, can life fight death in affirmation:
Quand le corps visible affronte tel un lutteur les puissances de l’invisible, il ne leur donne pas d’autre visibilité que la sienne. Et c’est dans cette visibilité-là que le corps lutte activement, affirme une possibilité de triompher, qu’il n’avait pas tant qu’elles restaient invisibles au sein d’un spectacle qui nous ôtait nos forces et nous détournaît. C’est comme si un combat devenait possible maintenant. (...) La vie crie à la mort, mais justement la mort n’est plus ce trop-visible qui nous fait défaillir, elle est cette force invisible que la vie détecte, débusque et fait voir en criant. (FB, 61-62)

**Painting and sensation**

To Deleuze as to Bacon the violence of painting has to do with the violence of sensation. Though Bacon is not particularly inspired by Cézanne, Deleuze places him in the tradition of Cézanne in the sense that he paints sensation in between abstraction and figuration:

Cette voie de la Figure, Cézanne lui donne un nom simple: la sensation. La Figure, c’est la forme sensible rapportée à la sensation; elle agit immédiatement sur le système nerveux, qui est de la chair. (FB, 39)

It is a painting of the senses, but not as the impressionists would have it a rendering of impressions, it is anchored in the body:

La couleur est dans le corps, la sensation est dans le corps, et non dans les airs. La sensation, c’est ce qui est peint. Ce qui est peint dans le tableau, c’est le corps, non pas en tant qu’il est représenté comme objet, mais en tant qu’il est vécu comme éprouvant telle sensation (...) (FB, 40)

The fact is not an object or an event objectively rendered, it is the form in relation to the sensation that forms the *Figure*. The *Figure* is the form not only as perceived by sensation but captured in its own sensation. The *Figure* is the way sensation is lived from within, but which can only be felt through the paint. Furthermore, it is something that is able to connect different levels and passes from one level to the other:

Et positivement, Bacon ne cesse pas de dire que la sensation, c’est ce qui passe d’un «ordre» à un autre, d’un «niveau » à un autre, d’un «domaine » à un autre. C’est pourquoi la sensation est maîtresse de déformations, agent de déformations du corps. (FB, 41)

These levels or “ordres de sensation” or “niveaux sensitifs” are not different kinds of senses or sensations. It is each sensation which consists of several levels at the same time:
C’est chaque tableau, chaque Figure, qui est une séquence mouvante ou une série (et pas seulement un terme dans une série). C’est chaque sensation qui est à divers niveaux, de différents ordres ou dans plusieurs domaines. Si bien qu’il n’y a pas des sensations de différents ordres, mais différents ordres d’une seule et même sensation. Il appartient à la sensation d’envelopper une différence de niveau constitutive, une pluralité de domaines constituant. Toute sensation, et toute Figure, est déjà de la sensation «accumulée», «coagulée», comme dans une figure de calcaire. D’où le caractère irréductiblement synthétique de la sensation. (FB, 41-42)

Sensation is “synthétique”, not in the sense of artificial (though he might be playing with it, as he just remarked that Bacon’s motifs are artificial in contrast to Cézanne’s, which are found in nature), but in the etymological sense that comes from the Greek noun “sunthetos” and the adjective “sunthetikos” meaning composed of different parts (DHLF).

Deleuze enumerates and discusses four explanations of sensation: the figurative, the psychological, the “motrice” and the phenomenological hypothesis. Where the first two are opposed to what Deleuze is trying to explain, the latter two allow him to specify the idea of sensation. The figurative hypothesis, Deleuze clearly rejects. The sensation of the painting is not due to what it represents or tells. On the contrary, the sensation of violence is all the stronger in those pictures that do not depict horror. The second hypothesis is the idea that sensation is due to the co-presence of contradictory affections, for instance love and violence. It is a psychological hypothesis. But it still assumes a representation, as the feelings are in relation to a specific situation. The third hypothesis, however, allows Deleuze to develop his argument. He calls it “l’hypothèse motrice” or the motor or movement hypothesis. The idea is not that the movement from one thing to another produces sensation, but that sensation is a simultaneous and instant cut through several layers:

Les niveaux de sensation seraient comme des arrêts ou des instantanés de mouvement, qui recomposeraient le mouvement synthétiquement, dans sa continuité, sa vitesse et sa violence(...) (FB, 44)

It can be the grotesque turning of a head, or “une étrange promenade” (FB, 44), it can be the curve or the contour that is used to create the effect of a mobile sculpture. It is a strangely immobile movement. It is a movement on the spot:

Si bien que, même quand le contour se déplace, le mouvement consiste moins dans ce déplacement que dans l’exploration ambienne à laquelle la Figure se livre dans le contour. (FB, 45)
In fact, it is not the movement that explains the sensation, but the flexibility of sensation that explains the movement:

Le mouvement n’explique pas la sensation, il s’explique au contraire par l’élasticité de la sensation, sa *vis elastica.* (FB, 45)

That is why “Le véritable acrobate est celui de l’immobilité dans le rond” (FB, 45). Movement is due to the intense sensation and the elasticity of sensation that allows it to comprise several levels at once:

Bref, ce n’est pas le mouvement qui explique les niveaux de sensation, ce sont les niveaux de sensation qui expliquent ce qui subsiste de mouvement. Et en effet, ce qui intéresse Bacon n’est pas exactement le mouvement, bien que sa peinture rende le mouvement très intense et violent. Mais à la limite, c’est un mouvement sur place, un spasme, qui témoigne d’un tout autre problème propre à Bacon: *l’action sur le corps de forces invisibles* (d’où les déformations du corps qui sont dues à cette cause plus profonde). (FB, 45)

The immobile movement is, and is due to, sensation. And furthermore, rendering the immobile movement is a way of rendering the effect of the invisible forces on the body. It is those forces of transformation and deformation that interest Bacon, and the movement comes from there. The “hypothèse motrice” is not that there is a privileged relation between movement (as objective movement in space) and sensation, but that the elasticity of sensation and its ability to crosscut several different levels (and thus contain difference) create an intensive movement on the spot.

In other words, we are back at the figure of arrested movement that we first encountered in the analysis of the two oppositional movements between the figure and the structure. The spasm, the two opposed movements in their coexistence, *is* sensation. The images of figures in twisted transformations are now explained as the way sensation through its elasticity captures the work of invisible forces. The analysis of the two movements is not suspended or cancelled out, but another layer is added to it. One that explains the two movements not as formal workings between the entities of the picture, but as a result of the nature of sensation, Bacon being able to capture the Figure in its sensation. It is not only the two movements resulting in an arrested movement, it is the arrested movement of sensation that explains the movement of the figures.

What Cunningham wants to make visible is the invisible movement of immobility or the invisible immobility of movement, the proximity between the two, the elasticity of the two. The very slow movements force sensation to stretch its capability to encompass a certain
space of time. Cunningham keeps off the forces that threaten to dissolve the body. It is the forces the body is capable of that he is interested in. The forces that make the body able to sustain a very slow movement over a long time. Cunningham forces the elasticity of sensation through the use of immobility. The elasticity of the sensation in Bacon’s painting results in an immobile movement. Cunningham is working with the sensation of movement, provoking and developing the sensation of movement. Bacon uses the movement and the immobility to make another kind of sensation felt.

The fourth and last hypothesis is the so-called phenomenological one. This hypothesis would propose that the different levels of sensation have to do with the different senses. But it needs to be defined more precisely. It can only account for the levels of the sensation if it insists that the different senses also refer to each other (Merleau-Ponty would not have disagreed):

Les niveaux de sensation seraient vraiment des domaines sensibles renvoyant aux différends organes des sens; mais justement chaque niveau, chaque domaine auraient une manière de renvoyer aux autres, indépendemment de l’objet commun représenté. (FB, 45)

The last specification is important, it is not the nature of the object that decides which senses are involved. Independently of the sense to which for instance an art is supposed to address itself, there is an internal relation between the senses in the sensation:

Entre une couleur, un goût, un toucher, une odeur, un bruit, un poids, il y aurait une communication existentielle qui constituerait le moment « pathétique » (non représentatif) de la sensation. (FB, 45)

Sensation is “synthétique” as it brings different levels together. But it is also “pathétique”. “Pathétique” comes from Latin “patheticus”, “qui émeut”, derived from Greek “pathos”, “ce qui arrive” (DHLF). In other words the pathetic is that which moves us. So firstly, the elasticity and syntheticity of sensation give rise to a certain kind of movement. Secondly, it moves us. The first definition concerns the nature of sensation, the second concerns the effect on the spectator.

The figure has to show all these crossings of the senses at the same time. But to do this, one has to catch something that is stronger than the senses themselves, something that belongs to the sensible but goes beyond the senses:
Mais cette opération n’est possible que si la sensation de tel ou tel domaine (ici la sensation visuelle) est directement en prise sur une puissance vitale qui déborde tous les domaines et les traverse. Cette puissance c’est le Rythme (...) (FB, 46)

In the preceding chapter le rythme was defined as the coexistence of all the movements in the painting (“La coexistence de tous les mouvements dans le tableau, c’est le rythme” (FB, 38)). But now le rythme is developed and differentiated in various ways. It is a kind of force that goes beyond the senses, invests the senses. It takes different forms according to the art where it is expressed. But it also traverses all the senses and brings into each art the movement between different levels:

L’ultime, c’est donc le rapport du rythme avec la sensation, qui met dans chaque sensation les niveaux et domaines par lesquels elle passe. (FB, 46)

Thus le rythme is not simply the coexistence of different movements in the picture, it is le rythme as a force of life that creates the movement between the different levels that constitute sensation.

**Sensation and le corps sans organes**

It is this rythme as a force of life that constitutes sensation which takes Deleuze beyond a phenomenological hypothesis, to something that is inherent in his thinking, the forces of life that go beyond everyday experience, to the point where creation happens and life and death meet:

L’hypothèse phénoménologique est peut-être insuffisante, parce qu’elle invoque seulement le corps vécu. Mais le corps vécu est encore peu de chose par rapport à une Puissance plus profonde et presque invivable. L’unité du rythme, en effet, nous ne pouvons la chercher que là où le rythme lui-même plonge dans le chaos, dans la nuit, et où les différences de niveau sont perpétuellement brassées avec violence. (FB, 47)

When we are dealing with the body, the place where the rythme plunges into chaos and where the levels of sensation are violently mixed is in the corps sans organes. (Incidentally, already Deleuze’s idea of “la chair” is much more meaty than the relatively abstract “chair” as meeting point between the world and the self as explained by phenomenology.)\(^{31}\) Though Deleuze places Bacon in the tradition of Cézanne, he also puts him in the same league as Artaud:

\(^{31}\) For an extensive analysis of Deleuze’s relation to phenomenology, see Alain Beaulieu, *Gilles Deleuze et la phénoménologie*, 2004.
On peut croire que Bacon rencontre Artaud sur beaucoup de points: la Figure, c’est précisément le corps sans organes (défaire l’organisme au profit du corps, le visage au profit de la tête) ; le corps sans organes est chair et nerf ; une onde le parcourt qui trace en lui des niveaux ; la sensation est comme la rencontre de l’onde avec des Forces agissant sur le corps, « athlétisme affectif », cri-souffle ; quand elle est ainsi rapportée au corps, la sensation cesse d’être représentative, elle devient réelle ; et la cruauté sera de moins en moins liée à la représentation de quelque chose d’horrible, elle sera seulement l’action des forces sur le corps, ou la sensation (le contraire du sensationnel). (FB, 48)

It is a “peinture de la cruauté” (though Deleuze does not put it that way directly) in the sense that it is the presentation of the action of the forces on the body and the meeting of the rythme and sensation. Le rythme, which first seemed to introduce a vitalist, organic and almost harmonious element, is not a concept that is as peaceful as it might seem. Le rythme that combines sensation and creates a movement between the levels, is a force of life that can also take us to its dark side, where the forces are so strong that creation and destruction reflect each other. Le rythme takes us to the force of life but beyond the organism, it takes us to le corps sans organes.

Le corps sans organes evoked in the text quite resembles that of L’Anti-Œdipe or Mille plateaux, it is the body beyond the structures that are enforced upon it to keep it neatly organised and hierarchical. But the idea of rythme is perhaps more central here:

C’est un corps intense, intensif. Il est parcouru d’une onde qui trace dans le corps des niveaux ou des seuils d’après les variations de son amplitude. Le corps n’a donc pas d’organes, mais des seuils ou des niveaux. (FB, 47)

There is no doubt that this “onde”, the wave, is le rythme. The levels that the rythme was explained to traverse are now the different “seuils” of the corps sans organes, and sensation is the intensive vibration between the different levels of the corps sans organes:

Si bien que la sensation n’est pas qualitative et qualifiée, elle n’a qu’une réalité intensive qui ne détermine plus en elle des données représentatives, mais des variations allotropiques. La sensation est vibration. (FB, 47)

Deleuze analyses how Bacon is working with this body which is beyond the organism, but therefore all the more vital. The sensation of the corps sans organes is the meeting with the rythme, the direct contact with the levels of the chair and with the invisible forces:

32 The word “allotropiques” could be a reference to the quantités intensives, “allotropie” means “propriété qu’a une espèce chimique (élément ou molécule) d’exister dans les mêmes conditions physiques sous les formes cristaline et amorphe” (LPR)
Le corps est entièrement vivant, et pourtant non organique. Aussi la sensation, quand elle atteint le corps à travers l’organisme, prend-elle une allure excessive et spasmodique, elle rompt les bornes de l’activité organique. En pleine chair, elle est directement portée sur l’onde nerveuse ou l’émotion vitale. (FB, 48)

Sensation meets le rythme in le corps sans organes and becomes a spasm. This is what happens in Bacon’s paintings.

That le corps sans organes has organs though no organism becomes clear in Bacon’s paintings. Instead of having clear and well-defined organs the figures have temporary organs which change as l’onde of sensation runs through them:

Voilà ce qu’il faut comprendre: l’onde parcourt le corps; à tel niveau un organe se déterminera, suivant la force rencontrée; et cet organe changera, si la force elle-même change, ou si l’on passe à un autre niveau. Bref, le corps sans organes ne se définit pas par l’absence d’organes, il ne se définit pas seulement par l’existence d’un organe indéterminé, il se définit enfin par la présence temporaire et provisoire des organes déterminés. (FB, 50)

Thus the blue and reddish brushings of the torso in Three Studies of the Male Back are not only a trait of la viande, of l’indiscernabilité between the human and the animal, not only variations on the torso. Bacon makes visible le corps sans organes where the organs constantly change forms and functions. It is the variations of the organs. It is all the more comprehensible that it is the torso that is the most blurred – the torso is the part of the human body where most of the vital organs are gathered. It is a study of le corps sans organes of the torso.

The states of the body and of the torso in Cunningham’s Torse are always temporary and fugitive, a movement or a state of tension never stays the same for long, even when there is no movement going on. However, we do not see the vital organs change, it is more as if we saw the relation between the structural elements of the body change: the bones, the articulations, the muscles. Cunningham might be interested in another kind of organs, very changeable, but less meaty than in Bacon. Bacon does not paint the vital organs such as heart or lungs, and often the contours of the figures seem to be influenced by the muscles. But the blurred zones of blue and red nevertheless suggest organs that do not show on the outside as do the muscles, but need to be presented from the inside.

But there is yet another aspect to the relation between sensation and le corps sans organes. For it is through colour and line that painting in a double sense can become the art of
le corps sans organes. The paint works on the body of the spectator, it transforms the regarding eye into a polyvalent organ:

Libérant les lignes et les couleurs de la représentation, elle libère en même temps l’œil de son appartenance à l’organisme, elle le libère de son caractère d’organe fixe et qualifié : l’œil devient virtuellement l’organe indéterminé polyvalent, qui voit le corps sans organes, c’est-à-dire la Figure, comme pure présence. La peinture nous met des yeux partout (...) (FB, 54)

In this sense there is a chiasmic relation between the painting and the spectator, through the colours and the way they react on sensation. This is part of what Deleuze calls “l’hystérie de la peinture”.

**Colour and time**

The constant changing of the organs introduces, according to Deleuze, an aspect of time:

C’est une manière d’introduire le temps dans le tableau; et chez Bacon il y a une grande force du temps, le temps est peint. (FB, 50)

The changing of the organs to a large extent comes through colours, for instance the use of red and blue in *Three Studies of the Male Back*, and thus the variation of colours becomes a variation of time:

La variation de texture et de couleur, sur un corps, sur une tête ou sur un dos (comme dans les «Trois études de dos d’homme ») est vraiment une variation temporelle réglée au dixième de seconde. D’où le traitement chromatique du corps, très différent de celui des aplats : il y aura un chronochromatisme du corps, par opposition au monochromatisme de l’aplat. Mettre le temps dans la Figure, c’est la force des corps chez Bacon : le large dos d’homme comme variation. (FB, 50)

Deleuze interprets *Three Studies of the Male Back* as figures of le corps sans organes; the colour variations of blue and red are not only the colours of la viande, the variations are also the variations of the ever changing organs, and through the indication of these changes the colours also convey time. But the above analysis of Deleuze’s is even richer than that through his choice of words and the etymological connotations. The centre of interest is the “traitement chromatique du corps”, the “chronochromatisme du corps” and the “monochromatisme de l’aplat”. These words are formed over two different roots: “chrome” and “chrono-“. Evidently Deleuze is playing with the word monochrome, but there is more to it than that.
“Chrome” comes from Latin “chroma”/Greek “khrôma” meaning “couleur du corps”, “couleurs”. It also had a sense within rhetorics meaning “couleur du style, figure” or more musically “modulation, mélodie, air”. It is derived from “khrôs” meaning “surface du corps humain, peau, chair” and by metonomy “teint, carnation” and “couleur”. The words are already heavy with meanings and cross-meanings that make perfect sense in relation to Deleuze’s explanation of Bacon’s paintings. Already the idea of the body and of colour is etymologically included. Furthermore it is interesting that there are connotations of music, the idea of rhythm being related to music as well. These transitions continue if we regard the way the word “chrome” develops into “chromatism”. In fact, there are two senses of the word. The first sense comes from the musical connotations and means a series of musical notes that rise and fall in demi-tones. The second sense has been derived from a medical use of the word and has become “action de colorer” and is used in the visual sense and concerning painting. All this is retained in the adjective “chromatique” and the noun “chromatisme”. (DHLF)

“Chrono-“ regards time and comes from Greek “khronos”. However, it is important to notice that there are several Greek expressions for time. There is “kairos” meaning the precise instant, there is “aîon” meaning eternity, and there is “khronos” meaning the time that passes. It is in other words a time that is conceived plastically as something that crosses a certain duration, “le temps qui s’écoule, une durée définie, tout laps de temps”. But it is also used within the idea of rhythm and music, “comme nom d’unité rythmique, notamment au pluriel, dans le domaine musical et métrique”. Thus there is yet again a connection with the idea of music and of rhythm. And furthermore, the idea of movement is not far away either. Plato defined “khronos” as “une représentation mobile de l’éternité”. This is retained and combined with the idea of chromatisme in the word “chronochromatique”. (DHLF)

These definitions, however, should not be mixed up with Deleuze’s own definitions of Chronos and Aiôn as he explains it in, for instance, Différence et répétition or Logique du sens. He defines Aiôn as that which is constantly split in past and future without ever staying in the present, it is the time of l’événement, le devenir, le sens, which are not anchored in bodily reactions. Chronos is defined as the time of the present, the time of corporal effects and the depth of the bodies:

Nous avons vu que le passé, le présent et le futur n’étaient pas du tout trois parties d’une même temporalité, mais formaient deux lectures du temps, chacune complète et excluant l’autre : d’une part le présent toujours limité, qui mesure l’action des corps comme causes, et l’état de leurs mélanges en profondeur (Chronos) ; d’autre part le passé et le futur essentiellement illimités, qui receuillent à la surface les événements corporels en tant qu’effets (L’Aiôn). (LS, 77)
In the “chronos” of “chronochromatisme” we have to do with the depth of the bodies. Returning to the text we find the following crossovers: “Monochromatisme” containing the idea of one single colour and combining the idea of body and of colour. “Traitement chromatique” is a treatment of colour and of the body, but there is a musical and rhythmical connotation lurking there as well. And “chronochromatisme” joins the idea of the time that passes with the idea of colour, the body, and movement. Put simply, Bacon treats time with the help of colour. But the etymological meaning of the words adds to the analysis. For finally it is *le rythme* as it crosses the levels and creates organs that Bacon manages to grasp with the help of his variations of colour on the body. And indeed the idea of time as a mobile time is important as the figures contain movement and time, they contain the movement of time that goes through *le corps sans organes* traversed by *le rythme* as shown through the colour variations of the body. Although it is all written in the text, we need the etymological background to see how Deleuze also captures his idea within the precision of his words. There is no stylistic surplus, only etymological necessity.

“*Une clinique esthétique*”

The use of colour is important not only in relation to time; there is also a relation between colour and sensation. Bacon sets out to capture sensation and one of the reasons this is possible is the relation between paint, colour and sensation. According to Deleuze, painting has a privileged relation to sensation because of the colours. It is through the colours that painting captures sensation, and that is what constitutes its “hystérie”:

> La peinture se propose directement de dégager les présences sous la représentation, par-delà la représentation. Le système des couleurs lui-même est un système d’action directe sur le système nerveux. (FB, 53)

What Bacon captures is “la réalité hystérique du corps” (FB, 51). Deleuze finds traits of the clinically hysterical body in Bacon’s painting; contractions, paralysis, hyperaesthesia, anaesthesia and more. But the description is first of all marked by his own discourse. It is “l’action directe des forces sur le système nerveux”, “le caractère transitoire de la détermination d’organe suivant les forces”, “un sentiment très spécial de l’intérieur du corps, puisque le corps est précisément senti sous l’organisme” (FB, 51). He is following the paintings, his description of them and the conceptual network he is building around them – it is a hysteria in his own sense of the word. It is the hysteria of the spasm of sensation and *le corps sans organes*, or as he puts it in the words of Artaud in a figure of immobility: “*Une
What has been described as the confrontation of two movements, as the shifting of levels in sensation, as le rythme that traverses le corps sans organes creating temporal organs, is now contained in the idea of hysteria. What characterises this kind of hysteria is its surplus of presence and its hypersensibility towards presence:

L’hystérique, c’est à la fois celui qui impose sa présence, mais aussi celui pour qui les choses et les êtres sont présents, trop présents, et qui donne à toute chose et communique à tout être cet excès de présence. (FB, 52)

Deleuze is walking on tricky ground when speaking of hysteria. He is referring to a psychoanalytical term, dating from the nineteenth century and heavily loaded with history. But Deleuze is deliberately moving the term towards the aesthetic and avoiding psychologisation of the interpretation of the painter. He does not place the hysteria within the painter, nor within the spectator. This hysteria is that of the figure and of the painting. But he goes further than that, he proposes that there is a special link between painting as such, as art, and hysteria. Hysteria is, so to speak, the clinique of painting:

Nous voulons dire en effet qu’il y a un rapport spécial de la peinture avec l’hystérie. (…) Ce n’est pas une hystérie du peintre, c’est une hystérie de la peinture. Avec la peinture, l’hystérie devient art. Ou plutôt avec le peintre, l’hystérie devient peinture. Ce que l’hystérique est tellement incapable de faire, un peu d’art, la peinture le fait. (FB, 53)

Each art relates to the nervous system in a different way and therefore the clinique of each art is different. Painting works directly on the nervous system through colours and lines. Music works through sounds that affect us directly but is not yet capable of showing colours. This gives it another clinique, “une schizophrénie gallopante” (FB, 56). Deleuze does not go into all arts, but he contrasts music and painting. Where music is a totally disembodied art, painting shows la chair, le corps. But even though music has a profound nervous effect on the human body it is not hysterical, precisely because it is disembodied:

D’une certaine façon la musique commence là où la peinture finit et c’est ce qu’on veut dire quand on parle d’une supériorité de la musique. Elle s’installe sur des lignes de fuite qui traversent les corps, mais qui trouvent leur consistance ailleurs. Tandis que la peinture s’installe en amont, là où le corps s’échappe, mais, s’échappant, découvre la matérialité qui le compose, la pure présence dont il est fait, et qu’il ne découvraitait pas sinon. (FB, 55-56)

It is interesting that Deleuze contrasts painting and music as the most embodied and disembodied arts, for dance has alternately or simultaneously been regarded (and is in many
ways still regarded) as both the most embodied and the most disembodied art. Embodied because it is the most bodily of the arts: the body itself on stage. And the most disembodied: the body creating spiritual states, being evanescent and ethereal, flying off to other worlds where the physical body cannot follow. Dance incarnates the bodilessness of music and the bodiliness of painting – perhaps this is the split personality of dance.

The difficulty of these definitions, however, does not only concern how a particular art affects the nervous system, but also how to distinguish such an “esthétique clinique” from psychology and psychoanalysis. Is it possible to keep it “purement esthétique, et indépendamment de toute psychiatrie, de toute psychanalyse”? (FB, 55) Deleuze does not answer directly, but we can say that that is exactly what he is showing through the analysis of Bacon. A way to capture the clinique of the painting without going into the psychology of the representation or of the painter. With the question of hysteria we come back to the problem of representation. For in a way the refusal of representation and figuration, the insistence on the “matter of fact” serves a double purpose: to liberate the painting from figuration and its interpretation from representation, and to avoid a psychological interpretation based on the painter. Deleuze places all affectivity in the painting itself.

Bacon’s paintings are in a way very personal, and to read them in a biographical light can be tempting when confronted with their violent force. Bacon is probably well aware of that temptation. Moreover it is sometimes easy to find a close relation to some of the events of his life, the most prominent example being the pictures that Deleuze often returns to: those that can be related to the tragic suicidal death of Bacon’s friend and lover George Dyer. Even Bacon admits that these paintings were a conscious attempt to exorcise this tragic loss. It therefore seems to be reasonable information in order to understand the context of the painting. However, it does not mean that these paintings should only be understood personally and biographically. As David Sylvester, his friend and critic who often includes biographical information but in a sober way, remarks: there is a will to make the personal general. Indeed, the whole idea of exorcising is to get the emotion out of the subject, not to draw the emotion back into it. It is a will to transform. This transformation can for instance be through abstraction as in the case that David Sylvester draws attention to: a painting with two figures making love, presumably Bacon and Dyer, where Bacon has added some abstract arrows to indicate the direction of the movement. Sylvester concludes:

The presence of these elements, which are simultaneously geometric in form and clinical in context, seems a deliberate indication that Bacon’s intention is to speak of a personal grief in
the most impersonal way possible, as if in obedience to Eliot’s precept, “poetry is not a
turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion.” (Sylvester, 2000, p.143)

Though biographical information has its place, it does not necessarily explain the work of art,
for the importance lies in the transformation of the material.

Deleuze goes even further in his insistence on this transformation; but paradoxically he
captures the violence of les affects all the more. There are almost no traces of psychological
interpretation in his commentary. Everything is interpreted in terms of forms and forces. It is
not that all affection is left out. It is that all affection is interpreted through the way it is
expressed in paintings. The affect-ionate is included in the figural. Deleuze has found another
way to express those forces that others would have expressed in psychological terms. If there
is a psychology pertaining to art, it is not that we go and look at the biographical psyche of the
author, instead we should look at art and its affects. The affects as analysed in Bacon are the
same as les affects distinguished from affection that Deleuze discusses with Guattari in one of
the chapters of Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?. Les affects are what is extracted from the
affections of life and transformed into something that lives its independent and durable life in
art:

Les percepts ne sont plus des perceptions, ils sont indépendants d’un état de ceux qui les
éprouvent; les affects ne sont plus des sentiments ou affections, ils débordent la force de
ceux qui passent par eux. Les sensation, percepts et affects, sont des êtres qui valent par eux-
mêmes et excèdent tout vécu. Ils sont en l’absence de l’homme, peut-on dire, parce que
l’homme, tel qu’il est pris dans la pierre, sur la toile ou le long des mots, est lui-même un
composé de percepts et d’affects. L’œuvre d’art est un être de sensation, et rien d’autre: elle
existe en soi. (QP, 154-155)

A similar approach to the work of Cunningham would have many advantages, though it is not
easy to accomplish. Cunningham’s refusal of psychology and insistence on the dance itself
cannot only be seen in the light of the history of dance and his break with his predecessors. It
can also be seen in a personal context. This refusal equally serves to ward off all
psychological and biographical interpretation. When dance does not represent anything but
itself, does not mean anything but the movement it executes, there is no reason to search for
an explanation in the personality of the choreographer. But though the violence is of a
completely different kind than in Bacon’s work, it is none the less intensive. The
transformation of affection into affects might be even more complete, but the force of the
affects is equally strong. They might be harder to localise as they are less obviously violent,
but they become so intensifs that they become almost invisible.
Movement in Deleuze’s writing

It is striking when reading Deleuze’s study of Bacon how much he is talking about movement. It becomes evident how much his philosophy is an aesthetics of movement. Yet, one has to characterise how he uses movement, what kind of movement and what he obtains, and how movement works within his own text. I have tried to constantly underline this on a very concrete level in the text. I am of the opinion that this cannot be abstracted from the text, but has to be studied within it.\(^\text{33}\)

That movement is important to Bacon’s paintings, is evident to the eye, even if movement is not represented in the same way as in, for instance, the surrealist painting with the running dog or Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase*. But Deleuze manages to capture what is not so evident: namely how this movement works in Bacon’s paintings. For it is rarely an *actuel* movement, and rarely a represented movement. It is an *intensif* movement within the figure, between the figure and its surrounding. If this movement is *intensif* for the figure, it is often almost imaginary for the spectator.

But the movement explicity described in the text is followed by another movement: that of Deleuze’s text itself. For, indeed, it is more than a clear progression from the simple to the complex; it is a line of variations, it is an internal movement of the text and its concepts. That is why neither the analysis of movement nor the concepts of movement present in the text can be abstracted from the text as such. The stylistic movement of the text is indispensable to the explicit aesthetics of movement described. Here we have seen, for instance, how the concept of *sensation* constantly changes. First sensation is “ce qui est paint”, then it is that which is *synthétique* (meaning composed of different parts), then sensation is movement in the sense that the elasticity of sensation gives rise to movement, and lastly sensation is a meeting in which *le rythme* traverses *le corps sans organes*. We could also quite simply take the example of how the movement in the paintings is explained. It is the two opposite movements, it is *le rythme* as coexistence of all the movements in the paintings, it is the systole and the diastole, the contraction and *décontraction*, it is the elasticity of sensation that gives a cross-cut of several instants of movement at the same time – and even more. In other words: the explanation of movement moves. And this seems to be a general trait of Deleuze’s writing: each time a concept is used, it has both accumulated the preceding definitions in its meaning and is attributed a new meaning in that particular passage of the text. Because of these

\(^\text{33}\) That is why I have not been working closely here with Stéfan Leclercq’s book *L’expérience du movement dans la peinture de Francis Bacon*. He is using all Deleuze’s concepts (not only from the book on Bacon), but does not at all analyse how they work in Deleuze’s text. He is more than indebted to Deleuze’s analysis, but does not work on the text itself.
constant changes it is not enough to make a general concept of Deleuze’s movement analysis\textsuperscript{34}, instead we have to analyse each time what movement means and how it is executed in this particular passage or context.

Like a choreography, Deleuze’s text does not only consist of fluid movement that passes imperceptibly from one position to another; it also contains figures of movement, poses. The most striking one is the figure of arrested movement or immobile movement, which is used in many different ways. It is part of the way the two opposite movements relate to each other and meet, it is inherent in the \textit{intensité} of \textit{le corps sans organes}, it is the structure of the \textit{synthétique} sensation.

Another kind of movement inherent and central to Deleuze’s work, is one that is not described in the text itself, but the one through which the text comes into being. It is the trapeze act through which Deleuze swings from the material to an abstract philosophical level, where the material acquires another kind of meaning. This is a very intriguing movement as Deleuze stays very close to his material and yet transports it far away. As I have also used the interviews with Bacon that Deleuze refers to, it often becomes evident how close he is to Bacon. And yet he manages to give Bacon’s way of thinking an importance and a meaning that only becomes evident through his way of putting it into another context. It is a transformation of an experience of painting into the philosophy of a painter. This transformation is constantly at work through Deleuze’s way of unfolding different elements of Bacon’s painting, analysing them and carrying them further. Deleuze’s \textit{mimétisme} is very independent and transforms the subject as much as his thinking is transformed by it.

**Deleuze – Bacon – Cunningham**

In this chapter I have made the very \textit{athlétique} exercise indeed of juxtaposing and combining an analysis of Deleuze, Bacon and Cunningham. It is several exercises at once – looking at the paradoxical likeness between Bacon and Cunningham, as different as possible and yet not without points of connection; and at the same time analysing Deleuze’s analysis of movement in Bacon’s painting. I have not pretended to apply the philosophy of Deleuze to Cunningham, as I believe it cannot be abstracted from his work, but I have tried to juxtapose the aesthetics of Cunningham to Deleuze’s analysis of Bacon, showing where they might accidentally meet.

\textsuperscript{34} This danger is for instance present in Leclercq’s book. Movement becomes such a broad and all-explaining term that it is hard to say what it is. Movement in Deleuze has a cosmic dimension, but it has many other and often very concrete shapes and forms.
The meeting between Bacon and Cunningham is not completely accidental seen in a historical view, or rather: through the accidental meeting we realise that there is a historical coincidence: Bacon is in opposition to abstract expressionism, and Cunningham to psychological modern dance, which is in many ways related to it\textsuperscript{35}, and both try to break with representation and narration. But where Deleuze situates Bacon exactly between figuration and abstraction, it seems that Cunningham is closer to abstraction. Cunningham, however, does not like the word abstraction, as living bodies on stage for him can never be abstract. And even in Deleuze’s analysis, movement is linked to or almost inherent in sensation, it becomes obvious that there is no such thing as “abstract” dance. It is not only an investigation of movement, but also an investigation of sensation. But contrary to Deleuze’s analysis, we might say that Cunningham does not work with the movement within sensation, but with the sensation of movement. It is therefore a double investigation of sensation: how the sensation of the body is composed of movement, and how through movement we can investigate sensation. In this sense it is \textit{figural}. It addresses itself to the body, it speaks directly to the senses.

The contrast between Bacon and Cunningham is striking. No matter how much Deleuze tries to explain the violence in Bacon’s paintings in positive terms, it still seems violent when contrasted with Cunningham’s work. Yet, a level of communication between two otherwise very different aesthetics arises, through Bacon’s work itself, but not least through Deleuze’s analysis. However, this can only be conveyed through working close to the text and trying to make the different materials speak. It passes through detours, repetitions and variations. And what happens cannot be neatly summarized in a conclusion, it cannot be abstracted from the movement itself.

\textsuperscript{35} Roger Copeland develops this connection between abstract expressionism and the modern dance of Cunningham’s predecessors in his book \textit{Merce Cunningham – the Modernizing of Modern Dance}.
Chapter 3
Moving to le rythme, from chaos to consistance - ”1837 - De la ritournelle” and Variations V

Refrain: Activity involving in a single process the many, turning them, even though some seem to be opposites, towards oneness, contributes to a good way of life.
(John Cage, Silence – Lectures and Writings, 2004 (1968), p.63)

La ritournelle

"Ritournelle” comes from Italian “ritornella” derived from “ritorno”, meaning return, and “ritornare”, or in English “turn back”. The prefix indicates a movement of return. It is a musical term that means “refrain”, that is: the last two couplets of a song that keep coming back, the repetition of a “dance”. It has also come to mean, simply, a traditional song. But though it is primarily a musical term, it can also be applied to dance, and as we can see, the idea of movement is included in it.

La ritournelle of Deleuze and Guattari in Mille plateaux as developed in the chapter “1837 – De la ritournelle”, is a much broader term. It leads them to discuss such diverse subjects as birdsong, animal and human behaviour, territories, cosmic rhythm, music, art. In short: biology and aesthetics melt together. In fact, all the themes of the chapter melt into each other to the extent that it is quite hard to determine what une ritournelle actually is. It can be musical, gestural, visual, performed by animals or humans, it takes different shapes at the same time, it is related to territories, to cosmos, to time. Although this wide range of meanings and connotations make a definition difficult or impossible, it might also be an opening that contains possibilities in the meeting with the work of Cage and Cunningham.

Cage, Cunningham and la ritournelle

The concept of la ritournelle seems to connect to Cunningham and Cage’s aesthetics in several ways. There are at least two concepts to discuss: le rythme and la ritournelle. Deleuze and Guattari mostly develop la ritournelle in relation to music, sounds and birds, but they suggest that there are gestural ritournelles as well. Le rythme seems to receive an echo because it is a concept that refers to both dance and music and that allows me to examine how Cage and Cunningham use it.

But other meetings take place as well: the parallel between art and nature recalls Cunningham’s interest in the movement of animals and birds and Cage’s interest in nature,
mushrooms and the American philosopher Henry David Thoreau. Furthermore, the chapter on *la ritournelle* deals intricately with the coexistence of difference, of heterogeneity. This is a problem that Cage and Cunningham are engaged in, not least in their collaborations with others in happenings and events. Lastly, the chapter also deals with the difference between materials and arts, and the advantages of *la ritournelle* composed of sound. Deleuze and Guattari do not speak of dance but contrast painting and music in a way that might be questioned.

**Variations V**

*Variations V* is a happening and an interactive performance, a very early one of its kind. It was first performed in 1965, but I will be working on a TV recording made by German television in 1966. Cunningham did the choreography, Cage was in charge of the music. The visual artists who collaborated were Stan VanDerBeek, who also did the TV recording, and Nam June Paik. The visual elements consist of several screens of different formats on which a film collage is projected. There are pictures of Cunningham and his dancers in rehearsal as well as extracts from film and television. (Sometimes in the televised version the images of the collage overlap the immediate images of the dancers, as if they were projected on an invisible screen in front of them.)

The idea behind the performance was to conceive of a technique where the movement of the dancers affects the sound. Several antennas are placed in the space of the performance and emit sound every time a dancer is within 1.2 metres of one of them. Furthermore, there are photocells that react to movement, and microphones hidden in the different objects used in the performance. In that way, *Variations V* differs from their other performances as music and dance are not separated but interact. This should not be seen as a contradiction in their aesthetics, for it is important to emphasise that music and dance are still brought together in an indeterminate way. The order of the events is not arranged in advance and neither is the production of sound. Music, dance and pictures come together in a chaotic and unpredictable way. One of the things that are interesting to discuss through “1837 – De la ritournelle” is how we can conceive the incoherent whole that is the result.

**The first definition of *la ritournelle***

Deleuze and Guattari open with descriptive examples of three aspects of *la ritournelle*. The first aspect is illustrated by the image of a child, afraid in the darkness, singing to create a centre of security in the middle of chaos. The second is not the establishment of a centre but
the construction of a territory, a circle, keeping the exterior from the interior by means of a wall built by sound. The third is the opening of the circle, plunging oneself into the improvisation of the future, meeting the cosmic forces. These are the three simultaneous aspects of la ritournelle:

La ritournelle a les trois aspects, elle les rend simultanés, ou les mélange : tantôt, tantôt, tantôt. Tantôt, le chaos est un immense trou noir, et l’on s’efforce d’y fixer un point fragile comme centre. Tantôt l’on organise autour du point une “allure“ (plutôt qu’une forme) calme et stable : le trou noir est devenu un chez-soi. Tantôt on greffe une échappée sur cette allure, hors du trou noir. (MP, 383)

Or, said in another way, three kinds of forces, chaotic, earthly and cosmic, come together in la ritournelle: “Forces du chaos, forces terrestres, forces cosmiques: tout cela s’affronte et concourt dans la ritournelle.” (MP, 384)

It might not be evident what this has to do with music; the examples seem to speak more of the human psyche. But as we will see, la ritournelle intertwines questions of territoriality, behaviour of humans and animals, art and nature, biology and aesthetics. And as a matter of fact, these first examples contain elements that also structure their later arguments and definitions.

The construction of chaos and the emergence of le rythme

As the three examples indicate, la ritournelle has to do with constructing something in chaos and then letting it go in a merging with cosmic forces. To develop this idea Deleuze and Guattari describe how chaos is moulded into entities called “milieux” and how relations are built between these milieux. And this is where le rythme comes into la ritournelle.

Chaos is not a completely formless mass, it has directional layers, milieux. Each milieu is a block of time and space constituted by periodic repetitions:

Chaque milieu est vibratoire, c’est-à-dire un bloc d’espace-temps constitué par la répétition périodique de la composante. (MP, 384)

Les milieux refer to each other in different ways. Each has an interior, an exterior, an intermediate zone and annexe zones, between which there is communication:

Ainsi le vivant a un milieu extérieur qui renvoie aux matériaux; un milieu intérieur, aux éléments composants et substances composées; un milieu intermédiaire, aux membranes et limites ; un milieu annexe, aux sources d’énergie, et aux perceptions-actions. (MP, 384)
These distinctions are a way of explaining the complexity of the interrelation between, for instance, different organisms and their surroundings. The *milieux* are permeable and weave into one another. Although this might sound very abstract, it is nevertheless the basis for how Deleuze and Guattari are going to analyse the territorial relation between the species, and art’s relation to chaos and to territories. *Milieux* is a sufficiently abstract category to be able to include organic and inorganic beings, humans or animals, as well as the behaviour and the expressive production of these beings.

