

Deleuze's Ontology and Creativity: Becoming in Architecture

JAMES WILLIAMS

*A life contains only the virtual. It is made of virtualities, events, singularities.*¹

I. Architecture and paradox

In an early morality tale about the despoiling of the Italian Riviera, Italo Calvino dramatises the clash between the particular and the general in planning and architecture. Calvino describes the distance separating a mother and son in their relations concerning the family plot, which the son plans to build on, and that the mother cherishes as her labour of love:

She paused as though an unexpected fear had struck her. "And what happens if once we have sold the land, they decide to *build* there?" As she spoke, there rose up before her eyes the grey cement wall crushing down onto the green spaces of her garden and transforming it into a bleak back yard.²

This is not a simplistic and one-dimensional caricature. Quinto, the son, is prey to passions equally as strong as his mother's, but his feeling for the ancestral home and the spaces of his youth is in conflict with a desire to participate in the post-war renewal, to make his mark on the world:

¹ Gilles Deleuze, 'L'Immanence: une vie...', in *Philosophie*, 47, September 1995, pp. 3-7, esp. p. 6.

² Italo Calvino, "A Plunge into real estate", in *Difficult Loves* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1983) pp. 163-250, esp. p. 169.

She was lamenting the loss of a part of herself, something she was losing that she knew she would not get back again. It was the bitterness older people feel when every general injury that touches them in some way seems a blow against their individual life, which has no longer any means of redress; because when any one of life's good thing is taken away, it is life itself that is being taken. Quinto recognised in the resentful way he had reacted in the *côte que côte* school of optimism, the refusal of the young to admit any sort of defeat since they believe that life will give back at least as much as it took away.³

But his modern credo is feigned. It is a defence against an intuitive understanding of the momentum of history. The family have to sell in order to meet new taxes, brought in to fund post-war reconstruction, a chance for a new, egalitarian and prosperous society. They must also sell to cover death duties. The two symbols deployed by Calvino – death and taxes – shift the action from decision to fate: the question can only be whether to welcome change or to ignore it in a pretence of resistance. Better to ride with history and to act as if one participates in its movement, since to fall into nostalgia is to fall into despair, "... his mother's serene melancholy provided no foothold for that contradictory demon of his, and the longing to stop being passive to take the offensive grew all the sharper in him."⁴

Calvino has grasped the complex battle that takes place with development. It is not merely an opposition between understanding and feeling, progress and nostalgia. Rather, nostalgia is a form of understanding insofar as it brings together raw attachments to space and place, to a way of life and the idea that life is those attachments, feelings and patterns. But understanding is itself accompanied by the feelings of youth – hope and the love of modernity for itself – and by the realisation that nostalgia can only destroy us, since history moves on regardless. Progress must be affirmed not for its goal but for survival in its wake: "And yet he felt how mistaken the cruelty of youth is, how wasteful, and how much it bodes the first unseasonable taste of age; and at the same time how necessary it is." Calvino refuses to resolve this conundrum, preferring to describe life as a paradox that must be lived with as best we can.

³ Ibid. pp. 166-7.

⁴ Ibid. p. 166.

The question for architecture and philosophy though, is whether new buildings and new creations can resolve the opposition of the singular and the general and the contradictory claims of past, present and future. Is there necessarily a paradox in the clash between specific local loves and universal utopia, and between actual and virtual environments? This essay will deduce one answer to this question from the thesis that creation is necessarily paradoxical and problematic, put forward by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze (“The ‘problematic’ is a state of the world, a dimension of the system, and even its horizon or its home...”⁵). It also a response to one of the strongest criticisms of Deleuze’s work, in its application to architecture. Manfredo Tafuri’s claims that Deleuze’s philosophy does not allow for critical distinctions between ideological groups and movements in criticism (“We firmly believe it necessary ‘not to make rhizomes’ of those groups.”)⁶ Tafuri attacks the loss of critical effectivity and acumen in a fundamentally problematic and paradoxical view of the relation of critic and architectural phenomena: “Implicated though it may be in the objects and phenomena it analyzes, historical criticism must know how to balance on the razor’s edge that separates detachment and participation.”⁷ When Deleuze embraces the problematic and the paradoxical, does he also embrace indifference?

II. Peter Eisenman’s Deleuzian architecture

Though Deleuze defines the context in which creation must take place as primarily problematic, his philosophy is still progressive and responsive to environment. It is not the case that out of unavoidable problems comes a loss of reforming energy or a form of quietism. Neither is it the case that the problematic nature of things leads to an inability to recognise important or salient features of our environment. On the contrary, we can only move forward through a philosophical redefinition and creative affirmation of those features. There is a combination of diagnostic and innovating functions in this view. We have to grasp the significant aspects of our worlds by expressing them in new ways, ways which will inevitably change them. This necessary combination of diagnosis and creation can be

⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968). Trans. Paul Patton *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia, 1994) p. 280.

