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“THERE WAS ALREADY QUITE A CROWD”:
GILLES DELEUZE ON ACTION, MULTIPLICITY, AND SOCIALITY

by

Paul W. Hammond

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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For Cathy

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Abstract

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This dissertation argues for an interpretation of Gilles Deleuze's theory of the mind and of action which, by means of the concept of a social group agent, can serve as the basis for a novel political theory. Drawing on recent scholarship on Deleuze which emphasizes the significance of Immanuel Kant's influence on his work, the first chapter argues that Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* presents a theory of the mind which is largely in line with Kant's project, but which presents a more dynamic and developmental picture of the mind. Deleuze presents the mind as the product of the interaction of three synthetic faculties, habit, memory, and thought, and argues that they can function both in concert, taking the same object and producing empirical representation, or dynamically and serially, permitting learning when encountering new phenomena. The second chapter argues that Deleuze has a unique theory of action, drawing from Spinoza, Kant, and Nietzsche, which distinguishes action from habitual behavior by means of the presence of a rule constructed by the agent through thought. The third chapter argues that, given this theory of the mind and of action, along with Deleuze's argument that a multiplicity must have both material and virtual parts, social groups of a sufficient level of organization, such as commercial corporations, are metaphysically individual agents. Finally, the fourth chapter argues that if large social groups, such as nations, are also individual agents, Deleuze's distinction between action and habit lines up with H. L. A. Hart's distinction between social practices and social rules and explains why latter exert normative force on the members of a social group. Finally, these concepts are applied to Deleuze's own social

philosophy, in *Anti-Oedipus*, to shed light on Deleuze's concepts of social machines and social inscription.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Introduction	1
1. Deleuze's Synthetic and Constructive Theory of Mind	7
Critique	8
The Image of Thought	12
The Doctrine of the Faculties	21
The First Synthesis: Imagination or Habit	27
The Second Synthesis: Memory	34
The Third Synthesis: Thought	39
The Interaction of the Faculties	43
Deleuze's Theory of Mind in Comparative Perspective	46
2. Three Sources for a Deleuzian Theory of Action: Spinoza, Kant, Nietzsche	52
Spinoza and the Common Notion	54
Kant and the Action=X	69
Nietzsche and the Eternal Return	76
Habit vs. Action	84
Deleuze's Theory of Action	87
3. Multiplicities and the Agency of Social Groups	96
Two Types of Individualism	96
Deleuze's Theory of Multiplicities	105
Agents as Multiplicities	114
Social Groups as Agents	122
4. Social Practices and Social Rules in Hart and Deleuze	138
Hart on Habits and Social Rules	140
Social Group Agents as the Source of Social Rules	150
Social Group Action in Anti-Oedipus	164
Conclusion	171
Theories of Action	171
The Physical Instantiation of Action	173
Deleuze's Kantianism	175
Bibliography	179

Key to Abbreviations

References to texts by Gilles Deleuze are as follows:

- AO** *Anti-Oedipus* (co-authored with Félix Guattari)
- B** *Bergsonism*
- DI** *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974*
- DR** *Difference and Repetition*
- EP** *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*
- F** *Foucault*
- KCP** *Kant's Critical Philosophy*
- LS** *The Logic of Sense*
- NP** *Nietzsche and Philosophy*
- PS** *Proust and Signs*

Introduction

This dissertation attempts to make a contribution to scholarship on the thought of Gilles Deleuze and the contributions his thought makes to social and political theory. I'll argue that Deleuze has a unique concept of action which says that thinking is a necessary condition for acting and distinguishes action from habitual behavior. By "thinking," however, Deleuze does not mean picturing a goal to be achieved by action and working out what one ought to do to bring that goal about, but instead constructing an idea which can serve as a rule governing interactions between oneself and one's environment. I'll then use this theory of action in conjunction with Deleuze's conception of multiplicities to argue that organized groups of people are agents in the same way that individual people are, and that thus when we say things like, "Delta canceled my flight," or "The United States dropped bombs on Baghdad," we are speaking literally and not referring covertly to the actions of individual people. Finally, I'll argue that the action of social groups explains the existence of normative rules for members of those groups, because action involves the creation of rules that differ in kind from mere repetitions of practices or behaviors. In doing so, I'll partly be attempting to build a bridge from Deleuze's earlier solo work in metaphysics, the theory of ideas, and philosophy of mind, to his later texts in which he addresses social and political topics more explicitly.

In the context of scholarship on Deleuze, at least in the English-speaking world, I believe that this project develops a recent line of thought in interpreting Deleuze and extends it to partially bridge a gap between that interpretive tradition and another. An early tradition in Anglophone Deleuze scholarship derived its main force from Deleuze's later writings, in which his emphasis on productivity and novelty is most pronounced.

These interpreters, including Brian Massumi and Michael Hardt, make Deleuze into a kind of partisan of permanent revolution in social and political forms and emphasize the attention he pays to how social structures can transform themselves. They focus on terms like “deterritorialization,” “line of flight,” “rhizome,” and “schizophrenia” that Deleuze employs in his later work with Félix Guattari to identify these moments of transformation and metamorphosis within social and natural systems. These are no doubt important themes in Deleuze's work, but focus on them exclusively seems to prevent these thinkers from developing a systematic interpretation of Deleuze's theory of political and social systems, and these interpretations therefore remain somewhat weak in their theoretical utility.

Another tradition of interpreting Deleuze on political theory focuses on extending the work of Manuel DeLanda, who has argued that Deleuze's metaphysics provides a sound foundation for dynamical systems modeling in the natural sciences, to applications in the sphere of social philosophy. DeLanda himself and John Protevi have written books in this vein, applying concepts from Deleuze's metaphysics to questions of social structures and social organizations. These works describe the social sphere in a lexicon that almost amounts to a social physics, talking about “transmissions of affect,” “contagions,” “thresholds,” and “attractors.” These interpretations have been very interesting and do give us a novel way to talk about social phenomena and social processes at a variety of levels of organization and interpretation. However, DeLanda and Protevi both ignore the way in which social structures and organizations affect how agents themselves view the meanings of their actions. Their projects aim to describe social phenomena as if they were given physical processes and merely to describe and predict regularities within those phenomena. This misses the fact that human beings in

social contexts act in ways that are subjectively meaningful to them and that often the meanings with which they experience their own actions and those of others are affected by the social structures within which they are embedded. I believe that Deleuze's own thought has significant resources for describing this subjective aspect of social actions and phenomena and that a full account of Deleuze's contributions to social and political philosophy ought to make use of those resources.

A third strain of Deleuze interpretation, which I follow and extend in this project, takes this subjective aspect of his thought, mostly through his reception of Kant, very seriously. Levi Bryant, Joe Hughes, and others emphasize that Deleuze isn't merely an ontological anarchist, but is concerned with the nature of the mind, and very seriously tries to take up the implications of the Kantian critical turn. I follow Hughes especially in arguing that Deleuze's ideas are similar to Kant's concepts in being rules for the construction of objects. I argue that thought is essentially an active faculty for Deleuze, and that actions necessarily involve thought. Thus I extend Kantian interpretations of Deleuze by going beyond the analysis of the receptivity of intuition which drives most scholars' interpretations of *Difference and Repetition* and emphasize the way Deleuze conceives of the activity of the mind in thinking. By pointing out the connection between Deleuze's account of thought and the concept of action I am able to extend the Kantian strain of Deleuze's philosophy to practical and social questions as well. I take this third strain of scholarship focusing on Deleuze's contributions to a theory of subjectivity and try to move this into the social realm by means of the concepts of social group agency and social rules. In this connection, I appeal to the notion of social rules elaborated by Kantian-inspired legal theorist and philosopher H. L. A. Hart and argue that this concept can be used to extend Deleuze's conception of the rules involved in action into the sphere

of social theory. Thus, I think that this connection I draw between Deleuze's earlier theory of mind and social and political philosophy fills an important niche in Deleuze scholarship by connecting interpreters who approach his work from these two different points. I also think that by focusing on the notion of a social rule which gives an internal meaning to social behavior, this work presents a new and broader perspective on Deleuze's contributions to political philosophy than can be found in interpretations that stress only his emphasis on the production of novelty or those that treat his metaphysics as a foundation for only a descriptive social theory.

This work also touches on a few other areas of philosophical debate in which substantial scholarly literatures have developed. Although I do not have the space in this project to give a complete and rigorous treatment of these debates and attempt to make a substantive contribution to them, it may be worthwhile to situate my work with respect to these areas of research. First, this project touches on the theory of action, primarily in Chapter 2. Many thinkers have written on the concept of action in the last 50 years (Harry Frankfurt, Donald Davidson, and Alvin Goldman, to name a few of the best-known), and my work here will not attempt to directly engage with their arguments. I do think that what I am trying to draw out of Deleuze's thought is a response to the same problem of action, taken in a broad sense, that these thinkers are concerned with, namely, the problem of distinguishing between things that an individual *does* and things that happen to him or her. However, the notion of action that I develop from Deleuze here is not meant to be identical to those developed by other philosophers. Specifically, the account that I develop here does not identify action with intentional or deliberate action, which is to say, action guided by some idea of a goal or end to be reached. I use the term "action" in this work in a broader sense to denote the behaviors that can be ascribed to an agent,

whether they are intentional or not. The account I present here may be amenable to future development to bring it into dialogue with theories of intentional action and practical reasoning, as well as to engage in contemporary debates about the philosophy of action, but both of those undertakings would require a great deal more research than what has gone into this project.

This project also engages with issues closely related to some that have recently been taken up in the social epistemology literature, particularly debates concerning the metaphysical status of group or collective agents. Philosophers writing in this area have attempted to answer questions such as, “Are social groups sometimes really the correct subjects of action ascriptions?” “What do we mean when we describe events as the actions of a collective entity?” and “What is the relationship between the actions/beliefs/commitments of a collective entity and those of the members of that collective entity?” I won't attempt to canvass the positions and arguments of the various participants in this debate either, but the course of my development of Deleuze's thought within this project does lead me to take a position on some of these issues. I argue that social groups, under certain conditions, are sometimes the subjects of action in precisely the same way in which individual people can be subjects of action, and that there is no necessary or conceptual relationship between the action of a group and that of its members. As a shorthand, I may at times refer to this position as “realism” about social group agency. In this work, I argue for this position primarily from the theories of mind and action that I draw from Deleuze without engaging directly with arguments for and against it from other sources. My position on the reality of social groups comes quite close, however, to that advocated by Christian List and Philip Pettit in their 2011 book *Group Agency*, with the significant caveat that I base my argument for social group

agency on a different account of action than the end-directed model that their account implicitly relies on. Critical comparison of my view with that of List and Pettit, as well as other writers who have addressed similar issues in social epistemology, such as Margaret Gilbert, John Searle, Michael Bratman, and Raimo Tuomela, remains an area for future research.

1. Deleuze's Synthetic and Constructive Theory of Mind

Gilles Deleuze is a philosopher whose reputation seems to be very much on the rise among continental-inspired thinkers working in the world of English language philosophy. Among these interpreters, however, there is quite a large variation in what is considered to be the most important area of philosophy to which Deleuze contributed. Some (such as John Protevi) draw inspiration from the overtly political focus of his later work, mostly co-authored with Félix Guattari. Others (such as Claire Colebrook) focus largely on the impact of his aesthetic criticism, of which he wrote many volumes about artists working in a variety of different forms. Still others (including Manuel DeLanda) are impressed by Deleuze's realist theory of ideas and apply his work to explorations in the philosophy of science. Finally, some (like Michael Hardt) draw attention to his materialist metaphysics, arguing that it is a corrective to a problematic idealist tradition in French philosophy and that it can help to articulate a radical leftist politics. This list of the major interpretive approaches to Deleuze is doubtless incomplete.

More recently, however, especially following the 1994 translation of Deleuze's major solo-authored treatise *Difference and Repetition* into English (it was published in French in 1968), there has been a much more concerted effort to interpret Deleuze with a view to his relationship to the phenomenological tradition and especially to Kant and to assess the relevance of his work for issues in the philosophy of mind. Two major examples of this type of interpretation belong to Levi Bryant and Joe Hughes, both of whom draw heavily on Deleuze early solo work to argue that he has significant contributions to make to issues in epistemology and metaphysical questions concerning the mind. However, this work has all taken a perspective on Deleuze's philosophy of

mind from the point of view of a conception of experience, focusing more on the mind as receptive of information about the world. This is simplistic of course, as no one thinks that Deleuze conceives the mind as purely passive and receptive. Still, there has been little attempt to thematize the conception of the active mind in Deleuze's philosophy, or to take on the question of action and the action/passion distinction. I believe that Deleuze's thought has contributions to make on this issue and, conversely, that approaching his work through the lens of philosophy of action can also help illuminate his system of thought in novel and useful ways. The first chapter of this dissertation, therefore, will retrace some ground that has been covered before in treating Deleuze's theory of the mind from a receptive perspective (although I will make some contributions that other commentators have overlooked). The second chapter will take up the question of action in Deleuze's theory of the mind explicitly and show how we cannot understand it completely without a full accounting of the nature of thoughtful activity as a part of that picture.

Critique

In a frequently-quoted passage from his book *Modern French Philosophy*, Vincent Descombes famously asserts “Gilles Deleuze is above all a post-Kantian.”¹ This is a complex, and clearly at least a bit intentionally provocative, statement. I'll avoid any attempt to assess the veracity of the “above all,” which would require the impossible task of giving a scale by which Deleuze could be evaluated as “more” or “less” a post-Kantian than he is a Bergsonian or a Spinozan or a Structuralist. But I do think it's fruitful to explore what it means to claim that Deleuze is, at least to some degree, a post-Kantian.

1. Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, 152.

On the one hand, at a rather superficial level, this label indicates his engagement with a philosophical school which historically followed Kant in Germany, particularly, in Deleuze's case, with Salomon Maimon. More profoundly, however, it means that we ought not to ignore the degree to which Deleuze's work is marked in several places by an engagement with Kant's own concepts and framing of problems, and by an attempt to respond to, sometimes by refuting, sometimes by extending, Kant's own arguments.

One of the most significant places that Deleuze adopts methodology and concepts, as well as terminology, from Kant, concerns his commitment to the undertaking of “true critique” or “radical critique” in philosophy. He credits Kant with one of the deepest understandings among philosophers of the critical role of philosophy, that is, its opposition to all dogmatism and ungrounded, unjustified speculation. Critique, however, means more than just the denunciation of illusions or dogmatic beliefs as false or unjustified. Critique goes beyond even replacing dogmatic beliefs with better-grounded, more thoroughly justified beliefs. A true critique, according to Deleuze, exposes structures that are more fundamental and better justified than the phenomena which appear to basic intuition, while at the same time explaining the genesis of the phenomenon being critiqued.² Kant's philosophy is critical, therefore, insofar as it explains how the transcendental nature of reason that he illuminates leads inevitably to the dialectical illusions characteristic of the speculative employment of reason. These are explicated in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and include the illusion of knowledge concerning God or the immortality of the soul. When Deleuze praises Kant's philosophical originality and accomplishment, it is for explaining the category of illusions internal to thought, as opposed to errors which are assumed to be

2. Hughes, *Reader's Guide*, 8.

mere external accidents in thinking.³ As Deleuze interprets Kant, this project is laudable because it seeks the proper, critical aims of philosophy.

At the same time, when Deleuze criticizes Kant, it is for not taking the method of critique far enough. Deleuze accuses Kant of failing to apply critique to the assumption that the thinking subject is self-identical, or to the presumption that the form of recognition is constitutive of thought in general. Kant is not critical enough because he continues to subscribe to what Deleuze calls the “dogmatic image of thought,” or the assumption that thinking consists in recognizing particular experiences as instances of general categories. Instead, Deleuze contends, critique should be directed at these assumptions themselves and should attempt to show how this image is an effect of more fundamental processes and structures. Precisely what Deleuze means by the image of thought and the critique he levels against it will be explicated in more detail later, but my goal at present is to emphasize (against interpretations such as that of Badiou) that Deleuze is more interested in extending Kant's critical project further than Kant himself did than he is in dismantling Kant to return to a “classical” or pre-Kantian tradition of purely speculative metaphysics.⁴

The reason Deleuze's engagement with Kant is so thorough and so fruitful (the index to *Difference and Repetition* contains more entries for Kant than for Hegel, Nietzsche, Leibniz, Plato, Spinoza, or Bergson) is that his approach to Kant consists in taking up the critical challenge and turning it back onto Kant himself. Deleuze accepts

3. See KCP 25, NP 91.

4. Badiou's interpretation and critique of Deleuze rests on the mistaken (in my view) premise that Deleuze is primarily engaged in a project of speculative, pre- or anti-critical, metaphysics similar to what Badiou views his own philosophy as aiming at (Badiou, *Deleuze*, 45). On the basis of this interpretation, he criticizes Deleuze for maintaining the notion of the univocity of being, claiming that it can only be justified by an appeal to something transcendent to the world. Of course, my goal is not to consider Badiou's important reading of Deleuze's work thoroughly, but I would suggest that his criticism is based on this assumption of the “classical” orientation of Deleuze's project, which I think is belied by the the depth of his engagement with Kant.

that a project for philosophy consists in explaining how experience comes about, but he wants to give this explanation without recourse to the assumptions that he identifies in Kant, thus purging philosophy more fully of dogmatism. Deleuze's attempt to continue the critique, therefore, is not a rejection of Kant's questions or a rejection of the idea of a transcendental philosophy that Kant proposes in response to them, but an attempt to take an even more radical perspective on the questions and show the partiality of Kant's response to them as well as the lack of justification for some of the assumptions he makes in formulating his response. The goal of critique remains the same: not to reject what appears empirically, but to explain why that appearance appears.

It is necessary to begin by pointing out this aspect of Deleuze's thought on critique to combat a common assumption, that the concepts of experience, subject, and object have little or no relevance for Deleuze. Michael Hardt, for example, insists that Deleuze takes a materialist or ardently anti-idealist perspective throughout his work, which amounts to rejecting subjectivity and experience.⁵ Alain Badiou insists that Deleuze is fundamentally a “classical,” by which he means pre- or anti-Kantian, philosopher.⁶ Both of these interpretations rest on a misunderstanding of what Deleuze means by critique. The total critique is not the one that completely destroys its target, but instead that which rejects the universality of the target, while explaining its occurrence by elucidating its conditions of genesis. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* does not reject knowledge and experience, but instead explains the conditions of experience in order to circumscribe the field in which knowledge is possible. Similarly, Deleuze's attempt to perform a critique of the “image of thought” does not amount to the rejection of thought, or even a denial of the reality of that particular image. Instead, he seeks to understand

5. Hardt, *Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, 28ff.

6. Badiou, *Deleuze*, 45.

why the illusion of the dogmatic image comes into being and to show that it constitutes just a partial region within the whole of thought or the full scope of mental phenomena.

This understanding of what Deleuze means by “critique” is important because it makes it possible to see that *Difference and Repetition* can be viewed, without undue strain on the terminology, it seems to me, as a philosophy of mind. Just as the *Critique of Pure Reason* attempts to illuminate the “conditions of possible experience,” in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze is concerned with determining the “conditions of real experience.” Joe Hughes has emphasized this point in his recent interpretations of Deleuze's work, arguing that Deleuze's goal throughout much of his philosophical writing is to articulate a critique of the phenomenon of representation, which amounts to demonstrating the genesis of representation from the prior concepts of difference and repetition. My interpretation here will be in line with Hughes' in maintaining the continuity between Deleuze's own project and Kant's on the issue of critique. The details of the genesis of representation are, of course, complex, but I think it will often be useful to recall that Deleuze's project in many places runs parallel to the *Critique of Pure Reason* and that he often employs Kant's concepts and terms in the same or a similar way. In connection to this Kantian inheritance, as well, this chapter will be concerned with the receptive nature of the mind in Deleuze's thought, while the second chapter will consider how Deleuze conceives of the mind's capacity for spontaneous activity.⁷

The Image of Thought

If Deleuze is attempting to deepen the Kantian critical project and put philosophy on sounder footing by questioning more assumptions than even Kant himself did, what

7. On the importance of this division in Deleuze's interpretation of Kant, see F 60-61.

exactly are the presuppositions that Deleuze makes it his business to attack and critically evaluate? Kant calls into question the assumption that knowledge consists in the simple and spontaneous adequation of the mental representation of a thing to the thing-in-itself and concludes that, in fact, the situation is much more complicated and that thought must be restricted to the proper usage of reason and of the understanding in order for knowledge to be adequately grounded. What assumptions about the mind does Deleuze find to be still present in Kant and post-Kantian philosophy which remain in need of critical examination? Deleuze says that these assumptions together make up what he calls “the image of thought,” and discusses his criticisms of them primarily in Chapter 3 of *Difference and Repetition* and in the conclusion to part 1 of his earlier study *Proust and Signs*, both bearing the title “The Image of Thought.”

Deleuze holds that this image of thought is a subjective presupposition that runs throughout the philosophical tradition, and that amounts to the formula “thought = recognition.”⁸ By a “subjective presupposition,” he means to oppose the operation of this assumption to that of an objective presupposition, such as an axiom or postulate in geometry. For example, the 5th postulate of Euclid's *Elements* asserts that if the sum of the interior angles formed by two lines intersecting a single line is less than 180 degrees, the two lines will intersect at some point. This postulate is then used as the basis for proofs of further results or theorems, but the explicit nature of the postulate makes it clear that these results are based on the assumption that the postulate is true, and the veracity of the theorems is seen within that axiomatic structure; hence different structures that deny or replace Euclid's 5th postulate are referred to as different “geometries.” Deleuze refers to

8. In what follows, I draw primarily on DR 129ff.

these kinds of assumptions as “objective” because they are explicitly stated and understood to be unproven propositions at the basis of an argument.

The image of thought is not an explicit definition of thought with which philosophers begin to construct theories, but rather an implicit model or notion which is passed over because it is assumed not to require an explicit thematization. Such implicit presuppositions function most insidiously when philosophers try to eliminate all objective or explicit presuppositions. To illustrate this, Deleuze refers to the example of Descartes' attempt in the *Meditations* to give philosophy a starting point which does not require assuming anything which is uncertain, which I will explicate here to show what Deleuze means in asserting that the image of thought is a subjective presupposition.

In the *Second Meditation*, Descartes rejects the postulate that “I am a man,” with “man” meaning “a rational animal,” as a starting point because it would presuppose an understanding of “rational” and “animal” and would therefore bring him no closer to a firm foundation. Instead, he proposes as a starting point “I am a thing that thinks,” because the notions that this definition depends on – “I,” “thing,” and “thinking” – are understood clearly and unequivocally by everyone. Deleuze, however, argues that the fact that these ideas are understood by everyone based on their own subjective experience and self-reflection does not make them any less presuppositions. Descartes has eliminated objective presuppositions, but still relies covertly on subjective presuppositions corresponding to images attached to these terms. These still amount to pre- or non-philosophical assumptions which are imported into a thinker's system of philosophy and ought to remain open to questioning and critical scrutiny. The fact that “everyone” agrees to them doesn't amount to any philosophical justification and should not exempt these presuppositions from investigation. In fact, Deleuze wants to call into question the

agreed-upon subjective image corresponding to each of these notions (“self,” “being,” and “thinking”), but he focuses his critique at this point on the presumed pre-philosophical understanding of thought.

Continuing the exposition with regard to the example of Descartes, Deleuze moves on to consider Descartes' argument regarding the piece of wax from the *Second Meditation*, in order to show that the father of modern philosophy conceives of thought primarily as recognition. Descartes contends that “of course” the wax remains the same object even though heating it changes it from a solid, cold block to a warm, soft, malleable form. The role of the mind is to identify the wax as the same object for thought across time and across changes in properties, which is to say, to guarantee the recognition of the later object as the same as the earlier one. Descartes employs the example of the wax to show that the identity of the wax as an object for thought is guaranteed by the mind, not by any continuity in the perceived properties of the wax. It is the judgment by the mind that the wax has the properties of self-identity and temporal and spatial extension that really make the wax a possible object of knowledge, according to Descartes, and none of these properties is in any way grasped by sense-perception. For Deleuze, however, the ascription of precisely this function of judging the identity of objects to thought shows that Descartes imagines that the fundamental model of thought is illustrated by the function of recognizing objects.

Deleuze defines the image of thought as recognition by “the harmonious exercise of all the faculties on a supposed same object.” The important notion of “faculties” will be discussed in much more detail in the next section; however, at present, we can illustrate what this definition means with regard to the wax example. If the wax is an example of thought for Descartes, it is because it shows the activity of the mind

recognizing an object, or identifying a thing as the same across changes in time and in perceivable properties. The presently perceived melted wax is thought to be the same object as the presently *remembered* solid wax which was previously perceived. Thus, in order to effect recognition, it must be assumed that both the faculties of perception and memory have the same object, and also that at least the faculty of perception has it at different times. This convergence of the distinct faculties on the same object is ensured by thought, and thus thought is given the role of making objects recognizable across different faculties at different times. In Descartes, this identification of the object as the same for memory and perception guarantees the possibility of knowledge of the object: because thought guarantees that the wax is recognized as the same, it makes possible the knowledge of the wax as an incorporeal essence.

The model of thought as recognition, according to Deleuze, has two facets, each of which he considers to be unjustified. The first he calls “good sense,” which is the assumption that thinking naturally seeks truth or is naturally oriented only to produce the true. This is clearly present in Descartes' conception of thought's relation to the world, in which the methodology for thinking correctly consists just in eliminating sources of error, which themselves come only from the body, rather than the mind. Descartes assumes that by following its own natural inclination, the mind will always seek truth, and that this goal can only be hindered by interference from something external to thinking, such as processes of the sense organs in the body. The assumption of good sense in thought guarantees the possibility of knowledge as long as interference from outside of thought is eliminated. With regard to Kant, Deleuze says that the assumption of good sense amounts to ensuring that in thought the faculties are always organized with respect to one another

in order to serve the “speculative interest of reason,” or in order to ensure that the object perceived is a possible object of knowledge.

The critique of good sense in Deleuze's thought connects to a large region of Deleuze's thought concerned with critiquing the “values” inherent in the image of thought, and with Nietzsche's contention that the fundamental assumptions underlying even theoretical philosophy are thoroughly “moral assumptions.”⁹ However, there is no space here for an adequate treatment of Deleuze's criticisms of good sense. Furthermore, focusing on the second aspect of the model of recognition, which he calls “common sense,” will be sufficient for us to understand the motivation behind Deleuze's critique of this image of thought, and will be more pertinent to our specific concerns here.

Common sense, as Deleuze employs the term, has nothing to do with what we understand by “common sense” in everyday English. In fact, the notion of the things that everyone knows simply by exercising their naturally occurring reason is much more like what Deleuze calls “good sense.” Common sense, however, has a very specific meaning, which is that every faculty or sense is the faculty of a single, self-identical subject, and that as a universal rule, objects of any faculty are also possible objects for any other faculty. The “common” in “common sense” refers primarily to the commonality of the objects of diverse faculties, and to the commonality of the subject to which the different faculties belong. Sticking with Descartes' wax example, we can see how the assumption of common sense is necessary to ensure the recognition of the object. The wax that I currently perceive must be assumed to be the same as the wax that I currently remember as having perceived before. In order for recognition to take place, the object of perception and memory must be one and the same. Furthermore, recognition requires that the subject

9. Ibid., 132.

who previously perceived the block of wax, the one who now remembers it, and the one who now perceives the melted wax must be one and the same. In order for me to recognize the object and think about it on Descartes picture, “I” must be the bearer of the different faculties, both now and in the past. The image of thought which assumes common sense requires “the unity of a thinking subject, of which all the other faculties must be modalities.”¹⁰

Thus, we can see that the image that Deleuze wants to bring into the light for critique is the picture of thought according to which thinking consists essentially or naturally of the capacity for recognition. The model of recognition requires the assumption of good sense and common sense as natural attributes of thought, because it is based on the picture of more than one faculty or capacity of a single mind or subject being exercised on the same object. Deleuze calls this image of thought “dogmatic,” and announces his intention to oppose to it a better “critical image.” According to Deleuze's own schema of the mind, thought will be the name of an individual faculty, having its own particular objects, not a name for the coordination of the faculties on the same object in recognition. But what exactly is wrong with the image according to which thought is essentially recognition? Recognition does seem to be a common feature of our day-to-day mental lives, and probably to be required in order to have knowledge about the objects of our perception. Does Deleuze want to say that no recognition is ever involved in our thinking?

Here, again, we must remember the notion of critique that Deleuze is employing. A critique of the image of thought as recognition does not consist in saying that thought has nothing to do with recognition and is, in fact, something completely different.

10. Ibid., 133.

Deleuze's intention is instead to show that recognition is only one possibility for thought, one which is perhaps necessary, but which is only one effect of a broader and deeper structure. Deleuze is fully aware that it would be ridiculous to suggest that representation does not take place or is simply a mistake of some kind. He acknowledges it as “apparent that acts of recognition exist and occupy a large part of our daily life.”¹¹ Deleuze's polemic is against those who think that recognition is all that there is to thought or that it somehow constitutes the essence of thought. “The criticism that must be addressed to this image of thought is precisely that it has based its supposed principle upon extrapolation from certain facts, particularly insignificant facts such as Recognition.”¹²

But why is recognition an insignificant fact? Why exactly does Deleuze think it can't be the case that the essence of thought consists of recognition? Recognition seems like a particularly significant fact of our ordinary mental lives, especially if our concern with thought largely stems from an interest in the possibility of knowing objects. How can we have knowledge without recognizing something identical between different mental representations? Deleuze will not deny any of this, but insists that thought cannot be essentially recognition because there are significant instances in which we employ our mental faculties in a way that does not constitute a common sense, or the recognition of an object as identical to a previous one. He insists that we “encounter” objects that we do not recognize and that this kind of encounter with the world leads to a kind of thinking which is fundamentally different than the mental activity involved in recognizing, and cannot be reduced to it. The possibility of the encounter, or the failure of recognition, shows the limited and inadequate scope of recognition as a model for thought.

11. Ibid.,135.

12. Ibid.

In addition to pointing out the insignificance of recognition as a model for thought, and the contention that there must be thinking taking place that does not consist of recognizing objects, Deleuze makes another critique of the image of thought as recognition that is often implicit throughout his text, but which can help us to orient ourselves to the sense of his critique. This concern is that if all thought were recognition, it would seem that creative or novel thoughts would be impossible. This is more than a romantic and idiosyncratic concern on Deleuze's part; it constitutes a real philosophical problem that he would argue no earlier thinkers have adequately addressed. If recognition consists in the “harmonious exercise of the faculties on a supposed same object,” we are faced with a puzzle about the origin of the form of that object. To return to Descartes' wax example, if I presently recognize the wax as the same object which I perceived before, there is a harmonious exercise of perception and memory upon the same object. If I remember the wax now it is because it is the same object I perceived earlier. But when I perceived it earlier, was this an act of recognition? If so, I must have remembered it then, which leads us into an infinite regress. But if not, then something took place when I first perceived the object which was not recognition, but which resulted in constituting it as an object for later recognition.¹³

This is a brief presentation of the critique that Deleuze raises against the image of thought as recognition. Of course he is not the first thinker to pose such a problem, nor are all previous philosophies of mind vulnerable to the critique in the terms in which it is posed here. Nevertheless, Deleuze's proposed answer to this problem is unique, and keeping it in mind will help us organize our exposition of his system as an answer to this question. Deleuze calls his philosophy a “transcendental empiricism” largely because of

13. Cf. Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, 81 for a related interpretation of Deleuze's criticism of the image of thought.

the way that he responds to this problem. It is an empiricism because he maintains that the essence of the mind is in fact influenced by what it encounters in the world; the mind itself does not have a pre-given form, but the things that are given to the mind bear on the way that it is structured. On the other hand, it is a *transcendental* empiricism because what is given to the mind is not given directly to conscious thought as exemplified by the image of recognition. What is given to the mind from outside is not immediately recognized in thought, but needs to pass through the series of syntheses corresponding to the different faculties at the unconscious level first. The constitution of new material for thought begins with transcendental (and unconscious) sensibility, initially causing the faculties to interact with one another serially. This process of serial activation of the faculties is what ultimately underlies the eventual possibility of recognition. Of course, much more will need to be said to flesh out this notion, but we should keep in mind that Deleuze develops his theory of the mind as a system of faculties in order to answer to this particular problem raised by the critique of thought as recognition.