Les *milieux* are immersed in chaos and constantly threatened by chaos. It is in this opposition that *le rythme* is born. *Le rythme* is the defence of the *milieux* against chaos, “la riposte des milieux au chaos, c’est le rythme” (MP, 385). But *le rythme* is not only opposed to chaos, it also has an affinity with chaos, in fact it is chaos that becomes *rythme*. What chaos and *le rythme* have in common is that they are entre-deux, in-between:

> Ce qu’il y a de commun au chaos et au rythme, c’est l’entre-deux, entre deux milieux, rythme-chaos ou chaosmos (...) (MP, 385)

It is in the in-between that chaos itself becomes *rythme* in the coordination of heterogeneous time-spaces:

> C’est dans cet entre-deux que le chaos devient rythme, non pas nécessairement, mais a une chance de le devenir. Le chaos n’est pas le contraire du rythme, c’est plutôt le milieu de tous les milieux. Il y a rythme dès qu’il y a passage transcodé d’un milieu à un autre, communication de milieux, coordinations d’espace-temps hétérogènes. (MP, 385)

So when chaos passes through one *milieu* to another in the plasma that they consist of, it produces *rythme*. Even if the *rythme* is a defence against chaos it is also chaotic. This might be the logic behind the opposition between cadence and *rythme*. The cadence is metric and regular; the *rythme*, on the contrary, is irregular, it is “critical”:

> On sait bien que le rythme n’est pas mesure ou cadence, même irrégulière: rien de moins rythmé qu’une marche militaire. (…) La mesure est dogmatique, mais le rythme est critique, il noue des instants critiques, ou se noue au passage d’un milieu dans un autre. Il n’opère pas dans un espace-temps homogène, mais avec des blocs hétérogènes. (MP, 385)

*Le rythme* is not regular. Even when it consists of repetitions, the repetitititions underline the difference and singularity of each instance. This argument recalls *Différence et répétition*:
When I mention *Différence et répétition*, it is because *la ritournelle* has to do with repetition, with the return of something (just as *le rythme* here is described in terms of difference and repetition) and it also refers to “l’Éternel Retour” (the eternal return) which is of central concern in this book. The French scholar François Zourabichvili even calls *la ritournelle* a “mot-valise”\(^{36}\) which contains this theme. (Zourabichvili, 2003, p.75)

**Cadence and rythme – a general discussion**

When Deleuze and Guattari analyse *le rythme* in terms of chaos and in-between, it makes sense to remember Deleuze’s use of *rythme* in his analysis of Bacon, where it first seemed a relatively harmonious term, later becoming something that borders on chaos. *Le rythme* is bound up with a discussion of chaos and order, regularity and irregularity.

Deleuze and Guattari are, of course, not the only ones to discuss the notion of rhythm in terms of regularity and irregularity, cadence/metre and irregular variety. Although the connotations and meanings attributed to rhythm have been many and varied, this opposition often returns, and the main disagreement seems to be whether rhythm is regular or not. Indeed, it is a very old and long discussion, which I cannot account for in detail here. Furthermore, it is a discussion that touches on the fields of philosophy, music, choreography, poetry, painting, architecture. But to give an impression of it, I would like to quote Véronique Fabbri’s *La valeur de l’œuvre d’art* where she discusses rhythm and, in particular, Henri Meschonnic’s work on rhythm in poetry in *Critique du rythme* and *La rime et la vie*. Through Meschonnic and his reference to Benvéniste, she shows that this discussion and opposition goes back to ancient Greece and the Greek philosophers’ understanding of the notion. Whereas the thinking of Heraclitus and Democritus lead to an understanding of rhythm as change (to put it simply), it has been the understanding of Plato that has become dominant: rhythm as the ordering of a material according to number and regularity:

> Le rythme n’est donc plus une figure de l’espace infini, non orienté, mais une figure du temps, pensé comme cyclique, fondé sur la répétition, «l’image mobile de l’éternité». (Fabbri, 1997, p.270)

\(^{36}\) A "mot-valise" (or a portmanteau-word) is a word which contains non-signifying syllables from two (or more) other words. The construction of *ritournelle* in relation to *l’Éternel Retour* would be slightly more complicated, but it contains both (ritour)\([((eter)nel])\]le and [r(e)tour][nelle].
And consequently, it is this conception that is under attack in the different attempts to restore the change, variety and irregularity of rhythm. And Deleuze’s conception of “l’image-mobile” would be a different one – it would be *Aiôn* and not as for Plato “Khronos” – it would not be a cyclic return of the same, but an open return of that which is different, that which differentiates.

**Rhythm seen by Cage**

As a musician, Cage’s notion of rhythm is in relation to, or rather opposition to, other musical definitions of rhythm. Here I will be analysing his definitions of rhythm, especially in the writings assembled and first published in 1961\(^{37}\) in *Silence – Lectures and Writings*. Although Cage’s concept of rhythm might seem consistent, it is not entirely free of the ambivalence between rhythm and cadence, and it changes somewhat over time.

In an article about ballet and modern dance from 1944 called “Grace and Clarity”, he argues that modern dance so far has been based on the personality of the dancer, but that ballet has a rigour, a rhythmical clarity and grace that makes it durable. (Cunningham will show that it is not only classical ballet that has this quality.) And his idea of rhythmical structure as time is beginning to take shape:

> However, a dance, a poem, a piece of music (any of the time arts) occupies a length of time, and the manner in which this length of time is divided first into large parts and then into phrases (or built up from phrases to form eventual larger parts) is the work’s very life structure. The ballet is in possession of a tradition of clarity of its rhythmic structure. (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.90)

Rhythm has to do with division of time. But while this element is to be explored further in Cage and Cunningham’s work later, in the 1944 article another element that seems to belong more to early modernism becomes present: the opposition between grace and clarity of rhythm:

> With clarity of rhythmic structure, *grace* forms a duality. Together they have a relation like that of body and soul. Clarity is cold, mathematical, inhuman, but basic and earthy. Grace is warm, incalculable, human, opposed to clarity, and like the air. Grace is not here used to mean prettiness; it is used to mean the play with and against the clarity of the rhythmic structure. (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.91-92)

\(^{37}\) The edition I have been using does not mention the first publication in the United States, but only the first publication in Great Britain (1968). But according to *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage*, it was first published in 1961.
This opposition between body and soul, warm and cold, recalls a set of aesthetic (p)references that Cage is later on to leave. Clarity of rhythm and grace should go together and still be opposed. There is a “perpetual conflict” (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.92) between them, as grace keeps challenging the clarity; grace is the irregularity that challenges the clarity (regularity) of the rhythmical structure. This opposition is the beginning of an opposition between cadence and rhythm. But Cage’s way out of this opposition is to define rhythm as neither regularity nor irregularity, but simply as time-spaces. This becomes obvious in the text “Forerunners of Modern Music” from 1949:

Before making a structure by means of rhythm, it is necessary to decide what rhythm is.
This could be a difficult decision to make if the concern were formal (expressive) or to do with method (point to point procedure); but since the concern is structural (to do with divisibility of a composition into parts large and small), the decision is easily reached: rhythm in the structural instance is relationships of lengths of time. (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.64)

Cage here distinguishes between material, structure, method and expression. Rhythm pertains only to structure, and therefore has to do only with the division into time intervals. Any question concerning beat or accent has to do either with expression, method or perhaps even the material, but it does not pertain to rhythm:

Such matters, then, as accents on or off the beat, regularly recurring or not, pulsation with or without accent, steady or unsteady, durations motivacally conceived (either static or to be varied), are matters for formal (expressive) use, or, if thought about, to be considered as material (in its “textural” aspect) or as serving method. (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.64-65)

To explain further he refers to something daily and natural: the year as it is divided into seasons, months, days. Within such time-lengths other events might happen without being related to that order in a particular way (for instance performances). When the structure and the events coincide it is a kind of lucky coincidence that is particularly “luminous”, but only if they are accidental. They then speak of chance, or as he puts it here “the paradoxical nature of truth”. What he calls caesurae only has to do with the relationship between law and freedom, regularity and the will to challenge it:

In the case of a year, rhythmic structure is a matter of seasons, months, weeks, and days. Other time lengths such as that taken by a fire or the playing of a piece of music occur accidentally or freely without explicit recognition of an all-embracing order, but nevertheless, necessarily within that order. Coincidences of free events with structural time
points have a special luminous character, because the paradoxical nature of truth is at such moments made apparent. Caesurae on the other hand are expressive of the independence (accidental or willed) of freedom from law, law from freedom. (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.65)

Perhaps the difference between caesurae and coincidences is not quite clear here. But if we see what he is talking about in terms of dance and music it becomes clearer. If the moments of coincidence between dance and music are planned according to accents, it only shows the relation between the rules and the exceptions; if the moments of coincidence are accidental, it shows an aspect of life.

In a later text on dance from 1957, it becomes even clearer that by talking about accidental events he is referring to the complexity of life and nature, and that rhythm belongs to this realm:

> From this independence of music and dance a rhythm results which is not that of horses’ hoofs or other regular beats but which reminds us of a multiplicity of events in time and space – stars, for instance, in the sky, or activities on earth viewed from the air. (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.94)

Rhythm here has to do not with lengths of time but with a “multiplicity of events in time and space”. Here he mentions the stars, but it is also this kind of multiplicity that he is trying to create in for instance Variations V.

In an article finished in 1962, but not published until 1966 (and included in A Year from Monday), Cage seems to move away from the use of time and rhythm as structure. He was asked to write about proportion, symmetry, structure, rhythm etc, to which he answered that those things did not interest him. But he ended up writing a text using chance procedures, talking against symmetry, balance and order. Even rhythm seems to become an almost superfluous term:

> Etc. Some time ago counting, patterns, tempi were dropped. Rhythm’s in any length of time (no-structure). Aorder. It’s definitely spring – not just in the air. Take as an example of rhythm anything which seems irrelevant. (Cage, 1985 (1968), p.123)

He opts for a rhythm that is chaotic (Aorder) and irregular (irrelevant) (even if spring is something recurring). Nevertheless, he seems to show a decreasing interest in time-structures. They become more and more open through the use of unpredictability and finally almost disappear:
More and more we left openings in our space of time. What changed matters radically was the willingness to stop work altogether before the structure was complete. After that there was no longer any fixed structure: just parts in any number, superimposition, and duration. Time-sense changed. Now he says: The permeation of space with sound. (Cage, 1985 (1968), p.127)

Rhythm seen by Cunningham

It is clear that Cunningham’s conceptions of rhythm depend on his common aesthetic ground with Cage. He too proposes to define rhythm as time-spaces within which the two arts, dance and music, can develop freely. He also maintains that rhythm does not have to be regular, and in particular, the cadence of music should not structure the choreography. But though Cunningham’s aesthetic standpoint on the subject is clear, his use of the word rhythm is nevertheless not entirely consistent. To some extent it wavers between cadence and rhythm, depending on the context. Or rather, when he speaks of classical dance aesthetics (criticising it), rhythm tends to mean metre. But when he is speaking of his own aesthetics it tends to take another direction.

Speaking of classical ballet, Cunningham says:

In the ballet the various steps that lead to the larger movements or poses have, by usage and by their momentum, become common ground upon which the spectator can lead his eyes and his feelings into the resulting action. This also helps define the rhythm, in fact more often than not does define it. (Vaughan, 1997, p.66)

If the first phrase is taken to illustrate rhythm, rhythm is a pattern or grid that structures the dance and the way the spectator sees it; if it is not exactly cadence, it is at least an ordering principle.

But when he speaks of his own aesthetics the concept takes another form, and he defines rhythm against cadence:

The element that underlies both music and dance is time, which, when present in component parts, is rhythm. As an element coordinating the two arts, it is more useful when the phrase and parts longer than the phrase are considered, rather than the small particularities of accent and even of individual quantity. The concentration on the minutiae of rhythm in the music-dance relationship leads to the “boom-with-boom” device, giving nothing to either and robbing both of freedom. Working, however, from the phrase leads to a related independence, or to an interdependence of the two time arts. Accents, even and uneven beats, then appear, if they do, where the music continuity or the dance continuity allows them to. (That is, an accent in the music is an incident in the music continuity which does not necessarily appear in the dance, and vice versa.) (Vaughan, 1997, p.61)
To begin with, rhythm is not defined on its own. It is defined as an aspect of the common material of dance and music, time, under particular circumstances. When time becomes an element of composition, it becomes rhythm. In that way, rhythm is organised time or time that has become part of an organisation. But so far this does not tell us anything about how time is organised – regularly or irregularly. However, it seems that when it comes to dance and music, rhythm is, according to Cunningham, most usefully regarded not as a repetition of units with a particular distance between them, but as a block of time: long phrases or sequences. This of course refers to Cunningham and Cage’s way of working. It seems to rely not so much on an attempt to describe the nature of rhythm, as on a way to conceive the collaboration between dance and music. If rhythm is too narrowly defined in this collaboration, defined as a particular metre for instance, it leads to a lack of liberty for both of the arts. If it is defined as a time-space, the two arts keep their liberty and can be independent, though close. The accents then, which are traditionally part of the concept of rhythm, do not have to correspond. They may appear in the music or in the dance separately at any moment, but not as a means of coordination. They may even appear at the same time, but as the result of chance.

In a later extract from a lecture demonstration, Cunningham actually seems to discuss the difference between cadence (regular) and rhythm in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari describe it: the irregular. But Cunningham does not mention the word rhythm:

Time is not meant as pulse or metronomic speed, but as span or length, and not evenly segmented like a ruler, but with the possibility of even and uneven, like a tree or a bush, the weather or the year. (Vaughan, 1997, p.101)

But noticeably it is only secondarily that the uneven or the even enters. Primarily time has to be defined as a time span. Before there can be either uneven or even, there has to be a span of time where it can enter. But Cunningham also introduces new metaphors to describe this combination of the regular and the irregular: trees, bushes, the weatherforecast and the year. All these, in spite of their differences and their belonging to either the natural world or the human world, have in common that they always come back, but that they are different each time. It is the rhythm of life, the irregular regularity of life.

Le rythme – an irregular expression of life

Cage and Cunningham circle around a definition of rhythm as time, and explicitly and implicitly discuss the difference between rhythm and metre. It enters into a play between
structure and chance, independence and lucky moments of coincidence, the expression of the indeterminacy of life. Deleuze and Guattari discuss the difference between metre and *rythme* and define *le rythme* as that which is irregular. *Le rythme* has to do with chaos, and chaos becoming life. Whereas Deleuze and Guattari define *le rythme* as an in-between *milieux*, Cage and Cunningham lift rhythm beyond irregular and regular patterns to define it simply as the more abstract category of time-space, within which both is possible. In both cases, it is no longer the regularity of rhythm that makes it natural, but in a sense it is naturalised when it is put in connection with the invisible forces of life. For Deleuze and Guattari these forces have to do with the chaotic, for Cage they have to do with the complexity of chance.

This concept of rhythm is not a technical or methodological concept of rhythm and it is perhaps hard to use analytically. Seen as time-spaces it becomes concrete, but as we have seen, Cage and Cunningham’s definitions come to embrace more than that. It is not obvious either how Deleuze and Guattari’s concept can be used, even if Deleuze has given (at least) one example of it in the book on Bacon. But one thing that is striking in relation to *Variations V*, is the *rythme* described as in-between heterogeneous elements. *Le rythme* is a movement between different *milieux*, and let us say that those *milieux* could be different animals, different areas, or different arts. The dancers or instruments or elements of the performance could also be understood as different *milieux*, and in this sense *le rythme* would be something that arises between them – as when Cage says that the rhythm arises in the independence of dance and music and forms “a multiplicity of events in time and space”, where chance may reveal that which we cannot plan. This *rythme* is not the rhythm of concordance between arts through the use of a beat or a structure, but the lucky coincidences between them at unpredictable moments.

**The construction of a territory and the emergence of a style**

The emergence of *le rythme* is only a first step in “1837 – De la ritournelle”. *Les milieux* can also become territories through the act of *territorialisation*:

*Le territoire est en fait un acte, qui affecte les milieux et les rythmes, qui les «territorialise». Le territoire est le produit d’une territorialisation des milieux et des rythmes.* (MP, 386)

In the territory the components of *le milieu* become expressive, expressive of the territory; even *le rythme* becomes expressive:
Précisément, il y a territoire dès que des composantes de milieux cessent d’être directionnelles pour devenir dimensionnelles, quand elles cessent d’être fonctionnelles pour devenir expressives. Il y a territoire dès qu’il y a expressivité du rythme. (MP, 387)

What we have to do with here is an idea of expressivity that is not linked to human activity, psychology or to art, but is an element of the territoriality of nature. The colours of fish, for instance coral fish, the behaviour of different animals, the song of birds become expressive. These characteristics are no longer just functional, but have become a signature that marks an area. Therefore, expression is also linked to possession. “Une composante de milieu devient à la fois qualité et propriété, \( qua \)le et \( proprium \).” (MP, 387) The basis of the building of territories is not the aggressivity of animals, but le devenir-expressif of le rythme that arises between different milieux. And this is the emergence of the animal as artist. The territory is an effect of art, the use of a mark is the first kind of art. It is also the emergence of property. Art is linked to property, since “La propriété est d’abord artistique, parce que l’art est d’abord affiche, pancarte. Comme dit Lorenz, les poissons de corail sont des affiches.” (MP, 389). The signature does not in the first instance designate a subject but a domaine.

But Deleuze and Guattari do not stop at comparing the expression of territory to art, they also call the marks of certain territories “ready-mades”, and the birds they use as example, namely the “scenopoïètes”, artists, and their art “art brut”. The name of this bird, in English called the brown stagemaker, is of course particularly tempting. The scenopoïètes make their own stage by turning leaves on the ground up-side down so that the difference of colour makes a mark, a signature. That is the way they create their territory and perform their art. But it is not just a comparison. Les scenopoïètes are literally scenic poets. Deleuze and Guattari describe art and animals in the same terms. Art is not the privilege of the human species. La ritournelle does not only occur in music, it also occurs in nature. La ritournelle is le rythme that has become expressive and territorialisé:

La ritournelle, c’est le rythme et la mélodie territorialisés, parce que devenus expressifs, – et devenus expressifs parce que territorialisants. (MP, 389)

Yet another step on the passage to art is when the expression becomes style. There is a transition from pancarte or affiche to style. This transition can be performed equally by a bird or a human, but it includes un devenir-autonome of les rythmes and the melodies:

Ce qui distingue objectivement un oiseau musicien d’un oiseau non musicien, c’est précisément cette aptitude aux motifs et aux contre-points qui, variables ou même constants,
The rythmes and the ritournelles created through the formation of territories really become art when they become autonomous or independent of their territorial function, disconnected from their creator and their object, and build “des visages ou personnages rythmiques” or “des paysages mélodiques” (MP, 391):

Il y a personnage rythmique lorsque nous ne nous trouvons plus dans la situation simple d’un rythme qui serait lui-même associé à un personnage, à un sujet ou à une impulsion: maintenant, c’est le rythme lui-même qui est tout le personnage (…) De même, le paysage mélodique n’est plus une mélodie associée à un paysage, c’est la mélodie qui fait elle-même un paysage sonore, et prend en contre-point tous les rapports avec un paysage virtuel. (MP, 391)

What we see here is a development of le rythme from being the irregular wave of chaos forming itself into milieux, to le rythme that becomes expressive, becomes territorial and marks a possession, to finally become autonomous and build its own artistic figures, and to build les ritournelles:

En un sens général, on appelle ritournelle tout ensemble de matières d’expression qui trace un territoire, et qui se développe en motifs territoriaux, en paysages territoriaux (il y a des ritournelles motrices, gestuelles, optiques, etc.). (MP, 397)

**The opening of music**

The comparison between biology and art not only has the effect that animal behaviour is regarded as art, but also that art, and here in particular music, is opened up to what is not traditionally regarded as art or music. It is therefore a similar undertaking to the aspirations of Cage, who dedicated his life to fusing music into life and letting music embrace all sounds including noise.

Deleuze and Guattari break down the border between nature and art, birdsong and music, in several ways. They treat birds as artists, they merge the analysis of bird behaviour and music, they apply the same terms to both areas and they explain them on the same abstract level. In that way the abstraction helps the fusion. They do not confuse birds and music, but treat them equally through abstraction. What may seem like a disadvantage, the very vast range of the notion ritournelle, in this sense becomes an advantage. In his book *Deleuze – on Music, Painting, and the Arts*, Ronald Bogue puts it this way:
Deleuze and Guattari argue that music is an open structure that permeates and is permeated by the world. They offer a reading of the relationship between the cosmos and music not as mechanical and mathematical but as machinic and rhythmical. (…) But this topic [birdsong] allows them to situate music within the general context of sonic and rhythmic patterning in nature and to suggest a continuity between human and nonhuman species in their modes of occupying space and establishing interspecific and conspecific relationships. (Bogue, 2003, p.14)

Cage’s aesthetics is perhaps first and foremost a way of opening up music. This appears in many aspects of his work and discourse over the years. For instance, his interest in Eric Satie comes, among other things, from Satie’s wish to let music blend with the environment, as in his “musique d’améublement” which is supposed to be listened to not as a concert but to be accompanied by activity and embellish the sounds around the music. Equally, his interest in Edgar Varèse comes from the latter’s attempt to open up music to other sounds, though he wants them to comply to his will too much for Cage’s taste.

Cage wants to let all sounds be equal; all sounds can enter into the time structure of music. At best, personal preferences for particular sounds or organisations of sounds should be suspended. Furthermore, the music is not separated from the environment around it, sometimes it even depends on it, as in his silent pieces, where the silence of the music is filled with the sounds of the space, showing that even silence is sound. Cage is equally interested in the sounds of nature and the sounds of environments created by humans. He often refers to nature to explain his principles, but he is particularly fond of those sounds that have been discriminately excluded from music, namely “noise”. He speaks for an art that is and enters into life. It is not life as art, but art as life. His conception of music relinquishes the idea of music in its traditional form and opens up music to the world.

Deleuze and Guattari blend non-human and human music in their analysis, but when they pick examples from human music, they often refer to composers who (though sometimes avant-garde) work through traditional means of composing or at least impose their aesthetic ideal on the sounds, something that Cage tries to prevent. They even distinguish, towards the end, between good and bad ritournelles in music, though the two depend on each other. Cage tries to conceive of ways of composing that render obsolete a distinction between good and bad sounds, good and bad combinations, and let the sounds be. To open up music one must first realise that the structure of music is based on conventions of how to organise sounds. Deleuze and Guattari open up la ritournelle towards nature, but perhaps la ritournelle is not devoid of aesthetic ideals. Cage tries to open up the structures to disorganisation, and even this he explains in terms of nature:
No, in music, there can be much organization or a lot of disorganization – everything is possible. In the same way, the forest includes trees, mushrooms, birds, anything you wish. Although we can still organize a lot and even multiply organizations, in any case, the whole will make a disorganization! (Laughter) (Cage/Charles, 1981, p.53)

Art and nature in dance and music

At some point Cunningham started drawing animals and some of these animals have even been published in a book with the striking title, to me at least, Other Animals, i.e. other animals than humans with whom he normally works (Cunningham, 2002). But even before that he seems to have been very interested in the movements of animals, especially the variety of their movements; each species’ particular way of walking for instance. As if each animal had its own rythme or ritournelle. In fact, it is a kind of expressivity of each animal. Not that the movement expresses the psychological constitution of the animal; more as if the movement expresses its singularity. Cunningham has also been interested in using this movement and trying to transfer it to humans, who have a different physical constitution. It is not an act of imitation but a way of challenging the movement of the human. Then the ritournelle or movement of the animal becomes detached from the species it belongs to, becomes independent of it, becomes autonomous, it becomes dance.

Nature also came to play a part in Cage’s thinking. Especially after his move to the country-side (Stony Point, from 1954) and his discovery of the works of Thoreau. He took to walking and contemplating in the woods. Cage also did passionate studies of mushrooms (he became a veritable expert), went mushroom hunting and wrote about them, as is evident from many of his texts. Sometimes he treats mushrooms and music as two separate themes that can be freely related through chance in the same way as dance and music. For instance, he remarks that the words “mushroom” and “music” are often next to each other in dictionaries, though they are not etymologically related. (Cage, 1985 (1968), p.34) But in a text called “Music Lover’s Field Companion” he blends the themes of music and mushrooms more intimately – the title alone shows it, as field companions are normally written to help people manage in nature, not in music. It was written for a humourous journal, but the humour of the text is most serious. It starts with the following phrase: “I have come to the conclusion

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38 Henry David Thoreau, American writer 1817-1862, mostly know for his famous essay “Civil Disobedience” and his book on his life in the woods called Walden.
that much can be learned about music by devoting oneself to the mushroom” (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.274), and throughout the text the two themes are blended:

But enough of the contemporary musical scene; it is well known. More important is to determine what are the problems confronting the contemporary mushroom. To begin with, I propose that it should be determined which sounds further the growth of which mushrooms; whether these latter, indeed, make sounds of their own; (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.275)

If mushrooms produce sounds or can be used to produce sounds, why not introduce them into music just like other new instruments and sounds that can be recorded; the result might be very tasty. But if you cannot bring the sounds of mushrooms to the concert hall, you can go into nature and listen to the music there. Thus, Cage conducted his silent pieces to himself in the forest:

I have spent many pleasant hours in the woods conducting performances of my silent piece, transcriptions, that is, for an audience of myself, since they were much longer than the popular length which I have had published. At one performance, I passed the first movement by attempting the identification of a mushroom which remained successfully unidentified. The second movement was extremely dramatic, beginning with the sounds of a buck and a doe leaping up to within ten feet of my rocky podium. The expressivity of this movement was not only dramatic but unusually sad from my point of view, for the animals were frightened simply because I was a human being. However, they left hesitatingly and fittingly within the structure of the work. The third movement was a return to the theme of the first, but with all those profound, so-well-known alterations of world feeling associated by German tradition with the A-B-A. (Cage, 2004 (1968), p.276)

This story is both very humorous and very telling. Cage here acts both as a conductor, imagining his own piece, and as an observer of nature, watching the music of nature, and the animals’ life and creation of a territory (which he is interrupting). As the piece that he is conducting is a silent piece, it absorbs the sounds of the environment, in this case of the forest. By chance three different movements produce themselves: the calm of watching an unidentifiable mushroom, the drama of a leaping buck and doe, and a return to the calm of the mushroom as they disappear again. To the observer, the buck and the doe not only run through the forest, their movement is expressif; it is “dramatic” and it constitutes a part of the imaginary music. Though the animals feel their territory threatened by the human being, they unknowingly enter into the music. They thus produce a movement that can be identified in the musical terms A-B-A, where the third part is a return to the first, though differently. Perhaps this could have been an example of a ritournelle.
**Variations V as ecosystem**

One of the possible consequences of a juxtaposition of the chapter on *la ritournelle* and *Variations V*, is the almost metaphorical projection of the universe of the text onto the performance, which lets us see it as a kind of ecosystem. The space of the performance of *Variations V* is a small ecosystem with different inhabitants, dancers, technicians, musicians, different rules, different conditions of climate. The question becomes how these diverse species inhabit this small ecosystem. The climate is the technical set-up: the antennas, the wires and the radios, the screens. The flora is the different objects: plants, bikes, towels, yoga mats on the stage. The fauna is the dancers and the musicians, but also the visual artists, though they are not physically present on stage. But on a more symbolic level, the inhabitants are also the different arts represented: dance, music, visual arts.

Before the performance, the elements of the space are not expressive. Even the antennas are not expressive before the dancers enter. In the performance they become the medium between dance and music. There is a change happening when these things enter into relations. Even if there is no “meaning”, something which Cage and Cunningham reject, the elements might become *expressifs* (in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari employ the word).

The actions and elements of *Variations V* seem to have an almost absurd character. When all the elements are put together, relations arise. Between dance and music, between music and painting, between dance and painting, between dancers and musicians, between dancers and objects. But these relations do not result in any particular meaning. Instead, they leave an impression of absurdity on the spectator. There are no apparent relations of causality, there are no particular emotions, there are no particular reasons for the events.

A woman comes in with a towel on her head and does a headstand. Cunningham walks in with a plant. Later he starts taking off the leaves. Later it is Carolyn Brown who is replanting it. Apparently without reason. Cunningham comes in with a bike. In fact, it is perhaps these actions, and not the danced movements, that seem the most absurd, perhaps because they remind us of the theatre but take away the theatrical sense of the action.

However, one can say that there is a reason for these actions, though one that is not apparent to the spectator: to produce sounds. Hidden in the towel and the plant are microphones. The bike interferes differently with the antennas than a dancer does. But the causal relationship remains absurd, as the sound produced is not in any obvious relation to the action. These actions still seem absurd, and yet they produce something else: repetition, return. Although it is perhaps not intentional, it helps us structure the piece. First Cunningham comes in with the plant, then he takes off the leaves, then Carolyn Brown puts on and takes
off the leaves and replants it. The repetition produces a structure in time, it produces intervals between points in time, though these are not exactly situated at the beginning, the middle and the end. But in fact, it is towards the middle that Cunningham comes in with a bike, walking beside it. And it is towards the end that he comes in again riding on it. There is a repetition but also a change, a change that makes us think there is a development (even if it is simply two different actions). In other words, the meaning we construct does not have to do with a relation between signifier and signified but has to do with time and the structure of time.

But perhaps we can also regard this production of time-structures, as a _devenir-expressif_. The plant, the headstand, the bike. It has to do also with the way the dancers occupy space. It becomes more than an action. It does not become a sign, but perhaps it becomes a mark, a signature. When Cunningham and Carolyn Brown are turning the leaves of the plant, it is neither more nor less meaningless than when the _scenopoïètes_ turn leaves to create a territory. It produces a relation between dance and music. Furthermore, it becomes a characteristic of the performance. It is not expressive in the sense that it has a particular meaning, but in the sense that it creates a rhythmical structure and a style.

**Coexistence of heterogeneous elements**

The creation of territories in the world of animals does not, according to Deleuze and Guattari, have to do with aggressivity, but with _le devenir-expressif_ of elements of behaviour. The marks and styles are not acts of aggression towards other species, but a way of creating the possibility of a multiplicity of species in the same area. By creating territories animals create a space for themselves but also for others:

> Bien plus, il faut tenir compte simultanément de deux aspects du territoire: non seulement il assure et règle la coexistence des membres d’une même espèce, en les séparant, mais il rend possible la coexistence d’un maximum d’espèces différentes dans un même milieu, en les spécialisant. (MP, 394)

The creation of territories renders possible the coexistence of heterogeneous elements. When planning _Variations V_, Cunningham was worried that the antennas would be a problem for the dancers, as they would have to be careful not to bump into them, or that they would have to be very careful not to stumble over the wires. Finally, these technical problems were solvable, but it is an example of how it is necessary to put up certain rules so that the arts do not interfere with and disrupt each other. Cage speaks of non-obstruction and interpenetration –
terms he has adopted from Suzuki and Zen Buddhism. The simultaneous elements should not depend on, nor obstruct each other, but when chance will, they interpenetrate each other.

It is perhaps hard for us to think in terms of territories, in view of the connotations that this word normally has (animal territories, national territories, something to fight over). Music occupies the air, dance the stage, pictures the walls. But these borderlines are not absolute: dancers also produce sound that travels in the air (not only because of the antennas, but the very sound of the dancing), in *Variations V* sometimes the pictures are in front of rather than behind the dancers, at least in the TV-version, the pictures already contain images of the dancers, the musicians are also present on stage. It is a very intricate network of sharing the same space. In Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the word, territories are precisely such intertwinnings, interrelations, and constructions of time-spaces.

The question of *Variations V* and one of the questions in the chapter on *la ritournelle* is how to make heterogeneous elements coexist. Deleuze and Guattari propose that territories are first and foremost mechanisms that allow many different species to occupy the same area. But another way of thinking the heterogeneous elements, is to try to describe a whole that consists of such disparate and coexisting elements. This whole is what they call a “consistance”.

**Consistance**

Deleuze and Guattari are searching for a model of a whole that is not hierarchical and that is in accordance with the philosophy of the one and the multiple, that is, the idea that the one and the multiple is one and the same thing, that the multiplicity exists within the one, that being expresses itself in the same way in every kind of being. This is also what Deleuze calls *l’univocité de l’être*. Interestingly enough, one actually finds a parallel in Cage’s thinking, though perhaps not thoroughly explained, when he says that “We are dealing not with the number 2 but with the number 1” (Cage, 1985 (1968), p.126), by which he means that he is not dealing with oppositions but the multiplicity of the one, or as he says to Daniel Charles, “I have always sought to grasp the plurality of the figure one” (Cage/Charles, 1981, p.77).

To avoid hierarchy Deleuze and Guattari propose a model based on the *rhizome*. To propose a model of the coexistence of heterogeneous elements in a material, where the elements do not enter into a hierarchy and do not lose their singularity and yet create a whole, they propose what they call “une consistance” (a consistency). The elements come together and consolidate and create a *consistance*. Referring to Eugène Dupréel, they put it this way:
La consolidation ne se contente pas de venir après, elle est créatrice. C’est que le commencement ne commence qu’entre deux, intermezzo. La consistance est précisément la consolidation, l’acte qui produit le consolidé, de succession comme de coexistence, avec les trois facteurs: intercales, intervalles et superpositions-articulations. (MP, 405)

The consolidation of a material is on the plan actuel what consistance is on a plan virtuel: “La consolidation n’est-elle pas le nom terrestre de la consistance?”(MP, 406). The heterogeneous elements consolidate into a consistance and this process is creative. For instance, it creates unknown and unpredicted relations between the different elements, intervals, insertions, superpositions, articulated forms. They create a material without dissolving the heterogeneous. It is a material that accumulates, becomes rich and captures intensives forces:

Il ne s’agit plus d’imposer une forme à une matière, mais d’élaborer un matériau de plus en plus riche, de plus en plus consistant, apte dès lors à capter des forces de plus en plus intenses. Ce qui rend un matériau de plus en plus riche, c’est ce qui fait tenir ensemble des hétérogènes, sans qu’ils cessent d’être hétérogènes ; (MP, 406)

This model is perhaps useful to consider the coming together of disparate elements in Variations V. The German speaker who introduces the programme in the TV-version of the performance and who analyses it in advance, is speaking of collage and collage in the second degree, “eine Kollage von Kollagen”. Although Variations V is a collage, this concept mostly describes the addition of fragments, but does not satisfyingly characterise the whole that it results in. For diverse elements are brought together, the relations that arise are more and more complicated, they blend together into a more and more complicated material without eliminating the heterogeneity. They build a consistance. In the programme Cage and Cunningham propose for Variations V it is not suggested what kind of unity the heterogeneous elements can build, only that they coexist simultaneously. But in a later interview it is striking how Cage speaks of the building of a One through the accumulation of differences that interpret each other independently:

I know perfectly well that things interpenetrate. But I think they interpenetrate more richly and with more complexity when I myself do not establish any connection. That is when they meet and form the number one. But, at the same time, they form no obstruction. They are themselves. They are. And since each one is itself, there is a plurality in the number one. (Cage/Charles, 1981, p.78)
Expressive material and semiotic systems – signification as conistance

If some of the elements of Variations V become expressive, it raises the question of whether they pass from being material to having a signification, and whether this is intended or not. In “1837 – De la ritournelle” Deleuze and Guattari are discussing the relation between material and signification in a way that is quite hard to grasp and furthermore they use the unorthodox example of the scenopoïètes. But I think the best way to understand it is to say that they propose consolidation and conistance as a model for the relation between material and signification.

Firstly, it is important to note that Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between expressive and significative, terms that are easily confused. The elements become expressive when they become the mark of a territory that renders the rythme expressive, but this does not mean that they have a signification as in a semiotic system (as described by the structuralists). This distinction is important in relation to Variations V where some elements perhaps acquire an expression, but do not necessarily carry a signification.

The very notion “matière d’expression” (material of expression) for Deleuze and Guattari signifies that there is a special relation between the material and the expression. The two cannot be separated but the material is the “moléculaire” (molecular) side of it and the signification is the structured “molaire” (molar) side of it:

Au fur et à mesure qu’elles prennent conistance, les matières d’expression constituent des sémiotiques; mais les composantes sémiotiques ne sont pas séparables de composantes matérielles, et sont singulièrement en prise sur des niveaux moléculaires. Toute la question est donc de savoir si le rapport molaire-moléculaire ne prend pas ici une figure nouvelle. (MP, 412-413)

In building a conistance the materials of expression build a relationship between moléculaire and molaire, which pull in a respectively unstructured and structured direction. This leads Deleuze and Guattari to return to the more abstract level of strates (strates, a part of the vocabulary of Mille plateaux) and conistance, territorialisation and déterritorialisation, life understood in terms of stratification and déstratification, two tendencies of life itself:

Il y a là plusieurs manières d’énoncer une même différence, mais cette différence semble beaucoup plus large que celle que nous cherchons: elle concerne en effet la matière et la vie, ou plutôt même, puisqu’il n’y a qu’une seule matière, elle concerne deux états, deux tendances de la matière atomique (par exemple, il y a des liaisons qui immobilisent l’un par rapport à l’autre les atomes associés, et d’autres liaisons qui permettent une libre rotation). (MP, 413)
One might say that they lift up the question of material and signification to a higher and more abstract level to explain it. They oppose the phenomenon of *stratification* and that of *consistance*:

Si l’on énonce la différence sous sa forme la plus générale, on dira qu’elle s’instaure entre systèmes stratifiés, systèmes de stratification d’une part, et d’autre part ensembles consistants, auto-consistants. (MP, 413-414)

*Les stratifications* consist of horizontal and vertical organisation. The consolidations or *consistances*, on the other hand, are heterogeneous:

On parlera au contraire d’ensembles de consistance quand on se trouvera devant des consolidés de composantes très hétérogènes, des courts-circuits d’ordre ou même des causalités à l’envers, des captures entre matériaux et forces d’une autre nature, au lieu d’une succession réglée formes-substances: comme si un *phylum machinique, une transversalité déstratifiante* passait à travers les éléments, les ordres, les formes et les substances, le molaire et le moléculaire, pour libérer une matière et capter des forces. (MP, 414)

The entities of *une consistance* are heterogeneous, they even shortcut order or inverse causality. We no longer have to do with a relationship between form and substance, the form being supposed to capture the substance. Instead they characterise it as a “phylum machinique, une transversalité déstratifiante”. Exactly how to explain this “phylum” is hard to know. “Phylum” means the layer or root from which a series of organisms depart39; here we might say that it is the common material of heterogeneous elements. That it is transversal means that it encompasses different elements in a way that opposes it to the organisation of the *strates*. We might say that it is a fluid material through which *machiniques* operations (cf. the use of *machinique* concerning *le corps sans organes*) are at play, where a *déstratification* is taking place through the different orders and elements. This new *consistance* liberates the material and captures the forces. This prefigures their definition of modern art.

In this context, this would mean that the coexistence of diverse elements in *Variations V* constructs a whole, but a heterogeneous whole of a *consistance*. It builds a material that is not based on the opposition between form and substance, but it creates another material, where the free operations capture another kind of forces. The material is liberated, for instance the different arts are liberated from each other, and a new *transversal* material is created.

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39 Phylum: "désigne la souche d’où une série d’organismes vivants (un embranchement) est issue” (DHLF), “A major group to which animals or plants belong” (ALD).
Contrary to what one might think it is not the organisation that keeps the elements together; the whole is defined by the most déterritorialisé element. It is the transversales, the transversal elements, that keep the whole together:

Ce qui fait tenir ensemble toutes les composantes, ce sont les transversales, et la transversale elle-même est seulement une composante qui prend sur soi le vecteur spécialisé de déterritorialisation. En effet, ce n’est pas par le jeu des formes encadrantes ou des causalités linéaires qu’un agencement tient, mais par sa composante la plus déterritorialisée, par une pointe de déterritorialisation (...) (MP, 415)

These observations could be quite important to a happening like Variations V and the relation between the different elements. It is not necessarily by creating vertical and horizontal structures that it is being kept together, instead it is the transversal movement of each art into the other that makes it coherent. This seems to speak in opposition to the idea of territories, though. But it can actually be the act of creating a territory that means crossing into another area; the territories intertwine. For instance, when the scenopoïètes pick up and turn leaves, they cross into the milieu of the flora. When the dancers hold hands around the antenna, they enter into the milieu of the sound or of the technical equipment. This act makes the happening coherent, through this transversal movement they produce sound, they create a transversal relation that keeps the separate elements together.

By explaining the relation between material and signification in terms of stratification and consolidation, Deleuze and Guattari manage to describe the simultaneous becoming-meaningful and staying-meaningless of a heterogeneous material. The material and the expression are one; they build a plan that is simultaneously drawn towards organisation and disorganisation, to molaires entities of meaning and moléculaires dissolutions that prevent meaning. Les strates and les consistances are in fact two tendencies of the same plan:

Dès lors, il n’est pas étonnant que la différence que nous cherchions soit moins entre les agencements et autre chose qu’entre les deux limites de tout agencement possible, c’est-à-dire entre le système des strates et le plan de la consistance. Et l’on ne doit pas oublier que c’est sur le plan de consistance que les strates dureissent et s’organisent, et que c’est dans les strates que le plan de consistance travaille et se construit, tous les deux pièce à pièce, coup pour coup, opération par opération. (MP, 415-416)

What becomes important is not whether something acquires signification, but how the material is drawn in two directions at the same time, and how the transversal elements make of it a whole that stays heterogeneous.
This analysis is actually quite productive in relation to Variations V. Firstly, it allows us to distinguish between the expressive and the signifying. Secondly, it allows us to characterise the whole, not through its coherence but through its noncoherent diversity and see how it is the transversal elements, and not the structuring elements, that build the whole. Thirdly, it allows us not to concentrate on whether or not a signification arises, but on how the expressive material builds a heterogeneous whole, une consistance, where the expressive material is drawn both towards stratification into meaning and towards déstratification, which prevents meaning.

Music, painting and dance

One of the reasons for the vastness of the concept of la ritournelle is that it can exist in all kinds of material. A ritournelle can be acoustic, gestural, visual, literary, behavioural and so forth. Depending on the material, the ritournelles have different qualities. For instance, Deleuze and Guattari discuss the difference between painting and music, which they see as opposed. In the book on Bacon, Deleuze places music and painting in an opposition of the most bodily and the most unbodily art. Here it is developed differently but with a similar outcome.