⁶ Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (Cambridge: MIT, 1990) p. 11.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 11.

understood best in the dual function of the key concept of becoming in Deleuze's work. He put forward an ontology of becoming, where the real is in a state of flux, or differentiation (that can be obscured by an illusion of fixity and identity). He also adopts creative becoming as the only way to affirm the underlying real processes of differentiation or constant change behind all apparently static things. The salient features of the environment will therefore be those in process of becoming(s). This means that any creative endeavour combines a passive registering of that which is in a process of change with an active affirmation of the process. It is because reality is primarily becoming that a creative affirmation of becoming is also related in a positive manner to the way things are. This relation is activated when an architect expresses the becomings at play in an actual site in a new building or plan.

As a consequence of this central role of becoming, Deleuze's influence on architecture is far from the most obvious connection of a philosophy of difference with the nostalgic fragmentation and pluralism of postmodern architecture. His work is influenced by and leads to the most radical modernism, one that eschews all idealism and the search for abstract fixed identities such as pure form. The ontology of becoming turns against progress, defined in terms of the move towards ideals or lost origins. Instead, there is an expression of pure movements, defined as variations, or more properly differentiations; that is, alteration that needs no reference to different identities or fixed reference points. However, this ontology and affirmation of becoming allows for determinacy: becoming is not justified on the basis of some originary chaos, but on undetermined relations between determined movements or processes. For Deleuze, indeterminacy is the problematic relation of ideas defined as structures of other ideas.⁸ For example, the difficult idea of urban innovation given by Calvino above, involves a structure combining the ideas of progress and the liberty to decide one's fate, with the ideas of loss and identity. It is because the relations between these ideas are uncertain and because the ideas themselves change with those relations that the structure itself is problematic in the radical Deleuzian sense of a primary becoming, a dynamic with no external measures or ends. For instance, as identity becomes heavily linked to environment, liberty becomes a less extended and weaker idea; and, if we accept Calvino's presentation of the paradox, there is no final way of determining which direction these links should or even must necessarily move.

⁸ See *Difference and Repetition*, p. 182 ff.

The American architect Peter Eisenman follows Deleuze's definition of the problematic in his large-scale regeneration of the Rebstockpark periphery of Frankfurt. His work picks up on the problematic relation of ideas in order to develop a new way of looking at the relation of architecture to environment: "architecture can propose [...] some kind of event in which interpretation of the environment is problematised..." Eisenman insists on the pervasive and recurrent problems facing architects when their brief involves urban design in complex historical, social and technological contexts. In responding to the brief, he goes from problems – which would seem to ask for solutions – to a problematisation, which involves the realization that certain problems cannot be resolved once and for all – they must become part of the creative process. This process is explicitly Deleuzian in recognising that the undetermined relation between ideas must be expressed in architecture. So Eisenman borrows Deleuze's concepts of the fold and the event in order to articulate the key ideas that are present in the site, history and future of the Rebstock site: "In the idea of the fold, form is seen as continuous but also as articulating a possible new relationship between vertical and horizontal, figure and ground [...] The new object for Deleuze is no longer concerned with the framing of space, but rather a temporal modulation that implies a continual variation of matter."⁹

Eisenman considers the problem of the relation of the ideas of figure and ground in architecture, the interaction between a building's spatial context (lines of communication and transport, entrances, urban spaces and boundaries) and the building proper. He considers two dominant ways of thinking about the problem as if it were soluble. First, **figure ground contextualism** assumes "a reversible and interactive relationship between the building blocks and the void between them"; the problem is then strictly one of buildings and spaces. The architect determines "in any historical context the latent structures capable of forming a present day urbanism."¹⁰ This postmodern contextualism refuses to countenance an extension of the relationship of figure and ground to social and technological influences that may demand a revolutionary attitude to space. Any problem is resolved through a reuse of historical ground-figure relations in new contexts. New buildings mimic historical forms and repeat historical grids in order to achieve an inoffensive continuity between the

⁹ Peter Eisenman, 'Unfolding events: Frankfurt Rebstock and the possibility of a new urbanism', in *Re:working Eisenman* (London: Academy, 1993), pp. 58-61, esp. p. 60

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 59.