The Doctrine of the Faculties

One thing that must be examined, however, before we proceed to consider Deleuze's complete model of the transcendental structure of the mind, is precisely what he means by the old-fashioned sounding word "faculty." Though acknowledging its present unfashionableness, Deleuze insists that "the doctrine of the faculties is an entirely necessary component of the system of philosophy."¹⁴ But what exactly is a faculty, and why is it necessary for philosophy to theorize the faculties? We have already worked with a rough and intuitive notion of a faculty in describing Deleuze's account and critique of

14. DR 143.

common sense, but we need to make this concept somewhat more precise, and we can start to do so by looking at Deleuze's interpretation of Kant in his short text *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, which depends heavily on the idea of a plurality of faculties. The introduction to the text lays out the two senses in which Kant conceives of faculties in his writings. The second sense will be the one that is of interest to us, because it corresponds most closely to the way that Deleuze uses the term when elaborating his own position.

According to Deleuze's interpretation of Kant, faculties in the second sense are the sources of different kinds of representations.¹⁵ Insofar as two mental representations differ in kind, they have their origin in two different faculties. This definition doesn't allow us to deduce an exhaustive list of faculties *a priori*, but we can easily exhibit those that are important to Kant. Insofar as intuitions, concepts, and ideas are three different types of representations for Kant, they correspond to the three mental faculties of sensibility, understanding, and reason which are their respective sources. Deleuze interprets the notion of a faculty, and of the different interactions between the different faculties, as a key concept tying Kant's system together. Our focus here, however, is on how he takes this notion from his interpretation of Kant and modifies it slightly to use it in his own theory of the mind.

Deleuze will agree with Kant that our starting point for distinguishing the mental faculties must consist in distinguishing types of representations which are presented to the conscious mind. The different modes or ways in which a particular object can be represented (for example, as perception and as memory) are enough for him to establish that there is a plurality of faculties at work in the mind. At the same time, he criticizes Kant for assuming that the way a faculty appears to function when exercised under the

15. KCP 7.

form of common sense (that is to say, when it represents the same object as the other faculties) is identical to its complete and essential function. Although Kant identifies the transcendental function of each faculty (for example, the *pure* intuition of space and time as empty forms, as opposed to the various empirical intuitions of objects *in* space and time), he assumes that this transcendental function takes the same form as its empirical function. Deleuze accuses Kant of tracing “the so-called transcendental structures from the empirical acts of a psychological consciousness,”¹⁶ which is to say that, although Kant (in the first edition of the *Critique*) recognized that the faculties were separable into different transcendental syntheses, he took the wrong method for describing each faculty in its difference from the others.

Kant refers to the way each faculty works under the image of thought as recognition and posits that this is the full description of each faculty. But that amounts to simply justifying this account on the basis of what it renders possible (Deleuze calls this Kant's “psychologism.”) Thus, if we consider for example the synthesis of reproduction in the imagination, Kant's account amounts to arguing that because the empirical ability to associate different ideas requires the capacity to reproduce earlier ones when later ones present themselves (I can only associate a cause and an effect if they can be presented to me as two parts of a unity), therefore there must be a transcendental faculty of reproduction.¹⁷ But on the basis of this argument, all that Kant ascribes to the nature of the imagination is whatever is necessary to make empirical association of ideas possible. Deleuze's critique is that the transcendental argument may be able to show the existence of such an *a priori* synthesis, but it can't show it's full nature, because there is no justification for assuming that it is only whatever is necessary to make recognition

16. DR 135.

17. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A100-102.

possible and nothing else. Deleuze instead wants to investigate the nature of each faculty based on a different methodology, and then show how their interaction generates representation.

Deleuze's disagreement with Kant about this stems again from the critique of the image of thought as recognition. To critique recognition, for Deleuze, means to show how it can be generated, how it comes to be. Thus Kant's method is insufficient because it uses the empirical forms of the faculties as a model for the transcendental forms. This is circular insofar as, for a true critique, the latter ought to explain the former. Deleuze says that if the interaction of several faculties is necessary to account for experience, there is no reason to suppose that those faculties are only, or even naturally, exercised in the harmonious way that leads to experience. Deleuze's methodology, then, will be to assume that the faculties are all different from one another, that each has its particular object and way of relating to that object, and to describe each of the faculties independently before showing how their interaction in a certain way generates ordinary experience.

This brings us to one of the most important characteristics that Deleuze ascribes to his notion of a faculty: the distinction between empirical exercise and transcendental exercise. Deleuze borrows the terms "empirical" and "transcendental" from Kant and uses them in the same sense in which Kant does, but I've thus far been employing them somewhat obscurely and we should take a moment to define them more carefully. The realm of the empirical, as the term etymologically suggests, corresponds to conscious experience. The empirical exercise of a faculty is the ordinary or everyday form in which it operates in the mind. The transcendental realm, on the other hand, consists, for Deleuze, in the structures which are deeper than experience but which form the structure that grounds experience as recognition. Deleuze identifies the empirical with the

coincidence of the faculties under the form of common sense, as we pointed out earlier, the situation in which the faculties coordinate in order to represent the same object. In the empirical employment of memory, for example, the object which I remember now is identified with one which I previously perceived. The faculties of intuition and memory, then, are trained on the same object, constituting a common sense.

In the transcendental exercise of any faculty, on the other hand, the object that it grasps is not grasped at all by any of the other faculties. In fact, Deleuze identifies the transcendental object of each faculty as the correlate which is appropriate only to that faculty and cannot be grasped by any other. Deleuze's contention is that each faculty has an empirical use and a transcendental use, and that the latter is the more fundamental than the former, and ultimately, in conjunction with the other faculties, explains it. Thus, although the empirical operations of each faculty are those most familiar to us, it is ultimately to the transcendental processes in which each faculty is operating only on its own terms that we must look in order to understand the genesis of representation and experience.

In order to explore the transcendental exercise of the faculties, which will allow us to have insight into the profound processes which make up the mind, we must look to episodes in our mental life where recognition and common sense fail. These quasi-experiences (properly speaking, “experience” in Deleuze's terminology refers only grasping objects under the form of recognition) are referred to as “encounters (*rencontres*),” to designate the inability of the mind to recognize them as objects constituting an identical focus for all the faculties. The extra-mental correlate of an encounter Deleuze calls a “sign” as opposed to an “object,” which is the correlate of an experience belonging to common sense. The description of encounters will allow us to

explore the transcendental exercise of the faculties and thus gain insight into the structures that underlie the empirical representation of the mind. We will explore what takes place in the encounter with respect to the various faculties shortly, but first we should say a few things about the difference between an encounter and the experience of an object under the form of common sense.

Although the encounter is defined by the failure of common sense in a particular case, the absence of recognition is not equivalent to the complete separation of and non-interaction among the faculties. Recall that common sense is defined as the focus of the various faculties on a supposed same object; the same piece of wax is perceived, remembered, and conceived. In the encounter the faculties affect one another, but not by determining the object of each as the same as that of the others. Rather, an encounter consists in a “discordant harmony” among the faculties, modeled on Kant's aesthetic common sense from the *Critique of Judgment*.¹⁸ When employed transcendently, the faculties do not converge upon the same object, as in recognition, but they do interact with one another through a “force” or “violence” which is transmitted from one to another. The inability of the sign to be recognized simultaneously by all the faculties stretches one faculty beyond its regular activity under the guidance of common sense, forcing it to relate to the sign in its particular way. However, the activity of one faculty alone does not allow the others to directly relate to the sign as a recognizable object. Instead, a second faculty takes up the product of the first as a sign to be interpreted in its own particular fashion, transmitting the failure of recognition along the line of faculties and eventually forcing a productive exercise of thought.

18. See KCP 48ff.

Moreover, this interaction has a specific order, which is crucial to the faculties forming a system capable of eventually constituting a common sense. For Deleuze, each individual faculty consists of an ability to synthesize a particular kind of difference in a particular way. Thus the order of the series of faculties is important because the product of an particular synthesis becomes the material or input for the subsequent one. The order in which the faculties process new encounters begins with sensibility, which in this case refers to the bare ability to be affected by differences in the intensity of stimulation from the outside, moves on to the imagination (also referred to by Deleuze as “habit;” more on this in the next section), then to the memory, and finally to the faculty that Deleuze names “thought.” Ultimately, as I will try to argue throughout this and the next chapter, the passage of the encounter through the series of the faculties ends up expanding the mind's capacity for representation and for the exercise of the faculties in common on new objects of experience. The description of this process is the primary concern of Chapter 2 of *Difference and Repetition*, to which I will now turn to explore Deleuze's account of the serial, transcendental operation of each faculty in itself, what Levi Bryant aptly names Deleuze's “phenomenology of the encounter.”

The First Synthesis: Imagination or Habit

The series of the faculties begins with sensibility for Deleuze. However, sensibility is a faculty only in the sense that it designates pure receptivity or the bottom level at which the mind is open to something which is other than the mind, and therefore indicates the mind's capacity to be affected by something outside itself. Unlike the other faculties, however, sensibility does not, for Deleuze, indicate a power of synthesis by itself. The first passive synthesis is that of the imagination, which contracts a certain local

domain of the sensible through habit. Sensibility refers merely to a sensitivity to differences in stimulation or intensity, or in Deleuze's Spinozist terms, brute "capacity to be affected." Deleuze himself is sometimes not perfectly consistent, using the term "sensibility" to refer to the first synthesis, but, as Joe Hughes has ably shown, the system of the syntheses only makes sense if we, strictly speaking, reserve "sensibility" for mere receptivity to affects and "imagination" to refer to the first synthesis of what is received in pure sensation.¹⁹

Imagination is the first level at which the mind takes what is received and groups it together or synthesizes it in order to "draw a difference" from it. The imagination constitutes the first production of the mind. But this synthesis is not identifying an object as the same across its multiple spatially and temporally diverse presentations, like saying that the piece of wax remains the same object as it was before. The identification of objects is a function of recognition, and to ascribe it to imagination at the basic level of that faculty functioning by itself would be to beg the question and offer no explanation (and no critique) at all. Instead, the faculty of imagination by itself must perform a much simpler synthesis and draw the impressions of sensibility together in a more basic way. The stimulations that the imagination synthesizes are not themselves individual objects which bear properties, but are instead merely excitations of the senses which cause the mind to form an expectation of their continuation.

For an account of such a basic operation of synthesis, Deleuze turns to Hume and Bergson. In fact, Deleuze's theory of the imagination is strikingly similar to Hume's, to a degree that few commentators seems to have recognized.²⁰ According to Hume, says

19. Hughes, *Reader's Guide*, 100ff.

20. I have in mind here Hardt, *Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, and Hughes, *Genesis of Representation*, all book-length studies of Deleuze's thought in which no significant engagement with Hume is considered. An exception to this would be Constantin Boundas,

Deleuze, “the imagination is here defined as a contractile power: like a sensitive plate, it retains one case when the other appears. It contracts cases, elements, agitations or homogeneous instants and fuses these in an internal qualitative impression endowed with a certain weight.²¹” The imagination doesn't identify impressions as similar or categorize them as instances of the same concept; it simply is affected by repeated stimulations in such a way that it forms an expectation of their continuation. It is the capacity to group a series of instants, which in themselves are separate and bear no internal relation to one another, and to form an expectation of their continuation, or a generalization, from them.

Hume's famous analysis of causality illustrates this theory of the imagination well. Hume asks, what causes us to believe that one phenomenon is the cause of another one? In the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* he criticizes any account which claims that there is a necessary principle ensuring the connection between causes and effects which can be discovered by reason. When we observe, for example, the movement of billiard ball A up to billiard ball B, where A stops, and then we observe the movement of B in the same direction, we attribute this to the motion of A causing the motion of B. Furthermore, if we observe this sequence of events several times, we come to expect that the motion of A will always be followed by the motion of B. That is, when we see A move toward B again, we anticipate that it will stop and B will start to roll in the same direction. Hume points out, however, that there is nothing internal to our impression of the movement of A from which we can infer the subsequent movement of B. If there were, we would be able to infer it the first time, without ever experiencing the conjunction of the two events. We may derive our belief that the movement of B follows

whose introduction to his translation of Deleuze's *Empiricism and Subjectivity* emphasizes the importance of Deleuze's interpretation of Hume for his subsequent work, including *Difference and Repetition*.

21. DR 70 (translation modified).

the movement of A from a universal rule which says that events of a certain type follow (or are the effect of) events of another type, but this would beg the question, since such a universal rule could only be justified in the first place by generalizing from observed cases, and this generalization is no better grounded than inferring a future case directly from a number of past cases. Hume concludes that our capacity to make inductive inferences of this kind, to expect future experience to continue the patterns of the past, comes down to a brute “habit” of mind. We expect certain impressions to follow others simply as a matter of habit, without any other justification underlying that habit.

Some have been inclined to read Hume's conclusion as an indictment of everyday inductive reasoning, or a challenge to the possibility of any foundational epistemology. However, Deleuze's fascinating interpretation of this argument focuses not on its bearing on the possible foundations of knowledge, but on the unique and fundamentally positive role that it ascribes to the power of habit. Deleuze argues that habit has a fundamental role in the constitution of the mind which cannot be reduced to or explained by other faculties. Habit by itself does not depend on the form of recognition and the possibility of consciously reflecting on cases because, as Hume points out, we expect the effect to follow the cause without undergoing a process of reasoning about whether we ought to make such a generalization in this case. Forming expectations on the basis of the contraction of past cases is a basic power of the mind which does not require the intervention of an active, thinking subject. This doesn't exclude the possibility of reflecting on our own habitual generalizations – we can take up a given expectation and ask ourselves whether we ought to have it or not – but the crucial point is that forming the expectation does not depend on the ability to reflect on the cases from which we form it. Generalization is a power of the mind which does not depend on the form of common

sense. Indeed, Deleuze argues that, on the contrary, the eventual possibility of recognition depends on an antecedent capacity to contract habits, or to form expectations from the repetition of cases, which is the faculty of imagination.

It's important to note here that Deleuze explicitly states that in his schema for describing the structure of the mind, habit is metaphysically more fundamental than action or behavior. Deleuze criticizes those psychological theories which attempt to explain how habits are acquired through repeated actions. Such a schema misunderstands what is at stake in learning and misses an important aspect of the nature of action. Habits which constitute generalities, Deleuze says, are a precondition for the possibility of any action, not the other way around.²² Moreover, habits are acquired not through repeated action, but through contemplation, which Deleuze defines as pure passivity²³. By this, he means that the only way to acquire a habit, in this more general, more fundamental, Humean sense, is by allowing oneself to be affected by the repetition of sensory impressions and contracting them in such a way as to form an expectation, or draw a generalization from them. Such a process consists not in being an agent of anything, but instead in being receptive to changes in oneself caused by the repetition of instants. The first synthesis consists solely in the mind's being affected by the repetition of instants of sensation without doing anything actively to create them or react onto them. Imagination constitutes a change in the mind, but it is a purely passively received change, an

22. See DR 73: “[Psychology] asks how we acquire habits in acting, but the entire theory of learning risks being misdirected so long as the prior question is not posed – namely, whether it is through acting that we acquire habits ... *or whether, on the contrary, it is through contemplating* (italics in original)?”

23. Deleuze uses all three of the terms “contemplation,” “contraction,” and “habit” to refer to the operation of the imagination, while broader terms like “synthesis” and “drawing together” are used more broadly to refer to all of the faculties. Readers should note that “contemplation” in no way means the same thing as “thought;” the former is only the capacity to form a generalized expectation on the basis of repeated stimuli, while the latter involves the capacity to employ ideas.

expectation formed directly from the impression left on the mind by the repeated cases of sensibility.

We will return to the relation between habit and action in the next chapter, after the transcendental structure that Deleuze outlines to underlie the active subject has been more thoroughly illuminated. However, for the time being, it is important to highlight the important concept of “passive synthesis” with regard to this distinction. Deleuze glosses this term by saying “it is not carried out by the mind, but occurs *in* the mind.”²⁴ The synthesis of the imagination is passive because it only requires contemplation or the affection of the mind by sensibility to take place. The mind is not the agent of any of the syntheses – they are natural processes which take place beyond the control of the subject that they are a part of – but each one constitutes a part of what will eventually be the unified, or relatively unified, mind. Deleuze says that each habitual synthesis constitutes a “passive self” or a “contemplative soul,” which is the bearer of the habit of making that particular generalization. Such subjects of habit are distributed throughout the body of an organism and they do not correspond to the whole creature or the whole mind. “A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to contract a habit.”²⁵ We can speak of a single faculty of imagination in so far as in each of these contemplative souls shares a similar function of anticipating the continuation of a pattern, but the notion that imagination is one faculty should not be interpreted to mean that it is the faculty of only one subject. At the level of the first synthesis alone there are mental entities (the passive selves), but there is not yet any such thing as *the* mind. This will come about only after the third synthesis corresponding to the faculty of thought.

24. Ibid., 71 (italics in original).

25. Ibid., 74

Finally, any discussion of the imagination in *Difference and Repetition* would be remiss if it failed to touch on the way that this synthesis is constitutive of one of the dimensions of time. The first synthesis, that of the imagination, then, takes the discontinuous instants of primary sensibility and contracts portions of them into what Deleuze calls a “living present,” a temporal region constituted by a past made up of the contracted cases which give rise to a generalization, and a future constituted by the expectation of the continuation of that generalization. The notion of the present here is similar to Husserl's well-known analysis of time-consciousness, or Bergson's concept of duration (at least in *Time and Free Will*), in that it differs from a simple instant and contains an aspect of retention of the past and of protention or expectation for the future. Nevertheless, the past and future in the first synthesis, the living or passing present, are not the empirical past and future of representation, nor are they the pure past and the future as the empty form of time which Deleuze will explicate in terms of the second and third syntheses. The past and future aspects of the present are relative to the particular present it is, which belongs to a particular contemplative soul and a particular habit. Such passing presents do not all take the same amount of empirical time, and they can overlap with one another in the empirical time they occupy. They are incomparable to one another from the point of view of the imagination alone, because each one belongs to a particular contemplative soul and concerns only the particular type of content related to that soul's habitude. Each contemplative soul is constituted only by the effect of repeated impressions on itself which cause an expectation to be formed. But this does not imply the ability to compare those impressions with one another as if they were two pictures side by side. Thus, the contraction by which the heart expects to continue pumping blood in and out constitutes a present with a limited past and future for the heart itself. Only

from the point of view of a reflective, observing mind can the present of the heart be considered to be at the same time as that of the lungs, which have the expectation of continuing to expand and contract, taking in and expelling air at a certain rhythm. The imagination itself can not compare the different times to one another and judge them to be taking place simultaneously in the form of objectively passing time. The imagination doesn't compare differences, but only contracts repeated similarities into an expectation. By itself, each particular present concerns only one contemplative soul and the particular generality that it constitutes through the synthesis of imagination. We will have to wait until the third synthesis to understand how this makes possible the present as an aspect of empirical time belonging to an individual subject, as opposed to a particular living present, belonging to a single contemplative soul.

The Second Synthesis: Memory

Considerations regarding time also motivate Deleuze to make the transition from the imagination to memory, as the second faculty, in *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze takes up the limitations of this conception of the present constituted by habit or the imagination, and argues that this faculty by itself is inadequate to the full conception of time as it is empirically experienced, and therefore requires an altogether different type of synthesis, belonging to a completely distinct faculty, to be added to it. Deleuze calls the second synthesis “memory” and argues that it consists in a synthesis of all moments of the past into a whole in which each particular moment of the past corresponds to a specific degree of contraction of the whole.

In order to see first why there must be a second distinct synthesis, or a second faculty different from that of that of habit, recall that the first synthesis constitutes a

present, in that it contracts successive instants into an immediate past which at the same time constitutes an expectation for the immediate future. Though habit creates a present of lived experience, Deleuze notes, such presents do pass, and their ability to pass into the past cannot be explained by the nature of imagination itself. Though habit creates a neighborhood of past and future relative to a given expectation, it does not account for why we move from the present moment into the future. The imagination only constitutes the “arrow of time” which distinguishes the asymmetry of the past and the future relative to a given present; it does not explain why time actually moves in the direction of that arrow, why one present passes away in favor of another one. In order for presents to pass, there must be some way of distinguishing between a moment which is now the present and a particular memory as a moment that was once present.

To illustrate this point, consider a concrete case of a habit that changes. Imagine a basketball player who has developed her skill at shooting free throws through practice over a long period of time. Each shot is almost the same, so through repeated practice she has managed to build in most of the shooting process into what we colloquially call “muscle memory.” Thus, she has acquired a habit in Deleuze's sense: on the basis of the contraction of repeated, similar past experiences in her muscles and nervous system, she has created in herself a disposition to always shoot the ball in as close to the same way as possible. Now imagine that, for some reason, the league in which she plays makes a decision to change the weight of the ball (perhaps in a fit of concern about animal cruelty, the commissioner of the league decides to switch from balls made out of natural leather to a lighter-weight synthetic leather). Immediately, this will disrupt our player's habitual practice because the conditions leading up to the free throw will not feel the same as they did with the old ball (even if the player can't “put her finger on” precisely what is

different). If she wants to continue having success as a free throw shooter, she will have to put in more practice with the new ball to adjust her dispositions to the new conditions surrounding the repeated shot, thus replacing her old habit with a new one. The disposition to shoot in a certain way, which was a present characteristic of the player before the ball change, has been replaced by a new one which integrates the feel of the new ball – one present has passed away in favor of a new one.

Deleuze's point regarding this is that although the former present of her earlier shot has passed and given way to a new habit constituting a new present, the earlier moment hasn't passed out of existence entirely. It's still possible to compare her current shot to her previous one, and she may be able to recall the way it felt to shoot a free throw with the old ball and compare it in reflection to the way that her new shot feels currently. Deleuze's point is that this very possibility of comparison between a current present and a former one requires for its ground a synthesis of memory which provides a medium for comparing the two. This synthesis can't be provided by imagination itself because the function of imagination is not to distinguish the instants that it synthesizes, but rather to contract them into what they have in common. The expectation of habit is the constitution of a similarity among contracted cases and an inductive operation on the basis of what they have in common. Thus the first synthesis can't allow us to distinguish moments from one another and another kind of faculty altogether is required to explain that capacity.

Memory, for Deleuze, is what allows different presents to pass from one to another and makes it possible (in principle) to compare them to one another. However, once again we must be careful to distinguish between the transcendental form of memory and its empirical form. In the sense in which it is a faculty by itself, memory does not,

according to Deleuze, correspond to the capacity to recall past events to present representation. This represents only the empirical use of memory under the form of common sense, in which a memory is conceived as a representation of precisely the same thing that was formerly perceived. The transcendental form of the faculty of memory does not correspond to the accessibility of past events to the mind that voluntarily recalls them. Deleuze's point is that this capacity to recall at will must itself be grounded in a second independent passive synthesis that gathers every moment of the past together into a great coexisting totality of all possible objects of recollection. This second passive synthesis constitutes the "pure past" or the "*a priori* past" which is independent of any particular present.²⁶

Deleuze explores the nature of this second synthesis somewhat in *Difference and Repetition* with regard to what he calls the "paradoxes of the pure past." The specifics of this analysis need not concern us here, but the upshot of these paradoxes is that the whole of the pure past must be conceived of as coexisting with each present moment, but that at the same time, some element of the pure past preexists any given present moment.²⁷ The point of exploring these paradoxes, for Deleuze, is to show that the past is essentially different from the present described by the first passive synthesis and cannot be reduced to it. Again, this is because from the point of view of the empirical exercise of the faculties, the possibility of recognition always requires a relation of what is presently presented to a memory of something from the past which it recalls. This requires a process of synthesis which contracts all of the past together, at least every element of the past to which it is in principle possible to related a present experience as a recognition.

26. Ibid., 81.

27. A detailed and clear account of the paradoxes of the pure past can be found in Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, 113-125.

The analysis of the requirements of experience as recognition reveal the necessity of positing a second passive synthesis of memory which constitutes the pure past. But this is only part of the story, insofar as it relates only to the appearance of memory from the perspective of common sense. Recall that Deleuze's starting point was that we should not assume that the faculties can only be exercised harmoniously upon shared objects. We ought to look instead for those experiences which reveal the particular correlate of only one faculty. Is there such a thing as the transcendental exercise of memory for itself and a correlative quasi-object which can only be remembered? Deleuze contends that the continued analysis of the encounter reveals that there is indeed such a transcendental exercise of the memory and an object which belongs to only memory by itself.

Deleuze has two sources to which he refers in describing the memorandum, or the correlate of the transcendental exercise of the memory. One is Plato, who at times identifies the Forms with objects seen in a former life which can only be recalled, and the recollection of which is stimulated by the encounter with a sensory experience in which recognition fails.²⁸ However, the more important source that Deleuze draws on, and whose position he seems to consider to be closer to his own, is Proust and his descriptions of involuntary memory or reminiscence. Deleuze briefly analyzes Proust's story about the madeleine which provokes the involuntary memory of the town of Combray.²⁹ The crucial aspect of what is remembered in this type of episode is that the object of the involuntary memory differs from an empirical recollection which purports to represent a former present as it was experienced when it was present. Deleuze says that Combray as it is remembered in reminiscence is not the same as Combray as it was ever

28. DR 140-2. For an example of the kind of passage in Plato that Deleuze is referring to, see Plato, *Phaedo* 73d-76e (Cooper 64-67).

29. DR 84-5. For a more detailed exposition of Proust's involuntary memory, see PS 52-61.

lived in the present. The object of involuntary memory is a *memorandum*, something which can only be remembered, never experienced in the present. The uniqueness of an episode of involuntary memory insofar as it recalls a part of the pure past is constituted by the fact that the object of reminiscence remains in the past and the present experience is related to it across the distance between the present and the past. This defines the memorandum, the correlate of transcendental memory, as not a particular formerly lived past experience, but an ideal or an essence based in the past, but related to by way of the present.

The Third Synthesis: Thought

The third synthesis, which Deleuze identifies with the faculty which he calls “thought,” has baffled many commentators on *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze's writing on this subject contains some of his most dense and idiosyncratic engagements with other thinkers, but at the same time his own doctrine regarding the third synthesis, I believe, is more original to himself than his theories of the first two. The theory of the synthesis of thought, however, is the crucial point where Deleuze's model of the mind turns from the two passive syntheses which constitute the receptive parts of the self as parts of the mind, to the unified subject or single, individual mind capable of the active synthesis of ideas. Understanding the third synthesis will thus be crucial to elaborating Deleuze's doctrine of action and the metaphysics surrounding the active subject. For this reason, I will reserve a complete treatment of the third synthesis for the next chapter, when it will be fully developed with a view to elucidating the distinction between passion and action and giving the complete Deleuzian account of the agent. For the time being, however, I would like to give a rough sketch of the third synthesis in order to show how it

completes what I've tried to argue is Deleuze's model of the mind as the interaction among the faculties of sensibility, imagination, memory, and thought.

We can start illuminating the third synthesis by asking what Deleuze's picture of the faculties still needs to be complete as a model of a mind that would be capable of the empirical acts of thought as recognition. Through the first synthesis, imagination creates a passing present by gathering together discontinuous instants to form an expectation. Through the second synthesis, memory records presents as they pass to constitute a pure past, or a past in itself, which in recognition makes the comparison of the present with a former present possible. What is lacking from this picture, from the point of view of recognition, is a gathering together of the first and second syntheses which attributes them to a single subject. A synthesis is required in order to make it possible to say that these present experiences and these past memories to which they are related are both mine, they both belong to one mind who can therefore recognize something of the past in the present. This is the role filled in Kant's transcendental philosophy by the synthesis of apperception.

In his own conception, Deleuze follows Descartes as well as Kant in calling the faculty which synthesizes the various units of experience and memory "thought." However, he wants to take the interpretation of thought that he attributes to Kant and extend it to a more radical level than Kant does himself. If thinking is what unifies the self, or the receptive faculties, into a single subject, for Descartes this happens immediately, insofar as "I think" directly modifies "I am," to define the mind simply and directly as thinking substance. Kant, however, says that the activity of thinking cannot directly modify the being of the self: there must be some intervening form guiding how this determination takes place. According to Kant, the form that makes it possible for

thinking to determine the self is time, as the *a priori* form of inner sense. If the self is intuited as a unified object for thought, Kant says, the active I which synthesizes the self must be temporally divided from the receptive self which intuits itself as the object of that synthesis. The passive, receptive “self” which is the object of a thought cannot be at the same temporal moment as the active “I” which thinks it.

Deleuze treats this notion of the paradox of inner sense as one of Kant's most important insights; however, he believes that Kant does not draw the significant conclusions from it himself. According to Deleuze, it is Hölderlin who takes this paradox of inner sense and illuminates the way in which it characterizes the faculty of thought as “the empty form of time.” This concept is captured, Deleuze says, by an image of time drawn from Hölderlin's interpretation of Oedipus. Deleuze draws this out into a generalized narrative structure which is a perfect symbol for this structure of time characteristic of the Kantian description of the relationship between thought and being. The image consists of a before and an after, divided by a “caesura,” represented by the image of a “formidable act.” There is an essential gap dividing the before, in which the character is passive and incapable of the act that represents the division between past and future. This is the time of the passive, receptive self of the Kantian paradox. The active “I” comes after the formidable act takes place, and the character becomes active and capable. Deleuze says that this structure of time, an asymmetrical division of a passive before from an active after, accomplished by a caesura represented by a major act, is the form which any synthesis of thought must take. The act of thinking which modifies the receptive subject can only take place at a different temporal moment from the reflection upon the modification created thereby. Thus, from the perspective of the passive self, the I is always an other which affects it by synthesizing it together in the act of thinking.

This notion of the “empty form of time” describes the form under which thought, as an independent faculty, can synthesize Ideas out of the material provided by the first two syntheses. Thought, like the other faculties, has objective correlates which are specific to its domain, and Deleuze calls these “Ideas.” Deleuze's doctrine of ideas is complicated and we will return to it in much greater detail in the next chapter; however, we can illustrate Deleuze's notion of an idea here briefly with one of his own favorite examples, that of the straight line defined as the shortest distance between two points.³⁰ Deleuze frequently points out that the notion of “the shortest distance” at play in this definition is not an analytic property of the straight line, but in fact contains within it its relation to a physical problem having to do with the measuring of curves. If one considers an arc of a circle, one can approximately measure its length by measuring short distances between nearby points on the curve and adding them together. The closer the points that one measures the distance between, the closer one will get to the actual length of the curve, but no matter how many measurements between nearby points are made and added together, the sum will always be less than the actual length of the curve. This is because the measurement directly from one point to another will always be shorter than a curved line between two points. Any curved line between two points is longer than the straight line, thus the straight line can be defined as the shortest distance. Deleuze frequently points out that this definition of the straight line is Archimedean rather than Euclidean, and has more in common with integral calculus than with axiomatic geometry. His point is that this concept of the straight line comes about through an operation of thought following a method of construction, and expresses the idea of straightness in its difference from curved-ness (i.e. the straight line is always shorter). This example

30. See DR 174.

illustrates Deleuze's contention that the transcendental nature of thought can be identified with the empty form of time, because the method required for constructing the idea that the straight line is the shortest relative to any curve involves the progressive process of drawing smaller and smaller chords to the curve in order to measure it. This is the form under which the active faculty of thought (the "I") affects the receptive "self" and makes it possible to intuit a straight line.

