

Deleuze on Art

Deleuze on Art:

The Problem of Aesthetic Constructions

By

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
List of Charts	ix
Abbreviations	xi
Chapter One.....	1
Introduction	
Chapter Two.....	19
The Problem of Aesthetic Constructions	
Chapter Three.....	29
Diagonality in the Modernist Work (<i>Proust and Signs</i>)	
Chapter Four.....	43
Constructing a Triptych Diagram (<i>Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation</i>)	
Chapter Five	57
Techniques of Time (<i>Cinema 1. The Movement-Image, Cinema 2. The Time-Image</i>)	
Chapter Six.....	91
Fold(ing) Outsides (<i>Foucault, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque</i>)	
Chapter Seven.....	115
Conclusion: Charting a Deleuzian Unity	
Analytic Summary.....	119
Bibliography.....	123
Index.....	133

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LIST OF CHARTS

Chart 1-1. Historian and Artist

Chart 2-1. Movements

Chart 3-1. Aesthetic Work and Thinking

Chart 4-1. Developed System of the Three Elements

Chart 4-2. Correspondence of General Notions and Elements of Painting

Chart 4-3. Double Reading of the Triptych

Chart 4-4. General Aspects of Thought

Chart 4-5. System (Horizontal Order)

Chart 5-1. Three Domains

Chart 6-1. Foucault's List of Operations

Chart 7-1. Unity of the System

ABBREVIATIONS

The writings of Gilles Deleuze frequently referred to or cited in the footnotes are indicated according to the below abbreviations. Complete references are given in the Bibliography. Where abbreviations are used, references to the writings are given, first, to the available English translation, with page numbers in Roman characters. The only exception to this approach is in relation to *Francis Bacon. Logique de la sensation*, from which I only refer to the original French edition, and not at the same time the available English translation. Page number references to the original French text where one exists follow in italicised characters. Translations are those of the published English language editions unless otherwise indicated. Where I have modified the available English translation, the page reference in the Notes is marked by: tr. mod.

- C1 Deleuze, G. (1983b) *Cinéma 1—L'Image-movement*, Collection "Critique". Paris: Les Editions de Minuit. English translation: (1986a) *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- C1(Pr) Deleuze, G. (1986c) 'Preface to the English edition', in *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image*: ix–x.
- C2 Deleuze, G. (1985a) *Cinéma 2. L'Image-temps*, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit. English translation: (1989a) *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*, trans. H. Tomlinson and R. Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- C2(Pr) Deleuze, G. (1989b) 'Preface to the English Edition', in *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*: xi–xiii.
- CC Deleuze, G. (1993c) *Critique et clinique*, collection 'Paradoxe'. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit. English translation: (1997) *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Michael A. Greco and Daniel W. Smith. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- D Deleuze, G. and Parent, C. (1987) *Dialogues*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam. European Perspectives. New York: Columbia University Press.
- D(Pr) Deleuze, G. (1986c) 'Preface to the English Language Edition', in *Dialogues*: vii–x.
- DR Deleuze, G. (1968a) *Différence et répétition*, Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine. Paris: Presses universitaires de France. English translation: (1994a) *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton. New York: Columbia University Press.
- DR(Pr) Deleuze, G. (1994b) 'Preface to the English Edition', in *Difference and Repetition*, pp. xv–xvii.
- Ep Deleuze, G. (1992a) 'L'Épuisé', postface to: S. Beckett. *Quad*, Paris: Editions de Minuit.
- ES Deleuze, G. (1953) *Empirisme et subjectivité. Essai sur la nature humaine selon Hume*, Epiméthée. Essais philosophiques. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. English translation: (1991a) *Empiricism and Subjectivity. An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, Edited by R.W. Lawrence and D. Kritzman, trans. Constantin V. Boundas. European Perspectives. New York: Columbia University Press.
- ES(Pr) Deleuze, G. (1991c) 'Preface to the English-Language Edition', in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, pp. ix–x; the text is dated 1989.
- F Deleuze, G. (1986b) *Foucault*, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit. English translation: (1988a) *Foucault*, trans. S. Hand. London: The Athlone Press.
- FB Deleuze, G. (1981a) *Francis Bacon: Logique de la Sensation*, Paris: Editions de la Différence.
- Fld Deleuze, G. (1988b) *Le Pli. Leibniz et le baroque*, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit. English translation: (1993b) *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. T. Conley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- IV Deleuze, G. (1995a) 'L'immanence: une vie ...', *Philosophie* 47 (September 1995): 3–7.
- LP Deleuze, G. (1990c) 'Lettre-préface', in M. Buydens, *Sahara. L'esthétique de Gilles Deleuze*. Paris: Librairie philosophique, J. Vrin: 5.
- LS Deleuze, G. (1969) *Logique du sens*, Paris: Editions du Minuit. English translation: (1990d) *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, Edited by Constantin V. Boundas. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Neg Deleuze, G. (1990c) *Pourparlers*, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit. English translation: (1995b) *Negotiations 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press.
- NP Deleuze, G. (1962) *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. English translation: (1983d) *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press.
- NPh(Pr) Deleuze, G. (1983e) 'Preface to the English Translation', in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press: ix–xiv.
- PI Deleuze, G. (1985b) 'Les plages d'immanence', in J.-F. Lyotard, M. Cazenare (ed.) *L'art des confins. Mélanges offerts à Maurice de Gandillac*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France: 79–81.
- PS Deleuze, G. (1970a) *Proust et les signes*, revue et augmenté, 3ième éd., Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. English translation: (1973) *Proust and Signs*, trans. R. Howard. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press.
- PV Deleuze, G. (1988b) *Périclès et Verdi. La philosophie de François Châtelet*, Paris: Editions de Minuit.
- SPE Deleuze, G. (1968b) *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, Paris: Editions du Minuit. English translation: (1990a) *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. M. Joughin. New York: Zone Books.