past and the present and in order to reproduce the successful ground-figure relations from the past (the postmodern piazza, is the paradigm).¹¹ Second, the **isolation of the point block or linear slab on a *tabula rasa* ground** liberates ground and figure by creating a discontinuity between them. This is a description of the most excessive form of modernism in architecture, where local environments are cut off from buildings in the name of functionalism and a set of ahistorical aesthetic principles. The modern block, floating on its pilotis over an island of grass and tarmac, is a product of this deliberate detachment of ground and figure. Its value, unlike contextualism, is to respond in a revolutionary fashion to modern problems of ground congestion and pollution.¹²

However, according to Eisenman, neither of these approaches “explains the true complexity of phenomena”. In the context of urban development in Frankfurt, he rehearses the well-known criticism that the isolation of a building leaves its inhabitants detached from a ground that becomes barren. The desolate spaces under and between modern urban developments testify to this false resolution of the ground-figure problem. Yet the postmodern ‘contextual’ solution is also attacked for its lack of profundity, which can be traced back to its concentration on a limited set of historical structures adopted in new developments. The demand for continuity in structures fails to account for the genuine value of historical forms and plans. In fact, contextual developments suffer from the same problem of isolation despite their superficial historicity because they do not take account of the full-range of conditions that lead to the success and value of earlier developments, “its nostalgia and kitsch sentimentalism never took into account the *manifold* realities of contemporary life.” Postmodern regeneration, according to a sympathetic representation of surface-looks and preservation of important social spaces, rarely recaptures an original energy and social cohesiveness, since their cause is not the space alone.

¹¹ See, Charles Jenks’ discussion of the postmodern ‘rule’ of **urbane urbanism**: “New buildings, according to urban contextualism doctrine, should fit into and extend the urban context, reuse such constants as the street, arcade and piazza, yet acknowledge too the new technologies and means of transport.” (Charles Jenks, *Postmodernism* (London: Academy, 1987) pp. 329-350)

¹² See Le Corbusier’s ‘Five Points of a New Architecture’, first point: “The first point was the *piloti*, or vertical stanchion in steel or concrete, which lifted the box up into space, freeing the ground underneath for circulation or other uses.” (William Curtis, *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms* (London: Phaidon, 1986). p. 69)

These criticisms are too general to be decisive in the already vague and unproductive modern-postmodern debate.¹³ They do, though, serve to highlight key aspects of Eisenman's theory. Firstly, the problem-solving theories fail to treat the relation of 'old to new' as one of mutual transformation. They concentrate on absolute continuity or severance at the expense of evolution. Secondly, they fail to analyse the relation of ground to figure as ever-changing and evolving at any given time. The problem is not that new building creates tensions within urban spaces. Those spaces are **constantly** prey to a tension between ground and figure because: one, that relation is necessarily difficult and complex; two, the relation takes place within an ever-changing social context. Thus, in his Rebstock project, Eisenman notes how, historically, the demand for cheap and efficient public housing and the demand for good communications put contradictory pressures on architects. The modern 'solution' concealed this contradiction in the separation of figure and ground, only to suffer from the re-emergence of the problem in the barren spaces produced between modern blocks. He also notes how new waves of innovation in communication put established urban plans under stress. Indeed, the challenge to his architecture comes from the electronic media revolution and hence from a new public used to a different, media-induced experience: "in a media age objects are no longer as meaningful as timeful events..."¹⁴

In response, Eisenman undermines the figure-ground opposition by blurring the distinction. He uses the practice of folding across and along lines to introduce uncertainty in the boundaries of the Rebstock site as well as within the spaces defined by individual buildings. The relation between old and new figures and grounds is made explicit through the new where folds in the plan, façade, and figure-ground relations bring to mind older relations as well as new ones (old and new boundaries of the site are extended within the site proper, for instance). In an article on Eisenman's use of Deleuze's concept of the fold, John Rajchman has focused on the complexity of this effect:

Rebstock is folding in three dimensions. Hence one is not just dealing with an urban 'pattern'; rather, it is the urban 'fabric' on

¹³ The difficulty Eisenman has in separating his work from modern and the postmodern theory is brought out in the interview 'Dialogues with Peter Eisenman', *The New Moderns* (London: Academy, 1990), pp. 208-37.

