Deleuze's Philosophy of Time: Time as Dimensions, Syntheses and Problems (Vilnius, Lithuanian Philosophical Association, Keynote Talk, May 2019) [Draft 05/05/2019]

Part I

> 'If your theory is against the second law of thermodynamics I can give you no hope; there is nothing for it but to collapse in deepest humiliation.'

This famous dictum by Arthur Eddington sums up one of the risks of Deleuze's philosophy of time. His philosophy can be interpreted as releasing versions of Maxwell's Demon across philosophy and the real, thereby contradicting the second law.

The demon imagined by Maxwell sorts faster from slower moving molecules through a trap door between two sides of a divided and enclosed space, distributing the molecules in order to increase the difference in heat between the two chambers and decrease entropy – hence breaking the second law.

There have been many attempts in physics to imagine plausible Maxwell demons. Richard Feynman has an elegant example using a ratchet and pawl, with the bonus of a discussion of irreversibility and the second law. The current view is that Maxwell demons are impossible because of the energy costs required for the demon to function (for example, the energy costs of erasing a bit of computer memory).

In going against the second law, Deleuze's philosophy of time appears to follow an anti-physics route that ends in a form of fantastic dogmatism counter to science.[1] This is made worse by the parallels the first and second law have with common sense and popular morality.

These connections coalesce around the following intuitions: the impossibility of perpetual motion; the moral view that everything has a cost (*no such thing as a free lunch*); our sense that time is irreversible; and the belief that we cannot go back in time to make changes. It seems that the past is set. Even if it is open, the future is partly determined by the past and gradually running out of possibilities.

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[1] The fullest discussion of Deleuze, physics and time takes place in Bill Ross's as yet unpublished PhD thesis on Deleuze (Staffordshire University, 2018)

Deleuze denies all of this, whether from physics or common sense. He designs philosophical concepts – types of demon – to demonstrate how life is negentropic and always counter to common intuitions about irreversibility and cost. In this talk, I want to explain some of the most significant features of Deleuze's philosophy of time as defending a negentropic position, in order to show their wider interest and argue for their plausibility.

Against the gloom of the second law ('that we shall die we know') Deleuze defines time as a multiplicity of processes, in irreducible and problematic tension with one another, and founded on the new:

- Unconstrained by determinism and laws of cost, the present is a new selection altering series of repetitions from the past;
- The past makes the present pass away. It is an active force on the present and returns in this making;
- The future is a radical cut in the present, where everything is reassembled into new series in a completely novel event;
- The values of the past are transformed by the present. Thereby, it travels back in time in order to change the past;
- All of the past is drawn together in a new synthesis, retroactively and all of the time, independent of the present and the future, but with effects on them;
- The past returns as a symbolic recasting, where everything changes sense according to a new symbolic order;
- The present contracts the future into new ranges of possibilities and probabilities;
- The future is both freedom and destiny;
- Only difference returns and never the same.

Note how the concepts of series, assembly, synthesis, symbolic order, destiny, possibility and probability can be taken as grounds for kinds of continuity and pattern in Deleuze's account. These can be read in ways that give a place, but only a place, to accounts from physics. Note also that these concepts are in tension with the concepts of new selection and synthesis, radical cut, recasting, freedom and the return of difference alone.

Phenomenologically, we should think of this multiplicity of times as many moments of experienced novelty, with effects back and forward through time. These moments interact with values from the past and with the openness of the future. For example, close your eyes and run your finger in a line from the top of your head to your chin:

- Your gesture is a new selection within series of such gestures. It reconfigures them, like a slight variation in a greeting, in a goodbye, in a caress – in this case, reflection and a different purpose are introduced into a gesture under my instruction;
- The gesture passes away but it only does so because it is called into the past – we only know our acts are passing because we feel them joining the past, like melancholy at the end of a

party, or the unsettling moment when an act cannot be called back or withdrawn, half-way through a misplaced phrase in a bitter argument, for instance;

