

Gilles Deleuze: A Philosophy of Immanence

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It may be that believing in this world, this life, becomes our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered on our plane of immanence today. This is the empiricist conversion (we have so many reasons not to believe in the human world; we have lost the world, worse than a fiancée or a god). The problem has indeed changed.¹

In order to activate Deleuze's thinking in the context of the current discussion on philosophy, phenomenology, and religion, we need to rehearse again his understanding of immanence, or more specifically "the plane of immanence". It is with reference to this specific concept that he at a certain point distinguishes philosophical from religious thinking. The aim of the present essay is to present an overview of this theme, as a preparation for a more sustained discussion of the religious from the point of view of Deleuze's thought. Together with the concept of "event," immanence constitutes one of the most central and recurring topics throughout the whole of his work. In *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, and in the books co-written with Félix Guattari, *Anti-Œdipus*, *A Thousand Plateaus*, and *What is Philosophy?*, immanence is a key theme; it is both the measure, the condition, and the criterion of what for Deleuze constitutes philosophy itself. But the concept is also emblematic for Deleuze's readings of other philosophers, especially those with whom he claims particular affinities and between whom he establishes a philogenetic connection: Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson. They are all read through the lens of immanence, their

1. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, 75. (Hereafter, WP.)

thinking estimated and measured in relation to their capacity for thinking immanence, where Spinoza occupies a very specific position. He, whom Deleuze calls “the prince of philosophers,”² and even “the Christ of philosophy,”³ is the one philosopher (possibly together with Bergson in the first chapter of *Matter and Memory*) who managed the impossible; that is, instituting *a pure plane of immanence*. While these claims certainly demand a further explication — for what does it mean to institute a plane of immanence? — they have the merit of pointing towards an explicit standpoint: the concept of immanence, as understood and worked by Deleuze, should be seen as pivotal in his own philosophy, and in his relation to the history of philosophy. However, immanence is thus also a very complex concept since it works on several levels in his thought: immanence, as a measure or an instrument in his *reading* of other philosophers; immanence as a measure or instrument of *evaluating* philosophy (immanence as a value); immanence as the *internal condition* of philosophy itself — indeed, immanence as philosophy, as it were — but thereby, also, immanence as the measure and instrument of the *concepts philosophy forges in relation to, but also against, other forms of thinking*, with their preference for transcendence. Immanence is a complex notion, not only because it is at play at various levels, but also, as we will see, because it appears to serve a double purpose. On the one hand, it is claimed as a key concept and an ontological, foundational notion, and as such its investigation must be immanent within Deleuze’s own problematic.⁴ On the other hand, it also constitutes a means of response, resistance, and positioning towards something else, towards its other: immanence, in the end, as the *pierre de touche*, is thus to be located as the core of philosophy’s internal problem. In the following, I will attempt to clarify some of the relations between these levels and how they are put to use in Deleuze’s work by investigating the relation between immanence and

2. WP, 48.

3. WP, 60.

4. The critical reading, as Deleuze often remarks, is pointless if it does not start out from the problem specifically posed by the text (rather than the reader). On this subject, see, for instance, “Qu’est-ce qu’un entretien” in *Dialogues*, Paris: Flammarion, 1977.

what for Deleuze constitutes the activity of philosophy — namely, the creation of concepts — in order to subsequently develop the analysis of the relation between a Deleuzian understanding of immanence and transcendence.

The importance of the concept of immanence is manifest through the whole of Deleuze's work, but it is not until *What is Philosophy?* that it becomes the object of a specific investigation. It is here that immanence, or to be more precise the *plane of immanence*, is formulated as the horizon out from which thinking as such can take place, and thus constitutes the internal condition of thinking: "it is a plane of immanence that constitutes the absolute ground of philosophy, its earth or deterritorialization, the foundation on which it creates its concepts" (WP, 41). From this definition, the plane of immanence is thus affirmed as fundamental, in literal terms (grounding that which otherwise precisely has no ground — no foundation as such or in itself), for thinking as such. Deleuze has always claimed that what is specific to philosophy is the *creation of concepts*. The concepts created by philosophy should not be understood as abstract terms or representations referring to universal entities such as soul, consciousness, reason, subject or object. Rather they constitute what Deleuze calls "intensive events," where thought crystallizes into a specific formulation responding to the specific problem at stake for the philosopher, such as Idea for Plato, *Cogito* for Descartes, and *Dasein* for Heidegger. As events of thought, or with another term used by Deleuze, *haecceities*,⁵ the concepts are always multiple and composites: cogito, for instance, is composed by a specific relation between a certain idea of thinking, being and the self. Also they function not only as answers to specific problems, but as tools rendering possible the elaboration of the problem in question. However, precisely because they have to be created rather than found (just as the problem is a specific construction rather than a pre-existing, universal question), these concepts require some-