Why does a ritournelle made of sound seem to come first, they ask themselves. They are much concerned about not introducing a hierarchy between different ritournelles, but want to analyse their different forces and “coefficients de déterritorialisation”(MP, 429). Somehow it seems to them that sound is more apt for déterritorialisation. Colour sticks to the territory:

Il semble que le son, en se déterritorialisant, s’affine de plus en plus, se spécifie et devienne autonome. Tandis que la couleur colle davantage, non pas forcément à l’objet, mais à la territorialité. (MP, 429)

This seems to correspond to the often repeated idea that music is more airy and ungraspable, but this is not their argument. It has nothing to do with its physical composition; that would rather have privileged light (and therefore colours which reflect light, I would add). Instead, they describe it as “une ligne phylogénique, un phylum machinique, qui passe par le son, et en fait une pointe de déterritorialisation” (MP, 429). It is not the sound waves of the music that make une déterritorialisation in itself because of their airiness, it is a machinique phylum that passes by the sound and transforms it into une déterritorialisation. The phylum is not a material in the ordinary sense but a transversal material that crosses over several borders.
Exactly where this line comes from is not quite evident from the explanation. But the sound transformed by this line goes into us, through us, and transforms us:

le son nous envahit, nous pousse, nous entraîne, nous traverse. Il quitte la terre, mais aussi bien pour nous faire tomber dans un trou noir que pour nous ouvrir à un cosmos. (MP, 429)

It throws us into a *ritournelle* composed of chaotic, earthly and cosmic forces. The idea that the music invades us, might not seem far from the idea that music is more “emotional” than other arts, but it is based on totally different criteria.

However, the aptness of sound to carry a line of *déterritorialisation* also has a dark side; there is all the more danger of *reterritorialisations*:

Ayant la plus grande force de déterritorialisation, il opère aussi les reterritorialisations les plus massives, les plus hébétées, les plus redondantes. Extase et hypnose. On ne fait pas bouger un peuple avec des couleurs. Les drapeaux ne peuvent rien sans les trompettes (…) (MP, 429-430)

This recalls the great discussions on whether music can become totalitarian, an accusation that has been particularly directed against the music of Wagner. It is the “Fascisme potentiel de la musique” (MP, 430), it is more likely to seduce a nation. Therefore society is more careful with music, whereas the painter has more political space, as his material, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is less dangerous.

The materials of music and painting are different. Whereas music deals with a preexisting phylum that it can operate in, the painter has to reinvent his phylum each time he composes his colours:

C’est parce qu’il a lui-même à créer ou recréer chaque fois un phylum, et doit chaque fois le faire à partir des corps de lumière et de couleur qu’il produit, tandis que le musicien dispose au contraire d’une sorte de continuité germinale, même latente, même indirecte, à partir de laquelle il produit ses corps sonores. (MP, 430)

This figure of opposition between painting and music, which respectively create a material and start from a material, is also expressed in terms of “soma” and “germen”:

Ce n’est pas le même mouvement de création: l’un va du *soma* au *germen*, et l’autre, du *germen* au *soma*. La ritournelle du peintre est comme l’envers de celle du musicien, un négatif de la musique. (MP, 430)
*Germen* comes from the root “germe” which means descendence or family, it is the generic, it means “seed”. *Soma* means body; in biology “soma” is all the cells that are not reproductive, in opposition to “germen”. The painter goes from the body to the seed, he creates the seed from the body, whereas the musician starts from the seed in order to create a body. The idea seems to be, translated into very concrete terms, that the canvas is empty from the beginning, that all is created from scratch, whereas music acts in a material where all the sounds are already there. This, however, seems to me to be a dubious idea. Even the white canvas is already full: white contains all colours by reflecting all light (or it is full of all the pre-existing clichés as Deleuze shows concerning Bacon). Furthermore, the pre-existing phylum of music with for instance the tones that one is supposed to use, is only a convention, as Cage very poignantly has shown. Many other sounds are possible, can be incorporated, can be invented through new uses of all kinds of materials. Both the musician and the painter are faced with a corpus of existing music or paintings, and both can choose or not to challenge this corpus through incorporating new material.

What Deleuze and Guattari do not deal with in particular are gestural *ritournelles*. What does the gestural material mean to the character of *la ritournelle*? In a certain sense, the gesture already is “soma”, it is already a body, and yet it has to create one. In a sense it renders the division between “germen” and “soma” obsolete, as there is no difference between the material and the body in the choreographer’s work. There is a transformation but the material does not change. It also becomes clear that the *déterritorialisation* has nothing to do with bodiliness or airiness; a *déterritorialisation* in dance is just as bodily as a *reterritorialisation*. The possible phylum does not have anything to do with the gravity of the material, but rather with the creation of *machiniques* relations. This becomes obvious also in Deleuze and Guattari’s work on *le corps sans organes*. In other words, perhaps in their distinction between painting and music, they are bordering on a distinction based on an aesthetic heritage that is in danger of being counterproductive.

**Different kinds of ritournelles**

There are not only *ritournelles* in different kinds of materials, but also different kinds of *ritournelles*, as we saw from the very beginning. At several points they come back to such attempts to distinguish between different *ritournelles*, though they do it each time in slightly different ways.

At one point they thus distinguish between four kinds of *ritournelles* (as opposed to three in the introduction): 1. territorial *ritournelles* that mark a territory, 2. *ritournelles* with a
territorial function where the marking has been transformed into another function, 3. *ritournelles* with territorial functions that work through *détérrioralisation-retérrioralisation*, 4. *ritournelles* that gather the forces to make an absolute *détérrioralisation* towards cosmos. (MP, 402-403)

Towards the end of the chapter, they attempt a new definition. There are the “*ritournelles de milieux*”, which consist of at least two parts that respond to each other. There are the “*ritournelles du natal, du territoire*”, where a part is in relation to a whole. There are “*ritournelles populaires et folkloriques*”, which have a relation to a people. There are “*ritournelles molécularisées*”, such as the sea or the wind that are in a relation with cosmic forces, the “*ritournelle-Cosmos*”. Indeed, they suggest, the cosmos itself is also *une ritournelle*. (MP, 428-429)

Where the first set of definitions is based on the analysis of animal territoriality, the second is based on the same principles, but takes a new direction because it is formed through their analysis of three periods in art: classicism, romanticism, modernism, which according to them work through different kinds of *ritournelles*.

*Les ritournelles* of classicism, romanticism and modernism

In the last part of the text, we change from birds to art, from ethology40 to art history. But it is not only a diachronic history, it is also a synchronic history, as the three eras that they describe can coexist and overlap. Some of the terms and concepts of analysis are recognisable from the first part of the text, and yet the reflections seem different. The analysis of birds has not disappeared, but the concepts change slightly because they are developed in another material. The concepts do not exist for their own sake; it is always the meeting between the concepts and the actual material that forms the analysis. But although we here find ourselves with reflections that belong to classical aesthetics (though not in a classical way), the comparison with nature stays in the composition of the text and in the textual memory of the reader.

Classicism is characterised by a relationship between form and substance, substance being the unformed material. Here lie the dangers because every time the artist tries to form the *milieux* it is an operation that borders on chaos. The artist of classicism is God and his cry is “creation!”. Thus there is an opposition between form and material, order and chaos. And it

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40 The science of the behaviour of animals in their natural environment. The word comes from Greek “êthos” meaning morals, habits, standards of behaviour. (DHLF)
is such oppositions, or “l’Un-Deux”, that the classicist artist proceeds by. La ritournelle becomes a melody of such oppositions: first the piano plays, then the violin answers.

With romanticism, things change. The centre of interest is no longer form and substance but the earth. It cries “la Terre!” (the Earth). From being universalist, the artist becomes a territorialiser. However, there is an opposition between the territory that the artist creates and “la Terre”. “La Terre” is like a mythical entity that gathers the forces. The artist no longer confronts himself with chaos but with subterranean Earth. His key word is foundation, not creation. He is no longer God, but a Hero. La ritournelle changes too:

Le petit air, la ritournelle d’oiseau a changé: elle n’est plus le commencement d’un monde, elle trace sur la terre l’agencement territorial. (MP, 418)

Though he traces a territory, the romantic artist is never at home. He is captured in the gap between the territory and “la Terre”; he becomes a traveller, a nomad, an exile. The relation to form and substance has changed also. The form becomes changeable, and the matter becomes a matter of movement:

La forme elle-même devenait une grande forme en développement continu, recueil des forces de la terre qui prenait en gerbe toutes les parties. La matière elle-même n’était plus un chaos à soumettre et organiser, mais la matière en mouvement d’une variation continue. (MP, 419)

The material is no longer a material of content, but a material of expression. As in the case of the coral fish where the colour becomes a material of expression, a poster (affiche, pancarte), in the constitution of a territory:

A travers les agencements, matière et forme entraient ainsi dans un nouveau rapport: la matière cessait d’être une matière de contenu pour devenir une matière d’expression, la forme cessait d’être un code domptant les forces du chaos pour devenir elle-même force, ensemble des forces de la terre. (MP, 419)

The modern age is the age of cosmos. And having reached the last one we can finally see the structure: classicism is chaos, romanticism is the earth, modernity is cosmos, and together they build a ritournelle! It is no longer the Earth, but the cosmic forces that attract the artist. Here Paul Klee is the key example. It is not a mythical or religious cosmos, however, it is an abstract cosmos nevertheless full of forces:

L’agencement n’affronte plus les forces du chaos, il ne s’approfondit plus dans les forces de la terre ou dans les forces du peuple, mais il s’ouvre sur les forces du Cosmos. (MP, 422)
This also changes the role of the material, now entering into a relation to the cosmic forces that it is supposed to capture:

Il se présente ici comme un rapport direct matériau-forces. Le matériau, c’est une matière molécularisée, et qui doit à ce titre «capter» des forces, lesquelles ne peuvent plus être que des forces du Cosmos. (MP, 422)

This also includes the idea that it must render the invisible visible. “Rendre visible, disait Klee, et non pas rendre ou reproduire le visible.” (MP, 422) It is no longer a material of expression, but a material of capture. “Les matières d’expression font place à un matériau de capture” (MP, 422), it should capture the energetic, the immaterial, the impalpable. We are in a way deep into abstraction. It is not only a change of form, it is also a change of object:

l’essentiel n’est plus dans les formes et les matières, ni dans les thèmes, mais dans les forces, les densités, les intensités. (MP, 423)

No longer earth, but gravity. The forces become cosmic, the material moléculaire. We are no longer with creation/beginning or foundation, but with consolidation or consistance:

C’est devenu un problème de consistance ou de consolidation: comment consolider le matériau, le rendre consistant, pour qu’il puisse capter ces forces non sonores, non visibles, non pensables? (MP, 423)

**Cosmos, nature and chance**

If the three periods correspond to different epochs, they also represent three kinds of ritournelles that can occur at any moment. It might, however, be a disadvantage that they are so coloured by their diachronic time, when trying to identify them in a material. Yet the lives of artists often range over several periods and we carry with us cultural layers constructed in other eras. It is not impossible to find classical ritournelles in the work of Cage; for instance in his *Concert for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra* there is an opposition between the prepared piano and the orchestra, the occident and the orient, which is then resolved:

I made it into a drama between the piano, which remains romantic, expressive, and the orchestra, which itself follows the principles of oriental philosophy. And the third movement signifies the coming together of things which were opposed to one another in the first movement. (Cage/Charles, 1981, p.41)
First the piano plays, then the violin/orchestra answers.

Yet, if we take Cage as an example, we would not hesitate to put him in the modern period. Nevertheless, we are far from the vocabulary of Klee and the intent to capture the cosmic forces of life. And yet there is a wish to be in contact with a cosmos, though it is expressed in quite different terms. Cage speaks of letting things be themselves, letting chance decide, giving up personal preferences, and miming the complexity of nature. In one of his last lectures he speaks of Ananda Coomaraswamy (an Indian thinker) and the mission of the artist to imitate nature, and he adds that “Dans la nature, le hasard fonctionne en toutes circonstances” (Cage, 1994 (1992), np.). Using chance is a way of imitating nature. Though Cage is much inspired by Oriental philosophy, chance is a modernist theme – we only need to think of Stéphane Mallarmé and *Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard*, or the thinking of Nietzsche that Deleuze discusses for instance in *Différence et répétition*. Cage’s point of view is not that far from Deleuze’s on difference and repetition when it is put in these terms:

Yes, I introduced into, or beside, this Schoenbergian idea of a repetition-variation double, another notion, that of something other, which cannot be cancelled out. (...) An element that has nothing to do with either repetition or variation; something which does not enter into the battle of those two terms, and which rebels against being placed or replaced in terms of... That term is chance. (Cage/Charles, 1981, p.45)

It is an integral part of Deleuze’s philosophy to think repetition not as repetition of the same, but as the emergence of the singular and unique, where chance enters into the differenciation, or where *Aiôn* introduces chance in time. Answering the question whether he refuses Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal repetition of the same, Cage answers: “I would say that there is only eternal rebirth. Only that.” (Cage/Charles, 1981, p.47)

A single line

In many ways, it seems that we can find parallels between “1837 – De la ritournelle” and *Variations V*, and that the terms of Deleuze and Guattari can be useful in an attempt to study what kind of whole the different elements of the performance form. Nevertheless, they raise something that might seem to be an argument against the ability of *Variations V* to become an example of what they are trying to describe as the force of modern art.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that to capture the cosmic forces, one has to proceed with a simple line and not mix too many elements. In order to arrive at constructing a *consistance* or consolidation (which can capture the cosmic forces), one has to keep the material simple and clear:
Or on ne remplit cette condition que par une certaine simplicité dans le matériau non uniforme: maximum de sobriété calculé par rapport aux disparates ou aux paramètres. C’est la sobriété des agencements qui rend possible la richesse des effets de la Machine. (MP, 425)

The recipe is “sobriété”, sobriety, temperance, simplicity, a single line, a single wave without harmony:

Votre synthèse de disparates sera d’autant plus *forte* que vous opérez avec un geste sobre, un acte de consistance, de capture ou d’extraction qui travaillera sur un matériau non pas sommaire, mais prodigieusement simplifié, créativement limité, sélectionné. (MP, 425-426)

It might seem that *Variations V* combines disparate elements, but lacks the simplicity that Deleuze and Guattari are arguing for here. It is hard to say exactly what this simplicity consists of, but for instance they reproach Cage for bringing in so many elements that the *événement* (event) is prevented from happening:

On prétend ouvrir la musique à tous les événements, à toutes les irrusions, mais, ce qu’on reproduit finalement, c’est le brouillage qui empêche tout événement. On n’a plus qu’une caisse de résonance en train de faire trou noir. Un matériau trop riche est un matériau qui reste trop “territorialisé”, sur les sources du bruit, sur la nature des objets…. (même le piano préparé de Cage). On rend flou un ensemble, au lieu de définir l’ensemble flou *par* les opérations de consistance ou de consolidation qui portent sur lui. Car c’est cela l’essentiel: *un ensemble flou, une synthèse de disparates n’est défini que par un degré de consistance rendant précisément possible la distinction des éléments disparates qui le constituent (discernabilité).* (MP, 424)

There is a risk of making the whole vague instead of consolidating it through a single gesture. Yet we might say that this *événement* can never be predicted in a heterogeneous material, whether this is a simple or overloaded material. And we might also say that this request for simplicity is perhaps a small remnant of a classical *ritournelle* in Deleuze and Guattari’s way of defining the modern *ritournelle*. The way the material is supposed to capture the invisible forces recalls, though in a different way, the way the form captures the substance in the classical *ritournelle*. Or at least it is an example of their aesthetic preferences. *Variations V* brings together heterogeneous elements in abundance without deciding the possible events in advance; the material is left free to capture whatever there might be to capture, but as far as possible without the form imposing its will on the substance. Perhaps Deleuze and Guattari are holding on to an aesthetic ideal of clarity, which Cage and Cunningham in the happenings let go of in order to let the elements be themselves. They dissolve their will over the material. It is also curious that Deleuze and Guattari in *le devenir* search for a zone of “indiscernabilité”
and here suddenly want “discernabilité”. But even before questioning Deleuze and Guattari’s view, we can say that the independence of the different arts involved makes the disparate elements of Variations $V$ distinct and discernible. Compared to the complexity of the elements, Variations $V$ is very sober. The sound possibilities are many, but not all are chosen through the unpredictable procedure, and they are not reterritorialisés onto the object that produce them as the source remains unknown in the final result. In Variations $V$ there is no excess, only seriousness. Their well-measured gestures and non-expressive faces reveal nothing of the chaos underneath. Perhaps it becomes a single line.

**La ritournelle as time crystal**

Despite all the definitions and descriptions of ritournelles one still has the impression of not really knowing what a ritournelle is. Deleuze and Guattari even ask the question themselves towards the end of the text: “Mais, de toute façon, qu’est-ce qu’une ritournelle?” (MP, 430). And here the argument takes another direction, though not a surprising one, in view of Deleuze’s other writings.

La ritournelle is not only a creation of or flight from a territory, it is also a crystal (like the time crystals that we meet in the film books):

*Glass Harmonica* : la ritournelle est un prisme, un cristal d’espace-temps. Elle agit sur ce qui l’entoure, son ou lumière, pour en tirer des vibrations variées, des décompositions, projections et transformations. (MP, 430)

It is a crystal of time and space that reflects and transforms a material – and (perhaps) it is in this sense that the ritournelle can go through the musical material of sound and transform it into a déterritorialisation. It is not only passive reflection but an active transformation, which is why they also call it a “protéine”(protein) (MP, 430). It has a catalytic function: it can put elements that do not necessarily belong together into a relation:

La ritournelle a aussi une fonction catalytique: non seulement augmenter la vitesse des échanges et réactions dans ce qui l’entoure, mais assurer des interactions indirectes entre éléments dénués d’affinité dite naturelle, et former par là des masses organisées. (MP, 430)

In this sense there could be ritournelles at play in Variations $V$, making the elements enter into relations though they are not dependent on each other naturally, and making them organise themselves in a new way. But still it is quite impalpable what it is that brings the elements into relations in this way.
It seems that the structure of the *ritournelle*-crystal is based on two principles. The first is that it contains several opposed movements:

Quant au germe ou à la structure internes, ils auraient alors deux aspects essentiels: les augmentations et diminutions, ajouts et retraits, amplifications et éliminations par valeurs inégales, mais aussi la présence d’un mouvement rétrograde qui va dans les deux sens comme «sur les vitres latérales d’un tramway en marche». (MP, 430)

It is a double movement. The second is the concentration in time and space. This again is a sort of paradoxical coexistence or concentration of forces:

Il appartient à la ritournelle de se concentrer par élimination sur un moment extrêmement bref, comme des extrêmes à un centre, ou au contraire se développer par ajouts qui vont d’un centre aux extrêmes, mais aussi de parcourir ces chemins dans les deux sens. (MP, 430-431)

*La ritournelle* or the time crystal is a small concentrated circuit of forces, movements and time. The two movements meet on a very small spot (“moment extrêmement bref”). It is a figure of immobile movement.

But it is not only a crystal made of time and space, it is a crystal that produces time: “*La ritournelle fabrique du temps*” (MP, 431). This is perhaps to be understood in the way that the *ritournelles* produce different structures of time, so that time takes different forms:

Il n’y a pas le Temps comme forme a priori, mais la ritournelle est la forme a priori du temps, qui fabrique chaque fois des temps différents. (MP, 431)

This is perhaps the kind of time that Cunningham is looking for when he wants every movement to have its own time. *La ritournelle* is the form that produces the different time of each thing.

In *Variations V* each element is allowed to find its own time within the time-structure of the performance, thus producing its own *ritournelles*. If a *ritournelle* is a rhythmic pattern of variation and return that produces time, it could make us think of the actions related to the plant and the bike, which somehow seem to structure the time of *Variations V*. The idea of reflection makes us think of the light beams that change the vision of what is going on, to the point of almost blinding the viewer. These light beams, however, are probably produced through the TV-montage of the performance. But that also makes us ask what it is that reflects the different elements of the performance, what could gather them into a prism. Is it the common time-space, or is it the TV-montage, or something totally different?
The crystal is a figure of thinking that Deleuze often uses to coin an expression for central moments (and/or movements) where something particular happens in relation to time and the concentration of understanding. But it is also a very symmetrical figure with a particular aesthetic appeal. In one of his last lectures Cage describes how he used to use symmetrical and crystalline figures, but how he wanted to get away from them later, as it imposed too much structure on the material – like a form to contain a substance. Instead, he takes to defining time as long parentheses within which he is not the master of what is going to happen when and therefore leaves it open for chance to produce the event:

Lors de mes premiers essais, je choisissais, pour chaque morceau, un nombre de mesures dont il était possible d’extraire la racine carrée, comme huit fois huit soixante-quatre, où chaque unité peut se laisser diviser en huit, comme chaque mesure en huit battues. Ce mode de division du temps me paraissait aussi convaincant que la forme d’un cristal. Par la suite, je renonçai à l’idéal de l’objet et lui substituai celui du procès; et le procès dans lequel je me suis investi aujourd’hui est celui que j’ai décrit: les parenthèses temporelles et les opérations de hasard. Ce que je veux suggérer, c’est qu’avec une semblable liberté, la flexibilité des parenthèses de temps autorisera une meilleure compréhension des opérations de la nature, et qu’un meilleur modèle pour les relations sociales se fera jour si l’on autorise une telle flexibilité. (Cage, 1994 (1992), p.22-24)

For Deleuze the crystal is a figure of thinking and a figure of time that is capable of concentrating something essential. For Cage the crystal is an aesthetic form, an object that is tempting, but which imposes too much will on the material. Instead, in his later career he opts for more flexibility to allow for chance to reveal nature, but also to realise a social ideal of liberty and difference and non-hierarchical relations in art – an ideal that is not far from those of Deleuze and Guattari.

If there are crystals of time at play in Variations V, they are hard to determine except for the bringing together of different elements within the time of the performance. There is no other structure that sums up time; it is left to chance to create relations freely. The only structure of time apart from the time-space/length of the performance, is created through the repetition with differences of a few specific moments: the bringing in and replanting of the plant, the walking with the bike and the riding on the bike. These moments end up structuring time, creating a rhythm through the performance. But though the beams of light remind us temptingly of a prism, it is not symmetrical. It might be a crystal, but an irregular one.

The unity of the concept of la ritournelle

Even if the time crystal seems to be the last definition, the last word has not yet been said on the concept of la ritournelle. To the very end, Deleuze and Guattari keep asking
themselves what *la ritournelle* is, and even after *Mille plateaux* it comes back in quite different ways in their separate writings. It is hardly definable. It is a rhythmical pattern that structures as well animal as human activity, it is related to territories and *reterritorialisation* and *déterritorialisation*, it is related to time, it relates heterogeneous elements. But it remains hard to keep together.

In *Le Vocabulaire de Gilles Deleuze*, edited by Robert Sasso and Arnaud Villani, the latter defines it simply as “Forme de retour ou de revenir, notamment musical, lié à la territorialité et à la déterritorialisation, et fabriquant du temps”, only to enumerate the very different aspects of it and conclude that “Le terme «ritournelle» semble très peu adapté à une telle largeur de significations.” (Sasso/Villani, 2003, p.304+306)

François Zourabichvili seems to choose another strategy in his *Le Vocabulaire de Deleuze*. In spite of the diversity of the concept, he tries to sum it up coherently in a beautifully philosophical way without revealing the possible inconsistencies. He first defines the *ritournelles* by the coexistence of three different moments of two different triades:

La *ritournelle* se définit par la stricte coexistence ou contemporanéité de trois dynamismes impliqués les uns dans les autres. Elle forme un système complet du désir, une logique de l’existence («logique extrême et sans rationalité»). Elle s’expose dans deux triades un peu différentes. (Zourabichvili, 2003, p.74)

The two triades are two different formulations of the creating of a central point, constructing a territory and going beyond it. To say that *la ritournelle* forms a logic of existence is true in its behavioural and psychological sense, but does not render the artistic aspect. To say that it is a complete system of desire is perhaps to go too far; even if it has to do with desire, it is not one of the concepts where Deleuze and Guattari particularly develop their ideas about desire. Later he sums up the aspect of *la ritournelle* that contains the theme of eternal return and repetition:

La *ritournelle* mérite deux fois son nom: d’abord comme tracé qui revient sur soi, se reprend, se répète; ensuite, comme circularité des trois dynamismes (se chercher un territoire = chercher à le rejoindre). Ainsi tout commencement est déjà un retour, mais celui-ci implique toujours un écart, une différence: la reterritorialisation, corrélat de la déterritorialisation, n’est jamais un retour au même. (Zourabichvili, 2003, p.74-75)

Here he obviously interprets *la ritournelle* as an aspect of the philosophy of difference and repetition. It is important as *la ritournelle* contains a rhythmic pattern of return, but it does not explain why it includes such different things as birds turning over leaves and the symphonies
of a composer. Zourabichvili certainly sums up the notion in a seemingly coherent way, but it
seems to me that the diversity of the notion and its attempt to build bridges between very
different things are not conveyed in such a definition. Perhaps it makes it easier to hold
together in the mind, but it does not account for the difficulties that one encounters in the text.

It becomes apparent when working on *la ritournelle* that an understanding of the concept
goes through a kind of filtering. A filtering where a diversity of information is somehow
clarified into a personal attempt to understand the concept. Much information is left aside in
this process, and one or the other aspect is emphasised. Such a process is necessary, but what
is more important, perhaps, than the final definition, is the struggle with the text while trying
to make sense of it, and the possible connections it can create. Therefore, I do not agree with
the objection that its incoherence makes it a less successful creation of a concept. Instead, it is
a concept that refuses to become a tool, a concept where the sense is struggling, in the same
way as Deleuze and Guattari describe the struggle of the expressive material between
structuring and unstructuring, the creation of a *strate* or of a *consistance*. *La ritournelle* is
never unified into a *strate*, but it is a *consistance* that relates heterogeneous elements without
dissolving them.

**Reflections on the juxtaposition of *la ritournelle* and *Variations V***

Juxtaposing “1837 – De la ritournelle” and *Variations V* gives rise to several surprises and
discoveries. I was expecting a dialogue on several points, but the response of the material was
much more vivid than I had imagined. In spite of the difficulty of making sense of the concept
of *la ritournelle*, another dialogue takes shape. A dialogue that rests not so much on the utility
of the notion of *ritournelle* as a tool, but rather on the struggle in the text to gather a multitude
of things and create notions that keep the heterogeneous together without dissolving it. This
struggle corresponds to the undertaking of *Variations V* which cannot be defined only in
terms of a collage, but needs other explanations as well.

Bringing these two subjects closer is constructing a dialogue between fragments of
thought expressed in different materials, fragments expressed in a philosophical discourse, in
a musical aesthetics transported into the texts of Cage, in choreography. Especially, it has
been surprising to notice how many fragments of thinking in Cage’s writings and aesthetics
echo the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. These fragments are not always developed, or at
least not in a strictly philosophical way, but they are nevertheless there. This should of course
not lead us to think that Cage’s aesthetics is Deleuzian. It is composed on the basis of quite
different elements – from the attempt to undo traditional musical aesthetics, through Indian
philosophy, American anarchist thinking, and the Zen Buddhism of Suzuki, to mention only a few. But all of these elements are used in a particularly Cagean way, taken out of their context and put into a new one in a way that makes it very unorthodox. What we can notice is that some of the same problems preoccupy him – the coexistence of heterogeneous elements, the multiplicity of one, the uniqueness of the event of chance. What is interesting is also that he is struggling to undo some of the aesthetic preferences that perhaps still underlie Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking, in spite of its radicality. The preference, for instance, for the figure of the crystal or the clearness of a single line. It is not that these preferences are wrong, but Cage shows that these ideas belong to a set of aesthetic choices.

But the fragments of thought that I have been trying to extract do not only express themselves in writing. I have been trying to extract elements of Variations V, even if some of them might seem to be too small to carry any real importance. For instance the use of the plant that recalls the merging of biology and aesthetics in the chapter on la ritournelle. This one plant in itself perhaps cannot carry the same amount of significance as the whole analysis of animals and birds in Deleuze and Guattari’s text. But its presence, though more or less accidental, is not without significance either. It refers to an attempt of Cage and Cunningham’s to cross the border between the cultural and the natural. And in the juxtaposition of la ritournelle and Variations V it suddenly acquires a new importance when Merce Cunningham and Carolyn Brown turn over and manipulate the leaves, not unlike the turning of the leaves of the scenopoïètes. It is the very juxtaposition of apparently disparate elements that gives rise to new connections.

Using these fragments of thinking is also an attempt to shortcut the discourse of Cage and Cunningham, a discourse that is very repetitive and, paradoxically, almost hermetic. The discourse on dance and the collaboration between dance and music seems even more repetitive than Cage’s discourse on music, at least the one that becomes apparent in his writings, which reveal a development that is not revealed in the standard presentations and manifest-like statements. Furthermore, as it is a discourse that refuses signification, it becomes hard to make the material speak without contradicting oneself. When I create a relation between, for instance, Variations V and la ritournelle, it is not in order to interpret the performance in terms of signification, but to bring forward those elements of the work that do not necessarily become apparent in the official discourse on Cunningham. That is what I mean by shortcutting; opening up the possibilities and making the material speak in new ways.

La ritournelle and Variations V seem to call more attention to the aesthetics of Cage than to the work of Cunningham. This is probably due to the musical base of the concept, the
attempt to dissolve the distinction between natural and cultural patterns of le rythme, and the attempt to make the heterogeneous coexist. Whereas the notion of le corps sans organes immediately responds to the work of Cunningham, la ritournelle, though ritournelles can be gestural, speaks less to the body. I was partly conscious of this from the beginning, and also wanted to use this as an opportunity to enter more into the work of Cage, as their collaboration has been more than important for the development of Cunningham’s work. And as the aesthetics of Cage is more outspoken, it gives us an insight into the context of creation and the development of their methods. This is also a way of confronting the barrier that the discourse of Cunningham puts up in front of his work without resorting to the aesthetic notions that he has rejected. I have tried, when possible, to make clear the absence of gestural ritournelles in the chapter in Mille plateaux, and how the relation between painting and music seems different when seen from the point of view of dance. But due to the character of the concept of la ritournelle, it is hard to find examples of gestural ritournelles. Could it be the manipulation of leaves, or the return of the bike, or should we rather look for repetition of movements, of which there is remarkably little in Variations V? The broadness of the concept makes it hard to apply, and in any case it becomes difficult to find examples that can carry the whole weight of it with all its different connotations.

There are several ways to see the juxtapositions I try to create. Or rather, there are several mechanisms of relations at work. One is the dialogue between fragments of thinking expressed in different materials. Another is the coexistence side by side of non-related elements (like dance and music in the same space), creating unforeseen moments of coincidence. Yet another is the coexistence of heterogeneous elements creating, possibly, a new material that becomes rich through accumulation and interrelations; an attempt at a consistance on a very small level. Yet another is the metaphorical projection between the chapter on the ritournelle and Variations V. Suddenly Variations V can be seen as the development of relations between different milieux or species, and at the same time the text can be read as a text on the whole that is created through the addition of artistic elements as in Variations V. And yet, in view of Deleuze’s remarks on metaphors in his own writings – that they are not metaphors but should be taken “literally” - we have to ask ourselves about the nature of this projection. When Deleuze and Guattari say that for instance the machines désirantes are not metaphors but should be taken literally, it is first and foremost because these expressions and explanations are the only way to speak of a certain reality. What becomes obvious in the juxtaposition I have proposed here, is that we do not only have to do with projection, but that the juxtaposition creates something else that depends on the two
elements and cannot be expressed independently of them. For instance, the parallel between dancers turning leaves in the performance and the *scenopoïetes* turning leaves seems absurd outside this context, but in the juxtaposition it becomes real.

I started this chapter with a quotation that struck me, and at the end it strikes me even more when Cage writes:

*Refrain:* Activity involving in a single process the many, turning them, even though some seem to be opposites, towards oneness, contributes to a good way of life.
(Cage, 2004 (1968), p.63)

It seems to sum up *la ritournelle* as a rhythmical pattern that tries to bring together heterogeneous elements into oneness without dissolving their differences. It is the preoccupation both of “1837 – De la ritournelle” and *Variations V*. But it is not only an aesthetic preoccupation and a reflection on nature, it is also a social ideal.
Chapter 4

How to construct a body in movement - *Untitled Solo, Suite by Chance* and *le corps sans organes*

*Car liez-moi si vous voulez, mas il n’y a rien de plus inutile qu’un organe.*

*Lorsque vous lui aurez fait un corps sans organes, alors vous l’aurez délivré de tous ses automatismes et rendu à sa véritable liberté.*

*Alors vous lui réapprendrez à danser à l’envers comme dans le délire des bals musette et cet envers sera son véritable endroit.* (Antonin Artaud: *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*)

The evident connection meets its *corps sans organes*

*Le corps sans organes* is one of the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari that has been frequently invoked, and not without reason. It is an intriguing concept that pushes to the extreme the question of what a body is. It might seem tempting to choose to work on *le corps sans organes* in relation to dance, as it so obviously includes the body. But this is far less evident than one would think. Polemically, one could say that *le corps sans organes* is a body that is not defined through what it is, but through what it is not, and that it almost tends towards a body that is not – or at least not in the sense in which we are used to understanding bodies. *Le corps sans organes* is neither a representation, nor the human organism. It is a dismantling of the ideological construction of the organism.

But at the same time it seems as if there is something almost too evident about the juxtaposition of Cunningham and *le corps sans organes*, exactly because Cunningham is trying to dismantle the hierarchy of the body. But I would like to go a bit further into the notion itself (which is more complicated than often accounted for, and my analysis will be far from exhaustive) through an analysis of the concept in *L’Anti-Œdipe* and *Mille plateaux* and the choreographies *Untitled Solo* and *Suite by Chance*. These are two of the works where Cunningham first started using chance procedures to construct his choreography and disrupt the hierarchy of the body. Here he takes to the extreme the practice that he is to become known for.

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42 This connection is for instance made by Roger Copeland in his *Merce Cunningham - The Modernizing of Modern Dance* (2004), pp. 234-236.
Unfortunately, neither of these works has been archived on video and film or at least not in their entirety. But actually this only opens other interesting aspects: the difficulty of accessing the experience of the dancing body and the ungraspability of the historical body. Well-known dilemmas of dance analysis that might take a particular form through the analysis of *le corps sans organes*.

**L’Anti-Œdipe and Mille plateaux**

*Le corps sans organes*, though it is one of the expressions and concepts of Deleuze and Guattari most often referred to, is more complex than it might seem. It might be easy to adopt the term, but it is not easy to capture its role in their philosophy as it is a very changeable one. Though my task is not to account for the entire concept, I find this complexity important when trying to construct a reflection in relation to Cunningham. It is an almost ungraspable concept – as is the dancing body. Though concrete to the point of making bodies shake and shiver, *le corps sans organes* is abstract and hard to see actualised. *Le corps sans organes* is a limit that is never completely acquired, not something to learn and master. It cannot be obtained and if so, only momentarily.

Looking at *le corps sans organes* in a larger context in Deleuze and Guattari’s work, it becomes clear that it is a concept that finds many usages and undergoes many changes. This plasticity is the plasticity of *le corps sans organes* itself. *Le corps sans organes* is most often treated in the form it has found in the chapter named after it in *Mille plateaux*. However, I find it interesting how it is first developed in *L’Anti-Œdipe*[^43] and there are interesting discussions to be found in the difference between the respective *corps sans organes* of these two works. The concept seems more open and less finished in *L’Anti-Œdipe* than it is to become in *Mille plateaux*. It is like the figure of Bacon, struggling to take form. Perhaps it is struggling to deform itself, as well.

*L’Anti-Œdipe* is the first of Deleuze and Guattari’s collaborative works. It is the first of the two volumes on “*Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*” (the subtitle of both works), the second being *Mille plateaux*. It is a raving, maddening piece of work referring to all kinds of sciences written in a schizophrenic (in their own sense of the word) style. It is equally hard to sum up and to understand. The collaboration is crucial to the form the books have taken; they are unthinkable without it. Neither Deleuze nor Guattari could have written them on their own. They weave their different competences into an amalgam that is broad but consistent and

[^43]: It seems to appear the first time in *Logique du sens* from 1969.
compelling: Deleuze’s understanding of philosophical history and his construction of a philosophy of his own through Bergson, Spinoza, Nietzsche and others; Guattari’s knowledge and practice of (anti-) psychiatry and his political sharpness and involvement. But the references go far beyond these areas into biology, physics, chaos theory, literature and art.

*L'Anti-Œdipe* is a work of philosophical activism, an experiment of style, it is deadly serious and should not be taken too seriously. It is a polemical but fair and carefully argued critique of capitalism, Freudian psychology and especially the dogma of the Oedipus complex and the family structures imposed on desire. It criticises Freud, it draws on Marx, it returns to Artaud, it is a polemic with the contemporaries of the authors (for instance Lacan), but it is also inhabited by Nietzsche, Beckett, Spinoza, Bergson, Schreber (a patient of Freud’s), Duchamp, Man Ray, and many others.

The attacks against Freudian psychology are strong and vigorous. The main objection is that Freudian psychology has mistaken psychological structures produced by capitalist and bourgeois society for universal structures, thus reinforcing them. It has discovered the importance of the psyche and of desire (and is credited for that by the authors), but it has locked its workings into too narrow mechanisms that end up being obstructive and repressive. Most reductive is the attempt to boil everything down to the Oedipus complex.

Above all, *L'Anti-Œdipe* is an attempt not to separate the analysis of the psyche from that of society, though capitalism has produced such a split. For Deleuze and Guattari, there is little or no difference. Everything is invested with desire, and everything is societal. These are not split realities and both realities are equally real. Therefore the combination of Marx and Freud.

It is a work that is a witness of its time, and yet it conducts a discussion that is still of much actuality today – both as a critique of heteronormativity and an attempt to show the plasticity of desire, and as a critique of capitalist society – and in their way of interweaving these two critiques. Furthermore, it contains a critique of the hierarchy of the body that is the most radical to date. This is the function of *le corps sans organes*.

By the time we arrive at *le corps sans organes* in *Mille plateaux*, something has changed. Perhaps not so much the concept itself, but at least the presentation of it and the context it is embedded in. *Mille plateaux* is in many ways different from *L'Anti-Œdipe* and this is reflected in its form. It is no longer conceived as a whole coherent argument, but split off in different “plateaux”, which can be read separately – inspired by their philosophy of the *rhizome*, a root structure that is non-hierarchical and can proliferate in all directions, and by the geological vocabulary of the book. It still proposes a theory, but in the form of fragments.
Much of the critique is repeated, and even enlarged to cover other areas, although the result is no longer a statement, but a series of reflections. This is probably also one of the reasons why it has been more often referred to. It is even harder to summarize, but easier to use in a pragmatic way. Perhaps one of the reasons for these differences is the time in which it was written. *L’Anti-Œdipe* still has the energy of the political movements of 1968, *Mille plateaux* was published in 1980 after the oil crisis. There are still elements of 68 in it, but the spirit has changed. The change is also a stylistic extension of their philosophy.

The presentation of *le corps sans organes* has also changed. Whereas in *L’Anti-Œdipe* it was embedded in a theory of the psyche and a critique of psychoanalysis, it has now been liberated from this argument to become a concept in its own right. Furthermore, as the title “28 novembre 1947 – Comment se faire un Corps sans Organes?” indicates, the chapter almost takes the form of a *mode d’emploi*. From being an element in the psyche that acts independently of the subject, it becomes something that can be manipulated through practice. Another indicator of the change is that *le corps sans organes* finds its chemical formula “CsO”, which fits well with the geo-scientific vocabulary of *Mille plateaux*. In a certain way, the concept has become clearer, but the chapter is no less maddening for that reason. The enumeration of examples, the rapid changes of subject, the superposition of arguments, the references to their own work and the works of others; all this still builds a thick tissue that makes of the concept a multi-layered argument that is hard to describe and to hold on to in all its complexity.

**Untitled Solo and Suite by Chance**

At the beginning of the 50s, Cage and Cunningham started using chance procedures – a method that provoked strong reactions. Cunningham first used chance methods in *Sixteen Dances for Soloist and Company of Three* (1951) in order to decide the order of the different parts. But in the choreographies that followed he used chance to a much larger extent, transforming the process of the choreographic work and bringing an entirely different view of the body and its movement into dance.

Both *Untitled Solo* and *Suite by Chance* are experiments with chance procedures; the first was a solo for Cunningham himself, the second a choreography for his company. Contrary to what one might think at first, *Suite by Chance* was choreographed first, namely in 1952 in its first version, but apparently reworked in 1953 for the final version. *Untitled Solo* was made in

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1953. But in spite of the chronology, I have chosen to deal with them in the opposite order, as the solo deals with the work on the individual body and the choreography for a group deals with the collective body.

When we are talking about chance procedures, it is important to remember that this can be quite a lot of different things, and that all depends on how and when chance enters, and what kind of preparations go before it. For *Untitled Solo* Cunningham had prepared a so-called “gamut” of movement, that is, sequences and varieties of movement that he had written down. He would then throw coins to decide the order of the sequences in relation to each other:

*I had made the dance by preparing a gamut of movements. I would figure out a movement or a phrase and would write it down so as to be clear about what it was (…) Then I’d throw two coins to find the order, by chance means. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.80)*

However, the gamuts were not equally long. Some were small sequences and some were just a single movement. In the latter case he would throw coins again to combine it with other movements. In other words, some sequences were already prepared, some had to be put together by chance, and the order of it all had to be decided by chance.

The use of chance procedures in *Suite by Chance* is even more radical and systematic. Or as Sabine Huschka interprets it:

*Im Unterschied zu *Untitled Solo* sind die für *Suite by Chance* vorab choreographierten Einzelbewegungen weitaus differenzierter. Cunningham würfelt nun prinzipiell alle Aspekte der Bewegung aus (…)* (Huschka, 2000, p.383)

For this choreography Cunningham prepared “charts” describing all the possible movements of the different body parts, and the different possible developments of a particular passage, fall or movement. None of the sequences are constructed before the element of chance, all are composed with the use of charts describing the movements and giving several options. Equally, there are charts for time lengths, orientation and positions and change of positions in space. The charts are used at different moments of the choreographing process: first the movements are put together into phrases that are noted separately, then the time, orientation, speed or slowness, and positions are decided with the use of other charts.