- SPE(Ltr) Deleuze, G. (1990b) 'Letter to Martin Joughin', in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*.
- SPP Deleuze, G. (1970b) *Spinoza: Philosophie pratique*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. English translation: (1988e) *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. R. Hurley. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- TP Deleuze, G., and F. Guattari (1980) *Mille plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie, vol. 2*, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit. English translation: (1987b) *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism & Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- WPh Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F. (1991e) *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*, Collection "Critique". Paris: Les Editions de Minuit. English translation: (1994c) *What is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchill. London: Verso.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to present an analysis of French post-structuralist philosopher Gilles Deleuze's late writings from the perspective of the problem of aesthetic constructions.¹ The main hypothesis of the study can be stated simply: in the texts of Deleuze there is a recurrent turn to works of art and the problem of aesthetic constructions in general. This interest becomes more overt in the writings that follow *A Thousand Plateaus* (1981), and reaches a certain programmatic density in *What is Philosophy?* (1991), which positions art as a distinct realm of invention, part of a universal triad alongside philosophy and science.

In contrast to a reading that would focus on the philosophical or speculative content of his work, I put forward the presence of formal aesthetic criteria in his writings as a distinguishing and productive aspect of Deleuze's work. These criteria and associated constructivist effects and principles contribute to establishing the conditions for a model of thinking as creation that is pluralist and multiple. According to Deleuze, this other model of thought has the potential to lead to a new diagram of life and an alternate aesthetic tradition, one that differs from a classical tradition. The elaboration of this thesis is undertaken by means of a survey of the varying roles and characteristics of the problem of aesthetic constructions in the major period writings.

A New Diagram of Thinking

Four achievements outline the contribution of what Deleuze himself announced as a central focus of his work: the formulation of a new image of thinking. These achievements are the establishment of a concept of

¹ Gilles Deleuze, b. 1925–d. 1995. A succinct chronology of Deleuze's personal and professional life can be found in A. Gualandi, *Deleuze* (Paris: Société d'édition les Belles Lettres, Collection Figures du Savoir, 1998), 7–8. For a listing of bibliographical surveys of his writings, see the first part of the Bibliography.

multiplicity,² a recognition of the criterion of force, giving meaning to the idea of the event,³ and the release of the concept and operation of the fold. These operative notions together construct a model or diagram of thinking whose primary characteristic may be described as creating the conditions for the new to emerge.

In the first two decades of Deleuze's professional activity, the question of image of thought is elaborated throughout his writings. Sustained formulations are found in *Nietzsche; Proust and Signs*, especially the Conclusion to the First Part of the Second Edition; *Difference and Repetition*, especially the third chapter; *A Thousand Plateaus*, especially the Introduction: Rhizome; and in *Negotiations*.⁴ After *A Thousand Plateaus*, it is possible to argue that the writings attempt to give shape to, and express fully, a new image of thought.

The writings of Gilles Deleuze construct this apparatus of thinking as well as a diagram of the apparatus that performs a critique and a reversal of the traditional image of thought as that more or less implicit or presupposed system that determines our goals when we think. The system Deleuze proposes to set up within the realm of philosophy would provide the conditions and processes of thinking as creation such that an open, pluralist world and a free life are allowed to appear. This ambition, the consequences of the reversal of thinking advanced in his writing, and the

² Several commentators on Deleuze's work have analysed the role and impact of the notion of multiplicity. See especially: Eric Alliez, *Deleuze philosophie virtuelle* (Le Plessis-Robinson, France: Synthélabo, Collection les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 1996); Philippe Mengue, *Gilles Deleuze ou le système du multiple* (Paris: Editions Kimé, 1994), 14–51; G. Battista Vaccaro, *Deleuze et il pensiero de molteplice* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1990).

³The problem of the event in Deleuze is taken up in Alain Badiou, 'Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*'. In *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*, edited by Dorothy Olkowski and Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 51–72. It is systematically considered in François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze une philosophie de l'événement* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, Collection Philosophes, 1994).

⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1990). English translation: *Negotiations 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), cited herein as Neg. Neg 147–9/202–5. A reminder to the Reader: Where abbreviations are used, references to the writings are given, firstly, to the available English translation with page numbers in Roman characters. Page number references to the original French text follow in italicised characters. Translations are those of the published English language editions unless otherwise indicated. Where I have modified the available English translation, the page reference in the Notes is marked by the following: tr. mod.

significance he assigned to this as one measure of his activity, are suggested in Deleuze's preface to the 1994 English Edition of *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze lays out the breadth of influence he assigns to his work on thought and of its necessarily critical path. He first identifies the terms that delimit a classical or traditional image of thought according to a number of characteristics. A classical model of thinking supposes that thought possesses a good nature and the thinker a will to want the true. This model presumes a process of recognition, in other words a common-sense employment of all the faculties on an object that is presumed to remain the same. Finally, the classical model of thinking assumes '... that the true concerns solutions—in other words, propositions capable of serving as answers. This is the classic image of thought'.⁵

Deleuze posits a need to continually resist this model of thought in order to situate thought and life in relation to another series of terms, one that he characterises as an open system. Deleuze clearly announces this goal when he calls for a critique of the very heart of the classical image of thought as recognition, as good will, as will to the true in order to provide the conditions for another kind of thinking. This other style, according to Deleuze, will open up the possibility of encompassing 'problems which point beyond the propositional mode' and involve 'encounters which escape all recognition'. For Deleuze, in its traditional mode of sensibility, thinking cannot 'confront' its true enemies. It lies statically in its 'natural torpor' unable to produce that which 'forces us to think'.⁶

From this perspective, a generic description of the consequence of Deleuze's written body of work as 'holding a line' appears to be accurate.⁷ It is not an art of statements or doctrines, but an art of maintaining a momentum of multiple directions. The challenge is one of placing and maintaining thought in motion in order to try to match the differing rhythms of those problems—both friends and enemies—which escape traditional representational modes. The discovery of philosophical concepts and the laying out of the strands of such an alternate figure of thought is one way to describe Deleuze's achievement.

Another way to describe the achievement, this time from *A Thousand Plateaus*, serves as additional clarification of Deleuze's purpose in his

⁵ Gilles Deleuze, 'Preface to the English Edition', in *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xv–xvii. Cited herein as DR(Pr), xvi.

⁶ DR(Pr) xvi.

⁷ This reading is suggested by Françoise Proust, 'Le ligne de résistance'. In Eric Alliez, ed. *Gilles Deleuze—Immanence et vie* (Paris: Collège International de Philosophie, 1998), 35–48, 35–6.

various presentations of traditional or classical thought. Deleuze writes: ‘The classical image of thought, and the striating of mental space which it makes manifest [*le striage de l’espace mental qu’elle opère*], aspires to universality. It operates in effect with two “universals”, the Whole as the final ground of being or all-encompassing horizon, and the Subject as the principle that converts being into being-for-us’.⁸ An examination of the alternative image offered and deployed can begin with the concepts he proposes in place of these two universals. For if Deleuze is concerned not with the whole, it is because he gives priority to the multiple. And, occupying the place of the notion of the subject, Deleuze deploys the question of the event. These two concepts of the multiple and the event are considered at length below.

Together, these aspects reveal the question of the work of art, or the aesthetic construction in general. Deleuze designates generically the work of art as variously a so-called plastic work (*oeuvre dit plastique*)⁹ or aesthetic construction, and considers it to encompass all realms of the fine arts: painting, sculpture, music, architecture, and cinema. I will argue below that Deleuze’s enterprise is however not concerned with formulating nor providing the bases for an aesthetics. This can be demonstrated in reading the unstable flow of Deleuze’s series of formulations. For example, the parallel series Reflecting-Expressionism || Intensive-Lyrical abstraction developed in *Cinema 1*¹⁰ is never allowed to stabilise into a fixed dichotomy. As another example, the fold is both a conceptual figure and an operative tool in Deleuze’s writing. Equally, it is not the establishment of lines that resemble each other but of folds that differ from each other and call out for singular concepts not universal ideas.¹¹

I have suggested the topographic and taxonomic bias of this study. It is not that I attempt to situate the Deleuzian discourse on art within the frame of a history of aesthetics with its objects, its methods, and its schools. Such

⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Mille plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, vol. 2 (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1980). English translation: *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism & Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), cited herein as TP. TP 379 tr. mod/469.

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1990). English translation: *Negotiations 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press., 1995), cited herein as Neg. Neg 156/213.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 1—L’Image-movement* (Collection “Critique”, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1983). English translation: *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), cited herein as C1. C1 90 ff/130.

