Let me begin with a hypothetical. Let us take a relatively established philosopher who has been at work within their particular sub-discipline for a number of years. They have produced some good work and when at conferences a few people actually recognize the name on their nametag. Things are good and the future looks even better. Brimming with confidence, our philosopher brings his latest work to a conference, fully expecting this will be the essay that brings him to the next level. While at the bar the night before presenting their paper, a good friend and colleague tells them about the work of another philosopher that addresses many of the same themes they do but in a much more interesting way. Our philosopher is caught off guard and a flood of questions is forced upon him: Who is it? How is this possible? How much have they written? Where and when did they write it? And with whom are they associated, and where does that leave me?¹ Our philosopher’s questions go unanswered for his friend has to rush off to meet someone else. Who? they wonder. So there he sits, our woeful academic, finding himself adrift, like Proust’s jealous lover, “living within a problem, and constrained, involuntarily, to explore its conditions.”² It is this problematic state, Deleuze argues, that forces one to think, it is the objectivity of what is not known, the “objective dimension of the problem,”³ or what Deleuze refers to as the “natural ‘powerlessness’ which is indistinguishable from the greatest power” -- that is, the power of thinking.⁴

¹ *Essays on Deleuze*, p. 21, and p. 92. See also *Desert Islands*, p. 96. As will become clear, these questions are the ones that are motivated by the nature and conditions of problems.
² Ibid. 84.
³ Ibid. 300
⁴ DR 147. This is the significance of Artaud in Deleuze’s writings; the madness that undermined his efforts to think something gets to the heart of what I will be discussing in this essay.
Associated with thinking, however, and with the conditions of the problem that force it upon us, is delirium. “Underneath all reason,” Deleuze writes, “lies delirium, and drift.”\textsuperscript{5} Take Hume, for instance, who Deleuze believes holds that “if the mind is manifested as a delirium, it is because it is first of all, and essentially, madness.”\textsuperscript{6} We can begin to see why this is so, for if thought is forced upon us by the objectivity of the problem, by the questions that impinge upon the jealous lover or academic for instance, then the pursuit of the questions may well undermine all that is common and familiar and unleash a madness that remains inseparable from each of our rational, well-tuned thoughts. Hume was well aware of this fact when in the \textit{Treatise} he noted that “a lively imagination very often degenerates into madness or folly, and bears it a great resemblance,” since for the mad person

\begin{quote}
  every loose fiction or idea, having the same influence as the impressions of the memory, or the conclusions of the judgment, is receiv’d on the same footing, and operates with equal force on the passions. A present impression and a customary transition are now no longer necessary to inliven our ideas.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

We can now return to our jealous philosopher, thrown as he was into a frenzied state of exploring the objective conditions of the problem he encountered upon hearing about the existence of a rival. The forced thinking this brings about, as thinking, risks becoming undone. Our philosopher can become unhinged. Rather than thinking in terms of already established associations and memories—or what Hume identifies as the “customary transition” from one thought to another—he is “inlivened” to conclusions on the least provocation. For example, he spots John Protevi in conversation with someone he doesn’t

\textsuperscript{5} DI 262 \\
\textsuperscript{6} ES 83 \\
\textsuperscript{7} T 123
recognize, but rather than assume all is well—after all, John has been a friend for years—he leaps to the conclusion that he and the stranger are plotting his own demise. This undermining then spreads, unchecked, and everywhere he turns the familiar associations take on a sinister air, as if he had suddenly fallen into a tale told by H.P. Lovecraft. It is this very possibility that lurks behind Deleuze’s comment that Hume’s empiricism is “a kind of universe of science fiction: as in science fiction, the world seems fictional, strange, foreign, experienced by other creatures; but we get the feeling that this world is our own, and we are the creatures.”8 Before our philosopher descends too deeply into this world of strange, foreign madness he is jolted to his proper, good senses by the return of the friend who first told him about the rival. Returning from dinner, and quickly on his way to another scheduled meeting, the friend spots our philosopher in the bar and hurriedly tells him about the philosopher he had neglected to mention earlier. “Dan Smith,” he says, “you really need to read Dan Smith’s work.” And with that he rushes off to his meeting.