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45 In David Vaughan’s book *Merce Cunningham –Fifty Years* (1997) it is listed under 1953 in the text, but in the Chronology at the end of the book it is noted under 1952. In Sabine Huschka’s “Chronologie der Choreographien” it appears that there was a ”Erste Fassung” in 1952 and a ”Neuarbeitung” in 1953.
However, it seems extremely difficult to reconstruct the exact workings of the charts even if they are very detailed, it is a puzzle with many missing pieces, not only the outcome of chance is unknown, also sometimes exactly how chance was invoked. The moment of chance is inscribed in a structure, but the exact workings between the two can be hard to reconstruct. How we can characterise these patterns of chance is one of things that the \textit{corps sans organes} might help us to study. But even before that, the chance operations of Cunningham and Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of \textit{corps sans organes} are up against the same enemy.

\textbf{Le corps sans organes and the organism}

One of the most central aspects of \textit{le corps sans organes} is its opposition to the organism. This is an aspect that is present even in the text \textit{Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu} by Artaud, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, from where the concept is taken. But it is developed in a specific and quite different way in Deleuze and Guattari’s elaboration on it.

One can say that Deleuze and Guattari’s three grand enemies in \textit{Mille plateaux} are the subject, signification and the organism:

Considérons les trois grandes strates par rapport à nous, c’est-à-dire celles qui nous ligotent le plus directement: l’organisme, la signification et la subjectivation. La surface d’organisine, l’angle de signification et d’interprétation, le point de subjectivation ou d’assujettissement. Tu seras organisé, tu seras un organisme, tu articuleras ton corps – sinon tu ne seras qu’un dépravé. Tu seras signifiant et signifié, interprète et interprété – sinon tu ne seras qu’un déviant. Tu seras sujet, et fixé comme tel, sujet d’énonciation rabattu sur un sujet d’énoncé – sinon tu ne seras qu’un vagabond. (MP, 197)

The subject, signification and the organism are normalising structures imposed on us. The \textit{corps sans organes} is the attempt to undo the structure of the organism to make other forces of the body possible. The \textit{corps sans organes} is not a body without organs, but the body without the organisation of the organs:

Nous nous apercevons peu à peu que le CsO n’est nullement le contraire des organes. Ses ennemis ne sont pas les organes. L’ennemi, c’est l’organisme. Le CsO s’oppose, non pas aux organes, mais à cette organisation des organes qu’on appelle organisme. (MP, 196)

The organism organises the body but thereby also limits it. The \textit{corps sans organes} is experiments of the body that make different constructions possible. Therefore it is obvious to compare \textit{le corps sans organes} to Cunningham’s attempts to explore the possibilities of the body and dismantle the hierarchy of the dancing organism. This finds its most poignant expression in his use of chance procedures.
The reason why the chance procedures might seem to deal with a *corps sans organes*, is not only that Cunningham uses chance itself, but that he first divides both the body and movement into smaller parts (legs, arms, torso, skips, falls, jumps, steps) which are then put together randomly. For that is what *le corps sans organes* is about, new connections. The organs themselves remain, but another organism is built. Against this, one could of course argue that the small parts Cunningham divides the body into correspond to traditional divisions, and that the body remains very controlled and does not correspond to the rather extreme body experiences that Deleuze and Guattari often refer to. But even if the divisions are logical, the connections produced by chance are radical.

But perhaps the *corps sans organes* is not only a body that is constructed differently. For in fact, we can perhaps say that the relation between body and organism is reversed: it is not the organism that is the body, but the “real” body that is distorted by the organism:

L’organisme n’est pas du tout le corps, le CsO, mais une strate sur le CsO, c’est-à-dire un phénomène d’accumulation, de coagulation, de sédimentation qui lui impose des formes, des fonctions, des liaisons, des organisations dominantes et hiérarchisées, des transcendances organisées pour en extraire un travail utile. (MP, 197)

The body is not the organism but the *corps sans organes*. The organism is only a “sediment” on the *corps sans organes*, to stay in the semi-scientific vocabulary of *Mille plateaux*. In other words they are turning the conception of the body and reality upside down. It is not the body as organism, the body with its anatomical hierarchy, which is the real body. The real body is the *corps sans organes* of the *intensif* level of *le plan de consistance*. It is our *virtuel*, unformed, *intensif* body that is the real body.

This also puts the accusation of dehumanisation that has been directed against Cunningham into another perspective. Copeland argues in his defence that Cunningham constructs a modern dismantled body corresponding to both scientific method and the complexity, fragmentation and interconnectedness of modern life (Copeland, 2004)\(^46\). Huschka on the other hand tries to show that Cunningham always lets his work go through a modulation when working with the dancers, constructing despite the fragmented vocabulary a new kind of continuity (Huschka, 2000)\(^47\). But here we might add that the *corps sans organes*

\(^{46}\) For instance: “Thus, Cunningham’s “formalism” (...) is not a shift from a representational art (Graham’s) to a nonrepresentational art (Cunningham’s); it’s a shift from an older mode of mimesis to one that more accurately mirrors the complexity, simultaneity, and non-Aristotelian causality that characterize contemporary, urban life.” (Copeland, 2004. p.14)

\(^{47}\) For instance: “Damit setzt sich die choreographische Arbeit einer Dynamik aus, in der das scheinbar Unmögliche möglich zu machen gesucht wird. In den Proben motivieren die Tänzer hierzu ungeahnte Kräfte und Energien. (...) Denn die entstehende Differenz zwischen einer im wörtlichen Sinne entworfenen Bewegung und
is not a dehumanisation of the body, but a re-humanisation of the body, restoring the possibilities that have been set aside by the sedimentation of the structure of the organism.

In going back to the origin of the concept in Artaud, however, we also discover some of the difficulties of the concept in relation to Cunningham. It is true that Artaud speaks of undoing the organism and Cunningham undoes the organism in a certain way. Certainly, we can say that Cunningham’s attempt never to be at ease with the movement, always trying to keep a certain strangeness between the dancer and the dance, is a way to learn to “danser à l’envers” (Artaud, 2003 (1974), p.61). But Cunningham’s methodical and meticulous approach has nothing to do with Artaud’s rather unrestrained ritual. Deleuze and Guattari do not emphasise but rather phase out the ritualistic aspect of Artaud’s thinking in favour of the schizophrenic side. But even between the schizophrenic violence and the minutely controlled experiments of Cunningham there is a considerable difference. This actually points to a central problem concerning both le corps sans organes of Deleuze and Guattari itself, and the possible juxtaposition with Cunningham’s work: is le corps sans organes violent or not?

The choreographic entry of le corps sans organes

Le corps sans organes makes its entry already in the very first chapter of L’Anti-Œdipe and it is a well choreographed entry. There is high speed, a multitude of references, and a blend of many different genres and parametres, all of which the reader has to keep track of at the same time. But it is nevertheless a chapter where the main constituents of their argument are to be introduced: the workings of les machines désirantes. For Deleuze and Guattari this is what desire is. Les machines désirantes are introduced at a rapid pace:

Ça fonctionne partout, tantôt sans arrêt, tantôt discontinu. Ça respire, ça chauffe, ça mange. Ça chie, ça baise. Quelle erreur d’avoir dit le ça. (AŒ, 7)

This “ça” is of course a reference to Freud. What for Freud is the unconscious “id”, is for Deleuze and Guattari machines désirantes, wildly and continuously connecting to each other to produce more machines. It is the production of desire that the first chapter is about and in an exhilarating tempo Deleuze and Gauattari describe its workings.

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48 As Roger Copeland also points out in accordance with his argument that opposes Cunningham, Rauschenberg and Johns in opposition to Graham and Pollock and their interest in myth, psychology and self-expression. **Merce Cunningham – The modernizing of Modern Dance**, p.236.
The production of desire is described as flux and is introduced stylistically through rapid enumerations. Despite the talk of “coupure” of the flux, the general impression is that of movement. But suddenly something happens: “Tout s’arrête un moment, tout se fige (puis tout va recommencer).” (AŒ, 13) A third term is about to introduce itself in the linear series of connections, an “énorme objet non différencié” (AŒ, 13). There is a moment of suspense created in the text as the machines that floated so freely, come to a halt:


The “station incompréhensible” indicates some kind of stillness. Le corps sans organes is introduced in a moment of arrested movement. Whereas the linear process combined the product and the production, the product itself being production, le corps sans organes is improduction, and yet is itself produced:

Le corps sans organes est l’improductif; et pourtant il est produit à sa place et à son heure dans la synthèse connective, comme l’identité du produire et du produit (...) Lui, l’improductif, il existe là où il est produit, au troisième temps de la série binaire-linéaire. (AŒ, 14)

But it arrests production only to make it possible for the production to be always different. It arrests production to produce new connections. Somehow this combination of movement and immobility, production and anti-production is necessary. The desiring machines only work by walking on the spot, they have to be arrested to keep working:

La genèse de la machine a lieu sur place, dans l’opposition du procès de production des machines désirantes et de la station improductive du corps sans organes. (AŒ, 15)

In fact, it is not unlike a cramp, a spasm, like the spasms of the figures of Bacon:

On ne demandera pas comment ça marche ensemble: cette question même est le produit de l’abstraction. Les machines désirantes ne marchent que détraquées, en se détraquant sans cesse. (AŒ, 14)

And this is in no way a metaphor; it should be taken literally, it is the body without image:

Il n’est surtout pas une projection; rien à voir avec le corps propre, ou avec une image du corps. C’est le corps sans image. (AŒ, 14)
Le corps sans organes and les machines désirantes

The choreographic opposition between movement and stillness in the entry of *le corps sans organes* is related to the opposition between the *machines désirantes* and the *corps sans organes*. The *machines désirantes* make multiple and multi-directional connections, but also threaten to organise the body by repeating the same connections:

Les machines désirantes nous font un organisme; mais au sein de cette production, dans sa production même, le corps souffre d’être ainsi organisé, de ne pas avoir une autre organisation, ou pas d’organisation du tout. (AŒ, 14)

Therefore, a conflict arises between the machines and the *corps sans organes*, the machines become impossible to endure for the *corps sans organes*:

Entre les machines désirantes et le corps sans organes s’élève un conflit apparent. Chaqueconnexion de machines, chaque production de machine, chaque bruit de machine est devenu insupportable au corps sans organes. (AŒ, 15)

And its defence against these structures is exactly its amorphous, slippery, formless surface:

Aux machines-organes, le corps sans organes oppose sa surface glissante, opaque et tendue. Aux flux liés, connectés et recoupés, il oppose son fluide amorphe indifférencié. (AŒ, 15)

The *corps sans organes* is so slippery that all structures slide off, or at least that is the image that is evoked. The opposition is also described in terms of attraction and repulsion. The *corps sans organes* repulses the *machines désirantes* in order to keep off the organism that haunts it:

Nous croyons que le refoulement dit originaire n’a pas d’autre sens: non pas un «contre-investissement», mais cette répulsion des machines désirantes par le corps sans organes. Et c’est bien ce que signifie la machine paranoïaque, l’action d’effraction des machines désirantes sur le corps sans organes, et la réaction répulsive du corps sans organes qui les éprouve globalement comme appareil de persécution. (AŒ, 15)

They re-interpret the notion of “refoulement originaire” (original repression) as this repulsion of the machines by the *corps sans organes*, and they call it “la machine paranoïaque” to indicate that the *corps sans organes* is persecuted by the machines. But the *corps sans organes* does not only repulse the *machines désirantes*, it also attracts them, which results in a so-called “machine miraculante”.
Le corps sans organes se rabat sur la production désirante, et l’attire, se l’approprie. Les machines-organes s’accrochent sur lui comme sur un gilet de fleurettiste, ou comme des médailles sur le maillot d’un lutteur qui s’avance en les faisant tressauter. Une machine d’attraction succède, peut succéder ainsi à la machine répulsive : une machine miraculante après la machine paranoïaque. Mais que veut dire “après”? Les deux coexistent, et l’humour noir se charge non pas de résoudre les contradictions, mais de faire qu’il n’y a en ait pas, qu’il n’y en ait jamais eu. Le corps sans organes, l’improductif, l’inconsommable, sert de surface pour l’enregistrement de tout le procès de production du désir, si bien que les machines désirantes semblent en émaner dans le mouvement objectif apparent qui les lui rapporte. (AŒ, 17)

There is no before and no after, there is no contradiction between the attraction and the repulsion, they coexist at the same time. The machines work “en se détraquant”. But the attraction results in another machine, a machine miraculante. Le corps sans organes attracts the machines that are then registered on its surface, memorised or imprinted. It is called miraculante, because the connections are so well registered that they seem to be natural or necessary, as if they emerged from le corps sans organes itself, though they are only one of several possible connections. Therefore they “miraculously” become “true”.

**Machines and Duchamp**

The idea of machines as expressed in the idea of machines désirantes or the so-called machines abstraites, actually points out a historical link between Deleuze/Guattari and Cage/Cunningham. Both intellectual couples are in some ways indebted to Marcel Duchamp.

When Deleuze and Guattari say that we should take the machines literally (“Partout ce sont des machines, pas du tout métaphoriquement (...)” (AŒ, 7)) it is partly a provocation, partly sincere, partly due to the connection in L’Anti-Œdipe between Freudian psychology and Marxism (the psyche and the factory). But what is certain is that we can easily take the machines literally in the sense of the “machines” constructed by artists such as Duchamp. In fact they open the book with a reproduction of Richard Lindner’s Boy with Machine, and in the appendix there are also references to the complicated machines drawn by the comic strip artist Rube Goldberg, or for that matter the machines of Francis Picabia, Ferdinand Léger, Victor Brauner, Jean Tingeley and others.

An example that seems particularly relevant here is the machine reproduced and interpreted in the “Appendice – bilan-programme pour machines désirantes” in L’Anti-Œdipe.49 It is Man Ray’s Dancer/Danger (L’impossibilité). The picture presumably refers to a

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49 First printed in Minuit nr.2, jan.1973, and then included in L’Anti-Œdipe.
Spanish dancer, but in it are only cogwheels that do not even seem to fit or interact so that the machine could actually work. Deleuze and Guattari interpret this as follows:

elle traduit mécaniquement, par l’absurde, l’impossibilité pour une machine d’effectuer elle-même un tel mouvement (le danseur n’est pas une machine). Mais on peut dire aussi: là il doit y avoir un danseur comme pièce de machine; cette pièce de machine ne peut être qu’un danseur; voici la machine dont le danseur est une pièce. (MP, 464)

They propose two different interpretations: Either the machine shows that a machine cannot do dance movements (as a dancer is not a machine), or that the dancer is a piece of the machine (and in this case possibly missing since the machine does not work). For what they want to show is neither that the human being is a machine nor that the machine is human, but that the two together make a machine, a machine being for them not something mechanical but something capable of producing connections. That is one of the reasons why they can say that the machines are not metaphorical:

Ce n’est pourtant pas par métaphore qu’on parle de machine: l’homme fait machine dès que ce caractère est communiqué par récurrence à l’ensemble dont il fait partie dans des conditions bien déterminées. (…) Le danseur fait machine avec la piste dans les conditions périlleuses de l’amour et de la mort…Nous partons non pas d’un emploi métaphorique du mot machine, mais d’une hypothèse (confuse) sur l’origine: la manière dont des éléments quelconques sont déterminés à faire machine par récurrence et communication; l’existence d’un «phylum machinique». (MP, 464)

Any components can build a machine through reoccurrence and communication, through building a particular set of relations. The Spanish dancer can build a machine with the floor in a particular relation to love and death. In their analysis of the picture, Deleuze and Guattari do not go into either the idea of impossibility indicated in the subtitle or the question of danger. But both are important in relation to Cunningham, challenging the possible and possibly risking danger.

Duchamp seems to be an important component of the machines of Deleuze and Guattari. Not least because his machines, in particular La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même also called Le Grand Verre (1915-23), combine the machine-like character with connotations of desire. So it is not unlikely that the idea of machines désirantes in itself owes something to Duchamp, who is himself talking in terms that would fit in well with their vocabulary: “cylindres seins”, “cylindres sexes”, “magnéto-désir” or “dynamo-désir” (Duchamp, 1999, (1980), pp. 39).
It is also Duchamp who has given name to the concept of *machine célibataire*, in fact, one of the elements in *Le Grand Verre* is called “machine célibataire”. This notion has had a certain importance within surrealism (apparently it belongs more to Duchamp than to surrealism, even if there is a common interest among the surrealists)\(^{50}\). But later it has been picked up and developed by the writer and scholar Michel Carrouge in the curious book *Les machines célibataires* from 1954 and 1976 (two slightly different versions), where he tries to show that there is a whole mythology of “machines célibataires” going through not only Duchamp, but also Franz Kafka, Raymond Roussel, Alfred Jarry, Guillaume Apollinaire, Jules Verne, (Isidore Ducasse, comte de) Lautréamont, Edgar Allan Poe and many others. He wants to make of it a hidden modern mythology, hidden in the sense of unknown and undiscovered even for those who have produced them. Both the myth and his project might seem playful, but he believes that much more is at stake:

> Il serait puéril de croire que les grands génies de notre temps se divertissent à des jeux irréels et qu’ils déguisent leur pensée à plaisir. Si bizarre que puissent sembler leurs grands jeux, ils font apparaître en trait de feu le mythe majeur où s’inscrit la quadruple tragédie de notre temps: le nœud gordien des interférences du machinisme, de la terreur, de l’érotisme et de la religion ou de l’antireligion. (Carrouges, 1976, p.24)

He tries to determine the constituents of the “machines célibataires”, and sees it as a complicated cognitive metaphor that puts disparate elements, anthropological and mechanical, feminine and masculine, together. Deleuze and Guattari had read Carrouges, and they owe something to him even if they make of it something completely their own. In their *machines désirantes*, anything can enter, and they have dissociated themselves further from the way “la machine célibataire” works in Duchamp’s work, for instance the feminine and masculine components of *Le Grand Verre*. The components in Deleuze and Guattari’s machines are not defined in terms of gender, but are elements, of whatever kind, in an *agencement*.

Following the notion of Duchamp, Carrouges, and Deleuze/Guattari, the notion of “machines célibataires” has also been used in the art world, to coin a particular use of machines within the visual arts. Thus for instance in the mid-seventies there was an exhibition in Malmö, Bern, Düsseldorf, Amsterdam, Paris and Venice that toured under the name “Machines Célibataires”/”Ungkarlsmaskiner”, arranged by among others Harald Szeemann, Jacques Carelman and Eje Högestätt. It included works of visual artists such as Marcel

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\(^{50}\) The surrealists were fascinated by machines and these were sometimes connected to eroticism, but it is with Duchamp that the term is coined. (“Machine/Machines célibataires” in Jean-Paul Clébert, *Dictionnaire du Surréalisme*, 1996, p.345-347)
Duchamp, Jean Tingeley, Hans Bellmer, Francis Picabia, but also machines by for instance writers such as Mary Shelley, Raymond Roussel and Franz Kafka (Szeeman/Karelman/Högestätt, 1976).

Duchamp is thus central in the history of the machines célibataires and possibly in the machines désirantes. Furthermore, Duchamp’s contribution to machines in art corresponds to one of the most important points in Deleuze and Guattari’s idea about unmetaphorical machines. With Duchamp a real element is introduced in the machines: the found object, the ready-made:

Avec Duchamp l’élément réel de machine est directement introduit, valant pour lui-même ou par son ombre, ou par un mécanisme aléatoire induisant alors les représentations subsistantes à changer de rôle ou de statut: Tu m’. La machine se distingue de toute représentation (bien qu’on puisse toujours la représenter, la copier, d’une manière qui n’offre d’ailleurs aucun intérêt), et elle s’en distingue parce qu’elle est Abstraction pure, non figurative et non projective. (AŒ, 470)

What makes Deleuze and Guattari’s machines resemble the machines of Duchamp and what they try to explain in the quotation, is that the machines are not representations, neither in the aesthetic nor the psychoanalytical sense, they are real, they are not metaphorical. If anything they are “Abstraction pure” – which is no less real.

The idea of ready-mades is of course one thing among others that Cage and Cunningham too take with them from Duchamp, even if Cunningham in general makes less use of found movement than Cage makes use of found sound. What they take with them is also an attitude to art and invention. And there are even actual links to Duchamp. Cage was a friend of his and used to play chess with him, and together Cage and Cunningham did Walkaround Time (1968) which is a homage to Duchamp and includes references to, for instance, Nu descendant un escalier but also to Le Grand Verre, which was reproduced with Duchamp’s permission in a stage version by Jasper Johns. However, Cunningham does not try to translate the erotic connotations of Le Grand Verre:

It is not surprising that Cunningham’s choreography pays homage to various aspects of Duchamp’s work in general rather than finding some kind of dance equivalent of the specific, erotic content of the Glass itself; such content is rarely to be found in his dances, and in any case such a literal approach is alien to his method. (Vaughan: ”Then I thought about Duchamp” – Merce Cunningham’s Walkaround Time” (1982), in Kostelanetz, 1998 (1992), p.68)
To my knowledge, Cage and Cunningham do not refer to the idea of machines in art either, but in fact they construct complicated abstract machines within their own art. For instance chance machines.

**Chance methods and the workings of *le corps sans organes***

The play between the *machines désirantes* and the *corps sans organes* is a play between forces, forces of movement and stillness, forces of production and anti-production, forces of attraction and repulsion. But one could say, as a matter of fact, that it is a play between structure and unstructuring. The *machines désirantes* are about to inscribe themselves, become naturalised, and the *corps sans organes* is the factor that tries to prevent that inscription, to obscure it, to set the wheel of chance free to find new possibilities.

If we see the idea of “chance methods”, “chance operations”, or “chance procedures” as a two-fold idea, there is on the one hand the unstructured and unpredictable element of chance, and on the other hand the well-structured and more predictable element of method. Seen through the analysis of the *machines désirantes* and the *corps sans organes*, we can say that the chance operations work through a similar play of structure and obstruction. The movement learned and incorporated by the body has been inscribed, *miraculé*, and to produce other connections, other movements, a *corps sans organes* is needed. *Le corps sans organes* is an element of disturbance, the rupture with the incorporated patterns of perception or execution of movement. This *corps sans organes* is for Cunningham chance.

But we can also see the play between the charts and chance as the production of *virtuels* patterns of which some become inscribed, *actualisés*, in the choreography. And actually the workings of the *machines désirantes* also produce kinds of patterns. The *machines désirantes* work through so-called “synthèses”*51* and the description of these contains elements that draw patterns. There are three syntheses, “la synthèse connective de production”, “la synthèse disjonctive d’enregistrement”, “la synthèse conjonctive de consommation”. What I propose is to discuss the patterns of Cunningham’s chance operations through the patterns of the three syntheses. Perhaps this will show *le corps sans organes* at work.

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*51* One may discuss what comes first, the opposition of *les machines désirantes* and *le corps sans organes*, or the three syntheses within which the opposition then develops. As described in the text it is almost impossible to decide, and I prefer to see these two as different parameters of description which overlap. Cf. The way Eugene W. Holland presents the syntheses as the structuring element in the second chapter of *Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus – Introduction to Schizoanalysis*, 1999.
“La synthèse connective de production”.

The first synthesis is “la synthèse connective de production”. It is the production of production (of desire) or the productive synthesis. It works through the figure “et...et” (“and...and”) where the connections between partial objects or organs follow each other in an additive way:

Les machines désirantes sont des machines binaires, à règle binaire ou régime associatif ; toujours une machine couplée avec une autre. La synthèse productive, la production de production, a une forme connective : « et », « et puis » .... (AŒ, 11)

The connective synthesis is the procedure that makes the machines connect to each other. One machine produces a flux, another cuts it off but acts as flux for another machine etc. They connect body parts, partial objects, but it could also be words, images or movement. Deleuze and Guattari call the machines “binaires” because they connect in this additional way two and two, but they are not completely binary. They call this process linear, and yet it is not. This is also a polemic with structuralism. As all machines can connect to each other limitlessly, they do not create one line, but many lines that go in all directions. This is in fact similar to the idea of rhizome that they are going to use in Mille plateaux. It is a map of possibilities that can develop in all directions.

In Suite by Chance Cunningham does not start from given movement sequences, but from the possible connections between body parts and their movements as described by the charts he has prepared. Arms, legs, head, slowly, quickly, left or right. In principle any connection is possible, and any connection can follow and so forth. At a certain point the movement of a leg could be this or that, the movement of the arms this or that, the movement of the torso this or that, and it could be followed by this or that movement of the head, this or that movement of the legs, of the arms, of the torso, slowly or quickly, to this or another point. And then the options are often not only binary but there could be up to five or seven options for each movement. It optimises the number of choices, and it is not linear but multi-directional. In Suite by Chance the first level of the choreographic process corresponds to a pattern of addition “and...and” where body parts and movements are added into sequences. The movement charts of Suite by Chance make connections of movement or desire independently of the patterns registered by tradition or imposed by norms of coherence and psychology.
“La synthèse disjonctive d’enregistrement”

Where the first synthesis was that of connection, the second is that of registration. It is the production of registration or “la synthèse disjonctive”. The registration of the movements of the *machines désirantes* on the *corps sans organes* is part of this second synthesis. However, the two syntheses co-exist, they do not succeed each other, the transformation between them is a constant factor of the system. The connections of the *objets partiels* continue as they are inscribed (and repulsed) by the *corps sans organes*, the relation between the two is more like a transformation of energy from one into the other:

La synthèse disjonctive d’enregistrement vient donc recouvrir les synthèses connectives de production. Le processus comme processus de production se prolonge en procédé comme procédé d’inscription. Ou plutôt, si l’on appelle *libido* le « travail » connectif de la production désirante, on doit dire qu’une partie de cette énergie se transforme en énergie d’inscription disjonctive (*Numen*). (AŒ, 19)

The connections are registered on the *corps sans organes*, and a selection takes place: it is registered according to the model “soit…soit”/“either…or”, and a new pattern appears:

Sur le corps sans organes, les machines s’accrochent comme autant de points de disjonction entre lesquels se tisse tout un réseau de synthèses nouvelles, et qui quadrillent la surface. Le «soit…soit…» schizophrénique prend le relais du «et puis»: quels que soient deux organes envisagés, la manière dont ils sont accrochés sur le corps sans organes doit être telle que toutes les synthèses disjonctives entre les deux reviennent au même sur la surface glissante. (AŒ, 18)

Already the coexistence of the two syntheses and the two patterns are sufficiently difficult to keep in the mind. Furthermore, it is not all that easy to imagine this second synthesis. In itself the idea of “either…or” seems fairly simple, but still it is hard to imagine what difference it makes in the patterns of connection. But where the “and…and” works through addition, the “either…or” works through selection. Though only two things are selected, the relation between them is not fixed. All relations between these two stay possible, because they are always brought back to the point of departure, they “reviennent au même sur la surface glissante”. And thus the *synthèse disjonctive* stays dis-jointed in the schizophrenic “soit…soit”.

52 *Libido* is of course a reference to Freud’s *libido*, the forces of desire of the unconscious. It comes from Latin meaning ”désir, envie”. (DHLF)

53 Latin : volonté, la divinité, puissance divine. (*Le Grand Gaffiot - Dictionnaire Latin-Français*). “Le corps sans organes n’est pas Dieu, bien au contraire. Mais divine est l’énergie qui le parcourt, quand il attire toute la production et lui serre de surface enchantée miraculante, l’inscrivant dans toutes ses disjonctions.” (AŒ, 19)
We could also think of for instance Cunningham tossing coins. First the combinations of movements are decided through an “and...and” procedure. Then through a second “either....or” procedure it is decided how these movements should be executed, for instance slowly or quickly. Both procedures remain present in the final choreography. In the choreography the connections are registered, and they are performed each time in a similar way. Yet for every dancer the outcome would be different. The procedure is constantly brought back to an open choice.

It may seem that this second synthesis is less open than the first one. Firstly as it is a selection, secondly as it entails a registration that captures one version or makes several versions look the same. But it is not that one is better than the other, they are just different:

Tandis que le «ou bien» prétend marquer des choix décisifs entre termes impermutables (alternatives), le «soit» désigne le système de permutations possibles entre des différences qui reviennent toujours au même en se déplaçant, en glissant. (AŒ, 18)

The first synthesis connects different things, but the second synthesis shows the difference of the same that is possible through repetition. Actually, a quotation that Deleuze and Guattari include from Samuel Beckett is quite illustrative of this and very interesting in relation to choreography.

Beckett’s text in this quotation is a small piece of choreographic writing where different options are used in different combinations. The options are: stop/start, talk/not talk, immediate/delayed, disrupted/continued. There are thus options of motion (stop/start), how to execute it or what kind of action it is accompanied by (talk/not talk), the speed and time of the motion (immediate or delayed). Beckett shows how with those few options a quite complicated choreography becomes possible through the simple selection of “either..or”:


Though the combinations spring from a limited number of parameters, the number of options and variations is impressive. The gliding and the small differences constantly changing become obvious. What we can also say about this text is that it is a literary equivalent of what Merce Cunningham is doing in his choreographic work to a much larger extent. In Suite by
Chance he chose to work with as simple and “flat” movements as possible (just as Beckett’s options are quite simple), but through the addition and selection, the repetition of the movements by several different dancers who might not have exactly the same selection of movements, the result even when it is fixed in the choreography is both complex and gliding, gliding through the repetition, the differences and the variety of combinations that come out of the chance operations.

“La synthèse conjonctive de consommation”

The third synthesis is that of “consommation”, that is, consumption or consummation, both included in the French “consommation”. Notice the double connotation to desire and economy. Here something strange is produced:

De même, la consommation prend la suite de l’enregistrement, mais la production de consommation est produite par et dans la production d’enregistrement. C’est que sur la surface d’inscription quelque chose se laisse repérer qui est de l’ordre d’un sujet. (AŒ, 22-23)

A subject is produced in the synthesis of consommation. It is a product of the machines désirantes that make multiple connections that are inscribed on the corps sans organes, but it does not come before this process. The phrase describing this process is “c’est donc…”, as the subject suddenly discovers itself in the consommation of the connections of desire:

De même qu’une partie de la libido comme énergie de production s’est transformée en énergie d’enregistrement (Numen), une partie de celle-ci se transforme en énergie de consommation (Voluptas). C’est cette énergie résiduelle qui anime la troisième synthèse de l’inconscient, la synthèse conjonctive du «c’est donc…» ou production de consommation. (AŒ, 23)

Where the two other syntheses had as their consequences patterns of alternatives or decisions, the third synthesis is a statement. Though it is problematic to speak in terms of result within the overlapping syntheses, the result seems nevertheless to be a temporary subject. If we think in terms of choreography, this synthesis would be the final result, which is of course still changeable and where all the possibilities and choices are still embedded and inherent. But it has something of the same statement as the third synthesis: it is, and it recalls one of Cunningham’s most repeated ideas and statements, namely that the dance simply is. Or as he comments when describing Suite by Chance: “C’est ça” (Cunningham, 1968, np.) But beneath

54 Latin: le plaisir, la volupté, joie, satisfaction, contentement. (Le Grand Gaffiot - Dictionnaire Latin-Français)
that there is a whole intriguing network of alternatives, choices and chance where the subject to a large extent releases its will to chance.

Deleuze and Guattari’s subject as it appears in the third synthesis is not absolute either. It is not an autonomous subject that surveys and controls the workings of desire and the unconscious, but a temporary subject that exists as it consumes the intensities produced by the machines désirantes:

C’est un étrange sujet, sans identité fixe, errant sur le corps sans organes, toujours à côté des machines désirantes, défini par la part qu’il prend au produit, recueillant partout la prime d’un devenir ou d’un avatar, naissant des états qu’il consomme et renaissant à chaque état. «C’est donc moi, c’est donc à moi…» (AŒ, 23)

It is a nomadic subject that always moves and is reborn in new forms.

**The desire of choreography and the question of the subject**

What I have been doing is using the patterns of the three syntheses as a concrete tool to analyse the chance procedures in Cunningham’s choreographic process in *Suite by Chance* and *Untitled Solo*. That also means aligning Cunningham’s choreographic machines with the machines désirantes. Though the dancing bodies in Cunningham’s choreographies hardly ever express themselves in what we ordinarily mean by desire, they are the result of the desiring dancing body. For in the terms of Deleuze and Guattari desire is not such a strictly erotic phenomenon anyway, but includes all kinds of activity. But first and foremost it underlines something which is very characteristic of Cunningham’s way of working with dancing bodies: keeping all possibilities open, connecting whatever can be connected, changing connections. This is what the desiring machines do, too. Where Cunningham’s choreographic procedures try to open up the possibilities of the dancing body through deconstructing the body and reconstructing it through a combination of structural and arbitrary means, the machines désirantes and the corps sans organes try to open up the possibilities of desire restrained by history, tradition, capitalism and Freudian psychoanalysis.

However, there are still important questions to be raised. *Le corps sans organes* as it is described in *L’Anti-Œdipe* has to do with the working of the unconscious. The corps sans organes of Cunningham has to do strictly with the organisation of the body, and especially: Cunningham rejects the psychoanalytical approach to choreography and art. However, the unconscious as described by Deleuze and Guattari is very different from the unconscious as described by psychoanalysis, and their work is just as much a rejection of it as Cunningham’s,
though in quite a different way. And what Deleuze and Guattari analyse and deconstruct on the level of the unconscious, Cunningham analyses and deconstructs on the level of the construction of the dancing body. Furthermore, in Mille plateaux, the concept of le corps sans organes to a large extent becomes independent of the critique of psychoanalysis it is attached to in L’Anti-Œdipe, and it also becomes detached from the three syntheses, or at least these no longer play such an important role in the text.

Another question is that of the subject. Though the subject that Deleuze and Guattari describe is nomadic, moving and changeable, it leads us to ask which subject we can talk about in the choreographic process of Cunningham. I am not thinking so much of the subject of Cunningham or his dancers, but which is the dancing subject that comes out of the choreographic chance-related procedures? The temporary subject of the dancing body, or in other words the subject of the experience of dancing, is one of the crucial and very difficult questions in dance research. For how can we have access to this experience (even if we have tried similar experiences on our own bodies) and how is it constructed? And here actually another discussion of Deleuze and Guattari’s becomes interesting: the idea of “intensités”.

**Experiment and practice, the ambiguity of the subject**

In L’Anti-Œdipe, le corps sans organes is an element of the psyche which enters into different relations with les machines désirantes in the three syntheses. Although it takes other forms as well – le corps sans organes in the chain of signification, “socius” or the equivalent of le corps sans organes on the level of society – it is intimately related with the unconscious. But in Mille plateaux, it is as if the idea has been separated from the unconscious. Furthermore, in L’Anti-Œdipe, le corps sans organes acts before and independently of the subject. But in Mille plateaux, one almost has the impression that le corps sans organes can be lived in different ways, and that the subject (which was otherwise just a byproduct) can be conscious of these manipulations. But still there is some ambivalence as to the role of the subject – which cannot control and yet tries to be in control. Even the very first sentence of the chapter of Mille plateaux contains this ambiguity:

> De toute manière vous en avez un (ou plusieurs), non pas tant qu’il préexiste ou soit donné tout fait – bien qu’il préexiste à certains égards – mais de toute manière vous en faites un, vous ne pouvez pas désirer sans en faire un, – et il vous attend, c’est un exercice, une expérimentation inévitable, déjà faite au moment où vous l’entreprenez, pas faite tant que vous ne l’entreprenez pas. (MP, 185)
On the one hand it exists independently and acts independently – it pre-exists in a certain way, it waits for you, it is already done when you make it – and yet it can be or has to be pursued. In fact, it is a practice:

Ce n’est pas du tout une notion, un concept, plutôt une pratique, un ensemble de pratiques. (MP, 186)

It is an experimentation on oneself, but one that has political implications as well. *Corpus* and *socius* are related, one always affects the other:

C’est une expérimentation non seulement radiophonique, mais biologique, politique, appelant sur soi censure et répression. Corpus et Socius, politique et expérimentation. On ne vous laissera pas expérimenter dans votre coin. (MP, 186)

And yet it cannot be totally obtained, it is a limit that one cannot easily reach even if trying:

Le Corps sans Organes, on n’y arrive pas, on ne peut pas y arriver, on n’a jamais fini d’y accéder, c’est une limite. (MP, 186)

Though the *corps sans organes* can be an experiment it cannot be controlled. Therefore, Deleuze et Guattari distinguish between what one does to make it happen, and what actually happens on the *corps sans organes*:

Quelque chose va se passer, quelque chose se passe déjà. Mais on ne confondra pas tout à fait se qui se passe sur le CsO, et la manière dont on s’en fait un. Pourtant l’un est compris dans l’autre. (MP, 188)

They need this distinction as it is not the practices themselves they are arguing for, but for *le corps sans organes*, a revolution against the organism. This is important to remember when they discuss different and often quite violent practices. Yet, as this quotation shows, we cannot totally separate the practice and what happens on the *corps sans organes*; one is also included in the other. In *L’Anti-Œdipe*, the predominant example was that of the schizophrenic. In *Mille plateaux* the example of the masochist often occurs. They enumerate

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55 “radiophonique” is a reference to *Pour en finir avec le jugement de Dieu* of Artaud which was made as radioprogramme in 1947, but was forbidden in 1948 and only broadcast in 1973.

56 “Socius” corresponds to “Corpus” but on the level of society. Both socius and corpus can be either déterritorialisé or reterritorialisé, but *le corps sans organes* is the deterritorialising limit of the socius: “Le socius n’est pas une projection du corps sans organes, mais bien plutôt le corps sans organes est la limite du socius, sa tangente de déterritorialisation, l’ultime résidu d’un socius déterritorialisé” (AŒ,334).
different extreme bodies: “le corps hypocondriaque”, “le corps paranoïaque”, “le corps schizo”, “le corps drogué”, “le corps masochiste”. But they also ask:

Pourquoi cette cohorte lugubre de corps cousus, vitrifiés, catatonisés, aspirés, puisque le CsO est aussi plein de gaieté, d’extase, de danse? (MP, 187)

However, their idea of a more positive approach to and practice of the corps sans organes is not followed up and perhaps not even totally consistent. What, for instance, does the anorexic body have to do in the following examples?

Pourquoi pas marcher sur la tête, chanter avec le sinus, voir avec la peau, respirer avec le ventre, Chose simple, Entité, Corps plein, Voyage immobile, Anorexie, Vision cutanée, Yoga, Krishna, Love, Expérimentation. (MP, 187)

But in any case, the distinction between what one does to obtain the corps sans organes and what happens on the corps sans organes introduces exactly the gap that allows the critique of a certain practice. They are not only engaged in a mode d’emploi of how to construct a corps sans organes, but in how to analyse and evaluate the practices used to obtain it. Actually, a similar shift is present in L’Anti-Œdipe, from the description of le corps sans organes, to the proposal of a “schizoaanalyse” in the last part of the book. Some of the questions one might ask in the analysis of a corps sans organes are:

Pour chaque type de CsO nous devons demander: 1) quel est ce type, comment est-il fabriqué, par quels procédés et moyens qui préjugent déjà de ce qui va se passer; 2) et quels sont ses modes, qu’est-ce qui se passe, avec quelles variantes, quelles surprises, quels inattendus par rapport à l’attente? (MP, 188)

And what might turn up in the answers is the relation between the practice or type of corps sans organes (to a large part decided by the subject), and what actually happens on le corps sans organes (not controllable by the subject). It is in this gap that the possible risks of danger occur:

Bref, entre un CsO de tel ou tel type et ce qui se passe sur lui, il y a un rapport très particulier de synthèse ou d’analyse: synthèse a priori où quelque chose va être nécessairement produit sur tel mode, mais on ne sait pas ce qui va être produit; analyse infinie où ce qui est produit sur le CsO fait déjà partie de la production de ce corps, est déjà compris en lui, sur lui, mais au prix d’une infinité de passages, de divisions et de sous-productions. Expérimentation très délicate, puisqu’il ne faut pas qu’il y ait stagnance des modes, ni dérapements du type: le masochiste, le drogué frôlent ces perpétuels dangers qui vident leur CsO au lieu de le remplir. (MP, 188-189)
They distinguish between “types” of corps sans organes and their “modes” of working. The type is the practice that leads to it, the mode what actually happens on the corps sans organes, that which cannot be predicted and yet depends on the type of practice. There is a “synthèse a priori” between the two, though this might seem in opposition to the unpredictability of the process. It is this delicate balance, this difficulty that leads some practices to be too violent, to “empty” the corps sans organes instead of “filling” it with intensity.

From the point of view of Mille plateaux, we can say that the chance procedures of Cunningham, more than being the unconscious of the choreography, it is the pratique of a corps sans organes. A pratique that for each choreography consists of a programme: “ce n’est pas un fantasme, c’est un programme” (MP, 188), which is meticulously developed as for instance in the case of Suite by Chance with charts that describe it. Each time it is an experiment. And behind the programme of the charts of a particular choreography, there is yet another programme: the programme of the training of the dancers preparing them to execute movement that is randomly assembled, by helping them to learn to dissociate body parts from each other and put them together in inconvenient combinations. What the critic has to do afterwards is to ask herself what type of corps sans organes the programme is producing and what its relation is to the resulting mode of the corps sans organes. However, whereas we can study the type and the programme of the choreography and the corps sans organes, we are faced with a historical and epistemological difficulty when trying to access the mode, what actually happens on the corps sans organes.

Changes – Notes on Choreography

Some of Cunningham’s notes and sketches, including those for Untitled Solo and Suite by Chance, have been published in Changes – Notes on Choreography from 1968. These notes and charts literally draw a programme for each dance. The notes and charts in Changes – Notes on Choreography are not published in a way where they are supposed to serve as strict documentation of the choreography. Handwritten and typed charts are overlaid on the same page, pictures and texts are mixed, the typography is deliberately spacial and free. In fact, the book is in itself a collage, an attempt to do in writing what Cunningham does with other artists on stage.