5. On the use of this scotian term by Deleuze, see Philip Goodchild, "Why is philosophy so compromised with God?," and Daniel. W. Smith, "The doctrine of univocity. Deleuze's ontology of immanence" in *Deleuze and religion*, ed. Mary Bryden, London/New York: Routledge, 2000, 160; also François Zourabichivili, *Deleuze. Une philosophie de l'événement*, Paris: PUF, 1994.

thing, a ground, a soil, or rather, a milieu, out from which they can be created, and this for Deleuze is *the plane of immanence*. The relation between the concepts and the plane of immanence is that of a mutual condition – no concepts can be created without the plane of immanence which grounds them, yet, the plane of immanence itself cannot be thought without the concepts that inhabit it. This is why it must be seen as pre-philosophical – not in terms of something pre-existing before philosophy, but as that which constitutes the unspoken, the un-thought internal conditions of thinking itself: “It is presupposed not in the way that one concept may refer to others but in the way that concepts themselves refer to a non-conceptual understanding” (WP, 40). However, the presupposition differs from one period to another, from one thinker to another, and most of all, from one problem to another. Each plane is outlined in its own specific way, depending on the nature of the question (implicit or explicit):

in Descartes it is a matter of a subjective understanding implicitly presupposed by the “I think” as first concept; in Plato it is the virtual image of an already-thought that doubles every actual concept. Heidegger invokes a “preontological understanding of Being,” a “preconceptual” understanding that seems to imply the grasp of a substance of being in relationship with a predisposition of thought. (WP, 41)

That which is pre-philosophical is what cannot be thought as such, and yet, it is constituting. The plane of immanence is *the image of thought* – not a method (since every method concerns the concepts and always already supposes a plane of immanence). Nor is it a state of knowledge in scientific terms, nor the general opinion of what thinking means or what mission it has, but rather what *pertains to thought by right*, separated from the various accidents that may occur to thinking scientifically or historically. For Deleuze, that which pertains by right to thought, and that which constitutes its internal conditions, is *infinite movement*. This is both what constitutes it (movement as thought itself) and what must be handled by thought (the creation of concepts).⁶ As such, it is of great importance not to confound the plane of

6. WP, 37.

immanence with the concepts themselves, nor to make it the concept underlying all concepts, but to understand it as an *infinite and absolute* horizon making possible the *consistency* that thought requires. It is infinite and absolute because it is not the relative horizon of a subject (which can only be posited as, precisely, a concept), but the horizon of movement as such: “it is the horizon itself that is in movement: the relative horizon recedes when the subject advances, but on the plane of immanence we are always and already on the absolute horizon” (WP, 38).

A first point of interest for us here is that Deleuze, at least to begin with (and this is certainly no coincidence, but a vital order), does not define the plane of immanence against or even in relation to its traditional counterpart: transcendence. This relation will certainly play an important role — and how could it not? — and I will return to this in short. However it appears that at this point, this relation will be one of consequence rather than a dichotomous pre-condition. In the text where Deleuze, together with Guattari, elaborates the notion of immanence and its absolute value, the term that constitutes its first counterpart or, more accurately, its counterweight, is *chaos*: if immanence is what makes possible the consistency (that is, securing some aspects of infinite movement while keeping it infinite), chaos is precisely what has no consistency, and that which constitutes a continuous dissolution of consistency; flashlightnings of speeds that dissolve, transform, disappear before they can be thought or grasped; to understand in analogy with what a not-yet formalized will to power would be for Nietzsche (power/force without direction). Chaos is perpetually present, is a continuing origin, where nothing has yet taken form neither as thought nor nature, and that in the same way threatens to dissolve once again all that is formulated and wrought into form: “Chaos is not an inert or stationary state, nor is it a chance mixture. Chaos chaotizes and undoes every consistency in the infinite” (WP, 42, transl. mod.) It is from this background, and still continually immersed in this chaos that thought begins precisely by the instituting of the plane of immanence that, in Deleuze’s words, constitutes a section of chaos, a sieve retaining or rather selecting a certain number of chaotic determinations, but at the same time requires them to be retained as absolute movement: “abstracted of all tempo-spatial coordination,