¹¹ This is developed in Neg 156–7/213–4.

a gesture would treat aesthetics as a discipline or a division of philosophy. Rather, I consider the constructive aspect as designating a specific configuration of thought, a specific interpretation of the act of thinking as a style of invention and an act of freedom. For this project, a system of aesthetic constructions is not a closed knowledge of the work of art or architecture, but a mode of thought which is deployed in relation to constructions, one which takes the work of art or architecture as the witness to a problem or to a set of problems. That is, the work of art is witness to the specificity of Deleuze's imaginative process and to what Deleuze calls a problematic. The problematic thus revealed carries with it a relationship to the sensible and to sensation. In addition, it carries with it a relationship to the power of thought that inhabits it before the act of thinking, without, if you will, the knowledge of thought. This relationship of power to thought to sensation is one of the most provocative in Deleuze's writing, for it posits a delay in figuring the relationship between things. This delay permits ideas, 'just ideas', to appear and to exist in a delay opened by the very force of the idea.¹² This does not imply that Deleuze retains some notion of a truth behind or under sensation, such as that which is outside thinking. Rather, for Deleuze, truth is formulated as pure sensation. It is an unconditioned sensation that is situated in a realm different from that of the ideas. The aesthetic work is privileged as one realm in which unconditioned sensation may make its appearance. This privilege of the work of art is announced in *Proust and Signs*: I consider it at greater length in Chapter Three.

I consider, in addition, how the texts, the modes of description and conceptualisation of Deleuze lead us towards the moving centre of that which is today a condition for invention in the domain of art. In Deleuze's theoretical construction, the effect of the work of art is to produce its own disappearance. Deleuze's text on the painter Francis Bacon is only that, a vast allegory of the functioning and productive force of self-effacing aesthetic constructions. The privilege of Bacon, the privilege of expressionism within the general aesthetic constellation constructed by Deleuze, is to demonstrate and allegorise a moment of metamorphosis. It is to present art in its becoming within a battle which resists figurative givens. The work of art from this perspective reveals itself in showing its immanent form and its natural movement. The figure of art, for Deleuze, is simultaneously the formula of a transformation and its allegory. The judgement and dismissal of the figure is linked to its capacity to become

¹² Neg 39/57.

the formula and the effigy which at the same time operates and allegorises the movement of its own escape.

In making the transition to a more concrete confrontation with the work of art, one is pushed to ask whether Deleuze's position differs from that held by a formalist. Does Deleuzism operate in a manner significantly distanced from that of Greenberg or the early Fried in regard to painting, or of Rowe and Eisenman in regard to architecture?

Having initiated an analysis of the appearance of a theory of art constructions in Deleuze, and sketched out the difference between classical thinking and the theoretical position with which we are concerned below, it is now possible to situate the Deleuzian formulation of the work of art in the line of a general commentary. It is possible to link his critique of representation and organicity to that which aesthetics says of itself.

What is implied in the emergence of the notion of a philosophy of aesthetics as it appeared at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries? The term first implied, negatively, the ruin of the poetic. The poetic was the mode of truth governing works of art in the universe of representation. The universe of representation is governed by the double competence of the mimetic principle that I mentioned earlier. The work, according to this model, produces a kind of resemblance. The work is, at the same time, something that resembles itself to the degree that it constitutes an organism, a *logos*, a beautiful living thing. The character of art as a skill based on general principles and capable of being taught implies that the work of art extends nature, capturing a moving force that accomplishes itself as life in an organism. The *tekhne* of the work is a kind of normative production led by this other kind of production that is the force common to life, to the organism, and to the work of art.

Opposed to this description, it is evident that Deleuze's logic of the work puts at its focus, not the work, but that which is made sensible or visible: the line, surface and shape bearing the force, pull, and character of sensations or concepts being rendered. This formulation of Deleuze is not easily understood. It is bound up with, or crossed by, a paradox that has marked and distanced the aesthetic construction from thought. Where the collapse of the criteria of representation leads to a privileging of the work as form, Deleuze's analysis of the work of art ties up any interpretation of the work in a thinking of the sensible, thinking which privileges the effect of sensation itself and is distinct from an emphasis on form. A Deleuzian theory of aesthetic constructions situates itself in this other realm.

By referring to a theory of aesthetic constructions, I am not only differentiating this realm from that of aesthetics, traditionally understood, but also designating a difference of perspective. The work, for Deleuze, is

neither an anachronism nor an impropriety. When the thought of the work no longer returns to an idea of the rules of its production, it is subsumed under something else. This something else is the idea of a particular sensibility, which is, and is not, of thought: it is of thought that has become other than itself. It is a question of the product that equals a non-product, of a consciousness that equals an unconscious. A Deleuzian aesthetics then seeks to transform the work of art and architecture into a punctual manifestation of a force or contradictory spirit. From this optic, the Kantian theory of genius defines it as a power that does not account for that which it does. Hegel treats the work as a station of the spirit outside itself. The spirit is present as an animation of the canvas or as the smile of the god of stone. The work of art in this model is a 'sensible' separated from the ordinary connections of sensibility that have value only as manifestations of the spirit, but the spirit only as that which does not know itself.