One therefore has to be extremely careful and attentive to one’s own way of reading. For instance, one has a tendency to focus on the type-written text, not necessarily because one believes it to be more authoritative, but simply because it is more legible. But in some cases the type-written texts have been typed for the publication and not at the time of the
choreographing. As the different texts are copied from Cunningham’s notes and then superposed, they often become quite hard to decipher. Indeed, besides being documentation, the book serves as a manifest, a *programme*.

**The programme of Untitled Solo**

The *programme* of *Untitled Solo* consists of different “gamuts” of movement, decided by Cunningham and then to be chosen by means of chance. There are gamuts for arms and hands or other body parts or for larger combinations of movements, for instance:

13. sitting on sides of feet, both feet closed under body.
14. turns with one foot up in front, foot is flexed, position of feet, parallel
18. Fall: rounding back on first beat, straightening back and parallel to the floor on second beat, rise on foot and fall in close huddle, knees bent, body curved near legs. (Cunningham, 1968, np)

Next, the order of the chance operations are described. First comes the choice from the movement gamut, then space and time:

3. Chance Operations: Possibility from I (Movement gamut) (given this, following is possibility of 2, if physically conceivable, i.e. if arms are free). Possibility of 2.
4. Space: With space charts, i.e. lines in given directions and whether in straight or curved proportions. (Cunningham, 1968, np)

These notes take the form of a *programme* rather than of documentation of the choreography, one might say. For what we see is so to speak the rules of the game but not the outcome of it. But there is one moment of the process that does not become evident: the outcome of the chance operation. The chance moment in a double sense becomes the limit of *le corps sans organes*: the one that Cunningham is up against and the one we have not got access to.

The documents represent different moments in the procedure, from the very first sketches to the flyer for the first night of performance. When it comes to the choreographing process, we can say that the later in the process the document dates from, the more levels of interpretation (on behalf of Cunningham) it contains in relation to these very chance operations. The comments often seem to install some order in a process, which appears otherwise chaotic or at least not transparent. In a text that accompanies the sketches for *Untitled Solo* such levels of interpretation become evident:
A large gamut of movements, separate for each of the three dances, was devised, movements for the arms, the legs, the head and the torso, which were separate and essentially tensile in character, and off the normal or tranquil body-balance. (Cunningham, 1968, np)

Whereas the movements in the *programme* are more neutral (“arms crossing back and forth”, “head up and down”), they are here accompanied by an interpretation: they are essentially tensile and off-balance, they stretch the body and twist it in uncomfortable positions off balance. Cunningham continues:

The separate movements were arranged in continuity by random means, allowing for the superimposition (addition) of one or more, each having its own rhythm and time-length. But each succeeded in becoming continuous if I could wear it long enough, like a suit of clothes. Learning how to wear one was another thing. (Cunningham, 1968, np)

The gamuts showed us that the movements were put together by random means, but the description speaks of how Cunningham tries to deal with this addition: trying to keep the rhythm and time of each movement even if they might not easily correspond, trying to make it continuous. Even if the movements are disparate and fragmented, Cunningham tries to attach them in such a way that some kind of continuity arises anyway. He tries to learn how to “wear” a new body. He tries to describe what the *corps sans organes* feels like, but by the time of the description the new connections have already become partly naturalised.

The pages concerning *Untitled Solo* contain yet another valuable document, namely a series of still picture photo negatives by Louis Stevenson. It is not clear, however, where these photos have been taken, during a performance or a rehearsal. And even if they seem to represent succeeding moments of the choreography, as in a (moving picture) film negative, we cannot know how long intervals there are between the pictures or whether the intervals are regular. But the camera has captured something intriguing anyway, namely the twistings and distortions of the body. Hardly one of the positions we see seems comfortable, either the body is twisted, or else it is in a position in between balance and off-balance. Suddenly it is not the opposition to the paintings of Bacon that is striking, but the resemblance.

**The programme of Suite by Chance**

It is probably no coincidence that quite a lot of pages of *Changes – Notes on Choreography* are devoted to *Suite by Chance*, given the choreography’s historical importance and the fact that the material shows the elaborate use of chance procedures. In this case too the sketches and charts show us the *programme* of the choreography, the method
used to produce it, the type of *corps sans organes*, but when it comes to the *mode* of the *corps sans organes* we are left with several question marks.

The programme for *Suite by Chance* is less based on text, and has a more mathematical or graphic character. Most sheets are divided into 3x5 boxes within which are shown different possibilities of the same movement. There are small drawings with stick figures as well as written comments. In each box something is changed – legs straight or not, both legs or one leg etc. Sometimes the movement described is a position, sometimes it is the development of a short sequence where the chart and the chance procedure decide how to go from one movement to another, how to execute a particular extension, for instance. Because of this level of detail, the charts show the principle of the isolation of the body parts, and the attempt to think of systematic variations of movement.

The charts show the development over time of the procedure. First there are the movement charts with the elaborate system for choosing movements from a *virtuel* range. Then there are notes where the sequences of the movement chosen are written down. Then there is a chart for the position of the dancers and notes for deciding time and other parameters still left to decide, and finally notes that sum up the sequences of several dancers and try to visualise them at the same time. However, the way they are presented in the book, they are not necessarily in the right order, and many charts are of course missing. In any case, even if we have the *programme*, it would be hard to reconstruct the choreography, some of the notations are quite hard to interpret, and how the movement is to be executed is not necessarily evident, even if we know for instance that a certain fall passes through a particular position. And lastly: the chance element makes sure that the result would probably be different, even if it might be similar because produced from the same *programme*.

The written interpretations that are added to the notes on *Suite by Chance* seem further removed from the process itself than the notes for *Untitled Solo*. Yet, there is some interpretation of the movement. For instance, Cunningham says that “the movements in them were purposefully as unadorned and flat as I could make them.” (Cunningham, 1968, np) This has to do with the difficulty of the undertaking, but perhaps it also has the function of letting the chance operations become visible – if the movement is too stylized and complicated, it would be harder to see the chance element involved. In another remark, he comments on the reaction of the audience: “the simple direct and un-connected look of this dance (which some thought abstract and dehumanized) disturbed.”(Cunningham, 1968, np) But to encounter this reaction or critique he opposes his own experience of the dance:
my own experience while working with the dancers was how strongly it let the individual quality of each of them appear, naked, powerful and unashamed. I feel this dance was classical – precise and severe – however unfamiliar the continuity, however unclassical the movements, in terms of tradition, and the stillnesses, that is held positions by the dancers, may have been. (Cunningham, 1968, np)

In order to meet the critique we could say that Cunningham underlines the classical side of his work (though classical is interpreted in terms of qualities and not style and history) instead of the radical side of it. But perhaps we can also say that he tries to describe (though in a polished and diplomatic way) how through the radical approach something like a new body – naked, powerful, unashamed, severe – appears. It is an attempt to communicate the wonder of the 
\textit{corps sans organes}, but it has already become almost too familiar.

The charts of \textit{Suite by Chance} seem to a higher extent to visualise the chance procedures, because of the graphical construction of the charts. One sees at the same time on one piece of paper the variations of a particular moment of movement imagined, the \textit{virtuelles} possibilities. The drawings become emblematic of the procedure, they visualise what is happening. They are literally a coordinating system that temporarily replaces the habitual coordinating system of the body. Only, what they show is the calculated part of the process, not the intervention of chance. The organism is already to a certain extent without organs, in as far as it is dis-assembled, but the re-assembling of it through chance and the emergence of a new glorious body (“une humanité nouvelle ou d’un organisme glorieux” (AŒ, 24)) remains between the sheets of paper, possible to imagine, but hard to grasp.

\textbf{The memory of the corps sans organes}

The sketches and charts constitute the \textit{programme} of the \textit{corps sans organes}. Even if it is not complete, it gives us an idea of the method employed to produce it. What it can only give us a short glimpse of – and what is in any case much harder to estimate – is what actually happens on the \textit{corps sans organes}\footnote{« On » \textit{le corps sans organes} is the expression that Deleuze and Guattari use, “Mais on ne confondra pas tout à fait ce qui se passe sur le CsO, et la manière dont on s’en fait un. » p.188. This is due to the way \textit{le corps sans organes} is often represented or the figures used to think it : the egg, a globe. The idea of “on” has to do with the idea of a round surface.}. But the written descriptions nevertheless contain the choreographer’s own evaluation of the experience of dancing it, the difficulty of it, the uncomfortableness of it. And this seems to be what survives over time in the memory, as it becomes evident if we look at Cunningham’s ways of describing these choreographies many years later in his conversations with Jacqueline Lesschaeve in \textit{The Dancer and the Dance}. 

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The choreography that seems to have left the most important impression on Cunningham’s body is the dance he choreographed for himself. Firstly, there was the difficulty of the music. *Untitled Solo* was choreographed for a piece of music by Christian Wolff called *For piano I*. Unlike many other pieces by Cunningham, this one is choreographed for a particular music, even if Cunningham says that he tried to follow only the structure of it. But apparently even the music was so difficult that he says that he could not hear it, that he needed David Tudor to interpret it and play it for him: “Christian’s music was so complex, and so difficult for me to hear – I mean even without dancing.” (Vaughan, 1997, p.78) Several difficulties were thus piled on top of each other in the work: the difficulty of hearing the music on its own, the difficulty of dancing at the same time, and the difficulty of carrying out the choreography. For added to the difficulty of the music there was the even more important difficulty of the movement combinations decided by chance. Especially those sequences that were randomly constructed from many small segments of movement were a challenge:

> Once five different things came up, all separate, and I spent days practicing without the music, to figure it out, just to **remember**: the continuity, what came next, was such a problem. It reordered the whole coordinating system. (Cunningham/Lesschave, 1999 (1991/1985), p.80)

So just remembering the sequences was a problem. But in this context, “remembering” almost takes the meaning of “re-membering”, putting the body back together in a new way. What has been challenged is first of all the coordinating system: “It absolutely rearranged my idea of what coordination was, or mine, certainly.” (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.80) Cunningham is struggling with another organisation of the body. But he is struggling slowly, systematically and patiently:

> I would think, first of all, it’s impossible, then I would say, “Well, I’m going to try it”. So I would do one movement with the feet, then the hands and see how I could fix that, then the head, each time practicing it all together. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.80)

And apparently he continues patiently (or stubbornly) like this all summer, trying and trying over and over. That is probably why he likes to repeat David Tudor’s remark: “Well, this is clearly impossible, but we’re going right ahead and do it anyway” (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.80).
Through this experience Cunningham did not only learn the choreography, but also that it is worthwhile to challenge one’s own idea of what is possible. Cunningham speaks in terms of a conflict between the mind and the body:

I also began to see that there were all kinds of things that we thought we couldn’t do, and it was obviously not true, we could do them if only we didn’t get the mind in the way. That’s what I have found continually throughout my experience, that the mind will say, “Oh, I cannot do that”, but if you try it, a lot of the time you can do it, and even if you can’t, it shows you something you didn’t know before. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.81)

The mind-body opposition might seem too dualistic – especially because of its incriminating philosophical heritage. But actually the dualism of the remark also points out something very important in relation to le corps sans organes: the organism is not in the body, it is first of all in the mind, it is a sediment of organisation, and to create a corps sans organes you have to challenge both the body and the mind, you have to challenge it through both practice and a complicated athlétisme of the mind.

Curiously, or perhaps arbitrarily, the passage on Suite by Chance is quite short in The Dancer and the Dance. Cunningham explains the structure, but does not tell anecdotes or dwell on the amount of labour that went into it (as he says in Changes – Notes on Choreography: “these charts had taken several months of several hours daily to complete”)

But here he describes it very matter-of-factly:

I made a series of charts of everything: space, time, positions, and the dance was built for four dancers going from one of these lists to the other. Then it ended. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.90)

We hear nothing of the difficulty of reassembling the body. However, he remembers the change in the use of time. But even this event is told matter-of-factly. The dance was first supposed to be to a piano score, but suddenly Christian Wolff proposed a score of electronic music:

This changed the way I worked with time. Originally we had expected to be able to connect in some way with the piano sounds or with counts, but we no longer could do that. Consequently I had to connect through minutes and seconds. I used a stop watch for the first time. It was OK. It was just another way of working.” (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.90)
Even in *Changes – Notes on Choreography* the comment on this revolution in the use of time and rhythm is equally matter-of-fact and without any kind of drama:

> The dance was constructed in and originally in rehearsals worked against a metric beat. Mr. Wolff’s score was constructed in inches per second. So, during the course of rehearsing and performing the dance we changed our time relationship to seconds and minutes. (Cunningham, 1968, np)

We have to remember how outrageous many people found the use of a stop watch in dance class/rehearsal.

Apparently it was also here he started changing his ideas about space, but this is told in the same matter-of-fact style:

> In applying chance to space I saw the possibility of multidirection. Rather than thinking in one direction i.e. to the audience in a proscenium frame, direction could be four-sided and up and down. (Cunningham, 1968, np)

This change of attitude to time and space, makes something else obvious to us, namely that when it comes to the dancing body and its possible *corps sans organes*, it is not isolated from its surroundings: time and space are part of the organism. It seems that both of these were challenged in *Suite by Chance*, and it seems that these changes were somehow related to the use of chance. It is nevertheless stunning how calmly and undramatically Cunningham remarks on these changes, though they are fundamental to his work. This is a contrast to the way Roger Copeland in *The Modernizing of Modern Dance* points to the year 1953 as a paradigm shift in both Cunningham’s and Robert Rauschenberg’s work.58 In his work, Cunningham tries to work against ideas of climax and the importance of some moments rather than others; perhaps the history of his works would look different if subjected to the same principles. This in no way questions the importance of the discoveries – but the discoveries concerning bodies, space and time could perhaps also challenge the staging of our historical thinking.

*Intensités*

Looking at Cunningham’s memories of possibly facing a *corps sans organes*, we are up against both the difficulty of knowing what the *mode* of a particular *corps sans organes* is and

58 Copeland, 2004, p.23 and pp.70.
the difficulty of approaching the individual dancing experience. But if we return to Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of the *corps sans organes* we might find some help.

Energy and intensity are often invoked in dance, dance methods and dance research, but even if everyone somehow understands what is meant by them, these are nevertheless very large and fluid terms and their content is rarely clear. In Deleuze and Guattari’s writings and in Deleuze’s philosophy in general the idea of *intensité* or *intensités* (in the plural) becomes both important and central. It becomes a concept, although, as with most of Deleuze’s concepts, the exact form depends on the context. But though it is an abstract concept, it is actually quite precise. In *Différence et répétition* it became clear that *intensité* is related to the *virtuel*, to the *plan d’immanence*. It describes the continuum of forces, of *quantités intensives*, that consist of difference and through differentiation create new forms. And it also turns out to be important to the concept of *le corps sans organes*.

The *machine célibataire* and the synthesis of *consommation* not only produces subjects, it also produces *intensités* – or perhaps the two things are one and the same:

The schizophrenic experience they are referring to here, which goes through the *machine célibataire* and produces *intensités*, is the experience of the *devenir-femme* of Freud’s patient Schreber. When Deleuze and Guattari are looking for examples in extreme experiences it is because their reflections on life are not based on everyday experience (contrary to many examples used in phenomenology), but on extreme experiences of life, possibly where life and death are crossing paths or where in another way the *intensités* make themselves felt. Here we must keep in mind the meaning of the word *intensités* in Deleuze’s thinking. That this feeling is intensive does not only mean that it is uncommonly strong, it also means that it touches another level where subjects and beings have not been formed and where a chaotic multiplicity exists.

As described in *L’Anti-Œdipe*, the *intensités* spring from the opposition between attraction and repulsion between the *machines désirantes* and the *corps sans organes*:

D’où viennent ces intensités pures? Elles viennent des deux forces précédentes, répulsion et attraction, et de l’opposition de ces deux forces. Non pas que les intensités soient elles-
mêmes en opposition les unes avec les autres et s’équilibrent autour d’un état neutre. Au contraire, elles sont toutes positives à partir de l’intensité = 0 qui désigne le corps plein sans organes. Et elles forment des chutes ou des hausses relatives d’après leur rapport complexe et la proportion d’attraction et de répulsion qui entre dans leur cause. Bref, l’opposition des forces d’attraction et de répulsion produit une série ouverte d’éléments intensifs, tous positifs, qui n’expriment jamais l’équilibre final d’un système, mais un nombre illimité d’états stationnaires métastables par lesquels un sujet passe. (AŒ, 25-26)

The intensités spring from an opposition but are not in opposition. Deleuze and Guattari are trying to avoid a figure where two oppositions equalize each other to create a balance around a neutral centre. It must be a figure that includes and sustains difference, that stays asymmetrical. In the intensités there is no neutral centre, all particles are positive, the system is never stable. However, they are positive in relation to a special point, and this point zero is the corps sans organes. The intensités and their always positive quality is also described in terms of movement: falls and recoveries. In fact, it is a figure of immobile movement. They create a series that never adds up to a final stable system, but forms an unlimited number of “états stationnaires métastables”. The expression “états stationnaires métastables” is curious. Apparently “métastable” is a term that Deleuze has borrowed from Gilbert Simondon and his L’individu et sa genèse physico-biologique, l’individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d’information where he develops a philosophy of individuation which Deleuze had found inspiration in. This term actually means the opposite of stable: “à l’être stable, Simondon substitue le concept de métastabilité, différence de potentiel qui induit un changement de phase”. Or as Deleuze himself explains Gilbert Simondon’s concept:

Mais ce qui définit essentiellement un système métastable, c’est l’existence d’une « disparation », au moins de deux ordres de grandeur, de deux échelles de réalité disparates, entre lesquels il n’y a pas encore de communication interactive. Il implique donc une différence fondamentale, comme un état de dissymétrie. (ID, 121)

But even if we look at the passage stylistically something happens. Suddenly these temporary states of the subject are described as stable multiplied by three. “Etat” indicates stability, “stationnaires” indicates stability, and “métastables” indicates it, too. It is almost too stable to be stable, I would say. The triple tautology inverts the meaning.

That the subject or the dancer is taken to the intensif level does not mean that they are transported beyond themselves to some vaporous state of mind. Rather: they are drawn into the very material of life, the continuum of quantités intensives from which all life becomes

possible through *différenciation*. *Le corps sans organes* is the kind of matter where there is no empty space but all is filled with different degrees of materiality:

Profondément schizoïde est la théorie kantienne d’après laquelle les quantités intensives remplissent la matière sans vide à degrés divers. Suivant la doctrine du président Schreber, *l’attraction et la répulsion* produisent d’intenses états de nerf qui remplissent le corps sans organes à des degrés divers (...) (AŒ, 26)

This is confirmed in *Mille plateaux*. In a short and very dense passage, we see how the idea of matter is itself transformed:

*Le CsO* fait passer des intensités, il les produit et les distribue dans un *spatium* lui-même intensif, inéthendu. Il n’est pas espace ni dans l’espace, il est matière qui occupera l’espace à tel ou tel degré – au degré qui correspond aux intensités produites. Il est la matière intense et non formée, non stratifiée, la matrice intensive, l’intensité = 0, mais il n’y a rien de négatif dans ce zéro-là, il n’y a pas d’intensités négatives ni contraires. Matière égale énergie. (MP, 189)

It is clear that Bergson is not far away, and it is perhaps to him that we have to refer in order to understand the implications of this statement. *Le corps sans organes* is neither space, nor in space, then how can it be matter? It can, because according to Bergson, matter is a continuum that goes from the *intensif* to the *extensif*. On the *intensif* level the forms have not got any extension. This is where *le corps sans organes* is: on the *intensif* level: “dans un spatium lui-même intensif, inéthendu”. It occupies a certain “degree” of intensity. It is matter not as solid matter, but as energy, light, images. It is real, it is *virtuel*.

Matter and immateriality are dissolved in the Deleuze-Bergsonian thinking, matter is different degrees of intensity and extension. And the schizophrenic floating in the *intensités* resembles that of the matter of life itself:

Expérience déchirante, trop émouvante, par laquelle le schizo est le plus proche de la matière, d’un centre intense et vivant de la matière (...) (AŒ, 26)

In fact, in the experience of the *corps sans organes* we are taken back to the continuum of life where organs and beings are not yet formed, we are taken back to *l’œuf* of the *corps sans organes*:

*Le corps sans organes* est un œuf : il est traversé d’axes et de seuils, de latitudes, de longitudes, de géodésiques, il est traversé de *gradients* qui marquent les devenirs et les passages, les destinations de celui qui s’y développe. Rien ici n’est représentatif, mais tout est vie et vécu (...) (AŒ, 26)
The schizo is immersed in the matter of life. In fact, humanity is the closest to, is matter, at the very moment when the temporary subject, especially if it is a subject of devenir, emerges. What is the most mental (the subject) and the most immaterial (le devenir), is pure materiality. The most intensive consciousness is pure matter:

Ce sont ces devenirs et sentiments intenses, ces émotions intensives qui alimentent délire et hallucinations. Mais, en elles-mêmes, elles sont le plus proche de la matière dont elles investissent en soi le degré zéro. (AŒ, 394-395)

Deleuze and Guattari do not develop explicitly all the consequences of le corps sans organes being on the intensif level. For instance, in relation to the body, it is interesting to notice that le corps sans organes has nothing to do with the body in its extension (matter as we know it), but rather with the body without or before extension. I find this aspect of le corps sans organes interesting in relation to dance, not only because of the overlapping of vocabulary, but mostly because of the dissolution of the body-mind dualism in the experience of le corps sans organes. It allows us to reinterpret Cunningham’s way of presenting his memory of Untitled Solo and the conclusion he reaches, namely that you have to persuade your mind that you can do the impossible. Cunningham even repeats the dualism at another point by saying that dancers should not think too much (by which of course he does not mean that they should be unintelligent):

I remember having had people in classes who were deeply interested in the ideas, they would come to study dancing, and I could see immediately, in the class, that it wouldn’t work, because it was all up here. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.72)

To be able to do the dancing, to dance, you have to be able to let go of the thinking, the idea. Dance is instinctual:

However, I never thought and still don’t, that dancing is intellectual. I think dancing is something that is instinctual. No matter how complex something I make or do may be, if it doesn’t come out as dancing it’s of no use. (Cunningham/Lesschaeve, 1999 (1991/1985), p.72)

Answers like these are of course answers to a polemic, Cunningham’s dances being accused of being too abstract and intellectual. But we could perhaps view the same remarks in the context of the philosophy of intensités. Then body and mind are only two poles in a continuum between extension and intensité. And what Cunningham does when persuading the
mind that the body can do it through doing it, is in a certain sense dissolving the opposition and passing into an intensif state where it is the body that does the thinking. In movement, reflection and body become one. The dancer is not someone who gives up thinking, but someone who abandons the polarism to let a continuum of intensités be possible. And in the meeting with the corps sans organes this is even more the case. The experience of the corps sans organes, as Deleuze and Guattari describe it, is one where the subject is an experience of the intensités of matter. And as we saw concerning the film books, the idea of movement is central to this dissolution of matter into energy because matter is images in movement. Therefore it is tempting to see the experience of movement, at least when it approaches the experience of the corps sans organes, as the experience of intensités. What dance adds to Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking, is an example where this experience is made possible (though never automatically and at every moment); an example that does not include extreme violence or modified states of consciousness.

**From le corps sans organes to le plan d’immanence**

But no sooner have we detected the presence of Bergson, than Spinoza is introduced:

> Finalement le grand livre sur le CsO, ne serait-il pas l’Éthique? Les attributs, ce sont les types ou les genres de CsO, substances, puissances, intensités Zéro comme matrices productives. Les modes sont tout ce qui se passe: les ondes et les vibrations, les migrations, seuils et gradients, les intensités produites sous tel ou tel type substantiel, à partir de telle matrice. (MP, 190)

Deleuze and Guattari incorporate the reference to *L’Éthique* of Spinoza in an important way. They use the vocabulary of Spinoza: *substance*, *attributs*, *modes*, to describe the different aspects of le corps sans organes.

In Spinoza’s philosophy these concepts are abstract categories used to describe the way the world is divided into entities, and how all these entities are part of the same substance: God. All attributes are part of the same substance. The humans can only conceive two (even though there are an infinity): extended things and ideas. They are equal and yet related as the consciousness perceives what is ("Les attributs ne sont pas des façons de voir de l’entendement, parce que l’entendement spinoziste ne perçoit que ce qui est” (SPP, 72). Each attribute expresses an essence ("Chaque attribut «exprime» une certaine essence” (SPP, 73)). They are also part of the substance, “Toutes les essences, distinctes dans les attributs, ne font

60 "L’Éthique" is a reference to Spinoza’s difficult main work of that name, which Deleuze has been working on in *Spinoza et le problème de l’expression*, 1968.
qu’un dans la substance à laquelle les attributs les rapportent.” (SPP, 73) It is another version of l’immanence or l’univocité de l’être:

Et l’immanence signifie d’abord l’univocité des attributs : les mêmes attributs se disent de la substance qu’ils composent et des modes qu’ils contiennent ” (SPP, 74)

Les modes are the different forms or states of the substance as they are developed and contained in the attributes. The modes are defined (by Spinoza and repeated by Deleuze) as being “[«]ce qui est en autre chose par quoi il est aussi conçu” (SPP, 118), because the modes exist in the attributs and are conceived through the attributs, “les modes diffèrent de la substance en existence et en essence, et pourtant sont produits dans ces mêmes attributs qui constituent l’essence de la substance.” (SPP,119).

The modes contain a part which is infini and one which is fini, a part which is intensive and one which is extensive. The essence of the modes is intensif, “les essences de modes sont des modes intrinsèques ou des quantités intensives.” (SE, 179). This is also called the degré de puissance. But the mode fini is composed of a number of extensive parts that can affect each other according to the intensives relation of puissance:

La triade expressive du mode fini se présente ainsi : l’essence comme degré de puissance ; le rapport caractéristique dans lequel elle s’exprime ; les parties extensives subsumées sous ce rapport, et qui composent l’existence du mode. Mais nous voyons que, dans l’Ethique, un strict système d’équivalences nous conduit à une seconde triade du mode fini : l’essence comme degré de puissance ; un certain pouvoir d’être affecté dans lequel elle s’exprime ; des affections qui remplissent à chaque instant ce pouvoir. (SE,197)

Here Deleuze and Guattari seem to use this terminology quite freely, however. The attributs become the different types of corps sans organes, and the modes are that which actually happens on le corps sans organes. But they do not only use fragments of Spinoza’s terminology to develop the one of le corps sans organes, they transpose a question of Spinoza’s to the discussion of le corps sans organes. Spinoza asks if all the substances belong to the same substance. Is there a level of matter where all the substances meet? Transposed to le corps sans organes, the question becomes:

Le problème d’une même substance pour toutes les substances, d’une substance unique pour tous les attributs devient: y a-t-il un ensemble de tous les CsO? Mais si le CsO est déjà une limite, que faut-il dire de l’ensemble de tous les CsO? (MP, 190-191)
But the question can also be put differently, in terms that Deleuze is occupied with whatever material he works in (and not the least reason why he is interested in Spinoza): the multiplicity of the same, being expressing itself equally in all things:

Le problème n’est plus celui de l’Un et du Multiple, mais celui de la multiplicité de fusion qui déborde effectivement toute opposition de l’un et du multiple. Multiplicité formelle des attributs substantiels qui constitue comme telle l’unité ontologique de la substance. (MP, 191)

What we are slowly approaching, is a level where all the *corps sans organes* coexist, being and not being the same. Being the same, and having different nuances, *intensités*, qualities, though they meet on the same *plan* in an ontological continuum:

Continuum de tous les attributs ou genres d’intensité sous une même substance, et continuum des intensités d’un certain genre sous un même type ou attribut. Continuum de toutes les substances en intensité, mais aussi de toutes les intensités en substance. Continuum ininterrompu du CsO. Le CsO, immanence, limite immanente. (MP, 191)

We reach the naming of this level where all the *corps sans organes* meet and are one though they are different. It is the *plan d’immanence*, or the *plan de consistance*. And moreover: it is the immanent *plan* of desire:

Le CsO, c’est le champ d’immanence du désir, le plan de consistance propre au désir (...)(MP, 191)

After having detected this level where all the *corps sans organes* join in a continuum, we can add a third distinction to the analysis of the *types* and *modes* of the *corps sans organes*:

Nous distinguons: 1) les CsO, qui diffèrent comme des types, des genres, des attributs substantiels, par exemple le Froid du CsO drogué, le Dolorifique du CsO masochiste; chacun a son degré 0 comme principe de production (c’est la remissio); 2) ce qui se passe sur chaque type de CsO, c’est à dire les modes, les intensités produites, les ondes et les vibrations qui passent (la latitudo); 3) l’ensemble éventuel de tous les CsO, le plan de consistance (l’Omnitudo, qu’on appelle parfois le CsO). (MP, 195)

The question is no longer only how to produce one *corps sans organes*, but also how to arrive at the level of consistency occupied by a multitude of *corps sans organes*:

Si c’est possible, ça ne se fera aussi qu’en conjuguant les intensités produites sur chaque CsO, en faisant un continuum de toutes les continuités intensives. Ne faut-il pas des
agencements pour fabriquer chaque CsO, ne faut-il pas une grande Machine abstraite pour construire le plan de consistance? (MP, 195-196)

Here a practice is no longer enough, it seems. A “grande Machine abstraite” is necessary. It is no longer enough to deconstruct the *strates*, we have to construct the level of consistency.

It is interesting to notice that we pass here from the extreme individual experience to the construction possibly going on in art. This is not much developed in the chapter on *le corps sans organes*. But why not think of the work of Cunningham as such an example, not only making *programmes* for experiencing the individual *corps sans organes*, but making abstract machines for producing a *plan de consistance* where many *corps sans organes* meet. This is perhaps on a very small scale what is the difference between a solo and choreography for a group, between *Untitled Solo* and *Suite by Chance*. A much more elaborate system is needed to construct a dance where several *corps sans organes* construct something together than in a situation where the question is to challenge just the organisation of one body. That is why the elements of time and space also become so important, for in a construction including several bodies these are some of the things that link them. To alter the organism of several dancing bodies, time and space have to be challenged as well. To construct a *plan de consistance*, it is not enough that each dancer is challenged to the point of a *corps sans organes*; all the dancers together must make a continuum of different *corps sans organes* which allows and joins their differences through an abstract machine that reaches out for a continuum of things yet unformed.

Deleuze and Guattari use Spinoza to lead the *corps sans organes* to the question of immanence and *l’univocité de l’être*. But they also use the *corps sans organes* to answer a question of Spinoza’s which has obviously intrigued Deleuze and Guattari: “Qu’est-ce que peut un corps?” The *modes* consist of a large number of extensive parts that *affectent* each other and their relations form the *mode*. Therefore, Spinoza can make two questions into one:

Bref, un rapport n’est pas séparable d’un pouvoir d’être affecté. Si bien que Spinoza peut considérer comme équivalentes deux questions fondamentales : *Quelle est la structure (fabrica) d’un corps ? Qu’est ce que peut un corps ?* La structure d’un corps, c’est la composition de son rapport. Ce que peut un corps, c’est la nature des limites de son pouvoir d’être affecté. (SE, 197-198)

With the *corps sans organes* Deleuze and Guattari answer this question by dissolving the organism, the body as we know it. What a body can do becomes possible through the liberty

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61 A question of Spinoza’s which has given name to a chapter in *Spinoza et le problème de l’expression*, pp.197.
of structure in the *corps sans organes* that allows it to build any structure possible, to
assemble any extensive parts and make them *affecter* each other in multiple ways. In that way
they also answer another question of Spinoza’s: How do we make a body produce positive,
active *affections*, that is, *affections* that spring from the body itself, not those that it has to
support from the exterior:

La grande question qui se pose à propos du mode existant fini est donc : Arrivera-t-il à des
affections actives, et comment ? Cette question est à proprement parler la question
« éthique ». (SE, 199)

For it is the *affections actives* that lead to a real conception of the body, *idées adéquates*, and
not only images. The *corps sans organes* produces its own *affections*, but actually sometimes
so much that it becomes dangerous. Deleuze and Guattari proceed so far that they move the
question of ethics: how do you produce positive, active *affections* without destroying the
body. Spinoza says, “Nous ne savons même pas ce que peut un corps” (SE, 205). Deleuze
and Guattari explore this to the very limit with the *corps sans organes*.

**Le corps sans organes and les strates - destruction without annihilation**

Two important questions were raised in the picture of Man Ray *Dancer/Danger*
(*L’imposssibilité*). The question of the impossible and the question of danger. It has come up
several times since then, and finally it is time to look at it more closely.

Trying to create a *corps sans organes* is not without danger. The examples that Deleuze
and Guattari mention are most of the time rather violent, and the risk of self-annihilation is
never far away. This does not mean that they promote self-annihilation; in fact, they
recommend a tight-rope walk between the *corps sans organes* and the *strates*. The *strates* are
the levels of organisation such as the subject, signification and the organism, captured in a
geological image fitting with the style of *Mille plateaux*. The *strates* are levels of
sedimentation on the earth, “le Corps de la terre”, or *le corps sans organes* – both round or
globe-like, *le corps sans organes* often being compared to an egg with different “seuils”.
Experimenting with the *corps sans organes* is an attempt to undo the *strate* of the organism.
But undoing the *strate* of the organism is no easier than undoing the *strates* of the
*subjectivation* and signification:

À la limite, défaire l’organisme n’est pas plus difficile que de défaire les autres strates,
signification ou subjectivation. La signification colle à l’âme non moins que l’organisme colle
au corps, on ne s’en défaît pas facilement non plus. (MP, 198)
But whether it is the organism, the subject or signification you are trying to unsettle, you have to be careful, keeping a bit of the *strates* for safety, not throwing all off at once, and even miming the *strates*, thus consciously reproducing parts of them, but with the distance of someone who knows that it is only a *strate*:

L’organisme, il faut en garder assez pour qu’il se reforme à chaque aube; et des petites provisions de signification et d’interprétation, il faut en garder, même pour les opposer à leur propre système, quand les circonstances l’exigent, quand les choses, les personnes, même les situations vous y forcent; et de petites rations de subjectivité, il faut en garder suffisamment pour pouvoir répondre à la réalité dominante. Mimez les strates. On n’atteint pas au CsO, et à son plan de consistence, en déstratifiant à la sauvage. (MP, 199)

In other words, they not only leave the door open to pragmatism, they advise it. Rather stay stratified, than put oneself in too great a danger. Patience and time, not violence, is the recipe. It is only possible to obtain the *corps sans organes* momentarily, and it keeps oscillating between stratification and destratification:

C’est que le CsO ne cesse d’osciller entre les surfaces qui le stratifient et le plan qui le libère. Libérez-le d’un geste trop violent, faites sauter les strates sans prudence, vous vous serez tué vous-même, enfoncé dans un trou noir, ou même entrainé dans une catastrophe, au lieu de tracer le plan. Le pire n’est pas de rester stratifié – organisé, signifié, assujetti – mais de précipiter les strates dans un effondrement suicidaire ou dément, qui les fait retomber sur nous, plus lourdes à jamais. (MP, 199)

It is indeed a work of patience, of experiment, of consistence. Searching for movements of *déterritorialisation*, *lignes de fuite*, but knowing and being conscious of the *strates*. It is indeed the work of a dancer:

Voilà donc ce qu’il faudrait faire: s’installer sur une strate, expérimenter les chances qu’elle nous offre, y chercher un lieu favorable, des mouvements de déterritorialisation éventuels, des lignes de fuite possibles, les éprouver, assurer ici et là des conjonctions de flux, essayer segment par segment des continus d’intensités, avoir toujours un petit morceau d’une nouvelle terre. (MP, 199)

In fact, it is hard to see where this is possible if not in dance. And it is hard to see how it could be done if not with the patience and insistence of Cunningham. It presupposes that one has to know the *strates* well. One can only experiment with them properly by having a detailed knowledge of them and transforming them almost from the inside.

C’est suivant un rapport méticuleux avec les strates qu’on arrive à libérer les lignes de fuite, à faire passer et fuir les flux conjugués, à dégager des intensités continues pour un CsO.
Connect, bend and continue, exactly what a dancer-choreographer has to do. I have kept emphasising what strikes me in relation to Cunningham’s way of working. The dis-articulation, experimentation and nomadic movement. The carefulness and the dismantling of the *strates* from within. Especially the sentence “Connecter, conjuger, continuer: tout un «diagramme» contre les programmes encore signifiant et subjectif” could be a description of the chance choreographies, connecting, bending and continuing the movement through a (graphic) diagram that minimises or transforms the subjective factor and the production of meaning.

The carefulness is in a way also an answer to the question raised in the difference between Cunningham and Bacon: could Cunningham be working with a *corps sans organes* though it seems much less violent? Cunningham is both radical and careful. He does not throw away the history of dance inscribed in the bodies, but works from within the tradition in a radical way. Cunningham does not only dismantle the dancing body, he also works with its history, combining ballet and modern dance principles to construct a new modern body. This can be seen as a going back and forth between *le corps sans organes* and *les strates* – a necessary tight-rope dance if we are to believe Deleuze and Guattari. It is through experimentation and patience with movement that he has been able to move the limits:

> Défaire l’organisme n’a jamais été se tuer, mais ouvrir le corps à des connexions qui supposent tout un agencement, des circuits, des conjonctions, des étages et des seuils, des passages et des distributions d’intensité, des territoires et des déterritorialisations mesurées à la manière d’un arpenteur. (MP, 198)

Even the words are suitable: circuits, connections, passages, measured by an “arpenteur” who walks (like Cunningham in *Merce by Merce by Paik*) and measures (think of the stop watch of Cunningham) in way of a *promenade* even if it is on the same spot, and through measuring gains knowledge.

But though Deleuze and Guattari’s call for carefulness and pragmatism in relation to the *strates* seems to be an answer to the question of violence, it is only a partial answer. The ambiguity remains. Indeed in the chapter of *Mille plateaux* they keep circling around the question, coming back to it in different ways until the very end of the chapter. Perhaps it is

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62 “An arpenteur” is the one who measures the land, but it is also used metaphorically for walking a distance, or doing a distance in thoughts.

63 Video from 1978 where Cunningham walks on the spot while the images pass behind him.
one of the paradoxes of le corps sans organes. From speaking for a corps sans organes sought out with carefulness, they suddenly argue that the corps sans organes is always desire even when it desires its own destruction and though it does not obtain the corps sans organes:

Le CsO est désir, c’est lui et par lui qu’on désire. Non seulement parce qu’il est le plan de consistance ou le champ d’immanence du désir; mais, même quand il tombe dans le vide de la déstratification brutale, ou bien dans la prolifération de la strate cancéreuse, il reste désir. Le désir va jusque-là, tantôt désirer son propre anéantissement, tantôt désirer ce qui a la puissance d’anéantir. (MP, 203-204)

This resembles the idea of le corps sans organes as the desire of death, which is not the desire for death but a desire so strong that it affirms life in death – already in L’Anti-Œdipe le corps sans organes is linked to a critique or rethinking of the death instinct. But still they find that it is the task of, or the problem of, schizoanalysis to distinguish between le corps sans organes and its “doubles”, the violent images of attempts to get to it that do not succeed. The problem is whether it is possible and how to make such a distinction:

C’est pourquoi le problème matériel d’une schizoanalyse est de savoir si nous avons les moyens de faire la sélection, de séparer le CsO et ses doubles: corps vitreux vides, corps cancéreux, totalitaires et fascistes. (MP, 204)

Separating le corps sans organes from its doubles means examining the desire of it, separating the false desires of destruction from the desire of the construction of a plan de consistance:

L’épreuve du désir: non pas dénoncer de faux désirs, mais dans le désir distinguer ce qui renvoie à la prolifération de strate, ou bien à la déstratification trop violente, et ce qui renvoie à la construction du plan de consistance (…) (MP, 204)

For what is interesting, in the end, is not the destruction of the strates, but the construction of le plan de consistance. But to make things difficult, it is only le plan de consistance that can distinguish between the acceptable and the non-acceptable corps sans organes. It is the plan de consistance itself that makes the selection:

Le plan de consistance n’est pas simplement ce qui est constitué par tous les CsO. Il y en a qu’il rejette, c’est lui qui fait le choix, avec la machine abstraite qui le trace. (…) C’est lui qui fait l’ensemble de tous les CsO pleins sélectionnés (pas d’ensemble positif avec les corps vides ou cancéreux). (MP, 204)
How the *plan de consistance* selects *le corps sans organes* and constructs itself remains abstract. *Le plan de consistance* can only be constructed by “une machine abstraite capable de le couvrir et même de le tracer” (MP, 204), a complicated and abstract machine that keeps making connections and transversal relations possible, keeps making desire develop. Otherwise it is the empty, violent *corps sans organes* that triumphs and the real *corps sans organes* that remains marginalised:

Nous disons seulement: l’identité des effets, la continuité des genres, l’ensemble de tous les CsO ne peuvent être obtenus sur le plan de consistance que par une machine abstraite capable de le couvrir et même de le tracer, par des agencements capables de se brancher sur le désir, de prendre en charge effectivement les désirs, d’en assurer les connexions continues, les liaisons transversales. Sinon les CsO du plan resteront séparés dans leur genre, marginalisés, réduits aux moyens du bords, tandis que triompheront sur «l’autre plan» les doubles cancéreux ou vidés. (MP, 204)

*Le plan de consistance* and *la machine abstraite*, which can perhaps produce it, seem perhaps too abstract to be constructed deliberately by humans by means of practice, politics, revolution etc.. Perhaps not even philosophy or art can provide such a machine. But if so, it must be an abstract machine in constant change, capable of producing ever new connections.