It is not an exaggeration to claim that my hypothetical captures an important aspect of Dan Smith’s work. Dan has engaged with the problematic nature of Deleuze’s thought and shown just how important it is for understanding Deleuze’s project that we distinguish between the ontological nature of problems and their solutions. It is this distinction, as Dan has shown so well, that Badiou and Zizek, among others, fail to appreciate. Moreover, I find it particularly appropriate that Dan’s reputation has been built upon the strength of his essays, for this is precisely what an encounter with Deleuze’s thought entails: that is, it involves an essay in the traditional sense of the term,

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8 In a short essay on Hume (in DI), Deleuze argues that “His [Hume’s] empiricism DI 162
meaning an effort to determine the distinctive characteristics of the substance in question.

In the case of Smith’s work, his essays have been an effort, an assay, to discern the objective nature and characteristics of the problems that run through Deleuze’s work. Such assays, however, are by their very nature experimental procedures that may fail; as experiments in thinking they may well fall into delirium. Dan’s essays are experiments and assays that have succeeded, however, like the artist described in *Anti-Oedipus* who enters the delirium and returns by way of the production of the new.⁹ What Dan’s work has done is to enter the delirium of Deleuze’s problematic and produce on returning a work of crystalline clarity that has established many of the parameters upon which future research and discussion of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari will be based.

What I would like to focus on today are two key themes. First, I will continue with my discussion of Smith’s analyses of the importance for Deleuze of the ontological nature of problems. If Deleuze continues to be read generations from now, it will be, I hazard to prophesize, largely as a result of the conceptual innovations that Deleuze undertook in his effort, or assay, to discern the ontological conditions of the problems that are distinct from their solutions. Related to this discussion will be the important connections Smith makes between Deleuze’s project and the Kantian project that took shape in light of Maimon’s criticisms of Kant’s first Critique. Secondly, I will extend Smith’s reading by stressing the importance of the pre-Kantian tradition in Deleuze’s thought. In particular, I would argue that Spinoza and Hume provide the conditions of Deleuze’s philosophical problem that then allows him to re-think Kant’s critical project and to develop what he

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⁹ See *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 88: “If schizophrenia is the universal, the great artist is indeed the one who scales the schizophrenic wall and reaches the land of the unknown, where he no longer belongs to any time, any milieu, any school.”
calls a transcendental empiricism. It is this latter aspect of Deleuze’s thought that does not receive the full attention of Smith (nobody can do everything!), though it provides further support for his arguments.

I

Although Deleuze’s philosophy has been an inspiration to many people working in many disciplines—cultural studies, architecture, English literature, film studies, among many others—Deleuze always saw himself as being engaged in philosophy and philosophy alone. The great merit of Dan’s work is that he has been able to situate Deleuze’s thought within the philosophical tradition, especially the Kantian and post-Kantian tradition. The central chapters of *Essays on Deleuze*, for example, echo the architectonic structure of Kant’s philosophical system, a system reinterpreted in light of Deleuze’s own philosophical problematic. These central essays, as Smith describes them, are an “attempt to explicate the broad outlines of Deleuze’s philosophical system by taking as their initial point of reference one of the great systems in the history of philosophy, namely, Kant’s critical philosophy.” (xii-xiii). Each of the five essays takes on one of the key domains of Kant’s architectonic structure: “aesthetics (theory of sensation), dialectics (theory of the Idea), analytics (theory of the concept), ethics (theory of affectivity), and politics (socio-political theory).” (xiii). What Deleuze does to Kant, Smith shows, and this is key, is to completely reorient the Kantian problematic *away* from the effort to establish a “principle of external conditioning” and turn it instead towards a “viewpoint of internal genesis.” (43).
To understand the motivation for this move to a “viewpoint of internal genesis,” we can turn to Kant’s solution to the First Antinomy from his first Critique. The central question of this antinomy is whether the world does or does not have a beginning in time. Kant argues that if one assumes it does not have a beginning in time then “an eternity has elapsed, and there has passed away in the world an infinite series of successive states of things,” but since an infinite series “can never be completed through successive synthesis [it] follows that it is impossible for an infinite world series to have passed away.” In other words, to represent in thought such a beginning in time would involve what has been called a supertask – that is, a task that completes an infinite process – which for Kant is impossible and thus the world must have a beginning in time. If, however, we assume the world has a beginning in time then the world proceeds from a “time in which the world was not, i.e. an empty time.” An empty time, however, lacks any determinate content and thus it lacks any “distinguishing condition of existence rather than non-existence.” There is thus no way to think a world that begins in time for this would involve a thought without content, which for Kant is another impossible task.