- There is always something new in your gesture, even if you do not know it at the time – this novelty reassembles your life, like a birth or a death, or indeed any minor happenstance. Deleuze often appeals to versions of the question 'How did we end up here when coming from there?' to convey this ongoing and often unconscious becoming where the new is drawn into lives;

- Your gesture transforms the past – it changes the values given to it, like performing a forbidden act to counteract its past banishment, or forbidding a cherished one to bring ignominy on past lives, or in pardoning a past act to lift its pall of criminality;

- The gesture is connected to everything that has been – there is nothing in the past that is completely separate from it, for this would suppose no common connection at all (the very definition of an evil and divisive politics is to deny this). Every act and life shares a dynamic and pulsing past with all others. This past is neither inert nor fragmented: to live is to be in continuous connection with the whole of the past;

- When your finger traces down your face, lingering on a new blemish, your face changes as symbol for the future – we fear and love mirrors, photographs and the gaze of others because, through them, our bodies are changing symbols (not in the mirror but through it);

- Gestures change possibility and probability – making some things more and some things less likely, like a fateful choice or act. Were your finger to track down creating a long tattoo line dividing your face into green and yellow halves many possibilities and probabilities would change in your future;

- Time is interruption and momentum. Your gesture is both freely decided and in the grip of destiny – this is the secret to all our compulsions, where we act freely yet under compulsion, like the first and last drink, or continuing to scratch an itch harder, or choosing again to arrange the contents of the fridge in exactly the same way as the preceding forty years;

- Only difference returns and never the same: your gesture is lost forever, except for the ways it changes the past, present and future.

Here are some non-phenomenological ways of understanding these nine time processes:

- Objects come in series. The present is a synthesis where each new object in the series is free to change some aspects of the series and contract it in a different way. Bigger engines for a series of classic airframes draw out its aerodynamic limitations; new versions of computer programmes emphasise the simplicity of earlier ones or their inefficiency; new configurations of instruments reveal a potential for different music for an orchestra or group. However, this free variation within series is only one of three aspects of the present for Deleuze;

- Another aspect of the present is its passing. A present weather system is also one that is becoming past at the same time as it is passing over; for instance in the way a high pressure ridge – one of a series – fades into the past as its pressure falls; it's not only that a new system comes to replace it but that as it declines it does so by passing away into past series of ridges and troughs – the key here is that even for a material or biological series the present is not an instant but a special kind of duration dependent on falling into the past;

- The final aspect of the present is the way it is a complete cut in time: an event that changes and reassembles everything. Great discoveries, historical events and natural disasters are events after which life will never be the same again (the Somme, Hiroshima, the birth of the internet). However, these examples could be misunderstood as saying that only some events are radical cuts. Deleuze is making a more radical point: any present must be a cut, as well as a reassembly of series and a duration;

- The past also has three aspects. First, it is changed in terms of values by any present. We can get a good idea of this from the often overlooked shame of past medical procedures, once thought good and worthwhile, but that are now cause for revulsion and shock (such as frontal lobotomies or incarceration after a diagnosis of hysteria): their discredit is a change in values brought about by new medical, social and philosophical theories and practices;

- Second, the past is not inert. It is an ongoing dynamic synthesis of all of the past. This is a difficult idea coming from a reinterpretation of Bergson. It means the past is always changing across all its relations – it is intrinsically unstable. This change doesn't alter things, but rather how they relate to one another as past. The dynamic synthesis can be understood as the idea that the collections of all museum are always changing in the value of their relations to one another – a town is a collection of museums and quarters fading in and out of importance – such that the past isn't steady, but is perpetually shifting, independent of the present and the future;

- Third, the hold of the past on the future works through the way the future is imagined, or experimented with, based on past symbols. This isn't a form of determinism but rather how the future depends on reworking past symbols – including genetic codes – that limit it and set the tracks it must reinvent. The past reappears as a script, both burdensome and promising, like working within a style, character or people to bring about the new;