¹⁴ 'Unfolding events: Frankfurt Rebstock and the possibility of a new urbanism', p. 61.

which the pattern is imprinted that is folded along this line, thereby becoming more complex [...] The periphery of the plot thus ceases to be its defining edge, and becomes instead one dimension of an uncentred folding movement...¹⁵

According to Eisenman, this effect is not one of clear definition; rather, what appears, only does so indistinctly, “In such a displacement, the new, rather than being understood as fundamentally different to the old, is seen as being merely slightly out of focus in relation to what exists. This out-of-focus condition then, has the possibility of blurring or displacing the whole, that is both old and new.”¹⁶

Eisenman has put forward a design that avoids the ‘solution’ of modernist urban discontinuity, whilst also responding to contemporary pressures without turning to the inappropriate nostalgia of postmodern contextualism. His displacement of the ground-figure problem bears witness to the value of an aesthetic developed within a problem, and hence in terms of becoming, rather than as a final response to a problem, in terms of Being or essences. The main concepts of his design (‘uncentred folding movement’, ‘out-of-focus’, ‘displacement’) challenge the figure-ground and past-present distinctions in a productive and forward looking manner. But, beyond this particular instance, Eisenman makes wider claims for his approach in his theoretical text on Rebstock. Having taken a set of ideas that have been treated as independent and having re-introduced them into a problematic structure, his analysis makes three fundamental claims that return to the Deleuzian thesis on an ontology of becoming:

- a. any actual form is changing **at any given time**;
- b. the relation between forms is **necessarily difficult and complex**;
- c. the relation takes place within a **constantly changing** context.

If these claims are accepted, then it is possible to see the value of an aesthetic that works with them, as opposed to concealing them under illusory solutions. Andrew Benjamin described this position in his introduction to *Re:working Eisenman*. His analysis is ontological, concerned primarily with Being as opposed to relations between forms:

¹⁵ John Rajchman, ‘Perplications’, in *Re:working Eisenman*, pp. 114-23, esp. 118.

¹⁶ ‘Unfolding events: Frankfurt Rebstock and the possibility of a new urbanism’ p. 60.

The recasting, the reworking, has a complex temporality in that what the project is – its being as a project – is not reducible to its being so at one point in time. What this means is that the reworking sunders the ontology of stasis in terms of the ontology proper to complex repetition; i.e. a giving which in happening again is an original happening. It is thus what that the name identifies is the complex site worked by the two-fold presence of reiteration and distancing.¹⁷

Eisenman's work is not bound to a specific instant in time. Its complex temporality brings past and future together in order to reveal an ontology of becoming where other works depend on an ontology of stasis. For instance, Eisenman's critique of the modernists' break with past relations of ground and figure is dependent on an awareness that this past is implicitly part of their timeless present (the modern 'stasis' – where time has stopped because the problem has been resolved). But also, an understanding of Being in terms of past, present and future **instants** is challenged since any 'being' brings all three together in an active becoming. Eisenman brings the past and the future into play in the present, thereby showing that they are not merely past and future, gone and yet to come, but 'happening again'. His work is in tune with this ontology because actual effects of reiteration and distancing, the experience of the folds described by Rajchman, are in harmony with the ontology of becoming as described by Benjamin.

III. Deleuze's ontological arguments

In his *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze develops an ontological argument that underpins Eisenman's claims on time and space. This argument is part of Deleuze's study of difference, where he seeks to prove that, fundamentally, difference cannot be understood in terms of differences between individuals, classified in terms of species and genus. This understanding would lead to a negative definition of difference in itself as a limit within a species and/or an opposition between genera. Problems concerning differences would then be resolved by referring to limits and oppositions. Instead, Deleuze defends the thesis that difference

¹⁷ Andrew Benjamin, 'Re:working Eisenman: work and name', in *Re:working Eisenman*, pp. 6-9, esp. 9.

is the product of primary differentiations; that is, any individual presupposes differences in the intensities of variable immanent components. Difference then, is not between individuals, but a condition of the existence of any individual. For example, Eisenman's understanding of space is consistent with the Deleuzian view that space is differentiated according to variable intensities of movement; the Rebstock project attempts to include a **limiting** of site, a **deformation** of facades and so on. On the other hand, the same site could have been analysed in terms of strict differences, the inside and outside of the site, the separation of figure and ground etc. According to Deleuze, in the first case, space is given by a distribution of movements and intensities (the site is more limited/dense here, less here); in the second case, space is divided following oppositions between identities and distinctions between concepts (inside/outside; figure/ground).¹⁸

Deleuze contends that the second position presupposes and yet conceals the differentiations associated with the first. He justifies this claim for primary differentiation in two stages. First, he puts forward an ontological proposition that undermines the argument for the primacy of distinctions of species and genus in determining differences between existents, simply 'Being is univocal'; that is, Being is said of all things in the same way. So Being cannot be a genus, since it can be said in the same way of existents that belong to different genera. Therefore, Being can be said of differences – for example, differences between genera – as positive existents in themselves, independent of genera:

In effect, the essential in univocity is not that Being is said in a single and same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, *of* all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities [...] The essence of univocal being is to include individuating differences, whilst these differences do not have the same essence and do not change the essence of being – just as white includes various intensities, while remaining essentially the same white.¹⁹

Difference exists positively. It is not the negative result of oppositions and limits.

