Charting the Road of Inquiry: Deleuze’s Humean Pragmatics and the Challenge of Badiou

Jeffrey Bell
Southeastern Louisiana University

Abstract

This essay responds to Badiou’s charge that Deleuze fails to set forth a philosophy that is “beyond categorical oppositions.” It is argued that this criticism of Deleuze is founded upon a misreading of the Deleuzean distinction between the virtual and the actual, a reading that carries forward Badiou’s misreading of Spinoza and, hence, of Deleuze’s Spinozism. With this corrected, we show how the virtual-actual distinction operates within the experimental philosophy, or pragmatics, that Deleuze, and later Deleuze and Guattari, sets forth. It is this pragmatics that is precisely the philosophy of difference that is beyond categorical oppositions. Through a comparison of Deleuzean pragmatics with the work of Hume and Peirce, we are able to respond to Badiou’s further criticism that Deleuze’s philosophy fails to understand the conditions for creativity in thought and culture. This criticism is itself resolved once one corrects for Badiou’s misreading of Deleuze’s virtual-actual distinction.

In Deleuze’s efforts to set forth a philosophy of difference, a number of philosophical texts from the history of philosophy are used in the formation of the conceptual tools Deleuze believes necessary to support these efforts. Deleuze does have his favorite philosophers—Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson—and they, as one would expect, play a more prominent role in Deleuze’s writings than others, but as one explores the themes that are important components of Deleuze’s philosophy of difference, one

Jeffrey Bell is Professor of Philosophy at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, Louisiana. He is the author of Philosophy at the Edge of Chaos: Gilles Deleuze and the Philosophy of Difference (University of Toronto Press, 2006). His current research investigates the implications of Deleuze’s thought for the study of culture and history.
finds that other philosophical texts and concepts assume an importance at least equal to those one finds more frequently in Deleuze’s writings. In particular, as Deleuze develops the concepts of “transcendental empiricism” and “pragmatics,” concepts that are themselves closely connected to Deleuze’s vision of an experimental philosophy, we find that Deleuze’s work on Hume and his appropriation of Peirce’s concepts are part of a general effort to place the developing philosophy of difference into practical, pragmatic contexts, and to clarify, moreover, how a philosophy of difference can successfully avoid subsuming difference to the identity of concepts, or to the play of categorical oppositions.¹

Alain Badiou also claims that the primary task and challenge of philosophy is to “establish itself beyond categorical oppositions,”² and to the extent that Deleuze is doing this, Badiou could not agree more. Badiou also concurs with Deleuze’s lack of concern with the “end of philosophy” debates, or with the critique of metaphysics. Deleuze, Badiou rightly says, is an unrepentant metaphysician.³ Despite these similarities, however, Badiou finds that Deleuze’s attempt to meet the challenge of establishing a philosophy of difference that is “beyond categorical oppositions” fails. More precisely, Badiou argues that Deleuze’s concept of “multiplicity,” although part of an attempt to think “beyond the categorical opposition of the One and the Multiple,” is nonetheless employed as a concept thought in terms of being an “intervallic type.”⁴ What Badiou means by this is that multiplicity comes to be thought of as “the play in becoming of at least two disjunctive figures,” but this presupposes “the element of the categorical opposition itself.”⁵ Deleuze’s thought is, in the end, simply a reworking of Sartre, and in particular a reworking of Sartre’s play of the in-itself and for-itself. This play of the in-itself and for-itself, Badiou admits, enabled Sartre to begin with any concrete phenomenon and transform it into something philosophically meaningful—a “philosopheme” as Badiou puts it—and similarly for Deleuze, “multiplicities, suspended between the open and the closed, or between the virtual and the actual, can serve this end [i.e., turn concrete phenomena into philosophemes], just as I [Badiou] was in the habit of using the internalized face-to-face of the in-itself and the for-itself for the same purpose.”⁶

To address Badiou’s criticisms, the following essay will detail the significant parallels between Deleuze’s work and the work of Hume and Peirce, parallels that become most evident when one sees Deleuze’s philosophy, as Hume and Peirce saw their own philosophies, as an effort to explicate and practice an experimental philosophy.⁷ Before turning to this discussion of Hume and Peirce, we shall, in the first section, briefly contrast Badiou’s reading of Spinoza with Deleuze’s reading. This will establish our bearings for later sections, for despite the fact
that Deleuze considered himself a Spinozist and wrote two books on Spinoza, the Spinoza Badiou finds in Deleuze is “an unrecognizable creature.” What I shall argue is that it is Badiou’s reading of Spinoza that would be unrecognizable to Spinoza, and moreover it is Deleuze’s reading that helps to clarify not only the relationship, in Spinoza’s *Ethics*, between the attributes and the modes of these attributes, but it also clarifies the relationship, for Deleuze, between the virtual and the actual. With this clarification in hand we will turn, in the next section, to Deleuze’s use of Peirce in his *Cinema* books. This comparison shall be useful for two important reasons. First, Badiou draws heavily from the *Cinema* books in his critique of Deleuze’s theory of the virtual; and second, by comparing Peirce to Deleuze we shall begin to see how Deleuze’s understanding of “pragmatics,” as with Peirce’s understanding of “pragmaticism,” avoids Badiou’s criticisms. In the final section we shall turn to Deleuze’s early work on Hume, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*. This work, published in 1953, shows Deleuze developing, in the context of working through Hume’s philosophical questions, the conceptual strategies that will come to be redeployed in his later works. These conceptual strategies and tools are crucial to Deleuze’s understanding of a practical, experimental philosophy, or a “pragmatics,” and it is this pragmatics, I shall argue, that successfully employs a philosophy of difference that is situated “beyond categorical oppositions.”

1.

In his book *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, Badiou focuses upon the theory of the virtual and directs his harshest criticisms of Deleuze at this theory. More to the point, Badiou argues that when Deleuze claims that the virtual is complete in itself and yet only part of an actual object, the *indiscernible* part, then Badiou believes that Deleuze stumbles because of his commitment to the univocity of One Being, or his commitment to affirming “a single and same voice for the whole thousand-voiced multiple, a single and same Ocean for all the drops, a single clamour of Being for all beings.” As Badiou states his criticism,

when the only way of saving—despite everything—the One, is by resorting to an unthinkable Two, an indiscernibility beyond remedy ...

... one says to oneself that, most decidedly, the virtual is no better than the finality of which it is the inversion (it determines the destiny of everything, instead of being that to which everything is destined). Let us be particularly harsh and invoke Spinoza against his major, and indeed sole, truly modern disciple: just like finality, the virtual is *ignorantiae asylum.*
To respond to this criticism we can return to Spinoza himself, and especially to a problem many commentators have had with Spinoza’s *Ethics*—namely, the relationship of the attributes to the modes of these attributes. Badiou himself notes this problem, recognizing that “Although it is on the basis of which the attributive identifications of substance exist, the intellect itself is clearly a mode of the attribute ‘thought’.” Stating the problem baldly, Badiou asks, “how is it possible to think the being of intellect, the ‘there is intellect’, if rational access to the thought of being or the ‘there is’ itself depends upon the operations of the intellect?” This problem has long been recognized by Spinoza scholars and has received a number of solutions. Badiou’s particular solution, however, is quite revealing.