The Interaction of the Faculties

If Deleuze is offering us a philosophy of mind, we can see now that the major elements of it consist in the descriptions of the three faculties as powers to synthesize mental contents in different ways. Recall that Deleuze's critical goal in describing the faculties was to avoid the assumption of subordinating them to the model of recognition, comprising common sense as the assumed unity of the faculties in one subject and their assumed focus on the same object, and good sense as the assumed natural distribution of each faculty's role in subordination to its natural interest in truth. To accomplish this goal, Deleuze has tried to describe what must be characteristic of each faculty in itself, what each does apart from its relation to the others. In order to truly characterize this as a model of the mind, however, we need to reverse course and show how the mind as we understand it arises out of the interaction among these faculties. *Difference and Repetition* can constitute a critique of the image of thought only insofar as it shows how that image is generated from processes operating on a more fundamental level. How do sensibility, imagination, memory, and thought actually ground representative thought and empirical cognition?

Deleuze's answer to this question begins with his opposition of his image of the faculties as serially organized to the image of recognition, which pictures them as simultaneously directed at a single object. We have seen what this serial organization is in the numbering of the syntheses as first, second, and third. The series starts with unsynthesized impressions in sensibility; the first synthesis of this discontinuous matter is in the imagination; the products of the imaginative synthesis are synthesized by the memory, and finally the products of memory and imagination are synthesized by thought. However, clearly this does not mean that this whole process of successive syntheses takes place every time any cognition or mental phenomenon takes place. Deleuze acknowledges that, of course, most of our cognitive experiences are recognitions. The process described by the serial organization of the faculties is meant to capture phenomena of non-recognition, or what Deleuze calls “encounters.”

The idea is not that we are always encountering what is new. The point, for Deleuze, is that this “phenomenology of the encounter” describes the transcendental structure of the process by which we learn when we do encounter something new. The series in which an encounter stimulates the faculties in order describes the general process by which the mind is capable of posing problems to itself, determining fields of solution for those problems, and finally constituting solutions as forms of representation which serve to expand the mind's capacity with regard to that particular problem. Once we have managed to pose and solve a problem, we can recognize it and apply the same solution to it again. Learning is essentially apprenticeship for Deleuze, as opposed to any model of learning by which pre-constituted knowledge is simply put into a mind. However, once the apprentice has learned how to pose and solve a particular problem, that skill stays with him or her and does become a form of knowledge.

In the final pages of Chapter 3 of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze refers to a study of primate learning to illustrate his interpretation of learning according to the serial activation of the faculties. In the study in question, the monkey subject is supposed to find the food which is located only in boxes of a specific color, while other boxes of various colors do not contain food. There is a period during the course of the monkey's learning process when it makes fewer errors, although it still makes some. Deleuze characterizes this as the period of learning, insofar as it consists in trying to pose the problem correctly. This is the process during which the mind undergoes the serial activation of the faculties which amounts to posing and solving the problem. To spell this out more according to Deleuze's schema, the monkey must first sense through the imagination some feeling corresponding to the stronger expectation of the presence of food in certain boxes (this doesn't mean that the monkey recognizes that the feeling is an expectation of food or what sensible property triggers it). This recognition of something which can only be sensed must then trigger the activation of a memory which envelops the past experiences of finding food under the form of an element of the pure past which can only be remembered. Perhaps this will take the form of an exemplary episode in which food was discovered in one box, the properties of which bring together all the properties of the boxes in which food was found. After this, it's still necessary for the faculty of thought to be stimulated and try to pose the problem and its solution in terms of concepts which can determine a rule. The monkey must determine the problem in thought as "what color boxes have food in them?" enabling it to propose the correct color as the solution.

Once this has been accomplished, the monkey now knows a fact: boxes of color A have food in them. The outcome of this learning is that now the monkey has the ability to

recognize boxes of color A as all being alike; it can now exercise perception, memory, and thought together harmoniously to see A-colored boxes as a particular type of object, recognized under the form of common sense. Deleuze's contention regarding the distribution of the faculties in a serial fashion is that all learning takes place like this, and that this kind of process of learning underlies every exercise of common sense, and every ability to recognize objects.

Deleuze's Theory of Mind in Comparative Perspective

Throughout this chapter, I've tried to present Deleuze's theory of the faculties in such a way that it describes a plausible and original theory of mind. I've attempted to show that at least a major part of Deleuze's project in *Difference and Repetition* is to provide a critique of the familiar phenomenon of recognition in order to show that there are more fundamental mental processes which, through their interaction, make recognition possible or cause it to occur. It may seem peculiar to many that Deleuze posits the existence of distinct "faculties" in order to undertake this project. Faculty psychology can suggest an antiquated way of thinking which has been replaced by a more modern empirical psychology which has no need to posit such mysterious entities.

In the final section of this chapter, I'd like to consider Deleuze's notion of the faculties and their interaction more closely by comparing his position with one type of view which has been developed in recent anglophone philosophy of mind, the view that William Lycan calls "homuncular functionalism," or "homuncularism." I don't have the expertise or the space here to present and defend Deleuze's position as a full-blown alternative stance within the debates and problems that concern anglophone philosophers of mind, but I think a consideration of the similarities and difference between the

theoretical entities posited in Deleuze's case and that of the homuncular functionalists will help some readers better understand the position that I'm attributing to Deleuze and make it easier to proceed to the rest of my project.

Lycan's approach consists of two complementary parts: homuncularism and functionalism. By homuncularism, Lycan means more or less that the mind ought to be viewed as a system composed of homuncular subsystems. Such subsystems may themselves be broken down into subsystems each performing simpler tasks. The precise number and nature of the subsystems and the levels into which they are organized will depend on the outcome of empirical psychological research, but the schema proposes that the ultimate model which will emerge for understanding the mind will be a multi-level hierarchy, organized around tasks and the division of those tasks into simpler tasks. The important characteristic of the homunculi for Lycan is that for any given system, the subsystems which make it up perform different tasks which are relatively simpler than that of the system that they make up. The homunculi are thus not, as in the classical image which the word suggests, like little people in a person's head because none of them individually has the capacities that the whole person as an "institution" or "system" does. If we take any function that is performed at a given organizational level of the mind, that function must either be simple and primitive, and thus performed by a specific type of homunculus appropriate to that task, or it must be decomposable into simpler, and different, sub-functions. If the function is complex, the crucial aspect of Lycan's picture is that each of the functional units at a level below it perform a simpler and different task from the integrated, higher-level unit. This kind of model is thus not susceptible to the accusation of depending on an "undischarged homunculus," because each function is explained by the organizational integration of several simpler functions. To take a

hypothetical example, a person's ability to read is not explained by positing a “reading system” in the brain. That would, of course, be an undischarged homunculus that would explain nothing. Rather, the task of reading might be accomplished by the interaction of several functionally distinct subsystems, perhaps one system for breaking up the visual field into distinct words, another for pairing the images of individual words with strings of abstract letters, another for comparing them to a database of previously encountered words, etc.

Lycan understands functionalism to mean that mental entities should be characterized by the “roles they play in furthering the goals or strategies of the systems in which they occur or obtain.”³¹ This is to be distinguished from what he calls “machine functionalism,” in which the relevant sense of function is much closer to the mathematical sense of a mapping from a set of inputs to a set of outputs. It's important to note that on Lycan's notion of function, then, both the homunculi that make up the mental system as well as any mental states or processes should be characterized functionally, but the latter are so only in a derived way. If we have a homuncular functionalist ontology of the mind, he claims, mental states, events, processes, and properties are all reducible to states, events, processes, and properties of one or more of the homuncular subsystems.³² Thus, functionalism applies primarily to the identification of the homunculi, and, through this, secondarily to the identification of mental phenomena as homunculus-system phenomena.

Given this brief sketch of the homunctionalist model of the mind, we can say that, to a degree, Deleuze's theory is both homuncularist and functionalist. It is homuncularist because Deleuze does want to analyze mental phenomena (at least recognition) in terms

31. Lycan, “Form, Function, and Feel,” 27.

32. Ibid., 30-31.

of the collaboration of the distinct faculties of sensibility, imagination, memory, and thought. None of these subsystems on its own performs the function of recognition; thus the theory avoids the objection of leading to an infinite regress in the same way that Lycan argues his theory does. Furthermore, although Deleuze identifies four faculties, these name four types of homunculi, not four individual subsystems. Sensibility, for instance, can name sensitivity to many different types of differences in the external world, and recall that Deleuze makes clear that “contemplative souls” corresponding to particular habits exist throughout the body and differ regarding what particular property they synthesize. Thus, the four faculties name four different types of capacities which constitute the mind, not four individual subsystems. Deleuze and Lycan share the idea that the mind is made up of many different levels of order or organization.

We can also see that Deleuze's identification of the faculties is indeed functionalist, in a sense related to Lycan's. The different faculties are indeed identified by reference to the role that they play in the comprehensive or higher level phenomenon of recognition. Deleuze discovers the different types of syntheses by asking what distinct types of processes must come together to make representation possible. Furthermore, this identification of the nature of each faculty is opposed to any attempt to group them on the basis of an identification of types of mental states with types of brain states. In this way, Deleuze's approach also resonates with functionalism in its opposition to a reductive mental-physical identity thesis.

However, Deleuze's method is importantly opposed to one aspect of Lycan's understanding of functionalism. The critical nature of his method consists in denying that their role in subordination to a higher level function of recognition *constitutes* the metaphysical identity of the faculties. This would be to assume the universality of

common sense. Thus, Deleuze's theory of mind is not functionalist in the full-blown teleological sense in which Lycan makes it explicit that his view is.³³ For Deleuze, the faculties can be identified and distinguished on the basis of their different roles with respect to a common project; however, their metaphysical identity cannot be reduced to that role. Although they can be organized hierarchically under the form of common sense, Deleuze's faculties are not *essentially* organized hierarchically. Each has its own nature (transcendental exercise) which is not reducible to the role that it plays in a larger project. We could say that the essence ascribed to each faculty is functional in a weaker sense, in that each is identified by what it *does* rather than by what it (materially) *is*. However, this notion of a function would have to be understood as “what it does” for itself, rather than what it does for a larger whole.³⁴

This difference may ultimately come down to a divergence in the fundamental projects that the two theories respond to. Lycan's homunctionalism is closely related to debates over the mind-body problem and to the prospects for a scientific empirical psychology of human beings. For Deleuze, however, the transcendental exercise of each faculty is not amenable to investigation according to the methods of an observational psychology, since each faculty's transcendental use is defined as what is concerned only with its stimulation by novel and unrecognizable encounters. From the point of view of a scientific psychology, Deleuze might agree that mental faculties can be treated as essentially hierarchically and teleologically organized in analogy to physiological

33. See *ibid.*, 31-32; Lycan, “Levels of Nature,” 52-58.

34. The relationship of both Deleuze and Lycan to the metaphor of organs and organisms could be instructive on this point. Lycan (and others) explicitly analogizes the systematic hierarchy among mental homunculi defined teleologically to the different levels at which we can describe an organism's organs as having functionally defined parts. On the other hand, Deleuze, particularly in *Anti-Oedipus*, is constantly invoking the fact that the essence of actual organs is not fully captured by their functional subordination to the organism.

organisms. He would argue, on the other hand, that philosophy can go beyond the methodology available to natural science in this area of inquiry.

2. Three Sources for a Deleuzian Theory of Action: Spinoza, Kant, Nietzsche

In the first chapter, I tried to lay out in a coherent and concise fashion, the basic framework of Deleuze's theory of mind, relying mostly on *Difference and Repetition*. The basic elements of that framework were the different mental faculties, imagination, memory, and thought, each characterized as a different power of synthesis of mental contents, which, when functioning together systematically, constitute the mental life of an individual. As it was motivated by Deleuze's critique of the recognitive model of thought, this exposition took its cues primarily from the image of the passive, receptive mind, hence the focus on the importance of passive synthesis. We saw that the first and second syntheses were defined as "passive syntheses" insofar as they were "in the mind, but not by the mind." However, Deleuze's view is not that the entirety of the mental subject is passively constructed by the operations of the faculties in passive synthesis without any activity attributable to the mind or the subject itself. Such a view would not only be potentially open to critique as a naïve empiricism (accepting the "myth of the given," as the phrase goes), but it could also only constitute a partial theory of the mind, since it would lack an account of the mind as active or creative. To make reference to Kant again, I think the case could be made (though I won't attempt to make it fully here) that for Deleuze as well the mind must comprise faculties of receptivity and of spontaneity. For Deleuze, as well as for Kant, a perceiving and thinking being has the capacity for activity as well, and it may even be the case that perceiving itself involves some level of activity by the perceiver. In the first chapter, we've more or less discussed Deleuze's account of mental faculties as receptive, or as capacities to be affected by the world, but in this

chapter we will attempt to describe his conception of the activity of the mind, and how it interacts with and contrasts with the mind's passive receptivity.

This chapter will attempt to illuminate a theory of action and agency that draws heavily on Deleuze's work, and in doing so, to provide the metaphysics corresponding to the active aspect of the mind in a way that complements the first chapter's focus on receptivity. My guiding course here will be to follow the general outlines of the problematic of action theory laid out by analytic philosophers of action in the last 50 years (Chisholm, Davidson, and Frankfurt, among others). Roughly, that problematic consists of attempting to distinguish when an action takes place that is attributable to an agent, as opposed to something that may involve that same individual, but which is not attributable to him or her as an action. Alicia Juarrero has characterized this task intuitively as one of describing “the difference between a wink and blink.¹” The considerations relating to this topic that I will offer based on Deleuze's writings will not always correspond precisely to the conceptual distinctions made by other philosophers of action, or the way in which they use the relevant terms. I hope that readers will not have too much difficulty understanding these terms primarily within the context of Deleuze's concepts in which I present them here. I will proceed by considering ideas drawn from other thinkers that Deleuze puts into close proximity to notions of action and activity in his own writing. Once we have fleshed out the sense of these concepts and how they connect to action, we will proceed to try to integrate them with one another to form a complete, coherent Deleuzian theory of action, and finally give this concept its place within the picture of Deleuze's philosophy of the mind outlined in chapter 1.

1. Juarrero, *Dynamics in Action*, 1.

Spinoza and the Common Notion

In his interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, Deleuze frequently insists on the importance of the practical point of view. In addition to being a speculative ontological system, Deleuze contends, Spinoza's *Ethics* is an ethics in the proper sense of the word – a theory of how human beings can and ought to conduct themselves in the world. One would be justified in expecting, then, that such a project would treat the theory of action and make at least some attempt to illuminate the nature of action. Specifically, we find in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza a detailed treatment of how an individual can make a transition or a “leap” from being passive and merely affected by forces external to it, to itself being active or capable of action. Deleuze asserts that this transition is accomplished through Spinoza's concept of the “common notion,” which is “one of the fundamental discoveries of the *Ethics* (EP 292).” Deleuze argues that in Spinoza's system, every action rests on the agent's comprehension of something in common between itself and something other than itself. Spinoza's thesis is that we can only act by understanding something that we share with the object that we act upon. However, in order to understand what this means and to comprehend the argument for it, we must back up and elucidate some of the other concepts which are crucial to Deleuze's reading of Spinoza in *Expressionism and Philosophy*. Finally, we will consider the relation of these arguments to Deleuze's own thought and whether and in what way we can ascribe this Spinozist thesis to Deleuze himself.

Although Deleuze provides interesting analysis of many aspects of Spinoza's philosophy, including the doctrine of parallelism and the concept of expression, I believe we can grasp the meaning of the relevant theses concerning action and the justification behind them by restricting our discussion of Spinoza to the theory of finite modes, and

therefore, primarily to Part III of Deleuze's study, with only specific references to earlier points. This discussion can begin with the notion of power that Deleuze ascribes to Spinoza: the degree of power of an existing mode is identical with its essence. To be a particular thing is to have the degree of power corresponding to the nature of that thing, which is a part of the infinite power of substance, or God. However, what Spinoza means by power is not the ability to decide whether to act or not to act in a certain way. Spinoza's conception of power differs in two important ways from a conception of power as the ability to decide whether to do something or not to do it. In the first place, power is not identical with the capacity for action in Spinoza, but rather designates the sum of an individual mode's capacity to act upon other things and its capacity to be acted upon by other things. Thus a degree of power does not indicate only what one individual being can do, but instead the sum of what it can do and what can be done to it. Since both its own actions and the actions of other things upon it affect an individual mode, the total degree of power corresponding to the essence of a thing corresponds to its "capacity to be affected," both by itself and by others. In the second place, power is not defined as what can either become actual or remain merely possible. Instead, in Spinoza, there is no unexercised or un-actual power, no capacity that remains merely a potential. Every capacity of an individual mode to be affected is exercised; the difference consists in whether it is exercised by the action of the mode itself, or by the action of another mode on it. "The distinction between power and act, on the level of modes, disappears [in Spinoza] in favor of two equally actual powers, that of acting, and that of suffering action, which vary inversely one to the other, but whose sum is both constant and constantly effective.²" Thus, the fact that a given thing is sometimes active and

2. EP 93.

sometimes passive is explained not by the notion of its having a power which it sometimes restrains from exercising, but rather by a variation in the proportion of its total power which is exercised actively, relative to that which is exercised passively.

In order to understand what it means for a finite mode to affect other things or to be affected by them, however, we have to understand what constitutes a finite mode, according to Deleuze. In Spinoza's thought, an actual mode has an essence and an existence which are independent in that neither of them is the cause of the other one. For any mode, the fact that it has a certain essence, or degree of power, does not imply that it exists. Conversely, the existence of a given mode, while it does require that that mode has an essence, is not the cause of its essence. The cause of each modal essence is God, or the infinitely powerful single substance, of which each essence is one intensive part or degree of power. For a given mode to exist, it is necessary both that its essence exist, and that it also actually possess "a very great number" of simple extensive parts, which bear a relation to one another corresponding to the essence of that mode. The essence of a given mode determines the system of relations between simple parts which makes the mode what it is, and the existence of that mode is determined by the fact that there actually are a very great number of simple parts that bear the characteristic set of relations to one another. These simple parts are not smaller individual modes, according to Deleuze's interpretation, but rather infinitely small extensive parts which affect one another externally, but which each have no internal properties or structure. Simon Duffy has ably and in detail shown how Deleuze interprets Spinoza's simple extensive parts as mathematical infinitesimals and the relations between them as expressible by differential equations;³ however, what is necessary to understand here is only that, according to

3. Duffy, *Logic of Expression*.

Deleuze's interpretation, existing modes in Spinoza have two independent aspects: the set of infinitely small extensive parts that materially make them up, and the relations among those parts which correspond to the essence of the mode.

Because each mode is made up of a very great number of parts, Deleuze contends, we can infer that it is “affected in a very great number of ways,”⁴ but the relations between the parts are determined by the essence of the mode, which thereby determines the specific ways that a particular individual can be affected. This is the way in which the essence of a particular mode corresponds to a particular degree of power to be affected. When one mode affects another, however, this must have an impact to some degree on the constitutive relations among the simple parts of the affected mode. That is, when individuals interact with one another in the world, they do, in fact, make changes in one another. If the encounter between two or more individuals changes the relations among the simple parts of one of them, we must then say that it changes, to a certain degree, the essence of that individual, as the essence is equivalent to the relationship among the parts.⁵ Therefore, as the essence of a mode is identified with a degree of power, Deleuze points out that an encounter of a given individual with another which affects it must constitute either an increase or a decrease in its power.

In itself, then, the universe of finite modes in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza consists of an order of essences (also called “intensive parts” or “degrees of power”), and an order of simple, extensive parts which bear only external relations to one another.

These external relations themselves determine whether the group of extensive parts that

4. EP 217.

5. The language for describing this point is difficult, because it becomes unclear whether we ought to refer to “the same” individual with a change in its essence or nature, or the same extensive parts coming to constitute a slightly different individual. For this reason, Deleuze sometimes talks about the power of as being “endowed with a kind of elasticity,” which is to say that its essence remains nearly the same, with small increases or decreases. See *ibid.*, 222-5.

bear them to one another constitute an individual with a given essence or not, but the essence does not cause the simple parts to come into that relation to one another, nor do the simple parts cause the existence of the essence. For a given mode, its essence and its actual existence are causally independent of one another. This physical scheme describes metaphysics operative in Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza; however, in order to understand the importance of common notions in the passage from passive affection to active affection, we must understand how Deleuze interprets the epistemological side of Spinoza's theory of modes as well. The relevant distinction, according to Deleuze, is that between adequate ideas and inadequate ideas, and the difference between the two has to do with whether we know the properties of an idea through grasping its cause and the way that those properties necessarily follow from the cause. Deleuze opposes Spinoza's conception of the adequate idea to the Cartesian criteria of clarity and distinctness. For Spinoza, being clear and distinct is not enough to make an idea adequate. Rather, we must start with a clear and distinct idea, and through the active, constructive operation of thought, construct an idea of something that would be capable of being the cause of the initial idea. This is the process of constructing a genetic definition, and only by determining a sufficient cause in this way can we ensure that our conception of the original idea is adequate.

Deleuze cites a geometric example from Spinoza's *Improvement of the Understanding* to illustrate this process.⁶ If we possess a clear idea of a circle as all the points within a two-dimensional plane of less than a given distance from a given point, we can imagine a genetic definition of this circle by conceiving of a line segment of which one end remains fixed while the other end moves through all the points it can

6. Ibid., 135. The reference is to Spinoza, *Ethics*, p 32.

within the two-dimensional plane. The constant length of the line which forms the radius defines a rule that we follow in order to construct the circle from a given point (the center). The relation between the point on the circle and the ideal point of the center remains constant and corresponds to the radius, and thus the radius and the center point become the two features which define any given circle. Identifying the common property shared by every point on the circle, that of being in a relationship to the center of a certain distance, allows us to define the circle rigorously. By imagining this process of the construction of the circle, we conceive of a cause of the idea of the circle from which follow all the necessary properties which belong to it qua circle. Such an idea of the circle is therefore adequate, because we see how its properties follow necessarily from its cause. This is what Deleuze means in saying that adequate ideas are distinguished from inadequate ones because the former “express” their cause: the cause and the effect are linked by the fact that the cause necessarily leads to the essential properties of the effect.⁷

How, then, does the distinction between adequate and inadequate ideas relate to the power and affections of an existing mode, such as a human being? Although Spinoza is often classified as a rationalist, Deleuze does not believe that he conceives of naturally given reason as having the power to work out an interconnected system of ideas independently of experience. Although the *Ethics* starts out with the presentation of ideas derived from other ideas purely by efforts of logical reasoning, Deleuze does not think that, for Spinoza, this order of reasons, or systematic connection among ideas, is the same as the order in which human beings actually develop their thought. He contends that, in terms of the account of the process by which human beings become active and

7. This conception of thought involving genetic definition is very closely related to the faculty of thought as it was briefly described in Chapter 1. We will return to this similarity in the subsequent section on the Kantian inspirations behind a Deleuzian theory of action.

thoughtful, “Spinoza's inspiration is in this respect profoundly empiricist.”⁸ The first ideas are not the most general, universal concepts, but rather particular impressions derived from the impact or force of an external body on the body of a given existing mode, such as a human being. The essence of a given mode, such as a human being, corresponds to its capacity to be affected (both by other things and by itself, in passive and active affections). But it isn't possible for a human being to have active affections naturally, without some course of development. Thus, the capacity of a human being to be affected is exercised at first by its suffering the actions of external bodies on itself. Due to Spinoza's parallelism between the attribute of thought and the attribute of extension, each affection of an external body on the body of a human being corresponds to an idea of that affection in the mind. That is, the way in which I am affected by something other than me corresponds to an idea of being affected in such a way. These ideas of the way in which something external affects one's own body are the first ideas which any human being has.

An impression which arises as a result of an external body affecting mine is a perception, for Spinoza. But what is presented to me in a perception is not the essence of the external body as it is in itself, but only represents the way in which it affects my body. Thus, I know the effect of the other body's action on mine, but not anything about its cause, and therefore these primary ideas gained through perception are, for Spinoza, necessarily inadequate and do not by themselves constitute any knowledge or understanding. “The idea of such an affection does not express its cause, that is to say, the nature or essence of the external body; rather does it indicate the present constitution of our own body, and so the way in which our capacity to be affected is being at that moment exercised.”⁹ The mere receptivity to an impression, for Spinoza, never yields an

8. EP 149.

9. Ibid., 219-20.

adequate idea; an act of thought by the mind is necessary in order for any mind to have an adequate idea of anything.

This notion that having adequate ideas requires the subject to exercise the power of thinking corresponds to Deleuze's contention that Spinoza intricately links inadequate ideas with passive affections and adequate ideas with active affections. An inadequate idea is caused by something external because it is not explained by my own power of understanding. But if that idea causes an affect or feeling in me, then the cause of that feeling is ultimately something else, not myself, and it is therefore a passion, not an action. On the other hand, an adequate idea is explained by my own power of thought. Therefore, if it causes a feeling in me, that feeling must be an active affection, because I am ultimately its cause, and therefore that feeling corresponds to an action.¹⁰ Thus, Deleuze draws a single line dividing passion, perception, and inadequate ideas, on the one hand, from action, thinking, and adequate ideas, on the other. Recalling *Difference and Repetition* here, we can see that Deleuze here puts action on the side of thought and opposes it to passive synthesis in habit and memory.

Nonetheless, Deleuze contends that in Spinoza, there is a real gap between these two sides, and although we can group things together on each side, it remains a mystery how a given mode, such as a human being, can make the leap from one side to the other. This is a significant issue, since Spinoza contends that human beings are always in the first place passive and do not naturally exercise their capacity to affect themselves or to think rationally. This is the point at which the concept of the common notion finally intervenes to make this leap possible. According to Deleuze, the theory of common notions, although only sparsely discussed by Spinoza, connects the interaction of existing

10. Ibid., 221.

modes with the distinction between adequate and inadequate ideas in order to account for the transition, for a particular individual, from passive affections to active affections. Common notions in general refer to structures or sets of relations among extensive parts which are shared by two or more different modes or individuals. “A common notion is always an idea of a similarity of composition in existing modes.”¹¹ However, common notions exist along a spectrum from the least general, i.e. those that are common to the smallest set of things, to the most general, those that are common to all modes and within which more specific differences can be identified. Deleuze argues that the most specific are at the same time “the most useful,” and that “our initial notions are necessarily the least universal ones.”¹² If the first common notions that are formed are the most specific, we should look to the process by which we form these common notions in our effort to understand how they allow an individual to initially bridge the gap between passivity and activity.

Deleuze quotes Spinoza in saying that the least universal common notions are those that are “common to a human body and to certain external bodies.”¹³ How might an individual come to conceive such notions, and why does conceiving of them constitute a passage from passivity to activity? To answer this question we must return to Deleuze's characterization of an encounter between bodies, or the affection of one individual by another. Recall that if one mode is affected by another mode, this changes the relations among the simple parts of the first which correspond to the essence of that mode. The way in which the two modes affect one another will be determined by the relations in the region in which the two interact, according to some principle or law governing how

11. Ibid., 275.

12. Ibid., 286-7.

13. Spinoza. *Ethics* II.39e.

modes bearing those particular relations interact with one another. Although there are many specific ways that they can interact in concrete cases, Deleuze says that they can be grouped into combinations of two types. “The first sort occurs when I meet a body whose relation combines with my own.”¹⁴ If the two relations combine, neither relation is destroyed, but the two modes enter into a new combination of parts which includes the previous relation of both and relates them to one another. Such an encounter Deleuze identifies as “agreement” or “composition.” On the other hand, the relations characteristic of the two modes may not be capable of combining with one another. In such a case, if the two modes continue to affect one another, each tends to decompose the relations characteristic of the other. Such modes do not agree with one another, or are “harmful” to one another.

Recall, now, that the relations characteristic of a given mode correspond to a particular degree of power. Thus, if the encounter between two modes results in a change in the relations belonging to one of them, this is either an increase or decrease in its degree of power. If the relations are maintained but combined to form a larger and more complex whole, this constitutes an increase in the mode's degree of power, but if the encounter decomposes some of its relations, this is a decrease in the degree of power. An increase in the power of a mode is accompanied by an idea that Spinoza labels as a “joyful passion” or “joyful passive affection,” and a decrease in power is accompanied by a “sad passion.”

The feeling accompanying a favorable encounter with an agreeable external body is not itself a common notion, but, Deleuze says, such joyful passions provide us with the “occasion” for forming common notions. If two modes agree fully, Deleuze argues, such

14. EP 239.

that they can be combined in such a way that all the relations of each are maintained in a whole of a greater degree of power which leads to a joyful feeling, this must be because the two have something in common in virtue of which they can be combined: “two bodies that agree entirely have an identical structure.”¹⁵ Such an identical structure, common between two modes, is the cause of their capacity to combine with one another. The feeling of joy accompanying such an encounter does not represent what that shared structure is, but it indicates the presence of such a commonality which determines the possibility of composition. “The joyful affection itself induces us to form the corresponding common notion.”¹⁶

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the joyful passions corresponding to agreeable encounters do not directly cause me to grasp the common notion. Deleuze is clear that they are merely the “occasional cause,” and provide the inductive basis on which we form the common notion through an operation of thought.¹⁷ Although he is not entirely explicit about this, we must understand that by such an operation of thought, Deleuze has in mind the process of constructing a genetic definition described in the account of adequate ideas. The experience of a joyful passion indicates the existence of a common structure between two modes, but to form the common notion we must construct the idea of such a commonality in thought and understand how the possibility of combining the two relations follows necessarily from it, just as the idea of a circle follows necessarily from the rotation of a line around one of its endpoints. Thus, our own power of thought intervenes between the external body with which my own body combines, and the joyful feeling which follows from that combination. Insofar as my

15. Ibid., 275.

16. Ibid., 282.

17. Ibid.

mind grasps the common notion, it is an adequate idea from which the joyful feeling necessarily follows. However, insofar as this feeling now has its cause in my own power of thought, and therefore in my own essence, it is an active affection because I am the cause of it. “Our mind by itself forms the idea of what is common to that body and our own; *from this flows an idea of the affection, a feeling, which is no longer passive, but active.*”¹⁸

We might ask, then, what theses about action follow from the theory of common notions that Deleuze outlines here and attributes to Spinoza? The first, and most significant, seems to be that action is primarily distinguished from non-action by the intervention of thought between physical causes and effects, rather than by separating types of physical causal processes from others. A given composition of bodies can be either active or passive depending on whether thinking and an understanding of the causal necessity of that combination takes place and constitutes the cause of the joyful affection which coincides with the combination. Furthermore, the conception of thinking in play is a specific one, according to Spinoza's notion of adequacy. One thinks, in this sense, and is therefore active, if one posits the common notion as necessarily leading to the effect in question. Spinoza's notion of adequacy is in addition to Descartes' criteria of clarity and distinctness in ideas. The common notion here takes the form of a general principle or rule from which the combination of one body and another follows necessarily.