The second argument that Deleuze must put forward is a deduction of the primacy of differentiation ('individuating difference') over identity:

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* p. 54.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p 36.

“We must show not only how individuating difference differs in kind from specific difference, but primarily and above all how individuation properly *precedes* matter and form, species and parts, and every other element of the constituted individual.”²⁰ The argument has two functions: it establishes the truth of the proposition on the univocity of Being for all existents and it proves the precedence of individuating difference. Firstly, Deleuze turns to Duns Scotus’ ontology and to his definition of two types of distinctions that depend on the univocity of Being. A *formal distinction* allows us to distinguish between different objects without having to suppose different identities, or ‘a numerical distinction’, and without having to suppose that these differences cannot be unified. Thus, we can understand differences in essence (thinking thing and extended matter, for instance). We can distinguish objects according to these essences (thinking animal and animal). But this does not mean that they cannot persist in one Being; on the contrary, Being must have all these attributes: “not only is the univocity of being [...] extended in the univocity of its ‘attributes’, but, given his infinity, God can possess his formally distinct univocal attributes without losing anything of his unity.”²¹ A *modal distinction* is a distinction of variations in intensity of attributes in actual individuals; this means an individual may possess a given attribute to greater or lesser degrees. Again, the distinction is not dependent on differences between individuals, but in the perception of varying intensities of attributes: “These variations, like degrees of whiteness, are individuating modalities...”

Formal and modal distinctions show how a univocal Being can be expressed as a differentiating factor in individuals. However, this does not prove that differentiation is primary. So, secondly, Deleuze turns to Spinoza and to his affirmation that “Univocal being [is] identical with unique, universal and infinite substance: it is proposed as *Deus sive Natura*.”²² The argument here depends on a counter to the common sense understanding of real and illusory. For Deleuze, real differences are differences of essences or attributes of a single substance, since it is only possible to establish an absolute distinction on the grounds of attributes because any two individuals either share attributes or not and, if they share them, then they cannot be fully distinguished. Furthermore, numerical distinctions are not real, since they depend on distinctions of degree of modes of attributes, that is, we can only distinguish between two

²⁰ Ibid. p. 38.

²¹ Ibid. p. 39.

²² Ibid. p. 40.

individuals because of the intensity of their attributes. Attributes are different essences of a single infinite substance; modes of attributes are the different ways in which that substance can actually be expressed: “Any hierarchy or pre-eminence is denied in so far as substance is equally designated by all the attributes in accordance with their essence, and equally expressed by all the modes in accordance with their degree of power.”²³ We can only understand difference on the grounds of essences and we can only feel difference on the grounds of intensity. For example, any part of Eisenman’s Rebstock site can only be really differentiated from others according to the intensity (mode) with which it expresses a given function (attribute) – ‘the **limiting is stronger** here’.

Deleuze completes his argument by reversing the unity of attributes and modes in Being, understood as a single substance. Spinoza’s position still subsumes differentiation to identity, to the identity of God or nature. The problem here, is that Being is defined independently of modes, in terms of attributes – Being is the infinity of attributes – whereas modes are defined entirely in terms of attributes; they are the expression of a variation in an attribute. This leads to an imbalance in the ontology and to an inconsistency in terms of the founding proposition: Being is not said equally of all things, since it would appear that it is said only imperfectly of modes. However, according to Deleuze, the single substance, expressed in the proposition ‘Being is univocal’, is nothing other than an infinity of attributes **expressed as modes**:

Substance must itself be said *of* the modes and only *of* the modes. Such a condition can be satisfied only at the price of a more general categorical reversal according to which being is said of becoming, identity of that which is different, the one of the multiple, etc.²⁴

So the ontological proposition is not to be understood as the unity of modes in Being, but rather, as the affirmation of the differential quality of existence: Being is as an infinite variation of virtual attributes **or** Being is the expression of virtual attributes in actual intensities (the process of actualisation). Deleuze finds the best version of these statements in Nietzsche’s doctrine of eternal return. This does not allow for the return of identity, since this would ultimately come down to a final stasis, but must instead stand for the eternal return of differentiation: “Returning is being,

²³ Ibid. p. 40.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 40.

but only the being of becoming.”²⁵ Thus Deleuze’s ontological argument for the primacy of differentiation allows for the conclusion: the real world is the world of virtual variations that underlie any illusory identity.²⁶

