

The Simple Virtual: Bergsonism and a Renewed Thinking of the One¹

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A static and immobile being is not the first principle; *what we must start from* is contraction itself, the duration whose inversion is relaxation.

Deleuze, 'Bergson's Conception of Difference' 1956

Our starting point is a unity, a simplicity, a virtual totality.

Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 1966

I.

In his *Deleuze. The Clamor of Being*, Alain Badiou describes the virtual as the principal name of Being in Deleuze and claims that his thinking amounts to a *Platonism* of the virtual. Badiou argues that in Deleuze the virtual is presented as 'the ground of the actual', and moreover, that that it is *its own ground* as the 'being of virtualities'. Badiou likes to speak of the virtual as what lies 'beneath' as in "'beneath" the simulacra of the world'.² This explains why he has such problems with any talk in

¹ I am grateful to Alberto Toscano for reading an earlier version of this essay and indicating the areas in need of further clarification. Any difficulties that remain are not simply a reflection of a personal penchant for obfuscation on my part but have, in my view, a more objective basis.

² A. Badiou, *Deleuze. La clameur de l'Être* (Paris: Hachette, 1997), p. 70; *Deleuze. The Clamor of Being*, trans. L. Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 46 (abbreviated to *CB* followed by page reference first to the French edition, then the English translation).

Deleuze of the virtual in terms of an image. Is not the 'image' the status of the actual only? How can the virtual, conceived by Badiou as the 'power proper to the One', be a simulacrum? No doubt, he says, 'the virtual can give rise to images but it is difficult to determine how an image can be given of it or how it can itself be an image' (*CB* p. 78; p. 52). There is a Berkeleyan dimension to Badiou's point which serves to disclose the somewhat peculiar nature of his question. In his *Principles of Human Knowledge* Berkeley poses a problem with regard to soul or spirit in terms that bear a striking similarity to the way Badiou has posed the problem of the virtual qua image. If spirit is One, that is, simple and undivided, and if it is the primary 'active' being, how can an idea or image be formed of it since inert ideas/images cannot represent to us that which acts?³ The incorporeal and immaterial substance cannot be represented, cannot itself be an idea or image, since it is their causal ground.

Badiou is adamant that Deleuze is a classical thinker whose project is primarily and essentially an ontological one. In Deleuze the task is to think the real of the One: 'Deleuze's fundamental problem is most certainly not to liberate the multiple but to submit thinking to a renewed concept of the One' (p. 20 ; p. 11). This means that the multiple is to be conceived 'integrally' and in terms of the 'production of simulacra'. Badiou is aware that notions of the ground [*fondement*] and of foundation have been taken to task in contemporary thought and that Deleuze's work can be construed as being at the forefront of these developments — he does, after all, speak in *Difference and Repetition* of a 'universal un-grounding' [*l'effondement universel*].⁴ Nevertheless Badiou persists with his reading, establishing the notion of ground in Platonist terms by speaking of it as the 'eternal share' of beings (*CB* pp. 68-9; p. 45). It is because Deleuze thinks the virtual in terms of this eternal share that his thinking demands 'that Being be rigorously determined as One' (*ibid.*). 'Ground', therefore, is being identified not with the (Kantian) noumenon but with the Platonist notion of participation. Deleuze, as we shall see, opens chapter eleven of his 1968 book on Spinoza by addressing this very issue of participation (see also *DR* p. 87; p. 62).

Badiou opposes Deleuze on account of the latter's deployment of the two terms, the virtual and the actual, in order to think the question of

³ G. Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge* (London: Fontana, 1962), p. 77.

⁴ G. Deleuze, *Difference et Repetition* (Paris: PUF, 1968), p. 92 (henceforth *DR*); *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), p. 67.

Being.⁵ He wishes to discredit the appeal to the virtual and desires that we speak instead of 'the univocity of the actual as a pure multiple' (my emphasis) (*CB* p. 78; p. 52). The multiple of multiples has to be affirmed, it cannot be posited in terms of the power of a One. The One, and along with it Life, has to be sacrificed. The two 'classicisms', says Badiou, are irreconcilable.

Badiou has, without doubt, raised a number of important questions concerning Deleuze's project. To deal satisfactorily with the issues they raise, however, I believe we need more precision. What kind of Platonism of the virtual? Is Deleuze a thinker of the One or is he not rather a thinker of virtual multiplicity that has gone beyond the opposition of the one and the many? Badiou knows this, of course, but persists in reading Deleuze as a thinker of the one and not the multiple. I will argue that Deleuze's thinking of the virtual does have a link with an important (neo-) Platonist source and that it is legitimate to describe him as a thinker of the One. However, the reading I offer here of Bergsonism's renewed thinking of the One produces a quite different image of Deleuze's thought. Badiou's curious affirmation of the *univocity of the actual* (as pure multiple) shows that he has inadequately understood the role of the virtual in Deleuze and discloses a fundamental incoherence in his own thinking.

II.

Deleuze may be a classical thinker in key respects but he also thinks the reality of the virtual in relation to some peculiarly modern problems. However, while the notion of the virtual is being deployed by Deleuze to elucidate a specifically modern conception of evolution, its character as a problematic is of ancient descent. When we think this virtual in terms of the question of the One — as the One that is peculiar to a virtual multiplicity — we encounter all kinds of philosophical conundrums. As Hegel notes in his treatment of the One in Plotinus — and it is a Plotinian reference we need in order to determine the nature of both Bergson and Deleuze's encounter with Platonism — the principal

⁵ Although the matter cannot be treated here, I would dissent from Badiou's claim that as an essentially ontological thinker Deleuze is a thinker of the *question* of Being where this questions *belongs* to Heidegger. It is not clear to me that there is a question of Being which needs to be considered for Deleuze, where this question also entails a history of Being, a sending of Being, and a destiny of Being.

difficulty, 'known and recognized many years ago', is 'the comprehension of how the One came to the decision to determine itself'.⁶ As Deleuze acknowledges in his 1966 reading of Bergsonism, we are led inevitably to the question of how the One, 'the original identity', has the power to be differentiated' [*le pouvoir de se différencier*].⁷

Almost everything at stake in this thinking of the One would seem to turn on what kind or nature of power is assigned to it: is it eminent or simple? In *Bergsonism* it is neither accidental nor incidental that Deleuze should repeatedly speak of the virtual as a *simple* virtual (*B* p. p. 98, p. 99, p. 103; p. 95, p. 96, p. 100). This is a simplicity he had already outlined in his 1956 reading of Bergson as a philosopher of (internal) difference.⁸ Gerson has argued against a straightforward creationist or emanationist reading of the Plotinian One, and his argument is worth citing since it brings to light the reasons for Deleuze's designation of the virtual as a simple power:

...Aquinas must say that God is not just virtually all things but eminently all things as well. That is, every predicate that belongs to complexes belongs to their simple cause in a higher mode of being.... By contrast, Plotinus is less concerned with preserving omnipotence than he is with preserving the unqualified simplicity of the first *arche* ... by refusing to accept that virtuality in being entails eminence in being, Plotinus' negative theology constrains itself in a way that Aquinas' negative theology does not. Plotinus cannot just infer that the One is eminently whatever its effects are in an inferior way. To do so would compromise the simplicity of the One.⁹

Now, although this provides us with an indication of some of the reasons as to why philosophy might have a desire to appeal to the One in terms

⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Volume 2*, trans. E. S. Haldane & F. H. Simson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 416.