Kant’s solution to the antinomy is straightforward—he rejects the very notion that the world exists in-itself as either a finite or infinite totality. One cannot have a thought or belief in this world for it does not, in the end, exist, and to claim otherwise is to suffer from an illusion—what Kant calls a transcendental illusion. Kant is clear on this point: If we reject the assumption that the world exists either as a complete series, whether finite

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10 Critique of Pure Reason, p. 397
or infinite, and “the accompanying transcendental illusion, and deny that the world is a thing in itself,” then we are able to avoid the antinomy.\textsuperscript{11}

In his reading of Kant’s solution to the antinomy, Deleuze points out that it is made possible by discovering “within representation an element irreducible to either infinity or finitude”—this is the regress of representations—and to this Kant adds “the pure thought of another element which differs in kind from representation (noumena)” (DR 178). The problem with Kant’s move, Deleuze argues, is that this “pure thought,” to the extent that it “remains undetermined—or is not determined as differential,” continues to remain tied to the framework of external conditioning and representation in that the noumena is external to and conditions the possibility of the regressive series of representations. In other words, as with his critique of Aristotle who subjects specific difference to “the identity of an undetermined concept (genus),” (DR 32) so too does Kant subject the differences between the representations of the regressive series to the identity of the undetermined noumena. Deleuze, by contrast, in his effort to develop a metaphysics of difference, seeks to account for identity in terms of difference rather than difference in terms of identity, and it is here where the \textit{differential} emerges as a key conceptual tool for Deleuze.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp. 447-448.
\textsuperscript{12} Deleuze announces this task of prioritizing difference in the Preface to the English Edition of \textit{Difference and Repetition}, where he claims that “All that I have done since [the initial publication of DR] is connected to this book, including what I wrote with Guattari,” and this was to develop a concept of difference and avoid the fate whereby the “majority of philosophers had subordinated difference to identity or to the Same, to the Similar, to the Opposed or to the Analogous…” (DR xv).
For Deleuze, once we adopt the perspective of thought as differential rather
than the pure thought of an undetermined noumena we are able to avoid Kant’s first antinomy
for the differential entails what Deleuze refers to as “the nature of the problematic as
such,” or a “problematic element” with an “extra-propositional character…[that is]
Neither particular nor general, neither finite nor infinite, [but] …is the object of the Idea
as a universal.” (ibid.). This differential or problematic element is indeed an “Idea as a
universal,” and as Deleuze readily admits it is an Idea in the manner of the “Platonic,
Leibnizian or Kantian Idea” (DR 171). This Idea also serves as the principle of sufficient
reason for all that appears, for all that can be identified in the mode of representation, but
the Idea itself is not caught up within the framework of representation. Smith is thus
quite right when he argues that “Difference and Repetition in its entirety can be read as a
search for the roots of sufficient reason, which is formulated in a theory of non-
representational Ideas.” (Essays, 50).