At the basis of Badiou’s understanding of the relationship between the infinite intellect, as an infinite mode of the attribute thought, and the attribute thought itself is the premise that the intellect is distinct from the objects that are objects or ‘ideas of’ the intellect. For Badiou, then, since “every idea is an ‘idea of’, it is correlated with an ideatum,” it follows that “the attributes of God and the modes of these attributes are objects of the infinite intellect.” With these assumptions at play, Badiou is naturally led to conclude that “the attribute of thought is not isomorphic with any of the other attributes,” for the very reason that it is an infinite mode of this attribute that has, as its object, the other attributes, thereby constituting the essence of substance. Add to this claim Badiou’s extension of Spinoza’s argument, in the Demonstration to 2P21 that “the mind is united to the body from the fact that the body is the object of the mind,” then it again follows for Badiou that there must then be “instances of union that straddle the disjunction between attributes. It is this union, the radical singularity proper to the operations of the intellect, which I call coupling.” In other words, since the infinite intellect, as an attribute of thought, is united to the objects that are its ideas—that is, the other attributes—then it is “coupled” to these other attributes, a coupling made possible by the attribute thought that is not “isomorphic with any of the other attributes.”

These arguments lead Badiou to a surprising conclusion. With the notion of coupling, a notion Badiou admits is not to be found in Spinoza but is necessary to make sense of Spinoza’s (supposed) understanding of the relationship between the infinite intellect and the objects that are the distinct objects of this intellect, Badiou claims a further consequence follows: “As a matter of fact, infinite intellect by itself constitutes an exception to the famous Proposition 7 of Book II: ‘The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things’.” Because the intellect is coupled to the other attributes and to their modes, the order of the ideas in the infinite intellect is not the same as the order and connection of things, for it is
what makes possible the very actuality of attributes and things, and hence the parallelism between them. Yet it is just this conclusion, that the intellect is an exception to Spinoza's famous parallelism, that Spinoza would himself likely find unrecognizable.

The reason Badiou is led to what we believe is a mistaken conclusion concerning the relationship between the attributes and their modes is because he presupposes the identity of both the infinite intellect and the attributes and modes that are the identifiable objects of this intellect. As I have argued elsewhere, the best way to understand the relationship between the attributes and the infinite intellect is to argue for the primacy of the modes themselves. In other words, there is the necessity for the modification of an attribute—infinitesimal thought—as that which perceives substance and constitutes its identifiable, actualized essence, precisely because the attribute is identifiable as such only as actualized in a mode. The attributes are thus not distinct identities or objects waiting for the infinite intellect to perceive them; rather, it is the very perception of the attributes by the infinite intellect (as infinite mode) that actualizes the identifiable essence of substance itself. Furthermore, if one understands Spinoza’s notion of substance as absolutely indeterminate, then the attributes can then be understood as the condition for determining the infinite and infinitely determinable essence of substance. This identifiable essence is made possible by the actualization of a mode of an attribute, and substance is therefore identifiable as such only when actualized within a mode—that is, the intellect. This conclusion, we argue, is not one Spinoza would find unrecognizable, unlike Badiou’s, but instead simply repeats Spinoza’s own definition of the attributes: “1D4: By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence.”

It is this relationship between the modes and attributes that is extended, I argue, by Deleuze in his understanding of the relationship between the virtual and the actual. Just as the attributes are the conditions that allow for the possibility of determining, by way of the intellect, absolutely indeterminate substance, so too the virtual is indiscernible from the actual not as a distinct identity that is to be contrasted to the identity of the actual, but rather the virtual is the condition for identity itself. How, then, as Badiou might ask, can we know that the virtual is real, as Deleuze contends, if it is indiscernible? The reason Badiou might ask such a question, why he finds the virtual problematic in its purported resort to an “unthinkable Two,” is, we suggest, because Badiou subordinates knowing to a conceptual knowing whereas Deleuze, in good Nietzschean-pragmatist fashion, subordinates knowing to the practical problems that are inseparable—that is, indiscernible—from the
actualities that are themselves the identifiable solutions to these problems.  

To clarify this further, we will turn to discuss Peirce’s understanding of pragmaticism as an experimental philosophy. There are sufficient parallels between Deleuze’s “pragmatics” and Peirce’s “pragmaticism” to evidence that Deleuze’s use of the term pragmatics bears more than a terminological affinity to the name Peirce gives to his philosophical project. One need not turn immediately to Peirce, however, to demonstrate the importance, for Deleuze, of understanding the actual as a solution to a problem. In an important example from Difference and Repetition, Deleuze points out that a monkey that learns to find food under boxes of one particular color achieves, during the learning process, a “paradoxical period during which the number of ‘errors’ diminishes even though the monkey does not yet possess the ‘knowledge’ or ‘truth’ of a solution in each case.”

“To learn,” Deleuze summarizes, “is to enter into the universal of the relations which constitute the Idea, and into their corresponding singularities.” This entering into the relations which constitute the Idea is, as is made clear throughout Difference and Repetition, to enter into the virtual, and to actualize the virtual as a solution to a problematic field of singularities is to acquire the identifiable knowledge that will lead, in this particular case, the monkey to look only under boxes of a particular color. Moreover, as we now turn to Peirce’s work it must be stressed that the processes associated with learning are of equal importance for Peirce. As Peirce puts it:

Upon the first, and in one sense the sole, rule of reason, that in order to learn you must desire to learn, and in so desiring not be satisfied with what you already incline to think, there follows one corollary which itself deserves to be inscribed upon every wall of the city of philosophy:

Do not block the way of inquiry

2. 

To turn to Peirce at this point may seem unjustified, for although Deleuze does use some of Peirce’s concepts in his Cinema books, most notably the concepts firstness, secondness, and thirdness, Deleuze ultimately seems to conclude that Peirce failed to think the time-image, or the virtual. As Deleuze states his understanding of Peirce, “everything ends with thirdness,” meaning that everything is related “to the whole that it expresses.” In particular, the whole, as discussed in the Cinema books, is “the ‘sensory-motor whole,’” and it is this “which grounds narration in the image.” With the time-
image, however, things are quite different: “The internal of movement was no longer that in relation to which the movement-image was specified as perception-image, at one end of the interval, as action-image at the other end, and as affection-image between the two, so as to constitute the sensory-motor whole. On the contrary the sensory-motor link was broken, and the interval of movement produced the appearance as such of an image other than the movement-image.” This other image is the time-image.

For these reasons and others, therefore, it might seem that by emphasizing the whole that is thirdness for Peirce, Peirce in the end does not take philosophy in the direction Deleuze would like to take it. On closer reading, however, significant similarities emerge, especially as one analyzes Peirce’s understanding of learning and the role of abduction and experimentation in the creation of new beliefs. It is the perpetual charting of the road of inquiry, a charting that occurs through the experimental testing of beliefs that leads to surprise and doubt, a doubt that is then relieved by way of a hypothesis (or abductive inference) that leads to new beliefs when successfully tested. And it is precisely this charting of the road of inquiry by way of experimentally challenging beliefs so that they might become transformed or give way to new beliefs that bears an important similarity to Deleuze’s call to tap into the virtual. As Deleuze states it, “In going from A [actual] to B [virtual] and then B to A, we do not arrive back at the point of departure as in a bare repetition; rather, the repetition between A and B and B and A is the progressive tour or description of the whole problematic field.” This progressive tour of the whole problematic field is precisely the intuition of problems inseparable from the actualities (A) that are their solutions; or, in Peirce’s terms, it is the instilling of doubt or surprise into the actual, a doubt that makes possible new beliefs (actualizations).