⁷ G. Deleuze, *Bergsonisme* (Paris: PUF, 1966), p. 103 (henceforth *B*); *Bergsonism*, trans. H. Tomlinson & B. Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 100.

⁸ G. Deleuze, "La Conception de la Différence chez Bergson", *Les Études Bergsonniennes*, volume IV (Paris: PUF, 1956), pp. 77-112 (henceforth *BCD*), here at p. 93, p. 97; "Bergson's Conception of Difference", trans. M. McMahon, in J. Mullarkey (ed.), *The New Bergson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 42-66, here at p. 51, p. 53.

⁹ L. P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 32.

of simplicity, it does not follow that Deleuze's conception of the simplicity of the virtual is the same as Plotinus' insistence that there 'must be something simple before all things' (*Enneads* V, 4).¹⁰ The difference with Plotinus can be articulated as follows: in Plotinus the simplicity of the virtual is thought in strictly negative terms (we cannot say what it is, only what it is not);¹¹ moreover, it is a power that always withholds from expressing itself in the beings that irradiate from it, which explains why Plotinus insists that this simple must be completely other to all the things that come after it and exists by itself, 'not mixed with the things which derive from it' (V, 4). In Deleuze, by contrast, the simplicity of the virtual denotes the positivity of being as a power of self-differentiation which, in differentiating itself, ceases to be what it is 'all the while keeping something of its origin' (*BCD* p. 100; p. 55). In other words, the virtual both ceases to be and continues to persist. Admittedly, this is all very paradoxical. On Deleuze's conception of difference, however, the asymmetry of the virtual and the actual must be maintained to allow for a thinking of the *immanence* of Being, of Being as univocal. To proclaim a univocity of the actual, as Badiou does, is to render one's thinking incoherent: the univocity of Being cannot be upheld by predicating it of actual beings, since such beings are beings *already constituted*.¹² A univocal conception of Being *necessarily* entails a notion of the virtual. The power of the simple virtual cannot be transformed into an eminent one without sacrificing immanence. As a way of warding off such a move Plotinus adopted a rigorously negative (and ecstatic) approach to the One.¹³ The result is a negative theology.

The importance of Plotinus for Bergson has been noted and examined in the literature.¹⁴ The fact that Bergson lectured regularly on Plotinus is

¹⁰ The edition and translation of the *Enneads* I have used is that published in seven volumes by Harvard University Press, 1996, and translated by A. H. Armstrong. Although the Penguin edition of the *Enneads* is an abridged one it contains invaluable editorial material.

¹¹ See J. Bussanich, "Plotinus's Metaphysics of the One", in L. P. Gerson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 38-66, pp. 40-1.

¹² I am grateful to Daniel Smith for drawing my attention to Badiou's incoherence on this issue.

¹³ As Bussanich deftly draws out, this means that the negative way to the One ultimately contains a superior affirmation.

¹⁴ W. E. May has suggested that conceived as a 'one-many' the *élan vital* can be compared to the third hypostasis or World Soul of Plotinus (in *Enneads*, IV, 1). See May, "The Reality of Matter in the Metaphysics of Bergson", *International*

not surprising given the central preoccupations of his thinking (time, free will, matter, creativity, etc.).¹⁵ In his Gifford lectures of 1914 on 'Personality' Bergson goes so far as to claim that modern metaphysics (Leibniz, Spinoza) is a repetition of Plotinus but in a weaker form (*M* p. 1058; see also remarks Bergson makes on Plotinus and moderns like Spinoza, Kant, and Schopenhauer in a lecture course of 1907 on 'Theories of the Will', *M* pp. 716-7). The starting-point of Plotinus' philosophy, which is also its essence for Bergson, is the attempt to rediscover a unity that has become lost in time. 'The philosophy of Plotinus', he writes, 'may be taken as the very type of the Metaphysics which we are eventually led to when we look upon internal time as pulverised into separate moments, and yet believe in the reality and the unity of the Person' (*M* p. 1056). In other words, we are two modes of existence, a *de jure* one in which we exist outside time, and a *de facto* one in which we evolve 'in' time. Considered in *de jure* terms we are Ideas (eternal essences), 'pure contemplation', in contrast to the life of the sensible world in which praxis takes place. But if the *de facto* existence is a diminution or degradation of the eternal then to act or to desire is to have need of something and thus, consequently, to be incomplete. Evolving in time 'is to add unceasingly to what is'. However, because the one mode of existence is a distension or dilution of the other, in which an original unity has broken up into a multiplicity, our actual existence can be little more than that of a 'dispersed

Philosophical Quarterly 10: 4 (1970), pp. 611-42, p. 631. Bergson comments on the three hypostases in the third of his Gifford lectures of 1914 (*Mélanges* (Paris: PUF, 1972) pp. 1056-60; hereafter cited as *M*), and a careful reading of what he has to say therein would show, I believe, that the comparison of the '*élan*' with the third hypostasis would have to be complicated. This is because in Bergson's metaphysics unity is an an-original virtual multiplicity that can only proceed in terms of a disseminating or dispersed multiplicity, there can be no return to unity which is 'unity only'. This is why Deleuze always insists that the whole is never given and that we should be *glad* of this fact. In this essay I am arguing that there are, in fact, two different figurations of the whole in Bergson and Deleuze, and while the *élan* is given as a simple totality the whole of evolution as a creative process can never be given. Deleuze's 'gladness' is over the second whole. On how it is possible to have a unity of multiplicity, and a One and a whole that would be not the principle but the *effect* of the multiplicity, see Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, trans R. Howard (London: Athlone Press, 2000), p. 163.