- As shown in the previous point, for Deleuze, the future is open and closed. One of its aspects is a quite traditional sense of possibility and probability, for instance, in the way a genetic mutation makes others possible and more or less likely;

- A further aspect of the future, emphasising its open and closed nature, but away from possibility and probability, can be found in Deleuze's ideas about destiny. Living things have characteristic tracks and fault lines, their destiny, defining their individuality as part of a population, species, tribe, kind or family, but though these lines have a grip on their lives, they are also free to struggle against them and take them in different directions;

- Finally and perhaps above all, the future does not exist for identities. No identity persists and the only things that return are differences, variations, changes and alterations. Nothing simply is over time – nothing simply continues over time: everything fades or grows. The same named hurricane never returns, but violent increases and decreases in pressure do.

There is also an oppositional way to understanding Deleuze's multiplicity of times, through the positions each of its nine aspects run counter to. Put this way, the tensions in the multiplicity come out strongly. For Deleuze:

- The present is not an instant separated from what came before it and what comes after
- The present is not a duration independent of a past that does not belong to it
- The present is not determined by what came before it

- Time is not irreversible
- The past is not incapable of novel action
- The past is not a simple record of what has been
- The future is only partly determined in terms of possibility and probability, and never once and for all
- The future is not a matter of perfect calculation, or of absolute freedom
- Nothing persists over time; only change is eternal

And here are some ways of placing Deleuze in the philosophy of time and current debates. For Deleuze:

- Time is real
- Time is only made by processes
- Time flows and divides
- There are many times
- These times are interdependent, but cannot be reduced to one another
- Time is not subjective
- Time is not objective
- Time is reversible
- Time is not a law or set of laws taken from physics or other sciences
- Time is not human
- As processes all things make time
- No identified thing is eternal
- Every change is eternal
- Time cannot run out
- The new happens everywhere and across the whole multiplicity of time

Part II

The range, invention and insight of this manifold model of time contribute to making Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of time the latest all-encompassing metaphysics of time, in a line stretching back to Aristotle, through Augustine, Kant, Husserl, Bergson and Heidegger, among many others. This means the philosophy is both the current culmination of the history of the philosophy of time and an attempt to give a comprehensive philosophical account of the nature of time in relation to contemporary ways of understanding, describing and living in time.

This conjunction of history and creative commitment is typical of Deleuze. He draws on the history of philosophy, but he is also a philosopher committed to action, in the Sartrian and Kantian senses of

interested and engaged in the sciences, mathematics, arts, nature, lives, societies and politics of his age.

This makes Deleuze's philosophy of time demanding and rewarding, not only due to its originality and extent, but also due to its form, as conceptually multiple and as expressed in many different ways and locations. Its reception is still young and will be for many years, since it requires tentative and bold interpretations, open towards many routes of differing promise and validity, depending on the problems and questions tackled.

In Deleuze's two mid-period masterworks, time is among the most important topics. In *Difference and Repetition*, this is in the three passive syntheses of time that take up only a few sections of Chapter 2 yet fulfil crucial roles in its arguments. It is also, throughout the book, in a rethinking of circular time thanks to an original interpretation of Nietzsche's eternal return: only difference returns and never the same; all things must die, but the differences they make are eternal.

In *The Logic of Sense*, the philosophy of time is developed through two times taken loosely from the Stoics: Aiôn and Chronos. Aiôn is the time of abstract processes: of eternal passing away and coming to be. These processes are latent and waiting to be expressed in actual events; like an eternal 'to smile' expressed differently by each one of us, each time our faces betray the inner feeling we sometimes interpret as happiness. Chronos is the time of actual physical punctures and wounds, where time is manifested as an inscription; the time of growth marks, signs of injury and worry lines – in joy and sadness.