From the point of view of architecture, the importance of this ontology is that it leads to an idea of aesthetic experience where any real experience is an experience of variations, as opposed to an experience of identity:

There is a crucial experience of difference and a corresponding experiment; each time we find ourselves confronted or bound by a limitation or an opposition, we should ask what such a situation presupposes. It presupposes a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences, a properly differential and original space and time...²⁷

For example, a real experience of an entrance would be of an entering and an exiting with different degrees of intensity, and not of an entrance as such – this would merely be an illusion. So Deleuze proposes an aesthetic based on experimentation with the aim of uncovering the differential intensities that underlie any identity. His work on art and literature has never wavered from this early analysis in *Difference and Repetition*: “The identity of the object read really dissolves into divergent series defined by esoteric words, just as the identity of the reading subject is dissolved into the decentred circles of possible multiple readings.”²⁸ Consequently, Tafuri’s criticism appears to be valid. Are not Deleuze’s view of creation and his critique of identity necessarily undifferentiated and chaotic, since they offer no values or measures beyond an endless uncovering of intensities? This seems to be implied by recent work on Deleuze and architecture by Elizabeth Grosz: “... Deleuze can be understood as the

²⁵ Ibid. p. 41. See also Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1962) pp. 215-22. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (London: Athlone, 1983) pp. 186-94.

²⁶ Deleuze follows and develops the main steps of these proofs throughout *Difference and Repetition*, for instance, in his analysis of time in terms of eternal return (pp. 125-26). It is important to insist on his ontology and on his dependence on traditional philosophical argument in order to counter recent interpretations of his work as metaphysical fictions (see, Frédéric Gros, ‘Le Foucault de Deleuze: une fiction métaphysique’, *Philosophie*, 47, September 1995, pp. 53-63).

²⁷ *Difference and Repetition*, p. 50. See also Daniel W. Smith ‘Deleuze’s theory of sensation: overcoming the Kantian duality’ in Paul Patton (ed.) *Deleuze: a Critical Reader* (London: Blackwell, 1996) pp 29-49, esp 49.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 69.

philosopher who evacuates the inside (whether of a subject, an organism, or a text), forcing it to confront its outside, evacuating it and thereby unloosing its systematicity or organisation, its usual or habitual functioning, allowing a part, function, or feature to endlessly deflect, become, make.”²⁹ How do we know which feature to explore? Where to begin ‘deflecting’? In what direction? And since the process is endless, why should we bother at all?

III. The real, actual and virtual event

In order to respond to these qualms, it is important to return to problematisation. For Eisenman, it allowed for a creation particular to the Frankfurt site through a combination of the ideas of figure and ground as processes of becoming rather than fixed limits. The main concept that allowed for this restriction of Deleuze’s ontology to specific considerations was the concept of the event. Indeed, it is a special definition of the event that allows Deleuze to bring problematisation, difference and creation together as a response to the threat of chaos and to the ‘loss of critical effectivity and acumen’. He is aware of the difficulties raised by Tafuri. These are summed up in an opposition drawn up between problems that remain undifferentiated, ones that leave their field utterly obscure, and differentiated problems that allow for distinct aspects of the field to appear. Deleuze contends that the second type of problem, though ‘unsolved’ and even insoluble, reveals the state of the world with precision and distinction: “[The ‘problematic’] designates precisely the objectivity of Ideas, the reality of the virtual. The problem as problem is completely determined: to the extent that it is related to its perfectly positive conditions, it is necessarily differentiated, even though it may not yet be ‘solved’...”³⁰

However, is it the case that the chaotic state implied by his ontology can be interpreted in terms of this definition? In *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Deleuze defines the key facets of his earlier ontology in terms of events in order to allow for specific problems to emerge. Within the terms of *Difference and Repetition*, this re-definition is somewhat difficult to

²⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, ‘Architecture from the outside’, in *Anyplace* (Cambridge: MIT, 1995) pp. 14-23, esp. p. 23. To trace the sources for this view of Deleuze’s work on architecture see his *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980) pp. 388-9; 406-5.

³⁰ *Difference and Repetition*, p. 280.

follow, since Deleuze follows a Leibnizian use of real (objective reality), possible, virtual and actual which comes into conflict with the definition of the virtual as real. Deleuze highlights the dangers of this situation in *Difference and Repetition*:

The only danger in all this is that the virtual could be confused with the possible. The possible is opposed to real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a 'realisation'. By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualisation.³¹

Realisation subjects the possible to a condition of identity: the real is established by resemblance. That which is perceived is accepted as real if an identity can be established with a concept judged to be well-defined according to common sense.³² However, this cannot be a condition for actualisation as differentiation, since it is exactly something that exceeds identification.