¹⁵ Bergson mentions one of the courses of lectures he gave on Plotinus given at the College de France in 1897-8 in *Creative Evolution* where he says he tried to demonstrate the resemblance between Leibniz's monads and Plotinus' Intelligibles. Deleuze also makes a link between Plotinus and Leibniz in his text *The Fold*.

multiplicity' always 'indefinitely striving to produce an imitation of unity in Time' (ibid.). So where Plato construes time as a 'moving image of eternity' in terms of the figure of resemblance,¹⁶ Plotinus construes it in terms of an imitation. Bergson insists that if the original element is posited as unity then it is insufficient to say that in Plotinus' system there is a return to the 'multiplicity which is One'; rather the return has to go further back to 'a Unity which is unity only' (*M* p. 1057). This is how he reads the theory of the three hypostases in Plotinus (God, the Intelligibles, and Minds with bodies), in which the movement consists in the Mind that is in a body returning to the Intelligible. So although matter entails division and 'unrolling', Bergson notes, it is the movement of immateriality as a *movement of return to the immaterial* which is the *telos* of this mode of thinking the One, unity and multiplicity. The immaterial is conceived as an original unity that is without number potentially or actually, it has no multiplicity to it whether virtual or actual.¹⁷

What are we trying to learn from this brief consideration of Bergson on Plotinus? It is clear that Bergson's ambitions are not (neo-) Platonist ones. Plotinus stands out among the ancients for Bergson because he considers him to be a 'profound psychologist' and what must be extracted from his system are its purely psychological elements (p. 1058). The actual edifice of this system, however, is fragile. It remains instructive in that it brings out an important aspect of later metaphysical systems but which is only implicit, chiefly, the idea that movement is less than immobility and that duration is divided indefinitely. This means that to find 'substantiality' it becomes necessary to place ourselves outside time. Modern metaphysics is a repetition of this view up to, and even after, Kant, Bergson claims.¹⁸ Bergson wishes us to know

¹⁶ Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. D. Lee (Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), sections 7, 8, & 18, pp. 51-2, pp. 55-6, pp. 69-70.

¹⁷ On this see P. Henry, "The Place of Plotinus in the History of Thought", in *The Enneads* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1991), p. lii: "Plotinus identifies as a matter of course the Good of the *Republic* and the absolute One of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. This identification which, in the words of Plato, situates the Good 'beyond being' and which denies to the One all multiplicity — be it only virtual and logical, a multiplicity of names, attributes, forms, or aspects — constitutes the basis of the 'negative theology' which, in Plotinus and in his disciples, plays so great a part in the doctrine of God and of the mystical experience".

¹⁸ *Time and Free Will* unfolds a distinction between a "true self" and a "superficial self" that may initially strike one as either Plotinian or Kantian; but it is important to grasp that for Bergson the "true self" does not reside outside time but can only

that he holds the opposite to be the case (there is no fall into time and time is not an imitation of eternity) and that, while it is important to give full weight to certain aspects of Plotinus' doctrine it also has to be *inverted* (ibid.). Badiou does not comment on Bergson's attempted inversion of Plotinus, and there is no reason why he should other than perhaps for the purposes of lending greater precision to his claim that Bergsonism ultimately amounts to a Platonism of the virtual.

Let us now turn to Deleuze on Plotinus. Important references to Plotinus can be found in *Difference and Repetition* and *What is Philosophy?* (in both it is the notion of 'contemplation' that is put into effect). The most relevant treatment for our purposes is to be found in the 1968 book on Spinoza and expressionism.¹⁹ In this work Deleuze also speaks of Aquinas as thinker of eminence and in the context of a discussion of how the method of analogy seeks to avoid anthropomorphism. In Aquinas the qualities that are attributed to God do not imply a community of form between divine substance and finite creatures but only an analogy, 'a "congruence" of proportion or proportionality' (*SEP* p. 46). Deleuze's contention is that Spinozism effects an inversion of the problem:

Whenever we proceed by analogy we borrow from creatures certain characteristics in order to attribute them to God either equivocally or eminently. Thus God has Will, Understanding, Goodness, Wisdom, and so on, but has them equivocally or eminently. Analogy cannot do without equivocation or eminence, and hence contains a subtle anthropomorphism, just as dangerous as the naïve variety (ibid.).

For Deleuze the significance of Spinoza's philosophy resides in its struggle against the equivocal, the eminent, and the analogical. He belongs to the 'great tradition of univocity'. This is the thesis that 'being is predicated in the same sense of everything that is, whether infinite or finite, albeit not in the same "modality"' (p. 63). This means that,

become what it is in duration. On Bergson on links between Plotinus and modern metaphysics see also the essay "The Perception of Change", *Oeuvres* (Paris: PUF, 1959), pp. 1374-6 (hereafter cited as *O*); trans. in *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. Andison (Totowa: Littlefield, Adams, & Co, 1965), pp. 139-42 (the English translation leaves out Bergson's citation from Plotinus).

¹⁹ G. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Expressionism in Philosophy*, trans. M. Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992) (hereafter *SEP*).

although there is a difference between *natura naturans* (substance) and *natura naturata* (attributes), they are not in a relation of hierarchy in which the former enjoys a power of eminence over the latter. In his Bergsonism of 1956 and 1966 Deleuze will insist on the need to treat duration as both 'substance and subject'; indeed, duration is likened to a 'naturing nature' and matter to a 'natured nature' (*B* p. 94; p. 93).²⁰ Moreover, as a power of the virtual, duration is pure immanence (that which does divide but as a division that always changes in kind). And we need to recall Bergson's own insistence that we err in our thinking of the immanence of a creative evolution when we think of a thing that creates and of things that are created (*O* p. 705; *CE* p. 248). Moreover, Bergson insists that the divergent creations of evolution are to be treated not as 'presenting analogies' but rather as 'mutually complementary' (*O* p. 578; *CE* p. 97).

The key chapter from Deleuze's 1968 book on Spinoza is chapter eleven entitled 'Immanence and the Historical Components of Expression'. We cannot examine the full details of this reading here. Instead, let us note some key points.