Key to understanding the relationship between the virtual and the actual, and this is true as well for understanding Peirce’s theory of abduction, is to clarify the manner in which the actual is a solution to the virtual. Deleuze clearly states that the actual is a solution to the virtual: “Whereas differentiation determines the virtual content of the Idea as problem, differenciation expresses the actualization of this virtual and the constitution of solutions.” A few pages later Deleuze argues that “An organism is nothing if not the solution to a problem, as are each of its differenciated organs, such as the eye which solves a light ‘problem’.” So too for the monkey who learned to find food in boxes of a particular color, she was able to actualize, as “knowledge” and “behavior,” a solution to the “virtual content of the Idea as problem.” Similarly for Peirce, since an abductive inference is the only way of arriving at new
ideas, what subsequently needs to be understood is how abduc-
tion transforms the doubt into a new belief.

One concept that emerges in *A Thousand Plateaus* to address
these very issues is the concept of an “abstract machine.” More
precisely, what Deleuze develops, along with Guattari, is the
model of the abstract machine as double articulation. To clarify
this concept we can return to our earlier example of the
monkey. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the first articula-
tion of double articulation draws a multiplicity into a plane of
consistency—in *Difference and Repetition* this was referred to
as differentiation—and with the second articulation the plane of
consistency is actualized into determinate, identifiable entities.
What is added to *A Thousand Plateaus* with the concept abstract
machine is the greater emphasis placed on the double process
(i.e., double articulation) inseparable from the emergence and
transformation of entities. This concept, as we will see below,
also helps to clarify Peirce’s account of the processes associated
with the creation of new beliefs as well as Hume’s efforts to
account for how beliefs that go beyond the given (cause and
effect, etc.) are constituted solely within the given.

Before seeing how the concept of the abstract machine of
double articulation clarifies the work of Peirce and Hume, a few
potential problems must first be addressed. First and foremost,
might not Badiou charge Deleuze’s concept of the abstract
machine as being yet another Sartrean concept which pre-
supposes the very categorical oppositions Deleuze’s philosophy
of difference is intended to move beyond? Rather than in-itself/
for-itself accounting for the interplay of concrete phenomena, we
have instead first articulation/second articulation (itself a
further variation upon virtual/actual and differentiation/
differenciation). What must be stressed in answering this
question is that when Deleuze states that “the virtual is to be
opposed not to the real but to the actual,” Deleuze is not
constructing an opposition between identities, but is instead
emphasizing the notion that the virtual does not resemble the
actual (which explains Deleuze’s repeated claims that the
virtual is not to be confused with the possible). Yet, one might
ask, why say the virtual and actual are “to be opposed”? Does
this not open up Deleuze’s arguments to a Badiou-styled
critique? If the virtual is thought of as an identity, much as
Badiou thought of Spinoza’s attributes as identities waiting for
the intellect to perceive them, then the critique would be valid.
However, from Deleuze’s perspective the virtual cannot be
thought except as that which cannot be identified (it is
indiscernible), and hence it is not to be confused with, or is
opposed to, the actualities that can be identified. But then, as
the questioning might proceed, does this indiscernibility not
make of the actual an irreal phantasm that is split in two, or is
Deleuze putting forth what Badiou calls a “natural mysticism”?

---

406
The premise of these questions seems to assume that the virtual operates independently of the actual. Deleuze is consistent, however, in asserting that there is not the reality of the virtual that operates independently of the reality of the actual, a virtual that predetermines the fate of the actual. There is only one reality for Deleuze, and thus the great stress Deleuze lays on univocity. And yet, the questioner might persist, if the virtual is indiscernible and yet operative without identifiable independence, what then can be known or said about the way in which the virtual operates? With this question we return to our earlier question: how does the virtual present problems that come to be actualized as solutions?

As a provisional answer to this question we can state that the virtual enables the becoming-other of the actual. What is meant by this is that the evental nature of the abstract machine (double articulation) is inseparable from all actualities not, as Badiou sees it, as a rare occurrence, but as the creativity and becoming (à la Whitehead) that is the condition for the possibility of every actuality, and the condition that assures the becoming-other of this actuality. If the virtual predetermines the actual, or if it is the fate of the actual, it is only in the sense that the actual is fated to become-other. To this extent, then, Deleuze would echo Nietzsche’s love of fate (amor fati) and becoming. The virtual, then, to recall our earlier critique of Badiou’s reading of Spinoza, does not operate independently of the actual; rather, the virtual is inseparable from the actual, it is the problematic indiscernible from the actual, and it is this problematic that comes to be solved with the creation of new entities (e.g., it was the light problem inseparable from actual organisms that made possible the actualization of organisms with eyes).

At this point we can return to Peirce, for Peirce too understands doubt as that which is inseparable from the actualities that are being doubted, and it is this doubt that abductive inference can overcome when a successful new explanation is offered. It is this creative process associated with abduction that receives much of Peirce’s attention, and his reasoning is quite straightforward on this matter: “observed facts relate exclusively to the particular circumstances that happened to exist when they were observed. They do not relate to any future occasions upon which we may be in doubt how we ought to act. They, therefore, do not, in themselves, contain any practical knowledge. Such knowledge must involve additions to the facts observed.” Such an addition, Peirce adds, “may be called a hypothesis,” or what he will also call an abductive inference. Stating this point in slightly Deleuzian terms (though, as we will see, Peirce uses many of these same terms), practical knowledge requires going beyond the singularities and uniqueness of a given circumstance so as to arrive at a hypothesis and/
or concept that may assist us on “future occasions upon which we may be in doubt how we ought to act.”

With what Peirce seeks to explain with the concept abduction, we can turn to Peirce’s most frequently cited concepts of firstness, secondness, and thirdness. Moreover, we can also place Peirce’s concepts into the framework of Deleuze’s theory of the abstract machine. Beginning with firstness, then, Peirce most famously defines it as a quality that is what it is regardless of any relationship to any other. In discussing redness, Peirce states that this “mode of being a redness, before anything in the universe was yet red, was nevertheless a positive qualitative possibility.... That I call Firstness.”

Less frequently discussed, however, is Peirce’s further association of firstness with freedom and multiplicity: “The idea of First is predominant in the ideas of freshness, life, freedom.... Freedom can only manifest itself in unlimited and uncontrolled variety and multiplicity; and thus the first becomes predominant in the ideas of measureless variety and multiplicity.” Stated in other words, firstness is the qualitative reality that is measureless and not to be confused with the actualities that come to be seen as having these qualities. Once firstness is actualized in a second, then and only then can we recognize and identify the qualities as actual. This is why Peirce defines secondness as “the being of actual fact,” as the other “which insists upon forcing its way to recognition as something other than the mind’s creation.”

The reason Peirce’s move to the concept of firstness as that which is positively real and yet not to be confused with the actual is so crucial is that it enables Peirce, as Deleuze’s theory of the virtual enables him, to move beyond the given. As Peirce puts it, “It is impossible to hold consistently that a quality only exists when it actually inheres in a body. If that were so, nothing but individual facts would be true.” Moreover, not only does the qualitative aspect of firstness that is indiscernible from the actualities that have these qualities make possible the move beyond the given actualities, but Peirce argues that it is precisely the qualitative aspect of a heterogeneous multiplicity that enables the move to a general theory, through abduction, that accounts for the unity of disparate facts, or it facilitates the attainment of practical knowledge. Peirce is clear on this point: “Quality is the monadic element of the world. Anything whatever, however complex and heterogeneous, has its quality *sui generis*, its possibility of sensation, would our senses only respond to it.”