To begin to make sense of this notion of a differential, problematic element, it is
first important to recognize that for Deleuze the differential serves not as the condition of
possible experience, but of real experience. When one seeks the conditions of possible
experience, as Kant did, then one looks for those conditions that function as a
determinable category that is more expansive and encompassing than the determinate
experiences that provide the content (e.g., the determinable blue is a category that is more
expansive than a determinate instance of blue). For Deleuze, by contrast, “Everything
changes once we determine the conditions of the real experience, which are not larger

13 See DR 222: “Disparity—in other words, difference or intensity (difference of intensity)—is the
sufficient reason of all phenomena, the condition of that which appears.”
than the conditioned and which differ in kind from the categories.” (DR 68). As Smith puts it, “this is one of the fundamental problems of a theory of thought: How can thought leave this sphere of the possible in order to think the real: that is, to think existence itself, to think existing things.” (Essays, 72).

The pivotal step for Deleuze in addressing this fundamental problem, Smith argues, is the use to which he puts the mathematical concept of a differential. As mentioned earlier, Deleuze’s problem with Kant’s solution to the first antinomy was that he did not view thought as conditioned by a differential but rather by the identity of an undetermined noumena. Deleuze, however, follows through on the approach Maimon suggests, and one of the many strengths of Smith’s work is that he shows just how essential it is to understand Deleuze’s philosophy in light of Maimon’s work. In particular, in his critique of Kant, Maimon argues that by viewing the categories as determinable concepts external to the determinate experiences one is left with the *quid juris* question of accounting for the relationship between determinable concepts and their determinate intuitions. To address the *quid juris* question adequately, Maimon argues, entails not taking the categories as already constituted facts and identities that then need to be related to a determinate content; rather, by beginning with differentials themselves one is able to *generate* the very relationship between a determinable concept and its determinate content. Maimon thus exemplifies the turn to internal genesis that Smith rightly points to as being fundamental to Deleuze’s project.
The textual evidence for this turn abounds. In *Difference and Repetition*, for instance, Deleuze points to the differential as the “sufficient reason” he seeks to establish, and this is because the “symbol dx appears as simultaneously undetermined, determinable and determination.” (DR 171) Deleuze then adds that to these three aspects of the differential there corresponds “three principles which together form a sufficient reason.” These will be the principle of determinability which is associated with the undetermined dx, dy; the principle of reciprocal determination which corresponds to the dy/dx relation; and the principle of complete determination which “corresponds to the effectively determined (values of dy/dx).” (ibid.). I will return to these principles shortly and offer an example to clarify them, but first I want to highlight that the relationship between these three aspects constitutes what Smith rightly identifies as “a new concept of dialectics [which is] more or less synonymous with the concept of ‘problematics’: dialectics is the art of posing or constructing problems, expressed in the form of Ideas (which Deleuze, like Kant, distinguishes from concepts).” (*Essays*, 69-70).

It is precisely at this point where I believe Smith’s work is at its most important and serves as an essential corrective to an overly simplistic reading of what is at stake in Deleuze’s project. My earlier comments may have led one to the assumption that Kant got it wrong by focusing on external conditioning and Deleuze (following Maimon) gets it right by turning instead to the viewpoint of internal genesis (or more accurately, heterogenesis). Smith argues convincingly that such a simplified reading overlooks the subtleties of Kant’s own arguments as well as the changes he wrought in the wake of Maimon’s criticisms. As Smith shows, there are two main points where Kant’s work is
radical and not greatly different from Deleuze’s own. First, in his theory of Ideas, Kant was perhaps the first to recognize the “problematic” nature of Ideas. As Smith puts it, “Kant’s genius…was to assign a new status to Ideas: lacking any determinate object, he argued, Ideas are necessarily “problematic,” which means that the true object of an Idea is the problem as such.” (Essays, 71). The Idea of the world, for instance, as “the absolute whole of all appearances” as Kant puts it, is an Idea with no determinate content, and as such it remains a problem that risks leading to the transcendental illusion when we infer determinate content to this Idea. Kant, like Deleuze, thus embraces the notion of a fundamental “problematic” that is irreducible to any determinate content that may serve as the “solution” that prefigures and pre-determines the problem. To the contrary, Smith shows that for Deleuze and Kant, “the ontological status of the problem as such is detached from its solutions.” (Essays, 302).