For Deleuze the idea of an 'expressive immanence', the idea by which the univocity of being is to be thought, can be traced back to the Platonist problem of participation. In Plato we find different schemes of participation, such as 'being a part', imitating, and even being the recipient of something from a demon. Deleuze notes that in spite of these different schemes the principle of participation is always sought on the side of what participates. In all cases the sensible is forced to reproduce the terms of the intelligible, while also 'forcing the Idea to allow itself to be participated by something foreign to its nature' (*SEP* p. 170). The attempt to invert the problem is what defines the post-Platonic task. This is done by locating the principle of participation within the perspective

²⁰ Bergson often "distorts" [*détourne*], as he puts it, the terms of Spinoza's famous distinction. See for example *O* p. 1024; *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. A. Audra & C. Brereton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 58 (hereafter cited as *TSMR*). It is interesting to note that although Bergson regularly gave lectures on the history of philosophy he accorded special treatment to Spinoza by always devoting a separate lecture course to him. For insight into the critical character of his rapport with Spinoza see *O* pp. 788-95; *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 347-56 (hereafter cited as *CE*). Both Leibniz and Spinoza are said to present a "systematization of the new physics, constructed on the model of the ancient metaphysics"; and in both, but especially in Spinoza, there are "flashes of intuition" that break through the system.

of the participated itself: 'Plotinus reproaches Plato for having seen participation from its lesser side' (*ibid.*). In Plotinus participation does not take the form of a violence, in which it supervenes as a force from the outside which is then suffered by the participated, but rather as a gift: 'causality by donation, but by productive donation'. It is *emanation* that is this cause and this gift: 'participation occurs only through what it gives, and in what it gives' (p. 171). This explains why in Plotinus the One is held to be beyond or above Being, since it is above its gifts: 'it gives what does not belong to it, or is not what it gives' (*ibid.*).²¹ The One cannot have anything in common with the things that come from it. This is a thought of emanation in which an emanative cause is not only superior to its effect but also to what gives the effect.²² This 'One-above-Being' is inseparable from a negative theology and from a method of analogy 'that respects the eminence of principle or cause' (p. 172).

For Deleuze it is only on the basis of the kind of movement of thought we find in Spinozism or Bergsonism that the 'emanative transcendence of the One' can be transformed into an expressive immanence of univocal Being. The univocity of Being requires that the power of the virtual be a simple one. Indeed, although Plotinus thinks the virtuality of being in terms of a simplicity this power remains emanative or eminent for Deleuze (as for other commentators, such as Jaspers for example).²³ The One remains above and outside what is explicated since it does not explicate itself: 'the One above Being does of course contain all things virtually: *it is explicated* but does not *explicate itself*' (p. 177; here we could readily substitute actualization for

²¹ As Karl Jaspers notes, the Plotinian One cannot, strictly speaking, be thought and is not the 'subject' of thinking. It is what 'gives' thinking without giving anything of itself. This One is neither the number one nor the one contrasted with the other, 'for any attempt to think the One produces duality and multiplicity', Jaspers, *Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plotinus, Lao-Tzu, Nagarjuna*, ed. H. Arendt, trans. R. Mannheim (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966), p. 34.

²² We should note that recent scholarship no longer favours using the term 'emanation' to describe Plotinus' doctrine on account of its Stoic connotations; rather, the creative process is now seen in terms of 'illumination' or 'irradiation'. See J. Dillon, Introduction to *The Enneads*, Penguin edition, p. xci.

²³ For a more recent upholding of this reading of Plotinus see Bussanich 1996, p. 60, where he makes it clear that while there is nothing discrete about the character of the One in Plotinus the move to univocity is not made: 'the One's properties are [not] univocally predictable of its products: the One's life is not life in the same sense or the same degree as Intellect's'. But he also notes that the One's products cannot then simply be said to be equivocal either. As ever, Plotinus presents his readers with an real interpretive dilemma.

explication). With the univocity of Being there is also entailed the equality of Being in the sense that not only is 'being equal in itself, but it is seen to be equally present in all beings' (p. 173). Causation is no longer 'remote' or eminent but truly immanent: 'Immanence is opposed to any eminence of the cause, any negative theology, any method of analogy, any hierarchical conception of the world'. Once the hierarchy of hypostases is substituted by an equality of being this means that participation must now be thought in a completely positive manner and not on the basis of an eminent gift (say of Being to beings or of the virtual to actuals).

In describing Deleuze as thinker of the One Badiou took many readers by surprise. But although Deleuze does indeed intend to think beyond the opposition of the one and the many this does not rule out the possibility of speaking of the virtual multiplicity in terms of a One that is peculiar to it. Throughout the 1966 text Deleuze will insist on the need to posit virtual multiplicity as a single time, and the co-existence of all of the degrees and levels of Being is said to be virtual and 'only virtual' (*B* p. 95; p. 93). It is precisely because the point of unification is said to be virtual that Bergsonism is led for Deleuze to the realization that it has an affinity with 'the One-Whole of the Platonists': 'All the levels of expansion and contraction coexist on a single Time and form a totality; but this Whole, this One, are pure virtuality' (ibid.) (if such a Whole has number it is only potentially). Badiou's reading of Deleuze's alleged Platonism of the virtual does not persuade, however, for a number of reasons. It does not adequately comprehend either the nature of the commitment to univocity or what is stake in positing a simplicity of the virtual. On Badiou's reading the actual becomes a mere simulacrum of the virtual and, as such, represents little more than a degraded, and even expendable, expression of an eminent power. Badiou's reading fails to distinguish between the different presentations of the virtual in Deleuze. It is often overlooked that there are, in fact, *two* presentations of the virtual whole in Bergson's *Creative Evolution*: a first one that is to be understood in terms of a simple virtual of the vital impetus, and characterized by interpenetrating tendencies; and a second one which refers not to a point of origin or an initial impulsion but rather to a ceaseless becoming to be thought on the level of the open whole of evolution. This is the whole that Bergson argues science extracts from when it isolates closed systems for diagrammatic study. It is this latter conception of the virtual whole that Deleuze brings to the fore in *Cinema I* when he speaks of a plane of immanence in terms of a 'machinism' as

opposed to a mechanism. Badiou, I contend, deals only with the one virtual whole, notably in this latter configuration.

After making his point about the One never being given in its totality Badiou then uses a citation from *Cinema I* which speaks of the whole only in terms of the second conception (the open whole in which duration is said to be immanent to the universe).²⁴ Badiou then argues unconvincingly that because the real of the virtual is not given in its totality this means that the real 'consists precisely in the perpetual actualizing of new virtualities' (*CB* p. 75; p. 49). This is a very odd construction of Deleuze's thinking of the virtual. It makes little sense of Bergson's conception of creative evolution and its uptake in Deleuze's texts of 1956 and 1966 where the movement is from the virtual to 'actuals' (the plural is Deleuze's) and where this movement involves the self-differentiation of a simple virtual in accordance with divergent lines of actualization. Badiou has completely reified the power of the virtual.

