

REVIEW ARTICLE

Robin Mackay (Ed.), *Collapse—Philosophical Research and Development*

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It is no doubt strange to find the review of one journal in another. This strangeness is ameliorated, in this case, by the exceptional status of the journal in question. In most cases, it is the content of a journal alone which is of philosophical interest – leaving aside the multitude of commercial, political and social aspects of every such publishing venture, which may be interesting but rarely contribute to an increase in the tone of the publication. In the case of *Collapse*, a different *formal* ambition is at work, and this is the principle reason for this review.

The strength of *Collapse* as a publishing enterprise lies in its attempt to *populate theoretical spheres* rather than *extrapolate or 'apply' philosophical positions* to external matters. Such an approach ought not to be confused with the familiar 'thematic' approach to philosophy, for indeed, this latter is nothing other than one form of applied philosophy, insofar as it takes the central matter of its discourse to be already established. Nowhere is this tendency more evident than in the case of Deleuze, who is the unfortunate victim of apparently endless 'applications' of his thought, despite the fact that—in the words of Quentin Miellassoux, who formulates the necessarily and impressively modest manifesto of the third volume of *Collapse*—"our understanding of Deleuze is itself, let us admit, incomplete." (69) Such applications are thus susceptible to the charge of developing claims which may bear a relationship which is arbitrary *in principle* with Deleuze's work. In place of this, we have an attempt to properly situate philosophical questions, whether they be relative to the mathematics/materialism couple (Volume One), a renewed conception of materialism (Volumes Two and Three), or the forthcoming volume on philosophy and horror. Each volume of *Collapse* thus takes the form of a *source book*, enriching the philosophical context in which various debates and among which bodies of work are situated.

This is why the subtitle of the journal is so apt and welcome: 'Philosophical Research and Development' In question here in particular is Volume Three, devoted principally to the philosophy of Deleuze. Under the rubric of 'Unknown Deleuze', this volume includes a rich variety of material of different kinds, marshalled in the service of expanding our sense of Deleuze's investments, passions and influences. It opens with as good a critical statement as I have ever read on the tendency I have just noted in contemporary readings of Deleuze, unfortunately fuelled by a few of what now seem like ill-advised remarks from the master (I am thinking in particular of the 'philosophy as tool-box' concept, but also the over-inflated uptake of the concept of the rhizome, which is certainly one of the less powerful thematisations of multiplicity available in Deleuze's work). Following this valuable introduction, we are presented with a surfeit of riches, including a number of new translations of Deleuze himself (his first published piece, and an interview). Included are pieces from well-known and highly regarded Deleuze scholars, including Eric Alliez, writing with Jean-Claude Bonne on Deleuze and Matisse, and Arnaud Villani on the political and ethical aspects of Deleuze's thought. 'Aion and Chronos', by John Sellars, is to my mind a decisive piece of scholarship and should be required reading for any serious student of *Logic of Sense*. He demonstrates that the split between two kinds of time in that work is, to the contrary to Deleuze's own assertions, totally unrelated to Stoicism, before articulating the Stoic aspect of Deleuze on the ethical moment in the former alone.

Alongside these more scholarly examinations, there are a number of other pieces which allow us a fuller view of Deleuze's influences. In the wake of the research currently being pursued by Christian Kerslake, published in *Deleuze and the Unconscious* and elsewhere, we are here presented with more material to assess the nature of Deleuze's relationship to esoteric thought, and to the concept of *mathesis* in particular. Also included is a piece of fiction by Rosny the Elder, referred to by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, who reads like the Descartes to Lovecraft's Pascal.

Now, despite the fact that this issue is for the most part devoted to Deleuze, the most admirable pages are those by Quentin Miellassoux, lecturer in philosophy at the ENS and author of *Après la finitude*, whose English translation by Ray Brassier is due to appear later this year. His piece on Deleuze, 'Subtraction and Contraction' is a work whose sensitivity to Deleuze's (and Bergson's) thought is only matched by the striking interpretive conceit at work in it. In short, Miellassoux reads a small fragment of Deleuze's work through the lens of Bergson's account of perception in *Matter and Memory* in order to construct something like the simulacrum of Deleuzian philosophy. It is a remarkable piece of work, of philosophy, and – to be honest – a breath of fresh air in the generally stuffy and smug environs of Deleuze scholarship.

There are a few pieces in this otherwise fantastic collection that seem to run counter to the general tendency. Principle among these is the piece 'Blackest Ever Black,' which dwells on the pioneering work of Iannis Xenakis in the field of electro-acoustic music. On the one hand, it seems to me the only piece that partakes at moments in the analogical and exemplary use of Deleuze spoken of above; on the other, among the rest of the pieces included, it offers the least illumination of Deleuze's thought itself. This is of course not to deny the value of the examination itself, which is a fascinating one – but rather to signal its anomalous status in the volume.

It is also worth remarking on the peculiarity of the inclusion of an obituary for Deleuze, written by Thomas Duzer. It presents a reading of Deleuze's philosophy in the light of Badiou's critique of the former (in *The Clamor of Being* and elsewhere). Again, on the one hand, the piece seems out of place among the more enriching tenor of its companions; on the other, however, it is unfortunate that such a defence of Deleuze would proceed by granting so many of Badiou's premises. In the encounter between these two philosophers, it is not always the explicit grounds provided for the *differend* that are significant, but a range of more subterranean concerns, which, it seems, remain to be fully examined. This is what lends Duzer's piece, excellent at many points, something of the character of an anachronism.

A final word about the addendum of the full transcript of a colloquium devoted to the theme of 'Speculative Realism', subject of the second volume of *Collapse*. I have already mentioned Miellassoux's contribution, though it would be remiss of me to not mention the other three contributors, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman and Ray Brassier, all of whom present a philosophical thought in process, the interest of which lying both in their novelty and their diversity, while all committed to a certain undoing of the anti-realist tendency in post-Kantian philosophy.

What is also striking, though, is the homology between this great discussion and the enterprise of *Collapse* itself. Both proceed by inserting themselves into a field of philosophical interest with great vivacity. Both proceed through an equal commitment to innovation and rigor. And both convince us that, today, philosophy is possible. *Collapse* is a sign that, rather than falling prey to the retreat to moral seriousness or the facile reduction of philosophy to common sense, or indeed to the deflations that are afflicting the publication of philosophy in the Anglo-American academy, it is still possible to undertake decisive steps forward.

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