Another kind of theorisation of the work of art is born as a mode of thought when the work of art is subsumed under the category of a heterogeneous sensibility, with the idea that there is a zone of sensibility which witnesses the presence of another kind of force. It is this other kind of force to which one can give the name, as has Deleuze, of the spiritual. There is nothing to suggest something more deterministic, more precise than this. The idea of a zone of sensibility is qualified by the action of a heterogeneous force which changes regimes, which leads sensations beyond sensibility and claims that they have more to do with thinking and thought. This formulation of thought is situated in a singular regime of thinking other than itself, of pathos that is a kind of logos, and of the conscience that equals the unconscious. A theory of art constructions in the Deleuzian style is one that submits the consideration of works to the idea of this heterogeneous force, submits art constructions to this power of the spirit and this has the effect of a flame that can equally illuminate or burn.

This power of a thought, which does not think in the classical sense, can be conceived according to one of two alternate schemas. The first underlines the immanence of reason in the will to form, the immanence of thought in that which does not think. Thinking incarnates itself, gives itself to be read in sensation. This is the romantic model of thought which moves from the stone and the desert to the spirit, which moves from thought already present in the texture of things, inscribed as if in layers of rocks, and which then elevates itself into increasingly manifest forms. The second scheme is the reverse, grasping at spirit as a point of stoppage, in which the image petrifies itself, sending the spirit to a kind of desert,

underlining the immanence in thought of that which does not think. This is the Schopenhauerian 'thing in itself', the without-ground, the undifferentiated, the obscure of the pre-individual life.

In this formulation, classical aesthetics is the history of the forms of coincidence between the space of artistic representation and the space of the presentation of the spirit to itself in sensation. The problem of a modernist diagram of aesthetic constructions, by contrast, is to affirm the power of artistic presentation against the dogma of representation, the power of the spirit that is equal to its other, variously called nature, the unconscious, the absence of language. A philosophical programme of aesthetic constructions would, therefore, claim a reversal of the direction of the spirit that moves from sensation and emotion to opinion and belief. It would make the work of art the conquest of the spiritual which had been lost, lost in the translation by way of matter, making the spiritual the inverse of the classical powers and the classical values of incarnation and individualisation. In this profile, the destiny of the work finds itself suspended to the other side of the 'spiritual'. This other side can be characterised as immanence in a thinking that does not think, the groundlessness of an un-differentiated, pre-individual life, pathos as a point of repose.

Accordingly, for Deleuze, this metamorphosis is achieved in the guise of a battle that identifies the power of the work with that of a pure non-signifying sensation. The process of de-figuration analysed by Deleuze in the painting of Francis Bacon, for example, is identical to the kind of cleaning operated by Flaubert, undoing line upon line the ordinary grammatical conjunctions of a history, of a thought, of a sentiment. This operation has a precise finality: to give to the phrase, in the case of literature, the force of a sensation that is other than a figure of representation. This scouring of the surface of the work of art at the same time resists and replaces a future gesture, that of the non-significance of the void, of the infinite, the great and indifferent wave which rolls over and breaks up the elements. Consider Deleuze's Proust, for whom the ideal book is composed of the substance of a few instants torn from time, a book constructed from drops of light. For Proust, however, the problem of this ideal effect is that with this material of pathos one cannot write a book. For Proust, a book must make itself according to a logic of pure construction, a fable constructed in order to give the effect of the pure sensation that does not think but does write itself.

In this sense, the writing of Deleuze could be imagined as the intentional construction of a work whose world is identical to that created nature which reveals no intentionality. It is the construction of a non-

organic relationship that captures epiphanic moments which, however, has no final, closed transcendental reference. It is a fable for the discovery of truth—of a truth-thought according to a modern model of truth, of truth as erring, as a continual error. The modern work takes as its role model this paradox. It is marked by the inclusion of an aesthetic truth, a truth that is pure sensation, heterogeneous and pluralistic, the intrigue of knowledge and of chance that passes itself off as the unanticipated event and as an act of recognition. The text of Deleuze presents itself by means of this exemplary figure.

The meaning and consequence of such operations in the writings of Gilles Deleuze are confirmed in the act of thematising the beginnings and the prolongations which sustain, support, force, and pursue the problems and concepts being considered. To what problem does this or that concept call out? To what broader problematic field is it in debt? Perhaps the simplest that can be said would be to describe Deleuze's work as more about problems than solutions. It is a pedagogy of learning as distinct from a pedagogy of teaching. Problems and not solutions are presented in the writing, and problems which are established in one book are taken up again, but with an independence and freedom, in another book. The freedom marks an innocence that Deleuze considers as much a right as an obligation. Each book, rather than constituting a solution or a closed system, even less a contribution to an ever-narrowing circle, is a catalyst for another series of problems.

From this interpretation, the characterising figure of Deleuze's thought is that of the spiral. The movement of his thought is simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal. Such a description is consistent with his own statements. However, the question is which operations, which processes, which world does one obtain in following the various leads laid out across the writing? For the plastic arts, what logic of relations is unleashed? And what kind of temporality is constructed? Such are the questions that determine and constitute one aspect of the following enterprise; there is a constructive archaeology tracing the spiralling profile of an always-elusive subject.¹³

¹³ The figure of the spiral is an auto imposition in the writings of this period. In *Cinema 2—The Time-Image*, for example, a spiral is one of the foundational principles of contemporary cinema. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2. L'Image-temps* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1985). English translation: *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*, trans. H. Tomlinson and R. Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), cited herein as C2. C2 78/105.