We can now begin to understand Peirce’s theory in light of Deleuze’s notion of the abstract machine. For Peirce, as we shall see, the abstract machine is “learning,” since it is through learning whereby a double articulation enables the acquisition of new ideas. Peirce recognizes the mediating role of learning between firstness and secondness, but now we can see the
similarities to Deleuze. In the first articulation, learning draws from the heterogeneous multiplicity and singularities of firstness a monadic whole, what Deleuze calls a plane of consistency. In the second articulation, learning actualizes this monadic whole as a general expectation or belief concerning the complex of actual facts (secondness), both given and not given. As Peirce describes this process wherein belief appeases doubt, he claims that “As it appeases the irritation of doubt, which is the motive for thinking, thought relaxes, and comes to rest for a moment when belief is reached. But, since belief is a rule for action, the application of which involves further doubt and further thought, at the same time that it is a stopping-place, it is also a new starting-place for thought.” Learning, in other words, entails what Deleuze discussed as the move from A to B and B to A. By taking beliefs as one’s “starting-place,” A, one then immerses into what Peirce discusses as the scientific attitude whereby the starting-place is thought through and subjected to doubts, doubts that can then give rise to problems in need of a solution, B. With the resolution of doubt through an abductive inference that establishes a new belief and a new pattern of general behavioral expectations, we have the move from B to A.

As we can now see, Peirce’s effort to make of philosophical thinking an experimental project that subjects beliefs to doubt so as to unblock the road of inquiry does involve a double process (A to B and B to A). Badiou’s difficulty with Deleuze on this point was that this double movement seemed merely to repeat the very categorical oppositions Deleuze sought to move beyond. As Badiou saw it, this made of every actual entity a double entity, but an entity that is double by virtue of an “unthinkable Two.” Peirce too sees actual entities (beliefs) as entailing a double aspect: there is the attitude of the scientist who subjects these beliefs to doubt, and there are the conservative, habit-bound gentlemen who remain comfortable with established ways of thinking. Badiou would likely not be critical of Peirce in the same way that he is critical of Deleuze (though Badiou might be critical of Peirce for other reasons). The reason for this is that Peirce emphasizes the actual and subordinates the doubts and questioning of the experimental, scientific attitude to an increased understanding of the actual. On this point, Badiou is quite in agreement, for he too affirms the actual and discards with the theory of the virtual. But Deleuze, as we have been arguing, would be quite in agreement with Peirce as well with respect to the double movement that creates new beliefs. This agreement becomes most evident when Deleuze and Guattari discuss ‘pragmatics’. In A Thousand Plateaus pragmatics is often linked with the making of maps, whereby maps, in contrast to tracings, are “entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real.” Maps entail the
creation of rhizomes, or planes of consistency which bring to the real the virtual problematic that may, in Peircean fashion, lead to the transformation of the real. One begins with the real, the actual, but in pragmatics one then experiments: “Schizoanalysis, or pragmatics, has no other meaning: Make a rhizome. But you don’t know what you can make a rhizome with, you don’t know which subterranean stem is effectively going to make a rhizome, or enter a becoming, people your desert. So experiment.”

Badiou’s difficulties with Deleuze arise in part, as we argued above, from his failure to understand what Deleuze does with Spinoza. The virtual, as with the attributes, is not a separable entity somehow attached to or acting upon actual entities, much as the attributes are not already identified essences waiting to be perceived by the intellect. The virtual, as with Peirce’s understanding of firstness or Spinoza’s understanding of the attributes, is identifiable only insofar as it is actualized. In answer to the question then of how we can, if the virtual is identifiable only as actualized, speak of the virtual without resorting to a “natural mysticism,” the answer for Deleuze, and Peirce, is that any move beyond the actual presupposes the virtual (or firstness as Peirce argued), it presupposes a condition for this move that is not reducible to the actual. It is at this point where we encounter Hume, and in particular the transcendental empiricism Deleuze reads into Hume. For transcendental empiricism, as Deleuze sets it forth, attempts to answer just these questions. From the transcendental point of view, the question is: how, from within the given, can something be constituted and given to a subject that transcends the given, such as the belief that the future will resemble the past? From the empiricist point of view, the question is how the subject itself can be constituted solely within the given? To answer these questions, and to further address Badiou’s criticisms, we turn then to Deleuze’s reading of Hume.

3.

There are two central and related problems that are the focus of Deleuze’s 1953 work, Empiricism and Subjectivity. The first problem, as Deleuze reads Hume, is how the multiplicity of ideas in the imagination “become[s] a system.” This problem arises because for Hume “The collection of ideas is called ‘imagination’, insofar as the collection designates not a faculty but rather an assemblage of things, in the most vague sense of the term: things as they appear—a collection without an album, a play without a stage, a flux of perceptions.” The second problem follows from the first: “The problem is as follows: how can a subject transcending the given be constituted in the given?” In particular, as Deleuze adds, “This subject who invents
and believes is constituted inside the given in such a way that it makes the given itself a synthesis and a system." The problem of transforming a multiplicity into a system is related to the problem of accounting for the constitution of a subject within the given that nonetheless transcends the given, or is irreducible to the given.

The effort to resolve these problems Deleuze comes to call transcendental empiricism. The transcendental component of transcendental empiricism, as discussed above, involves addressing the question, “how can something be given to a subject, and how can the subject give something to itself?” Most especially, how can the subject give something to itself that transcends the given? The empiricist aspect addresses the question, “how is the subject constituted in the given?” Fifteen years later in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze continues to address these problems, but in this work the emphasis is placed upon how the faculties are constituted. As Deleuze puts it, the faculties such as speech, sociability, etc., are made possible by that which can also effect the dissolution of the faculty, and in a triple sense:

Each faculty must be borne to the extreme point of its dissolution, at which it falls prey to triple violence: the violence of that which forces it to be exercised, of that which it is forced to grasp and which it alone is able to grasp, yet also that of the ungraspable (from the point of view of its empirical exercise). This is the threefold limit of the final power. We ask, for example: What forces sensibility to sense? What is it that can only be sensed, yet is imperceptible at the same time?

Later in the book Deleuze offers an example that recalls his earlier work on Hume. The example is the faculty of speech. This faculty, Deleuze argues, entails “the linguistic multiplicity, regarded as a virtual system of reciprocal connections between ‘phonemes’ which is incarnated in the actual terms and relations of diverse languages” and it is precisely this multiplicity that is the violence that forces and “renders possible speech as a faculty.” The “incarnated actual terms and relations of diverse languages” is that which the faculty of speech is forced to grasp, and “which it alone is able to grasp”; and the “ungraspable,” or what Deleuze will also call the “transcendent object,” is, relative to the faculty of speech, “that ‘metalanguage’ which cannot be spoken in the empirical usage of a given language, but must be spoken and can be spoken only in the poetic usage of speech coextensive with virtuality.” In other words, the transcendent object is constituted within the given, within the operations of the faculty and the actual terms that are the incarnation (actualization) of the linguistic multiplicity, and yet this object is not reducible to the actual terms but rather reflects the
Jeffrey Bell

creative becoming-other of these terms, their “poetic usage” that is “coextensive with virtuality.” Such creative and inventive uses of the faculties, as well as other faculties altogether, cannot be predetermined; rather, transcendental empiricism is for Deleuze a method of empirical research wherein “nothing can be said in advance, one cannot prejudge the outcome of research.” As with pragmatics, one must experiment.