The second point follows from the first. Smith cites an important line from Difference and Repetition. “Problems,” Deleuze claims, “do not exist only in our heads but occur here and there in the production of an actual historical world.” (DR 190, cited in Essays 70). It is from here where the questions Who?, Where?, When? and How? acquire their relevance for in asking these questions, as opposed to the What is x? question, we are seeking the multiple conditions for the generation of that which is actual. Problems therefore do not presuppose the solution that comes to be actualized; problems

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14 See Critique of Pure Reason, in “Transcendental Dialectic,” pp. 308-9, where Kant argues that “concepts of reason,” what he will call “transcendental ideas,” are what “enables us to conceive,” just as “concepts of understanding” (the categories) enable us to understand. With respect to these ideas, Kant argues, “No actual experience has ever been completely adequate to it, yet to it every actual experience belongs.” In reference to “the absolute whole of all appearances,” which Kant claims is an example of such a transcendental idea, Kant argues that “since we can never represent it [this idea] in image, it remains a problem to which there is no solution.” (319).
are the conditions for the generation of a solution that is not predetermined. On this very issue Kant will also be much in line with Deleuze’s own views. In discussing the faculty of desire, for example, desire is not related to an already existent object that is lacking—the object of desire—but to the contrary Kant argues that “desire is a faculty which by means of its representations is the cause of the actuality of the objects of those representations.”¹⁵ The surprising conclusion that Smith draws from Kant’s claim is that Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* can be said to find its primary model in the *Critique of Practical Reason…* (*Essays*, 318).

Despite these profound areas of agreement between Deleuze and Kant, and we should be thankful to Smith for highlighting this agreement, Kant ultimately does not follow through on his own developments and pass through the threshold wherein he comes to embrace a philosophy of immanence and difference. What Kant does instead in his second Critique, as Smith correctly notes, is to resurrect the “transcendent Ideas of soul, world, and God.” (*Essays*, 117). But by doing this Kant in the end returns to the representational view and does not truly come to understand the conditions for the possibility of real experience—he does not come to think the existence of things. It is only by way of difference-in-itself, by differentials or the problematic element, that we come to think the existence of things. This is the reason for Deleuze’s claim that “Delirium lies at the base of good sense, which is why good sense is always secondary.” (DR 227). In other words, it is delirium, the problematic element, which forces us to think and is presupposed by good sense—that is, “the point of view,” as Deleuze defines good sense, “of the empirical selves and the objects qualified as this or that kind of thing.”

(DR 134). In other words, it is delirium that lies at the base of our ability to live in a familiar world of objects that we safely identify as objects of this or that kind. Kant, in the end, avoids this delirium at all costs, with the result that he fails to account for the conditions of real experience and remains stuck within the realm of only accounting for possible experience, an experience that is already thought in terms of good sense.

II

Moving to my second theme, I would like to move beyond the Kantian problematic that Smith shows to be crucial for understanding Deleuze’s project and move to yet another problematic I believe is equally important if we are to understand Deleuze’s philosophical motives, and in particular his frequent turn to the pre-Kantian tradition. Smith does discuss the importance of Leibniz for Deleuze, which is not surprising given the role differentials plays in Deleuze’s thought (and in the neo-Leibnizian approach of Maimon). Spinoza is discussed much less frequently by Smith and yet I would argue that a Spinozist problematic runs throughout Deleuze’s work (and explains as well why Deleuze always considered himself to be a Spinozist). This problematic can be stated as follows: If, as Spinoza argues in his famous letter to Jarig Jelles, “all determination is negation,” (letter 50) and if God is absolutely infinite substance, or what Spinoza will call the “infinite enjoyment of existing” (in letter 12), then what is the relationship between an absolutely infinite and affirmative substance and determinate individuals? In short, can we account for the process of determinate individuation without resorting to a process of negation? It is this Spinozist problematic that becomes central to Deleuze’s project. Although this problematic receives little attention from Smith, it actually lends further
strength to Smith’s arguments regarding the ontological status of problems as distinct from solutions. Smith does an excellent job discussing the theory of univocity as it relates to Spinoza, though without explicitly addressing the problematic as I have formulated it here. In the time I have left, I will highlight some of the points where bringing the Spinozist problematic into play can expand upon and enhance Smith’s readings of Deleuze.