brought back to their pure expressible sense by the verbal infinite”⁷ (verbal infinite since the proper of the event is to be uninclined⁸). In other words, what we call thinking occurs as a relation of tension between chaos and immanence, where chaos ungrounds [*effonde*] thought, and where immanence makes possible its grounding and yet maintains chaotic speed. However it is precisely this relation of tension that allows us to understand the way that which we might be tempted to simply call “the horizon of thought” or “the plane of thought” as a manner of figurative speech (the famous “image”) in reality can only be qualified in terms of real *immanence* and nothing less. By letting thought be formulated as a tension (and this tension understood as a continuous, never-ceasing state of tension) in relation to chaos, it becomes obvious that what is literally at stake here is a fundamental, must we even perhaps say, *essential*, groundlessness that is that of philosophy or the act of thinking; there are, according to Deleuze, for thought, no fixed points and thus no *given* questions, concepts, or problems. In other words, what constitutes the horizon of thought is the very absence of givenness, of either “world,” “subject,” “consciousness,” or “God.” Immanence, for Deleuze, has this first and formal signification: thought is not inscribed in a vertical order where it could be a question of pulling order and form from a chaotic unformulatedness in such a way that the concepts, in the end, would correspond to an under- or overlying real order that chaos was just obstructing and obscuring. On the contrary, it is the question of the effort of subtracting from chaos specific, high-intensive composites on the horizon that has no other guarantee but its own strength of resistance against the chaos of infinite speed. Immanence, thus, in a Spinozian sense,⁹ as what is boundaryless (absolute horizon, as opposed to the relative, cf. *supra*), since there is nothing to delimit from or border against: the idea of a “beyond” is invalidated from the very beginning, since it, too, must be understood as one of many concepts created and operating from the plane of immanence itself. This, in

7. F. Zourabichvili, *Le vocabulaire de Deleuze*, Paris: Ellipses, 2003, 58.

8. Cf. *Mille Plateaux*, 10, “Souvenirs d’une heccécité.”

9. The substance, which has no outside, expressing itself by its own affections: see Spinoza, *Ethics*, I.

turn, means that we may not think the Deleuzian plane of immanence as a transcendence or a transcending of chaos: chaos is neither hither nor beyond the plane of immanence since it is not experienceable or thinkable other than through and by the plane of immanence: indeed, in the words of Zourabichvili, “the ‘real’ experience begins with the section or the instituting of a plane. Chaos, thereby, is rather thought than given.”¹⁰ The plane of immanence is immanent precisely because it is by and through it that what we call world comes to be in the first place as thought and nature: “The plane of immanence has two facets as Thought and as Nature, as *Nous* and as *Phusis*” (WP, 38). The plane of immanence, in short, is what enables meaning – the creation of meaning, against the background of the chaotic non-meaning that underlies all life.

It is only now, having approached the specific nature of the plane of immanence, that it is possible to understand not only its relation to transcendence, but also the essential distinction made by Deleuze between philosophy and religion. What must be noted is, as we have seen, that immanence for Deleuze is defined as constituting the internal conditions of thinking and that thought, as well as experience, takes place within the plane of immanence that thought itself must institute. But this also implies that the significance of the *plane of immanence* is actually not to be found within the traditional and somewhat overdetermined opposition of transcendence/immanence. In a certain sense, the correlatedness of the terms is short-circuited by the notion of the plane of immanence. According to Deleuze philosophical thought in itself should not accept any given. It has to create its own tools corresponding to each specific problem, which outrules from the very start any reference to another transcendent order, be it God, the Good, or the Ideal:

There is not the slightest reason for thinking that modes of existence need transcendent values by which they could be compared, selected, and judged relatively to one another. On the contrary, there are only immanent criteria. A possibility of life is evaluated through itself in the movement it lays out and the intensities it creates on a plane of immanence: what is not laid out or created is rejected. (WP, 74)

10. Zourabichvili, *ibid.*, 60.

The legitimacy of this claim can, of course, be discussed, but it for Deleuze it is an absolute claim, and one to which I will return. However, the relation of immanence to transcendence (and vice-versa) is not even to Deleuze this simple and clear-cut. Following an initiated and interesting investigation of Daniel W. Smith in his article “Deleuze and Derrida, Immanence and Transcendence: Two Directions in Recent French Thought,”¹¹ we can distinguish at least three different realms, or regions, all of particular interest to Deleuze in which the problematics of transcendence/immanence are concerned: subjectivity, ontology, and epistemology. In the tradition of subjectivity, immanence can be understood as referring to the sphere of the subject, whereas transcendence refers to that which transcends the field of consciousness immanent to the subject (the transcendent here as the Other in Husserl or the world in Heidegger); or, in Sartre’s idea of a transcendence of the ego, a transcendental subject which itself is already transcendent in relation to experience.¹² In the field of ontology, the reference to transcendence marks the relation to a hierarchy of Being — God, the Good, or the One — or more specifically, a beyond, an outside-of, an ungraspable that exceeds and determines whatever immanent sphere there might be (beings, subjects, consciousnesses, and so forth). At last, in the field of epistemology, the Kantian distinction between immanence and transcendence posits the whole project of the first Critique as a transcendental philosophy seeking immanent criteria: indeed, he says, “We shall entitle the principles whose application is confined entirely within the limits of possible experience immanent, and those, on the other hand, which profess to pass beyond these limits, transcendent.”¹³ Here, what pertains to understanding (and thus, reason), belongs to the realm of immanence, whereas the metaphysical illusions go under the term of transcendence. The project of a critical philosophy must thus, in terms of pure epistemology, be understood as a question of immanence, however Kant, as is well

11. Daniel W. Smith, “Deleuze and Derrida, Immanence and Transcendence: Two Directions in Recent French Thought,” in *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, eds. Paul Patton and John Protevi, London: Continuum, 2003.

12. Smith, 47. I thank Jakob Nilsson for drawing my attention to this article.

13. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 295–6/B 352, 1929.

known, reintroduces transcendence understood as traditional metaphysical ideas in terms, for example, of regulative ideas (God) and practical postulates (eternal life). Considering these three realms, it is not difficult to see where Deleuze consequently chooses the immanent version rather than the transcendent. Concerning subjectivity, Deleuze explicitly rejects the idea of a given subject which is transcendent or even transcends: the reason for this is simply that the subject, as consciousness, is a concept highly operative as such, but that nevertheless is created from a plane of immanence rather than constituting it. Concerning ontology, Deleuze, who, himself, claims to be a pure metaphysician¹⁴ not only refuses to embrace the problem of an end or an overcoming of metaphysics, but, as Smith puts it, actively sets out to *do* metaphysics (hence, for instance, the whole development of the notion of difference) by showing how ontology itself is constituted immanently.¹⁵ This is why it, in itself, cannot respond to transcendent notions or values and why it resists the idea of hierarchy, being itself, as any concept, anarchy (also in the sense of *an-archè*), resisting the idea of a Beyond. Concerning epistemology, Deleuze devotes not only an important part of *Difference and Repetition* to the elaboration of an immanent theory of the idea. Moreover, he introduces a dissonance in the whole philosophical claim of being a project of establishing the conditions of possible experience, and thus of knowledge, by expressing, throughout his work, an interest in real experience.¹⁶ This is also why the categories of truth or the good give place to the categories of the Interesting, the Important, the Remarkable.¹⁷ From all of these perspectives, and still following Smith's analysis, there is little doubt

14. *Negotiations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 88. Cf. also in Viliani, *La Guêpe et l'orchidée*, Paris: Belin, 1999, 130.