Parameters

... analysis is only of real interest when it is *active*, and it can only be fruitful in terms of its deductions and consequences for the future.

—Pierre Boulez, *Boulez on Music Today*¹⁴

This study focuses on what I am calling Deleuze's third phase of writings. Dividing his professional activity into three chronological phases, the first can be described as devoted to writings on the history of philosophy. A second phase is distinguished by the formulation and growth of a singular style of thought. In a third phase there is a shift in direction and a more explicit, experimental and thematic extension of his work into aesthetic material and areas such as literature, cinema and painting.¹⁵

According to this division, I propose that the first phase, 1953–1966, is devoted to the history of philosophy and includes the books on Hume (*Empiricism and Subjectivity*, 1953), Nietzsche (*Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 1962), Kant (*Kant's Critical Philosophy*, 1963) and Bergson (*Bergsonism*, 1966).

In the second phase, 1967–1980, there is the emergence and elaboration of a singular style of philosophical thinking. This phase commences with *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *Logic of Sense* (1969), the two texts he submitted for his Doctorat d'Etat. The former was submitted as his principal thesis (directed by M. De Gandillac) and the second as his secondary thesis (directed by F. Alquié). At the same time, there appeared *Spinoza and the Problem of Expressionism*¹⁶ (1968) and *Spinoza* (1970). While these writings are in process, and in what I am calling the second period, Deleuze begins writing with Félix Guattari. Together with Guattari, Deleuze published three books: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia [volume 1]: Anti-Oedipus* (1972), *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*

¹⁴ Pierre Boulez, *Boulez on Music Today*. Trans. Susan Bradshaw and Richard Rodney Bennett (London: Faber and Faber, 1971): 17.

¹⁵ In their interview with Deleuze published in September 1988, Raymond Bellour and François Ewald suggest and then question a tripartite division of Deleuze's work according to an a-b-a rhythm based on a classical, closed model which shares some of the above traits. The points of difference include—whereas I propose the end of a second phase to correspond with—the publication of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Bellour and Ewald suggest that *Cinema* ends a second, 'non-academic' period. See Neg 135/185.

¹⁶ I have given a direct translation of the French title, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expressionism*. The published English translation appeared under the title *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*.

(1975), and *Capitalism and Schizophrenia [Volume 2]. A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). In this same period, Deleuze published two other co-authored books: *Dialogues* (1977) with Claire Parnet, and *Superpositions* (1979)¹⁷ with Carmelo Bene.

In the third phase, 1981–1991, there is a shift in preoccupation, one marked by an extension of his writings towards works of literature, painting, cinema, and sculpture. This period includes Deleuze's text on the British painter Francis Bacon, entitled *Francis Bacon. Logique de la sensation* (1981), the two volumes of *Cinema* (1983–1985), the confrontation with the system of Michel Foucault (*Foucault*, 1986) and *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988). Though outside a strict chronological categorisation, I also include *Proust and Signs* (1964, 1970, 1976) in this phase for its originating role and thematic correspondence with my topic. I argue that in this set of texts there is a general experimentation with new operative concepts such as time,¹⁸ the outside¹⁹ and the fold.²⁰ These notions are the sign of a philosophical response to a set of specific problems.

I argue that similar to his writings on other philosophers, Deleuze's third period writings on aesthetic constructions—whether of space and time, volume, sound, image or colour—operate through a double gesture of isolation and generation, of abstraction and generalisation. The outcome of this conceptual experimenting can be described as a series of concept clusters with a focus on Deleuze's interest in the domain of aesthetic constructions translated into an ensemble of composition principles. This is demonstrated, for example, in the notion of figure in *Logique de la sensation*, and in his creation and use of the concepts of movement-image and time-image in *Cinema*. In concentrating on the third phase of Deleuze's work, I focus attention here on Deleuze's interest in the domain of aesthetic constructions, and contribute to efforts to translate his work into composition principles.

¹⁷ Originally published in Italian as *Sovraposizioni* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978).

¹⁸ Especially in Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: Logique de la Sensation* (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1981) and *Cinema 2*.

¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1986). English translation: *Foucault*, trans. S. Hand (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), cited herein as F.

²⁰ Especially in *Foucault* and Deleuze, *Le Pli. Leibniz et le baroque* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1988). English translation: *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. T. Conley. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), cited herein as Fld.

As indicated above, I am concerned with investigating the logic of aesthetic constructions as a dominant theme in the third phase of Deleuze's work. To this end, the purpose will not be to identify a Deleuzian aesthetic as one domain in a general architectonic of his philosophical activity alongside a dialectics, an analytics and an ethics. Such a stabilising position is outside the limits of this study, and is inconsistent with the nature of Deleuze's project as is demonstrated below. Instead, the line of investigation occupies a different relationship to his thought, a relationship better characterised as one of adjacency. The problem of understanding will not be that of proposing to identify or coincide with the centre of his thought, but rather to configure a productive realm from within that thought by articulating it in another set of terms, in another system, and in this case, that of aesthetic constructions from a broad, if only lightly touched, number of fields including painting, sculpture, cinema, music, and architecture.