Returning now to Hume, we find that already in this early work Deleuze was most interested in Hume’s understanding of the natural inventiveness and creativity of human nature, and for reasons similar to those set forth years later in *Difference and Repetition* and *A Thousand Plateaus* (as we shall see). For Deleuze Hume is quite clear as to how one goes beyond the given—it is through belief and invention: “Belief and invention are the two modes of transcendence.” Moreover, it is precisely through the creativity of invention and belief that the multiplicity of ideas is transformed into a system: “The subject invents; it is the maker of artifice. Such is the dual power of subjectivity: to believe and to invent, to assume the secret powers and to presuppose abstract or distinct powers…. This subject who invents and believes is constituted inside the given in such a way that it makes the given itself a synthesis and a system.” These powers that constitute the subject within the given, and a subject able to invent and believe, are the principles of human nature. Deleuze is clear on this point:

The most important point is to be found here. The entire sense of the principles of human nature is to transform the multiplicity of ideas which constitute the mind into a system, that is, a system of knowledge and of its objects … [but for this to be possible] we must give the object of the idea an existence which does not depend on the senses.

The way in which the principles do this is through a double process. First, “within the collection [multiplicity], the principle elects, chooses, designates, and invites certain impressions of sensation among others.” For example, “the principles of passion are those that choose the impressions of pleasure and pain,” and “the principles of association … choose the perception that must be brought together into a composite.” As for the second process, the principle “constitutes impressions of reflection in connection with these elected impressions.” What does this mean? For Deleuze, what Hume means by this is that “the principle produces a habit, a strength, and a power to evoke any other idea of the same group; it produces an impression of reflection.” This double process, however, mirrors a more profound double process for Hume, that being the processes associated with the passions on the one hand and the principles of association on the other. And Hume, as
Deleuze reads him, gives clear primacy to the passions: “Association gives the subject a possible structure, but only the passions can give it being and existence ... the principles of the passions are absolutely primary.”

To restate this using Deleuze’s much later terminology of double articulation, the principles of human nature draw the multiplicity of ideas into a “possible structure” through the association of ideas, and the principles of human nature actualize this possible structure by way of the passions. By prioritizing the passions, therefore, Hume gives preference to the actual demands and passions, and the creativity of invention and belief are subordinate to these actual demands (hence Hume’s famous statement that reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions).

This double process also clarifies another crucial aspect of Hume’s work, the relationship between the understanding and society. As Deleuze states the relationship between the two, there are “two points of view [that] coexist in Hume: the passions and the understanding present themselves, in a way which must be made clear, as two distinct parts. By itself, thought, the understanding is only the process of the passions on their way to socialization.”

We have seen how the multiplicity of ideas is transformed, through a double process, into the impressions of reflection that create beliefs, habits, and tendencies which constitute, within the given, that which transcends it. The same process is at work within socialization, though this time the multiplicity that comes to be transformed into a system or unity are the partialities, passions, and interests of individuals. Again Deleuze is quite clear on this point: “Partialities or particular interests cannot be naturally totalized, because they are mutually exclusive. One can only invent a whole, since the only invention possible is that of the whole.”

This leads Hume, according to Deleuze, to an understanding of society not as an established law to escape our state of nature (à la Hobbes), but rather as invented institutions, inventions that are themselves indistinguishable from human nature in that they follow from the principles of human nature:

The main idea is this: the essence of society is not the law but rather the institution ... institution, unlike the law, is not a limitation [as Hobbes would understand it] but rather a model of actions, a veritable enterprise, an invented system of positive means or a positive invention of indirect means.

What such institutions attempt to do, then, is not to function as representatives of a general interest or a general will, but rather they operate so as to make “the general interest an object of belief.” Such an operation, if successful, will “enter the natural constitution of the mind as a feeling for humanity or as culture.” And it is with this constitution, or invention, of
social institutions whereby the multiplicity of partialities and interests comes to be transcended by the feeling for humanity, or where one comes to be socialized and cultured.

With this latter move, we come to a core concern of Hume's—namely, the relationship between society and what Hume calls, in his essay of the same name, “the rise and progress of the arts and sciences.” In this essay Hume recognizes that the geniuses of the arts and sciences are frequently few in number, and thus to discuss the conditions that give rise to them may seem a futile task, but then Hume argues that though they “be always few in all nations and all ages, it is impossible but a share of the same spirit and genius must be antecedently diffused throughout the people among whom they arise, in order to produce, form, and cultivate, from their earliest infancy, the taste and judgment of those eminent writers.” It is this diffusion of “the same spirit and genius” “throughout the people,” or what Deleuze might call the drawing of a multiplicity into a plane of consistency, that is the antecedent condition that allows for the actualization of the great geniuses and hence for the rise and progress of the arts and sciences.

It is precisely with Hume’s concern for both the conditions for the emergence of creativity, in this case the creative geniuses, and just as importantly the conditions that lead to the decline of creativity within cultures, that is especially relevant to Deleuze’s concerns. Hume’s reasoning for the necessary decline of creativity in a particular culture (or “nation” for Hume) is quite straightforward:

A man’s genius is always, in the beginning of life, as much unknown to himself as to others; and it is only after frequent trials, attended with success, that he dares think himself equal to those undertakings, in which those who have succeeded have fixed the admiration of mankind. If his own nation be already possessed of many models of eloquence, he naturally compares his own juvenile exercises with these; and, being sensible of the great disproportion, is discouraged from any further attempts, and never aims at a rivalry with those authors whom he so much admires.

At this point we merge with Deleuze’s project, especially with his transcendental empiricism and pragmatics. As we saw, transcendental empiricism, as an experimental research project, could not prejudge what new faculties or limits might be created; similarly, with pragmatics the experimental approach could not, if it were to be creative, operate with a predetermined destination or model already in mind. If transcendental empiricism and pragmatics are to be successful philosophies of difference, then this would involve a creative thinking that cannot be reduced to, or predetermined by, the identity of any model or standard, just as the genius, according
to Hume, can only come to rival the other great authors they admire when there is not already an established national model and when this developing genius, without knowing where their work will develop, is able to progress through “frequent trials” and experimentations.

It is precisely here where Badiou believes Deleuze’s philosophy fails. Not only does Badiou, as we have seen, argue that Deleuze failed to situate a thinking beyond categorical oppositions; more importantly, at least from Deleuze’s perspective, Badiou believes that Deleuze’s thought is not even creative but rather quite monotonous. By taking any concrete phenomenon and plugging in his double method of A to B then B to A, Badiou argues that this may enable Deleuze to transform these phenomena into philosophemes (as discussed above), but it also leaves a monotonous predictability to Deleuze’s method, whether the subject be film, Sacher-Masoch, or Proust. What lies behind this criticism is a profound difference between Deleuze and Badiou regarding the nature of creativity. As Badiou states this difference, it follows from “the indiscernibility of casts (of events, of emissions of the virtual) [that] was, for him [Deleuze], the most important of the points of passage of the One.”