**Trying to stay on the surface**

The juxtaposition between *le corps sans organes* and Cunningham’s work at first sight seems obvious because of the challenge to the hierarchy of the body. I have tried in different ways both to go into this evidence and examine it further, and to question it through taking a closer look at various nuances of the concept. I believe that it is in the unfolding of the concept, where the meanderings of the thought inherent in it become visible (if only partly), that the connections become interesting and help us to bend and challenge the reflection on, for instance, Cunningham’s chance procedures.

The unfolding of *le corps sans organes* takes place when entering into texts abundantly filled with details and trying to undo the knots of condensed meaning that they consist of. The unfolding of the methods of Cunningham’s chance procedures is up against the opposite kind of difficulty: the scarcity and repetitiveness of the material. Here the unfolding becomes repetition and with each repetition an attempt to take a small step further, using the development of *le corps sans organes* to slowly winkle out the workings of chance in more detail, trying to get beyond the surface.
Le corps sans organes is more than a challenge of the organism. It is also the play of les machines désirantes and their relation to le corps sans organes. It is also a state that provides access to les intensités of life. Where the first allows us to look at the use of chance operations and their way of using the unknown (in a structured way), the second allows us to take a closer look at the experience of the dance and the ambiguous state of the subject. For le corps sans organes is also the inaccessible experience of intensités, which is perhaps part of dance. It is also the game of a programme trying to construct a corps sans organes, without any guarantee that it will actually be produced. And when working with a historical material, we are literally left with just the programme, in this case the charts for the chance procedures. But the very moments of chance are left behind in history just as the dance is always already gone. However, that is part of the game, for reaching out through chance to that which is yet unformed is an event, un événement, and once the forms are actualised they are in danger of becoming strates on the corps sans organes if not unsettled again.

So instead of evidence, we are left with a certain number of uncertainties. The uncertainty of establishing a temporary analysis of such a moving concept as le corps sans organes. The uncertainty of trying to discuss whether we can find in Cunningham’s work something that corresponds to that which in itself is a limit and extremely difficult, if not impossible, to establish. The uncertainty of speaking of the experience of dancing and the dance event now gone. Such uncertainties seem inevitable when working with something as inaccessible as le corps sans organes.

One question that recurs, is the question of violence. Sometimes when reading Deleuze and Guattari, I am shocked by the violence of their words. If we try to take them literally, as they say we should, it almost becomes too much. But perhaps we also have to keep in mind what Deleuze says in Logique du sens, that the difference between the schizophrenic and, for instance, the artist is that the schizophrenic cannot distinguish between the surface of the words and the depths of the psyche/body, to him they are the same thing (LS, 101). Deleuze and Guattari’s writing, though schizo-analytical, which is something completely different from schizophrenic in the ordinary sense of the word, is literal in another sense. It is literal on the level of l’événement du sens (the event of meaning).

In any case, it is a problem in their work on le corps sans organes that there are no examples that back up their insistence on carefulness and ironic miming of the strates in order to avoid annihilation. It is here that I think Cunningham’s work can save us. Cunningham’s approach provides us with the missing example. It gives us the chance to see the possibility of working with le corps sans organes without throwing oneself into annihilation. Furthermore,
it provides us with an example of desire and *machines désirantes* that is open and abstract, and that does not reterritorialise Deleuze and Guattari’s discourse on desire by merely bringing it back to that which is traditionally thought of as desire.
Chapter 5
Movements and transformations of desire - le devenir and Beach Birds for Camera

Furthermore, some animals have feet and some are destitute thereof. Of such as have feet, some animals have two, as is the case with men and birds, and with men and birds only;
(Aristotle, Historia Animalium, I,5.)

Other animals
Animals seem to have become a recurring motif in the preceding juxtapositions. First there was la zone d’indiscernabilité between the human and the animal in Bacon’s paintings, and Cunningham’s interest in the movement of animals. Then there was the meeting of humans and animals who had something in common through their particular way of communicating through territories and ritournelles. Here, Cunningham and Carolyn Brown almost turned into scenopoïètes through their repeated turning of the leaves of a plant. In this chapter too, dancers will be turning into birds but this time explicitly and continually throughout the whole choreography.

In the quotation that I referred to in the juxtaposition of Cunningham and Bacon, Cunningham speaks of the structural difference between humans and animals. We cannot move like them, because we are not structured in the same way. Instead he proposes to examine the infinite range of movements within one species – the human species. That is what he does in for instance Torse. But the fascination for animal movement has not left him, and later he will even try to incorporate the movement of other species into the choreographies. Or perhaps even transform the human body into other species. Hence my juxtaposition with le devenir as it is developed in the chapter of Mille plateaux called “1730 – Devenir-intense, devenir-animal, devenir-imperceptible...”.

Of all the other animals than the human, it seems to be the bird that occupies a special place in Cunningham’s imagination. In the book with his published drawings, there are evidently quite a few birds. Already in 1951 he did a choreography with the title Boy who wanted to be a bird; a choreography that has been forgotten and of which no traces exist. But Beach Birds and Beach Birds for Camera are the choreographies where he seems to take this interest furthest, or at least where it seems to become most visible. In 1991 Cunningham

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produced on stage the choreography *Beach Birds*. Later this choreography was turned into a choreography for the camera in collaboration with Charles Atlas. The result of this is the video *Beach Birds for Camera* which I will be working on in this chapter.

Where many of Cunningham’s titles are quite abstract, *Beach Birds for Camera* is sufficiently concrete to seem to imply a theme for the choreography. The problem is therefore how to deal with such a “theme” in a work of a choreographer who argues that there is no representation at stake in his choreography. Therefore we also come back to another motif of the juxtaposition with Bacon: the refusal of representation – be it of a story or of emotions – and the attempt to keep the choreography matter-of-fact. This motif (already important in *Différence et répétition*) is also present in *Mille plateaux* where we saw that one of the *strates* one should try to undo, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is signification. *Le devenir* is part of this attempt. But instead of attacking signification as it might appear in narration and text, they direct themselves towards another kind of representation, one very inherent in theatre, though here developed in quite a different material: mimetic representation.

Even if Deleuze and Guattari never speak of the actor, the kind of mimetic representation they attack is the one where someone acts or imitates someone or something else. Cunningham seems very far from this kind of representation, as there are never any stories or narrative characters in his choreographies. Nevertheless, he seems to be concerned with this problem in *Beach Birds for Camera* where the relation between the birds of the title and the dancers sometimes comes dangerously close to imitation. As David Vaughan points out, Cunningham’s stance concerning the status of his title is not quite clear:

> Even so, Cunningham did not intend the title to be taken literally (though it frequently has been). Yet this was clearly another of his nature studies, based on his observation of birds, and, for that matter, of people: (Vaughan, 1997, p.258)

Cunningham does not want his title to be taken literally, in other words we might say: he does not want his choreography to be read representationally (the choreography as a representation of birds) or mimetically (the dancers imitating birds). Nevertheless, he is undeniably inspired by birds, and admits to it himself. The question is therefore how to deal with this inspiration or this theme without taking it too representationally, too mimetically. Here the concept of *le devenir* (“becoming”) is evidently of interest. It will also allow us to go further into the idea of “littéralité”.

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Cunningham and the birds

*Le devenir-animal* is only one of the many *devenirs* that are treated in the chapter “1730 – Devenir-intense, devenir-animal, devenir-imperceptible...”. But before going into Deleuze and Guattari’s concept, I will take a look at what Cunningham himself says about the birds of his choreography:

I had three things in mind: one was birds, obviously, or animals or whatever, but also humans on the beach and also one of the things that I love so much on shores – the way you are looking at a rock and you go around it, and it looks different each time, as though it were alive too. Those three images are part of what I worked at. In dividing the structures the way I always do, I used those three things as something to think about….

It is not meant to be a particular bird, but I used the idea of a bird, and then since dancers are also human beings, I thought I might as well include that. (Vaughan, 1997, p.258)

This seems quite an innocent commentary for someone explaining “what he had in mind” when making a choreography. But at the same time it seems to take us much further.

Firstly, it is not clear exactly which function the images have and how they enter into the choreographing process. Cunningham says that he did the structure as he always does, which means: he organises a structure but not according to parameters of a theme, a story, or other external principles, perhaps just the length of the music. Therefore, it seems that the images he used have been a sort of backdrop against which the choreography develops. Still, this is a very general way of describing the function of such images.

Secondly, there is not only one idea, the birds, that he kept in mind, but three: birds or other animals, humans on the beach, and observing the changes of rocks on the beach. In itself, it does not seem impossible to keep these various ideas in mind. But there is something else at play: how these three ideas relate to each other and work together in the mind. For even the first idea of birds is not unequivocal, the expression “birds, obviously, or animals, or whatever” introduces a relation between birds and some other undefined animals, or perhaps we should rather say something more abstract such as “animals in general”, something animal pertaining to all animals. There is a fusion between birds and other animals. But there is also a fusion between birds/(other animals) and humans. What the humans seem to have in common with the birds (and the rocks) is that they are at the seashore, on the beach, that they are alive, that they are changing.

But the last sentence introduces even more nuances. It was not only the birds that Cunningham was thinking of, but the idea of a bird. That introduces a level of abstraction, as the idea of a bird is one level above the bird, it is the generic idea of all birds. But at the same
time as this idea inserts a larger distance between the dancer and the bird, the next sentence seems to, almost by accident, bring them closer to each other. When Cunningham says that the dancers are also humans, it actually leads us to understand the “also”, as if the humans are also humans like the birds. Birds are humans.

Almost unnoticeably, this small quotation leads us into some of the central questions concerning the choreography, not least the relation between the title and the choreography, between the dancers and the birds. It shows that there are several metaphorical levels at play, and that these are overlapping in ways that are not easily distinguishable. Metaphor is one kind of figure where one might say that different images intertwine, but this is even more the case in the figure that Deleuze and Guattari construct, namely *le devenir*.

**Le devenir**

*Le devenir* (“becoming”) is not easy to define. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari use a long chapter of approximately one hundred pages in *Mille plateaux* to develop it. As the title indicates there are many kinds of *devenirs*: “1730 – Devenir-intense, devenir-animal, devenir-imperceptible...”; not to mention *le devenir-enfant* and *le devenir-femme* which also play an important role. The chapter is divided into smaller parts headed by a word that rhymes with *devenir*: “souvenir de…”, for instance “souvenir d’un naturaliste”, “souvenir d’un sorcier”, “souvenir d’un bergsonien”. These sub-titles both indicate the numerous themes, inspirations and possible polemics (against structuralism, against the natural sciences, against psychoanalysis) of the chapter, but it is also curious, almost contradictory, as at the end of the chapter Deleuze and Guattari define *le devenir* as the opposite of history and memory.

Deleuze and Guattari are interested in a particular kind of phenomena of transformation, which are in no way restricted to language or aesthetics but can take place also in other human behaviour. Transformations where humans are turning into animals, men into women, adults into children, and all of them into something imperceptible and molecular. This may happen in many and multiple ways, in rituals, psychologically, in writing, in music. Therefore the humans becoming birds in *Beach Birds for Camera* may take us straight into their text.

Deleuze and Guattari argue against a particular way within both natural history and structuralism of structuring the relation between different species of animals. Either they are perceived as a series of resemblances where “a” resembles “b” which again resembles “c” (*ressemblance*), or they are described in structural relationships where “a” is to “b” what “b” is to “c” (*analogie*). These are ways of conceiving of species that go as far back as Aristotle and his *Historia Animalum* quoted at the beginning of this chapter. He relates the species and
their organisms through resemblance and analogy. Thus, humans are related to birds through analogy, they resemble each other, because both have only two feet. The transformations that Deleuze and Guattari describe do not follow such structures. To them there is another and more intimate relation.

Cunningham’s remark that his title and his choreography should not be taken literally leads us to a very important aspect of *le devenir*. *Le devenir* has nothing to do with resemblance or imitation; indeed it is a critique of mimesis:

Un devenir n’est pas une correspondance de rapports. Mais ce n’est pas plus une ressemblance, une imitation, et, à la limite, une identification. (MP, 291)

It is not a question of imitating an animal, but of constructing it differently, with something else, through a molecularization of the body that takes it through a *corps sans organes* into a *zone de voisinage* with the animal:

Par exemple: non pas imiter le chien, mais composer son organisme avec autre chose, de telle manière qu’on fasse sortir, de l’ensemble ainsi composé, des particules qui seront canines en fonction du rapport de mouvement et de repos, ou du voisinage moléculaire dans lesquels elles entrent. (MP, 335-336)

On the other hand, the idea that it should not be taken literally (in the common sense of the word), may also be misleading in relation to *le devenir*. That it should not be taken literally, could be taken to mean that it is not real. A *devenir* on the other hand is always real, never imaginary (as psychoanalysis would have it: a phantasm):

Et surtout devenir ne se fait pas dans l’imagination, même quand l’imagination atteint au niveau cosmique ou dynamique le plus élevé, comme chez Jung ou Bachelard. Les devenirs-animaux ne sont pas des rêves ni des fantasmes. Ils sont parfaitement réels. (MP, 291)

*Le devenir* is always literal in the same way as the *machines désirantes* are always literal. Even if one might argue that the human, in Cunningham’s case the dancer, does not become an animal as we know animals, the process of becoming animal is none the less real:

Car si devenir animal ne consiste pas à faire l’animal ou à l’imiter, il est évident aussi que l’homme ne devient pas « réellement » animal, pas plus que l’animal ne devient « réellement » autre chose. Le devenir ne produit pas autre chose que lui-même. C’est une fausse alternative qui nous fait dire : ou bien l’on imite, ou bien on est. (...) Le devenir-animal de l’homme est réel, sans que soit réel l’animal qu’il devient ; et, simultanément, le devenir-autre de l’animal est réel sans que cet autre soit réel. (MP, 291)
It would therefore be wrong to ask whether Cunningham’s dancers actually become birds or not; if there is a devenir at play, le devenir-oiseau is no less real even if they cannot fly. Instead, it would be correct to ask if the transformation goes beyond imitation and mimesis to construct another kind of relationship between the bird and the human.

**Beyond the metaphor**

In order to search for the particularity and radicality of le devenir it can be useful to contrast it with other figures. What it has in common with other figures, like for instance the metaphor, is that it consists of a relation between different elements. But still, we have to be very careful to keep it apart from the metaphor; or, indeed, if we conceive of it as a figure, we have to show how it is also a critique of the classical conception of figures and metaphors or an extreme radicalisation of them. However, the distinction is not easy to describe. Firstly, there are so many different definitions of for instance the metaphor, and so many different distinctions between metaphor and its related figures. Secondly, Deleuze and Guattari do not only take as their indirect discussion partners the different aesthetic points of view, but also structuralism, the natural sciences and philosophy. But in spite of these difficulties we can try to get a glimpse of the possible distinctions as they appear in relation to le devenir.

A devenir brings together two (or more) elements that enter into a process. And it is not only a process of comparison, but of interaction and mutual change, where the one cannot be understood without the other. This is true of the metaphor too, at least in some ways of understanding it. But in the devenir the two (or more) elements become so bound up with each other that they become indistinguishable. This could also be said of the metaphor in the most radical interpretations of it. And yet le devenir seems to go further.

A devenir brings together elements that are heterogeneous (MP,292), and it brings out a state of confusion between the two, “une zone de voisinage ou de co-présence”(MP,334) – just as we have seen in the analysis of Francis Bacon, where there is a zone de voisinage between the animal and the human. But it is also described as “alliance” (MP, 291), “symbiose” (MP, 291), “pacte” (MP, 302) or “contagion” (MP, 302) – words and descriptions that recall witchcraft (“sorcellerie”) or black magic. These elements underline the degree of fusion in le devenir, and underline how another reality is produced.

A devenir is not only aesthetic, but can be lived in human behaviour, in everyday life, dreams, rituals or any other situation. The reality of the devenir, the reality of the process of the devenir, takes us beyond the stylistic figure. In the metaphor the two entities are lifted to another level of combined meaning. The metaphor functions through a kind of synergy on the
level of meaning, but the devenir decomposes the levels of meaning. It is not a synergy, it is a
symbiosis. It is a fusion that stays on the same level, where the two entities are literally
melting together. It does not only produce meaning; it produces a reality. The devenir is
always embodied, whether it is embodied in a text, a piece of music, or the behaviour of a
human being. The devenir never only seems or means, it always is. Even when embodied in a
literary text, it is never metaphorical but real.

In other words, le devenir is part of what we might call Deleuze’s (and Guattari’s) project
of “littéralité”. Like the machines désirantes, le devenir should be taken literally. Just as the
machines are not metaphors, le devenir is not a metaphor, it is real. It is both easy and hard to
imagine what this means. But actually, it seems that le devenir is where they come the closest
to describing what they mean by literally. Of course, we can say that also a metaphor exists, it
is real on the page. But that we should take le devenir literally somehow means more than
that: it means that the process the figure describes is exactly what it describes. This might
have to do with the conception of the plan d’immanence: as there are only qualitative
distinctions within the one plan, even a metaphorical meaning is part of this and is no less real
and literal than other meanings. The plan d’immanence includes that which is otherwise put
on another level of reality: metaphors, fictions, imaginations, phantasms. A man becoming a
dog is no longer just someone with a lively imagination, but a man actually becoming a dog.

In other ways too, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish le devenir from the metaphor.
Sometimes metaphors are described as a shorter form of comparison where the
”comme” (“like”) has disappeared. But in relation to le devenir the understanding of the word
“comme” changes:

Interpréter le mot «comme» à la manière d’une métaphore, ou proposer une analogie
structurale de rapports (homme-fer = chien-os), c’est ne rien comprendre au devenir. Le mot
« comme » fait partie de ces mots qui changent singulièrement de sens et de fonction dès
qu’on les rapporte à des heccitéés, dès qu’on en fait des expressions de devenirs, et pas des
etats signifiés ni des rapports signifiants. (MP, 336)

The man is not behaving like the dog, but the meaning of like changes when the devenir
brings two undefined entities together; it is not the behaviour of a dog that defines the
behaviour of the man, but both the man and the dog are molecularised, they enter into
something else that undoes both the man and the dog.

The metaphor is also related to the analogy. Where the comparison compares two entities,
the analogy compares a set of relations as in the above quotation: the iron is to the man what
the bone is to the dog. (Or to stay in the picture that Aristotle evokes in the epigraph: the
claws are to the birds what the toes are to human beings.) The analogy, however, is not only a stylistic term but is also used within the natural sciences, structuralism, and philosophy – in different ways, but nevertheless it is all these conceptions of analogy that *le devenir* is opposed to. To Deleuze and Guattari *le devenir* has nothing to do with analogy or the correspondence of different relations, on the contrary. This is specified several times (though not developed at length) as for instance in the following passage:

> C’est que devenir, ce n’est pas imiter quelque chose ou quelqu’un, ce n’est pas s’identifier à lui. Ce n’est pas non plus proportionner des rapports formels. Aucune de ces deux figures d’analogie ne convient au devenir, ni l’imitation d’un sujet, ni la proportionnalité d’une forme. (...) Ce principe de proximité ou d’approximation est tout à fait particulier, et ne réintroduit aucune analogie. (MP, 334)

*Le devenir* is a machinic *agencement*, it is not imaginary, it is not a phantasm, like *le corps sans organes* it can be a programme, and it has to do with a composition of speed on *le plan de consistance*. In *le devenir*, the elements are taken apart into molecules, particles, speeds:

> Ce n’est ni une analogie, ni une imagination, mais une composition de vitesses et d’affects sur ce plan de consistance: un plan, un programme ou plutôt un diagramme, un problème, une question-machine. (MP, 315-316)

If we are to sum up in a fairly simple but not misleading way, all the figures mentioned (comparison, analogy, metaphor and *le devenir*) can be placed on a scale from a low level of fusion to a high level of fusion. The higher the element of fusion, the more pronounced is the dissolution of the entities. In the comparison the two elements are clearly distinguished through the word of comparison: the dancer is like a bird. In the analogy, the comparison is developed through a set of corresponding relations but these remain separated: the arms of the dancer are like the wings of the bird. In the metaphor there is a high level of fusion, but it is still possible to distinguish the two elements even if the word of comparison has disappeared: the wings of the dancer. In *le devenir*, however, the level of fusion is so high that the two cannot be distinguished: the dancer is bird, enters into a real *devenir-oiseau*. Unfortunately, whenever we try to make such distinctions between figures, we tend to use examples that are much more banal than those in the works of art. Nevertheless, I find it important to try to make these distinctions, as it is evident that Deleuze and Guattari want *le devenir* to be more radical than all the other figures. It is part of the “littéralité” that they are circling around.

When we have these sorts of distinctions in mind, it becomes more evident how radically Deleuze and Guattari develop *le devenir* even in linguistic terms. When trying to formulate
the linguistic form suitable for *le devenir*, Deleuze and Guattari come to a result that is quite unusual. When dealing with *le devenir* the convenient grammatical forms are: “*Article indéfini + nom propre + verbe infinitif*” (MP, 322). The indefinite article: for instance “a bird” (one can never become “the bird” without making an imitation of *le devenir*), it is the bird as a dissolved molecular entity, not as a subject or an object. The proper name: because proper names are hard to categorize, its content (for instance a person) always changes. The proper name in *le devenir* does not indicate a subject, “Le nom propre désigne d’abord quelque chose qui est de l’ordre de l’événement” (MP, 322-323). The verb in the infinitive marks the time of *Aiôn*, of *l’événement*, not the chronological time. *Le devenir* is not chronological. In other words, if *le devenir* of *Beach Birds for Camera* were to be expressed in these terms, it would be something like: “a bird Cunningham fly”. This can hardly be said to be a traditional metaphor.

**Animal components**

It would not be impossible to see the relation between birds and humans in Cunningham’s choreography as a metaphor or as an imitation. Yet, it is very unsatisfying. It seems to lock the dancers into a fixed relation to an object, and one has the uncanny feeling that this is perhaps the closest we get to representation in Cunningham’s otherwise very abstract choreographies. *Le devenir* is perhaps a way to get out of this feeling and see something more complicated at play in the choreography. But to find out if it might be so, we need to take a closer look at the animal components of the choreography.

The first animal component that one notices is one that could be said to be exterior to the choreography itself, to the movement, namely the costumes. The dancers, men and women alike, are dressed in tight-fitting whole-body suits that are white up to the upper part of the torso, and black across the shoulders and over the arms. In that way the arms are turned into “wings”. The black of the arms is continued onto the hands with a pair of black gloves, so that the hands and the fingers become the “wing tips”, the fingers are almost like the end of feathers. The black and white colours lead the thoughts to a sea gull, even if Cunningham had no particular bird in mind. We might say that the costumes work through a *pars pro toto*, a synecdoche or a metonomy where the part stands for the whole, the indication of wings and the colours stand for the whole bird.

A synecdoche is a variety of metonomy, where the part stands for the whole (or the other way around). Both are a variety of tropes, as are metaphors. But as we are dealing with dance, there is even a metaphorical element. There is a metonymical relation between the (arm of the
dancer doing the) wing of the bird representing the whole bird. In that sense there is a “changement de nom” (LPR). But in an ordinary metonymy in language it would have been between the word “wing” and the bird that we can speak of metonymy or more specifically synecdoche. But as it is the dancers doing the wing of the bird, the bird is twice removed. The arm represents the wing which represents the bird. There is not only a metonymical relation but also a metaphorical relation. There is not only a “changement de nom”, there is even “transposition” (LPR). There is a change of level, a transposition of meaning between the dancer and the bird. It is a metaphor in absentia as the bird is not actually there, but it is nevertheless a metaphor. The realm of dancers and the realm of birds are brought together in one figure.

The costumes therefore clearly indicate a bird component, but they also bring us closer to the metaphor (and to signification and representation) than to le devenir. Through the costumes Cunningham’s title makes evident sense, but it almost makes too much sense. However, these things are never constant. For instance, the video opens on a close-up of two arms crossed in a blurred image and it takes a while to figure out what these black lines are. Instead of being arms or wings they have a more structural and almost architectural relation to the background and the minimalist setting.

The set design or the setting does not carry strong beach indications. The setting in the video is an empty studio with windows in the first part, and a stage with different colours on the backdrop but no set design apart from the very architecture of the stage in the second part. The first part is shot in black and white; the second part in colours. These two settings give us very different impressions. The first part seems more abstract, probably because of the minimalist aspect that the black and white adds. The dancers and their surroundings become one; in the grey scale of the colours, they are part of the minimalist setting. Also it seems to affect the way their attitude is perceived. They seem distant and self-absorbed, caught up in their own universe, not unlike animals in their own world. Abstraction here both furthers the animal impression, and helps to reduce the risk of imitation. In the second part, the setting is no less minimalist, it is basically a naked stage, but the colours add a realistic impression, or recall a performance space in reality, and suddenly the dancers seem to become more human. They are dancers on a stage, not so much birds on a beach. Paradoxically, the realistic impression seems to make their movements more imitative. As they are more clearly human bodies, they seem to be just imitating birds rather than becoming dancer-birds.

But to understand the animal components of the choreography we have to look to the movement itself, and here the relation between human and animal might be slightly different.
There are some movements that could be said to hold animal components through a kind of *pars pro toto* or imitation. For instance at some points the dancers wave their arms in a way that might make us think of the movement of wings, but they only rarely do it in a way that becomes a cliché, that becomes the movement sign for bird. Here it might be of importance what Cunningham said about the structure of the body. As the human body is structured differently, it cannot produce the same movements as the animal, it can only produce them through different means. Deleuze and Guattari say that in *a devenir* one has to create the animal but “composer son organisme avec autre chose” (MP, 335).

Speaking in analogies we might say that the arms are the part of the human body that corresponds to the wings of the bird – a relation that would fit in well with Aristotle’s analogy between birds and humans but that does not belong to *le devenir*, but rather to the realm of hierarchical relations as described in natural history or structuralism. We may also say that the arms are not the same thing as wings, they are structured differently, and therefore the dancers produce the organism of an animal but through something else. Actually, it is not only through the arms that the dancers are producing movements that recall the stroke of wings. In the first part, one dancer is leaning on another with the arms while moving her leg, which is bent behind her in a balance, up and down in a waving and twisting way. The leg is angularly bent, and the uneven and yet regular movements that go from the hip through the thigh and the calf to the foot are not unlike those of the wing of a bird. Not only does the dancer produce a bird component through a different structure, but also through a body part that is not analogous to the wing. As in a *corps sans organes* any function can be produced through any organ, and they travel through the body through time.

Another set of movements that recall the title and the birds are the balances; the balances where the dancers are standing on one leg, the other stretched out behind the body, and the arms spread out to the sides. “Like” a bird resting on air, being carried by the air. At the beginning of the second part in colours they are even standing side by side waving their hands, or the tip of their wings, slightly up and down. Especially, there is the balance of a dancer in the second part which is quite long and where the stroke of the arms is long and slow, almost as if he were imitating a bird. It seems to be the closest we get to imitation; or at least the closest to the cliché. We are again approaching the synecdoche/metaphor. Yet, we may ask where this impression comes from. It is quite a common balance in Cunningham’s choreographies, there is nothing particularly bird-like about it otherwise, but the context and the title make of it something else. Yet, more than a metonomy we might perhaps say that there is suddenly a common denominator between the organism of the dancer and the
organism of a bird in the way they are positioned in space. There is perhaps une zone de voisinage, but one that is getting close to a structural analogy. When la zone de voisinage becomes too obvious, we are dangerously approaching imitation.

Other movements are less obviously related to birds. For instance there are the shakings of the feet and legs. This is a trait of behaviour that is perhaps more characteristic of animals in general. It is a movement of the dancer determining which kind of bird (s)he is, changing the bird that is being referred to. The movement shakes the entire body, not only the legs, in an intensive (intensif) movement that seems to shake it almost apart, molecularize it. It is not only a movement of the feet and the legs, but also very much a movement of the stomach. Sometimes the movement starts in the feet and goes to the stomach, sometimes it is only a trembling movement in the abdomen. It is almost a spasm, but it is very local, the rest of the body is in complete control.

Many of the movements that are ambiguous are more human than bird-like, but they nevertheless give an animal impression. For instance, in the beginning when the dancers are running fast on the spot, kicking behind them. This is not particularly characteristic of birds, nor of humans. It produces a universe of its own and a new animal of its own. Other movements pertain more to the realm of humans but nevertheless produce an abstract quality. This is the case of the movements that recall dance training such as pliés and other exercises of the legs and the arms. They carry with them something ambiguous that does not belong to the dance class but arises in the combination of movements. A kind of movement that is common both in the animal realm and the human realm are the jumps. Both animals and humans jump, and Cunningham’s dancers jump quite a lot. But we are not talking about jumps from dance exercises, even if there are a few split jumps. Instead there are some jumps on two legs, perhaps recalling the jumps of birds, but yet in a very human and almost ironic way.

In spite of the metaphorical possibilities of interpretation, it is possibly in the movement that we should look for something else at play. It is hard to disregard the title and the costumes, but the movement is much more ambiguous when considered alone. Actually, the choreography seems to waver between abstraction and movements that recall birds. Here I have mostly mentioned the ones that seem to become animal components, but in between those there are all the others, and the image of the birds thus appears and disappears. One has a tendency (we are so used to representation after all) to remember those that are most clearly signifying, but when watching the choreography it is not necessarily those that are the most prevalent, but rather those in between, which are abstract and ambiguous. It is quite hard to
leave out of account the context of the movements, as the context influences the way we perceive them, and yet the context also changes according to the movements. And the movements waver between the ambiguous and the imitative; they never establish a fixed relation to the title and through the movements small changes are constantly taking place. Where the costumes seem to bring us in the direction of imitation, the movement seems to take us closer to le devenir. And indeed, if we have a closer look, there is an important relation between movement and le devenir.

**Movement and le devenir**

The first kind of movement we discover in le devenir is the movement of le devenir as such. We might say that the word devenir, as a concept formed from the verb, is a metaphor of movement or that it has connotations of movement: becoming – changing – moving. It is the movement of the process, it is the movement that takes the subject from one thing towards another. It is always real, but the movement in it is not necessarily physical. But that le devenir is movement is even included in the description of le devenir in several different ways. One of the first indications of this is the naming of le devenir as a “bloc de devenir”:

> Ce qui est réel, c’est le devenir lui-même, le bloc de devenir, et non pas des termes supposés fixes dans lesquels passerait celui qui devient. (MP, 291)

As in le bloc d’espace-temps, “bloc” does not only mean a quantity of. It includes the idea of a span, for instance a time span. Instead of focusing on the beginning and the end, it focuses on that which is in between, the process. But it also focuses on this span as something that is indivisible, that cannot be cut into pieces, as movement. The bloc is a movement, a movement that cannot be divided, but always takes place in between the poses and can only be understood as such. The thinking of le devenir is related to the thinking of movement through this trait common to both.

Expressed in relation to time, they characterise le devenir as that which passes (please note: a movement verb) through:

> Un devenir-révolutionnaire reste indifférent aux questions d’un avenir et d’un passé de la révolution ; il passe entre les deux. Tout devenir est un bloc de coexistence. (MP, 358)

Like movement, le devenir is the present that keeps dividing itself into past and future, but never becomes past or future as such, it is always in between, it is la durée or Aiôn. But
perhaps it is not even enough to think of it as a bloc of movement between two points; it does not only have one direction, it seems to be a double movement:

Le devenir-juif, le devenir-femme, etc., impliquent donc la simultanéité d’un double mouvement, l’un par lequel un terme (le sujet) se soustrait à la majorité, et l’autre, par lequel un terme (le médium ou l’agent) sort de la minorité. Il y a un bloc de devenir indissociable et asymétrique, un bloc d’alliance (...) (MP, 357)

As the movement of *le devenir* is a *devenir-minoritaire* from the majority to the minority entity, the movement includes a relation between these two entities which is expressed in the form of a double movement. But even if *le devenir* is always named after the minority entity (woman, child, animal), the two movements of *le devenir* meet in between, namely when the subject extracts itself from the majority and when it finds an element of the minority that it extracts in order to transform itself. Deleuze and Guattari describe these double movements as asymmetrical. The movement of *le devenir* is two asymmetrical movements. It is a movement which is never synthesised, which is always awkward, it is a *libre figure de la différence*. In fact, this is what we might say that we are looking for, when we are trying to establish how the dancer becomes a bird: how she/he extracts her/himself from the human (the first movement), and which animal components the dancer extracts from the bird (the second movement). *Le devenir* is a paradoxical movement and not a linear one. The two movements do not meet exactly in between, in a sort of hybrid but stable human-bird, but the two movements constantly continue and stay asymmetrical – they coexist but they never coincide to build a stable entity.

Another way of thinking movement that joins this idea of a *bloc de devenir*, is the idea of points and lines that is developed at the end of the chapter in the part called “Souvenirs et devenirs, points et blocs” (MP, pp.356). Movement cannot be understood as the points in between which it moves, but only as that which is in between the points:

Une ligne de devenir ne se définit ni par des points qu’elle relie ni par des points qui la composent : au contraire, elle passe entre les points, elle ne pousse que par le milieu, et file dans une direction perpendiculaire aux points qu’on a d’abord distingués, transversale au rapport localisable entre points contigus ou distants. (MP, 359)

But moreover there is the twist to it that *le devenir* is the movement that liberates the line from the points: “Le devenir est le mouvement par lequel la ligne se libère du point, et rend les points indiscernables” (MP, 360). Here it is not only *le devenir* that is compared to or
described as a line, but *le devenir* that takes the line further, beyond the line defined as that which passes through the points. It is a transversal line, une ligne de fuite.

This is also what Deleuze and Guattari try to express in the idea that *le devenir* “pousse que par le milieu”. This *milieu* is not the same as the middle point on a horizontal line. It seems to be another figure, that of a line that advances by the middle:

Une ligne de devenir a seulement un milieu. Le milieu n’est pas une moyenne, c’est un accéléré, c’est la vitesse absolue du mouvement. Un devenir est toujours au milieu, on ne peut le prendre qu’au milieu. Un devenir n’est ni un ni deux, ni rapport des deux, mais entre-deux, frontière ou ligne de fuite, de chute, perpendiculaire aux deux. (MP, 360)

It is not quite evident what this *milieu* or middle is. It might be a reference to Bergson’s idea that something does not show its potential creation at the beginning or at the end, but in the middle. But more concretely, it is not only a point in the middle of the line, it is a ligne de fuite, a line of flight, which is perpendicular to the two points, as if a vertical line parts from the middle of the horizontal line between the two points, as seems to be the case in the lower illustration on page 359. A vertical line, but in the shape of a fall, une chute. *Le devenir* is a line that departs from the line between the two entities, departs vertically or perpendicularly from the middle and transgresses the line between the two entities. They call this *milieu* the absolute speed of movement, without explaining further what this could be. This expression, however, is also used elsewhere, and through analysing how Spinoza is used to develop the thinking of movement in *le devenir* further, we might get a better idea of what could be meant by it.

**Spinozist movement**

The block of movement or the perpendicular line are not the only models of movement used to explain *le devenir*. There are many more movements. Some are developed in the part called “Souvenirs à un spinoziste, I”. If the movement block of *le devenir* seemed to take place between two entities, with the aspect of the Spinozist memories these entities are dissolved. This, however, does not take away the movement. On the contrary, the entities are

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65 “L’essence d’une chose n’apparaît jamais au début, mais au milieu, dans le courant de son développement, quand ses forces son affermies. Cela, Bergson le savait mieux que quiconque, lui qui avait transformé la philosophie en posant la question du « nouveau » (…)” (IM,11)

66 Curiously this is the only chapter called ”souvenirs à”, most of the others are called “souvenirs de”. It is not quite clear what this means. Instead of memories “of”, we have memories “to”. The second part on Spinoza, however, is called “Souvenirs d’un spinoziste,II”. A small riddle in the text.
dissolved into movement. With Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari dissolve essential entities and forms into formless elements of movement and rest, slowness and speed:

On a critiqué les formes essentielles ou substantielles de manières très diverses. Mais Spinoza procède radicalement : arriver à des éléments qui n’ont plus de forme ni de fonction, qui sont donc abstraits en ce sens, bien qu’ils soient parfaitement réels. Ils se distinguent seulement par le mouvement et le repos, la lenteur et la vitesse. (MP, 310)

The entities are no longer distinguishable, but are part of each other through different relations of movement and rest. Each individual can thus be part of another and greater one, which might in its own turn be part of something else:

Elles [les parties] ne se définissent pas par le nombre, puisqu’elles vont toujours par infinétés. Mais, suivant le degré de vitesse ou le rapport de mouvement et de repos dans lequel elles entrent, elles appartiennent à tel ou tel Individu, qui peut lui-même être partie d’un autre Individu sous un autre rapport plus complexe, à l’infini. (MP, 310-311)

This is a return to Deleuze’s explanation of the extended modes (des modes de l’étendue) in Spinoza’s philosophy:

L’attribut étendue a une quantité extensive modale qui se divise actuellement en une infinité de corps simples. Ces corps simples sont des parties extrinsèques qui ne se distinguent les unes des autres, et ne se rapportent les unes aux autres, que par le mouvement et le repos. (SE, 188)

The modes are composed by an infinity of parts that are related through movement and immobility. When this infinite number of small extended parts are brought together, their relations get to correspond to an essence de mode or degré de puissance, that is the intensif part of the modes.

C’est sous ce rapport [de mouvement et de repos] qu’un ensemble infini correspond à telle essence de mode (c’est-à-dire à tel degré de puissance), donc constitue dans l’étendue l’existence du mode même. (SE, 188)

These two together (the extended mode and its intensif essence or degré de puissance) build the immanent plane of God/Nature:

Si l’on considère l’ensemble de tous les ensembles infinis sous tous les rapports, on a «la somme de toutes les variations de la matière en mouvement», ou «la figure de l’univers entier» sous l’attribut étendue. Cette figure ou cette somme correspond à la toute-puissance
de Dieu en tant que celle-ci comprend tous les degrés de puissances ou toutes les essences de modes dans ce même attribut de l’étendue. (SE, 188)

It is not hard to see the interest of this in relation to *le devenir*. It means that nothing is in itself distinguishable, the entities are not exclusive and already enter into one another in different ways through relations of movement. Everything meets on the same plan, and *le devenir* so to speak only confirms that which is already a reality, things intertwining. The plan where everything meets is *le plan de consistance*, “le plan de consistance de la Nature” (MP, 311):

Plan fixe, où les choses ne se distinguent que par la vitesse et la lenteur. Plan d’immanence ou d’univocité, qui s’oppose à l’analogie. L’Un se dit en un seul et même sens de tout le multiple, l’Être se dit en un et même sens de tout ce qui diffère. Nous ne parlons pas ici de l’unité de la substance, mais de l’infinité des modifications qui sont parties les unes des autres sur ce seul et même plan de la vie. (MP, 311)

When everything meets and is one on “*le plan fixe de la vie*” (MP, 312), when everything is at once both one and multiple, some of the modulations on this plan are *devenirs*, some of these relations of movement and rest, slowness and speed are *devenirs*. *Le devenir* does not distinguish itself from how things already are, it just confirms that fixed entities are an illusion of structure, it takes us back to the plan where the structure is that of movement. Here we also get a part of the explanation why *le devenir* cannot be analogy; because it cannot be based on a structure of hierarchy and a separation of species and genders. All parts of being are modulations of the same plan. Being is not divided into different parts that can only be related to each other through analogy. For instance, human beings and animals spring from the same substance, the same plan of movement. Human beings are not like animals, they are animals. It is not only a stylistic polemic, but a philosophical and ontological one.

Basically, as the first sentence of the above quotation already indicates, we are on our way to a conception of life as movement:

En tout cas, pur plan d’immanence, d’univocité, de composition, où tout est donné, où dansent des éléments et matériaux non formés qui ne se distinguent que par la vitesse, et qui entrent dans tel ou tel agencement individué d’après leurs connexions, leurs rapports de mouvements. Plan fixe de la vie, où tout bouge, retarde ou se précipite. (MP, 312)

Life is that which moves, that which consists of movements, slow or fast, different relations between movements, that which dances. It is life before things are formed into entities and hierarchies, but also life as that which is hidden behind forms and hierarchies. In fact: there is
really no before/after: the plan is always there. However, it is not only that which moves, it is also that which is caught in an arrested movement: “Plan fixe de la vie, où tout bouge” (MP, 312). Even when conceiving life as movement, movement cannot be conceived without immobility, just as speed cannot be conceived without slowness. They are relative terms that cannot be understood independently of each other. But though they are relative in relation to each other, they are also absolute in relation to the plan. Actually, the absolute movement and the absolute immobility join each other, they are exchangeable, as in the following phrase:

Il faut essayer de penser ce monde où le même plan fixe, qu’on appellera d’immobilité ou de mouvement absolu, se trouve parcouru par des éléments informels de vitesse relative, entrant dans tel ou tel agencement individué d’après leurs degrés de vitesse et de lenteur. (MP, 312-313)

The plan is a plan of absolute immobility or of absolute movement, but the two are not contradictory. Indeed, the absolute immobility and the absolute movement join each other in the fixedness of the plan. The plan becomes “fixe” through the fact that it contains both immobility and mobility. Movement and immobility are both “fixe” in their absolute state:

Fixe ne veut pas dire ici immobile: c’est l’état absolu du mouvement autant que du repos, sur lequel se dessinent toutes les vitesses et lenteurs relatives et rien qu’elles. (MP, 326)

What is seemingly a simple figure of arrested movement, is in no way simple. Not only does the figure recur in many different contexts, it is also slightly different each time. Within this figure, the exact way movement and immobility is combined always differs. But we will have the opportunity to come back to the distinction and exchangeability of relative and absolute movement later, when we will also meet Kierkegaard.