At the same time that thinking is posited as the intervening condition distinguishing acting from being acted upon in this schema, however, we should also note that this thinking is of a type that is fundamentally practically rooted, as Deleuze points

18. Ibid., 284 (italics in original).

out. Spinoza's theory of modes has a built-in conception of value whereby whatever increases an individual's power is good and whatever decreases it is bad. It follows, therefore, that what produces joyful passions is good, for the individual in which those passions are produced. It is in the context of a mode's striving to continue to have joyful affections that the attempt to construct common notions occurs; that is, an individual's repeated fortuitous encounters with others that are agreeable to it provides the occasion that determines it to try to grasp the cause of their agreeableness, the common notion. It follows from this that the sense of "action" determined by this theory is, in a sense, narrow, in that it is only a part of a broader range of what might be called "behavior directed by desire." We can put this in Spinozist terms by saying that action and active affections are by no means attained by all modes, although all modes have *conatus*, or striving to maintain themselves in existence, corresponding to their essences. Thus, Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza endows all existing things with what might, in a looser sense, be called a principle of activity (*conatus*), but reserves the terms "activity" and "action," for that narrow conception mediated by thought in which individuals can truly be said to be the *adequate* causes of the things that happen to them. Similarly, in Deleuze's own thought, the formation of habits involves the production of pleasant attributes and patterns of behavior, but this is distinguished from full-blown action which is directed by thought and has an element of necessity.

We can use, as an example to illustrate this conception of becoming-active by way of common notions, one of Deleuze's own preferred examples, that of learning to swim.¹⁹ Learning to swim, as Deleuze frequently points out, is a matter of understanding a relation between the motions of one's own body and the motions of the water around that

19. References to swimming as an example of learning occur at DR 23, 165, 192.

body. What matters is coordinating my own movements with the way that the waves making up the water move among themselves and bounce off one another and off me. One becomes active and learns how to swim, according to the theory of common notions, by forming an idea in thought of a general principle governing the relation between the connections and movements among parts of one's body and those of the parts of the water, or the waves. The common notion here mediates between two bodies, one's own and another, and serves as a rule of how they relate to one another. In fact, the common notion is an idea that is best expressed as a differential equation, because it describes a relationship between changes in two things relative to one another.²⁰ It is a rule describing the way that the motions and changes in one body (the human body) are related to those in another (the water) in general, not at any particular point, but throughout the whole field of their interaction. To know how to swim and to be able to swim is not to understand what position to take at a given point in the water's movement, but instead to grasp a general rule applicable to the whole field of possible interactions between oneself and the water.

It is the construction of this common notion relating the movements of one's own body to those of an external body, like a body of water, that constitutes the difference between passivity and activity on Deleuze's reading of Spinoza. We can see from the swimming example that we certainly couldn't ever come to be capable of swimming without first experiencing the effects of the water's movement upon our own body; becoming-active requires a prior passive experience of the relationship among the bodies in question. However, the formation of a common notion goes beyond the accumulation of experiences (passive joys) and passes into activity because the common notion is

20. For a discussion of Deleuze's reading of Spinoza that goes into detail about the way that differential equations can be used to illuminate the theory of relations, see Duffy, *Logic of Expression*, 135-156.

posited as a general rule that explains the possibility of those prior interactions as individual cases and extends them to other as-yet-unexperienced cases. It's the formation of this kind of idea, governing the general terms of interaction between the movements of those two bodies that distinguishes passion from action, according to Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza.

It remains for us to consider briefly whether, and to what degree, the account of action adduced in this section can fairly be attributed to Deleuze himself, as we find it in a text that is clearly intended as a study of another thinker's work. I believe that, although he attributes these theses to Spinoza, there is good reason for thinking that we can ascribe them to Deleuze himself because of analogous relationships that we can find in many places between his own systems of concepts and those he ascribes to Spinoza. The first such analogy we can identify concerns the distinction Deleuze draws from Spinoza's texts between the order of extensive parts, or simple bodies which make up the extensive parts of modes, and modal essences identified as intensive parts. This corresponds closely to a distinction we find in *The Logic of Sense* between what Deleuze identifies as the order of causes and the order of effects, or between the order of corporeal things and ideal events.

We can also see similarities with *Difference and Repetition*, regarding the relationship between thought and receptivity. The capacity of the mind to be affected by encounters with other modes, in Deleuze's reconstruction of Spinoza, is identified as "capacity to be affected," i.e. to change in response to outside objects. This corresponds to the passive synthesis of habit as Deleuze describes it in his own theory of the faculties. The mind is affected by encounters with things outside of it, and these encounters affect the mind in such a way as to change its future receptivity to other things. These are the characteristics of contracting a habit in *Difference and Repetition*. This faculty of forming

unclear ideas by being affected is even identified by Deleuze, in reconstructing Spinoza, as “imagination,” using one of the same terms he uses to identify it in his own account. Furthermore, in both cases it is conceived as a passive receptivity and opposed to thought, which is conceived as involving the activity of the mind or subject. The analogous relationship between imagination and thought in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza and his own account suggests that we shouldn't be too far off base in applying something like the concept of a common notion to Deleuze's own thought and connecting it to the concept of action, although these ideas don't appear as explicitly in *Difference and Repetition* as they do in *Expressionism in Philosophy*.

Kant and the Action=X

In terms of the theory of the faculties presented in *Difference and Repetition*, the notion of activity first comes into play for Deleuze in connection with the third synthesis, or the faculty of thought.²¹ As we saw above, the exposition of the function of this synthesis relies on Deleuze's own interpretation of Kant. The interesting thing about thought, from this perspective, is that it embodies the possibility of self-affection by the thinker. Deleuze pursues this point by contrasting the meaning of thought, or the way thought determines being, in Descartes and Kant. In Descartes, the “I think” directly determines the “I am,” or the being that is the subject of thinking, in that “I am a thing that thinks” follows directly from “I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind.”²² In Kant, this feature of thought persists, but the relationship between the act of thinking and the existence of the thinker (between

21. For example, “while the passive ego becomes narcissistic, the activity must be thought” DR 110.

22. Descartes, *Meditations*, AT 25, 28.

determination and the undetermined, in Deleuze's words) gets more complex. It is still thinking as an activity of which I am the subject, which determines my existence, but not in the sense of the simple conclusion "I am a thing that thinks." Kant's separation of the mental faculties prevents my having a direct presentation of myself as an active, thinking subject. Because, Kant points out, "in us humans the understanding is not itself a faculty of intuitions," we can be conscious of the activity of thought only through its effect, of giving unity to our sensible intuitions. We have no direct access in experience to the thinking of the "I"; we only know that the I performs an act of synthesis on the impressions received by the passive, intuitive "self."²³

There are several syntheses, in Kant's account, between receptivity and cognition of objects, however, the one that is relevant to us here is the synthesis of recognition, which is necessary for thought as such to take place. Recognition is the act of the understanding by which all representations are determined to belong to a single consciousness. Consciousness must be a unity, Kant says, in order for there to be any cognition of objects. Thought, therefore, requires a transcendental apperception, that is, an *a priori*, necessary unity belonging to consciousness such that it can be capable of cognition. But such cognition is always a cognition of objects, for Kant, and therefore the transcendental subject or consciousness, unified through transcendental apperception, has a correlate in the object in general, or object=x. The object=x is the object to which no particular predicates apply, or to say it in another way, the object to which only the predicates which apply to all objects apply.²⁴ These general predicates which apply to all objects, in Kant's thought, are the categories of the understanding, which are like the rules

23. The use of the terms "I" and "Self" to distinguish the active faculty of the mind (or thought) from the receptive, passive faculties are Deleuze's, and I will try to adhere to them in a way that hopefully clarifies the difficult arguments at issue here.

24. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A103-110

that the understanding applies to all received representations such that they can fit the form of the object which is necessary for cognition. So for Kant, thought is, in its pure form, an act of the understanding which simultaneously determines the mind, or consciousness, as a unity (transcendental apperception) and relates it to some object, the form of which is circumscribed within the limits of the categories, or the predicates of the object=x.

According to Deleuze, however, interesting consequences follow from Kant's argument which Kant himself did not develop, with regard to the temporal character of apperception. "I think," in Kant, can only mean the inner sense of the effect of my own activity on myself. "I am a thinking thing," does not imply that I am a simple substance endowed with the property of "thinking." Rather, Kant shows that if I am aware of my own thinking, it can only be as the effect of the active "I," conceived as the subject and agent of thinking, on the passive "self," the faculty of intuition and sense. Therefore, the "I am" which goes with the "I think," is in fact a complex thing, a self which is passive and captures all the ways in which I am affected by anything, and an active I, which, relative to this self, is something else. Deleuze says that Kant's insight in fact corresponds to Rimbaud's famous poetic formula: "I is an other." Whatever is the spontaneous active force which is responsible for my thinking, it is something other than the passive self which is affected by its activity. Another way to put this, according to Deleuze, is that the I is "fractured by the pure and empty form of time."²⁵ The "pure and empty form of time," corresponds to the separation of the I, as cause, from the modification of the self, as effect. This temporal separation doesn't mean something like there being an amount of time, measurable by a clock, that necessarily separates every act of thought from the

25. DR 86.

effect it has on the passive self. If Kant “introduces time into thought,²⁶” this doesn't mean that he shows that thought takes a certain amount of time, but rather that every thought implies the form of time, the division into a before and after corresponding to the fracture between the I and the self.

Deleuze takes this up into his own analysis of thinking, saying that the form of time which becomes apparent through the separation of the I from the self in inner sense is the necessary form in which thinking takes place. He calls this the “empty form of time,” and says that it consists of a before and after, a past and future, which are separated by a “caesura,” or gap. Although this account of time is purely formal, Deleuze describes it as having significant structural features which are common to all things happening in time. Deleuze draws on an account of the narrative form of Sophoclean tragedy from Hölderlin in order to describe these features of the empty form of time, and refers to various narratives conforming to this structure to illustrate it. Hamlet and Oedipus figure as the major literary symbols for describing this form. In the case of both Oedipus and Hamlet, Deleuze says, following Hölderlin, the narrative is defined by the image of a single “formidable act,” also referred to by Deleuze as the “action=x” – Oedipus' killing of his father, Hamlet's killing of his uncle to avenge his father. This image of the formidable act represents the activity of thought on the receptive self. From the perspective of the passive and receptive self, the action by which the I affects the self in thought looks impossible, or “too big for me.²⁷” This image as a whole, the final synthesis of the mind through thought, determines the time of the story to be divided into three moments, however. The “before,” or the past, is the moment corresponding to the passive self, the part of the mind capable only of feeling, not of active thought. The second

26. DR 87.

27. DR 89.

moment is the caesura, or the “becoming equal to the action.” This represents the transition from passivity to activity. For the story of Hamlet, this corresponds to the sea voyage where Hamlet is absent from the action taking place on stage. How the transition from passivity to activity takes place is essentially hidden; that is, experience has no access to the process that makes the mind capable of activity. Finally, the third moment in the series of time corresponds to the active I. This is represented in the narratives by characters transformed into an active and capable force, like Hamlet in the final act. The I is completely transformed insofar as it is now capable of affecting the self, not merely of being affected through receptivity. In Deleuze's use of Hölderlin's description of the form of certain tragic narratives, this structure represents the time of thought, or the third synthesis in general. Every thought takes this temporal structure, he argues, dividing time at any point of action into a before and after, separated by a caesura.

Why does Deleuze call the structure symbolized by these dramatic forms the “empty form of time?” It is because this is the form in which everything which is in time is experienced for a being that thinks. Experience involves a kind of activity of thought insofar as there must be a determination of some kinds of forms in order for perception of objects to take place. But that act of thought must determine the self to the possibility of experience as “another,” from outside itself. This determination of the self by thought is what constitutes the possibility of the future. The activity of thought comes from the future insofar as it represents something added onto the accumulation of what is received in the passive self, which determines what is received as the content of a thought. This is a form which allows time to always keep unfolding further as thought affects the self again and again. It moves forward in a straight line, according to Deleuze, not coming around to itself to form a circle, or moving along in harmony with the circular motion of

nature. Deleuze also refers to this empty form of time as “time out of joint,” because it is not determined in accordance with the cardinal points of a circle, corresponding to the circular or periodic movement of the cosmos. On this point, Deleuze connects the empty form of time to the idea of the eternal return, as he interprets what Nietzsche means by this term. We'll discuss the eternal return in the next section and see how it relates to this kind of thought which takes place in a “time out of joint.”

First, however, we should try to specify clearly what our analysis of the empty form of time and the “action=x,” or the “formidable action,” to which Deleuze refers tell us about how he conceives of the metaphysics of action. If we take the notion of the action=x to be analogous to Kant's object=x, we can say that the action=x represents the universal form of any action, the transcendental conditions common to every action. No particular action *is* the action=x, just as there is no real object in general, but rather it is the form which any particular action must take in order to be an action. If this analogy holds, we can make several assertions about the theory of action Deleuze holds. First, action constitutes the form of time as a division between a passive, receptive past and an active, capable future, but with the two temporal sides of the subject united as aspects of a single agent. Individuals act only as selves already formed in a certain way by the passive syntheses of habit and memory, but action consists in a further and separate affection of the self by the I. However, the thought by which one affects oneself is never represented clearly in consciousness, per the paradox of inner sense. Self-affection and activity belong to the dimension of the future, while receptivity and passive synthesis belong essentially to the past. The analogy between the third synthesis of time and the Kantian transcendental synthesis of apperception also suggests that this general possibility of action is then ground of a unity of the mind, but an open unity which

continuously unfolds from the past into the future. Second, this analysis of Deleuze's Kantian inspiration brings to the foreground, as did the discussion of Spinoza, the essential connection Deleuze draws between action and thought. The fact that thought interiorizes the distinction between the active I and the passive self within the subject suggests that there can be no thinking that is not the exercise of a power of activity. As in Spinoza, the exercise of the faculty of thought is identified as “becoming-active,” or “becoming capable of the act.”

We can return to Deleuze's example concerning learning to swim in relation to Kant and the notion of the action= x . If, as suggested by the analysis of Spinoza's concepts, acting is possibly only by creating a general, differential rule in thought, it's nevertheless always the case that that rule is not present to consciousness when we act according to it. I don't represent the relationship between my bodily movements and those of the water to myself and calculate how I should therefore move my body at the present moment. I simply experience the instantiation of that rule in the present moment. This corresponds to Deleuze's “caesura” between the active I and the receptive self. The faculty of thought, as an active part of myself, determines the idea of my relation to the water that I swim in, but I experience, receptively, only the effect of that rule on myself, or the way it is incorporated in a particular moment in my swimming. This is the “crack” which separates the I from the self and which Deleuze argues is constitutive of action as a capacity for self-affection.

The interpretations of both Spinoza and Kant suggest that, for Deleuze, thinking is the way that we become capable of acting. I would put forward the hypothesis here that, for Deleuze, becoming active and becoming thoughtful, are the same thing, and that a capacity for thinking goes hand in hand with a capacity for acting. I'll return to this

suggestion after discussing the way in which Nietzsche's notion of the eternal return figures into the essence of action for Deleuze.

Nietzsche and the Eternal Return

The questions of Deleuze's relationship to Nietzsche and even of the relationship between his own positions and his interpretive suggestions regarding Nietzsche is a somewhat vexed one among commentators. Many interpreters cite Nietzsche as a major influence and come close to suggesting that we would be justified in considering any position Deleuze attributes to Nietzsche to be one that he holds himself.²⁸ On the other hand, some contend that drawing on Nietzschean concepts in interpreting Deleuze can be grossly misleading and suggest that eagerness to focus on Nietzschean themes in Deleuze has led to hasty and problematic misreadings.²⁹ I don't intend to settle this dispute in any comprehensive way, but I believe there is at least one concept adopted from Nietzsche, that of the eternal return, that is crucial to Deleuze's own philosophical project overall, and specifically important to consideration of his theories on action. Deleuze doesn't always speak about actions or agents when he speaks about the eternal return, but I'll argue that understanding how Deleuze interprets the eternal return is crucial to a proper understanding of his theory of action. I'll begin by sketching his understanding of eternal return on the basis of a close reading of specific textual passages, then step back to show how this concept fits into the framework regarding mind, thought, and activity that we've been developing thus far.

28. See Lyotard and Beardsworth, "Nietzsche and the Inhuman," 80: "[Deleuze and Guattari] are profoundly inspired by Nietzsche."

29. See Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*: "It is our contention that reading Deleuze with Kant is far more rewarding than reading him with Nietzsche, Spinoza, or Hume (164)," and "In truth, this exercise of accounting for the Image of thought on the basis of active and passive forces [as described in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*] is entirely suspect with respect to Deleuze's own project (221-2)."

Deleuze has always treated eternal return as one of Nietzsche's most important and most fundamentally original notions, and has consistently asserted that it is nearly always misunderstood.³⁰ Nevertheless, we find that the concept intervenes frequently at crucial and enigmatic points in Deleuze's exposition of his own thought, specifically in connection with the discussion of the faculty of thought, or the third synthesis, and the doctrine of ideas in *Difference and Repetition*. Before asking what this notion contributes to a Deleuzian theory of action, we must make sure we have correctly distinguished the correct interpretation of the concept from tempting but dangerous misreadings.

According to Deleuze's reading, Nietzsche's account of the eternal return is fundamentally opposed to anything that takes the eternal existence or identity of the subject of returning as prior to its returning. One way in which Deleuze expresses this is as an explanation of why Nietzsche insists that his understanding of eternal return is different from that of the ancient Greeks. Deleuze makes it clear that, as he understands Nietzsche, the eternal return is fundamentally opposed to the hypothesis that the passage of time in the cosmos is subordinated to a cycle by which the same events repeat themselves endlessly (such a cosmology as we seem to find in Empedocles, for example). He insists that “we misinterpret the expression 'eternal return' if we understand it as 'return of the same.’”³¹ Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return, according to Deleuze, proceeds from an argument against the possibility of there being any static state of the whole universe.³² If there were any state of the universe that were complete, that could be

30. I am not going to make any attempt here to evaluate the merit of Deleuze's understanding of the eternal return as an interpretive claim about Nietzsche. That is, I won't try to answer whether the views about the eternal return that Deleuze attributes to Nietzsche are the latter's “real views.” In part, I think that such an undertaking with regard to Nietzsche may actually be hopeless, but more importantly, as with the discussions of Kant and Spinoza, my goal is ultimately to get a grasp on a reasonably clear set of concepts and positions attributable to Deleuze so that we can evaluate the light that they shed on questions about action.

31. NP 48.

32. Ibid., 47.

characterized as a beginning or end, it would follow that there was no reason for change to begin. The same critique goes for the “cyclical hypothesis:” the beginning and end between which events in the universe vacillate are posited as possible complete, static states, but there can then be no principle to explain why things move from one to the other.

If eternal return does not mean the return of everything through the cyclical operation of the universe, however, what does it mean? Deleuze says it is Nietzsche's way of expressing a reversal in the order of priority between being and becoming. According to the cyclical hypothesis, or the incorrect interpretation of eternal return, becoming is ontologically dependent, defined as what takes place between two states of being that are independent of it. This conception explains change as what happens in the passage between two end states. But Nietzsche's eternal return, on the contrary, makes becoming the ontologically independent term, and says that being, or the Same, is dependent on the possibility of “returning” within this continual change. “Returning is the becoming-identical of becoming itself.”³³ This conception pictures the universe as fundamentally made up of pure differences, a place where things are constantly changing, but where those changes sometimes produce, as an effect, an identity between one point, one “being,” and another. The identity of an individual here is constituted by its returning within a world of constant change and becoming. An individual does not exist and then return – it is an individual, a being, only insofar as it returns. Eternal return thus conceives of becoming as primary and being as secondary, as the “being of becoming.”³⁴

Deleuze also connects the idea of the eternal return to his doctrine of chance and necessity, which he explicates according to what he calls the “divine game” or “ideal

33. DR 41.

34. Ibid.

game.³⁵” The idea of the divine game is that of a game whose rules do not preexist the playing of the game. Deleuze always pictures this game as playing at dice, drawing on Mallarmé and Nietzsche: the divine game is the one in which the roll of the dice determine both the move and the rules by which that move will be evaluated as a winning or losing one. It is opposed to ordinary, or “human,” games, in which the rules must be given in advance and are constitutive of the game, and in which the occurrence of a given outcome is exclusive of the others. There is only one divine game, Deleuze insists, because the differences in rules which are constitutive of different games, are themselves part of the play in the divine game. To quote Deleuze quoting Borges, then, the divine game is the maximum “intensification of chance.”³⁶

The divine game, like the eternal return, represents the primacy of becoming over being, then. The rules themselves are left up to chance in the divine game, but the throw of the dice does produce rules that then determine the distribution of beings accordingly. The play of the game itself creates the rules, so one cannot try to play in such a way that will maximize the chances of winning and minimize the chances of losing. It's impossible to foresee what the rules will define as the distribution of winning and losing plays. But we can say in advance that it will necessarily create rules which imply necessary connections between plays and outcomes relative to the created game. In subordinating being to becoming, Deleuze's conception of the divine game also subordinates necessity to chance: the rules determine necessary relations which are definitive of an idea, but the rules themselves are determined by chance. This changes everything from the perspective

35. Deleuze renames the “divine game (*le jeu divin*)” of *Difference and Repetition* as the “ideal game (*le jeu idéal*)” in *Logic of Sense*, although it is clear from the descriptions in the two texts that he is referring to the same concept. The latter text suggests that Deleuze wanted to do away with the implication that the divine game is the game played by God or the gods. “It is not enough to oppose ... a divine game to the human game (LS 59)”

36. DR 116.

of winning and losing, however. In the divine game, “the child-player can only win, all of chance being affirmed each time and for all times.”³⁷ Every cast of the dice in the divine game is a victory, since it creates something new as well as the rules by which it will be evaluated.

Deleuze identifies the idea of the divine game with the formal structure of the faculty of thought. “It is the reality of thought itself and the unconscious of pure thought.”³⁸ This suggests the way in which we can connect the concept of the eternal return to Deleuze's theory of the faculties and make the idea more concrete. If the serial arrangement of the faculties culminates in the faculty of thought, the analysis of the divine game suggests something about how thought functions in an encounter. The quasi-object of an encounter is opposed, in Deleuze, to an object of recognition. But thought functions to make something encountered into an object by determining an idea under which it can be conceived. The idea has a rule-like character that determines some relations among the properties of the object as necessary, but the act of thought that mediates the determination of that idea proceeds from a “roll of the dice,” what Deleuze sometimes calls an “aleatory point,” an unpredictable randomization before which the rules which will become constitutive of the idea cannot be foreseen. Thinking, therefore, proceeds by the creation of rules, but there are no meta-rules which determine the nature of a given idea in advance.

It still remains to address more precisely what the concepts of eternal return and the divine game have to do with action. Thought conceived of as a randomizing event that determines rules in an unforeseeable way does not obviously relate to the distinction between activity and passivity. But Deleuze insists that the eternal return is precisely the

37. Ibid.

38. LS 60.

notion of what makes the “selection” which is determinative of that distinction: “the eternal return produces becoming-active.”³⁹ How does eternal return differentiate what is active from what is passive? The answer has to do again with the idea that it represents the ontological priority of becoming over being: Deleuze's world is one in which beings are created or produced out of a constant flux and change by the fact of their returning. Eternal return selects activity because what returns is what has been created as a being with a determinate identity, a “same” created out of the different. The returning of something created through thought therefore testifies to the active power of that thought to create a new being which could not have been accounted for before the thought which generates it. Something passes the “test” of eternal return if it proves to be a relatively stable identity, a being, which can be distinguished from everything else. The production of a new being testifies to the active power of the act of thought that created it.

This can perhaps be illustrated by coming back to a geometrical example. Recall, from the discussion of Spinoza, the generation of the idea of the circle from that of the straight line. A circle can be defined by the movement of a straight line segment through all its possible positions within a two-dimensional plane, provided that we hold one endpoint of the line fixed. This is a genetic definition of a circle, in that it describes how the circle can be constructed or generated from concepts different from it (line segment, plane, motion). However, the idea of the circle which is created here bears the many geometrical properties that follow necessarily from something's being a circle. The idea of the circle persists and carries over into many other applications which could not have been deductively determined directly from the elements that were used to construct the circle. The “return” of the circle in its effectiveness in other contexts thus testifies to the

39. NP 71.

active force by which it was initially produced; the thought which produced the idea of a circle through providing the genetic definition was an active power to create something fundamentally novel. This is the selective operation of the eternal return: created concepts which lead to other creations and other applications of thought are those that return and testify to active forces, thoughts which happen only once and disappear without returning are designated as reactive, not productive or creative.

This exposition of the concept of eternal return that Deleuze adopts from Nietzsche helps us clarify another aspect of Deleuze's theory of action: the way in which it defines the productivity of action. Eternal return is the process which determines the existence of beings or individuals as products within generalized change or becoming. Therefore, it shows that, for Deleuze, the active character of something is determined by its results, its production of something which is capable of standing on its own as an individual. In connection with this, the notion of the divine game suggests that true action or activity requires the production of something genuinely unpredictable; Deleuze's theory of action seems opposed to any kind of preformism, whether teleological or causal. It remains to be seen whether, and in what way we can square this commitment with the concept of intention.

Let's recall the example of learning to swim once again in order to give some concrete purchase to the idea of action as governed by eternal return. Learning how to swim involves making the transition from passively floating, in which I am affected by motions in the water, and actively swimming, in which I move myself through the water by coordinating my body with its movements. I've suggested in the previous discussions that one makes this transition by positing a general differential rule for the relation between movements in my body and movements in the water. We can extend this

conception by adding on to it the ideas of the eternal return and the divine game. The rule that is posited to govern interaction between the waves and the body will not be guided itself by a more general rule. It will be guided by attempting to fit prior experiences of the way that the waves impact my body, but there will always be a significant degree of freedom, because any number of past cases underdetermines a possible rule to fit them all. Furthermore, nothing in my experience of interacting with the water passively forces me to interpret that situation as one in which I must figure out a way to relate my body to the water so that I can control my movement in it. I may pose the problem that explains this action to myself in different terms.

At the same time, as suggested by the notion of the eternal return, the rule that I create which allows me to swim will imply further connections to other ideas and other possibilities for action down the road that I can't currently foresee. Once I've figured out how to swim and the idea that I'm going to use to coordinate my swimming, new problems and corresponding potential actions open up to me. For example, I can now ask, given that I am capable of the act of swimming, how can I determine my bodily movements more specifically so as to swim as quickly as possible? Or how can I now coordinate moving my head and neck so that I can breath at an acceptable pace while swimming, in order to allow me to swim for a longer time uninterrupted? One can't even pose these problems to oneself before learning how to swim, except in a very abstract way. But achieving a new capacity makes it possible for the agent to conceive related problems and to further develop and specify his or her ideas in order to extend this capacity to other actions.

Habit versus Action

Now that we have analyzed the way that Deleuze takes up concepts and arguments from other thinkers in relation to the problem of action, we should try to relate this complex of concepts back to what we said about his own philosophy of mind in Chapter 1 and try to assess how action fits into that that system. The problem of the philosophy of action is usually approached as a question of distinguishing action from something else. Different theorists, of course, don't agree about what to call the relevant contrast class to actions, nor on the defining features that distinguish them. Given the account of Deleuze's theory of the faculties, and its relation to his comments relating to action, that we've adduced above, the contrast can be identified as the distinction between habit and action. Let's return to the analysis of habit given in the first chapter, which we can now compare with Deleuze's account of action in a way that will hopefully be illuminating.

Recall that the faculty of habit, according to Deleuze, is the capacity to be affected by stimulations or sensations in such a way that one comes to expect the continuation of a pattern. We form a habit when we hear a clock making a constant “tick-tock” sound and after hearing the “tock” follow the “tick” enough times, the sound of the “tick” automatically causes us to expect the sound of the “tock” to follow it. A habit, therefore, is formed in response to the way in which the environment affects the individual. A habit involves no spontaneous action by the individual on the environment, but is only a reaction by the individual to the environment's action upon itself. Habits may or may not involve bodily movement. For example, blinking when something approaches one's eye quickly would be an entirely habitual movement for Deleuze, though it clearly involves a movement of the body. On the other hand, a habit may be noticeable only through the

internally sensed feeling of expectation, as in the cause and effect examples familiar to us from Hume. We expect “tock” to follow “tick,” and can feel that expectation in some way, although it may not involve any movement of the body that could be detected by anyone.

Thus, although Deleuze identifies habit with passivity, we should be careful not to interpret this to mean that it cannot involve any movement; habit is identified as a passive synthesis because it involves being affected by the environment, but this way of being affected can involve a conditioned reaction on the environment, like automatic, unintentional blinking. The reason that habit is passive is rather because it is entirely dependent on external things in order to be formed. One contracts a habit only as a response to repetition in sensibility, as Deleuze says, only by contemplating something else, which is to say, by gathering together discontinuous moments of stimulation. So habit, though it can involve the formation of a patterned reaction to stimulation, is fundamentally receptivity for Deleuze. We could say that habit-formation is the way that we initially receive the external world.

Although a habit is the constitution of a stable, predictable response to a given stimulus, Deleuze is very clear that this does not constitute action. It cannot be an action because habit, by definition, in Deleuze's case, does not include reflection on the connection between stimulus and response. On the other hand, action for Deleuze, as I've tried to argue above, necessarily involves thought, and thought takes place through the construction of rules. In fact, I think the contrast between habit and action in Deleuze can most clearly be formulated in terms of rules.⁴⁰ A habit involves no reference to a rule connecting the stimulus and the response, or the connection between the different

40. See Hughes, *Reader's Guide*, 143-5 for a brief but insightful comment on the difference in the conception of rules and regularity between Deleuze's notion of Ideas and Kant's concepts of the understanding.

elements that are contracted into a given case. I don't form the habit of drinking milk with my chocolate chip cookies by coming up with a reason that the two items go together, and then remembering that rule and following it to milk every time that I eat a cookie. If I develop a habit of eating them together, it's simply because repeatedly pairing the two has caused me to form an expectation that I will drink milk every time I have a cookie, possibly to the point that I sense the absence of milk if I eat a cookie without it.

On the other hand, an action, as I've tried to argue above, necessarily involves the construction, through thought, of a common notion linking two things. The construction of common notions in thought is not itself governed by rules, but rather takes the form of a divine game, in which the playing itself bears on the rules by which that play is understood. Although thought isn't constrained by pre-existing rules, however, the exercise of thought proceeds by the construction of rules, and objects produced through thought are subject to the law of the eternal return because thought creates rules. These rules take the form of a genetic definition which conceives the object in such a way that its essential properties necessarily follow from its cause. Proceeding by means of the construction of such a rule in thought is what distinguishes habit from action for Deleuze.

Let's revisit the example of the swimmer once more in the context of the habit/action distinction. One may be able to float in the water without knowing how to swim, and some habits formed from prior exposure to water and waves may come into play when that takes place. But the difference between floating and swimming consists in thinking about a rule to govern the relations between one's own bodily movements and the movements of the waves. This rule will not be present to consciousness as a guide to action, per the analysis of the action= x and the empty form of time, but it will function like a differential equation which describes the way that the motions of one's body should

be dynamically put into relation with the motions of the waves. Such a rule is based on one's remembered interactions with bodies of water in the past, and should be constructed to correspond to them, but those past experiences can never be enough data to determine one specific rule as the correct one to the exclusion of other possible rules. Thought constructs a single rule to guide action from a space that previously has an infinite number of possibilities. However, in accordance with the concept of the divine game and the eternal return, that choice of a rule or principle comes to constitute what the action of "swimming" is after the fact. One doesn't say that in order to swim I must follow such and such a rule, but movement of one's body in accordance with such a principle of dynamic interaction with the waves comes to constitute swimming. The positing of a general differential rule directing the movement of the whole body, in any potential relation in which one might find oneself to the movement of the water, is what distinguishes swimming as an action from floating or being affected by the movement of the water passively. We can restate, then, that for Deleuze, habit and action are distinguished by the absence or presence of a rule constructed by the thinking agent which describes the reciprocal relations between the body of the agent and some external body. Habit can create an organic expectation in the body for the continuation of a pattern from case to case, but it doesn't involve the positing of a rule which determines what things belong to a particular action and attempts to capture all of them.