It is, in other words, and as we have been stressing, precisely the indiscernibility of the virtual from the actual that is one of many points upon which Badiou breaks with Deleuze. For Badiou, by contrast, he affirms “the absolute ontological separation of the event, the fact that it occurs in the situation without being in any way virtualizable,” and with this he affirms the “basis of the character of truths as irreducibly original, created, and fortuitous.”

A consequence of this is that whereas Deleuze affirms the indiscernibility of the virtual from the actual, and from each and every actual, that operates as the condition for the going beyond of this actual, for the creative becoming-other of this actual (hence the importance for Deleuze of Whitehead), Badiou, on the other hand, argues that creative events are actual though rare, and that “no count can group the events, no virtual subjects them to the One.” From Badiou’s perspective, the developments that follow from these rare, singular events follow axiomatically, even homogenously. This is yet another reason why Badiou criticizes Deleuze’s tendency to “begin from any concrete case whatsoever, rather than from the ‘important’ cases, or from the history of the problem.” Deleuze, in short, does not, on Badiou’s reading, accept the notion of “absolute beginnings” but holds rather that the “new is a fold of the past.”

And on this point Badiou sees an irreconcilable difference with Deleuze:

I conceptualize absolute beginnings.... Deleuze always maintained that, in doing this, I fall back into transcendence and the
Jeffrey Bell

equivocality of analogy. But, all in all, if the only way to think a political revolution, an amorous encounter, an invention of the sciences, or a creation of art as distinct infinities—having as their condition incommensurable separative events—is by sacrificing immanence and the univocity of Being, then I would sacrifice them ... [and sacrifice them in order to] render eternal one of those rare fragments of truth that traverse here and there our bleak world.84

Deleuze's philosophy of difference, and in particular the transcendental empiricism and pragmatics that bear such similarities of method to Hume and Peirce, is not incompatible with the claim that creative events are rare. Peirce, as we saw, admitted that it is not common to adhere to the scientific attitude of thinking and to subject one's starting point to doubt so that we may further advance and chart the road of inquiry. It is much easier to remain the habit-bound academic professor who does not dare to dump the whole cartload of beliefs. Similarly for Hume, the creative geniuses in the arts and sciences are rare and few in number, and even more so because their possibility depends upon an equally rare if not rarer convergence of institutional and social factors. Regardless of this rarity, however, the creative transformations occur to and within the actualities that come to be transformed, and for this to happen both Peirce and Hume recognized the need for an experimental play with the actual. It is this experimentation without preconceived end-in-view that may release the virtualities indiscernible from the actual. These virtualities are indiscernible precisely because they remain hidden beneath our habitual beliefs and expectations, but through a "cautious experimentalism" the actualities may become transformed.85 This is the sense, then, that Deleuze believes the "new is a fold of the past," but this was already Hume's and Peirce's position.

These new folds may be inseparable and indiscernible from the actual, but their actualization is nonetheless quite rare and exceptional. Deleuze is quite forthright on this point. In discussing literary creativity, Deleuze claims that "The conditions for literary creation, which emerges only unpredictably, with a slow turnover and progressive recognition, are fragile. Future Becketts or Kafkas, who will, of course, be unlike Beckett or Kafka, may well not find a publisher, and if they don't nobody will notice."86 Later in this same essay Deleuze discusses innovation in sports, describing these innovations as an invention that transforms what one could call the existing syntax that is, an invention in sports opens a new style, "a linked sequence of posture, the equivalent, that is, of syntax, based on an earlier style but breaking with it."87 What then happens, Deleuze claims, is that these qualitative transformations in the style or syntax of a sport—though Deleuze extends this to other creative enterprises such as literature,
Charting the Road of Inquiry

film, philosophy, and science—then come to be copied and quantitatively improved through technological modifications. The efforts of the latter may be more common, and certainly they are more profitable, but they ultimately depend upon an experimentation that actualized the virtualities inseparable from an already actualized style and syntax:

We might say that the copiers, by taking advantage of a movement coming from elsewhere, become all the stronger, and that sporting bodies show remarkable ingratitude toward the inventors by whom they live and prosper. It doesn’t matter: the history of sports runs through these inventors, who amount in each case to the unexpected, a new syntax, transformations, and without whom the purely technological advances would have remained quantitative, irrelevant and pointless.88

The issue for Deleuze then is not whether or not creative, transformative events are rare. They are, and on this point Deleuze and Badiou agree. The more important issue for Deleuze is to understand how these creative advances came to be. What are the conditions of literary creation? What factors inhibit the release of virtualities? How might such inhibiting factors be challenged and overcome? These questions are precisely the questions the experimentalism of transcendental empiricism, pragmatics, and others (e.g., rhizomatics, schizoanalysis) seeks to address. Moreover, the experimentations are not guaranteed of success, and thus it is a “cautious experimentalism” that is needed. Rather than transform an actuality through the successful release of virtualities that come then to be actualized in a new idea, concept, belief, invention, etc., the efforts may simply come to repeat the same well-worn forms and paths, just as Badiou felt Deleuze repeats the same monotonous conceptualizations of concrete phenomena; or, the existing patterns and paths may become utterly destroyed and nothing coherent results from the experimentation. Whether successful or not, the methods Deleuze develops in his own works and with Guattari do not, nor can they, prejudge which road to take, which charts to follow. New charts and maps will come to be created, but they will come, as with other creations (literary or otherwise), unpredictably. So experiment.

In the end, Badiou might not be brought around to Deleuze’s perspective. However, as we have attempted to show in this essay, there are sufficient reasons to suggest that Deleuze’s theory of the virtual is not nearly as problematic as Badiou paints it as being. Deleuze and Badiou in fact are largely in agreement on what they see as the need to embrace the possibility of creative beginnings. For Badiou, however, such creative beginnings are absolute beginnings, rare events that initiate the many problems and developments that follow in their wake.
Jeffrey Bell

These beginnings, as absolute, cannot be thought in terms of anything that might already be actual. Deleuze, by contrast, argues that creative beginnings must begin where they are (in media res), with the actual. On this point, Deleuze echoes both Peirce and Hume (and no doubt many others) when he argues that the way to move beyond the actual, to think through the actual so as to release the creative potentials that are co-extensive with it, is to experiment. Despite these important differences between Badiou and Deleuze, they each nonetheless agree on the need to situate philosophical thinking beyond categorical oppositions, and see this effort as necessary to move beyond the actual, “bleak world” (as Badiou puts it). Badiou underestimates the importance of the actual for Deleuze, and this coupled with his own problematic reading of Spinoza leads him to overlook as well the great caution and concern Deleuze (and Guattari) had for beginning with the actual and for releasing us from its frequently suffocating grip. The virtual is itself the difference in itself inseparable and indiscernible from the actual because, to repeat, it is the very condition for the possibility of moving beyond the actual. If, then, to philosophize is to engender a creative, thoughtful, experimental engagement with reality, with the actual, as Deleuze believed it should be, and if this engagement leads to a further reworking and charting of this thoughtful engagement itself, then whether one calls such an effort a philosophy of difference or not, Deleuze certainly would have been in sympathy with its efforts.

Notes

A shortened version of this paper was presented at the inaugural meeting of the Society for the Study of Difference in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, October 2006, in Salt Lake City. I owe special thanks to Panos Zamaros and Douglas Donkel for their efforts in organizing the society and for the invitation to participate that is the reason for this essay. I am also especially grateful to John Protevi, Todd May, James Williams, and the anonymous readers of this essay for their many helpful comments.