15. Thereby, as Smith also notes, while acknowledging utmost interest in the question raised by Heidegger, he refuses to side with him: "The project of *Difference and repetition* is to provide an immanent analysis of the ontological difference in which *the different is related to the different through difference itself*. [. . .] Deleuze is not often thought of as a Heideggerian, but *Difference and Repetition* can be read as a direct response to *Being and Time* from the standpoint of immanence: for Deleuze, Being is difference, and time is repetition" (ibid.).

16. Cf. Smith, 58

17. Deleuze, WP, 82, DR, 189.

that Deleuze prefers immanence to transcendence. However the question itself always requires a more specific formulation (immanent to what? transcendent to what?) than the simple dualistic one. Yet, the opposition, clear-cut or not, does not appear to be what is really at stake in Deleuze's questioning of immanence and transcendence. The concern would rather be of a genealogical order, ontological surely, ethical, or even, as Nietzsche would have it, a matter of *taste*. If indeed philosophy is about creating concepts, answering to real and specific problems, and if all creation of concepts requires a plane of immanence, immanence thereby imposing itself as the proper milieu of thought itself (at least all thought that, from Hume to Kant, Nietzsche, Husserl, or Sartre, claims to be *critical*),¹⁸ the question would rather be why the very notion of immanence always becomes such a burning issue — why it must become what has to be disguised, obscured, and, not the least, denied? This is why the Deleuzian question, formulated throughout his work, concerns what is expressed, in philosophy, by immanence, to what inclination it answers, to what problems it responds, to what it is a threat, and what it must resist; but even more, in what ways it is transformed, what mutations it undergoes — in short, and in more explicitly Deleuzian terms: how immanence deterritorializes itself, and how it is reterritorialized.

For obvious reasons, this question must always be retraced back to the heart of philosophy. Referring to Jean-Pierre Vernant's discussion in *The Origins of Greek Thinking*, Deleuze states that philosophy indeed has its origins in ancient Greece, since it was there that thinkers, for the first time, understood themselves as something other than sages. The beginning of philosophy is not about instituting a rationalism versus a mythology — rationality, or reason, is for Deleuze nothing but a specific concept among others, however powerful — itself originating from most irrational grounds.¹⁹ Instead it is precisely about instituting a plane of immanence instead of referring to a transcendent order:

18. And, as Smith also notes, "the radicality of a critique of transcendence above all stems from the theoretical interest to expose its fictional or illusory status — this has been a constant in philosophy from Hume to Kant to Nietzsche, its 'demystificatory' role," 61.

19. WP, 43.

In short, the first philosophers are those who institute a plane of immanence like a sieve stretched over the chaos. In this sense they contrast with sages, who are religious personae, priests, because they conceive of the institution of an always transcendent order imposed from outside by a great despot or by one god higher than the others. (WP, 43).

Philosophy is thus what is characterized by its relation to immanence — and Deleuze explicitly claims that each philosophy has its beginning in the institution of a plane of immanence. However, this is also the reason why its relation to religion gets more complicated, as it appears that philosophy *in itself* has an inner tendency to re-implement the transcendence that the instituting of a plane of immanence out-rules. Indeed, says Deleuze, “whenever there is transcendence, vertical Being, imperial State in the sky or on earth, there is religion; and there is Philosophy whenever there is immanence” (ibid.), but this distinction is not simple or evident, as in, for instance, making religion to be about God, and philosophy to be about something else (knowledge, reason, or even truth). The problem here still lies in the relation of thought to chaos, or more precisely in the difficulty of this relation, where we, following Deleuze, on the one hand, can see the task of philosophy in the necessary upholding of the infinite speed of chaotic determinations while giving them consistency at the same time and, on the other hand, the unavoidable tendency or temptation to “freeze” them, make them static and fixed, an object for a inquiring or contemplating subject.