Such a project is consistent with what Deleuze described as the task of the historian. It is also consistent with his understanding of the philosopher's role as essentially constructivist. This creative bent in Deleuze has been helpfully isolated by a number of commentators.

John Rajchman provides a useful formulation of this bias in Deleuze's writing. Commenting on the transfiguring force of Deleuze's project in the face of the Kantian architectonic, Rajchman asks, 'What if we then, through constructions, could free the whole idea of "aesthesis" not only from the Kantian problematic of regulated faculties but also from the whole salvationist problematic of judgment or a judgement day, connecting it instead to another unfinished sense of time, peculiar to the city?'²¹ Rajchman continues to develop this theme through the double notions of a vital thinking and a non-organic constructivism when he writes: 'To think would always be to construct, to build a free plan in which to move, invent concepts, unfold a drama. Making a philosophy would become a matter of architecture in the way a novel, a painting, or a piece of music is, where the plan of construction must be always built anew, since it is never given in advance through a pre-set system or unbending rules. Philosophies would become free, impermanent constructions superimposed on one another like strata in a city. For once the architectonic is loosened up, the twin questions that we find in all philosophy—how to construct a work, how to construct a life—acquire new shapes. The constructed work becomes less organic, the constructed life less perfect, and the characters

²¹ John Rajchman, *Constructions* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, Collection Writing Architecture Series, 1998), 2.

in the resulting drama more flexible, without univocal roles, working through provisional alliances, broken and reconciled'.²²

Andrew Benjamin provides another perspective on this trend in Deleuze's thought, this time in relation to painting. In a reading of the potential limitations in Greenberg's analysis of the work of Jackson Pollock, Benjamin picks up the idea of surface and extends it towards a reconfiguration of the traditional interpretation of the essential modern problematic to be that of the frame.²³ In its place, Benjamin proposes, after Deleuze, the productive value of surface as a characteristic feature of Pollock's painting specifically, and a modernist manner in general. In addition, surface is used to transform the opposition of surface and depth in favour of what he develops as a 'pure surface, the site of [the painting's] self-regulation. The surface would emerge as the other possibility contained within the opposition surface/depth'.²⁴

Finally, a small number of commentators and practising architects have been experimenting with the specific potential in Deleuze's thought to the theorisation and construction of architecture. Writing in a special issue of *Architectural Design* titled "Folding in Architecture", Greg Lynn formulates the interpretive and creative potential in the ideas of the folded, the pliant and the supple laid out in Deleuze's writing (Lynn 1993).

Rather than a focus on the themes and possible influences on the work of Deleuze, I focus here on the principles that emerge from his work. In this way I hope to open up the work to other uses and other applications. A full system can be developed composed of animating forces and principles of relations. The figures and problems in it are not the product of genesis but the effect of principles.²⁵ The role of these principles is 'to designate impressions of sensation and, based upon them, to produce an impression of reflection'.²⁶ In addition, they have other effects that are 'abstract ideas, philosophical modes and relations'.²⁷

²² Rajchman, *Constructions*, 2.

²³The painting as frame is formulated in "American Type" Painting in Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973): 208–29.

²⁴Andrew Benjamin, *Object Painting* (London: Academy Editions, 1994):103.

²⁵Gilles Deleuze, *Empirisme et subjectivité. Essai sur la nature humaine selon Hume* (Epiméthée. Essais philosophiques. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953). English translation: *Empiricism and Subjectivity. An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, Edited by R. W. Lawrence and D. Kritzman, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (European Perspectives. New York: Columbia University Press 1991), cited herein as ES. ES 108/122.

²⁶ES 114/129.

²⁷Ibid.

There is ample evidence in Deleuze's writings of the kind of critical and historical approach he considers appropriate in front of a philosophical text. In an interview that appeared in 1988, a relationship of non-synchronous coupling between the material and actions of the philosopher and those of the historian is posited. 'The history of philosophy', writes Deleuze, 'must not state again that which a philosopher says, but state that which is necessarily implied, that which is not said and yet which is present in that which is stated'.²⁸ The analytical component of this work provides an approach to Deleuze's own dreamt of work, one that lists the new concepts created by a philosopher as the essential contribution.²⁹

Another formulation of the relationship between the philosopher and the commentator is found in his 1994 introduction to the English language translation of *Difference and Repetition*, in which Deleuze distinguishes between the activities of the historian/commentator and those of the philosopher/artist by means of the metaphor of the arrow: the philosopher/artist shoots arrows, whereas the commentator picks up and continues in another direction the arrows left behind.

Deleuze's work from this point of view can be thought of as a series of arrows left behind, and the challenge to a commentator is to, first, capture the force behind the original Deleuzian arrows and, second, continue in another direction. The commentator/historian is not thereby unproductive, for s/he keeps the lines moving. This study seeks to contribute to maintaining the movement of certain of Deleuze's ideas in the direction of aesthetic composition principles in general, and form-generation in particular, while providing a contribution to mapping the style of thinking and the figure of thought constructed by Deleuze's third-phase writings.