Badiou's neglect of the first whole must surely explain how and why he is able to turn Deleuze's virtual into a power of eminence. Let me make it clear: the simple virtual refers to the virtual of the vital impetus and is given not in the sense that it is given once and for all, which would be to convert time into space, but rather in the sense that it is given as a limited force (it requires contact with matter in order to divide and differentiate). It is, then, given as a limited force but not given with respect to actualization and differentiation. And what makes it 'simple' is that it exists as confused, inchoate, and undetermined — the contrast is not between some absolute conception of the simple and an equally absolute conception of the complex, but rather between the tendencies in one mode of being (fusion and interpenetration) and another mode (dissociation and divergency in which the tendencies acquire a more and more specific stress and dominant articulation). Deleuze's affirmation of the non-giveness of the open whole should not be overlooked or downplayed. It is, in fact, the principal feature of his Bergsonism in both the 1966 text and *Cinema I*. As virtual this open whole cannot assemble

²⁴ The citation Badiou makes runs as follows: 'if the whole is not giveable, it is because it is the Open, and because its nature is to change constantly, or to give rise to something new, in short, to endure' (*CB* p. 75; p. 49, quoting from Deleuze, *Cinema I*, 1983, p. 20; 1986, p. 9). Clearly, this whole that is subject to, and the subject of, constant change, can never be given; but this is a different virtual whole from the whole of the simple virtual. The two conceptions of the whole are both articulated by Bergson and both are at work in Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (see 1983, pp. 53-5, p. 87 & p. 257 for a presentation of the first whole, and *CE* pp. 10-11 for a presentation of the second whole; the two meet in the discussion that takes place on pp. 86-7).

its actual parts, which are external to each other. But the assembling or reassembling of a whole is never the issue for Deleuze: the actual does not come to resemble the virtual because actualization does not proceed by rules of resemblance or limitation. So, while it may indeed be odd for Deleuze to describe the virtual as an image, it is equally strange to describe the actual in terms of a projected or produced image of the virtual, since this is precisely how the relation between the real and the possible is to be defined, and as a way of highlighting the creative character of the lines of differentiation that characterize an actualization: 'For, in order to be actualized, the virtual cannot proceed by elimination or limitation, but *must* create its own lines of actualization in positive acts... For while the real is in the image and likeness of the possible that it realizes, the actual, on the other hand does *not* resemble the virtuality that it embodies' (*B* p. 100; p. 97). In the actual, says Deleuze, there reigns an irreducible pluralism. This is a pluralism that fills him with delight (*B* p. 108; p. 104).

III.

In order to demonstrate the nature of Deleuze's dual commitment to the One and to pluralism (to the One of pluralism) I want to provide a fairly close and exacting reading of the 1956 and 1966 essays on Bergsonism. Before we commence the analysis of Deleuze's texts let us consider the following key citation from Bergson's *Creative Evolution*:

While, in its contact with matter, life is comparable to an impulsion or an impetus, regarded in itself it is an immensity of potentiality [*virtualité*], a mutual encroachment of thousands and thousands of tendencies which nevertheless are 'thousands and thousands' only once regarded as outside each other, that is, when spatialized. Contact with matter is what determines this dissociation. *Matter divides actually what was but virtually multiple* [*virtuellement multiple*]; and, in this sense, individuation is in part the work of matter, in part the result of life's own inclination (*O* p. 714; *CE* p. 257; my emphasis with translation modified).

Here we encounter the dual manner in which Bergson approaches the real: regarded in itself life is a pure virtual and in terms of its contact

with matter it is a virtual with divisions. I cite this passage, however, not simply because it is only the example we have in Bergson's text of the description of life in terms of a virtual multiplicity, but rather because it signals an issue that is crucial to decide upon, even though there is a certain undecidable element to it. The problem is this: Deleuze credits the virtual with the power of self-differentiation. In this passage, however, it would seem that what is crucial for Bergson is matter: 'matter divides actually what was but virtually multiple'. Do we have a fundamental difference here between Bergson and Deleuze's Bergsonism? Might it mean that Deleuze has, in some sense, reified the virtual by positing it in terms of an independent, albeit simple, power? To respond at all adequately to these questions we must follow the details of Deleuze's reading with extreme care. The turns of Deleuze's thinking in both the 1956 essay and the 1966 text are remarkably nuanced and subtly unfolded.

The 1956 essay begins by stating that conceived as a philosophy of difference — the difference between differences in degree and differences in kind or nature, the difference between the virtual and the actual, the difference of Being itself qua self-differentiation — Bergsonism operates on two levels: a methodological one and an ontological one. The differences between things lies, ultimately, in their differences of nature, and it is the task of thinking to demonstrate this and to determine the differences themselves. It is not immediately self-evident to thinking what this difference is (the difference of nature) simply because the natural bent of the intellect is to think in terms of differences of degree (positing the differential relations between things in terms of 'more' or 'less'). The task is to show that the differences of nature are neither things nor their states but rather tendencies. This methodological problem, which can only be resolved via the method of intuition, turns into an ontological one when we realize that these differences of nature suppose the difference 'of' Being itself. Consideration of differences of nature leads us to thinking about the nature of difference (*BCD* p. 79; p. 42). Everything is an expression of difference but, in turn, each thing expresses its own internal difference. The difference 'of' Being resides in the differences of beings.

Deleuze conceives duration as that which '*differs from itself*'. He then goes on to treat matter as the domain of repetition (it does not differ from itself), a distinction between difference and repetition that is complicated by Bergson in texts such as *Matter and Memory* and especially *Creative Evolution*, and which Deleuze goes on to complicate in this essay and also in the 1966 text. Psychic life is taken as an

example of the difference of nature in which there is always 'otherness' without there being 'number' or 'several'. If movement is qualitative change and vice versa — movement has to involve alteration if it is to amount to real change (see Socrates in *Theaetetus* 182c) — then this suggests that duration is a movement of self-differentiation: 'Duration, tendency is the difference of self from self; and what differs from itself is *immediately* the unity of substance and subject' (BCD p. 89; p. 48). Duration then becomes Bergsonism's unconventional designation for the traditional notion of substance. Against what he regards as the essential movement of Hegelianism, Deleuze insists that the difference of nature is an essential aspect of the internal logic of difference itself; it is not, therefore, external to Being — being does not have to become or 'decide' to become since it is already characterized by an internal difference as a power of self-differentiation: '*Difference of nature has itself become a nature. Moreover, it was so from the beginning*' (BCD p. 90; p. 49). This is un-Hegelian for Deleuze simply because it means that we do not have to go to the level of contradiction and negation to account for the productive power of difference:

The originality of the Bergsonian conception is in showing that internal difference does not go and must not go to the point of contradiction, to alterity, to the negative, because these three notions are in fact less profound than it or are merely external views of this internal difference. To think internal difference as such, as pure internal difference, to reach the pure concept of difference, to raise difference to the absolute, such is the directions of Bergson's event... In Bergson and thanks to the notion of the virtual, the thing differs from itself *in the first place, immediately*. According to Hegel, thing differs from itself in the first place from all that it is not, such that difference goes to the point of contradiction.²⁵

²⁵ BCD p. 90, p. 49; p. 96, p. 53. This is perhaps the principal theme of Deleuze's difference from Hegel — the difference that is at stake in *Difference and Repetition* — and it is expressed not only in the 1956 essay on Bergson but also in the 1954 review of Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*: 'can we not construct an ontology of difference which would not have to go up to contradiction, because contradiction would be less than difference and not more? Is not contradiction itself only the phenomenal and anthropological aspect of difference?' (Deleuze's review now appears as the appendix to the English translation of Hyppolite's text, trans. L. Lawlor & A. Sen [New York: SUNY Press, 1997], pp. 191-5).

We have, no doubt, entered into the deepest waters of Deleuze's Bergsonism. These waters, however, are not necessarily murky. Let's seek to swim in them. How exactly are we to think the virtual and to conceive of this originary difference of Being? Deleuze's answer is: through a thinking of Life.

'Life is the process of difference' (BCD p. 92; p. 50). Deleuze refers not simply to the differentiations of embryology but more to the differences of evolution, such as the production of species: 'With Darwin the problems of difference and life come to be identified in this idea of evolution, even though Darwin himself has a false conception of vital difference' (ibid.). The vital difference is not a simple determination but rather an indetermination. The difference is crucial for Deleuze since only by recognizing the unpredictable character of living forms is it possible to construe the true nature of evolution, namely that the *élan vital* is not a determination but a differentiation. And if life is not simply the result of a subsisting exteriority — the external mechanism of selection — then it is necessary to think this as a *self-differentiation*. It is here that we can now return to the citation from Bergson's *Creative Evolution* concerning matter dividing actually what was virtually manifold.

Deleuze is not blind to the role of matter within a creative evolution. He can, in fact, be seen to be giving a *reading* of Bergson's text which does not itself ever make explicit or clear the precise nature of this relation between the virtual multiplicity of tendencies and the actualizations of materiality. The passage from Bergson seems to suggest that it is matter that makes actual what is virtual. This seems to stand in contrast to Deleuze for whom differentiation comes about as the result of the resistance life encounters in matter but, first and foremost, 'from the internal explosive force that life carries in itself' (BCD p. 93; p. 51, compare B p. 97; p. 94). The indetermination of evolutionary life, therefore, is a necessary and not an accidental feature of it. How do we square this with Bergson's stress on the enormous role played by contingency within evolution? Strictly speaking, Bergson notes, it is possible to conceive of the evolution of life taking place either 'in one single individual by means of a series of transformations spread over thousands of ages' or in any number of individuals succeeding each other in a unilinear series. In both cases evolution would have taken place in only the one dimension (O p. 540; CE p. 53). But in actual terms we know that evolution has involved millions of individuals spread across divergent lines. Is such divergency entirely contingent? The list of

contingent features within evolution is of quite a scale in Bergson's conception; they include the forms of life invented, the dissociation of the 'primordial tendency' into complementary tendencies that create divergent lines that are relative to the obstacles that are encountered in a given place and at a given time, and also the adaptations, arrests and setbacks that characterize it. Only two things are necessary for evolution to take place, he suggests: (a) a gradual accumulation of energy and (b) an elastic canalization of this energy in variable and indeterminable directions. Moreover, although both of these conditions have been met on our planet in a particular way it was 'not necessary that life should fix its choice mainly upon the carbon of carbonic acid' (*O* p. 711; *CE* p. 255). We can imagine life evolving in terms of a different chemical substratum. Now although the 'impulsion' would remain the same it is highly conceivable that it would split up very differently to the way it has on our planet which has specific physical conditions (*O* p. 713; *CE* p. 257).

In the 1956 essay Deleuze writes: 'Self-differentiation is the movement of a virtuality which actualises itself' (*BCD* p. 93; p. 51). In the 1966 text differentiation is said to take place as an actualization because it presupposes the unity and 'primordial totality' of a virtual that is dissociated according to lines of differentiation but which continues to show 'its subsisting unity and totality in each line' (*B* p. 97; p. 95). For example, life becomes divided into plant and animal, the animal becomes divided into instinct and intelligence, but each side of the division 'carries the whole with it' (*ibid.*)²⁶ Deleuze likens this persistence of the whole to an 'accompanying nebulosity', speaking of a 'halo' of instinct in intelligence, a 'nebula' of intelligence in instinct, and a 'hint' of the animate in plants. Now, could we not recommend eliminating these vague appeals to halos and nebulae and simply recognize that what we have is an actual multiplicity of life which does not require a virtuality in order to account for it? As Badiou asks, is virtuality 'any better' than the finality it is designed to replace? (*CB* p. 81; p. 53).

On the Bergsonian conception of creative evolution, however, life cannot be adequately conceived outside of the terms of an indivisible and uniquely historical continuity (one that more than allows for divergence and heterogeneity). In addition, Deleuze's point about the

²⁶ See Bergson *O* p. 585; *CE* p. 106: 'There is no manifestation of life which does not contain, in a rudimentary state — either latent or potential — the essential characters of the most other manifestations'.