1 Deleuze is quite forthright in the preface to *Difference and Repetition*, the work in which Deleuze most explicitly states his desire to develop a philosophy of difference that is not subordinate to identity. As he puts it, “We propose to think difference in itself independently of the forms of representation which reduce it to the Same, and the relation of different to different independently of those forms which make them pass through the negative” (*Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton [New York: Columbia University Press, 1994], xix). This passing through the negative is precisely the dialectics of categorical opposition, and Deleuze’s desire “to think difference in itself” is thus an effort to think beyond such oppositions, to think beyond good and evil. When Deleuze states in the preface to the English edition of *Difference and Repetition* that “All that I have
done since is connected to this book, including what I wrote with Guattari," (xxv) it becomes clear that Deleuze was aware of the primacy of this effort to think difference in itself. For an excellent survey of the themes of *Difference and Repetition*, see James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).


3 Badiou argues that “He [Deleuze] courageously set out to construct a modern metaphysics...” (ibid., 67).

4 Ibid., 70.

5 Ibid., 78.

6 Ibid. Deleuze’s essay, “He Was My Teacher,” in *Desert Islands and Other Texts*, trans, Michael Taormina, ed. David Lapoujade [Cambridge, MA: Semiotext(e), 2004], 77–80) written in support of Sartre’s refusal of the Nobel Prize in 1964, adds fuel to Badiou’s fire here. Deleuze remained, according to Badiou, a faithful disciple of his teacher.

7 Recently there have been a number of essays that have defended Deleuze’s work against Badiou’s criticisms. See especially Todd May, “Badiou and Deleuze on the One and the Many,” in *Think Again: Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (Continuum, 2004), 67–76, and Daniel W. Smith, “Mathematics and the Theory of Multiplicities: Badiou and Deleuze Revisited,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 41 (3): 411–50. May argues that if one emphasizes Deleuze’s resistance to transcendence and understands the virtual-actual distinction as following from Deleuze’s Bergsonian conceptualization of time—in contrast to Badiou who, May points out, “separates his discussion of time from his discussion of the virtual and the actual” (74)—then most of the difficulties Badiou has with Deleuze would be overcome. For Smith, Badiou fails to appreciate the significance of the mathematical basis for Deleuze’s theory of multiplicities. In particular, Smith argues, and quite correctly I believe, that whereas Badiou’s ontology understands Being solely in terms of axiomatic set theory, Deleuze recognizes the necessary tension between axiomatics and problematics. Interpreted in this way, Smith shows that not only has Badiou failed to grasp the real differend between himself and Deleuze (for Badiou it revolved around the One and the Multiple), but more importantly his neglect of problematics leads to difficulties for his own philosophy. Both arguments are compelling. Where our approach differs is in offering a reading of Spinoza that corrects what we take to be Badiou’s misreading of Spinoza, and hence Deleuze’s Spinozism as we see it, but it also highlights, with our discussion of Hume, the manner in which an experimental philosophy drawn from problematics was a concern of Deleuze’s from early in his career.

8 Alain Badiou, *Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1. For an extended discussion of Deleuze’s and Badiou’s differing readings of Spinoza, see Sam Gillespie, “Placing the Void: Badiou on Spinoza,” *Angelaki* 6, no. 3 (2001): 63–77. Gillespie is largely sympathetic to Badiou’s reading of infinite modes whereby the infinite modes are for Badiou the return of the void that Spinoza had sought to foreclose and exclude. On this reading, the problem for both Deleuze and Spinoza, as Gillespie summarizes Badiou’s position, is to account for something that is
“above and beyond the immediacy of presentation” (74); or, as we are discussing this here, neither Deleuze or Spinoza are up to Badiou’s challenge to think difference beyond the identity of categorical oppositions. For a more extended treatment of Badiou, see Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

9 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 304. This is from the final sentence of *Difference and Repetition* and explains, obviously, how Badiou arrived at the title he did for his book on Deleuze.

10 Badiou, *Clamor of Being*, 53.


12 Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 84

13 Ibid.


15 Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 86.

16 Ibid., 88.

17 Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, 87.

18 Ibid., 88.

19 Badiou is quite forthright on this role of the infinite intellect: “The infinite intellect provides the modal norm for the extent of modal possibility. All the things that it can intellect—‘omnia quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt’—are held to exist” (ibid., 85).

20 As I have argued at length elsewhere, two of the more prominent of Spinoza commentators, Edwin Curley and Jonathan Bennett, find the latter half of Part V of Spinoza’s *Ethics* problematic precisely because they, too, as with Badiou, assume the distinction between an intellect and the object (e.g., attribute) that is the distinct object of this intellect. This view is mistaken, we argue, and to understand the attributes as we do we avoid both the difficulties Curley and Bennett find with Spinoza, and we can avoid the proposed solution Badiou offers. Of the prominent Spinoza scholars, other than those listed above, Alan Donagan, in *Spinoza* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), offers an interpretation of the relationship between intellect and attribute that avoids the problems we have mentioned, though Donagan’s approach differs quite markedly from ours (he argues, for instance, that the attributes, thought and extension, each
expresses the laws of nature, which we reject).


22 That the virtual is real is one of Deleuze's central claims and he states it on numerous occasions. See, for instance, Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 208: "The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual."

23 Badiou, Clamor of Being, 53.

24 A preliminary indication that this reading of the difference between Deleuze and Badiou is correct can be seen in Badiou's work itself, where, in the introduction to the Clamor of Being, Badiou claims that Deleuze did not want to have his correspondence with Badiou published for on rereading it "he found them too 'abstract'" (Clamor of Being, 6). It is also worth noting that the subtitle to Deleuze's second book on Spinoza is "Practical Philosophy." The practical, pragmatic concerns of Deleuze will occupy us for the remainder of this essay.

25 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 164.

26 Ibid., 165.


29 Ibid., 32.

30 Ibid., 34.

31 For important work on Peirce that details his understanding of abduction and provides, as well, an excellent overview of Peirce's theory of meaning, a theory that is much at work in Deleuze, see Sandra B. Rosenthal, Charles Peirce's Pragmatic Pluralism (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Floyd Merrell, Peirce, Signs, and Meaning (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Gérard Deledalle, Peirce's Philosophy of Signs: Essays in Comparative Semiotics (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001); and James K. Feibleman, An Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960).

32 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 208.


34 Ibid., 211. For the most sophisticated treatment of the implications of Deleuze's thought for biology, and evolutionary theory in particular, see Keith Ansell-Pearson's Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze (New York: Routledge, 1999).

Philosophical Writings, 150. Peirce repeats this point in an essay he wrote on Hume: “Any proposition added to observed facts, tending to make them applicable in any way to other circumstances than those under which they were observed, may be called a hypothesis.”

We do not have the space here to compare Peirce’s theory of abduction and its role in the emergence of conceptual knowledge with Deleuze’s similar understanding of the emergence of concepts. A helpful essay that does address this, however, is Paul Patton’s “Concept and Event,” *Man and World* 29: 315–26.

*Philosophical Writings*, 76. Deleuze cites this famous definition in his Cinema books.

Ibid., 78–9.

Ibid., 76: “We naturally attribute Firstness to outward objects, that is we suppose they have capacities in themselves which may or may not be already actualized, which may or may not ever be actualized, although we can know nothing of such possibilities [except] so far as they are actualized.”