This is precisely what happens whenever philosophy institutes a plane of immanence but finds itself unable to support its weight, thus transforming it into an immanence belonging *to* something else: to a consciousness, to a bigger whole, to the One, and so forth. In other words, philosophy tends to introduce transcendence into immanence — on to the plane of immanence — and it is then, and only then, that transcendence becomes the poisonous counterpart of immanence. It is in this sense that Deleuze reads the history of philosophy as the history of a *dative immanence* (WP, 44), which thereby displaces thought to the genealogically speaking altogether different region of faith. This analysis is, for Deleuze, in close analogy with Nietzsche’s in *On Truth and Lie in Extramoral Sense*: philosophy creates concepts, but forgets that they are created and displaces their signification as created singu-

larities to eternal, transcendent universals — consciousness, subject, object, soul, and, not least, truth. This is the same thing that occurs whenever the plane of immanence is confused with the concepts, making it thereby a concept that, in turn, must be understood and referred *to* something else. Deleuze also effectuates a diagnostic analysis of how this scheme can be found through at least three paradigms of Western philosophy. Interestingly enough, we can see how the three paradigms correspond to the three traditional realms of the relation transcendence/immanence as proposed by Smith, but in fact complicate them since several of the realms are at play simultaneously within each paradigm. In the first one, starting with Plato and continuing through Neoplatonism, transcendence, on both an ontological and an epistemological level, is superimposed on the plane of immanence as its double: “Instead of the plane of immanence constituting the One-All, immanence is immanent ‘to’ the One, so that the other One, this time transcendent, is superimposed on the one in which immanence is extended or to which it is attributed.” In the second paradigm, Christian philosophy, in what concerns ontology, subjectivity, and epistemology, develops as a real battle against immanence, which becomes synonymous with the highest risk and danger within philosophy, tolerated only in exceedingly small doses, strictly controlled and enframed by a highly emanative and creative transcendence. Turning to Bruno, Cusano, and Eckhart, Deleuze points out how philosophers, often with their own lives at stake, must prove that the degree of immanence injected into the world and thought does not compromise the transcendence of a God to whom immanence can be attributed only secondarily. If from the beginning it is not clear why immanence appears as such a threat, it becomes clear throughout history *that it is* considered to be a threat, engulfing “sages and gods” (WP, 45). In the third paradigm — modernity, where once again all three realms: ontology, subjectivity, and epistemology are concerned — Deleuze shows further how the plane of immanence, via Descartes and Kant, is yet again reclaimed by transcendence, and how it, through the *cogito*, is now allowed to be immanent to conscience itself. And as the last step of the analysis comes phenomenology with Husserl,²⁰ who transposes

20. Deleuze only makes brief references to Husserl in *What is Philosophy?*, but

immanence from consciousness and the subject to a transcendental subjectivity, thereby transposing transcendence within immanence²¹ itself. For Deleuze, then, it is clear that even, or perhaps in particular, with phenomenology, as if responding to the compelling call of a *necessary* (and always *desired*) Beyond, one of the deepest concerns appears to be precisely the overcoming of immanence once and for all, even in one of the most meticulous attempts to institute a critique of transcendent, mystificatory values. Whether the Deleuzean critique of phenomenology here is fully valid remains, naturally, an open question, recently and most fruitfully discussed by several commentators, among others Alain Beaulieu whose *Gilles Deleuze et la phénoménologie*²² contributes largely to the question, in this specific case by carefully distinguishing the various levels of immanence at stake in Husserl's work. If most studies devoted to this particular relation agree that there remains in phenomenology a call for transcendence, thus establishing a relation to religious thought, the question still remains concerning Deleuze's own claim concerning pure immanence. This is a more worthwhile discussion than the rather pointless debate concerning whether Deleuze in fact inscribes himself in the phenomenological tradition (for instance, as an atheist phenomenologist,²³ a title which Deleuze himself would probably have interpreted as based on a strong desire for annihilation) or if he is "guilty" of the transcendence he himself rejects; important because it points to the problem immanent to philosophy itself, that is, how immanence reterritorializes itself in transcendence not only by *taste*, but perhaps by *necessity*. One could of course point to the fact that the very use of terms such as "absolute," "pure," and "unthinkable," pertaining to Deleuze's notion of the plane of immanence, inscribes immanence itself within a certain frame of value that is claimed by all transcendent discourses — an unavoidable compromise of philosophy with God, as Philip Goodchild point-

proposes a lengthy discussion on the subject of Husserl's idea of the conscience and the transcendental field in *Logic of Sense*, series 14–16.