élan vital needs confronting: although evolution is littered with accidents, abortions, and arrests it would be very strange to say that the impulsion of life and towards life, supposing we are committed to such a hypothesis, is itself something entirely accidental. This would indeed be to sacrifice everything to exteriority, to an external causality. As Bergson himself notes, the impulsion would remain what it is whatever the conditions of life. The problem is determining just what is and what is not contingent in this conception of creative evolution. The impulsion is not contingent and neither, it seems, is the dissociation; what is contingent is the particular form this dissociation takes within an actual historical evolution and the kind of divergence that takes place. Bergson speaks of a 'primordial tendency' of life dissociating itself into divergent lines which, while divergent, also have to be seen as complementary (simply because they are the dissociated products of a simple virtual whole). Moreover, if we think about the 'great scission' of life into the two major kingdoms of vegetable and animal and the way in which the two forms of life have sought to utilize and transform energy, it is possible to see, Bergson holds, that the evolution of life into these two main forms is not simply the result of 'external intervention' but rather can be seen as 'the effect of the duality of the tendency involved in the original impetus and of the resistance opposed by matter to this impetus' (*O* p. 711; *CE* p. 254). The primordial tendency, then, has duality built into it and from this scission many others have followed. Claims such as this do not negate the need to assign a role to contingency but rather clarify how we might more precisely configure it. If the chemico-physical conditions of a planet were different to our own, and their consistency sufficient to generate life, we do not know in any *a priori* terms what particular forms and lines of life would evolve; but what we do know, according to Bergson, is that the initial impulsion would be one characterized by a duality, even a multiplicity, of tendencies (of association, individuation, etc.). The problem here, which is perhaps also the problem of the virtual, is of speaking of an impulse of life in advance of any actual evolution and which supposes a separation of the vital from the physico-chemical. It is also the same problem we face when we try to conceive of tendencies, such as those of instinct and intelligence and as manifested in forms of plant and animal life, in advance of the actual emergence of particular plants and animals (see *O* pp. 609-10; *CE* pp. 135-6). Nevertheless, and as will become clear, this is precisely what Deleuze's philosophy of difference commits itself to: the difference of

Being or of life is *at the beginning*, and only a notion like the virtual can make this clear.

Bergson himself is not unaware of the difficulties his thinking faces. He insists that 'division' is what characterizes life, it is not a mere appearance. Matter plays the crucial role in effecting this division (*O* p. 1071; *TSMR* p. 114). Indeed, it is by studying the directionality of the great lines of evolution, which run alongside paths that have reached a dead end, that we are able to formulate the conjecture and hypothesis of a vital impetus that began by possessing the essential characteristics of these main lines 'in a state of reciprocal implication', such as instinct and intelligence 'which reach their culminating point at the extremities of the two principal lines of animal evolution' (*O* p. 1072; *TSMR* p. 115). Such tendencies are not to be abstractly combined into one but rather taken as given 'in the beginning' and as interpenetrating aspects of the 'simple reality'. The tendencies are given then not in an actual evolution but only in a simple virtual. They cannot be given in any other way if we are to take seriously the conception of a *creative* evolution, in which 'duration is invention or it is nothing at all' and in which hesitation and indeterminacy are its positive features. Of any 'original tendency' we might take and think about it is difficult to speak of its actual content simply because we cannot tell in advance what will issue from it (*O* p. 1228; *TSMR* p. 297). Bergson insists that it is impossible to forecast the actual forms that will emerge 'by discontinuous leaps' and all along the lines of evolution (*ibid.*). A more unequivocal affirmation of the discontinuity entailed by actuality and materiality could not be found. Later in this book, his final text, Bergson will insist that the *materialization* of tendencies only comes about through a process of dichotomy. So although we can posit a 'undivided primitive tendency' it is equally essential that such a tendency is not reified and viewed independently of the actual divisions that have taken place: 'we will call *law of dichotomy* that law which brings about a materialization, by a mere splitting up, of tendencies which began by being two photographic views, so to speak, of one and the same tendency' (*O* p. 1227; *TSMR* p. 296). To neglect the different aspects of this 'image' of the vital impetus is, Bergson argues, taking a stab at Schopenhauer, to be left with an 'empty concept', like the 'will to life', and presented with a 'barren theory of metaphysics'.²⁷

²⁷ In the aforementioned letter to Delattre of December 1935 Bergson expounds at some length on the differences between his notion of the *élan vital* and both Schopenhauer's 'will to life' and Samuel Butler's 'life-force'. See *Melanges*, pp.

One reason why Bergson is not a hylozoist is because he insists upon maintaining a distinction between matter and life conceived as different tendencies.²⁸ Matter admits of relaxation, showing 'a certain elasticity', and on account of which its geometry, inertia, and determinism can never be said to be complete.²⁹ This co-implication of life and matter is to be found in duration (Bergson insists that there is a 'becoming of matter') (*O* p. 726; *CE* p. 273). Duration is the most contracted degree of matter, while matter is the most expanded degree of duration (ex-tension is a tension interrupted). On this scheme there is no duality of homogeneous quantity and heterogeneous quality but rather a continuous movement from one to the other: 'quality is nothing other than contracted quantity' (*B* pp. 72-3; p. 74). Matter is not geometrical and isolable as a closed system solely as a result of our representation of it; it has this feature itself as a tendency (which explains why Bergson insists upon a *double genesis* of matter and intellect).

In the 1956 essay Deleuze argues that the virtuality of the vital tendency of life 'exists in such a way that it realises itself in dissociating itself' and that 'it is forced to dissociate itself in order to realise itself' (*BCD* p. 93; p. 51). Deleuze would seem to be arguing, therefore, that the dissociation of the vital tendency into divergent lines is not something accidental. Perhaps this point enables us to address the question of how the virtual can be said to '*differ from* itself' (my emphasis) when it becomes actualized. If we posit the relation between the virtual and the actual as asymmetrical then how can the virtual differ from itself when it differentiates and becomes actualized? The only possible answer is this: because it is realizing itself and realizing itself in becoming something *other* than itself in its very persistence or endurance (it is this otherness from the beginning, not as number but as potential). As a movement of actualization evolution is an actualization of the virtual, not the brute eruption into being of either preformed or fully-formed actuals. But then we need to ask: what is the character of its simplicity? This is, in effect, the same kind of issue: self-differentiation is a necessary characteristic of the simple virtual; its simplicity consists

1522-8, especially pp. 1526-7. I discuss this letter in essay four (on Bergson and Kant) in my forthcoming *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual*.

²⁸ Bergson makes his position clear in a letter to H. Hoffding of March 1915, in *Melanges* p. 1148. Translations of this letter and the one to Delattre are forthcoming in *Henri Bergson: Key Writings* (London: Athlone Press, 2001).

²⁹ H. Bergson, 'La Conscience et la Vie', in *Oeuvres*, pp. 824-5; trans. in *Mind-Energy* (hereafter cited as *M-E*) (New York: Henry Holt, 1920), pp. 17-18.

in the fact that it is operating on the level of inchoate and undetermined tendencies and although actual species of life evolve in and out of existence the tendencies they are implicated in persist and continue to be expressed in new ways.