Deleuze's Theory of Action

In this chapter, we've considered three themes in Deleuze's philosophy that originate in his interpretations of earlier thinkers in order to try to extract a theory of action, as Deleuze's comments on that subject in his own name are somewhat sparse.

We've found that in his treatments of Spinoza, Kant, and Nietzsche's concepts there have been several points of overlap, while at the same time it seems like what is drawn from each source brings something unique to the account. For similarities, we find that action is closely connected to thought in Deleuze's treatment of each thinker. For Spinoza, coming into possession of one's power of action is identical with exercising one's capacity for thought. Thinking, as becoming-active, proceeds by way of grasping a certain kind of ideas, called "common notions," which render action possible. But these common notions, in their turn, are not arrived at through pure rational speculation, but in the context of practical problems encountered by the thinker, tying thought to the resolution of these problems in activity. In Kant, an individual's capacity for action is revealed only through thought, or the effect that the spontaneously active I has on the passive and receptive self. According to Deleuze, the splitting of the subject in this way is constitutive simultaneously of the form of activity and the form of thought. Finally, for Nietzsche, Deleuze ascribes the process of becoming-active to the eternal return, and says the eternal return functions like a divine game for thought. The divine game can only be played in thought, Deleuze says, but at the same time it makes all the difference between an active individual and a passive or reactive force lacking its own identity.

In interpreting Nietzsche, Kant, and Spinoza, Deleuze ascribes to each of them a deep connection between thought and action. But what does each interpretation bring to the table individually, such that we can achieve a more complete picture by considering the three together? The unique aspect of the Spinozist source of inspiration on Deleuze is the idea that the "common notion," as the idea of something had *in common* between two things, is the means by which an individual makes the passage from purely passive to active. If we combine this with what we see from the study of Nietzsche, we may also be

able to give a different and deeper sense to common notions. Recall that one function of the eternal return is as a secondary process by which individuals are identified as the same in a world that is characterized by pure difference or constant change. If the common notion links two things together as the thing that they have in common, the Nietzschean inflection seems to give this concept a more creative and constitutive function than it might appear on the standard substance monism reading of Spinoza. Thought doesn't simply reflect the divisions between modes of extension as they are in themselves, but actively creates the identifications between them. An act of thought truly is active and creative if its identification of the common notion is what actually makes it the case that there can be a single thing identified across different instances in continual change, as the eternal return suggests. The thought of the common notion, then, isn't simply picking out antecedently existing identical structures between things, but in fact making it possible to identify different things in the first place by creating an idea of what they share. Deleuze's common notion, then, is not an identification of a pre-existing similarity between my own body and that of some other thing, but an idea of the dynamic, differential rule by which my body and an external body are able to relate to one another.

From the interpretation of Kant we get the idea that, for Deleuze, action is something that makes a break between past and future, dividing the two into fundamentally different kinds of times. This formal structure of time is derived from the nature of thought as the possibility of an active faculty. Combining this with the concepts drawn from Spinoza and Nietzsche, we can perhaps give a new sense to what it means that time is divided by the form of the image of an action. If thought consists in the construction of a common notion that is subject to eternal return, then it's the case that

thinking creates some thing, the existence of which divides the past from the future. Creation of a common notion allows for the identification of an object across different points in change, an identification that couldn't be made before. Therefore, this creation separates a past without such an object from the future in which it exists necessarily. Furthermore, Deleuze's interpretation of Kant makes a distinction between the active I and the passive self, which means that the active faculty of thought that creates the common notion enabling action is not itself directly experienced by the subject/agent. The mind only experiences its own activity through the effect of that action on the passive, receptive self. The common notion is unconscious, but completes the passive self and renders the whole subject capable of an action.

This combination of Kant and Nietzsche could also provide an interesting opening for considering the comparison between Kant and Deleuze on the question of the legislative character of action. As is well known, Kant suggests that one feature of action is that it carries with it a maxim that can potentially be universalized in accordance with the general form of law. There might be a way in which Deleuze agrees about the legislative nature of action, but under a different conception of law, one more in concert with the model of the divine game.⁴¹ If eternal return means the creation of an idea which will endure into the future and from which further connections to other ideas will necessarily follow, there is a sense in which every action for Deleuze creates law as well. However, this would be a creation not guided by the form of universality implied in the Kantian categorical imperative, because for Deleuze, such a meta-rule governing the possible space of laws does not exist. Hence Deleuze's tendency sometimes to oppose the idea of the divine game to a tribunal or a court. Some commentators on Deleuze have

41. In NP 91-3 Deleuze contrasts Nietzsche's idea of philosophy as active law-giving, which we can identify with the divine game, with that of Kant, in which the legislative power of thought depends on subjection to universal reason.

also suggested that his work could have deep significance for the philosophy of law, but with a concept more in line with the common law tradition than with Kantian-style civil jurisprudence. The idea that action is a divine game following the model of the eternal return suggests a type of legal reasoning that proceeds more from case to case than from statute to application. Each action implies the construction of certain rules that make sense of that action and that have implications for future cases, but those rules affect one another only locally, at places where a specific analogy between cases exists. There is no categorical imperative that can be generated as the meta-rule for all possible actions. This conception of legislation under the form of eternal return, as opposed to the form of universal or natural law, could help explicate Deleuze's potential contributions on this subject.⁴²

As we have seen, although Deleuze at no point sets out to give a clear and complete account of the concept of action as it functions in his philosophical system, through a close reading of some of the concepts surrounding action that he borrows from previous thinkers, we can sketch out an account of action reasonably attributable to him. Let's step back to the treatment of what I called Deleuze's "philosophy of mind" from Chapter 1 and see how the analysis of action developed here fits into it. We saw in the first chapter that Deleuze conceives of the mind as emerging from the interaction among three faculties, which he calls habit or imagination, memory, and thought. Deleuze's methodology for describing the faculties stems from his critique of the dogmatic image of thought, which posits that all cognition is fundamentally recognition and that if there are a plurality of mental faculties, they are naturally or ordinarily exercised by being trained

42. Alexandre Lefebvre ably describes Deleuze's concept of jurisprudence as an ongoing process of creating new legal concepts and interpretations to connect received legal history to new cases, and he opposes this to a Kantian model of law as embodied in the abstract model of *a priori* judgment. For an example, see Lefebvre, *Image of Law*, 83-6.

on the same objects as one another. Deleuze calls this the model of common sense, and says that there's no reason to suppose that the mind works only in this way. In fact, he argues, they must operate independently if we are to account for the production of new experiences in the mind.

Deleuze proceeds to describe the system of the faculties, and an idea from Kant in defining them each as a capacity to synthesize a certain kind of mental content. He defines habit and memory as passive syntheses, which is to say that they are not acts attributable to the mind as a subject. I argue, however, that although Deleuze doesn't make this explicit, he conceives of thought not as passive, but instead as being the faculty which is attributable to a unified individual. Although he doesn't thematize it as a philosophy of action, the collection of concepts surrounding Deleuze's analysis of the synthesis of thought show that the concept of thought provides Deleuze with his distinction between things done by an given individual and things that happen to that individual. Specifically, several notions give us insight into how thought makes action possibly in Deleuze's theory. First, thought proceeds by the construction of common notions which relate the motions of two bodies to one another, as Deleuze argues in his interpretation of Spinoza. However, on Deleuze's conception of common notions, they are not identical structures between two bodies, but rather differential equations, or differential relations, describing the way that changes in the two bodies over time relate to one another. Second, thoughts, and correspondingly actions, affect the agent in the form of the "empty form of time," which is to say that the principle of agency, or the active I, is not represented directly to the agent's consciousness, but only appears through the medium of its effect on the passive self. This means that actions take place in a time that has two different moments, the moment of the thought itself, and the moment of its

effect on the agent. Finally, thoughts and actions are subject to the form of the eternal return, which means, for Deleuze, that they correspond to the model of the divine game. True actions don't follow rules, but instead constitute the rules by which they are interpreted, which then have further, unforeseeable implications on the possibilities for actions by that agent in the future. To return to the model of the three faculties, then, Deleuze claims that thought traces out a section from the contents of the second synthesis and posits a general rule covering the way that the self related to its environment in this set of past cases. This is the common notion which then serves as a principle of extrapolation for the future, thus making it possible for the agent to act in ways determined by this rule in the future. This synthesis of active thought also completes the process of learning that I've described as the completion of the series of syntheses in Deleuze's theory of the mind. In positing a rule or common notion through thought, the mind constitutes a category for future perceptions of objects at the same time that it constitutes future possibilities for its own action.

In this chapter, I've attempted to define a concept drawing on Deleuze's writing to which I want to assign the term "action." In doing so, my goal has not always been to determine the way that Deleuze himself always uses the words "action" or "act." For example, in a contrasting usage, Deleuze sometimes uses the terms "action" and "passion" together to refer to the material order of causes and effects, as in *The Logic of Sense*. I suspect this inconsistent usage is owing to the fact that "action" and its cognate words are terms that are frequently used in many ways in everyday discourse, and Deleuze uses the term in a more or less everyday fashion because he doesn't take it up as an explicit philosophical problem, nor utilize it as a technical concept. My goal has been to show that, although he doesn't himself do so, Deleuze's philosophy contains theses and

concepts around which a “philosophy of action,” can be constructed which engages the same, broadly speaking, philosophical problem as that addressed by analytic philosophers of the last 50 years to whom that subject is often ascribed (“philosophy of action”). From a Deleuzian framework of concepts, the definition of action that I've attempted to draw out distinguishes thoughtful action or activity from thoughtless, reactive habit or behavior. Action, in this sense, always involves thought as an effort to respond to a particular problem by constructing rules that define the essence of a particular concept or idea, as a concept or idea of the situation in which one acts. Furthermore, on this Deleuzian theory, actions are always subject to the law of eternal return because any determination of an idea implies the possibility of further ideal connections that will present themselves in relation to that concept in other contexts.

This concept of action will not, of course, correspond extensionally to that picked out by the definitions given by other philosophers of action. For example, Harry Frankfurt draws the line around action by defining as an action anything which is under the control of the agent when the agent performs it. This notion of control doesn't divide the conceptual space of bodily movements in the same way as the Deleuzian theory, since presumably an agent could be in control of his or her movements even when performing them simply in a habitual way. Thus, the Deleuzian theory of action presented here is not meant necessarily to function as an answer to the question “what is action?” that competes directly with the answers suggested by other philosophers of action, in the sense that they offer different and mutually exclusive analyses of the same concept. Nor is it meant to provide a detailed and rigorous account of what ordinary people mean when they refer to action, in the tradition of linguistic or conceptual analysis. The goal of explicating the Deleuzian account of action is, rather, to shed light on the way that one

concept (I think a significant one) functions in a broader system of philosophical concepts (that of Gilles Deleuze), and by elucidating that concept to make it possible for it to be applied fruitfully and clearly in other contexts. In the next two chapters, I hope to show that with this concept of action worked out, it can be extended usefully into other contexts, particularly in social theory and political philosophy.

3. Multiplicities and the Agency of Social Groups

Having attempted to lay out as clearly as possible in Chapter 3 the conception of action that Deleuze works with, I now want to turn to some of the implications of that conception for social theory. The primary claim that I want to put forward is that certain organized social groups are individual agents and that their actions do not need to be reducible to the actions of their members. To argue this point, I will draw on Deleuze's conception of mentality and agency, as presented in the first two chapters, as well as another metaphysical point from Deleuze, having to do with the concept of multiplicity. First, however, I think it's necessary to attempt to clear and straighten some terminological space surrounding the issue of group action.

Two Types of Individualism

In the debate about the metaphysical status of group agents, I believe a good deal of resistance to the proposition that social groups can really be the subjects of action as such derives from an unfortunate terminological circumstance. The terminology in question concerns the words "individual" and "individualism," and the contrast terms to individual, such as "group" or "collective." These terms have different senses depending on whether we take them in a logical or metaphysical usage or a sociological usage. In both lexicons, "individual" and "group" are opposed to one another, but on different grounds and with different presuppositions. According to the logical usage of the term, an individual is simply any single thing, whether thought of as an Aristotelian individual substance, a Leibnizian monad, or a bearer of identity across different possible worlds, following David Lewis and Saul Kripke. An individual usually answers to a definite

description or a proper name. A group, in these terms, would be a collection of several individuals, and individuals could be grouped in different ways according to any number of shared properties.

In the logical usage of the terms, it's important to note that "individual" (as an adjective) isn't synonymous with "simple." Individuals can have many parts without this jeopardizing their individuality in any way. Moreover, the parts of individuals are themselves often individuals. If Fido the dog is an individual, Fido's left front paw is also an individual, although it makes up only one part of Fido. The individuality of the paw doesn't compromise the individuality of Fido, nor vice versa. Groups, in these logical terms, don't, properly speaking, have parts, but rather have members.¹ A member of a group is an individual that belongs to that group, like Fido would be a member of the group "dogs." Fido's left front paw is not a member of Fido, although it would be a member of the group "Fido's paws." So groups have several individuals as members, whereas individuals can have other individuals as parts.

If we turn to the way "individual" and "group" (as well as "collective") are used in social theory, however, we see quite a different distribution of terms. Most importantly, if sociology is the study of human beings in society, "individual" is almost always used to refer to single human beings. Anything of which multiple people are parts or members, is then referred to as a collective or a group. Thus, everything from nation-states, ethnic groups, and economic classes, through firms, corporations and civic groups like churches, clubs, or political parties can be called a group in social science. A group is anything made up of, in any way, several individual people. "Individualism" in the social sciences

1. I mean for this distinction to be as close as possible to the way these words are used in modern English, while keeping them distinct. Of course, there is an older sense of the word "member" (in Hobbes, for example) according to which it more or less means what I mean by "part." But I think the way that I'm distinguishing the two terms here tracks a distinction that comes fairly easily to philosophers today.

and social theory, therefore comes to signify any theoretical perspective that takes single human beings as the metaphysically primary unit and describes other social phenomena in terms of the combinations of individual people. This is opposed (especially by its proponents) to “collectivism,” as any framework which posits social forces which are not reducible to interactions among individual human beings.

It is crucial to notice, however, that this sociological usage of the term individual is much more restrictive than the logical usage. No doubt individual human beings are individuals in the logical sense, but individualism in sociology asserts that they are the only things properly called individuals. This precludes the possibility of different individuals at different scales, and of individuals being parts of other individuals, as is permitted by the way the term is used in the logical sense. If “individual” refers only to single human beings, then nothing made up of several human beings can be an individual, and it must therefore be a collective. There is nothing inherently wrong with using the terms in either of these ways, but we need to be careful to avoid equivocation, especially in cases where it could lead us to draw hasty conclusions.

One of my reasons for distinguishing these terms carefully is to avoid an equivocation that I think underlies an (often implicit) objection to realism about collective agency. The objection suggests, intuitively to many people, that since individual human beings clearly can be agents, collectives, which are made up of individual human beings, must not really be agents, but must be so in some kind of derived or metaphorical way. I think the argument against realism would go something like this:

1. Only individuals can be agents.
2. No groups are individuals.

3. Therefore, no groups are agents.

Obviously the argument is valid, so if we keep to the correct interpretation of the terms and the premises are true, then realism about collective agency would seem to be in hot water. However, my contention is that on the logical interpretation the argument is sound, but uninteresting, whereas on the sociological interpretation, the argument is unsound because (1) is false.

Let's take the logical interpretation first. Clearly (2) is true. In both lexicons the terms "group" and "individual" are supposed to be exclusive of one another, such that something is either a group or an individual, but not both. On this interpretation it seems that (1) is pretty likely to be true as well. For something to be an agent, it has to display a substantial degree of unity, likely a sufficient degree of unity to justify characterizing it as an individual. So in the logical interpretation of the terms, the conclusion is pretty clearly well-supported. Nothing that is, logically speaking, a group can be an agent. However, this just means that things that are merely collections of several individuals cannot be single agents. It doesn't follow from this that things like states, corporations, civic organizations and other groups in the sociological sense are not agents, because it isn't clear whether they should be logically classified as groups rather than as single individuals themselves.

Now if we turn to the interpretation of the argument in which we take all of the terms to be used in the sociological sense, I think we'll see that (1) is much more questionable. Sociologically, an individual refers to a single human being, but why should we assume that a single person is the only kind of individual that can be an agent? The kind of unity required to be an agent certainly rules out considering something that doesn't qualify as a logical individual as an agent, but sociological groups might also

exhibit the right kind of unity. A corporation or a nation-state is unified enough for us to ascribe a large number of individual predicates to it in ordinary language, including terms that make it the single subject of actions or other intentional states.² A good deal needs to be said about the nature of agency before we can assess whether there are grounds to assert that only sociological individuals can be agents.

To restate and clarify, then, I don't want to dispute that logical individuality is a necessary condition for something to be an agent. The point that I want to raise is that it doesn't follow from this that only individual human beings can be agents, and that therefore groups or collectives made up of several human beings can not. In the social sciences, it's clearly often intuitive and methodologically reasonable to draw a line between single people and things involving a group of more than one person. However, having individual human beings as parts shouldn't prevent sociological groups from being thought of as logical individuals – individuals can clearly have other individuals as parts, like Fido's left front paw is a part of Fido. Sociological groups can clearly, sometimes at least, be logical individuals, so what is up for dispute is whether they can be agents or not. The soundness of the logical argument against group agency shouldn't have any bearing on the conclusion about group agents in the sociological sense, because many of them are, logically speaking, individuals rather than groups.

To avoid equivocation in what follows (and hopefully avoid torturing listeners with repeated qualifications of “logically” vs. “sociologically” as well), I want to reserve the term “individual” for individuals in the logical sense, and refer to individuals in the sociological sense by the phrases “human individual” or “individual human being.”

2. We could consider the case of non-human animals as a clear counterexample to (1) under the sociological interpretation as well, insofar as “individual” refers usually only to human individuals. However, if we expanded the concept somewhat to encompass all single organisms, there would still be an interesting dispute over whether (1) is true. My contention, that it is far from obvious that sociological groups cannot be (logically) individual agents, would still hold.

Similarly, I'll reserve "group" and "collective" alone for the logical sense of something that is merely a collection of individuals without the unity of being an individual itself, and I'll refer to sociological groups as "human collectives," "social groups," or some similar term which emphasizes that they are only groups relative to the baseline of human individuals. This terminology still has the unfortunate effect of suggesting that human groups are a type of logical groups, which I want to deny in many cases. However, no preferable common term exists, and I do not want to completely sacrifice readability and the possibility of connection with sociological debates by inventing or borrowing a completely foreign term. When possible, I'll use more specific terms like "firm," "corporation," "organization," etc. for types of human collectives to avoid the implication that these things are merely groups and not individuals.

Before moving on, I think it will be fruitful to briefly apply these reflections to the question of the famous "methodological individualism" of the social sciences. Methodological individualism refers to the foundational supposition that the explanation of a phenomenon in the social sciences must ultimately amount to explaining it in terms of the actions of individuals. The concept is usually ascribed to Max Weber as its source, although he didn't use the term himself. It also has a long provenance in economics, where it figures importantly in debates about the relationship between macroeconomics and microeconomics. I want to focus on the idea as it appears in Weber's thought, because I think distinguishing between the logical sense of "individual" and the sociological notion of human individuals can help us clarify what follows from this principle and what doesn't.

In the beginning of his systematic outline of social science, *Economy and Society*, Weber argues for methodological individualism on the basis of his interpretive method of

sociology. According to Weber, sociology is characterized by a method of interpretive explanation, which distinguishes it from, for example, the natural sciences. The goal of sociological explanations is to interpret social actions and social phenomena in terms in which they are subjectively meaningful. That is, the notion of a subjective, internal perspective on behaviors is a crucial, ineliminable element of social science. Social scientists should not seek to replace this with mere descriptions of statistical regularity. This commitment to the method of interpretation is connected, for Weber, to the idea that the object of sociological understanding is social action, as opposed to merely the statistical laws describing the incidence of social phenomena. Social action is inherently potentially subjectively understandable, and therefore social science should hew to the interpretive method.

Weber then draws his commitment to individualism from his commitment to the method of interpretation or subjective understanding. The idea is that individuals are the only entities to whom the phenomena in question can be subjectively meaningful, and that therefore sociology must take the individual as an irreducibly basic level of analysis. Breaking down an individual further, Weber says, whether into physiological or psychological elements, actually hinders the sociologist's attempts to give a subjectively meaningful explanation. Given the relationship between subjective understanding and action that Weber draws, we can characterize his position as claiming that individuals must be taken as irreducible and primary units of sociological understanding because only individuals are agents.

If we take Weber's argument in the logical sense of the terms, it is close to the logical interpretation of the argument given above. Only individuals can be agents, and therefore we should not try to eliminate individuals from our explanatory scheme if we

want to have a subjective understanding of action. Clearly Weber is right to suggest that populations or aggregates of cells or of unconscious psychic elements can't be agents and therefore can't be the subjects of interpretation. As such, they don't possess the individual unity which is necessary to interpret something as a subject of action. Weber, however, takes the argument to show that only human individuals can be the basic units of sociological explanation, claiming that "action in the sense of subjectively understandable orientation of behavior exists only as the behavior of one or more individual human beings."³ He claims directly that, although in certain other fields of inquiry it may sometimes be necessary to treat social collectives as individual units, for the purpose of social science such collectives "must be treated as solely the resultants and modes of organization of the particular acts of individual persons."⁴

If we explicitly separate the logical sense of "individual" from the sociological notion of the "individual human being," we can see that there is nothing in Weber's argument to support the claim that only human individuals are the ultimate subject of sociological study, other than the bare intuition that only human individuals are agents. Weber is correct that we can't eliminate individual agents in favor of statistical processes occurring in populations of neurons, or of the interplay of anonymous psychological forces if we want to achieve a subjectively meaningful interpretation of social phenomena and social action. Describing statistical regularities among the members of a neurological or psychological aggregate will give us no access to the kind of internal psychological meaning involved in action. However, some groups of human beings can be and often are treated as individual agents in their own right, providing us with a subjective understanding that does not require us to eliminate these individuals in favor of analysis

3. Weber, *Economy and Society*, 13.

4. *Ibid.*

into smaller ones. Weber's method in fact suggests that we might lose something by attempting to eliminate the organizational level of subjective meaning in favor of analysis in terms of the subjective meanings available to the individual human beings that form a corporation, civic organization, or church. There may in fact be interpretations of events relevant to the situation in which a corporation finds itself with its own interests and internal structures that would allow us to understand the meaning that an action has for the group, taken as an individual agent, which it does not have for any of its individual human members.

Apart from some argument to show that collections of human beings cannot be individual agents, the dictates of methodological individualism do not seem to require eliminating talk about the motives and beliefs of groups of human beings, Weber's own interpretation of the doctrine notwithstanding. Granted, many people believe that human collectives cannot be individual agents for reasons other than the requirement that an agent exhibit logical individuality. My goal in this chapter will be to argue that, on the Deleuzian framework I have been developing, some groups of human beings are really individual agents. This argument will make use of the theory of mind and the theory of action adduced in Chapters 1 and 2 and attempt to show that groups of human beings can exhibit those features in the same way that individual human beings can. In order to do so, however, we'll first need to specify to a greater degree the concept of individuality in Deleuze's work beyond our somewhat general reflections here on the logical notion of individuality. This will proceed by means of a discussion of a concept very closely related to individuality in Deleuze, and one more commonly associated with thought, the concept of multiplicity.

Deleuze's Theory of Multiplicities

The notion of multiplicities is a main theme running throughout Deleuze's work from beginning to end. In discussions of Deleuze's philosophy, it can sometimes serve as a slogan to endorse or dismiss his thought without a thorough engagement with it.

Deleuze does use the notion of multiplicity in a way that distinguishes his ontology from other philosophers, however, and understanding his use of the term will help us to see much more clearly how to approach the issue of agency and group agency from a Deleuzian perspective.

Deleuze makes clear that his intention in introducing the idea of multiplicity is to introduce a way of thinking of individual substances that is distinct from earlier metaphysical systems, especially that of Hegel: “the utmost importance must be attached to the substantive form: multiplicity must not designate a combination of the many and the one, but rather an organisation belonging to the many as such, which has no need whatsoever of unity in order to form a system.”⁵ Multiplicity is the fundamental ontological category for Deleuze, prior to oneness and multiple-ness themselves, which he considers to be unduly abstract. We can see already, perhaps, the affinity of this notion with the logical individuality that we are seeking to define in order to clarify the question of what types of entities can exhibit agency. But we need to briefly follow the Deleuzian notion of multiplicity through its historical antecedents in order to get clear on what it means in relation to the individual, and how exactly it is supposed to replace the opposed concepts of one and many.

Deleuze credits the 19th-Century mathematician Bernhard Riemann with first using the notion of multiplicity in a way similar to the way Deleuze himself wants to use

5. DR 182.

it.⁶ In his *Habilitationschrift* lecture, delivered in 1854 and published in 1868, Riemann uses the concept of a multiplicity as a more general notion than that of space to separate out the conceptual from the empirical elements of the foundations of geometry. The relationship Riemann draws between space and the general concept of a multiplicity need not concern us here. What does concern us, because of Deleuze's appropriation of this method, is the way in which Riemann conceives of multiplicities and the method he uses for dividing them into different types. Riemann starts with the conception of multiplicity as merely any “general notion which admits of different specifications.”⁷ Riemann speaks here as if anything that contains distinguishable, or even potentially distinguishable, parts can be said to be a multiplicity. What matters is not so much the general notion, however – Riemann seems to take it that we can treat just about any concept as a multiplicity – but the way that multiplicities are divided into different types. What will be crucial to Deleuze is that they are divided according to differences in their internal relations, difference in the types of relations which specifications within a given multiplicity bear to one another.

Riemann distinguishes “discrete” from “continuous” multiplicities according to whether “there exists among these specializations a continuous path from one to another or not.”⁸ The specifications within a continuous multiplicity are called “points,” and those within a discrete multiplicity are called “elements.” We might think of three-dimensional space as a paradigm example of a continuous multiplicity: from any point in space we

6. Throughout my discussion of Riemann and throughout this chapter, I'll use the term “multiplicity” as it is almost always used to translate “*multiplicité*” in Deleuze into English. The term in German, as it appears in Riemann, Husserl, and others is “*mannigfaltigkeit*,” and it is more often translated directly into English as “manifold” or “manifoldness.” It is important to recognize that this is the same term Deleuze is referring to when he discusses Riemann's or Husserl's treatment of multiplicities.

7. Riemann, *Hypotheses*, 2.

8. *Ibid.*

can draw a continuous line to any other point. However, Riemann also gives color as an example, suggesting that we can move on a continuous path of variation in shade, hue, and tint from any color to any other. For the elements of a discrete multiplicity, however, we cannot move continuously from one to another. The elements are distinct without a continuous path from any one to the others. Riemann suggests that concepts which are discrete multiplicities are perhaps so common that for any two things there is some discrete multiplicity of which they are elements. We can describe, for example, the set of all cats as a discrete multiplicity, because there is no way to pass through continuous variation from one individual cat to another one. For that to be the case, there would have to be an infinite number of cats, but clearly any two cats are different from one another in a number of ways that prevents continuously moving from one to the other. Riemann goes on to derive a few other properties of each of these types of multiplicity, but what is crucial for Deleuze's inheritance of the concept is the means by which the types are distinguished from one another. The distinction between continuous and discrete multiplicities in Riemann is made by making a distinction between internal relations between parts in each one. The difference between the two kinds consists in what relations the specifications of a given multiplicity bear to one another: can they be connected continuously or not?

Deleuze won't put a great deal of weight on the difference between discrete and continuous multiplicities as such, but what is crucial to him is the way that the division into types takes place. Essential to Deleuze's concept of multiplicity is the fact that they can be classified according to internal relations, relations that their parts bear to one another. What matters to Deleuze about this procedure is that the classification of different multiplicities takes place solely on the basis of internal factors, rather than

according to any scheme outside the multiplicities in question. They are not classified according to their appearance to an outside observer, their resemblance to other multiplicities, or any other external features, but only by the relations that their own parts bear to one another. We can see here the same idea that was at work in Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza's metaphysics, although he doesn't use the term multiplicity there. Relations among parts of a given multiplicity correspond to Spinoza's essences, the structure of internal parts that make an individual thing what it is. Crucial to Deleuze's conception of multiplicities, then, is that they are distinguished or classified according to internal relations: this is what he means by saying that multiplicity refers to "an organization belonging to the many as such." A multiplicity is never a pure and simple unity, which would be homogeneous throughout, nor is it just multiple things thrown together, because the internal relations among its parts or elements unify the multiplicity and make it not a mere collection. The parts of a multiplicity bear relations to one another, and the nature of those relations corresponds to the kind of multiplicity it is.

Deleuze sometimes calls this structure or organization according to which multiplicities are distinguished "internal difference," especially when discussing Bergson. Indeed, Bergson is the next important ancestor of Deleuze's theory of multiplicities, and he follows the way that Bergson distinguishes discrete from continuous multiplicities much more closely. The Bergsonian typology of multiplicity, Deleuze says, divides discrete from continuous not according to the possibility of continuous passage from one specification to another, but according to the types of divisions of which the multiplicity is capable. For Bergson, the essential characteristic of a continuous multiplicity is that if it is divided it changes in kind and in quality, whereas the parts of a discrete multiplicity remain the same, and remain of the same kind as the whole, when they are divided and

separated from one another. It may perhaps be confusing to use the terms “discrete” and “continuous” to identify Bergson's types of multiplicity, as his paradigmatic example of a discontinuous multiplicity, from his early book *Time and Free Will*, is that of space or objects in space, which is one of the multiplicities that Riemann names as continuous. Bergson's point in using space as an illustration of this type, however, is that the parts of space and the spatial parts of objects are homogeneous to one another and to the whole. A foot, for example, is composed of twelve inches, and each of those inches, taken by itself, is of the same type as the whole and of the same type as the other inches. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson opposes to this type of multiplicity his reflections on the phenomenology of time or duration, in which he says that the temporal moments of a particular experience are fused together in such a way that separating them out from one another changes the nature of each piece from what it was as part of the whole. Bergson discusses a melody as an example of this kind of multiplicity. Each note can be isolated from the musical theme, but taken by itself it no longer forms a melody, nor is alone what it was as part of the whole.

This idea of a distinction between multiplicities which change in nature when they divide and those whose parts maintain their nature when separated from one another is crucial to Deleuze's development of the concept of multiplicity into a philosophically unique and productive category. Deleuze seizes on the Bergsonian distinction and develops it into a theory of multiplicities that gives a more specific account of the logical individuality discussed above. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze applies Bergson's distinction to characterize the difference between the ideal and material aspects of an individual, and thereby creates a rigorous concept of individuality that can be applied to our problem of what entities we ought to ascribe agency to.

Bergson's distinction between multiplicities that change in nature when they divide and those that do not remains in Deleuze's own thought, but is transformed and put to different purposes. Rather than opposing continuous to discrete multiplicities, Deleuze frequently speaks of a difference between virtual and actual multiplicities. This terminology exists in Bergson as well, and Deleuze makes clear in his book on Bergson that he takes it to line up with the continuous/discrete distinction. The virtual/actual terminology, however, highlights the general application that Deleuze wants to apply to this classification. Deleuze applies the term "virtual" to Bergson's continuous multiplicities, and uses Bergson's definition as the foundation of his concept of the idea. Deleuze says, "An idea is an n -dimensional, continuous, defined multiplicity."⁹ We should take "continuous" here to indicate that Deleuze is drawing on Bergson's conception of a continuous multiplicity. The n dimensions of the idea are the parts which cannot be separated out from the complete idea without it changing in nature.