Aiôn and Chronos depend on one another through shared intensities expressed differently. These degrees of change are abstract and virtual (more of 'to smile') and actual (a wider smile here). These virtual and actual connections are always multiple relations. The virtual intensities of 'to smile' in relation to 'to jaundice' are changed, for instance, by Juliette Binoche in Claire Denis's Let the Sunshine In, when she actually inhabits her mouth and eyes independently with happiness and sadness, opening a wound that's both joyful and weary. Deleuze calls this expressive co-dependence the reciprocal determination of two times – Aiôn always expressed by Chronos and Chronos always making sense in Aiôn – through a shared surface of intensities, or variations in degrees assigned to abstract processes and actual wounds.

There is much more to be said on this and I have done so in my books on *Difference and Repetition*, *The Logic of Sense* and on Deleuze's philosophy of time. However, time featured prominently before the middle-period masterworks, in Deleuze's early books about Kant, Nietzsche, Bergson, Proust and Sacher-Masoch (and the Hume book too, less obviously, but I think as, if not more significantly, due to the importance of repetition and habit for Deleuze's philosophy of time). Time leaves the scene in

later work with Guattari, to be replaced by more direct accounts of the processes of time, in history, novellas, machines and the unconscious, for instance. Yet, there is an exception to this shift, since in the *Cinema I and II* books, the idea of the time-image is pivotal and allows for rich readings of film – for example, in an original account of flashbacks in cinema.

In terms of the history of philosophy, Deleuze's sources on time are varied and in some ways non-standard. They include the Stoics, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Bergson and Nietzsche as its main protagonists, that is, as the positions Deleuze learns from, criticises and transforms. But there are also more negative roles for Platonism (through a reversal around identity-based concepts of eternity), Hegelianism (in a rejection of the idea of historical progress through negation) and Cartesianism (through the rejection of clarity and distinctness in favour of variations of distinct-obscurity as criteria for individuating processes in time).

Note these are all 'isms', or reductive movements determined by politicised followers. They are not satisfactory accounts of the texts of those three philosophers. Each one can be interpreted in ways consistent with some of Deleuze's suggestions about time. To add to these thinkers, there is also a difficult position with respect to Spinoza that I will consider briefly.

I will not go into the detail of all these historical sources and disputes since, later, I want to focus on what I view as Deleuze's three most significant concepts about time: dimension, synthesis and problematic multiplicity. However, to get a flavour of its interest, consider the way Deleuze retains a concept of eternity, but discards any substantial or ideal eternity, in order to replace it with the eternity of perpetually altering powers (he will call these 'Ideas' in *Difference and Repetition*, but in a different sense to the Platonic tradition – Daniel S. Smith has a very helpful account of this through an analysis of the concept of the simulacrum).

In his work on Spinoza, Deleuze treats distinctions around eternity through the problem of temporal modes of extra-temporal substance. How can the modes of substance fade and thrive over time, if the substance itself is timeless? Note that this problem is hardly restricted to Spinoza and can be found in many other versions, notably in Augustine. Note also that it is a version of the much wider problem facing any dualism designed to bring together essentially different realms. For Deleuze, against a traditional reading of Spinoza, it is modes that take priority over substance with respect to passive and active fluxes in power – to take priority here means to be the source of something necessary and valuable.

Modes are needed and contribute time to substance. Yet, as durations, the modes are still dependent on eternal essences, because their duration is in relation to the eternity of substance. Actual power is modal, but eternal power is in substance – and each one depends on the other but

in different ways. This asymmetry, in this case of mode and substance, is replicated in different ways throughout Deleuze's philosophy of time in order to allow two domains to complete one another, via a double-facing medium such as power or intensity, but not be reduced to one or the other.

Virtual essences will be defined as becomings in later work with Guattari, as infinitives in *The Logic of Sense*, or Ideas in *Difference and Repetition*. They can be aligned to a reflection about duration and essence in Spinoza: 'Duration is said of extensive parts and is measured according to the time they belong to the essence.' *Spinoza et le problem de l'expression*, p 291. So the conundrum is solved by the concept of belonging. The mode – the becoming – is in time because it belongs to the essence only over a period of time and according to fluctuations in model power or intensity as related to eternal power. One of the great puzzles of Deleuze's philosophy is whether this eternal power has its own flux. I'm pretty sure it does, for instance, in the dynamism of the pure past and the role of the surface of intensities for the eternal time of Aiôn.