*Particules moléculaires*

The dissolution of the entities and forms into relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness is also related to another aspect of *le devenir*, namely that a *devenir* always passes through particles in movement, through a *devenir-moléculaire*:

D’une certaine manière, il faut commencer par la fin: tous les devenirs sont déjà moléculaires. (...) Devenir, c’est, à partir des formes qu’on a, du sujet qu’on est, des organes qu’on possède ou des fonctions qu’on remplit, extraire des particules, entre lesquelles on instaure des rapport de mouvement et de repos, de vitesse et de lenteur, les plus proches de ce qu’on est en train de devenir, et par lesquels on devient. (MP, 334)
That is also why *le devenir* is not an analogy, why it can neither be imitation nor an attempt to reach a similar form or a similar set of relations or structures. It is a dissolution into particles or molecules in movement that approaches the movement relations of that which one tries to become. These relations of movement are central to the *zone de voisinage ou de coprésence* that *le devenir* constitutes. However, it is impossible to say whether it is the relations of movements that lead into the *zone de voisinage*, or if it is when entering into the *zone de voisinage* that one gets these relations of movement:

On peut dire aussi bien: émettre des particules qui prennent tels rapports de mouvement et de repos parce qu’elles entrent dans telle zone de voisinage ; ou : qui entrent dans cette zone parce qu’elles prennent ces rapports. (MP, 334)

But through these relations of movement one enters into molecules and through this *moléculaire* state becomes one with what one is trying to become. This is part of every *devenir*, whether it is a *devenir-animal*, a *devenir-femme* or any other *devenir*, and in that way all *devenirs* are related:

Oui, tous les devenirs sont moléculaires ; l’animal, la fleur ou la pierre qu’on devient sont des collectivités moléculaires, des heccéités, non pas des formes, des objets ou sujets molaires qu’on connaît hors de nous, et qu’on reconnait à force d’expérience ou de science, ou d’habitude. (MP, 337)

We can never enter into a *devenir* if we want to become something in its form of *molaire* entity; we can only become something if both we and what we want to be become *moléculaire*, “On ne devient animal que moléculaire.”(MP, 337) In the case of Beach Birds for Camera this would mean that the dancers cannot become “birds” as entities defined for instance by the natural sciences, or even common knowledge, as species, but that both the dancers and the birds become *moléculaires* and that they enter into a *zone de voisinage* through relations between movement and rest. They should not try to imitate the bird or construct the structure of a bird, but transform their own bodies and the bodies of the birds into molecules. It is not enough to incorporate animal components, these components have to be a deconstruction of the entity “bird” into molecules in movement. This means that the entities instead should become *heccéités*. 

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*Heccéités*

*Heccéités* are undefined and unformed *moléculaires* entities. The word is borrowed from the philosopher Duns Scot. Deleuze and Guattari specify in a note on page 318 that it is created from the word “haec” meaning “cette chose” or “this thing”, and not, as it is sometimes said, from “ecce” (to be). But actually they find this mistake suggestive: “c’est une erreur féconde, parce qu’elle suggère un mode d’individualisation qui ne se confond précisément pas avec celui d’une chose ou d’un sujet.” (MP,318) This *mode d’individualisation* can be exemplified by for instance a season, the weather or other phenomena that cannot be conceived as a totality:

> Il y a un mode d’individualisation très différent de celui d’une personne, d’un sujet, d’une chose ou d’une substance. Nous lui réservons le non d’heccéité. Une saison, un hiver, un été, une heure, une date ont une individualité parfaite et qui ne manque de rien, bien qu’elle ne se confonde pas avec celle d’une chose ou d’un sujet. Ce sont des heccéités, en ce sens que tout y est rapport de mouvement et de repos entre molécules ou particules, pouvoir d’affecter et d’être affecté. (MP, 318)

But it is not only seasons and other impersonal phenomena that can be *heccéités*. Subjects and objects can also be *heccéités* under a certain point of view and in a certain state, namely taken as consisting of movement and rest, different speeds, different affects. We are also *heccéités*:

> “Car vous ne donnerez rien aux heccéités sans vous apercevoir que vous en êtes, et que vous n’êtes rien d’autre.” (MP, 320). The animal, the flower, the rock can also be *heccéités*, and in *le devenir* this is what we have to go into, become *heccéités*.

*Beach Birds for Camera* does, though it is not the first thing one notices, consist of other things than birds. As we saw in the first quotation, Cunningham had the idea of rock in his mind when doing the choreography. The rocks, the beach, the birds, all part of an undefined space and time. It would be too much to claim that the dancers become rocks, but what is interesting about the rock is not its substance, its form, the rock as an object. It is the fact that it constantly changes. Like the bird, the rock enters into a process, an *agencement*, that transforms all of them. It is the rock seen as *heccéité* that we are dealing with, even if we cannot actually see the rock. Another component of this *agencement* is the wind. In the beginning there is a slight sound of wind in the music, but we actually only become aware of this when we see the dancers swaying in the wind, as if on the beach, some kind of being on the beach, where there might be some rocks too, rocks changing depending on the weather and the wind.
Deleuze and Guattari mention several kinds of *heccéités* in art. Firstly, they talk of the way for instance writers use *heccéités* like weather, seasons and winds to create changes and atmospheres. Then they develop the idea that everything can be an *heccéité* when seen as movements and speeds, *longitudes* and *latitudes*, or when entering into an *agencement* with other elements that transform all of it into an *heccéité*: the time, the place, the subject and the object are transformed into an *heccéité*. In *Beach Birds for Camera* we at least have the first (the creation of an atmosphere), but we might even have the second, once the wind, the dancers, the birds, the imaginary rocks enter into an *agencement* that makes of the dance studio a beach, a a seashore, the sand, but in a *moléculaire* form of movement where the objects never become clear.

**Le devenir-imperceptible and movement**

All *devenirs* pass by a *devenir-moléculaire* as the entities of the subject and the object are dissolved into molecules and particles. But even these are not really to be understood as entities but as relations of movement. They are smaller than molecules, perhaps they do not even have extension, and they are *imperceptible*. And that is the next step: all *devenirs* pass by a *devenir-imperceptible*:

*Si le devenir-femme est le premier quantum, ou segment moléculaire, et puis les devenirs-animaux qui s’enchaînent avec lui, vers quoi se précipitent-ils tous ? Sans aucun doute, vers un devenir-imperceptible. L’imperceptible est la fin immanente du devenir, sa formule cosmique. (MP, 342)*

This *imperceptible* is linked to a reflection on the indefinite nouns and the infinite verbs: *l’imperceptible* is a becoming “tout le monde”, becoming indefinite. This is not at all the same as becoming normal (in a normative sense); it is to become invisible, unnoticeable, becoming an abstract line that passes without being seen, becoming “un monde”, a world:

*Car, tout le monde est l’ensemble molaire, mais devenir tout le monde est une autre affaire, qui met en jeu le cosmos avec ses composantes moléculaires. Devenir tout le monde, c’est faire monde, faire un monde. (MP, 343)*

But moreover, *l’imperceptible* is intimately linked with movement. Not only because *le devenir-imperceptible* is movement, but because movement is imperceptible. This adds another layer to the conception of *le devenir* as movement. This is confirmed by the way “mouvements” and “devenirs” are put alongside each other in the middle of this passage:
Le mouvement est dans un rapport essentiel avec l'imperceptible, il est par nature imperceptible. C'est que la perception ne peut saisir le mouvement que comme la translation d'un mobile ou le développement d'une forme. Les mouvements, et les devenirs, c'est-à-dire les purs rapports de vitesse et de lenteur, les purs affects, sont en dessous ou au-dessus du seuil de perception. (MP, 344)

Here the explanation of movement goes one step further than in the film books. It is that which cannot be understood through the poses, the “translation d’un mobile”, that is, the movement that is translated or transmitted by an object that moves, or the “développement d’une forme”. The movement is something else than that which moves. But it is also that which cannot be perceived, not only because a series of pictures cannot capture it, but because the perception works by series, and the movement passes either under or above the levels of perception:

Si bien que le mouvement pour lui-même continue à se passer ailleurs : si l'on constitue la perception en série, le mouvement se fait toujours au-delà du seuil maximal et en deçà du seuil minimal, dans des intervalles en expansion ou en contraction (micro-intervalles). (MP, 344)

As an example Deleuze and Guattari mention Japanese wrestlers (sumo wrestlers) whose movements are both too slow and too quick to be seen. But, in fact, instead of the wrestlers, that which is perceived is the infinite slowness and the infinite speed. The slowness and the speed, however, are not only in the game, but also in the perception of the spectator first waiting for something to happen, then asking himself what happened:

C’est comme les énormes lutteurs japonais dont l’avance est trop lente et la prise trop rapide et soudaine pour être vues : alors ce qui s’accouple, ce sont moins les lutteurs que l’infinie lenteur d’une attente (qu’est-ce qui va se passer ?) avec la vitesse infinie d’un résultat (qu’est-ce qui s’est passé ?). (MP, 344)

The combination of that which is either too slow or too fast to be perceived, either beneath or above our levels of perception, is condensed into an image of arrested movement. It is the same image of Japanese wrestlers as Deleuze uses to describe his collaboration with Guattari. And here too it condenses levels of thought that are not explicitly developed in the text. It exemplifies a paradoxical movement, which is imperceptible and therefore confronts perception with its own limits. But apparently, it also makes perception stretch its limits, makes thought go beyond itself. The movement is imperceptible, and yet it is perceived. Already here the imperceptible becomes perceptible, as we will see in a moment.
Strictly speaking, it is not enough to see that the dancers in *Beach Birds for Camera* move; the dancer is a *mobile* that transfers movement, but is not movement itself; movement is not the way the forms of their bodies develop either. Actually, we have a double problem: firstly, the camera perhaps cannot perceive real movement – it is only a series of pictures that cannot capture the block of movement that is in between; secondly, our perception also proceeds in series that re-constitute the movement, but the movement itself in its entirety escapes our levels of perception. When we think we see the movement of the dancers in *Beach Birds for Camera* it is strictly speaking an illusion; the movement itself is invisible to us, it is *imperceptible*. And equally, we might add, the *devenirs* of the dancers are *imperceptible*. We might see parts of *le devenir*, some of its poses, but the movement of *le devenir* itself goes beyond our levels of perception. But perhaps it can be perceived on another level.

**Moving with Kierkegaard**

At this point, Deleuze and Guattari’s argument takes a turn for which they use Kierkegaard’s *Frygt og Bæven* (*Fear and Trembling*), not as an example but as a way of moving their argument further. This might seem to take us further away from Cunningham, but it takes us into a junction of movement in Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking. It is one of those points where thought is struggling with itself. It also leads us back to Deleuze’s resolution to put thought into motion.

What attracts them to this book is expressed in the following footnote:

Nous nous rapportons à *Crainte et tremblement*, qui nous paraît le plus grand livre de Kierkegaard, par sa manière de poser le problème du mouvement et de la vitesse, non seulement dans son contenu, mais dans son style et sa composition. (MP, 344)

Deleuze and Guattari are right that this work has an interesting aspect of movement. As they say, it is present in the content and the style of the book, the way Kierkegaard keeps turning the story about Abraham and Isaak over and over again, to discover different aspects, different *affects*, and different movements of the spirit. And this is also what the mental dispositions Kierkegaard describes are called: movements of the spirit (“Aandens Rørelser” or “Aandens Bevægelser”). This is of course a common metaphor that goes back to the etymological origin of “emotion”, coming from “movere”, to move.67 But Kierkegaard does not only use it as a casual metaphor, but develops it further through, among other things,

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67 Mouvoir: Lat.clas.: emovere = émuer, ébranler, composed of ex + movere = mettre en mouvement. Emotion : lat. : motio = mouvement, trouble, frisson, derived from « movere ». (DHLF)
physical metaphors (swimming, dancing, etc.) which he takes literally. He takes it so far that he presumably does not look at the state of mind of someone, but only at the way the movements are executed, as Deleuze and Guattari quote: “«Je ne regarde qu’aux mouvements»” (MP,344)/ "Jeg seer blot paa Bevægelserne” (Kierkegaard, 2001 (1843),p.36)\(^68\).

There are two movements in particular that interest Kierkegaard: “Uendelighedens Bevægelser” (“the movements of infinity”) i den “Uendelige Resignation” (“the infinite resignation”) og “Troens Bevægelser” (“the movements of faith”) which are also “Endelighedens Bevægelser” (“the movements of finitude”); these also play an important role in the interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari. They might seem paradoxical: the one who does not have faith makes the movements of infinity, but the one who has faith makes the movements of finitude.

Since “Uendelighedens Bevægelser”/the movements of infinity are not the movements of the one who has faith, it is quite curious why they are called infinite. It is the movement of complete resignation that humans are able to make regardless of faith. It is the acceptance that one is not going to obtain what one wanted, for instance a beloved, and that life is ephemeral. An acceptance, however, which keeps the wish alive and finds contentment in being faithful to the wish though giving it up, taking the pain upon oneself. It is the movements of “den Uendelige Resignations Ridder” (“the knight of infinite resignation”).

In contrast to this, there is the movement of faith made by “Troens Ridder” (“the knight of faith”). His movements, surprisingly, are not infinite, do not refer to anything infinite but are so much in the world, are so much in finitude that he almost seems philistine or we might say exceedingly normal, or as Kierkegaard ironically says, “‘Herre Gud! Er det Mennesket, er det virkeligt ham, han seer jo ud som en Rodemester.’” (Kierkegaard,2001 (1843),p.37)\(^69\). His movements betray or convey nothing of infinity, no matter how much one looks, not even a bit of the movements of the poet. He is constantly and completely in finitude. This does not mean that he has not made the movement of complete resignation, rather, he has made the movement of resignation plus the movement of faith. The movement of faith is made with the help of the absurd; through believing the absurd. Through the absurd finitude is brought back to him in faith, even if he had given it up in resignation, and he can enter into it fully, be

\(^{68}\) “I look only at the movements” (Kierkegaard, 2003 (1985), p.67)

\(^{69}\) “‘Good God! Is this the person, is it really him? He looks just like a tax-gatherer.’” (Kierkegaard, 2003 (1985), p.68)
completely absorbed in finite life. This is the paradoxical movement of faith; it brings one back into finitude.

Deleuze and Guattari use this distinction between infinite movement and finite movement in several ways. First it helps them clarify an aspect of the imperceptible movement of le devenir; namely, to characterise movement (especially the movement of le devenir) as infinite:

Il a d’autant plus de raisons de préciser qu’il n’y a de mouvement que de l’infini; que le mouvement de l’infini ne peut se faire que par affect, passion, amour, dans un devenir qui est jeune fille, mais sans référence à une « médiation » quelconque ; et que ce mouvement comme tel échappe à la perception médiatrice, puisqu’il est déjà effectué à tout moment, et que le danseur, ou l’amant, se trouve déjà « debout en marche », à la seconde même où il retombe, et même à l’instant où il saute. (MP, 344)

There are only movements of the infinite, all movements are of the infinite. It is not that easy to determine what they mean by this. Is it infinite because it is imperceptible? Has the finite movement that Kierkegaard is also talking about suddenly disappeared? Does that mean that they rule out the finite movement of faith? These questions will be answered later, when Deleuze and Guattari try to merge the two kinds of movement into an immanent plan. But to start with, they want to determine movement and le devenir as a question of affect by reference also to a note in Kierkegaard’s text where he polemically argues about the movement of resignation:

Dertil hører der Lidenskab. Enhver Uendelighedens Bevægelse skeer ved Lidenskab, og ingen Reflexion kan tilveiebringe en Bevægelse. Dette er det idelige Spring i Tilværelsen, der forklarer Bevægelser, medens Mediationen er en Chimaire, som hos Hegel skal forklare Alt, og som tillige er det Eneste, han aldrig har forsøgt at forklare. (Kierkegaard, 2001 (1843), p.40)

It is in this kind of phrase that Deleuze finds a kindred spirit in the critique of the faux movement of Hegel (“Il s’agit au contraire de produire dans l’œuvre un mouvement capable d’émouvoir l’esprit hors de toute représentation; (...) de substituer des signes directs à des représentations médiates (...).” (DR, 16)) Both le devenir and the infinite movement of resignation are movements of affects. It is through affect that one moves. Le devenir is always made by affects and thereby it is infinite. They are on the way to bringing “emotion” back to

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70 **“This requires passion. Every movement of infinity occurs with passion, and no reflection can bring about a movement. That’s the perpetual leap in life which explains the movement, while mediation is a chimera which in Hegel is supposed to explain everything and besides the only thing he has never tried to explain.” (Kierkegaard, 2003 (1985), p.71)**
its etymological source – and thus continue Kierkegaard’s metaphors of movement – but to do that they change its meaning through the concept of affect.

This could be relevant to Cunningham. Is the movement executed by emotion or by reflection? Cunningham’s answer would be double, movement does not spring from emotion but from movement itself, but on the other hand one should not reflect too much when making the movements as it might inhibit them. Actually, the first idea underlines the quotation that Deleuze and Guattari notice in Kierkegaard: “ne regarder qu’aux movements”, for even the way Kierkegaard describes it, the important thing is not to learn the emotions, but to learn the movements and execute them well. The secret is in the execution of the movements. If there is a devenir-oiseau in Beach Birds for Camera it does not have to do with the way the dancers imagine themselves as birds (live themselves into the birds emotionally), but the way they execute the movements.

At the end of the above quotation on infinite movement Deleuze and Guattari also refer to another passage in Kierkegaard’s text where he develops the metaphor of movement through an analogy with a dancer. In an explanation of how the knight of faith makes the movements of the infinite so completely that they enter into the finite, he compares the knight’s movements to the impossible jump of a dancer:


What he is describing is actually a figure of arrested movement: the simultaneity of the jump and the position, the position is in the jump (“men i Springet selv staa i Stillingen”). The combination of the infinite and the finite movement is described as an arrested movement.

That we have to do with an arrested movement is underlined stylistically. It is present in the chiasmic expression “Maaske kan ingen Dandser gjøre det – dette gjør hiin Ridder” (“Perhaps no dancer can do it – but that knight does it”). There is a crossing in the position of the words, the order of the words is reversed in the second part of the Danish sentence, in a way that has the result that it both moves and stays the same or closes in on itself, it becomes

71 “He is continually making the movement of infinity, but he makes it with such accuracy and poise that he is continually getting finitude out of it, and not for a second would one suspect anything else. It is said that the dancer’s hardest task is to leap straight into a definite position, so that not for a second does he have to catch at the position but stands there in the leap itself. Perhaps no dancer can do it – but that knight does it. (Kierkegaard, 2003 (1985), p.70)
a caesura. Even the preceding sentence contains such crossings, though it is harder to represent it visually because of its length. But it seems evident to me that there is a similar tension at stake, though it is expressed differently. There is a tension between the movement verbs, “springer” (leap) and “griber” (catch), and the static noun “Stilling” (position) in the first two parts of the phrase; a tension that becomes condensed in the last part where the verb “springer” becomes the noun “Spring” (leap) and the noun “Stilling” becomes the verb “staar” (stand): “i Springet selv staar i Stillingen” (“stands there in the leap itself”). There are several crosses of meanings retained this a figure of arrested movement. Even Deleuze and Guattari retain a part of this stylistic way of presenting the arrested movement in the sentence where the position of the word “même” in the two parts hint at a chiasmic relation: “à la seconde même où il retombe, et même à l’instant où il saute” (MP, 344). There is no stylistic surplus, only the necessity of thought. The arrested movement is not only a stylistic figure, but a way of thinking.

First, it might seem as if the position is in the jump itself, in the air. But in the continuation of the metaphor it seems as if the position refers to the landing. For what the knight of resignation is not able to do, is the invisible landing where he takes the perfect position completely without tottering:

Men hver Gang de falde ned, kunne de ikke strax antage Stillingen, de vakle et Øieblik, og denne Vaklen viser, at de dog ere Fremme i Verden. Den er mere eller mindre paaafaldende, eftersom de have Kunst, men selv den kunstigste af disse Riddere kan dog ikke skjule denne Vaklen. Man behøver ikke se dem i Luften, man behøver blot at see dem i det Øieblik, de berører og have berørt Jorden – og man kjender dem. (Kierkegaard, 2001 (1843), p.39)72

The knights of resignation stumble when they land; they cannot make the finite movements perfectly, the jump and the position cannot become one. Though their artistry is excellent they cannot perform the highest of arts, land as if they had not jumped, or as Kierkegaard also expresses it: turn the jump into simple walking, make of pedestrian movement something sublime:

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72 “But when they come down they cannot assume the position straightaway, they waver an instant and the wavering shows they are nevertheless strangers in the world. This may be more or less evident, depending on their skill, but even the most skilled of these knights cannot hide the vacillation. One doesn’t need to see them in the air, one only has to see them the moment they come and have come to earth to recognize them.” (Kierkegaard, 2003 (1985), p.70)
Men at kunne falde saaledes ned, at det I samme Secund seer ud som stod og gik man, at forvandle Springet i Livet til Gang, absolut at udtrykke det Sublime i det Pedestre – det kan kun hiin Ridder, – og dette er det eneste Vidunder. (Kierkegaard, 2001(1843), p.39)

Here we might think of how Cunningham works with the invisible border between movement and immobility. He works with combinations of movement that do no follow the rules of for instance preparation – jump – recuperation. The dancer must be able to jump without preparation depending on the movement before, and come out of the jump in another movement with as little need of recuperation as possible. To do this as easily as if one were walking in the street, that is sublime. It is this kind of pedestrian movement Cunningham incorporates in his choreographies. They are both pedestrian and sublime at the same time, there is only one plan. Deleuze and Guattari retain this figure of the pedestrian sublime and immobile movement in their paraphrase, “le danseur, ou l’amant, se retrouve déjà «debout en marche», à la seconde même où il retombe, et même à l’instant où il saute” (MP, 344). But they put it into a slightly different context to show that the movement (the infinite imperceptible movement) always escapes perception because it is always already executed, the jump and the landing cannot be separated, the movement is always already split into a “before” and an “after” which perception cannot retain. It seems as if the infinite movement is compressed into the simultaneity of the jump and the landing, the movement and the immobility. The imperceptible movement of affect and of le devenir is an arrested movement.

Deleuze and Guattari also use Kierkegaard to execute another movement, namely the distinction of two different plans, and of respectively relative and absolute movement. It is a contradictory movement where they first turn 180 degrees to say that l’imperceptible must also be seen, it is also the “percipiendum” (MP, 345). This is explained by the difference between the two plans. On the “plan d’organisation et de développement, plan de transcendance” (MP, 345) the movements are relative because they are in relation to the levels of perception, to the subjects perceiving them. On the other plan, “d’immanence ou de consistance”, however, the movements cease to be relative in relation to a subject, to become absolute in relation to the plan that in itself becomes perceptible:

Mais, sur l’autre plan, d’immanence ou de consistance, c’est le principe de composition lui-même qui doit être perçu, qui ne peut être que perçu, en même temps que ce qu’il compose ou donne. Ici, le mouvement cesse d’être rapporté à la médiation d’un seuil relatif auquel il échappe par nature à l’infini ; il a atteint, quelle que soit sa vitesse ou sa lenteur, un seuil

73 “But to be able to land in just that way, and in the same second to look as though one was up and walking, to transform the leap in life to a gait, to express the sublime in the pedestrian absolutely – that is something only the knight of faith can do – and it is the one and only marvel.” (Kierkegaard, 2003 (1985), p.70)
The movement is absolute but differenciated, even if it is absolute it is still multiple. The movements are relative in relation to each other, but all of them are absolute in relation to the plan. The imperceptible movement becomes perceptible on the plan:

C’est la différence des deux plans qui fait que ce qui ne peut pas être perçu sur l’un ne peut être que perçu sur l’autre. C’est là que l’imperceptible devient le nécessairement-perçu, sautant d’un plan à l’autre, ou des seuils relatifs au seul absolu qui leur coexiste. (MP, 345)

We might possibly say that the imperceptible movement is made perceptible on the immanent plan, because it is made by such imperceptible movements, constituted by them. What is certain is that there are several movements at play: a movement making le devenir the infinite movement of Kierkegaard, a movement making the imperceptible perceptible when jumping onto le plan de consistance, and a movement showing that the two plans in the text of Kierkegaard are one. This last movement ends the circle.

One might think that the “jump” of Kierkegaard into faith could indicate a jump onto another plan separated from the one we live on. But supporting themselves on the description of the knight of faith in Frygt og Bøven/Fear and Trembling, Deleuze and Guattari show that there is only one immanent plan:

Kierkegaard montre que le plan de l’infini, ce qu’il appelle le plan de la foi, doit devenir pur plan d’immanence qui ne cesse de donner immédiatement, de redonner, de recueillir le fini : contrairement à l’homme de la résignation infinie, le chevalier de la foi, c’est-à-dire l’homme du devenir, aura la jeune fille, il aura tout le fini, et percevra l’imperceptible, en tant que « héritier direct du monde fini ». (MP, 345)

Here again there is a paradox concerning the concepts of Kierkegaard. The infinite movements are those of the one who does not believe, but here the “plan de l’infini” is the plan of faith. But more importantly, the two plans melt together as faith sends the knight of faith fully back into the world (in contrast to the knight of resignation). Therefore, it is not entirely a deleuzification of Kierkegaard, when Deleuze and Guattari talk of a “pur plan d’immanence”. Surprisingly perhaps, the knight of faith is the man of le devenir, the one who undergoes le devenir. This is almost contradictory, as they first defined le devenir as infinite movements, and those are in Kierkegaard’s text linked to the knight of resignation. But what this underlines concerning le devenir is of course that le devenir is always real and of this world, it sends the knight of le devenir back into the real world, but with another conception
of the plan. Instead of living the plan as structure and organisation, the knight of le devenir lives the plan as le plan de consistance full of heccéités that are moléculaires and imperceptibles:

La perception se trouvera confrontée à sa propre limite; elle sera parmi les choses, dans l’ensemble de son propre voisinage, comme la présence d’une heccéité dans une autre, la préhension de l’une par l’autre ou le passage de l’une à l’autre: ne regarder qu’aux mouvements. (MP, 345)

That is why l’imperceptible becomes perceptible, because the subject and the object are dissolved into heccéités that are moléculaires and in movement; the subject itself becomes only movement and becomes one with that which was imperceptible. That is why we should only look to the movements, according to Deleuze and Guattari, when considering le plan de consistance and le devenir: there is only movement. But to show this and to experience this plan d’immanence and its movement, we need a figure of immobile movement. By refusing a representational level, Cunningham argues for the dance as something that moves on one immanent plan only, full of movement in different forms and speeds, but nonetheless real. They are infinite because imperceptible on the plan or finite because they are nevertheless perceived by us. And sometimes they are even both, when movement and immobility become one. “In dance, it is the simple fact of a jump being a jump, and the further fact of what shape the jump takes” (Vaughan, 1997, p.86), Cunningham says; “ne regarder qu’aux mouvements.” (MP, 345).

Movements – affects – bodies

The movement of le devenir can only be made through affects, Deleuze and Guattari say through Kierkegaard. In the quotation they were referring to, Kierkegaard speaks of emotions such as passion. However, in view of the complexity of both Kierkegaard and Deleuze and Guattari’s texts, and their ability to write movement, we could perhaps ask if even reflection can make them. In any case, Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of affects is so large that it can possibly include reflection. In their thinking, affects are not equivalent to emotion; their conception of affects is much larger, as it becomes apparent in their interpretation of Spinoza.

Through Spinoza, affects are linked to movement. The relations between movement and rest, slowness and speed (which constitute the modes) constitute the bodies, their capacities and their affects. Firstly, the movements correspond to different degrés de puissance:
A chaque rapport de mouvement et de repos, de vitesse et de lenteur, qui groupe une infinité de parties, correspond un degré de puissance. Aux rapports qui composent un individu, qui le décomposent ou le modifient, correspondent des intensités qui l’affectent, augmentant ou diminuant sa puissance d’agir, venant des parties extérieures ou de ses propres parties. Les affects sont des devenirs. (MP, 313-314)

Le degré de puissance then again corresponds to intensités, which in their turn affectent the body. These affects can be both internal or external; the body can be affected both by itself or by something else. But even when it is affected by something outside itself, its capacity to be affected is a characteristic and an act of the body itself. Thus the movements also affect the body, and the affects are devenirs. These affects are not emotions (in the ordinary sense of the word affection) but the effect of the degrés de puissance. They are part of what a body can do (“Spinoza demande: qu’est-ce que peut un corps?” (MP, 314)), they are not something the mind thinks but something the body does.

Movement, affects and the body are thus related. This is interesting in relation to Cunningham as it proposes a way to see the body where affect and form are not opposed: affects are part of what the body can do and not necessarily emotional. Affects are movements. It breaks down the opposition between motion and emotion that Cunningham fights against. But instead of denying emotion, the affects include it in the motion of the body. Emotion is brought back to its etymological beginning in motion, and thus made less emotional. It becomes obvious that even if Cunningham’s work seems less marked by affection than Bacon’s, he is by definition working with affects the way they are here defined by Deleuze and Guattari, not least through working with the relations of movement of the body. Relations of movement are affects even if they are unemotional. In fact, they are so inherent in the movement of the body that they become imperceptible and invisible. Through the concept of affect the opposition between emotional and un-emotional is dissolved and everything becomes movement.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the body is not defined through its form, but through what it does, its movements, what kind of agencement it enters into with its surroundings, what kind of affects it is capable of, what kind of devenirs it can enter into. By defining the affects as part of the body, the idea of the body has been expanded. This also becomes clear in the definition of the body as “latitude” and “longitude”.

What Deleuze and Guattari call la latitude of the body is the affects it is capable of or the intensités it is capable of:
On appellerà *latitude* d’un corps les affects dont il est capable suivant tel degré de puissance, ou plutôt suivant les limites de ce degré. *La latitude est faite de parties intensives sous une capacité, comme la longitude, de parties extensives sous un rapport.* (MP, 314)

*La latitude* is the *intensive* part of the *mode* (*essence/degré de puissance*); *la longitude* is the extended mode (the different parts) that that results from these relations. But though *la latitude* (and the *affects*) is *intensive*, it is still part of what the body is able to do. It is not the materials, forms and organs that define a body:

Un corps ne se définit pas par la forme qui le détermine, ni comme une substance ou un sujet déterminés, ni par les organes qu’il possède ou les fonctions qu’il exerce. (MP, 318)

Instead, it is what it can do that defines it. What it can do physically, but not least which *affects* it is capable of. On *le plan de consistance* the body is defined by its *latitude* and *longitude*:

Sur le plan de consistance, *un corps se définit seulement par une longitude et une latitude* : c’est-à-dire l’ensemble des éléments matériels qui lui appartiennent sous tels rapports de mouvement et de repos, de vitesse et de lenteur (longitude) ; l’ensemble des affects intensifs dont il est capable, sous tel pouvoir ou degré de puissance (latitude). (MP, 318.)

The body is both *intensif* and *extensif*, it has both *latitude* and *longitude*, and both are equally part of it.

If *devenirs* are *affects* and *affects* are part of the body, *le devenir* in fact has to do with the body to a large extent. Not only because it often has to do with a transformation of the body, but also because fundamentally, it has to do with the construction of the body. *Le devenir* and the definition of the body as *longitude* and *latitude* is opposed to the definition of the body as form, species or gender:

Tout comme on évitait de définir un corps par ses organes et ses fonctions, on évite de le définir par des caractères Espèces ou Genre : on cherche à faire le compte de ses affects. On appelle « éthologie » une telle étude, et c’est en ce sens que Spinoza écrit une véritable Éthique. (MP, 314)

But when we do not study the bodies in terms of species, gender or form, we have to study them in terms of actions, what they can or do, what affects they are capable of, which *agencements* they enter into. Deleuze and Guattari call this an “éthologie” (that is, the study of the behaviour of animals) and they make of this an “éthique” (in reference to Spinoza’s *Éthique* – thus giving the word a double meaning). It is ethical because it takes into account
the body that is obliterated when talking in structural or hierarchical terms. It defines the individual capacities of a body instead of classifying it according to already existing categories. It takes into account *le corps sans organes*. What is beginning to emerge is how Deleuze and Guattari link several different discussions: the creative and arbitrary *individuations* of animals instead of fixed species that relate to each other through analogy, the critique of imitation as reproduction of the same in favour of a literal devenir that dissolves all entities, and the body as *corps sans organes* instead of opposable sexes produced through the reproduction of the same. All these come together in *le devenir*.

*Le devenir-femme*

There is thus also a relation between *le devenir* and *le corps sans organes*. *Le devenir* brings forward a *corps sans organes*. This becomes particularly evident in *le devenir-femme*. The young girl is the first one to experience how we are robbed of our bodies (*corps sans organes*) to be limited to two opposable organisms (men – women):

> Or, c’est à la fille qu’on vole d’abord ce corps: cesse de te tenir comme ça, tu n’es plus une petite fille, tu n’es pas un garçon manqué, etc. C’est à la fille qu’on vole d’abord son devenir pour lui imposer une histoire, ou une pré-histoire. (MP, 338-339)

It is on a very concrete level that this symbolic theft is committed. But if the young girl is the first to experience this theft, it might be a slight satisfaction that, subsequently, the recuperation of *le corps sans organes* is always related to a *devenir-femme*:

> C’est pourquoi, inversement, la reconstruction du corps comme Corps sans organes, l’anorganisme du corps, est inséparable d’un devenir-femme ou de la production d’une femme moléculaire. (MP, 339)

In fact, this is true to the point that the “young girl” (*jeune fille*) herself becomes a *devenir-femme* (*moléculaire*, not the *molaire* woman that society raises young girls to be), that *le devenir-femme* is a *jeune fille*:

> Sans doute la jeune fille devient-elle femme, au sens organique ou molaire. Mais inversement le devenir-femme ou la femme moléculaire sont la jeune fille elle-même. La jeune fille ne se définit certes pas par la virginité, mais par un rapport de mouvement et de repos, de vitesse et de lenteur, par une combinaison d’atomes, une émission de particules : heccéité. (MP, 339)
La jeune fille of le devenir-femme is a corps sans organes, we might also say. Le devenir-femme is not just yet another idealisation of the woman. The molaire entity of the category woman is in no way idealised, on the contrary, the way it is constructed through theft is underlined, and if there is an idealisation, it is the idealisation of the jeune fille as movement, heccéité and corps sans organes. But yet again, it would be wrong to see this solely as an idealisation of the “young girl”, for in fact it is also an intertextual reference, one of the many to be found in their texts, a reference to Proust. Furthermore, the jeune fille becomes something more than a young girl, she becomes something that encompasses all sexes and all ages:

Aussi les jeunes filles n’appartiennent pas à un âge, à un sexe, à un ordre ou à un règne : elles se glissent plutôt, entre les ordres, les actes, les âges, les sexes ; elles produisent n sexes moléculaires sur la ligne de fuite, par rapport aux machines duelles qu’elles traversent de part en part. (MP, 339)

La jeune fille can actually no longer be identified as a girl who is young, la jeune fille is something that pertains to le devenir of all sexes and all ages, she is a bloc de devenir, however mysteriously :

La jeune fille est comme le bloc de devenir qui reste contemporain de chaque terme opposable, homme, femme, enfant, adulte. Ce n’est pas la jeune fille qui devient femme, c’est le devenir-femme qui fait la jeune fille universelle; ce n’est pas l’enfant qui devient adulte, c’est le devenir-enfant qui fait une jeunesse universelle. (MP, 339)

As le devenir-femme is beginning to show, le devenir includes a theory of gender and sexuality. This is an inherent part of the work of Deleuze and Guattari, as we already saw concerning le corps sans organes. In L’Anti-Œdipe, for instance, they describe desire and gender in this way:

C’est cela, les machines désirantes ou le sexe non humain: non pas un ni même deux sexes, mais n... sexes. La schizo-analyse est l’analyse variable des n... sexes dans un sujet, par-delà la représentation anthropomorphique que la société lui impose et qu’il se donne lui-même de sa propre sexualité. La formule schizo-analytique de la révolution désirante sera d’abord : à chacun ses sexes. (AŒ, 352)

74 It is through these remarks on the “young girl” that we shall find the answers to the rhetorical question on page 340 of the chapter, why Proust made Albert into Albertine (Proust is thought to have transformed the real-life Albert into his fictional character Albertine). We might have said that it was necessary to make the forbidden homosexual longing into an apparently heterosexual attraction. But Deleuze and Guattari’s explanation is that all devenirs and all sexualities pass by la jeune fille of le devenir-femme.
Also in *le devenir* Deleuze and Guattari take apart sexuality as that which takes place between two opposable categories of sexes. Instead, they argue that sexuality is the construction of a limitless number of particular sexes that pass through just as many *devenirs*.

**Le devenir-femme of the human becoming bird**

Just as all *devenirs* are *moléculaires* and *imperceptibles*, all *devenirs* also pass by *un devenir-femme*:

Or, si tous les devenirs sont déjà moléculaires, y compris le devenir-femme, il faut dire aussi que tous les devenirs commencent et passent par le devenir-femme. C’est la clef des autres devenirs. (MP, 340)

This would also be the case of *le devenir-oiseau*. All *devenirs* are related and pass through each other. *Le devenir-oiseau* is a good opportunity to ask ourselves how this is possible, or whether it is visible. For instance, if there is an oscillating *devenir-oiseau* at stake in *Beach Birds for Camera*, it does not seem at first sight to contain an obvious *devenir-femme*, as it would if it contained, for instance, drag elements. But then again, *le devenir-femme* that Deleuze and Guattari speak of does not necessarily express itself through travesty even if it can.

Both the male and female dancers in Cunningham’s choreography are dressed in the same bird costumes. As far as I can see, in this choreography there are not even any differences in the details, like the collar or the cut of it. Both men and women become birds. Nevertheless, we are still able to distinguish between the male and female dancers. Their gender is revealed through their hair-cuts and the way their bodies are built. Sometimes they are even revealed in opposition to one another. When female and male dancers dance together, we can more easily place their genders because the female dancers look relatively more feminine. For instance, at the beginning of the second part there is quite a long *pas de deux* between a male and a female dancer. It is worth noticing that this *pas de deux*, which is very close to imitation, is also quite close to traditional gender roles. Nevertheless, sometimes we have to pay very much attention in order to distinguish between the female and the male dancers. Sometimes we have to look very carefully in order to tell, as the general form of the bodies becomes so alike. Actually, they are harder to distinguish in the first black and white part where the minimalist outcome blurs the gender distinction even more. In the second part the colour has an almost realistic effect, and with the visibility of the body the genders also become easier to determine.
Le devenir-animal does have an effect on gender. Even if it is not primarily a devenir-femme, it is a devenir-androgyne which is also a devenir-femme through the way it extracts both men and women from their molaire genders. The two genders of the dancers are brought closer to each other through the costumes and their common movement vocabulary, and they are both made more androgynous. The masculinity of the male dancers is thus diminished through the devenir-femme at stake in the devenir-animal, and the femininity of the female dancers is also diminished, they also enter into a devenir-femme that removes them from the molaire entity “woman”. But as it seems to be with all the devenirs, at least in this choreography, the passage is never completed, it is always an asymmetrical movement between the two, where we are sometimes closer to the molaire entity and sometimes closer to the moléculaire dissolution of it, but always somewhere on the line between the two, or in a fall perpendicular to the two.

It might seem curious that le devenir-femme has so little to do with women. This is due to two traits of le devenir-femme: it is not an imitation of women, and even women have to undergo it in order to become moléculaire. What Deleuze and Guattari are trying to describe is not an identity politics that defends a particular minority, but a micropolitics that transforms both majorities and minorities into molecules:

Or devenir-femme n’est pas imiter cette entité, ni même se transformer en elle. On ne négligera pourtant pas l’importance de l’imitation, ou de moments d’imitation, chez certains homosexuels mâles : encore moins, la prodigieuse tentative de transformation réelle chez certains travestis. Nous voulons seulement dire que ces aspects inséparables du devenir-femme doivent d’abord se comprendre en fonction d’autre chose : ni imiter ni prendre la forme féminine, mais émettre des particules qui entrent dans le rapport de mouvement et de repos, ou dans la zone de voisinage d’une micro-fémininité, c’est-à-dire produire en nous une femme moléculaire, créer la femme moléculaire. (MP, 337-338)

Seen from the point of view of an identity politics, it might be a disadvantage to criticise the way minorities are sometimes seen as molaire group entities. Nevertheless, this is also the strength of their micropolitics: that it takes a minority strategy to its extreme: trying, at least temporarily, to undo the categories, to make even the minorities moléculaire.

Another advantage of their argument is the way it makes us able to link things that are seemingly unrelated, and see the potential in something that does not seem to be concerned

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75 Deleuze and Guattari do, of course, admit the necessity of a molaire battle of the minorities in the struggle for equal rights. What they warn against is a closure of the categories that prevents the fluidity: “Certainement il est indispensable que les femmes mènent une politique molaire, en fonction d’une conquête qu’elles opèrent de leur propre organisme, de leur propre histoire, de leur propre subjectivité : « nous en tant que femmes... » apparaît alors comme sujet d’énoication. Mais il est dangereux de se rabattre sur un tel sujet, qui ne fonctionne pas sans tarir une source ou arrêter un flux.”(MP,338.)
with minority issues. For, on second thoughts, it seems obvious that *Beach Birds for Camera* is not only concerned with humans and animals, but also with gender and sexuality. As always in the case of Cage and Cunningham, this occupation is indirect. Sometimes it is by abstraction, here we might say that it is by deviation. But surely, one obvious way to circumvent the normative gender of humans, is to make them into androgynous animals.

But Deleuze and Guattari do not only link the different *devenirs*, for instance *le devenir-animal* and *le devenir-femme* to each other, they also link *le devenir* as such to sexuality and desire. Not only is *le devenir* a question of *affects*, it is also a process of desire: “C’est en ce sens que le devenir est le processus du désir” (MP, 334). *Le devenir* is not only a process of desire, it is the process of desire. It is not the process of desire understood as hetero-, homo- or bisexual structures of desire, it is the process of desire defined in a much broader sense as they do in *L’Anti-Œdipe*, as *l’agencement* between different parts of bodies, machines, contexts, in ways that are always particular and in ways that are always multiple. In *L’Anti-Œdipe* they launch this very broad conception of desire whose scope is poignantly summarized in the following quotation:

> En vérité, la sexualité est partout: dans la manière dont un bureaucrate caresse ses dossiers, dont un juge rend la justice, dont un homme d’affaires fait couler l’argent, dont la bourgeoisie encule le prolétariat, etc. Et il n’y a pas besoin de passer par des métaphores, pas plus que la libido, de passer par des métamorphoses. (AŒ, 348)

Just as the opposition between emotional and un-emotional is dissolved through the concept of *affects* without making everything emotional, the distinction between the realms of sexuality and non-sexuality is dissolved, too, without making everything sexual in the usual sense of the word. Everything is desire, but the definition of desire has changed.