The first and most obvious reason for bringing Spinoza into this discussion is that Spinoza sought to develop a philosophy of immanence and is “perhaps,” as Deleuze and Guattari argue in *What is Philosophy?*, “the only philosopher never to have compromised with transcendence and to have hunted it down everywhere.” “He is therefore the prince of philosophers,” they conclude.16 Spinoza can also be brought in to strengthen Deleuze’s efforts to “search,” as Smith puts it, “for the roots of sufficient reason [in terms of a] theory of non-representational Ideas.” As Michael Della Rocca argues in his work on Spinoza, “almost all philosophers expect explanations to run out at some point,” at which time they may say, as Wittgenstein famously did, “My spade is turned,” or they accept brute, inexplicable facts and thus turn away from the principle of sufficient reason. Della Rocca argues that Spinoza, however, offers “perhaps the boldest and most thoroughgoing commitment ever to appear in the history of philosophy to the intelligibility of everything”17—that is, to the principle of sufficient reason. Now while Deleuze’s Spinozism will not entail the “intelligibility” of everything in Della Rocca’s unrepentant rationalist sense of the term, Deleuze will argue, as we have seen, that the differential or

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16 *What is Philosophy?* p. 48
17 Michael Della Rocca, p. 1.
problematic element is the sufficient reason for all that appears. It is time then to return to that discussion.

Earlier we saw that Kant’s solution to the First Antinomy relied upon the representational framework that prioritizes identity in that the regressive series of representations was placed in relationship to the identity of the undetermined noumena. The resulting challenge, as we saw Smith argue, is to show how and whether we can “leave this meager sphere of the possible in order to think the real.” In rising to this challenge, Deleuze adopts the concept of the differential and the three principles associated with it (i.e., the principles of determinability, reciprocal determination, and complete determination), for it is with these principles that Deleuze, influenced by Simondon, develops his fullest response to the Spinozist problematic of how to account for a positive, non-negative process of determination (or individuation for Simondon and Deleuze). Let us turn to one of Deleuze’s better known examples to clarify this point—the case of an egg. In his 1967 talk, published as “Method of Dramatization,” Deleuze presents some of the central ideas from his dissertation that would later be published as *Difference and Repetition*. Within the egg the proteins, enzymes, etc., serve as the principle of determinability, or what Deleuze will call the differentiated content. This differentiated content is also in a reciprocally determined relationship to other proteins, enzymes, etc., which involves certain qualitative gradient thresholds, what Deleuze will call singularities. For example, in the case of the fruitfly larva, the bicoid protein is the differentiated content that is taken up in processes of reciprocal determination that involve gradient thresholds that trigger further processes—namely, the spatio-temporal
processes that produce the thorax and head of the fruitfly. If the gradient-threshold or singularity is varied, as has been done in experiments, then the result will be a fruitfly with either a greatly reduced or enlarged head and thorax. The principle of complete determination is precisely the multiplicity or assemblage of singularities and gradient thresholds that is immanent to the spatio-temporal processes of generation that result in a fruitfly. This assemblage or multiplicity is a dynamic system as I and others have argued, or as Deleuze puts it, multiplicity is “the true substantive, substance itself.” (DR 182).