The virtual defines 'an absolutely positive mode of existence' (*B* p. 100; p. 55). Things differ and differ from themselves (in 'the first place' and 'immediately') on account of the positivity of this simple power. This is because it is a simplicity of tendencies that split up and diverge and that do not follow or conform to a logic of negation and supercession in which the tendencies could be said to enjoy a hierarchical development (relations of negation and supercession between plant and animal, and between animal and man, or a single line of development from the vegetal to the instinctual and the rational, for example). When one term is negated by another we have, in fact, 'only the positive realisation of a virtuality which contained both terms at once' (*B* p. 96; p. 53). We have seen that duration is defined as that which differs from itself. Deleuze clarifies this by adding that if this is the case then 'that from which it differs is still duration'. So duration persists in its difference from itself since what differs from duration is still duration. Can the same be said of the virtual? Deleuze will describe the virtual in terms identical to duration as that which differs from itself. Differentiation is the expression of this essential difference of the virtual with respect to itself: 'What differentiates itself is *first* what differs with itself, which is to say the virtual. Differentiation is not the concept, but the production of objects which find their reason in the concept' (*B* pp. 97-8; p. 54).

IV.

'To do philosophy', Deleuze writes in 1956, '*is precisely to start with difference*' (*BCD* p. 111; p. 62). This is a truly radical philosophy of difference simply because difference is said to be there 'from the beginning' as the very difference of Being. Moreover, in its most primordial reality this difference entails the differences of beings. These latter differences are internal ones because they are implicated in the simple and positive virtual which remains in them while, at the same time, they themselves are the givers of their own unique differences.

It is clear that Deleuze, in addition to transforming Bergson into a radical philosopher of difference, has ontologized his conception of

creative evolution. This is evident in the way he seeks to establish a 'rigorous' link between *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution*: while the lines of differentiation are 'truly creative' the forms of physical, vital, and psychical life they create amount to embodiments of different *ontological* levels of the virtual (*B* p. 103; p. 100). As the 'pure concept of difference' the virtual entails the coexistence of all the degrees, nuances, and levels of being. Matter and duration are the two extreme levels of relaxation and contraction. This introduces us to the idea of life being construed in terms of a cone of virtual memory. 'The Bergsonian schema which unites *Creative Evolution* and *Matter and Memory*', Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*, 'begins with the account of a gigantic memory, a multiplicity formed by the virtual coexistence of all the sections of the "cone", each section being the repetition of all the others and being distinguished from them only by the order of the relations and the distribution of singular points' (*DR* p. 274; p. 212). If the virtual has its own peculiar reality, one that can be 'extended to the whole universe', this is because it has one that consists in all the degrees of expansion and contraction that never cease to coexist. What is different and has to remain different are the differences of level (singular points of contraction, etc.). The levels and degrees of being 'belong to a single Time; they coexist in a Unity; they are enclosed in a Simplicity; they form the potential parts of a Whole that is itself virtual. They are *the reality of this virtual*. This was the sense of the theory of virtual multiplicities that inspired Bergsonism from the start' (*B* p. 103; p. 100).

We have to approach the real and its articulations, therefore, on two principal levels at one and the same time. From the perspective of the lines of differentiation that diverge there is no longer any coexisting whole but merely lines of successive and simultaneous actualization. However, each one of these lines can be said to correspond to one of the degrees that coexist in the virtual totality. Obviously, it is only on the level of the virtual that the *coexistence* of levels and degrees can be posited. Each line retains something of the whole 'from a certain perspective, from a certain point of view'. The role of creativity in all of this, however, should not be neglected: the lines of differentiation do *not* simply trace the levels or degrees of the virtual, 'reproducing them by simple resemblance' (*B* p. 105; p. 101).

While we can concur with Badiou that the virtual is the principal name of Being in Deleuze's thinking we also wish to stress the importance of thinking this virtual in neither emanationist nor eminentist

terms. Badiou is right to point out that the nominal pair of virtual and actual 'exhausts the deployment of univocal Being' (CB p. 65; p. 43). Two names are required in order to 'test that the ontological univocity designated by the pair proceeds from a single one of these names'. But on his reading the actual is reduced to being nothing more than the 'function of its virtuality' (ibid.). Badiou has successfully drawn our attention to the importance of a renewed thinking of the One in Deleuze; what he neglects, however, is the unequivocal commitment to pluralism. It is not that Badiou simply downplays this commitment to pluralism in Deleuze; it is rather that he fails to comprehend it and fails precisely because of the way in which he has configured the virtual in Deleuze's thinking and transformed it into a power of eminence (the pluralism Deleuze seeks can only be incoherently established on the basis of a univocity of the actual). We agree with Badiou: Deleuze is a thinker of the One. But he is also a pluralist and an immanently qualified one. There are good reasons for positively hesitating in describing Deleuze as a Platonist of the virtual.

Socraticorum Maximus: Simon the Shoemaker and the Problem of Socrates

JOHN SELLARS

Xenophon: *Greet Simon the shoemaker and praise him, because he continues to devote himself to the teachings of Socrates and uses neither his poverty nor his trade as a pretext for not doing philosophy.*

Aristippus: *Simon the shoemaker [...] someone who is greater in wisdom than anyone ever was or will be.*¹

The name 'Simon the shoemaker' is not one immediately familiar to specialists in ancient philosophy, let alone to students of philosophy in general.² This may well be due, in part, to the tendency of many scholars

* My title is a variation upon Aulus Gellius's description of Epictetus as *Stoicorum maximus*, the greatest of the Stoics (*Noctes Atticae* 1.2.6).

** Abbreviations: CAG = *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, 23 vols & 3 suppl. (Berlin: Reimer, 1882-1909); OCD = *Oxford Classical Dictionary*; OCT = *Oxford Classical Texts*; SSR = *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae*, ed. G. Giannantoni, 4 vols (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1990); SVF = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, ed. H. von Arnim, 4 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-24).

¹ Both of these passages are quoted in full in the Appendix.

² The only extended treatment in English is R. F. Hock, 'Simon the Shoemaker as an Ideal Cynic', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 17 (1976), 41-53. This study is exemplary but little known; C. H. Kahn, for instance, is unaware of its existence when he discusses Simon in *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). R. S. Brumbaugh's 'Simon and Socrates', *Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1991), 151-52, although useful, is only a short notice primarily concerned with the recent archaeological discoveries and does not mention Hock either. Note also R. Goulet, 'Trois