The details of Deleuze's notion of the virtual have been debated at length in secondary literature.¹⁰ We have no need to enter into these dispute, however. By focusing on the continuity of the concept with Bergson's definition of continuous multiplicities, I think we can achieve an interpretation that serves our purposes without being controversial. The crucial thing about Deleuze's virtual multiplicities is that they are defined by the relationship between their parts. The parts of a virtual multiplicity cannot be extracted from the whole without both changing their nature. This means that the nature of the parts within such a multiplicity is reciprocally determined, that is, that each part is determined by the relationship it bears to other parts, and determines the nature of the other parts in turn. Deleuze also refers to virtual multiplicities as "structures," saying

9. DR 182.

10. See Badiou, *Deleuze*, Toscano, *Theatre of Production*, DeLanda, *Intensive Science*.

things like “the reality of the virtual is structure.”¹¹ In doing so he invokes the notion of structure employed by a variety of (mostly) French thinkers from different disciplines, such as Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Althusser, and Lacan, who analyze different phenomena according to a method of describing systems of mutually determining ideal relationships underlying the phenomena.¹² Such a structure is a Bergsonian continuous multiplicity, in that it has parts in the different mutually determining elements, but those parts cannot be separated out from the whole structure without changing it into an entirely different kind of thing.

The idea as structure or virtual multiplicity also means, for Deleuze, that an idea is in no way a representation of a thing in the mind, and it means, in fact, that virtual multiplicities are characteristically unrepresentable. Deleuze takes great pains in several places to oppose the concept of virtuality to that of possibility.¹³ An idea conceived as a possible object is the same as what it is an idea of in every way except really existing. But an actually existing object can be taken apart analytically and its parts investigated in isolation, violating the principle of continuity characteristic of virtual multiplicities. A virtual multiplicity, then, can't be thought of as a representation or image of a thing, although it is an idea. It is instead the system of reciprocally defined elements or dimensions which characterize a given thing as an instance of the idea defined by that particular virtual multiplicity.

We have seen how Deleuze picks up on Bergson's conception of a continuous, as opposed to discrete, multiplicity and uses it to develop a theory of ideas as virtual multiplicities or structures. It may have become clear at this point that the grounding

11. DR 209.

12. See the essay “How Do We Recognize Structuralism” in DI 170-192 for details on what Deleuze sees as the methodology unifying these thinkers.

13. See B 96-98, DR 211-213.

problem has shifted somewhat, however. In Deleuze's appropriation of the concept of a multiplicity whose parts change in nature when they divide it is no longer a question of dividing different things into different types of multiplicities, in the way Bergson opposes space as a discrete multiplicity to duration as a continuous one. Rather, the distinction has become, for Deleuze, a way of characterizing two different types of multiplicities belonging to a single thing: a virtual multiplicity of its ideal parts as opposed to an actual multiplicity of its material or spatial parts. We could say, indeed, that it has become a scheme for describing two different kinds of parts that a given thing has: those belonging to the idea and those belonging to its instantiation in a given material body. "The virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object ... There is another part of the object which is determined by actualization."¹⁴ Ideas are in fact incarnated in real things, such that we can say every real thing has a material half consisting of parts which are indifferent to separation, and an ideal half of elements fused together in a virtual multiplicity. The ideal part constitutes the individuality of the thing, insofar as it corresponds to a nature which is identical with the ideal elements which bear essential relationships to one another, and the material part constitutes its actual existence in a physical reality.

This distinction of existing things into complexes of an ideal/virtual multiplicity and an actual/material multiplicity can be mapped closely onto Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, which we encountered in Chapter 2, in a way that is illuminating. Recall that in Spinoza's theory of modes the essence of a given thing was distinguished from its existence. The essence of a mode was defined by the relationship among parts characteristic of being the type of thing that it is, whereas its existence consisted in there

14. DR 209.

actually being an very great number of infinitely small physical parts actually bearing that characteristic relationship to one another. The physical parts, then, clearly constitute a discrete multiplicity, in the Bergsonian sense: nothing changes about them when they are separated from one another and recombined into other things. The Spinozist essence, however, fits very closely Deleuze's conception of a virtual multiplicity. It is defined entirely by characteristic relations among parts, thus constituting an ideal structure, independent of its physical instantiation or actual existence. The essence itself is not an image of the actual object, but defines the internal relationships characteristic of that object. Changes in those relationships, furthermore, constitute changes in the essence of the thing and in its degree of power, in the way in which addition or subtraction of virtual parts constitutes a change in the nature of a continuous multiplicity. The interpretation of Spinoza we find in *Expressionism in Philosophy* therefore dovetails well with Deleuze's own theory of multiplicities, according to which each actually existing thing is made up of an ideal, virtual multiplicity and an extensive, actual multiplicity.

We have seen here how Deleuze employs the concept of multiplicity to develop a theory of the constitution of individuals from two types of parts. Each individual has an ideal aspect, defined by the virtual or ideal elements which make up a continuous multiplicity. These elements are not separable from one another without a change coming about in the nature of the whole that they make up. On the other hand, an individual has an actual aspect, corresponding to its physical or spatio-temporal parts, which can be separated without affecting the nature of the thing or changing the nature of the parts. This conceptual framework is the way that Deleuze defines an individual in an attempt to overcome the abstract opposition between the one and the multiple. By distinguishing the virtual from the actual aspects of an individual, Deleuze can characterize it as having a

unity corresponding to the particular idea instantiated in the combination of its virtual elements, while still conceiving of it as made up of parts. Moreover, each individual is a multiplicity of two distinct types of parts, both the physical parts which actually make it up and the parts of the idea, which can be distinguished, although separating them from their embeddedness in a system of reciprocal determination with other parts would change their nature. With this framework in mind, we can look at other aspects of Deleuze's work as attempts to describe the virtual multiplicities or ideal systems corresponding to different actually existing individuals. With reference to the accounts of the perceptive mind and of action adduced in the first two chapters, I'd like to elucidate how Deleuze's thought permits us to characterize the properties of an individual as an agent.

Agents as Multiplicities

In Chapters 1 and 2 I laid out my interpretation of Deleuze's theory of the perceptive mind and of the active mind, respectively. The mind consists of a system of three faculties, called habit, memory, and thought, each of which corresponds to a power to synthesize mental contents in a certain way, and which, by functioning in a particular systematic way, give rise to mental representation. Activity, in this scheme, corresponds to the exercise of the faculty of thought to determine a rule guiding the combination of the agent's own body with external bodies in the context of some practical problem. Given the terminology of the theory of multiplicities, we are now in a position to say that this scheme of faculties describes a virtual multiplicity which corresponds to the idea of the thinking and acting mind, and therefore that anything that instantiates it can be said to be a thinker and an agent. Let's revisit briefly the elements of the theory of the faculties

and the theory of action in order to describe how these concepts constitute an idea of agency for Deleuze.

The mind, for Deleuze, can be described as a system of three faculties, each of which is a type of synthesis of different contents. The first synthesis Deleuze calls habit or imagination, and consists simply in the formation of an expectation through the repetition of patterns of stimulation. The image of the power of habit is a ticking clock, where repeated tick-tocks create an unconscious anticipation for the tock upon hearing the next tick. Habit is not something that is done *by* the mind, but happens *in* the mind, as a passive synthesis creating the most basic level of identification within sensibility. The faculty of habit also constitutes the first dimension of time for the subject, time as a passing present with a local, fading past of repeated patterns of stimulation, and a short-range anticipation of the future as the fulfillment of the habitually formed expectation. Habit synthesizes passing instants at different locations of stimulation, and different parts of the individual or organism respond to different patterns in the environment and contract different habits. Thus, even at the level of habit we could be said to have a complex range of different processes going on in the mind, but Deleuze groups them together according to the common type of passive synthesis they all perform: the constitution of a relatively short, passing present by forming an expectation of the continuation of a pattern in sensible stimulation.

The moments of the passing present require being embedded in a larger time of an extended, all-encompassing past in order to explain the possibility of comparison between passing moments in ordinary empirical experience, and thus Deleuze posits the existence of the second faculty or power of passive synthesis, called memory. The faculty of memory itself differs somewhat from what we ordinarily mean by memory, in that it is

more general than the capacity to recall past experiences to present consciousness at will. Memory in Deleuze's sense is the synthesis of all moments of the past together in a type of coexistence which is a necessary condition for empirical recollection. There must be some kind of recording of past events which makes it possible to recall them when the present moment requires it. The ability to juxtapose a current experience with the memory of a past one for comparison proves that there must be a distinction between memory and habit, insofar as the latter only constitutes a present of limited extension which constantly passes away. Thought and empirical experience are impossible without such a memory, and thus Deleuze concludes that it is an irreducible faculty partly constitutive of the mind. Memory is a different kind of synthesis than habit because it brings together all past experiences into a single whole, while habitual contractions are local and relative to a particular pattern of stimulus and expectation.

The third mental faculty Deleuze calls thought, which we have explored at greater length in Chapter 2 in relation to its necessary involvement in action by an individual, as it is distinguished from habitual expectation. Unlike the first two faculties, which Deleuze describes as “passive syntheses,” thought is a synthesis that is attributable to the mind itself, rather than simply occurring in the mind. Thought is an active faculty distinct from habit and memory because it consists in going beyond what is given in the present and the past to posit a general rule making sense of various external stimuli as a field of possible action. Thought constitutes a more open and general future than the proximate and immediate future of habit by positing a concept or a general form under which future situations will appear to and be interpretable by the individual. In this sense, the future created by the faculty of thought is subject to the terms of the eternal return, in which the contents of a thought or an action are never foreseeable, but we can know that they will

have future ramifications in terms of their implications for the meanings of experiences yet to be encountered, or the further fields of inquiry that they will make possible. Thought synthesizes the individual's past and present experiences in an essentially forward-looking way. The third synthesis also gives the individual a kind of unity in a way that it lacks prior to the activity of thought. We saw that the faculty of habit is distributed to various different material parts of an individual, each being the site of different sensitivities with different scales of time. Deleuze calls this distribution of passive syntheses the “system of the dissolved self,” which he opposes to the unity of the “active I” represented by the synthesis of thought. Thought provides a global integration of the individual relative to a particular practical problem that it faces on the outside, and it poses a common notion that makes sense of that problem as a relation between relations between the material parts of that individual and those belonging to the external world. The faculty of thought is a necessary condition for any action by an individual, according to Deleuze's model of the mind, as well as being necessary for ordinary empirical mental processes.

I would argue that the structure of the three syntheses (habit, memory, thought) in *Difference and Repetition* corresponds to the virtual structure making up the ideal side of an individual that is a mind or an agent. These faculties constitute the ideal parts or structural singularities of Deleuze's idea of the active mind. Given that an agent or mind, to be real, must be instantiated in some indefinite number of material parts, we can say that this material body constitutes an actual or physical multiplicity, and that together they constitute an individual, as a multiplicity with both aspects, that has a mind or is an agent. Given what we saw above regarding Deleuze's theory of multiplicities, we could expect that any thing that actualizes the idea of agency or constitutes an actually existing

acting individual would be a multiplicity of this sort, with both virtual parts or dimensions, as well as physical parts. My further claim here is that the schema of the faculties makes up Deleuze's description of the virtual parts or structure characteristic of any individual agent.

There are two primary reasons I have for saying that this description of the three faculties is a description of a virtual multiplicity and is therefore a good candidate for Deleuze's general theory of the active mind. First, because the faculties fit the characterization of a virtual multiplicity as being something that “changes its nature when it divides,” and second, because each faculty constitutes not an actual part of the whole, but a type of characteristic relationship among actual parts, corresponding to Deleuze's notion of a structural idea.

In our treatment of the theory of the faculties in Chapter 1, we saw Deleuze make frequent employment of a distinction between the empirical employment or exercise of a given faculty and its transcendental exercise. The empirical employment of a given faculty takes place in ordinary mental representation, when the faculties converge on a single object and treat it as identical. In the transcendental employment of each faculty, however, it has its own object which is not a possible object for any of the other faculties. For example, in reminiscence, or involuntary memory, we saw that Deleuze invoked Proust to describe the nature of something remembered as it never was experienced, an element of the pure past that could be accessed only by memory and not by any other faculty. Each faculty has a transcendental object, which is the object proper only to that faculty, and which cannot be an object for the other faculties. I would contend that the empirical/transcendental distinction here is being used to describe the separation of each faculty from the whole in which they function in concert. A virtual multiplicity, according

to Deleuze's application of the Bergsonian concept, is one that can divide, but that changes in nature when it does so. The difference between the empirical employment of a faculty and the transcendental employment is that between that faculty operating as a virtual part of a multiplicity containing all three, and functioning by itself in isolation from being a part of the mind as a complete individual. Such a division is possible, but the parts of a virtual multiplicity, when isolated, are different in nature from the whole. Sometimes each faculty is separated from the others and functions alone in what Deleuze calls the transcendental operation, but in this case it is significantly different from the way that it works as part of the whole. Hence Deleuze's constant injunction that we cannot derive the nature of the transcendental exercise of the faculty from the properties of the empirical exercise: each part of the virtual multiplicity is not homogeneous with the whole and differs in its nature from the whole. Deleuze also calls this the imperative not to assume the form of the common sense in all mental operations. Common sense and recognition would be only a property of the mind as a multiplicity combining habit, memory, and thought, but they do not exist in any of the faculties if they are separated from one another. The parts of a virtual multiplicity are always of a different nature than the whole made up of them.

The second reason for viewing the theory of the faculties as a description of the mind as a virtual multiplicity is Deleuze's insistence that each faculty is a power of synthesis of a particular kind. As we saw in the definition of a virtual multiplicity, the elements or dimensions of such a multiplicity are not physical parts, but rather types of relations between physical parts. A synthesis seems like another way of describing a pure relation in itself, not characterizing it in terms of the parts that it synthesizes. Habit, memory, and thought are not themselves mental contents, but different ways in which

mental contents are connected to one another, constituting a structure in the mind. They are names for types of relations among parts, for three ways in which they are connected to one another. Each faculty, of course, doesn't refer to one specific connection between physical parts, but rather a "dimension" of relatedness which is a necessary component of the overall structure. I would argue that the way Deleuze is thinking of the mental faculties is in line with this theory of virtual multiplicities – that habit, memory, and thought are the three ideal dimensions required for any individual to be characterized as having a mind.

Given the explication of Deleuze's conception of multiplicity above, along with the identification of the theory of the faculties with the virtual structure corresponding to the idea of the mind, we can see the sense in which, for Deleuze, every thinker is a multiplicity. Each actual individual in Deleuze is a multiplicity, and one that has two kinds of "parts" belonging to it. Virtual parts are the components of the idea or structure which constitutes the individuality or unity characteristic of that thing. Every virtual structure has several parts, but they cannot be separated from one another without changing the nature of the whole and without the parts becoming something different than they were in the whole. On the actual side, every individual consists of a multitude of real, physical parts. There is nothing particularly interesting to say about the physical parts, other than to note that they are in no way responsible for the unity of a given individual. The reciprocal determination of the virtual parts by which they are organized into a complete system is responsible for the unity of the individual, the fact that it can be said to be "a" multiplicity. We should also note, however, that the different types of parts belonging to a given multiplicity are in every way independent of one another. A given virtual part is not actualized in some particular subset of the physical parts, nor do some

physical parts necessarily belong only to one dimension of the structure. A mind is a multiplicity because of being comprised of both the virtual parts corresponding to that idea, and of some number of actual parts, but the two kinds of parts are of an entirely different nature from one another, and they have no causal impact on one another. The physical parts are the material out of which a given multiplicity is made, but the virtual parts are the different types of relations which the physical parts bear to one another. This consideration will be crucial when we consider agents that are social groups in the next section.

Our investigations of Deleuze's concept of action in Chapter 2 suggested an intimate connection between action and the faculty of thought. It isn't absolutely clear from our investigations that thinking is both necessary and sufficient for acting, but we do see that action necessarily involves thought, and that therefore being a mind and actualizing the structure of the three faculties is at least a necessary condition for action. Thus, I don't think it's a stretch to apply the schema of the three faculties to a particular individual to ask whether it is an agent or not. We can look at a particular individual look for processes that instantiate the faculties of habit, imagination, and thought, and we can ask, given the characterization of action drawn from Deleuze, whether the thought processes of that individual seem to constitute activity of the same kind. In the next section, I want to turn these questions to certain social groups, and argue that, using this schema of the three faculties, we can see how these organizations or institutions, as logical individuals or multiplicities, constitute individual minds and individual agents.

Social Groups as Agents

In everyday interactions, ascribing agency to some of the things that we come into contact with is an indispensable technique for making sense of the world. We obviously often take other human beings that we meet to have a causal interaction with the world and with us that they are responsible for, and often to have mental involvement in the things that they do. We also often apply the same concepts and terms to make sense of our interactions with certain groups of human beings. Social institutions such as churches or government entities, as well as corporations, provide the examples of social organizations that we would be most likely to apply these concepts to. Cases of moral blameworthiness are one context in which it seems from the way that we speak that social groups like Exxon-Mobil, the National Security Administration, or the Catholic Church must be the agents of some morally salient action. However, we apply terms that seem to imply mind-involving action to social collectives in many other situations as well, such as, “the firm announced it would have to lay off 2000 employees because of recent declines in revenue,” or “the university decided to hire candidate A because of his 15 years of administrative experience.” Statements like these suggest *prima facie* that we take the organizations that are their subjects to be agents. I would like to argue that we are not mistaken when we do so and that these groups of human beings are metaphysically individual agents in much the same way that individual human beings are. I've addressed what I think is one source of resistance to this view above, and I will consider other objections in due course. First, however, I would like to show how Deleuze's account of the mental faculties applies to some cases of social groups. Let's take one example of a commercial firm that produces and markets some kind of consumer good and examine in what ways it instantiates the faculties of habit, memory,

and thought, and does so as a single individual itself, not merely through the mental faculties of its members (although obviously these will be involved at times).

With regard to the faculty of habit, we want to look for processes where repetition creates a certain expectation of continuity as well as various local temporal rhythms. I think we would be likely to find such habits throughout the organization of a corporation. The expectation by each employee of a work day of a certain length, the regularity with which data is gathered about market conditions and other factors of relevance to the company, the staff meetings that occur at regular intervals in various departments and offices, at which the continuity of progress on various tasks and projects is checked, the regular inspections of machines in a factory: each of these is a process of expectation and fulfillment of expectation, and each constitutes a kind of rhythm or local passing present for the firm. Each of them creates a kind of continuity insofar as it encompasses an expectation that is usually fulfilled. A meeting will usually take place at the same time and involve the same people, and usually be run in an expected way. Participants in the meeting expect to see that their colleagues and subordinates are making some sort of progress on their projects, approximating what was expected of them on the basis of the last meeting.

It's crucial to note that the processes constitutive of the faculty of habit for a firm or another organization are often not instantiated by a single individual person or employee, but only by the organization itself. For example, the habit of a 9 A.M. meeting can continue through personnel changes with a relatively high degree of continuity. This is important because what we are after are the habits of the organization or social group itself. These may be constituted by the habitual behaviors or actions of individual people, but they are not *just* the habits of those people; they constitute habits of the organization

as well, if they are sufficiently integrated into the operational systems of the organization. The habitual practices of groups of employees, such as a regular meeting, show that it is a habit at the level of the firm or department, not just the employee. These habits can persist through change in personnel, like vital processes in an individual human being can persist through the death and replacement of individual cells.

It's also important to note that, like the habits we think of in the case of an individual human being, the habits of a group can be completely passive and acquired without any reflection or decision to put them into practice. The practice of having a 9 A.M. meeting every morning may have come about simply as a matter of convenience or accident, and then become a habitual practice, without any reflection on whether any purpose for the meeting exists. Similarly, someone in the position of managing supplies of raw materials for the firm may habitually respond to an increase in the price of a particular input by changing the quantity that the firm orders, or increasing its orders for a substitute input, and this may occur simply as a matter of reaction, without any reflection on the reasons for making such a move. The habits which constitute the first synthesis for the firm may have come about simply by individual employees or groups of employees with a particular role contracting repeated experiences into a common practice, absent any active reflection about the reasons for that practice.

Regarding the faculty of memory, I think it is pretty easy to see that it can be instantiated by a corporation or other social group or organization. A commercial firm, for example, is likely to keep extensive records of data relevant to the firm's history, such as revenues, costs, various sales and purchase accounts, personnel records, data about market conditions, and so on. These records are likely to fit Deleuze's idea of a non-empirical memory, as well: most of the time the majority of the data is simply stored and

not thought about, but it is available for recall in principle. Like with the experiences of reminiscence that Deleuze describes in Proust, a particularly salient present perception of market conditions and other things relevant to the current status of the firm might be likely to prompt a search through this data and a discovery of a previously unnoticed pattern within the memory of the firm. Data that had not been looked at by anyone in a long time might be dredged up and interpreted in a new way in light of the present situation. The firm thus could be said to have a Deleuzian transcendental memory that is sometimes empirically accessed and compared to present perceptual conditions. We can see in the case of the second synthesis as well that this is a kind of memory that is best described as that of the firm, not as belonging to any employee. Many people in different roles at the company would be likely to have access to it, and it would likely be encoded in such a way as to be interpretable to any of them. Individual employees could access records that were prepared by other employees as well; thus, the memory is better described as that of the organization than that of any individual people.

The memory faculty of an organization often also functions to record information created only through the organization's own collective faculty of habit. Many of the habits of the corporation will function to collect information that is relevant to regulating the ongoing actions in which the organization is involved, as well as potentially to be used in posing future problems for itself. If one corporate habit is, for example, to regularly check the deterioration of machinery and perform regular maintenance on a weekly basis, the information gained through those inspections will likely be recorded in the corporate memory. That data will be gathered as a specific kind of information, highlighting certain factors and neglecting others that the inspector as an individual human being might notice, and it will likely be recorded in a regular, codified way in

which all such reports will be comparable to all others. The procedures for gathering that information habitually and recording it in a specific way distinguish the corporate faculties of habit and memory from the habits and memories of individual human employees. The corporate memory records what is sensed through the fulfillment or unfulfillment of the expectations generated through the corporate habits. It is, of course, often created through the actions of individual human beings, but it can be, and usually is, entirely distinct from the memories of those individual human beings.

Finally, can a social organization or group, such as a commercial firm, be said to exercise the faculty of thought and to be active in Deleuze's sense by doing so? It would seem to me that strategic processes of decision-making in a business or other organizational context would furnish a paradigmatic example of Deleuzian action, in which the agent takes a current situation, determines it as a practical problem, and constructs a rule to govern its relationship to its environment in order to constitute a solution to that problem. Management in business contexts would seem to be constantly faced with situations that correspond to this model. Say that a given firm is faced with a problem in terms of slowly falling profits, or a market shock that causes the price of some input that the firm needs to spike sharply. The conditions that indicate a practical problem to be faced with thinking and action do not by themselves dictate the action that the firm should take in response to them. A process of determining what kind of problem the firm faces, gathering information relative to the current situation, and making a decision about how to respond still needs to be undertaken. I would contend that this decision-making process constitutes an act of thought in the same way that Deleuze talks about the swimmer who makes a leap from passivity to activity in a particular case. Managers need to make a decision about what they take to be the salient facts of the situation that the

firm finds itself in, which will constitute deciding what kind of a problem the firm faces. This process will involve gathering information about where the firm currently stands and about its environment, which will perhaps include things like suppliers, markets, competition, and regulatory environment. The determination of the nature of the problem faced will then coincide with a particular interpretation of that information, from which will follow a solution as to what the firm ought to do to deal with the situation. This is the process of constructing a common notion described in Chapter 2: the management of the firm must form an idea capable of being the cause of the situation in which the firm finds itself, and from this they make an inference about what ought to be done, in terms of the relation of the firm itself to its environment, in order to deal with the problem.

It's also important to note that, as the Deleuzian theory of the mind would have it, it is the interaction among the faculties that constitutes the mentality or agency of a corporation, whether in the form of recognition or in the encounter. If the faculty of thought belongs to a corporation or another group as a social group agent it is because it works on and synthesizes the results produced by the syntheses of the other mental faculties, and the products of habit and memory will circumscribe the possible field of thought for the group. To remain with our corporate case, a firm will collect and record data about its internal and external environments in habitually determined ways that pick up on certain differences and ignore others. For example, a firm may habitually collect data on employee morale by means of a survey given to all employees quarterly, and keep a record of the results of each round of surveys. This survey will ask employees certain questions which will captures some aspects of how their morale could be understood, but inevitably leave out other possible data. The questions asked by this survey may change slightly over time, but they need to remain largely the same in order for comparisons of

the current status of morale with a past situation to be made. Thus, the memory which exists for the corporation in this case is conditioned by the information that is habitually gathered through this individual practice. The operation of the faculty of thought will, in turn, be constrained by the material produced in the syntheses of imagination and memory. The executive committee or other decision-making body within the corporation will be restricted to information gathered and collected in this way in its attempts to pose and solve problems facing the corporation. The only information about morale that will be available to be used in these thought processes of the corporation will be that gathered by the repeated and recorded survey of employees.¹⁵ Thus, the products of the first two syntheses become the material with which the faculty of thought works, and the scope of thinking will be circumscribed by the data provided by habit and memory. The thinking of the corporation doesn't happen in isolation, but instead in a constructive interaction with the faculties of habit and imagination.

As with the other faculties, I think there are reasons to ascribe this thought process to the organization itself, rather than to any individual. First, the problem that is faced is primarily the problem of the firm, not that of any employee. Solving the problem is a question of how to dispose the resources and membership of the organization so that it relates in an advantageous way to circumstances taken to be outside of it. Second, as with the other faculties, this thought process itself is likely to be undertaken by a team of several people, even if there is some hierarchy within the team. In the corporate case,

15. One could imagine a situation in which the board of directors, for example, is unsatisfied with the way that the existing survey of employees captures the state of corporate morale and decides to institute a new procedure for gathering different morale information. But useful information here will only be able to be gathered through instituting a new habitual process of gathering and recording data, which will take time to be put into place. Thus, the existing habits of the corporation do not absolutely limit the faculty of thought, but do put some limits on what is thinkable at a given time. The necessity of a temporal lapse between thought and its effect on habit and memory here would correspond to what Deleuze identifies as the caesura constitutive of thought as an active faculty, described in his uptake of the Kantian "action =x." See pp. 68-75 above.

there is likely to be both a board of directors and an executive team, either or both of which could be involved in strategic decisions of this kind. Furthermore, the determination of the problem and its solution is likely to take place through some kind of communicative deliberation among team members, rather than simply in the head of one individual executive. Thought itself can be said to take place in these deliberations if they result in the production of a common notion, the synthesis characteristic of active thought. It may, of course, be the case that this thought is sometimes undertaken by a single person in an organization where decision-making is concentrated in one leader. However, there's no reason to suppose that the thinking of the organization must be done by an individual human being. Ultimately, that is a question of how the virtual and actual parts of the multiplicity line up with one another, but the way that they line up has nothing essential to do with whether the individual actualizes a particular virtual structure or not. Whether this process of problem-determination and -solution is undertaken by an individual human being or a deliberative group is ultimately not important – in either case it is a problem of the organization or social group that is being determined, and this thought process therefore constitutes the thought of that organization.

We should note, however, that the thought processes of a collective, such as a commercial firm, may not be as autonomous as we would find in the case of an individual human mind. Some elements of the thought process of the group may take place through the thinking of individual human beings who are members of the group. The members of a board of directors, for example, are each capable of thinking themselves apart from their deliberation as a part of the collective process of thought. The ideas of any of the directors as individuals may therefore have some impact on the thinking of the group. I think, however, it is still legitimate to distinguish them and

maintain that the thinking of the corporation cannot take place only within one individual human member. First, the thought processes and decision-making procedure of the group may consist only in the deliberations of a board of directors, and not correspond to the mental activity of any single human individual. Furthermore, even if one human being is responsible for the ultimate decision-making in a corporation, the information that is relevant to posing and solving problems for the corporation itself will largely come from the corporate faculties of habit and memory. The CEO would have access to relevant information about employee morale, currently and in the past, only through the results of the survey that the corporation conducts to gather information about morale, and that information will therefore be conditioned by the questions that are posed on that survey. The corporate faculty of thought is therefore determined by interaction with the corporate imagination and memory, whether the faculty of thought is itself carried out by a single human individual or by a deliberative group of people.

I hope to have shown here that it's plausible that a social group, as an individual in its own right, could instantiate the conception of the mind provided by Deleuze's account of the three faculties. A problem that this account does not solve is that of determining precisely which social groups are individual agents and which are not. From the nature of the account of activity, we can see that the dividing line between groups which are agents and those which are not will be determined by the unification effected by thinking. As we saw especially in Deleuze's interpretation of the Kantian account of thought as spontaneity, this thinking process will ultimately be the point at which a distributed self is unified by the activity of the "I." Ultimately then, we would be able to say that those groups which are unified by a thought process which determines a problem to be faced and a rule to guide action in solving it would be the groups that we would properly call

agents. I think we can see pretty clearly in cases such as a commercial firm that these criteria are met and that it instantiates the active faculty of thought fairly clearly. However, I think it will be much less clear for other cases of social groups whether we ought to say that they are thinking in the same fashion, because we may not be able to point to processes going on within those groups that we can easily recognize as this kind of thinking. I won't attempt to give any answer to this problem here, except to say that it would seem that the more formally organized a social group is, the more clearly we are going to be able to interpret its decision-making process in order to determine it as an agent. I don't think my inability to draw a line between those social groups that can be taken as individual agents and those that can't in any way undermines the idea that some groups with a sufficient level of organization can instantiate the concept of agency clearly.

I have argued here for a view of group agency that considers certain social groups as individual agents and that does not attempt to derive the agency ascribed to groups of people from that of the individual people that make up the group. Obviously the agency of human individuals is almost certainly going to be involved in constituting the agency of the group. However, I contend that in order to characterize the group as an agent and to talk about it using the terms and concepts of agency we have discussed, there is no need to make reference to the mental states of any of the individual human members of the group. The two levels of agency have an independence from one another such that the agency of a social group could be instantiated by the human beings who make it up acting in many different ways. The agency of the group has to do with certain general organizational criteria being met such that the group as an individual multiplicity itself conforms to the idea of an agent.

Positions that deny the reality of such an autonomous group agency often appeal to the intuition that it must be somehow derived from the agency of the individual human beings that make up the social group. Many thinkers deny that a distinct agency could be emergent at the level of an organized group of people if it didn't exist in the people separated from one another. I would respond to this objection, however, by pointing out that agency is likely to be an emergent phenomenon in the same sense at the level of an individual human being. An individual person is an agent which is constituted in some way out of parts that are not agents, as Deleuze's account of the three synthetic faculties suggests that it is. Unless the objector is a classical Cartesian dualist, there must be some way in which agency is a feature of the whole human being, although it is not of any of the parts. To assume otherwise would risk involving us in an interminable regress, where agency of a whole could only be explained by that of one or more of its parts. However, if the agency of the whole is not derived from any of the parts in themselves it must somehow be a feature of the *organization* of those parts, i.e., of the virtual side of the Deleuzian multiplicity. So there should be no objection against the notion that structure is at least partly responsible for the existence of agency.