This leads to Deleuze's definition of the event. The event is not only an objective reality (this entrance), not only an actuality (this idea of entering, of exiting), but also that which can be distinguished from them in any given instance: every becoming that could have taken place with that event, "... what can be conveyed by all expressions, or what can be realised by all realisations, the *Eventum tantum* to which the body and soul attempt to be equal, but that never stops happening and that never ceases to await us..."³³ The Deleuzian event is the association of two familiar definitions of the event (objective and ideal) with an unfamiliar definition in terms of a withdrawn virtual world presupposed by actualisation: "We can speak of the event only as already engaged in the soul that expresses it and in the body that carries it out, but we would be completely at a loss about how to speak without this withdrawn part."³⁴ This association of a well-defined objective reality and actual ideas of feelings with an underlying virtual world, defined as all possible attributes, seems to satisfy the contradictory demands of determination and indetermination required at the end of the last section. It is also consistent with Deleuze's ontology:

³¹ *Difference and Repetition*, p. 211.

³² Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pli: Leibniz et le baroque* (Paris: Minuit, 1988) pp. 140-1. Trans. Tom Conley (London: Athlone, 1993) pp. 104-6.

³³ *Ibid.* pp. 105-6.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 106.

firstly, where the illusory objective reality is accompanied by an ideal actuality (in the sense where ‘entering’ would be an idea of a feeling – an intensity – rather than the feeling defined as an object); secondly, where any actualisation presupposes the virtual world of all possible attributes expressible by intensities. This means that Deleuze situates the objective conditions of an event and the ideas that accompany it within an extended world of every virtual event. The indication of that extended world is then the pure event in any event. His Spinozist ontology can be felt most strongly in this extension of the event (IP15. Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be conceived without God.³⁵)

However, it would be wrong to suppose that this definition simply resolves the risk of a chaotic and undifferentiated philosophy. According to Deleuze’s ontology, events bring together differentiated object and intensities with the undifferentiated virtual world that they express. This allows him to ground his assertion that real problems cannot be solved objectively or ideally because all real problems come forth with events understood with their full extension or with the ‘pure’ event of the non-objective and non-ideal virtual world. But doesn’t this extension plunge the differentiated into chaos? Even if Eisenman’s problem can be defined in terms of an objective site and in terms of a set of ideal intensities (the ideas that give importance to new ways of thinking about limits and oppositions in the ground figure relation), this precision is for nothing if he must also express Deleuze’s undifferentiated pure event. Again, Deleuze is aware of the recurring pitfalls: “We have ceaselessly invoked the virtual. In so doing, have we not fallen into the vagueness of a notion closer to the undetermined than to the determinations of difference?”³⁶ What the event does allow for, though, is a new approach to the difficulty. The challenge is now: how can the full event (objective-ideal-virtual) be approached despite the undifferentiated nature of the virtual pure event?

IV. Counter-effectuation

Two considerations direct Deleuze’s response to these questions. First, the depth of the problem faced by his philosophy is not ontological, but rather creative. The event defined by Deleuze is not ontologically inconsistent,

³⁵ Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics and Other Works* (Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 94.

³⁶ *Difference and Repetition*, p. 208.

but it may prohibit meaningful and effective actions. To act as if the pure event were unimportant would be to fall back into the ontological illusions that Deleuze attacks: the pure event matters because it guarantees the movement and extension hidden by identity and Being defined as stasis. However, how can one act meaningfully, that is, in a determinate fashion, without hiding the indeterminate pure event? Second, even if this creative imperative to take account of the pure event can be resolved technically, it still poses an ethical problem. If an openness to innovation, change and indetermination is to condition creative acts, will they not become endlessly destructive? Is Deleuze forced into an ethics of annihilation, where objective, scientifically determined worlds, and ideal passionately determined worlds are plunged into chaos for the sake of some meaningless virtual world?