21. The formulation being Husserl's own, cf. Hua III, 138.

22. Alain Beaulieu, *Gilles Deleuze et la phénoménologie*, Mons: Sils-Maria, 2004.

23. Cf. Beaulieu, 67, and R. Tejada, *Deleuze face à la phénoménologie* (1), Paris, Les papiers du collège international de philosophie, nr. 41, February 1998, 68.

edly puts it.²⁴ One could also, as Beaulieu remarks, question the hypothesis of a pure immanence.²⁵ It is difficult to conceive of an immanence of thought since there is necessarily always a transition, a change, a loss,²⁶ the *becoming* so clearly claimed by Deleuze himself, rendering impossible totality, identity, and whole, and this is nothing but Deleuze's own magistral thesis of difference. After all, is there not, in all of Deleuze's own concepts, an unmistakable odor of transcendence? But here, the question once again needs to be specified. If what is at stake in transcendence were only about opening up the otherwise closed and stale, about introducing a radically other and unknown dimension surpassing the self and its dirty little secrets,²⁷ if it was about injecting into the strict measure of rationality an incommensurability, then naturally Deleuze would be adhering to a transcendent philosophical project. Indeed, if that were the case, then transcendence would be the real issue of philosophy, acting with the same force as poetry, as referred to in the conclusion of *What is Philosophy?*:

people are constantly putting up an umbrella that shelters them and on the underside of which they draw a firmament and write their convention and opinions. But poets, artists, make a slit in the umbrella, they tear open the firmament itself, to let in a bit of free and windy chaos and to frame in a sudden light a vision that appears through the rent — Wordsworth's spring or Cézanne's apple, the silhouettes of Macbeth or Ahab. (WP, 203–204)

But in all this; the *surpassing*, the *strange*, the *becoming*, relate to *chaos*, and not to whatever mission transcendence, in history and in philosophy, has always assumed. For Deleuze, the role of transcendence has always had clear political, ethical, and precisely genealogical dimensions, all of which have to do with repression, control, and sadness. And, as he repeatedly points out, whenever immanence is attacked, it

24. Goodchild, "Why is philosophy so compromised with God?" in *Deleuze and Religion*, ed. Mary Bryden, London/New York: Routledge 2000

25. Beaulieu, 71.

26. On the Deleuzian cogito as the "have been", see *Logique du Sens*, Paris, Minuit 1969, 360, and Zourabichvili, *Le vocabulaire*, 62.

27. *Dialogues*, 58.

is with moral arguments.²⁸ This is why immanence must be understood as a non-negotiable claim. Immanence is a form of resistance to the different forms of transcendence, by consequence, but also ontologically and genealogically. Immanence is the upholding of the non-religious, first as the upholding of the concept as singularity over and against the universal, secondly as the upholding of infinite speed over and against stationary transcendence. Immanence is thus what Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, referring to Blanchot,²⁹ investigate as a strange form of infinitive, always impersonal, “a life” — “a” life, rather than “the” life or “life” itself, and of which he says the following: “it is not in something else, it does not belong to anything else, does not depend on an object and does not belong to a subject.”³⁰ But perhaps even more important is the understanding of immanence on a more formal level, immanence as a standard of value, a measure, and a criterion. The value of a concept, or the truth of a concept, can only be measured immanently according to Deleuze, that is, according to the specific architecture or problematics from which it issues forth: “we always have as much truth as we deserve in accordance with the sense of what we say” (DR, 154). It is thus not surprising that philosophy, as an activity, cannot be understood or realized as *polem*y or *discussion*, or yet more important, why its issues cannot be thought of in terms of reaching a *consensus*.³¹ All philosophy, as a system and as a construction, is immanent. Immanence thus is the measure in all respects. This is why immanence is pronounced as the formal philosophical requirement, a requirement of rigor, honesty, and even possibility.

28. DR, 132.

29. *Mille Plateaux*, Paris: Minuit, 1980, 324.

30. “L’immanence: une vie” in *Deux Régimes de Fous*, Paris: Minuit, 2003, 360.

31. For this analysis, I refer to extensive treatments in, among others, *What is Philosophy?*, *Difference and Repetition*, and *Dialogues*.