In another example from *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze cites the case of a linguistic multiplicity. In this example, the phonemes serve as the principle of determinability, or the virtual content that is involved in reciprocal determinations with one another such that a “virtual system of reciprocal connections between ‘phonemes’” becomes the principle of complete determination that is then “incarnated in the actual terms and relations of diverse languages.” (DR 193). This “virtual system” is not to be confused with the actual, “empirical usage of a given language,” and if it is spoken, Deleuze adds, “it must be spoken and can be spoken only in the poetic usage of speech coextensive with virtuality.” (ibid.). In other words, we have returned to the delirium that is at the base of good sense, or in this case the poetic usage of speech at the base of its empirical usage. In his continuing effort to address the Spinozist problematic, therefore, it is this process of individuation through multiplicities and virtual systems of singularities, gradient-thresholds, and bifurcations that accounts for good sense and the empirical usage of language—in short, for the determinate, representational modes of thought. As Smith correctly puts it, and in a line that echoes Spinoza, “Divergences, bifurcations, and
incompossibles now belong to one and the same universe, a chaotic universe in which divergent series trace endlessly bifurcating paths: a ‘chaosmos’ and no longer a world.” (Essays, 201).

At this point we can bring Hume and Spinoza together. This might seem to be a misguided thing to do. After all, our history of philosophy textbooks characterize Hume as an empiricist, which places him at odds with Spinoza the supreme rationalist. In the hands of Deleuze, however, a disjunctive synthesis becomes possible, a synthesis that does not presuppose or rely upon negation and opposition but is rather that which makes such oppositions possible. In particular, we can place Hume and Spinoza into alignment with Deleuze’s understanding of the Idea as problematic element. We can thus extend Smith’s claim when, in discussing Deleuze and Guattari’s political theory, he argues that “an uncoded flow is a limit-concept or an Idea: that is to say, a problematic. It is not an ideal to be attained, but a problem that constantly demands resolution.” (Essays, 171).

Similarly, Hume’s delirium that “underlies all reason,” or Spinoza’s “infinite enjoyment of existing” that underlies all determinate, finite things, are in both cases not ideals to be attained but problems that constantly demand resolution. In the case of Spinoza, for example, the problem manifests as the question of what a finite body can do. Following from Spinoza’s claim that the actual essence of a finite mode or body is its power, the appropriate question to ask is not what a body is but rather the conditions under which a body can exercise its powers.\textsuperscript{18} It is the where, when, in what case, and with whom questions that become most relevant. As Smith puts it, “at every moment, my

\textsuperscript{18} See Spinoza’s Ethics, especially 1P34: “God’s power is his essence itself”; and 4P4: “The man’s power, therefore, insofar as it is explained through his actual essence, is part of God or Nature’s infinite power, i.e. (by 1P34), of its essence.”
existence…is objectively problematic, which means it has the structure of a problem…” (Essays, 253).

The same is the case for Hume. With delirium at the base of reason, or as the condition for our determinate, familiar associations, the risk we run is one of slipping into madness, of succumbing to an overly active imagination whereby what we take to be the case departs dramatically from our peers. For Hume then as well, our existence is, at every moment, “objectively problematic,” and thus the question becomes not what is true but when, under what circumstances, where, how often, and for how long are we authorized to make these claims, to assert that something is the case. I have referred to this elsewhere as the historical ontology implicit to Hume’s project—namely, rather than pursue an ontology that seeks to determine what is the case, Hume’s approach is one of determining the historical, generative circumstances and conditions that allows for something to be the case.19 The problematic at the basis of Hume’s and Spinoza’s philosophies gets extended by Deleuze in his own work as he develops a metaphysics of multiplicity, an ontology of problematics or what he will also call a transcendental empiricism. The significance of Dan Smith’s work, finally, and in conclusion, is that he has shown just how thoroughgoing was Deleuze’s attention to the ontological status of the problem, and in doing so Dan has shown just how relevant and important Deleuze’s work is to the ongoing concerns of philosophy.

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