These considerations are taken into account in the practice of ‘counter-effectuation’ developed in Deleuze’s *The Logic of Sense*. This book brings together a concern with meaning and Stoic morality and came out in the same year as *Difference and Repetition*; it provides a practical aesthetic and ethical foil to the theoretical arguments therein. The problem of creative action in the light of events is studied in depth from ‘series’ 20 to 25 of *The Logic of Sense*. In series 20, Deleuze begins by considering a problem germane to his own in Stoic ethics, how to will the event as such: “Stoic ethics is concerned with the event; it consists of willing the event as such, that is, of willing that which occurs insofar as it does occur.”³⁷ This Stoic will towards the event reflects familiar difficulties, since their practical attitude towards the event has to bring together a physical understanding of the natural laws associated with every event with a different acceptance of the singularity of each event, seen as beyond interpretation, prediction and guidance. On the one hand, one should seek an understanding that allows general sense to be made of events and allows specific actions to be determined in terms of that understanding. On the other hand, the deepest understanding of events is exactly the opposite: physical knowledge can never approach the eternal truth of the pure event, which is revealed when we abandon the desire to control the flow of events. Deleuze has always identified death as the paradigm case of this opposition:

³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du Sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969) p. 168. Trans. Mark Lester *The Logic of Sense* (London: Athlone, 1990) p. 143.

To know that we are mortal is an apodeictic knowledge, albeit empty and abstract; effective and successive deaths do not suffice in fulfilling this knowledge adequately, so long as one does not come to know dying as an impersonal event provided with an always open structure (where and when?).³⁸

According to Deleuze, the Stoic solution to this paradox is to combine knowledge of the physical causes of general events with a feel for what makes each event singular in terms of that causality. We must understand general laws in order to be able to feel what makes each particular case exceptional. The practice that emerges from this combination is one of selection and affirmation: in order to will the event we must affirm what is singularly ours in any general course of events. That selection takes the form of a 'counter-effectuation' or a doubling of our singularity, of what in us exceeds any objective understanding. This re-enactment is then an expression of singularities, those movements within us which distinguish us from general, objective, representations. Underlying any given representation, there are singular processes of formation and deformation that make each event singular. The Stoic task is to detect and assume those processes by acting them out; this is an affirmation of difference, or more accurately, of differentiations. At first, this idea of selection and affirmation through acting out appears contrary to the traditional – limitative and passive – understanding of Stoic morality, where willing the event is associated with invulnerability, achieved through 'autarchism' and 'malleability'.³⁹ However, these functions are still present in Deleuze, as autarchism with respect to representation and objectivity, and malleability with respect to the 'signs' of our singularities. We must avoid the illusion of control in objective representations; we must let our real singularities guide our creative efforts.

This counter-effectuation is a practice in harmony with Deleuze's ontology since it reveals the limits of the objective and affirms singular differentiations in a creative act where these latter processes are played out again. The twin dangers of reducing those processes to general objective phenomena and of spinning off into a meaningless destruction are held at bay in their creative doubling or re-enactment:

³⁸ Ibid. p. 145.

³⁹ See Steven Luper, *Invulnerability* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996) pp. 87-101.

The eternal truth of the event is grasped only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh. But each time we must double this painful actualisation by a counter-actualisation which limits, moves and transfigures it [...] to be the mime of what effectively occurs, to double the actualisation with a counter actualisation, the identification with a distance, like the true actor or dancer, is to give to the truth of the event the only chance of not being confused with its inevitable actualisation.⁴⁰

Counter-effectuation is a determinate action, determined by the singular changes that occur to us, that stands in opposition to objective realisation and to meaningless annihilation. It is also an action that expresses the pure event by affirming that each event, though determined objectively and ideally, is open to endless ways of acting it out or of doubling it. Deleuze develops this point in series 25 of *The Logic of Sense* on counter-effectuation and the univocity of Being: only by willing each event by creatively acting it out as it occurs does one express the univocity of Being as becoming. Counter-effectuation is therefore a positive practice that takes account of the fundamentally problematic and paradoxical nature of events without having to deny that nature.

In his Rebstock project, Eisenman practices counter-effectuation by expressing that limits are the singularities of the site, the aspects that give the site its intensity and that can release becoming into the site. He criticises the ideas that have given limits *identity* – ground and figure – and sets the limits into motion by combining the ideas of ground and figure with the idea of an experience of spatio-temporal disturbance, associated with contemporary media. So each time we encounter a limit in the site, a border or an entrance, it does not provide a secure and final experience. Instead, the experience is diluted and transformed through the site and through the buildings with a repetition of forms and themes. What gave the site its identity, still does, but only as a becoming, a movement; it cannot be captured at any specific point by comparing the concept and fact of the limit. So the project forces us to experience well-determined and all important factors (limits and spatio-temporal flux) but only does so through an experience of becomings, of connectedness and of the destruction of identity. Its success as artistic counter-effectuation depends

⁴⁰ *The Logic of Sense*, p. 161. Note the close accord between this passage and the much later work on Leibniz. The internal cohesion of Deleuze's work over long periods is always striking.

on the intensity of the becomings, the extent of the connection and the thoroughness of the destruction.

University of Dundee