The essence retains eternity because it cannot be made to pass: 'But in itself the essence has an eternal existence or reality; it has no duration, nor time marking the end of that duration (no essence can destroy another).' (Ibid) Crucially, in this passage, 'eternal' does not depend on ideal persistence – still a modification – but rather follows from the necessary eternity of God as substance as indestructible by definition.

Again, we must remember Deleuze's inversion of traditional priorities: actual power and value are in the modifications, not the eternal essences, where they remain abstract potentials for the return of power and value, independent of prior actual manifestations. (If you are worried about my use of 'by definition' here, think of it as the definition of a term in an axiom, or as the creation of a concept that thereafter has the very widest applications.)

Part III

Turning to the contemporary sources for his philosophy of time, Deleuze has a deep concern for wider history, beyond the history of philosophy, as Jay Lampert, Craig Lundy and Claire Colebrook and Jeffrey A. Bell show. This engagement with history and time is developed notably in a reading of Charles Péguy and his great novel about history, *Clio*. [I have written about this in 'Ageing, perpetual perishing and the event as pure novelty: Péguy, Whitehead and Deleuze on time and history'; there's also an article on Deleuze and Péguy by Craig Lundy in Jones and Roffe Deleuze's Philosophical Lineage II – I recommend this.]

More broadly, Deleuze' work on time and history privileges repetition, decay and renewal. It does this over structural and logical identity and types, in patterns of events in history. It also does it over history as factual record, at any scale and according to any given entities or characters. This is another one of his connections to process philosophy and to work on history by Whitehead and Collingwood, among others. However, Deleuze's take is radical in positing novelty and repetition at all levels, rather than in particular cycles. As such, he is committed to a blend of perpetual revolution and flux in all processes, rather than a blend of structural process and identity. (This last claim is controversial with respect to Deleuze's work on Lautman with respect to structure and change in mathematics.)

We shouldn't confuse this radical novelty and revolutionary aspect with a commitment to extreme breaks. Instead, they must be seen as balanced by a necessary continuity and connectivity in history; insofar as an event such as a celebration repeats earlier ones, transforms them and breaks with them – as a difficult whole, as a completeness of fragments. This is why Deleuze's philosophy of time is an irreducible multiplicity of times as processes: it combines processes of continuity and rupture, of repetition and variation, of return and departure.

However, Deleuze's time and history are not human. Human focus, origin, meaning, subject and value are not necessary for time. I gave a phenomenological rendering of the multiplicity of times earlier. It is important to stress its pedagogical rather than interpretative role. For real experience, Deleuze replaces phenomenology with mathematics, science, art and literature, not out of some commitment to aesthetics and truth, but rather because science, mathematics, art and literature have greater access to the real understood as non-human process.

It takes a lot of work to undo the connection of phenomenology to false or hegemonic accounts of common sense and good sense – in particular, when they define what is proper to and superior in human beings. Phenomenology can be a temptation towards general or universal platitudes about experience, with their appalling record of missing and punishing diversity, difference, individuation and change. Science, mathematics, art and literature show us the way out of the traps of common sense and its political dangers, yet they also give rise to new risks of generality and hegemony.