It might be objected that there is some special property of individual human beings, which groups of human beings lack, which is responsible for their agency. John Searle seems to take a position like this, as he contends that intentional states are necessary for agency, and intentional states are the product of brains and of nothing else. However, it is hard to imagine what the property of human individuals would be that is responsible for their agency, other than a certain level of complexity or organization of their parts (most saliently, the brain). The level of complexity and organization possible within a human brain is certainly very great, and even greater if we consider the

connections between the brain and the different parts of the body. It seems unjustified to assume, however, that the level of complexity of a group of human beings is any less than that which is possible for a human individual. There are certainly many social groups that I would want to classify as agents which have fewer human members than there are neurons in a human brain, but the types of relations that are possible between two members of a social group are much more varied and multifaceted than the relations possible between two neurons. This suggests that a great deal of complexity or organization could be possible within a social group with even a relatively small membership, and thus that complexity is no reason to suggest that individual human beings can be agents but groups of human beings cannot.

Another argument that can be raised against realist accounts of group agency such as that adduced here is based on the principle of simplicity. Critics would argue that there is no need to posit the existence of group minds or group agents because an explanation of the apparent actions of groups that resolves them into the actions of individuals is sufficient. According to my view, the actions of a group, such as a corporation, as well as the processes constitutive of its faculties, are often carried out by individual human beings. Thus, if we want to describe how Corporation X came to a decision to issue A shares of stock at a price of B dollars per share and carried out that plan, we may be able to do so using a narrative (albeit a longer one) that refers only to the mental states and actions of individual human beings and not to those of a collective entity, agent, or mind. Since we ought to avoid multiplying entities or ontological posits unnecessarily, then, we should prefer the theory which does not posit the existence of group minds to the one that does, such as mine.

In response to this line of argument, I would first point out that the theory for which I am arguing here does not introduce the idea of social group agents as an extra theoretical posit necessary to explain some specific phenomena, but instead as a consequence of the general theory of the mind that I've ascribed to Deleuze and that I think is motivated on grounds quite independent of issues about social group agency or mentality. The theory of the mind presented here is that the mind is the result of the interaction among three faculties, conceived as processes of synthesis. If we find that such processes exist and are integrated in the right kind of ways in entities other than individual human beings, we ought to call those entities minds or agents for reasons of conceptual and theoretical consistency. This doesn't involve positing new entities for the purpose of explaining a phenomenon, but carrying the theory of the mind, that we have introduced in order to explain the phenomena that appear to suggest mentality in individuals, to their logical conclusion. In this work, I don't claim to have provided a comprehensive defense of this theory of the mind as the best possible theory among a host of alternatives, instead preferring to work out and elucidate a theory that I think is latent in Deleuze's philosophy. My contention is that the internal requirements of that theory, which posits that mentality is the integration of the three faculties in the right kind of way, lead us to conclude that some social groups are minds or individual agents because they instantiate the mental faculties. For some thinkers, the fact that it leads to asserting the existence of collective minds and collective agents might be a strike against this theory; however, that consideration would need to be weighed against others for and against this theory of the mind in general in comparison with possible competitors.

Although I don't here argue for the existence of social group minds and the view that some social groups are individual agents primarily by pointing out that it is necessary

to explain some phenomenon, I do think there is some additional explanatory power to the view that social group agents are real individuals and not just the results of the interactions of several human individuals. This concerns the fact that many social groups seem to have stable identities, as well as stability of habits, memories, goals, and beliefs, across changes in their membership. To remain with the example of a corporate firm, if a given employee is fired and replaced with someone else, this will not usually impact the habits or thought processes of the firm. Business will tend to go on as usual if the new employee can do the same job as the old one. The activity of that employee may be crucial to gathering the information that is used to make certain decisions, for example, but the information that is fed into that process of thought which constitutes the firm's active faculty will most likely be the same when the new employee does it as when the old employee did it. Corporations have policies governing the way reports should be written, and the new employee will be taught to follow those policies so that the reports he or she produces will be as close as possible to those that would have been written by his or her predecessor. Changing one employee, or more, may affect the firm's capacities, insofar as the new employee is likely to be less good at his or her job than the former employee, but it will not affect the interests of the firm, its beliefs, or its goals, nor the way that it characterizes its environment as a milieu for action, and we are therefore likely to say that the actions and mental faculties of the firm itself are the same. However, if we explained them in terms only of the interaction of individual human beings, we would have a different explanation of events with the former employee than with the new employee. Thus, positing a collective mind or agent explains why it seems that the interests, beliefs, and habits of the corporation persist if its membership changes.

Moreover, and perhaps more significantly for this point, in many cases the function of an employee can be replaced with a machine or some other mechanism in a way that doesn't seem to affect the identity of the collective. To use the example of memory, we can see that this faculty could be fulfilled in some cases either by the memories of human individuals, or by material methods of record-keeping. As part of trying to figure out how to respond to a particular situation, decision-makers at a firm may want to know what happened in a previous similar circumstance. Depending on the processes that are in place instantiating the faculty of memory in that particular firm, they may answer that question either by asking employees who have been around a long time what took place in the earlier case, or they may read a report that was produced at the time as a record of those events. As far as the memory of the firm is concerned, these two methods of recording fulfill the same function in the processes constitutive of the firm as a thinking individual and an agent. At a particular firm, a change may be instigated such that a function that was previously fulfilled by human employees comes to be fulfilled by a machine or a record-keeping procedure. However, these changes or differences in how the faculties are instantiated between different firms don't seem to have an impact on what we would expect the firm's goals, beliefs, or interests to be, and therefore how we would predict it to behave. Thus, positing the existence of a collective mentality distinct from the interaction among different employees or other group members allows us to explain this continuity or identity of the mental properties of the social group when its membership, or the ways in which its mental faculties are fulfilled, change. A description of the situation in terms of the actions and interactions of different individual human beings would distinguish the firm where the memorial function was performed by employees from one where it was carried out by an instituted recording procedure and

would be unable to identify the continuity between them, although the firm's goals, interests, and habits would persist. The explanation that posits the firm as a collective individual is necessary to explain this phenomenon of persistence.

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In this chapter, I've tried to apply the account of the mental faculties and the theory of action that I have extracted from Deleuze to the issue of whether social groups can be individual agents. I hope to have shown that, insofar as agency is determined by an individual's instantiation of the faculties Deleuze describes, we ought to take at least certain social collectives to be agents. I think that the existence of social group agents is a consequence of the theory of action posited here, and not a supplementary hypothesis. However, those who find positing a collective mentality to be objectionable may count it as a strike against this view that it is overly profligate in its ascription of mental states and agency to so many entities. To answer this charge completely would require a comprehensive assessment of this theory of mind and agency in comparison to other candidates, which I don't undertake here. Instead, in the final part of the work, I want to turn to political philosophy and apply this account of agency, and especially its included distinction between action and habit, to a particular kind of social group and show that this account gives us a novel way to look at the problem of political organization.

4. Social Practices and Social Rules in Hart and Deleuze

In the last chapter, I argued for realism about social group agents on the basis of the theory of mind and agency I ascribed to Deleuze and outlined in Chapters 1 and 2. I argued that if we interpret the logical sense of individuality according to Deleuze's theory of multiplicities, then we can describe human social groups as individual agents with individual human beings as their material parts, if they have some kind of organization that allows them to instantiate the faculties of habit, memory, and thought which correspond to the virtual structure of agency in general for Deleuze. In this chapter, I'll attempt to apply this theory of social group agency to more familiar issues in social and political philosophy. In order to do so, I'll need to make the assumption that the types of social groups that we normally think of as examples of political societies have the right internal structure to count as individual agents. The example of such a group agent that I described in Chapter 3 was that of a commercial corporation because I thought that the types of processes constitutive of the faculties would be easier to describe for this kind of social entity. However, I don't think it's stretching the idea very far to assume that social groups, such as nation-states or even smaller, less formally structured societies are instances of social group agents as well. In common language we often speak of political societies as agents, as well as ascribing beliefs, goals, and values to them. I see no reason to think that societies are any less amenable to description as social group agents than corporations or other relatively large, structured groups of people. Moreover, as I think will be clear from my discussion of the conceptions of societies in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* at the end of the chapter, Deleuze pretty clearly thinks of political groups as

instantiating the mental faculties as well.¹ I hope I can be excused, then, from explicitly making an argument to justify treating political societies as social group agents under the framework outlined in Chapter 3.

In what follows, my goal will be to characterize the normative phenomena characteristic of human social life in terms of the Deleuzian theory of action I have outlined so far. My contention will be that being part of a social group does impose norms of behavior on individual human beings, and that the source of those norms should be understood to be actions by the social group itself. In describing the nature of the norms present in human societies I will draw on legal theorist and philosopher H.L.A. Hart's *The Concept of Law*, which argues for a fundamental distinction between social rules and mere common practices of a social group which are not normative. I agree with Hart that rules like these are a characteristic feature of life in human societies, and that a social theory which ignores them or confuses them with mere habitual practices is fundamentally misguided. However, Hart lacks any account of the origin of social rules. Insofar as his aim is to describe the nature of law, he seems content to point out the reality of social rules and show that they pose an insurmountable problem for legal positivism without feeling the need to inquire into their source. Having in hand the theory of social group agents worked out in the last chapter, I'll then argue that the actions of such social collectives should be seen as the source of social rules constraining the behavior of individual human beings within the group. Finally, I'll turn to Deleuze's own social philosophy and show that the notion of social rules resulting from the action of social collectives helps us to understand the account of the historical forms of social organization that Deleuze and Félix Guattari provide in their book *Anti-Oedipus*, arguing

1. See also Hughes, *Genesis of Representation*, in which the author explicitly identifies the analogy between *Anti-Oedipus* and *Difference and Repetition* regarding the presence of the three successive syntheses that we have identified as Deleuze's three mental faculties.

that we should understand their notions of coding and inscription to refer to the constitution of social rules.

Hart on Habits and Social Rules

In his landmark text *The Concept of Law*, H. L. A. Hart introduces a conceptual distinction between a social practice and a social rule. This distinction is central to his theory of the nature of law and to his criticism of Austin's positivistic jurisprudence. I believe that the distinction between a social practice, which is something that is merely common among members of a social group, and a rule, which has normative force on members of that group, captures a significant phenomenon in human social life, and that Hart is correct that a theory of law which effaces the distinction is seriously flawed. As Hart draws the distinction, however, it rests purely on intuition and lacks a metaphysical account of human social reality that would explain why some behaviors are merely common in a group while others are normative. I contend that the Deleuzian theory of collective agents, as presented in the last chapter, can provide the grounds for this distinction and shed light on the nature of social norms.² In appealing to collective agency in connection with Hart's distinction, I follow Margaret Gilbert in her recent book *A Theory of Political Obligation*. However, the Deleuzian account of collective agency differs from Gilbert's plural subject view in significant ways which I'll discuss in the next section. First, however, we should consider the distinction between a practice and a rule as Hart presents it.

Hart first introduces the distinction between a habit and a rule in Chapter 1 of *The Concept of Law*, asserting that the notion of a rule is crucial to the search for a definition

2. In what follows, I'll use "norm" interchangeably with "rule," and terms like "normative" simply to suggest a situation in which a rule exists and therefore certain behaviors can be characterized as "against" or "in accordance with" the rule.

of law.³ He points out that there may be an initial temptation to identify a social rule as simply a convergence of behavior among members of a social group. This might be suggested by the use of terminology such as “they do such and such *as a rule*” to mean only that the people in question tend to do a certain kind of thing in a certain kind of circumstance. However, Hart argues that such an analysis of the notion of a rule doesn't seem to be adequate because a practice may be common without being normative in any way, and some kind of normativity is characteristic of what we usually mean by a rule. As a frequent example, Hart cites the difference between the British *habit* of going to the cinema on Saturday nights, and the British *rule* that men are to remove their hats in church. Though both are things that Britons frequently do, there is a rule against men wearing hats in church, whereas there is no rule requiring people to see movies on Saturdays, and it would be inappropriate to use normative language, such as “people *ought* to go to the cinema on Saturdays,” that would suggest there was such a rule.

Hart returns to the distinction in Chapter 4, attempting to further pin down the difference between a habit and a rule, in the context of an argument against an analysis of law that reduces laws to habits of obedience to a sovereign. He identifies the common property of the two, and then identifies three differences which are in some way related to the normative character of social rules. For Hart, both a social practice or habit and a social rule correspond to regular occurrences within a social group. For either a practice or a rule to exist, it must be the case that members of a specific group generally, although not necessarily universally, do the same thing. Not all Britons need to attend the cinema every Saturday in order for it to be true that this practice is a habit among the British.

3. Hart's aim in this text is to develop a theory of law, and he analyzes the category of social rules as a means to that end. For Hart, social rules are a very broad category, and “law” refers to the conjunction of two subsets of social rules. My concern with Hart here will be only to address the notion of a social rule in general, and not to attempt to give a theory of law of my own.

Similarly, some men wearing their hats in church does not falsify the claim that a rule against that behavior exists. The necessary proportions may even differ according to the specific practice or rule in question: there must be some preponderance of people who act in accordance with a given rule or habit, but it need not be all of them.

The two categories are the same as regards the requirement that they be generally, but not universally, practiced, but Hart identifies three characteristics of a rule which are not shared by something that is merely a social habit. First, deviations from a rule will generally be met with criticism, whereas behaviors that run contrary to a social habit need not be. If he fails to take off his hat in church, a man is likely to be pressured by the fellow members of his congregation to do so, whereas his failure to show up at the movie-house on Saturday night isn't necessarily likely to be met with social reproach. Not only are breaches of a rule likely, in fact, to be met with criticism, Hart says, but, as a second characteristic of social rules, members of a social group are likely to regard the deviation from the norm as itself being a good reason for voicing their objections. The existence of a social rule, when it does exist, is itself taken as the grounds for criticizing those who transgress it. In criticizing the man who left his hat on during church, his fellow congregant would be likely to say that there's a rule against such behavior and that the man had broken it.

While Hart refers to three characteristics of social rules, it is the third characteristic, what he calls the "internal aspect" of social rules, that really captures the essence of the concept. The first characteristic, the prevalence of punishment, is not sufficient for establishing the existence of a social rule, as I'll argue shortly, and the characteristic of explaining punishments with reference to rules is only a consequence of the internal aspect of rules. Thus we should focus on Hart's notion of the internal aspect

of rules in order to understand what is unique about social rules. By “internal aspect,” Hart seems to mean that the rules will have a normative character which colors the way they appear to members of the group whose rules they are, and that that character would not be visible to outsider observers. He characterizes the internal aspect in terms of the relatively simple example of the game of chess. In observing a game of chess, one might notice certain patterns in the way that the players tend to move their queens. An observer, however, would only capture the movements of the players' pieces according to their external aspect, by which they would not be distinguished from habits or practices. The players themselves, on the other hand, would recognize that certain ways of moving the queen are right and other ways are wrong, according to the rules of chess. All social rules, Hart claims, have this type of internal normative meaning for the members of the social groups whose rules they are. The external aspect corresponds to the mere convergence of patterns of behavior, which occurs whether a rule or a mere habit is present and which is observable equally by outsiders as by those participating in the activity. The internal aspect is characteristic only of rules, and is said to explain the fact that breaches of the rules often meet with criticisms which invoke the existence of the rule and its having been broken in this case.

There seems to be some ambiguity in the sense in which Hart uses the term “internal” to describe this characteristic of rules. On the one hand he refers to internal and external perspectives with the implication that the internal perspective on a social rule is available only to members of the social group in question, whereas both members and external observers of the group could take the external perspective on a social phenomenon. However, at other times he seems to take the “internal” of the internal aspect to refer to the psychological meaning that an action has if it is seen as in

accordance with or against a rule. The existence of a rule provides a reason for members of a social group to act in accordance with that rule, and therefore reference to the rule will be “internal” to explanations of their behavior. A chess player moves his bishop only diagonally because that is what the rules prescribe, not simply because that is the way it has always been done, as he might if it were merely a habit. Thus, social rules have an internal aspect in two senses, both because they are primarily visible as rules to members of the group and not to outsiders, and because the rule itself can be referred to in descriptions of actions, and in deliberations about how to act, insofar as actions can be against the rule or in accordance with it. Hart sometimes vacillates between the two senses of “internal” when discussing the internal aspect of rules, but I would contend that the assertion that rules are “internal” in the sense of providing reasons for action and an additional normative dimension for explaining action is the sense which captures most directly the unique aspect of a social rule as a concept.

We should pause to consider the relationship of the internal aspect of rules to the other characteristics of rules that Hart identifies. We can see immediately that it characterizes the difference between a rule and a habit at a deeper and more conceptual level than the first two distinguishing features he identifies, the likelihood of criticism in cases of a breach of a rule, and the fact that such criticism is itself likely to be explained by referring to the existence of the rule and its having been breached. In fact, it seems that the the prior two characteristics of the distinction are really inessential, and insofar as they characterize rules as opposed to habits, must be explained by reference to the idea of the internal aspect of rules. For example, Hart says that an observer of a social group could rigorously maintain a purely external point of view on the group and still observe the regularity with which certain behaviors were followed by punishments or other

sanctions against the members who engage in them, but that if an observer takes this perspective on the group's behavior "his description of their life cannot be in terms of rules at all."⁴ This suggests that the regularity of punishment is not truly an essential feature of rules as opposed to habits and that the significance that punishments have for Hart's understanding of rules stems only from the idea that the rule is seen as a *justification* for the punishment, and this stems directly from the notion that the rule has an internal aspect.

Therefore, we should focus on the idea that a rule has an internal aspect if we want to fully understand Hart's distinction. But what is this internal aspect which rule-governed practices have, but merely habitual practices do not? Hart is also at pains to stress that the internal aspect of rules is not reducible to a feeling of obligation or of the anticipation of punishment on the part of the people bound by those rules. "Such feelings are neither necessary nor sufficient for the existence of 'binding' rules. There is no contradiction in saying that people accept certain rules but experience no such feelings of compulsion."⁵ The "internality" of rules is thus not to be interpreted as referring to an internal subjective state of the person who is bound by the rule. What does the internal aspect of rules consist in then? It seems that ultimately, for Hart, the internality characteristic of rules amounts to the fact that rules open up, for those who accept them, a supplementary normative dimension of interpretation relating to certain behaviors. The existence of a rule makes it possible to identify behaviors as being in accordance with the rule or against the rule and makes sense of criticisms by grounding them in the existence of the rule.

4. Hart, *Concept of Law*, 89.

5. *Ibid.*, 57

Consider the rules of a game, such as chess, as in Hart's example. Both players view certain moves as permissible and other moves as impermissible. But this fact itself cannot be explained by the way that they habitually move their pieces. It would be unnecessary for an external observer to posit that moving the rook diagonally is “impermissible,” “wrong,” or “against the rules,” in order to explain the fact that players do not do it. The observer might avoid such terms if she was trying to describe the practice of playing chess, unless she made an effort to interpret it as a rule-governed game. Without the normative terms, the observer might be fully able to predict the course that a given game of chess was likely to take, but such predictions would be entirely in the external mode. The internal aspect of rules is not a matter of their predictive power, as Hart emphasizes, but rather a matter of what certain types of moves mean to the players. If they players agree on the rules, a claim that a certain move was “against the rules” will make sense to both of them (even if, in certain circumstances more complex than chess, they may not agree on whether the behavior was in fact against the rules or not).

The nature of the internal aspect can perhaps be clarified even more in the case of games by contrasting two types of responses that a player might have to another players move. If we imagine that player A is teaching player B how to play chess, we might expect A to make two different responses to two different kinds of moves on the part of B. One would be to indicate that a given move was against the rules. A might say, “you can't move the bishop like that; it only moves diagonally.” An entirely different kind of corrective response would be a prudential piece of advice. A might say, “you shouldn't move your bishop like that because you're leaving your king open over here.” This would be a kind of corrective to B's behavior, but of an entirely different kind than the response to a move that violated a rule. Both players and anyone taking an internal perspective on

the game would immediately recognize the difference between these two kinds of responses. The first is teaching B how to play chess in the sense of what the rules permit and require. The second is teaching B how to play chess in the sense of how to play one's best in order to win. These two types of responses might be indistinguishable from a purely external perspective, however.

To demonstrate more clearly that the internal aspect of a rule is the crucial feature of Hart's distinction, imagine a group where the following two conditions were met:

1. members of the group usually do action A in circumstance C
2. members of the group who fail to do A in circumstance C usually meet with some harm or rebuke at the hands of their fellow members after failing to do A.

This characterizes the activities of the group purely from an external perspective, and for all this it would not follow that the group had a rule requiring members to perform action A in circumstances C. Imagine two teams playing soccer. Generally speaking, one member of both teams remains in the goal at all times during the game. Furthermore, a team that pulls its goalie out of the goal during a game usually has a goal scored against them while the goalie is out of the goal, much to their chagrin. A common practice exists, and when it is breached, the team who breaches it usually meets with a negative consequence. For all this, as anyone familiar with the rules of soccer knows, it doesn't follow that there is any *rule* that the goalie must remain in the goal at all times. It only follows that, given the way soccer is played, it is *prudent* for a team to leave one player in the goal throughout the game. Thus, all of the external features which correspond to the existence of a rule can be met without a rule actually being in existence. It follows that it is the internal aspect, the fact that participants view the

existence of the rule as a reason or justification for punishment or rebuke, which is really at the heart of the distinctive character of social rules.

The internal aspect of rules, which seems to be the essential feature distinguishing them from social habits in Harts account, seems to amount to the fact that the existence of social rules makes certain actions appear under a normative description, whereas in the absence of social rules, a normative characterization is inappropriate. Hart suggests that behind every normative assertion, whether that one has a “duty” or “obligation” to do a particular action, that one “ought not” to have done something in a certain way, or that certain behaviors are “right” or “wrong,” there is some social rule which is appealed to in order to justify that assertion. The other side of this suggestion is that the existence of the social rule is what makes it possible for certain actions to appear as right or wrong, obligatory, permitted, or prohibited, to people who understand the rule, insofar as these actions are seen as bearing a certain relation to that rule. The existence of a social rule in a particular social community grounds the fact that normative terms can be applied to certain behaviors, because the rule itself is invoked to justify describing the behavior in such normative terms. This does not mean that two members of the same social group will agree as to whether a given action is permitted or prohibited under a specific rule, but the existence of the rule which both members recognize and accept is what permits them to talk about the action in these normative terms at all.

We have seen that the existence of a social rule in a particular group licenses the application of normative evaluations to certain behaviors, insofar as they can be seen as cases subsumed under that rule. This is opposed to a social habit or practice, the existence of which is not viewed as grounds for a normative evaluation of a behavior that diverges from the general practice, or one that converges with it. The definition of a social rule by

means of its internal aspect is a circular one, in a sense, insofar as it says that a social rule exists where people use it to justify their normative descriptions of actions, and the normative descriptions of actions are justified insofar as the social rule exists.

Nevertheless, the distinction between a habit and a rule makes sense, and Hart is right to point out that one can't be reduced to the other. There are mere social habits which don't entail the possibility of normative evaluation, and these are different from rules which can be appealed to as justification for a rebuke or reproach. And Hart persuasively demonstrates that if we restrict ourselves to the external perspective and treat rules as predictions we will fail to capture what people mean when they claim that their normative evaluation of a given behavior is *justified* by the existence of the rule. To say that a behavior is required or prohibited goes beyond saying that it is usually, or even universally, what is done or not done. A behavior that is practiced universally can nonetheless be normatively neutral. So Hart's distinction does seem to capture a difference that makes intuitive sense to those who live in societies with rules.

Although this distinction is visible to us, however, and although Hart makes it clearer and perhaps better defined, we still lack an account of the processes and events that must take place within a social group in order to constitute the existence of a particular rule, as opposed to a mere habit. What must take place in a society in order for there to be rules with this internal aspect, rather than just merely common practices? Obviously legislation is one way that this takes place. But as Hart rightly points out, the law-making power of a legislator or legislative body is itself based on an antecedent social rule defining the powers of the legislature and the circumstances in which they may be exercised. *The Concept of Law* lacks an ultimate social and metaphysical account of how social rules can be constituted. Hart is not to be blamed for this, of course; his

goal was not to do a social ontology but to characterize the kind of unity that belongs to the variety of things that are called “law.” However, we would not be amiss in wondering why certain practices are obligatory in certain social groups while others are merely commonly occurring. I believe that the notion of a collective agent, as spelled out in the last chapter, can provide us with a partial answer to this question, and I therefore want to return now to collective agents and Deleuze's habit/action distinction to show how it can elucidate the foundation of social rules and norms.

Social Group Agents as the Source of Social Rules

We saw in discussing Hart's account of social rules that the crucial feature distinguishing a rule from a group habit is that a rule has an “internal aspect” which explains its normative force and justifies reproaches against those who break the rule. A rule-governed practice has an external aspect as well, by which it can be identified as a general convergence of behavior and where divergences from that behavior are usually followed by punishing those who diverge. From this perspective, however, it is not in any way distinct from a mere group habit. I would suggest that we can see here in Hart a resonance with the way that Deleuze distinguishes actions from habits, which we explored in Chapter 2. We saw there that an action is distinguished from a habit by an intervening thought process which posits a rule to govern the dynamic interaction between the agent and the agent's environment. We could say that thought in this way constitutes an internal perspective on the agent's interaction with the world that would not exist in a mere habit, although a habit and an action might be externally indistinguishable. Recall that we distinguished swimming from floating not necessarily according to a difference in the way that the body moves relative to the waves, but in the fact that

thinking constitutes a rule which the swimmer creates on the basis of past experience to guide future movements of the body in relation to the waves. This rule now gives certain movements a normative character which they would not have in passive floating in the waves.

Can we say that the definition of action provided by Deleuze coincides directly with Hart's notion of a social rule and that thought as the process of constructing a common notion grounds the fact that there are social rules that exist distinct from group habits? Such a theory seems to provide a possibility for explaining why social rules with an internal aspect and concomitant normative force exist at all. However, we can't straightforwardly say that social rules result from any actions, because we have to take account of the *social* character of those rules. We can say that for an individual agent of any kind action creates a rule which sustains normative evaluation of certain movements as being in accordance with that rule or against it. But we still need to account for the fact that two individual human beings can make reference to *the same* social rule as a foundation for their normative evaluations of one another's behavior. The fact that two or more people can have a shared rule that can ground normative evaluations of one another is the phenomenon that primarily interests Hart in describing social rules. Our idea of an individual human being learning to swim would not likely not license him or her to object to the way someone else moved around in the water. In fact, this seems to be a motivation behind Deleuze's choice of the example: you can't learn to swim by having someone else tell you what the rule is or tell you when you're doing it right or wrong – the learning consists in constructing the rule for oneself.

So can Deleuze's habit/action distinction be helpful in understanding the source of social rules at all? I will try to show here that it can shed a good deal of light on Hart if

we apply the concept of a social group agent as discussed in the last chapter. The nature of social rules cannot be explained by reference to the thoughtful activity of an individual human agent, but if we consider the social group which has a given rule as an individual agent, the existence of normative social rules can be said to result from the actions (in Deleuze's sense) of that collective human agent. Social philosopher Margaret Gilbert has recently made a similar attempt to explain social rules by referring to the existence of a singular social collective, which she calls a "plural subject." I'll proceed with frequent reference to Gilbert's account because it will be instructive to see where and why my proposal diverges from hers regarding the nature of collective agents.

Gilbert's theory attempts to provide a foundation for the existence of social rules on the basis of two intimately related key concepts, the concept of "joint commitment" and the concept of a "plural subject." For Gilbert, a plural subject is constituted when several people enter into a joint commitment with some specified content. The content of joint commitments can be quite various, but we only need to be concerned here with joint commitments that constitute social rules, of which Gilbert's account says,

There is a social rule in population P if and only if the members of P are jointly committed to accepting as a body a requirement (or fiat) of the following form: members of P are to perform action A in circumstance C.⁶

According to Gilbert's account, a plural subject exists whenever a joint commitment is made, and thus the existence of any social rule implies the existence of some plural subject of that rule. The notion of plural subjects is important to Gilbert's account because, as she argues convincingly in several places, the commitment of a group of people *as a body* to a given belief, intention, or position, does not necessarily imply that all, or even any, of the members of that group are personally committed to that

6. Gilbert, *Political Obligation*, 197.

position as an individual human being (as opposed to as a body).⁷ For example, the editorial board of a newspaper could make a collective decision for the paper to endorse a presidential candidate without it being the case that any of them personally endorse that candidate. This condition clearly could be in effect in cases of social rules. An individual person can be part of a social group with a given rule while still personally believing that such a rule should not exist. He or she can nevertheless recognize that it is the rule of a social group that he or she belongs to and fully understand the rule's normative force from an internal perspective. Thus the important stipulation in Gilbert's definitions that a joint commitment implies accepting something "as a body." Any joint commitment for Gilbert implies the existence of some plural subject which is distinct from the members and their aggregate.

In Chapter 3 I proposed a theory of what I referred to as "social group agents," or "human collective agents," arguing that many individuals which are made up of a plurality of human beings should be taken as individual agents if they instantiate the Deleuzian structure of the three faculties. These social group agents correspond to Gilbert's plural subjects in being social groups to whom it is appropriate often to ascribe, as individuals, habits, memories, and other mental properties. Here I want to follow Gilbert's lead in suggesting that these social individuals are the source of social rules as we commonly conceive of them, but depart from her by arguing that they are not necessarily constituted by anything like a joint commitment in the way that she describes it. Instead of focusing on the actions and mental states of individual human beings and describing how these can be coordinated in the right way to create a plural subject, we should start out by taking a perspective on a social group as a whole and look for

7. Ibid., 200-203.

processes within it that constitute the faculties necessary for agency. For reasons that go beyond the specific problem of social rules (and political obligation, to which it is closely tied), Gilbert is committed to a framework on which plural subjects and joint commitments mutually imply one another. It would be beyond the scope of this project to assess the status of plural subjects and their relation to joint commitments in all of the myriad contexts in which they appear in Gilbert's work. However, I will argue here, regarding the foundations of social rules specifically, that although relating them to collective social agents is useful for understanding the internal aspect of social rules, there is no need to appeal to joint commitments as part of my theory of the origin of social rules.

Gilbert appeals to plural subjects constituted through joint commitments to account for the foundation of social rules because she thinks that such a theory adequately meets three challenges faced by any account of social rules. She calls these the “grounding problem,” the “group standard problem” and the “felt bindingness problem.”⁸ The group standard problem is more or less equivalent to the problem mentioned above, of explaining how a rule can be a justified standard for all members of a social group, rather than just a rule one individual makes to guide its own behavior. The appeal to a collective entity which is the true source of the rule does address this problem. However, as I'll argue shortly, this does not require conceiving of that social collective as the product of joint commitment. The felt bindingness problem that Gilbert raises is the necessity of giving some reason why so often people say that they feel psychologically bound, or feel a kind of social pressure, to act in accordance with a rule. This problem is also alleviated by the fact that it is the social group which exerts pressure on its members

8. Ibid., 195-197.

to conform to the rule, but I will argue that it also does not require us to conclude that such social groups are always the result of joint commitments. Gilbert's understanding of the grounding problem, on the other hand, rests on a misinterpretation of the notion of a social rule, and the failure to recognize that some of the properties Hart ascribes to social rules are not really essential to the concept. Once we recognize that the title to criticize any breaches of the rule is only a contingent feature of some social rules and not intrinsically linked to the concept, we will see that a social rule does not require the existence of a joint commitment by the members of the social group whose rule it is.

The proposal that I want to put forward is that a social group has a rule by virtue of an action on the part of the group itself, considered as a single thinking individual. We characterized an action in Chapter 2 as the construction of a dynamic genetic definition that serves as a rule relating the agent to the thing acted upon. Such a rule requires the parts of the agent's body to interact with one another and with external bodies in organized and coordinated ways. Insofar as the human members of a social group are the material parts of the group they are the body of the collective agent. So it makes sense that the action of a social collective would create a rule that constrains them to act and interact with one another in certain ways. Gilbert's felt bindingness problem is to explain why, when a social rule is in effect, a member of that social group may feel psychologically bound or compelled to act in accordance with the rule. While I think that Hart is right to point out that although this feeling of bindingness is often present in cases of social rules, it is not a necessary feature, the idea that a social rule corresponds to an action of a social group would explain why individual human beings often feel bound to act in accordance with the rule. The difference between an action and a habit is that in the case of an action there is a rule that coordinates movements and makes them obligatory.