Ibid., 75.

Ibid., 79.

Ibid., 86.

Ibid., 87.

The conception of mediation springs out of the plural consciousness or sense of learning” (ibid., 95); “that element of cognition which is neither feeling [firstness] nor the polar sense [secondness], is the consciousness of a process, and this in the form of the sense of learning, of acquiring, of mental growth is eminently characteristic of cognition” (ibid., 96).

Ibid., 28–9.

Peirce offers this famous statement concerning the scientific attitude: “If a proposition is to be applied to action, it has to be embraced, or believed without reservation. There is no room for doubt, which can only paralyze action. But the scientific spirit requires a man to be at all times ready to dump his whole cartload of beliefs, the moment experience is against them” (ibid., 46–7).

Peirce states this desire to make of philosophy an experimental science in a number of places. Here is a typical example: “what will remain of philosophy [after abandoning the non-practical, non-experimental metaphysics of the past] will be a series of problems capable of investigation by the observational methods of the true sciences” (ibid., 259).

For instance, Peirce describes the scientific person as follows: “If a man burns to learn and sets himself to comparing his ideas with experimental results in order that he may correct those ideas, every scientific man will recognize him as a brother; no matter how small his knowledge may be” (ibid., 43); and the gentleman scholar is described as follows: “Wherever there is a large class of academic professors who are provided with good incomes and looked up to as gentlemen, scientific inquiry must languish. Wherever the bureaucrats are the
Charting the Road of Inquiry

more learned class, the case will be still worse” (ibid., 45).

51 See, for instance, Badiou, Theoretical Writings, 79: “In order to have done with transcendence, it is necessary to follow the thread of the multiple-without-oneness—impervious to any play off the closed and the open, canceling any abyss between the finite and the infinite, purely actual, haunted by the internal excess of its parts—whose univocal singularity is ontologically nameable only by a form of writing subtracted from the poetics of natural language.”


53 A Thousand Plateaus, 251.

54 For a clear explication of transcendental empiricism as this concept is found in Difference and Repetition, see James Williams, Gilles Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition. Also see the chapter on transcendental empiricism in Claire Colebrook’s Deleuze (New York: Routledge, 2002), and Bruce Baugh’s “Transcendental Empiricism: Deleuze’s Response to Hegel,” Man and World 25 (1002): 133–48. For some of the few essays to discuss Deleuze’s interpretation of Hume, see “Gilles Deleuze, Interprete De Hume,” Revue Philosophique du Louvain 84 (1984): 224–48, and Constantin Boundas’s introduction to his translation of Empiricism and Subjectivity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

55 Boundas, Empiricism and Subjectivity, 22. For interpretations of Deleuze that stress the importance of system in Deleuze’s thought, see, in addition to my Philosophy at the Edge of Chaos, Philippe Mengue, Gilles Deleuze ou le système du multiple (Paris: Kimé, 1994).

56 Ibid., 22–3. Deleuze then cites Hume: “The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us; nor have we the most distant notion of place, where these scenes are represented, or the materials, of which it is compos’d” (in Treatise of Human Nature [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978], 253).

57 Ibid., 86–7.

58 Ibid., 97.

59 Ibid.

60 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 143.


62 Ibid., 193.

63 Ibid., 143.

64 Boundas, Empiricism and Subjectivity, 132.

65 Ibid., 86–7.

66 Ibid., 80.

67 Ibid., 113. In support of the constitutive role of impressions of reflection, Deleuze cites Hume’s Treatise, 36–7 (cited p. 97 in Empiricism and Subjectivity). The text runs as follows: “Five notes play’d on a flute give us the impression and idea of time; tho’ time be not a sixth impression, which presents itself to the hearing or any other of the senses. Nor is it a sixth impression, which the mind by reflection finds in itself. These five sounds making their appearance in
Jeffrey Bell

this particular manner, excite no emotion in the mind, nor produce an affection of any kind, which being observ'd by it can give rise to a new idea. For that is necessary to produce a new idea of reflection, nor can the mind, by revolving over a thousand times all its ideas of sensation, ever extract from them any new original idea, unless nature has so fram't its faculties, that it feels some new original impression arise from such a contemplation.” Such a new original impression is an impression of reflection, and these impressions are the results of the principles in their constitutive role.

Ibid., 114.
Ibid., 120.
Ibid., 22.
Ibid., 40.
Ibid., 45–6.
Ibid., 51.

Ibid., 130. Ian Buchanan has recognized the importance of first turning to Hume in order to gain one’s bearings on Deleuze’s critique of culture. As Buchanan puts it, “The problem of the formation of the subject Deleuze finds in Hume should, I believe, be at the center of any attempt to produce a Deleuzean cultural studies, not the question of which concepts can be applied to a reading of the social, as is usually the case.” In “Deleuze and Cultural Studies,” South Atlantic Quarterly 96, no. 3 (1997): 484.


Ibid., 75–6.

See Clamour of Being, for example, where Badiou makes this point: “It is therefore perfectly coherent that, in starting from innumerable and seemingly disparate cases, in exposing himself to the impulsion organized by Spinoza and Sacher-Masoch, Carmelo Bene and Whitehead, Melville and Jean-Luc Godard, Francis Bacon and Nietzsche, Deleuze arrives at conceptual productions that I would unhesitatingly qualify as monotonous, composing a very particular regime of emphasis or almost infinite repetition of a limited repertoire of concepts, as well as virtuosic variation of names, under which what is thought remains essentially identical” (15).

Ibid., 75.
Ibid.

Deleuze states that Whitehead’s Process and Reality is “one of the greatest books of modern philosophy” (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 284–5). With what we have said, the reason becomes clear why Deleuze feels this way—namely, Whitehead affirms the inseparability of Creativity as the underlying substance from the facts that actualize this Creativity.

Badiou, Clamour of Being, 76.
Badiou, Theoretical Writings, 77.

Ibid., 91. Deleuze most develops this notion of the fold in his book on Leibniz, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque, translated by Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Badiou, although sympathetic to Deleuze’s concerns in using Leibniz, ultimately criticizes Deleuze along the same lines discussed here. In particular, Badiou (see “Gilles Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,” in Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy, edited by Constantin Boundas [New York: Routledge, 1994]) argues that by
understanding the world as a relentless folding, unfolding, and refolding of events, whereby event means “everything that happens” (56), Deleuze is ultimately unable to get beyond the given, beyond the “presentifying” (68) descriptions of immanence (see note 8 above where we discussed this in the context of Gillespie’s essay). This problem of how creative events create beyond the given is precisely, as we have seen, the problem of transcendental empiricism that Deleuze found at work in Hume. Given space, we could parallel Badiou’s critique of Leibniz-Deleuze with his critique of Spinoza-Deleuze, and in doing so bring to bear our earlier criticisms of Badiou. For a more sympathetic reading of Deleuze’s notion of the fold, see Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Deleuzian Fold of Thought,” in Deleuze: A Critical Reader, ed. Paul Patton (London: Blackwell, 1996): 107–13.

84 Ibid., 91–2.
87 Ibid., 290.
88 Ibid., 291.
89 Peirce, for instance, argues that “there is but one state of mind from which you can ‘set out’, namely, the very state of mind in which you actually find yourself at the time you do ‘set out’” (Philosophical Writings, 256).