For instance, literature inspires Deleuze's understanding of time as multiple, not only by indicating the importance of forks in time – sliding door moments as we now call them – but in emphasising that these forks lead to multiple times and cuts in time – such that many incompatible worlds make up reality. Through Borges and Leibniz, Deleuze reflects on chance as the vehicle for cuts in time. By adding Hölderlin, he takes chance and the flow of time as a drama with shifting roles that can be replayed.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze paints an encounter between Carroll and Artaud around time as labyrinthine, comic and terrifying. Through readings of Fitzgerald, Bousquet, Lowry and Zola, he develops one of the great reflections on destiny as the fracturing of a life necessitating a 'counter-actualisation', a reworking of the patterns of a life to play them differently. Yet when art and science contribute to the myths of unified and hierarchical culture or nature they too obliterate these multiple fractures and lead to the violence of what Deleuze and Guattari call molar processes that establish fixed group identities and oppositions; of the kind found in colonialism, for example.

All these aspects of Deleuze's philosophy of time contribute to its interest and value. Yet were I to be asked to sum up the philosophy today, in its deepest philosophical advances, I'd say that that there are three concepts marking out the originality of Deleuze's philosophy of time. The concepts are dimension, synthesis and problem. All three are open to deep misunderstandings based on the common definitions of these terms. The three must be understood together. The following formula combines them and adds qualifications to each one, in order to distinguish it from its common meaning: *time is an unsolvable problematic multiplicity of disjunctive syntheses of heterogeneous dimensions*.

This means time is the coming together of a multiplicity of processes that when taken together give rise to an individual and practical problem. This problem does not have a solution, but rather calls for a transformation, a new way of living with the problem. Each of the processes is a synthesis; it brings other processes together. However, this synthesis is disjunctive, since the coming together is also a divergence – a coming together as becoming different.

Take the expression 'to run out of time' and apply it to anything you like: a deadline, a world, a life, an animal, a plant, an idea, a society, an organisation. To run out of time is something that will have many facets that cannot be reduced to a single time. Instead, the way time runs out will be an individual problem, in the sense that it only comes out fully when taken for an individuation. This creates something new out of the problem: an individual coming together of series of processes counteracting its destructive tendencies.

There will be lines from the past, cuts in the present, the opening and closing of lines to the future, changes in values, demands to do justice to the past, limits imposed by possibility, probability and destiny, and by what makes the perspective individual. Not time, but times. Not a unique equation, or a question, but a problem determined by multiple syntheses of time.

When one of the duellists representing two powerful families runs out of time, arm weakening and failing to parry the opposing blade, all will depend on where you situate the problem: Which

duellist? For family, lover or particular human? Consequences for the clan, or the state? Which blood line? The duel, or the plant life of the clearing where it all unfolds?

The particularity of time syntheses is that they involve past, present and future as dimensions of each other and of themselves; not T, but T extending and dividing into T'. The multiplicity of time is therefore, at base, a nine-fold determination of a problem: present-present; present-past; present-future; past-present; past-past; past-future; present-future; future-future. If you return to the lists that I began with, you'll see this nine-fold pattern in all but the long list of theories of times Deleuze is working against. I say 'at base' because each of these synthetic dimensions is tailored to individuals and to problems, such that there are many different configurations of the nine-fold pattern.

We can think of death – one of the recurring obsessions of the philosophy of time – in terms of this nine-fold structure. The problem coalescing around a death is in the unavoidable, but also ultimately unsolvable, challenge of nine questions. How to continue differently all the series making up a life? *Where will we take all this?* How to be worthy of the passing away of a present? *How will we lay it to rest?* How to live with the cut and reassembly the death implies? *How will we begin anew?* How best to gauge how the death is transforming the past? *What is this doing to us?* How to detect the changes in past relations that are making the death? *Whence does this pain come from?* How to determine and create the new symbolism that follows death? *Whose story will this become?* How to become aware of the changes in possibility and probability implied by it? *What patterns are being laid down here?* How freely to create a counter-actualisation of the destinies carried by the death? *How shall we not be trapped by these deaths?* How to take account of the passing of all identities and the sole persistence of differences? *Where to let go and where to force change?* We could do the same for a birth, an accident, or a gift. We shouldn't think of these questions as addressed to humans as we think we know them. The death of an animal, or of a star, prompts the same question, for animals and for stars.