In this chapter of *Mille plateaux* desire in this broad sense is described in terms of *devenir*. *Devenir* is desire whatever you become. But even more specifically, sexuality is defined as the production of an unlimited number of sexes and endless *devenirs*:

> La sexualité est une production de mille sexes, qui sont autant de devenirs incontrôlables. La sexualité passe par le devenir-femme de l’homme et le devenir-animal de l’humain : émission de particules. (MP, 341)

In *Beach Birds for Camera*, the *devenirs* at stake would thus have many particular genders as their outcome, genders that are neither masculine nor feminine, but particular for the bird of each dancer. The second sentence seems especially relevant to the choreography, as it links
the *devenir-femme* and the *devenir-animal*. Sexuality is defined as the *devenir-femme* of man and the *devenir-animal* of the human. (This, of course, should not be read as if sexuality is always the *devenir-femme* of a man; sexuality is the *devenir-femme* of any majority entity.) Seen against this background, the apparently innocent *devenir-animal* of *Beach Birds for Camera* becomes an obvious statement on gender and sexuality. It is even an expression of sexuality defined in the very broad sense of Deleuze and Guattari. Perhaps it is an indirect statement on “les machines désirantes ou le sexe non humain” (*AE*, 352).

**The filiation of the sorcerers**

The sexuality of *le devenir-animal* has nothing to do with animal reproduction as we know it from the natural sciences. It is another kind of sexuality that Deleuze and Guattari want to promote; it is a broader sexuality which is detached from and goes beyond the utilitarian question of reproduction and filiation. In this way, too, it is a continuation of *L’Anti-Œdipe* which argues against the oedipal understanding of family, reproduction and sexuality. Already at an early point in the text, *le devenir* is related to sexuality, but in a way that is both mysterious and original, and in a way that is related to the role of animals in the text.

The relations of *le devenir* are described in opposition to filiation, and therefore in opposition to the kind of relations at stake in reproduction. It is another kind of relation, that of an *alliance*:

> Enfin, devenir n’est pas une évolution, du moins une évolution par descendance et filiation. Le devenir ne produit rien par filiation, toute filiation serait imaginaire. Le devenir est toujours d’un autre ordre que celui de la filiation. Il est de l’alliance. (*MP*, 291)

It has to do with animals in a group, a “meute”, and the almost contagious alliances between them. It has to do with beings (humans or animals) on the margin, and a position outside the system of reproduction:

> Nous opposons l’épidémie à la filiation, la contagion à l’hérédité, le peuplement par contagion à la reproduction sexuée, à la production sexuelle. Les bandes, humaines et animales, prolifèrent avec les contagions, les épidémies, les champs de batailles et les catastrophes. C’est comme les hybrides, stériles eux-mêmes, nés d’une union sexuelle qui ne se reproduira pas, mais qui recommence chaque fois, gagnant autant de terrain. Les participations, les noces contre nature, sont la vraie Nature qui traverse les règles. (*MP*, 295)

What are these alliances outside the two-sexed system of reproduction, hybrid, and sterile and which yet reproduce themselves by other means, if they are not groups outside of
heteronormativity? Indeed, “les noces contre nature” do seem to refer, not only to humans turning into animals in diverse societies, but also to the way for instance homosexual love was described by the church and the state until the 20th century. Yet, here it is put into a mysterious context, which slightly hides the issue they must be raising, though in a peculiar way. What is important to underline, is that they do not use terms such as “counter-nature” to criticise sexualities that are not directed towards reproduction, on the contrary they show how they have been used to shut out what Deleuze and Guattari call “la vraie Nature qui traverse les règnes”. It is like *le corps sans organes* which is the real body in opposition to the bodies structured by society.

This question of non-filiation and of *alliance* is linked to the figure of the sorcerer:

Les sorciers ont toujours eu la position anomale, à la frontière des champs ou des bois. Ils hantent les lisières. Ils sont en bordure du village, ou *entre* deux villages. L’important, c’est leur affinité avec l’alliance, avec le pacte, qui leur donne un statut opposé à celui de la filiation. (MP, 301)

The sorcerers seem to be allied to those with a deviant sexuality in the view of society, or in this case the church (the reference to sorcerers is also a displacement in time):

Les anciens théologiens ont nettement distingué deux sortes de malédictions qui s’exerçaient sur la sexualité. La première concerne la sexualité comme procès de filiation sous lequel elle transmet le péché originel. Mais la seconde la concerne comme puissance d’alliance, et inspire des unions illicites ou des amours abominables : elle diffère d’autant plus de la première qu’elle tend à empêcher la procréation, et que le démon, n’ayant pas lui-même le pouvoir de procréer, doit passer par des moyens indirects (...) (MP, 301)

Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, are on the side of the sorcerers, of the deviants, of those that do not pass through procreation. Indeed, several times they talk of themselves as sorcerers: “Nous, sorciers, nous le savons tout le temps.” (MP, 292). And there is no doubt that they are trying to propound those processes of nature that cannot be explained in terms of reproduction and binary sexes:

Pour nous, au contraire, il y a autant de sexes que de termes de symbiose, autant de différences que d’éléments intervenant dans un procès de contagion. Nous savons qu’entre un homme et une femme beaucoup d’êtres passent, qui viennent d’autres mondes, apportés par le vent, qui font rhizome autour des racines, et ne se laissent pas comprendre en termes de production, mais seulement de devenir. L’Univers ne fonctionne pas par filiation. (MP, 296)
The sorcerer becomes both a historical reference and a position in the text that allows for mixes and blendings that have the character of l’alliance. The sorcerer becomes a designation for those that enter into alliances but circumvent the processes of reproduction, those that are aware of a thousand sexes and genders. Le devenir is linked to the sorcerer and thus to a different view on sexuality.

Animals are included in these reflexions, animals too are in groups and enter into alliances. Furthermore, the question of normativity and diversity or divergence is linked to a pun concerning the words animal, anomal and anormal. Where as anormal marks a position outside normativity, anomal marks the position of the exceptional\(^{76}\), the deterritorialising element:

> Bref, tout Animal a son Anomal. Entendons : tout animal pris dans sa meute ou sa multiplicité a son anomal. On a pu remarquer que le mot « anomal », adjectif tombé en désuétude, avait une origine très différente de « anormal » : a-normal, adjectif latin sans substantif, qualifie ce qui n’a pas de règle ou ce qui contredit la règle, tandis que « anomalie », substantif grec qui a perdu son adjectif désigne l’inégal, le rugueux, l’aspérité, la pointe de déterritorialisation. (MP, 298)

Through this opposition and this pun, they make something positive of the word anomal. The animal that distinguishes itself from the group through difference, becomes anomal, is not that which falls outside normativity, but that which has a position of déterritorialisation, of border-crossing. But as we know from the chapter on la ritournelle it is the most deterritorialised point or position that keeps something together, that defines a whole (MP, 415). It is irregular, it is le rhytme. This pun affirms something which is central to le devenir: a devenir is always a devenir-minoritaire, a devenir-animal is always a devenir-Anomal.

### Beyond imitation – towards a non-representational reproduction

It may seem as if le devenir has made us go through very diverse topics, from metaphors and mimesis, to animals and their relation to other species such as the humans, to gender and sexuality. But these are related in le devenir. Le devenir is an attack on mimesis as reproduction through imitation, on metaphor as comparison through analogy, on sexuality as reproduction through opposable sexes, on reproduction as that which makes animals into species that reproduce identical specimens. What imitation, species and genders have in common is that they are thought through the reproduction of the same. They are made

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\(^{76}\) Apparently Deleuze takes up this distinction from Georges Canguilhem, Le normal et le pathologique. (Anne Sauvagnargues: Deleuze. De l’animal à l’art p.150-151, in Zourabichvili/Sauvagnargues/Marrati : La philosophie de Deleuze, 2004.)
recognisable through identity, analogy, opposition and resemblance. As Anne Sauvagnargues says:

La symbiose «noces contre-nature», «alliance» hétérogène, reprend la disparation simondienne et le dispers de Différence et répétition (...) Le cas éthologique débouche ainsi sur une logique, une sémiotique qui transforme en même temps la biologie (rapport de l’individu à l’espèce, sexualité comme reproduction du semblable), la théorie de l’art (imitation et ressemblance) et celle de l’interprétation (critique d’art). (Zourabichvili/Sauvagnargues/Marrati, 2004, p.166)

In le devenir the metaphor becomes literal through the dissolution of entities and identities into movement and heccéités on the plan d’immanence. Imitation is brough back to the plan from which all individuations happen, and where the animal is not created through reproduction, but through différenciation, to become always different and anomal. Le devenir makes another kind of filiation possible. One that is not based on reproduction through opposable sexes, but an agencement of multiple sexes and devenirs. Le devenir is not the reproduction of the same, but the becoming real, the devenir-littéral of the intensités virtuelles on one and the same plane where there are only relations of movement and immobility.

Though Deleuze and Guattari do not discuss Aristotle in particular, they turn his definition of birds in relation to humans up-side down. To him there is a structural analogy between the birds and the humans as they are bipeds. To Deleuze and Guattari the possible devenir-oiseau would go through an unstructuring of the organism into a corps sans organes. They can enter into an agencement where they become indiscernible in movement. But they also turn up-side down his definition of metaphor as the ability to see resemblance (“Denn gute Metaphern zu bilden bedeutet, daß man Ähnlichkeiten zu erkennen vermag” (Aristoteles, 1994 (1982), p.77). In le devenir there is not resemblance, only indiscernabilité. They refuse mimesis as imitation (“Nachahmung”) based on the model of recognition (e.g. “Wahrscheinlichkeit”, “Ähnlichkeit” (Aristoteles, 1994 (1982)). Le devenir is not imitating, but literally becoming, it is not the reproduction of something that we know, but the creation of something new. And they overthrow his definition of “genus” (which here can mean both gender, race and the “genus” (kind) of other things) as “things which have the same form” (Aristotle, Metaphysica (V,XXVIII), 1908, p.1024 V.VIII). In le devenir there are no fixed “genus”, only relations of movement and rest.

Aristotle’s quotation making birds and humans into analogical beings is tempting in relation to Cunningham’s interest in birds. But the contrast between Deleuze and Guattari and
Aristotle shows how much is at stake. It is not insignificant whether Cunningham simply represents birds metaphorically through analogy, or if he manages to create a *corps sans organes* that makes birds and humans join on the *plan d’immanence* through relations of movement and immobility, thus making non-reproductive *individuations* possible. It is not only a question of metaphor or *devenir*. What is at stake are the four illusions of representation: identity, analogy, opposition, resemblance, and the way they structure not only art, but even the relation between the species and the genders. If Cunningham manages to succeed with the *devenir-oiseau* he reformulates the relation between birds and humans, men and women, creation and reproduction, movement and meaning. If he manages to attain the *plan d’immanence* of movement, all movements become possible. And we should look only to them.

**Getting out of the bird cage**

To the question why Cage wanted the book of his interviews with Daniel Charles to be called *Pour les oiseaux/For the Birds*, Cage answered that it was a pun on his name (“le choix, me dit-il, n’avait été guidé que par l’amusement d’un jeu sur son propre nom.”(Cage/Charles, 2002 (1976), p.7). But if a cage is something for the birds, Cage has always tried to get out of it, as he jokingly said with another pun on his name on another occasion: “Sortez de n’importe quelle cage, vous vous trouvez dedans.” (Cage/Charles, 2002(1976), p.5) And in a certain way, that is what *le devenir* is about, getting out of cages, getting out of *molaire* categories, whichever one it is. *Le devenir* speaks of a way of doing this by becoming something else, becoming *moléculaire*, becoming *imperceptible*, so imperceptible as to get out through the bars of the cage.

Seemingly the word “literal” is not particularly ambiguous. However, it is in no way self-explanatory. We just have to consider why Cunningham does not want his choreography to be taken literally. To him, apparently, the word has connotations to representation and imitation. He does not want us to take the title literally and think that the dancers represent birds. However, if we consider the choreography literally in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari, as a *devenir-oiseau*, it takes us in a completely different direction: the dancers literally become birds, but they become so exactly because they do not imitate or represent birds. They enter into relations of movement and rest, they molecularize their bodies and the bodies of birds, and become *heccéités* on another *plan*.

Though Deleuze and Guattari insistently try to tell us to take *le devenir* literally, it is hard to see what they mean by literally and there are only a very few and brief explanations in their
work. But instead of taking the idea of “literally” as an explanation of what they mean by *devenir*, we should perhaps try to see it the other way around: it is *le devenir* that comes the closest to explaining what they mean by “literally”. That is also why it is so important to distinguish *le devenir* from metaphor and analogy; *le devenir* is an attempt to describe what a literal process can be, how the *machines désirantes* can be literal. It is no easy task, as figures of metaphor, analogy, imitation and identification keep haunting our minds. But they also show us another reason why it is so hard for us to imagine the literal *devenir*: we tend to think in categories, entities, species and genders. It is only when we begin to see the *devenirs* as relations of movement and rest, movement and immobility, molecular *agencements* on *le plan de consistance*, that there is no contradiction between appearing and becoming.

Thus, perhaps *le devenir* also makes it possible to redefine Deleuze’s use of *mimétisme*. Even if *mimétisme* rather refers to the camouflage of animals, it still includes an element of imitation, even if the goal of the animal is to become indiscernible from the surroundings or the animal it tries to hide as. But Deleuze does not imitate, he enters into an *agencement* with the texts he is working on, and he transforms both his writing and the thoughts of other philosophers into molecules in relations of movement and rest which can then take new forms. It is a *devenir*.

The movements that I have been trying to trace in the text are not movements that are linearly inscribed in it. It might seem that the movement I have been trying to follow from *le devenir*, to movement, to Kierkegaard, to *les affects*, to the body, to gender, to sexuality, is an enormous jump. But those are the kinds of movement that Deleuze and Guattari practice in their text all the time, linking things that seemingly do not belong together, and yet showing that they do. On our way through the text on *le devenir* we often meet expressions saying that all *devenirs* tend towards a *devenir-femme*, a *devenir-moléculaire*, a *devenir-imperceptible*. These remarks should not be taken to mean that there is a hierarchy within the different *devenirs* and that some *devenirs* are better than others or more radical than others. It is rather that all *devenirs* enter into each other and are inseparable.

I have not tried to trace the line of this jump in order to force the interpretation of *Beach Birds for Camera*, but because it is an inherent part of *le devenir*. Furthermore, it is interesting because the reproach against Cunningham that he does not include enough reflections on gender often stays within the borders of sexuality defined as that which relates to or has connotations to sexual behaviour. Deleuze and Guattari show that we have to define desire more largely, not in order to make everything sexual, but to understand the investment of all the *agencements* that the subject enters into. At the same time it is interesting to hold up
against the text of Deleuze and Guattari an example that is seemingly devoid of desire, to see, to test one could almost say, if their concept of *devenir* can really open up our understanding of the investments that we do not normally think of as desire.

When Deleuze and Guattari practice such movements and jumps, it is necessary to do a movement analysis of their text: to analyse the movements and the jumps that they execute, and how they use these jumps to link things that are seemingly unrelated. Neither these movements nor the ways they describe movement are self-explanatory. Often they are complicated, contain heterogeneous elements, and do not necessarily have any explicit conclusions in the text. But the movement is not only a stylistic element. Perhaps the text does not contain an independent and complete theory of movement, but the movement is inherent in the text and indispensable to it. I believe that without the use of movement they could not have explained what *le devenir* is; movement is indispensable to the understanding of *le devenir*. This goes for the way they describe *le devenir* as movement through *le bloc de devenir*, through the lines as opposed to the points, through the imperceptible movement and Spinoza, or the infinite movement of Kierkegaard. But it also goes for the way they use movement to jump freely from one subject to another in their text and thus connect different kinds of *devenirs*.

To do a movement analysis of the text, it is necessary to stay very close to it and to analyse not only the general progression of the text, but also smaller details and descriptions where suddenly nuances appear. Those details are important, as they contain the exact execution of the movement. Just as in dance, it is not irrelevant how the movements are linked together in the text through preparations and prepositions. But to analyse such details, it is necessary to stay in a relation of strangeness with the text. The text of Deleuze and Guattari never really becomes more familiar with further reading. The general meaning of it might become slightly clearer, but as soon as you dive into the text itself again, it seems equally strange, if not stranger and stranger. It is not unlike the work of a Cunningham dancer to whom the movement of the choreography should always stay strange so that he can execute it as if for the first time every time. This seems particularly important in a choreography that is at times getting dangerously close to metaphor and to representation. The more strangely the dancers become birds, the more they become birds through a *devenir*. Equally the chapter on *le devenir* is one of those that are most frequently read, and most hastily summarised; but to appreciate it fully we have to execute the movements of the text strangely.
Conclusion
The jeu of chance

Now I can’t see that crisis any longer means a climax, unless we are willing to grant that every breath of wind has a climax (which I am), but then that obliterates climax, being a surfeit of such. And since our lives, both by nature by the newspapers, are so full of crisis that one is no longer aware of it, then it is clear that life goes on regardless, and further that each thing can be and is separate from each and every other: viz: the continuity of the newspaper headlines. Climax is for those who are swept by New Year’s Eve. (Merce Cunningham, “Space, Time and Dance”, 1952.77

This is not a conclusion. Through the method of juxtaposition, I have tried to produce random connections between Merce Cunningham and Gilles Deleuze. But the connections are produced au fur et à mesure. They cannot be abstracted from the movement of thought that they are part of. If they are repeated too often, there is a risk that they may become naturalised. We have to try to keep making these connections awkwardly. Although it might be tempting, the juxtapositions do not make of Deleuze and Cunningham a natural pair. The two can only meet through their differences. The connections can only be repeated if constantly changed.

The jeu could continue. The juxtapositions could have gone on, with other texts and other choreographies. And once there were no more texts and no more choreographies, we could start combining them in different ways. And once all combinations had been tried, we could start subjecting them to chance procedures. We could mix the paragraphs in a random order, or even the phrases, words, syllables. We could try disrupting the syntax. The possibilities are endless. Endless ramifications and différenciations could come about, endless creations that could be actualised.

I have tried to bring chance into play. It is through the arbitrary connections produced, between texts and choreographies arbitrarily juxtaposed, that a rencontre becomes possible. And by coincidence, one of the connections that has been produced between Cunningham and Cage, Deleuze and Guattari, is that both are occupied with chance. But the arbitrary often seems to be guided and it quickly seems to become self-evident. Both the work of Deleuze and that of Cunningham show that chance is a tricky thing, which humans do not have entirely in their hands, or rather, they have part of it too much in their hands.

77 In Vaughan, 1997, p.67.
Cunningham puts chance into action, and Deleuze provides a reflection which might act as an image of what happens. Through chance, real difference and real repetition becomes possible. Through chance, representation is outplayed. It is part of the actualisation where the singularités are thrown into new forms, it is part of creation. It is also a limit of thought, something that can hardly be thought, l’impensable. It is caught up in paradoxes. It is a paradox.

Deleuze inherits his thoughts on chance from Nietzsche, but repeats and displaces them. Chance is related to a jeu, a play or a game. It is a game of dice, played between the two tables of heaven and earth (Nietzsche), it is le jeu idéal of the Idées, and it is exemplified by the chaotic games of Lewis Carroll. But it is a game in which the rules are quite particular. Deleuze contrasts two kinds of jeu, which might help us clarify what happens when chance is put into play in these juxtapositions. There is the limited jeu humain, and there is the jeu divin, jeu idéal, or jeu pur. It is the second one which is pure chance, but it is also the one which is most impossible to obtain, at least for humans.

Le jeu humain is games such as we recognise them. The rules they have are categorical and pre-existent, i.e. they are authoritative and cannot be changed. The rules determine a set of probabilities that take into account every possible outcome. And they set up a number of hypotheses of victory or loss. They fragment chance into small parts of probability, into a series of “coups”, i.e. throws or blows, which are “numériquement distincts” (LS, 74) and ensure a “distribution fixe” (LS, 74) of the probabilities. They proceed by distributions sédentaires (DR, 361), they are based on identity and resemblance (every outcome has to be predictable and recognisable). These plays do not involve real chance, “ils retiennent le hasard seulement en certains points, et laissent le reste au développement mécanique des conséquences, ou à l’adresse comme art de la causalité.” (LS, 75) It is “l’exercice de la représentation”:

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\text{Ce jeu se confond déjà avec l’exercice de la représentation, il en présente tous les éléments, l’identité supérieure du principe, l’opposition des hypothèses, la ressemblance des lancers numériquement distincts, la proportionalité dans le rapport de la conséquence avec l’hypothèse. (DR, 362)}
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79 Such as the games in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (2001, (1865)). For instance in the Queen’s croquet game, the rules are constantly changing, the croquet balls are hedgehogs that keep running away, and the mallets are flamingos that do not necessarily hit the ball when Alice wants them to.
But whereas the false chance of le jeu humain is part of representation, the real chance of le jeu idéal is capable of doing away with it and affirming difference. But, “Nous ne «connaissions» pas de tels jeux, qui semblent se contredire eux-mêmes.” (LS, 74) The jeu has no rules that pre-exist, every coup creates its own rule. There is no winner and no loser. The hasard is not divided into smaller fragments that calculate the probabilities. Instead, every coup contains all of chance, “tout le hasard est affirmé dans un coup nécessairement vainqueur” (DR, 362). The coups are not distinct as to their number (numériquement), but formellement distincts as all of them have their own rule. Though there are many coups, they are still the same, they all affirm the same hasard, it is “un seul et même lancer ontologiquement un à travers toutes les fois.” (DR, 362) The distribution of the outcome is a distribution nomade which takes place in an espace ouvert. This is the kind of hasard and distribution which structures the intensif level of the Idées. These chaotic lancers or coups of chance organise the level of the Idée, which is in its turn turned into problèmes that contain their own solutions. Chance is part of the way the problems are posed, part of the the point of departure of thought, but in a way that defies representation:

Le jeu du problématique et de l’impératif a remplacé celui de l’hypothétique et du catégorique ; le jeu de la différence et de la répétition a remplacé celui du Même et de la représentation. Les dés sont lancés contre le ciel, avec toute la force de déplacement du point aléatoire, avec leurs points impératifs comme des éclairs, formant dans le ciel d’idéales constellations-problèmes. Ils rebondissent sur la Terre, de toute la force des solutions victorieuses qui ramènent le lancer. C’est un jeu à deux tables. (DR, 363)

To obtain this second game, le jeu pur, real chance, is obviously difficult. As Deleuze remarks, most human games are of the first kind. They are about probabilities, about winning and losing, they follow the laws of causality. Even if we look at the radical way that Cunningham (or Cage for that matter) practices chance, it does not satisfy all the principles of pure chance. Even if he makes up the rules himself instead of using pre-existing rules, the rules are the same for one work, one choreography at a time. It is not each throw of dice in the production of a choreography that produces its own rule. In order to work with chance, Cunningham has to divide chance into smaller parts. He cannot come up with a whole choreography, or at least not in an arbitrary way detached from habits and psychology, in a single throw. He has to do a large number of throws in order to compose each movement arbitrarily. But, actually, this is not in order to fragment chance and make it calculable. On the contrary, it is in order not to be able to predict the movement. Chance works differently in different media, and Cunningham relates to how it works in dance.
Nevertheless, it might seem paradoxical that in order to work with chance Cunningham has to invent a system, has to come up with rules. But this is an inevitable paradox, at least in the human access to chance. Using chance is not a laissez-faire. As Cunningham rightly shows, this only leads us back to habits and inherited structures. One has to use chance systematically. Chance is caught up between chance and system, between the completely arbitrary and the manipulated, between le jeu idéal and le jeu humain. Even Deleuze does not avoid this paradox. Not even when describing le jeu idéal or le jeu pur. Even le jeu pur has four rules: the first and most fundamental rule of le jeu idéal is the paradox that it has no rules: (“1°) Il n’y a pas de règles prédéterminantes” (LS, 75)!

Naturally, my juxtapositions too are caught up between chance and manipulation, between chance and structure. There is at least one rule that is set up in advance: that two different things should be juxtaposed, and that the analysis should if possible proceed through the possible connections that might arise in the meeting. The rule is that ça marche. There is not only one coup that affirms chance, but a lot of small coups where chance pushes the thought further into the ramifications of the material. But even if they come about through an instance of chance in the idea, they are covered by a material of rules, which is language.

It seems to be even harder to enact chance in writing than in dance. Language is guided by so many rules that are hard to disrupt, of semantics, grammar, syntax, etc. We would have to act at least as radically as Cage, and construct writing through a chance system that fragments language into small parts (words, syllables, letters) and then reassembles them in a way that does not rely on semantics and syntax. This would certainly introduce an element of chance and disrupt the meaning, but also involve the risk that the text becomes illegible. If we throw the structures overboard too violently, we put ourselves in danger.

But the rules of language are not innocent. As Cage said, “le langage contrôle notre pensée” (Cage/Kostelanetz, 2000, p.208). The rules of language can even induce ways of thinking. They can bring along identities, resemblances, analogies, oppositions. They can bring along criteria of comparison. We can try to transform these into figures libres de la différence, into paradoxes that disrupt meaning and common sense. But as in the case of representation, it is not something that is done away with once and for all. It is a constant struggle caught between the molaires and moléculaires, between the stratifiantes and déstratifiantes tendencies. But we can try to create a material composed of heterogeneous forces that merge into a consistance. “[Et] si nous changeons notre langage, il est vraisemblable que notre pensée changera.” (Cage/Kostelanetz, 2000, p. 208)
Cage and Cunningham make dance and music produce arbitrary connections by making them coexist in time and space. The time and space of writing is different, and this makes it harder to obtain a simultaneity in the connections. Causality is lurking in the background; there is a risk that the rules of language decide the continuity. Writing proceeds linearly, from line to line. But it is a line that constantly divides itself into past and present. In this constant division chance interferes and a *différenciation* becomes possible. At each point, the connections and arguments are subdivided on the line, into new branches. They are not the well organised branches of the tree, but more like the multidirectional branches of the *rhizome*. And even in the memory of the text, other structures become possible. Arbitrary connections become possible in the coexistence of time in memory.

Chance can be caught up in many combinations of structure and arbitrariness. Between the system and the dice, between the multiplication of ideas and the rules of language, between accident and control, between the material and the manipulation. But at some point, as Francis Bacon experienced, the manipulation is in danger of destroying chance, destroying the work. You have to know when to stop.
List of abbreviations

NP : Nietzsche et la philosophie (1962)
B: Le Bergsonisme (1966)
SE : Spinoza et le problème de l’expression (1968)
DR: Différence et répétition (1968)
LS: Logique du sens (1969)
AŒ: L’Anti-Œdipe (1972) (with Félix Guattari)
D: Dialogues (with Claire Parnet) (1996, (1977))
MP: Mille plateaux (1980) (with Félix Guattari)
IM : Cinéma 1 : L’image-mouvement (1983)
IT : Cinéma 2 : L’image-temps (1985)
PP: Pourparler (1990)
QP: Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? (1991) (with Félix Guattari)

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**Resumé en français**

Camilla Damkjær  
L’esthétique du mouvement – variations sur Gilles Deleuze et Merce Cunningham  
Thèse en co-tutelle avec les Universités de Stockholm et de Paris VIII.

Cette thèse est une étude de l’esthétique du mouvement chez le philosophe Gilles Deleuze et le chorégraphe Merce Cunningham. L’un travaille dans l’écriture, l’autre dans la danse. L’un a travaillé en France, l’autre aux États-Unis. L’un a beaucoup dit, l’autre beaucoup moins. Ils ne s’étaient encore jamais rencontrés.

Cette thèse essaie une juxtaposition d’éléments hétérogènes. Ici la philosophie et la danse, Gilles Deleuze et Merce Cunningham, la France et les États-Unis se rencontrent dans un espace-temps fictif. On rencontre également leurs collaborateurs respectifs, Félix Guattari et John Cage, qui jouent un rôle important. Sur le chemin on croise encore des personnages apparentemment périphériques comme Francis Bacon, Marcel Duchamp, ou Søren Kierkegaard. Les arts se mêlent, les discours se font écho, les mots et les mouvements, les sons et le silence se mélangent.

C’est une juxtaposition qui prend comme modèle méthodologique ses matériaux mêmes, dans un geste mimétique-critique. C’est une “machine” textuelle qui produit des connexions et essaie de les défaitre en même temps. C’est un happening fictif qui juxtapose des éléments hétérogènes et les laisse produire des moments de concordance, par hasard. Les matériaux ne se font pas obstacle, mais s’interpénètrent.

C’est une méthode qui essaie de prendre en compte la différence des matériaux, mais aussi le contexte des matériaux. Non seulement, il s’agit de matériaux hétérogènes, mais encore, ils viennent de deux sphères culturelles différentes. Il est devenu à la mode dans les études interdisciplinaires “d’appliquer” des philosophes français à des artistes américains (ou autres), tout en oubliant que la philosophie n’est pas “théorie”. Nous insistons sur le caractère philosophique, nous essayons de ne pas “appliquer” mais de juxtaposer, gardant ainsi les différences et les particularités philosophiques, chorégraphiques, géographiques.

La particularité est ancrée, fait corps avec les matériaux. La chorégraphie de Cunningham ne se laisse pas saisir sans les corps dansants. La philosophie de Deleuze prend corps dans l’écriture, dans la langue. C’est pour cela que la juxtaposition prend comme point de départ une analyse très près du texte pour Deleuze, et une analyse de différentes chorégraphies de Cunningham. Mais du fait que nous nous proposons d’analyser l’esthétique du mouvement
aussi chez Deleuze, l’analyse de texte prend la forme d’une analyse du mouvement dans le texte. Tout autant, nous ne laisserons pas de côté les textes de Cunningham (même s’il sont peu nombreux), les analysant, en essayant de mettre les deux matériaux sur un pied d’égalité. C’est un acte d’équilibre difficile.

La thèse est une “machine” textuelle composée de sept parties qui sont connectées, et pourtant individuelles, entre lesquelles des lignes non-linéaires se tracent. D’abord, nous introduisons la méthode de juxtaposition, en expliquant comment elle essaie de prendre en compte la nature des matériaux, la relation entre les matériaux, et le contexte de ces matériaux. Nous expliquons aussi de quelle façon cette méthode est une approche mimétique-critique, qui voudrait apprendre des matériaux et en extraire des méthodes pour les rapprocher. Déjà ici, les connexions commencent à se faire : on découvre que Deleuze et Cunningham partagent un double ennemi : la représentation et l’organisme.

Ensuite, nous proposons une présentation du mouvement chez Deleuze, et une définition de ce que nous nommons “la figure de mouvement immobile”, qui semble être une figure récurrente dans ses textes. C’est notre hypothèse que cette figure n’est pas seulement un élément stylistique, mais qu’elle a des implications philosophiques qu’elle incorpore dans les textes. Il faut la prendre “littéralement”. Elle ne décrit pas seulement le mouvement, elle l’effectue. En revanche, pour étudier l’importance de cette figure, il faut aussi faire le détour par l’attitude ambiguë et changeante de Deleuze envers les métaphores et les images. Il se trouve que le mouvement est au centre de la philosophie de Deleuze ; c’est un élément inhérent à sa philosophie que de vouloir mettre la pensée en mouvement. Comme il pense que l’ont fait Nietzsche et Kierkegaard entre autres, il voudrait “produire dans l’œuvre un mouvement capable d’émouvoir l’esprit hors de toute représentation ; il s’agit de faire du mouvement lui-même une œuvre”. (DR, 73) Sans doute, il partage cette détermination avec Cunningham. Mais pour étudier cela il ne suffit pas de s’en tenir à ce qu’il dit du mouvement, il faut aussi analyser les mouvements qu’il effectue. Nous proposons d’analyser quelques-uns des moyens qu’il se donne dans l’écriture, par exemple les figures de mouvement immobile, lequel a aussi une place importante dans la technique de Cunningham. La juxtaposition même met en relief cet intérêt de Cunningham et montre quelles en seraient, peut-être, les conséquences sur un plan esthétique-philosophique.

Suivent quatre juxtapositions de textes et de chorégraphies. C’est un matériau hétérogène qui se forme, et qui construit son propre ensemble. L’analyse du mouvement est poursuivie dans les textes et les chorégraphies, en même temps que d’autres connexions se font d’une manière imprévisible. D’abord, Cunningham rencontre Deleuze à travers Francis Bacon. C’est
une juxtaposition de *Torse* de Cunningham, et *Francis Bacon – Logique de la sensation* de Deleuze, ainsi que *Three Studies of the Male Back* de Francis Bacon. Dans cette partie sera étudié comment Deleuze emploie ses propres concepts et les laissent se développer dans la rencontre avec la peinture de Bacon. Le motif du torse devient le point de rencontre. Ici se joue “l’athlétisme” violent et intérieur de Bacon, et l’athlétisme extérieur mais invisible de Cunningham. C’est une interrogation de ce que c’est qu’un corps et ses mouvements. Le contraste évident entre l’esthétique polie de Cunningham et l’esthétique violente de Bacon, nous permet de nous demander s’il existe un “corps sans organes” (un corps compris sans l’organisation hiérarchisée de l’organisme) moins violent que celui que Deleuze détecte chez Bacon.

L’analyse de Bacon par Deleuze nous mène aussi vers le centre de l’esthétique de Cunningham : son refus de la narration et de la psychologie, d’un côté, et de l’autre, son insistance sur le fait que ses chorégraphies ne sont pas “abstraites”. On poursuit ainsi la discussion de leur refus commun de la représentation. Le mouvement est au centre, non seulement parce que Deleuze analyse les mouvements des peinture de Bacon, mais parce que le mouvement est inhérent à la sensation. Quand la sensation relie différents niveaux, qu’elle contient une différence de niveau, explique Deleuze, elle est mouvement, elle est même mouvement immobile, “comme des arrêts ou des instantanés de mouvements” (FB, 105), mais où le mouvement continue à l’intérieur de cet arrêt. Ainsi, Bacon étudie le mouvement de la sensation et Cunningham la sensation du mouvement. Cela s’exprime dans une figure de mouvement immobile, lequel est spasmodique chez Bacon, mais qui est moins violent et pourtant aussi “intensif” chez Cunningham.

On poursuit en entrant dans la collaboration entre Cunningham et Cage, Deleuze et Guattari. Qu’il s’agisse de deux collaborations est un élément structural du travail. Des deux côtés, ils essaient de nourrir la différence interne à la collaboration, plutôt que de tendre à l’atténuer. Dans cette partie, tous les quatre discutent la coexistence de l’hétérogénéité à travers “1837 – De la ritournelle” (*Mille plateaux*) et *Variations V*. La “ritournelle” même est très hétérogène comme concept. Mais avec elle, Deleuze et Guattari expliquent entre autres choses la coexistence d’espèces différentes dans un milieu biologique. Et dans leur texte nous trouvons aussi un nom possible pour ce que Cage et Cunningham construisent en *Variations V*. Ce n’est pas une représentation, c’est une “consistance”. C’est un matériau qui se tisse à partir d’éléments hétérogènes entre lesquels des relations “transversales” surgissent. Dans *Variations V*, il n’y a pas de signification, mais il y a “expression”, au sens que Deleuze et Guattari donnent à ce terme pour parler de la communication et des territoires des animaux.
Selon Deleuze et Guattari, c’est à partir de mouvements transversaux d’un territoire dans un autre, qu’une consistance est créée. Dans Variations V, ce sont par les mouvements transversaux d’un art dans le domaine d’un autre que le happening est créé.

On découvre également que des deux côtés ils essaient d’ouvrir la musique vers l’extérieur, mais de façon différente. Avec le concept de ritournelle, Deleuze et Guattari l’ouvrent vers l’éthologie et la communication entre les territoires des animaux ; Cage (et Cunningham) l’ouvrent vers la nature, mais aussi vers la ville et les bruits. Il se trouve, peut-être, qu’ils ne sont pas tout à fait d’accord au sujet d’une stratégie concernant leur héritage culturel et esthétique. Cage essaie de s’en libérer en supprimant ses préférences subjectives. Par contraste, il semble que Deleuze et Guattari ne se sont pas séparés de toutes leurs préférences.

Le hasard est un des points où la philosophie de Deleuze et la pratique chorégraphique de Cunningham se rencontrent. Nous étudions comment Cunningham essaie de se construire un corps sans organes avec l’aide du hasard. Nous extraîrons des outils concrets des textes de Deleuze et Guattari pour analyser ce qui se passe dans les opérations du hasard des chorégraphies Untitled Solo et Suite by Chance. En même temps, les opérations du hasard des chorégraphies montrent peut-être concrètement ce que sont “les synthèses de l’inconscient” (les différents procédés de connexion qui caractérisent les “machines désirantes”) développées par Deleuze et Guattari, même si dans les chorégraphies il s’agit d’un inconscient non-psychologique. Les procédés de Cunningham montrent que le concept élargi de désir (comme tout investissement énergétique) que proposent Deleuze et Guattari peut aussi être pertinent en danse.

Nous discutons à partir du premier chapitre de L’Anti-Œdipe et “28 novembre 1947 – Comment se faire un corps sans organes ?” (Mille plateaux), si le corps sans organes est un élément incontrôlable de l’inconscient ou s’il peut être pratiqué. Même si on connaît le “programme” d’un corps sans organes, on peut difficilement prévoir ce qui se passe réellement sur le corps sans organes. Ainsi, dans le travail de Cunningham, on a peut-être accès à la technique qu’il emploie pour s’en construire un, mais l’expérience réelle du corps sans organes s’enfuit toujours, l’expérience intensive du danseur échappe à la mémoire et à l’analyse. Ou alors, au moment où on peut l’attraper, il est déjà devenu trop naturel, trop habituel, et la limite du corps sans organes s’est déplacée. Mais “l’intensité” du corps sans organes montre peut-être un élément de cette expérience : l’expérience de la fusion entre le corps et l’esprit (selon Cunningham), l’expérience d’être matière pure et fluide, la matière en mouvement (selon Deleuze et Guattari).
Entre la pratique qu’on se propose pour s’en faire un, et ce qui se passe réellement sur le corps sans organes, c’est une danse sur la corde raide entre la construction et la destruction. Cela reste une grande ambiguïté dans le texte de Deleuze et Guattari. Mais Cunningham nous montre, peut-être, l’exemple qui manque chez Deleuze et Guattari : celui d’une pratique qui n’est pas violente, qui procède avec prudence, qui sait danser sur le bord des “strates” (surtout la strate de l’organisme, mais même celle de la signification) sans tomber dans un “trou noir”, mais qui arrive pourtant à contruire un corps sans organes.

Il se trouve que, et le travail de Deleuze/Guattari, et celui de Cage/Cunningham sont peuplés d’animaux. Le “devenir” est un mouvement de transformation, et un des processus possibles est le devenir-animal. Est-ce cela que Cunningham tente dans Beach Birds for Camera ? C’est une de ses chorégraphies où le risque d’un thème, de l’imitation et de la représentation surgit le plus. Mais peut-être qu’il n’y est pas question d’imitation, mais de devenir : “un oiseau + Cunningham + voler”. Cela finit par montrer qu’il y a un lien curieux entre la représentation, la catégorisation des espèces, et la reproduction des espèces par sexes opposés. Parmi les mouvements de Deleuze et Guattari, il y a de tels sauts. Et tout d’un coup la chorégraphie apparentement innocente de Cunningham semble porter des questions beaucoup plus grandes.

Le mouvement joue aussi un rôle important si l’on veut démonter des systèmes “stratifiants” (représentation, reproduction etc.). Avec le corps sans organes, Deleuze et Guattari reprennent une question de Spinoza : “Qu’est-ce que peut un corps ?” (SE, 197) Dans le concept de devenir, ils recourent à Spinoza pour montrer le “plan d’immanence” où toute entité est dissoute en relations de mouvement et de repos, “Plan fixe de la vie, où tout bouge, retarde ou se précipite.” (MP, 312). L’univers comme figure de mouvement immobile. Quand animaux et humains sont ramenés à ce plan en tant que “heccéités” et mouvement, tout devenir devient possible. Avec une autre figure de mouvement immobile qu’ils empruntent à Kierkegaard, l’univers est également ramené à un seul plan, qui s’exprime comme dans le mouvement du danseur qui sait sauter et atterrir imperceptiblement, qui transforme la marche en sublime. Également, avec l’aide de Kierkegaard, l’émotion est ramenée à sa source étymologique de mouvement (lat. motio), et maintenant il n’y a d’émotions que les mouvements. Ce sont eux qu’il convient d’étudier : “ne regarder qu’aux mouvements” (MP, 345). C’est cela qu’a toujours dit Cunningham.

Nous n’avons pas procédé à des juxtapositions selon un plan hiérarchisé, mais elles se font écho sur des points de rencontre. Ce qui se passe, se passe en cours de route, il n’y a pas de conclusions à tirer à la fin. C’est dans le mouvement du texte que les choses se font. La
conclusion ne ferme pas le texte, mais le met en jeu. Le texte aurait pu continuer, avec d’autres juxtapositions, d’autres combinaisons. Nous aurions pu encore imaginer de le soumettre à des opérations de hasard, de défaire les règles de la langue, d’interrompre la syntaxe, de mélanger les syllabes. Mais les expérimentations se font entre la construction et la déconstruction, le hasard se joue entre le système et le hasard, la manipulation et la perte de contrôle. Ceci n’est pas sans danger. Il faut savoir s’arrêter.