This coordination of the movements of different parts would then account for the feeling of being compelled to behave in a specific way, in accordance with the rule. The strength of the feeling of being bound to behave in a certain way would be proportional to the amount that the rule required a particular human individual to diverge from his or her habitual behavior. Thus we would expect there to be a strong feeling of being compelled in cases where a large diversion was required, but none in cases where one would already habitually behave as the rule prescribes. The mechanisms by which the feeling of being bound is produced could vary widely with different social groups and different situations, from explicit punishments for transgressors to rituals bestowing honor on those who uphold social rules to small correctives employed by parents to the behaviors of their children. All of these mechanisms could contribute to feelings of being bound with respect to particular social rules.

The analysis of a social rule as the action of a social collective would also solve Gilbert's group standard problem. The group standard problem is the question of how anyone can have the authority to issue a rule which is a standard for all members of a social group. My account solves this problem in the same way that Gilbert's own notion of a plural subject does. A social collective's action can constitute a standard for all the members of a given social group because it is the action of all of those members, acting as an individual. It isn't the case that one member of the group is giving orders to the others, or if they do so it is only grounded on a social rule which is the action of the entire social collective together.

Although we can address the group standard problem and the felt bindingness problem by referring to a social agent as the source of social rules, doing so does not require us to conceive of that agent as the result of joint commitment on the part of all of

its members, as Gilbert does. The grounding problem, however, could pose a problem for my view where Gilbert's view seems to solve it nicely. The grounding problem, as Gilbert puts it, is “what is it about a social rule that immediately grounds rights to performance and the standing to exert punitive pressure?”⁹ It does seem that in paradigmatic cases of social rules the existence of a rule in a social group is thought to justify claims against those who violate the rule by other members of the social group. I would contend, however, that the right of any member to enforce compliance with a rule is not an intrinsic feature of social rules, but merely a common feature of many specific social rules. Take the criminal law as one straightforward example. When a law exists forbidding a certain behavior in a complex, modern state this does not give any citizen the right to punish breaches of the law. The state itself reserves the right to punish criminal offenses or assigns it to a specific set of functionaries within the social group, i.e. the criminal justice system. We could also find examples of this in rules of social etiquette, which are generally agreed to be cases of social rules. If there is a rule in a certain group that one is only to use the smallest fork to eat the salad course at a dinner, it doesn't follow that any of one's dinner companions have a right to object to one's use of the largest fork to eat the salad. They may notice that one has used the wrong fork and feel that one is breaking the rule by doing so, but not be empowered to punish and try to correct this behavior. It may be that it falls to a person who has a specific relationship with the transgressor to correct his or her behavior.

Social rules generally involve the conferring of a right on someone to enforce obedience to the rule, but it isn't usually the case that any other member of the group has that right, as Gilbert seems to suggest. Who is empowered to enforce the rule and rebuke

9. Ibid., 195.

those who break it depends on the particular rule and social group in question. I would contend that it is better to think of the conferring of a right to punish on certain parties as itself being part of the content of the rule, not as a general presumption that any rule can be enforced by any other member of the social group. A rule creates an obligation for some individual human beings to behave in a certain way and confers a right to enforce that behavior on certain other human beings. Who specifically is obligated and who has the corresponding right to punish those who violate the rule is part of the content of a particular rule, not a universal feature of all social rules. Insofar as Gilbert's joint commitment theory supposes that all members of a social group have the same obligations to obey and the same rights to punish transgressions of a rule, this would seem to be a weakness of Gilbert's view as a good number of social rules don't in fact seem to work this way.

Hart makes a valid distinction between a social rule and a group habit, and Gilbert's concept of a plural subject provides a foundation for the distinction in social ontology. We should recognize that social rules, as distinct from practices, are a crucial part of human social life, and they can be best explained by being ascribed to the social collective itself, distinct from any of its individual human members, as the sources of this rule. However, we do not need to think of the existence of this social collective itself as grounded on the joint commitment of each and all of its members to the creation and upholding of these rules. We would do better to look at the actions of the social group as the result of complex mental processes within the group, involving its individual members in a variety of different ways, rather than to only try to explain the group's action as the result of the purposeful actions of individual human beings joined together. In keeping with the theory of social group action outlined in Chapter 3, we can view a

social group as an agent that coordinates the movements of its parts by the construction of dynamic genetic rules in the same way that individual human beings as agents do. The normative character, or internal aspect, of social rules stems from their being the result of the social group's action which coordinates and imposes norms on its parts, which are the individual human members. A social group agent certainly could be constituted by the joint commitment of its various members, and in the cases of small, relatively non-hierarchical groups this is no doubt commonly how such coordination occurs. However, my contention, *pace* Gilbert, is that such joint commitment is not a necessary condition of social group action, and so not a necessary condition of social rules. They may come about in other, much more indirect and often difficult to decipher ways.

There is still another issue that I would like to address in the theory of social rules, which stems from the broader context in which Hart introduces the notion in *The Concept of Law*. Hart introduces the concept of a social rule largely in response to the inadequacy he identifies in the positivistic jurisprudence introduced by John Austin in *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined*. Following Hart, we can characterize such a positivistic theory of law as one where law is defined as the orders, backed by threats, of a sovereign, given to subjects who habitually obey him or her. Hart has two main lines of criticism against such a theory, the first concerning the continuity of a system of laws across changes in the sovereign or legislator, and the second concerning the fact that the sovereign or legislator seems often to be bound by the law him- or herself. In a sense, the theory of social rules I have put forward here asserts that the social group itself is a kind of sovereign insofar as social rules result from the actions of that group taken as an individual agent. It might seem, therefore, that this theory goes against Hart's intention and reintroduces a kind of positivism at the level of the social group itself, rather than any

individual or legislative body as sovereign. It seems worthwhile to consider, then, whether this theory itself falls victim to the kind of paradoxes of sovereignty that Hart level's against Austin's view. I will argue that it does not because of the nature of the social group and the theory of action that is operative in my account. However, we should consider Hart's critiques in more detail before I attempt to respond to them.

Hart criticizes the positivistic theory of law by means of a thought experiment involving Rex, a ruler who gives orders to his subjects, backed up by threats of punishment for disobedience, who the subjects habitually obey, and who does not himself habitually obey any other legislator. The first critique imagines that Rex dies and is succeeded by his son, Rex II. We suppose that the subjects will continue to obey Rex II, but if the law was identical to the orders given by Rex, Hart contends that there is no reason to think that Rex II has any authority to legislate, nor is there any reason to believe that Rex II's orders will be habitually obeyed simply because those of his father were. Hart contends that there must be, therefore, a social rule, distinct from any orders promulgated by Rex or Rex II, the acceptance of which by the subjects explains the transfer of legislative authority from father to son. For Hart, this means that there is some content to the law which is external to the orders given by the sovereign, and that therefore the essence of the law can't be identical with the sovereign's commands.

Hart's second critique of the theory of law as the orders of a sovereign stems from the fact that there may be rules which restrict the powers of the sovereign to legislate and that those rules, if they exist, constitute a part of the law. If Rex is restricted, by a written constitution for example, from making laws which deprive subjects of certain of their legal rights, this restriction cannot emanate from an order made by Rex. If it could, then it would really be no restriction at all. But, Hart argues, there are clearly examples of

actually existing legal systems in which the powers of the legislative authority are limited in this way. Rules may exist that would empower the courts to strike down laws which go beyond the scope permitted by the constitution. Clearly, if law were identical with the orders given by the sovereign, such restrictions would be an impossibility. Hart extends this critique to theories that would try to maintain the identification of law with the orders of the sovereign by locating the sovereign authority in the electorate of a democracy as well. In order for the electorate to have legislating authority, there must be rules, those proscribing the manner of elections for example, that would place limits on that authority. These rules can not be parsed as habits of obedience to the sovereign, since they are constitutive of the sovereign, in the sense that they proscribe what the electorate must do in order to legislate as a sovereign.¹⁰ Failure to comply with correct electoral procedures would be grounds for invalidating a law, and therefore the rules proscribing the manner of elections are normative, not merely descriptions of a social practice.

I think that by identifying the source of rules with the social group identified as an individual agent we can avoid Hart's arguments. The point about continuity is fairly easily addressed. The legislative authority of Rex II is accounted for by the fact that the social group, which is the source of the rules proscribing who has the authority to make laws, persists although Rex dies. If some rule is already in existence to the effect that the power to make laws passes to the monarch's son on his death there will be no problem explaining the subjects immediate obedience to the orders of Rex II. If the social group itself ceased to exist, or continued to exist, but had its organization in some way altered so that it could no longer constitute a single agent, then its power to make rules really would cease, and if the individual human beings who made up the group survived the

10. Hart, *Concept of Law*, 76-77.

demise of the social individual their obligations to obey the rules that they formerly obeyed would be destroyed. This process would of course be messy and difficult to discern in reality, but it poses no theoretical problem for the view that social rules are the result of social group actions.

The problem of restrictions on the rule-making authority of the sovereign is perhaps more difficult to address, but I think that my account can meet it. It's crucial to note, as a starting point, that the category of social rules is much more broad than that of laws, to which Hart is referring in making his argument. Hart is certainly correct to point out that there are many legal systems in which there are *legal* restrictions on the legislative capacity of even the highest *legal* authority. Courts may be empowered to invalidate an election or strike down a law because they conflict with rules regarding procedure or content. The judges themselves, however, may still not be empowered to promulgate new laws, and thus can't be said to be a higher legislative authority. If this is the case, then in that legal system it is correct to say that there is no *legal* sovereign, because there are rules which are beyond the power of any person or body to abrogate legally.

Legal rules, however, are just one type of social rules, as Hart and others clearly acknowledge. My claim would be that the social group itself as an organized, acting entity is "sovereign" with regard to the whole set of social rules, not just the law. The question would then be, are there rules which normatively bind the whole social group and which it is outside its power to alter? I think the answer to that question is negative. Let's first consider the specific kinds of rules that Hart has in mind here, more or less constitutional restrictions on the power of a person or body of persons to make laws. There can be rules barring a monarch or the electorate of a democracy from making

certain types of laws, or restricting the manner in which they must act in order to legislate. These rules may not themselves be subject to possible legal changes, but they can be ascribed to the social group as their source and be changed by social processes other than legislation. Although there may be no legal means by which a monarch may change the rule prohibiting him from depriving citizens of certain rights, there will still be possible social processes, corresponding to actions on the part of the social group, that could transform or destroy such a rule. Thus these rules are not beyond the purview of the social group as an agent to change and don't constitute a limit to its "sovereignty." The broader question, however, is whether there are social rules at a higher level than these which are constitutive of the social group's power to act and make rules and which would be beyond alteration by any activity of the social body. I would argue that there are not, because the power of the social group to act as such comes from the way that it is *de facto* organized, not from any higher level norms conferring authority on it. The social group's agency, or its ability to make rules, comes from it having an organization that in some way corresponds to the structure of the three faculties, but this is a fact, not a norm. There is no rule obligating the social group to have this organization, or proscribing that it can only act by following certain procedures. Therefore I think that the social group, considered as an individual agent, can, without contradiction, be said to be "sovereign" with regard to its ability to create social rules.

H.L.A. Hart draws out a very important feature of human social life by pointing out the distinction between a group habit and a social rule. Rules of social groups are real and have a distinctive internal aspect which prevents them from being reducible to any description in terms of habits or common practices. I have argued here that the foundation for this distinction can be seen by taking social groups as real agents and identifying

social actions as the source of group rules. I've also argued that social group action can be autonomous and need not be conceived as resulting from the purposeful participation of the human individual members of a social group. I want to turn now to Deleuze's own social philosophy to show how this kind of framework is at work in his understanding of society, although easily obscured by a complete shift in terminology.

Social Group Action in *Anti-Oedipus*

Anti-Oedipus, co-written by Deleuze with Felix Guattari and published in 1972, is a complex book that tries to accomplish several things at once. It is in the first place an extended polemic against mainstream psychoanalysis which, while it maintains and repurposes several Freudian ideas, excoriates much of the contemporary European psychoanalytic establishment as agents of a reactionary form of social control. It's also an attempt to breath new life into Marx's critique of capitalism by broadening the concept of surplus value beyond the scope of what we traditionally think of as the economic sphere and into the broader milieu of culture and social psychology. At the same time, it contains an ambitious, Nietzsche-inspired history of major forms of human social organization that engages with contemporary anthropology to tell a story about the development of human society from "primitive" agricultural social groups to modern international capitalism. No doubt there are many interpretive approaches to the text that would yield significant philosophical insights, but I will focus here primarily on the third chapter of the text in which Deleuze and Guattari present their theory of historical forms of social organization. I believe this chapter most directly presents the important sociological concepts that represent the text's most distinctive contribution to social theory, and I

believe that the account of social groups and social rules that I have adduced here can be helpful in clarifying those concepts.

Deleuze and Guattari present their history of human social forms in terms of concepts like “flows of desire,” “socius,” “inscription,” and “coding.” “To code desire – and the fear, the anguish, of decoded flows – is the business of the socius.”¹¹ They describe society as a “megamachine” which integrates human beings and their technical machines into a functional whole. “The social machine is literally a machine, irrespective of any metaphor, inasmuch as it exhibits an immobile motor and undertakes a variety of interventions.”¹² We might seem to be a long way here from the idea of social groups and social rules, of collective norms of behavior with an internal perspective, or from any other terminology that political philosophers have traditionally used to describe human social interaction. However, I think that applying these terms from Hart can help us see much more clearly what is going on in the descriptions of social systems that Deleuze and Guattari give.

The first foundational concept of *Anti-Oedipus* is the “desiring-machine” and the corresponding “flows of desire” that the desiring-machines produce when hooked up to one another. This is disorienting from the start because social theories most often begin with an account of the individual human being and build up from that foundation. Deleuze and Guattari eschew this tactic out of a desire to avoid anthropocentrism or positing a controversial theory of a general human nature, as well as wanting to engage with Freud and the inheritance of psychoanalysis about the nature of the Id. If our aim is to restrict our discussion to the theory of human society, however, we can simply take “flows of desire” to refer to all processes which take place within and between individual

11. AO 139.

12. Ibid., 141.

human beings when they live together in groups. As described in *Anti-Oedipus*, these are characteristically biological processes, such as alimentary, excretory, or sexual functions, however, in principle they can be any processes that human beings habitually engage in. What is important to note is that when Deleuze and Guattari refer to flows or desiring-production, they mean these processes insofar as they lack social meaning. They are sometimes explicit about this and refer to “decoded” or “deterritorialized” flows, but desiring-production and flows of desire alone usually refer to these processes as they exist without coding or inscription by the socius. We'll see what this coding refers to and what I mean by “social meaning” momentarily. We might think of these flows and desiring machines as referring to merely “natural” or “biological” processes, as opposed to socially constructed meanings of these processes. Deleuze and Guattari don't use this terminology, likely out of a concern that terms like these themselves suggest a particular interpretation or meaning ascribed to these processes, but if we think of “natural” as meaning simply not coded by social forces this can give us an intuitive grasp on what the authors mean.

The other fundamental element of Deleuze and Guattari's social theory is the “socius” or “social machine,” and the process which it undertakes, called alternatively “coding” or “inscription.” These are, again, uncommon terms for a work of social philosophy, and their uncommonness would seem to suggest that there is some reason that the common terms they might have used (“society” or “population,” for example) are not adequate for their purposes. I have used somewhat awkward terms such as “social group agent” for similar reasons, hoping that the discussion surrounding the terms would clarify the sense in which I meant to distinguish the idea from other conceptions of social groups. I believe that Deleuze and Guattari, however, use the terms “socius” and “social

machine” in a way that corresponds quite closely to what I mean by a social group agent. They employ these terms to emphasize first, that although the socius or social machine is made up of human beings, its action has a degree of autonomy from the actions of its members, and second, that the character of the socius or social machine corresponds to its internal organization, the way that it functions in a machinic way as a result of parts fitting together, as in my description of social agency resulting from a group's instantiating the mental faculties. The socius is a whole social group considered as an individual agent, independently from its constitution by the activities of its members. It acts instead because of its organization. Although its material parts are individual human beings, along with their tools which serve a social function, it is the way in which they are organized together and the processes that can take place because of this organization that matter for its active capacities.¹³

What does it mean, then, that the social machine acts by coding or inscribing? I have argued above that social groups act by constituting rules for their members. Can we say that this amounts to the same thing Deleuze and Guattari mean when they say that the business of the social machine is to code the flows of desire? I think it's legitimate to identify the two if we recall that the identifying feature of a social rule as we derived the concept from Hart was that rules had an internal aspect that was lacking for practices that were just group habits. A rule makes the difference between being able to say that a member of a group ought to behave in a certain way in a given situation and simply predicting that he or she is likely to behave in that way. The social coding that Deleuze and Guattari describe works in a similar way: by attaching a social significance to people or things which permits, proscribes, or prohibits certain behaviors toward them by

13. “The social machine, in contrast [with technical machines], has men for its parts, even if we view them *with* their machines.” Ibid., 141 (emphasis in original).

members of the group. Take their first example of a major type of code, the genealogical systems created by early agricultural societies (what Deleuze and Guattari call the “primitive territorial machine”) to describe structures of kinship. These systems of alliance and filiation are ways of ascribing terms to individual human beings to identify their familial relationships with one another. It is a “code” in the sense of a system of terms used to categorize the people in one's clan or social group. But it is also a “code” in the normative sense of a “code of laws,” in that the terms themselves proscribe the individual women that a man is allowed to choose a wife from, usually prohibiting incest and proscribing exogamy. Social coding of this kind therefore constitutes the internal aspect of a social rule. The categories created through the coding process are understandable to all members of the group and they also ground normative judgments about the propriety or impropriety of certain behaviors, such as two people marrying.

Coding throughout *Anti-Oedipus* refers to any process of ascribing social meaning to objects, behaviors, and people that tell members of the social group what they ought to do with regard to the coded thing. These these codes don't always take the form of formal commands or clear imperatives stating exactly what one must do or not do, but the social meanings attributed to objects through the process of inscription are never separated from a normative aspect, an imperative, permission, or prohibition. Hence, I think it is justifiable to interpret them as social rules, though we might not always be able to state them as “member of group M must do action A in circumstances C.” Hart recognized as well that social rules are not always commands; some are procedures specifying how social powers and capacities can be exercised (what Hart called “secondary rules”). Deleuze and Guattari are largely talking about the same kinds of phenomena when they refer to codes.

There is no reason to go into the specifics of Deleuze and Guattari's historical account of social formations and social machines here. My goal was only to characterize the basic concepts out of which that account is built and to argue that they are comparable to those I have extracted from other sources in Deleuze's oeuvre. We've seen that the concept of actions of action and multiplicities based on his earlier work can be used to ground a theory of social groups as individual agents and allowed us to conceive of the action of groups as resulting in internally normative rules for their members. I've tried to show here that that conception of human social life is not far from where Deleuze and Guattari actually begin in their theory of society. Flows of desire are the habitual or “natural” processes within a social group, and the inscription or coding of the socius is the action of group which proceeds by creating rules that coordinate the behaviors of its parts, individual human beings.

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Our starting point in this chapter was that there is a significant difference within human social life between behaviors which groups of people merely commonly engage in and those which are normative standards for members of such groups. I've followed H.L.A. Hart in characterizing this difference as the distinction between social practices or group habits and social rules and adopted his idea of the internal aspect of social rules as their defining feature. I've then tried to argue that this distinction can be assimilated to the difference between an action and a habit in the general theory of agency. In addition to the plausibility of viewing sufficiently organized groups of people as individual agents, I hope I have shown here the fruitfulness that taking such a view can have for our theoretical conceptions of the relationship between individual human beings and the social groups that they belong to. The actions of groups of people should not be analyzed

only by adding up the actions of their members on the assumption that group agency is a simple aggregation. Often we should take the viewpoint of looking at the whole social group as an individual to gain insight into social phenomena. At the same time, the social group's action on its individual human members does not consist merely in conditioning them through threats of punishment to predictably follow orders. Social group action creates rules which are normatively meaningful for the individual human beings within a social group. The social standards thus created have a significant impact on how individual human members of a social group view their own actions and desires. Social groups as agents and social rules as distinct from habitual practices go together to give us a novel way of looking at human social life and at the relationships of individual people to the societies to which they belong. Social groups have a degree of autonomy from their members and are more than simply the result of many people's actions added together. At the same time, however, the influence of social groups on their members is not merely repression, punishment, and restriction of freedoms, but social groups influence the normative structure within which the world appears to the individual human members of those groups in complex and nuanced ways.

Conclusion

Theories of Action

Throughout this work, I have referred to "actions" and "agents" and "theories of action." I've described my aims as offering a theory of action and arguing that social groups are agents. Nevertheless, some readers might find the use of this terminology for the phenomena to which I've applied them to be incongruous and strange and I should acknowledge that I am using it in a different sense from many philosophers, and probably a different sense from most ordinary language understandings of the terms as well. Specifically, many people would define action, and distinguish it from non-action, by reference to some end state which the agent acts for the sake of, or in order to bring about. The way that I have defined the Deleuzian concept of action throughout this work has consistently avoided appealing to the notion of a purpose or end state as a necessary condition for action to take place. When I use swimming or drawing a circle as examples of action, it is partly in order to make clear that the agent need not have any idea of an end to be achieved through his or her action. In fact, given the implication of the eternal return in the conception of action I put forward here, there's a significant sense in which the agent *can't* have a clear idea beforehand of the state of affairs being brought about by his or her action.

There are clearly appealing facets to theories of action that define action in terms of behavior directed towards an end. One of these would be that it would seem to allow the theory of action to serve directly as a foundation for an account of practical rationality. If actions are essentially done for ends, they relate directly to deliberations about means and ends. If that is the case, then to be an agent is essentially to be a

practical reasoner and subject in some way to the standards of practical rationality, and we can connect the theory of action with a moral psychology that is fairly amenable to most people's moral intuitions. Unfortunately, all of this doesn't follow directly from the concept of action I've outlined here. Action, according to this Deleuzian view, doesn't necessarily involve the concept of end at all, and therefore actions are not inherently amenable to evaluation in the terminology of practical rationality.

I don't want to claim at all that there is no such thing as goal-directed behavior or action done for the sake of some end. Plainly, rational deliberation about a course of action is possible, and both individual human beings and some group agents seem to do it frequently. Such practical reason can involve deciding on a course of action on the basis of an assessment that it will lead to a desired end, and the action can then be conceived of as done for the sake of that end. My contention is merely that this goal-oriented behavior which may be affected by processes of practical reasoning, is not identical to action *tout court*. Much more research in this line would be required to build from the concept of action I've attributed to Deleuze here, that of action as bodily movement which follows the mental determination of a rule coordinating the motions of one's own body with the surrounding environment, to a theory of goal-directed action which can be evaluated according to standards of practical reason. I think the first step in such a line of thought would have to be to give a closer interrogation of the notion of a rule and the relationship between rules and concepts than I've been able to give here.

Although the theory of action I've presented here doesn't correspond to many people's intuitions because it is divorced from any necessary connection to an end, I would still defend my use of the terminology of action to describe this concept. The root of the problem of action is to distinguish between things that an agent does and things

that happen to an agent. Put in these general terms, the Deleuzian theory that I've argued for does propose a solution to this problem. It distinguishes between particular events that are actions and those that are passions, and, more importantly for my broader purposes here, it distinguishes theoretically between particular individuals that are capable of being agents, at least in some circumstances, from those that are merely patients and never act in any respect. Thus, I think it is appropriate to refer to this account as a theory of action and to talk about it sorting individuals into agents and non-agents, although it does not attempt to serve all the functions that some might expect from a theory of action.

The Physical Instantiation of Actions

Another problem not addressed by what I've said in this work is how the faculties are actually instantiated in social group agents, that is, exactly what processes in a given collective agent constitute its habits, its memories, and its thought processes, as well as what mechanisms give normative force to the social rules I've argued are characteristic of group agents. If we do take this theory of social group agency as correct, an interesting task would be to look at particular group agents to discover what processes taking place within the social group correspond to the mental faculties and to trace the relationships between social rules and actions of the group. Unfortunately, nothing about the theoretical account of agency given here tells us very much about exactly what these processes would look like in particular groups. There is no particular reason to think that the processes corresponding to the faculties in different social group agents would be homologous to one another. There may be many and various different ways in which different social group agents instantiate the faculties of memory or thought. We would

have to look at various group agents with the schema of the mental faculties in mind to try to discover the processes that are fulfilling these functions in each group.

This failure to tell us very much about the empirical structure of social group agents may seem like a shortcoming for the thesis that social groups can be real agents. I would contend, however, that as far as this disconnect between the ideal structure of the faculties and its actual instantiation in material processes we are in no worse of a position with regard to groups of human beings than we are with regard to individual human agents. Given a particular metaphysical account of agency that we accept (the one I have drawn from Deleuze or any other) we are always still faced with a problem of understanding the physical properties and processes by which an individual human being instantiates agency under that conception. There is still much research to be done to tell us how agency is realized in the brains and bodies of human individuals (or even in a specific individual -- we can't be sure that the same faculties are realized in physically similar processes in two different human beings). Similarly, empirical studies must be undertaken to describe how the organization of a given social group meets the characteristics of agency. Such a description would likely have to go to a deeper level of analysis than that taking individual human beings as atoms and would consider phenomena like emotional contagion and other unconscious transmissions of affect among human individuals.¹ Given the connection I've drawn between social rules and social group actions, an analysis of the processes that concretely instantiate agency in a group would also have to take account of the social practices by which members of the group are made to feel and identify with the normative salience of social rules. *Anti-*

1. See Protevi, *Political Affect*, for a discussion of the social function of transmissions of affect in a variety of social situations and groups.

Oedipus can be read as a part of such a study, albeit with reference to relatively broad types of social formations.

The theoretical framework for action developed here thus leaves a large number of empirical questions regarding social group agents unanswered. This is to be expected, however, and should not count against the thesis that social groups are agents any more than the failure of neuropsychology to identify the physical mechanisms that instantiate a given theory of agency should count against the thesis that individual human beings are agents.

Deleuze's Kantianism

A theme that I began with in the first chapter seems to require revisiting here at the end of the work. I started out by asserting one way in which it seemed to me that Deleuze's philosophy was Kantian, in contrast to some interpreters who stress that Deleuze's thought is fundamentally opposed to Kant's project. I noted there that Deleuze adopts the concept of critique from Kant, by way of Nietzsche, and employs critique as a method in *Difference and Repetition*, trying to apply it even to the things that remain outside the scope of critique in Kant's own philosophy. After the rest of my study, however, I think it's worthwhile to point out two more major Kantian strands running through Deleuze's thinking about action.

The first concerns Deleuze's division of receptivity from spontaneity. In his book on Foucault, Deleuze identifies the presence of such a division in the former's work as constitutive of his "neo-Kantianism."² However, I've tried to show here how Deleuze divides the active synthesis of thought from the passive syntheses of habit and memory in

2. F 60.

a very similar way. As we saw, Kant himself figured in a significant way in Deleuze's account of thought as the active faculty. Deleuze drew a dividing line between the active "I" of the faculty of thought and the passive, receptive "self" of the first two syntheses. Deleuze directly takes the idea of a temporal separation between the I and the self from Kant and it seems to figure into the way he conceives of activity. If distinguishing spontaneity from receptivity is neo-Kantianism, Deleuze himself is neo-Kantian as well.

If my analysis of Deleuze's concept of action is correct, however, we can point out a third way in which Deleuze is a Kantian which may be even more significant for ongoing Deleuze research than the first two. For Deleuze, as for Kant, thought is essentially a faculty of rules, and action necessarily involves rule-following. Drawing on Spinoza and Nietzsche for my interpretation, I've argued that thought and action, for Deleuze, necessarily involve the construction and following of a rule, and that this distinguishes them from habitual behaviors, even if the later are "regular" or predictable. As the faculty of the understanding in Kant can be defined as a "faculty of rules," so thought for Deleuze is a faculty of rules, in that it is active by creating rules.³ To do something as an action under the guidance of a rule is fundamentally different from a mere habitual behavior, just as in Kant there is a fundamental distinction between pure sensibility and the perception of objects falling under concepts. We can also clearly see the importance of the connection between rules and action in Kant's practical philosophy, when he argues that action by a rational being implies the creation of a maxim.

In Chapter 4, we saw also that the notion of rules and rule-following carries over in a significant way into the practical and social domain for Deleuze. Insofar as the social machine acts on the individual human being in *Anti-Oedipus*, I argued that it does so

3. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A126.

through the constitution of social rules, which are fundamentally normative in a way that goes beyond being merely statistical norms or regularities. I think it's appropriate to say for Deleuze that the social group does command its individual human members in some sense, beyond merely training or conditioning them into certain patterns of behavior. This is important to point out in the context of Deleuze scholarship because many commentators on Deleuze who apply his thought to the sphere of social philosophy⁴ seem to take only what Hart would call the external perspective on social structures and miss the fact that social rules are, to the members of a social group, experienced as genuine reasons for acting and for offering reproaches to those who transgress the rules. The reality of social rules as rules should be taken seriously by any attempt to draw insights from Deleuze's philosophy for social theory.

Thus, I think it's clear that Deleuze adopts three major theses from Kant's philosophy that are greatly helpful in orienting ourselves within Deleuze's own thought. First, critique is a method for explaining why appearing phenomena arise out of more fundamental structures, not merely a task of destroying appearances or showing that they are misleading illusions. Second, the mind as receptive "self" is separated from the mind as active "I" by the form of time, such that even if the active and passive faculties belong to one individual, they can never be said to entirely coincide. Third, thought is a faculty of rules and rules are a necessary component of action. I think these three points of overlap show how misleading it would be to characterize Deleuze's thought as broadly "anti-Kantian" or "anti-critical." We should instead take a much closer look at the relationship of Deleuze's thought to that of Kant, as several scholars of Deleuze's work have recently begun to do,⁵ in order to pinpoint the precise objection that Deleuze makes

4. See, for example, Protevi, *Political Affect*, or DeLanda, *New Theory*.

5. See Hughes *Reader's Guide, Genesis of Representation*; Toscano, *Theatre of Production*; Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*; Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, Essay 7; Carr, *Deleuze's Critical Philosophy*.

to Kantianism. I am obviously in no position to offer a definitive, comprehensive statement of the way that Deleuze's thought diverges from Kantianism, however, I would argue that the considerations regarding Deleuze's conception of action here are consistent with Hughes' reflections, especially regarding the place of rules in the two figures' systems of thought. In Kant's first *Critique*, the categories are fixed and universal rules governing all possible objects of experience. The process of schematization involves the application of those rules to intuitions through making them more specific and determinate, however, the concepts of the understanding always obey the meta-rules of the categories, which are universally the same for all rational beings. As we have seen, for Deleuze, when active thought is employed by an individual, no meta-rule exists to guide the creation of one specific rule. Thought proceeds by rules and action involves rule-following, but there is no necessary source of rules outside the agent or thinker, and rules are not universal and eternal truths, but frameworks created by individual thinkers in particular times and places. This is a major point of divergence between the two thinkers, but it should not lead us to overlook the significant influence of Kantianism on Deleuze's conception of the mind and of action. Further research is of course necessary on this topic but my work here would suggest that one fruitful path it might take would be to look more deeply into the concept of a rule in Kant and Deleuze and examine what is involved in rule-creation and rule-following.

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