There is no solution to the problem transmitted in these questions. There is no perfect death, no celebration or ritual adequate to death, no absolute best way to live on or live after. There is only ever an individual creative response to the problems a death bequeaths: a practical and experimental search for a best way, but where individual must be understood as an individuation, a determination of processes that are also collective. This response takes its place among all others, not as the best example, model, judgement or metaphor, but as another factor in their own problems. Learn, don't judge.

Deleuze uses the concept of dimension to determine and explain the multiplicity of times. Time is a multiplicity of dimensions. This does not mean time has many sizes, or scales, or expanses. Instead, a dimension should be understood by replacing expanse by process: expansion, not space. Time has many processes taking a time into another. A time extends serially according to different dimensions

of process determined by past, present and future. The dimension of a time is therefore the way it unfolds or extends according to series into another time; the past as dimension that makes the present pass away, for instance.

Here is a passage about dimensions that shows its key role in defining time: 'Past and future do not designate instants, as distinct from an instant that is supposedly present, but the dimensions of the present itself insofar as it contracts instants.' (*Différence et répétition, 97*) Past and future do not consist in the same things as the present. They are not all instants placed on different parts of a line or an order, like dates. They are instead processes, in this case of the contraction of series, determining how the present works as a synthesis.

Important things to note are that past and future are different dimensions and contractions of the present and that the present also contracts itself. The word contraction is something of a trap here if it is understood as a collection or coming together. As disjunctive synthesis, in Deleuze's sense, each of these dimensions brings series together by transforming them, in ways that divide them as well as keeping them together. When there is a selection in the present, there is a division (selected, not selected). When a present is made to pass it is diffused into many past lines. When the present is cut as a dimension of the future, this contraction is a synthesis into radical openness.

None of these dimensions can be reduced to each other. They are the many different heterogeneous ways in which times 'fold' and 'unfold' into one another. These two important terms for processes in *Difference and Repetition*, taken further in the later *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, explain why I claim the concept of dimension is important for Deleuze's philosophy of time. If we read that philosophy just through the concept of synthesis, we miss the consistency of his system, where all processes work through folding and unfolding through other dimensions. Nothing for Deleuze is *causa sui*.

When we define time as dimension and synthesis, no life is lived in time. It is rather that every life is lived as time, itself understood as the coming together and disjunction of series. Thus, for the 'living present', the concept of synthesis for Deleuze is a drawing together and splitting of series into dimensions: 'The synthesis constitutes time as living present, and past and future as dimensions of this present.' (*Différence et répétition*, 105)

One error waiting for interpreters of Deleuze is to focus too much or even solely on one dimension of time. This will always be a temptation when readers approach Deleuze through another philosopher; Bergson, for an overemphasis of the dimension of the pure past, or Hölderlin for an overemphasis on the future, for example. When Deleuze says 'the past is far from being a single dimension of time, but is rather the synthesis of the whole of time that the present and future are

only dimensions of' he is drawing attention to different dimensions of time: the past as dimension of present and of future, and the past as dimension of itself. (*Différence et répétition*, 111)

He makes the same point about the present: 'Without doubt and in every case, the present appears as the fruit of a contraction, but related to completely different dimensions. In one case the present is the most contracted state of successive instants or elements that are independent from one another. In another case, the present designates the most contracted degree of the whole of the past, that is in itself as a coexistent totality.' (*Différence et répétition*, 112) In one case, the present has itself as dimension as a selection within series; in another case, it is made to pass by the whole of the past that it falls away into. A living present is both a selection and a passing away (and a cut…)

I am stressing this multiplicity of times against narrow interpretations in order to make a final point. No sense can be made of that multiplicity as a totality, or as an object to be understood, or as a general set of rules, laws or model. Instead, the multiplicity of times only makes sense as a problem that pulls apart and brings together processes across times for an individuation – for the emergence and disappearance of an individual. Time is not only multiple. It is only a multiplicity in many ways. Those ways are only ever problems that appear as things are made to change.