Deleuze as an historian is concerned with questions, and deploys a double operation of putting something into question and criticising the conditions of the question. This is formulated in Chapter Six of *Empiricism and Subjectivity* where Deleuze writes: 'A philosophical theory is an elaborately developed question, and nothing else; by itself and

²⁸ Neg 136 tr. mod./186.

²⁹ This ideal programme is announced by Deleuze in his 'Preface to the English-language Edition' of *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (Deleuze, 'Preface to the English-Language Edition', in *Empiricism and Subjectivity. An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, Edited by R. W. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, European Perspectives, 1991), ix-x; the text is dated 1989.ES(Pr), ix. It is also discussed in his Preface to the English language edition of *Difference and Repetition*.

in itself, it is not the resolution to a problem, but the elaboration, *to the very end*, of the necessary implications of a formulated question'.³⁰

He uses the example of Hume to distinguish the activity of the philosopher and that of the historian. The former assesses the question to determine if it is the 'most rigorous possible'. The method of analysis is a movement from the writing of Deleuze as an exposition (*exposer*) or bringing forth (*apporter*) of new concepts and the work of the commentator as an identification of the problems to which the concept responds.³¹ Consider the diagram of this philosopher-artist relationship as an illustration of those relationships set out in Chart 1-1.

Chart 1-1 Historian and Artist

philosopher-artist	historian-commentator
Expose, Create	Identify, Say
(new) concepts	problems

Applied to the writings of Deleuze, the task below can also be formulated as an attempt to determine the unity of his thought. From this perspective the task would repeat his own approach to, and use of, the writings of Hume, Bergson, Nietzsche, Foucault, Spinoza, and Leibniz, and his approach to the aesthetic constructions of Proust, Ozu, Resnais, Hitchcock, Francis Bacon, Carl Andre, Donald Judd, and Robert Smithson. In these cases, he explicitly asks: In what consists the unity of this work?³² The challenge is to not get lost in the multiplicity of themes, variations and counter-variations which Deleuze's writing continuously presents. To this end, I have adopted a modest approach of examining a set of major texts from the point of view of the problem of aesthetic

³⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Empirisme et subjectivité. Essai sur la nature humaine selon Hume*, Epiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, Essais philosophiques, 1953). English translation: *Empiricism and Subjectivity. An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, Edited by R. W. Lawrence and D. Kritzman, trans. Constantin V. Boundas. European Perspectives. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), cited herein as ES. ES 106/119.

³¹ Neg 135-6/185-6.

³² Gilles Deleuze, *Proust et les signes*, revue et augmenté, 3ième éd (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970). English translation: *Proust and Signs*, trans. R. Howard (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1973), cited herein as PS. PS 3/9; *Le Bergsonism* (1966): 1; *The Fold*, Chapter 6.

constructions. Formulated differently, the task has been to map from the point of view of aesthetic creation, and within the chronological limits already referred to, the open unity of this thought. The constant challenge is to turn from the complex involution of specific concepts to the simplicity of broad formative acts. And to this end, I have adopted a strategy of treating Deleuze's writing not as consecutive moments in an unfolding narrative, but topologically, thinking of it as more of a table or a diagram than a history. In the realm of commentary on Deleuze, this method can be distinguished from other monographic and thematic studies.

In addition, I have sought to address the specific character of his prose style. Deleuze's prose style is characterised by a kind of condensation. It is as if one is confronted with a work of flint: it has a kind of contained violence, not a violence of gesture but an internal tension, concentrated in a very terse manner of expression. The consequence of this style is that the subject matter is quickly, immediately exteriorised. It is as if Deleuze is able to keep the topic external or adjacent to himself. Another impact and consequence of this manner of working is the transformation of form that results. Narrative development is not so much overthrown, as much as the concept of form itself is altered. Liberated from the impersonal constraints of the diagram, releasing supple and mobile expressivity, Deleuze's texts set up and demand a technique of perfect and instantaneous correspondence. This correspondence mimes a modulation characteristic of his worldview. As a consequence, I have adopted a strategy of charting the conceptual clusters or knots set up by Deleuze as a strategy for opening up the developments to greater interpretation and, hopefully, engagement.

One of the methodological consequences is an effort to map the system in place in the writings under investigation. This turn to the system is described as an inevitable one by Alan Badiou in an essay on Deleuze. 'Philosophy is always systematic', he writes. 'Naturally, if by "system" you mean an architecture necessarily endowed with a keystone or a centre, then you can say, to employ Heidegger's vocabulary, that it's a matter of an ontotheological systematicity, and therefore no longer valid.' And Badiou continues: 'But if by "system" you mean, first, that philosophy is conceived as an argumentative discipline with a requirement of coherence, and second, that philosophy never takes the form of a singular body of knowledge but, to use my own vocabulary, exists conditionally with