deleuze's secret dualism? competing accounts of the relationship between the virtual and the actual

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There are competing accounts of the precise way in which the virtual and the actual are related in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. As his philosophy gains a more widespread readership, especially in a diverse range of disciplines, it is important to review differing interpretations put forward as to the precise meanings of Deleuze's key concepts. Much interdisciplinary work that incorporates Deleuze's philosophy does so by using the concept of the virtual, usually by offering different accounts of this very important concept. To confound this many readers of Deleuze present differing 'standard' definitions, as we will see. As such there is a lack of clarity within the wider academic community and within Deleuze scholarship that stems from a divergence of opinion at best, or an unfortunate misreading at worst. In light of the current landscape this paper will both investigate this lack of consensus, and more importantly, provide a more precise reading of the relationship between the virtual and the actual as presented by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* (1994). Through a close reading of the fourth and fifth chapters we will be able to account for the movement of virtual Ideas to their actualised form, as well as to describe the precise relationship between actualisation and the process of individuation. Ultimately we will find that intensity holds the key to uncovering the precise relationship between the virtual and the actual as the domain though which objects are both actualised and individuated.

Commentators tend to take one of two interpretive directions concerning the relation between the virtual and the actual. These are termed here the views of 'virtual priority' and 'reciprocity,' and we shall explore them both below. Before we engage with these complex concepts, however, we must first come to an understanding of two crucial 'couplets': the virtual and the actual, and the intensive and the extensive. This will be the focus of Section I. In the first part of Section II, below, we will outline the reciprocal view. This is the view that the virtual and the actual cohere in a relationship of mutual influence over the production of reality. Following this we will explore the 'virtual priority' view, which is the view that there is in Deleuze's philosophy an *implicit* priority of the virtual with respect to the actual. As will be seen, however, there is an additional divergence of views concerning the placement of intensity *within* the relationship between the virtual and the actual. Highlighting the divergence of views found within the secondary literature concerning these concepts will bring into stark display the lack of consensus that is so detrimental to Deleuze scholarship. In Section III, we will turn to the pages of *Difference and Repetition* in order to provide a fresh engagement with the virtual and the actual through an explanation of virtual 'Ideas,' the complex notion of 'differen*t/c*iation,' and 'actualisation.' We will then focus on the concept of intensity through some key passages from the fifth chapter of *Difference and Repetition*. Ultimately we will find that a more nuanced reading of the relationship between the processes of actualisation and individuation illuminates the non-hierarchical, reciprocal, relationship between the virtual and the actual. However, we will also show that the crucial relationship that often escapes notice is that between the processes of individuation and actualisation. The demarcation of these two processes shows in clear distinction the bounds of the virtual, actual, and intensive.

SECTION 1: TWO KEY COUPLETS—VIRTUAL/ACTUAL, INTENSIVE/EXTENSIVE

1.1 *Virtual/actual*

Before we approach the subject of the paper proper we must first come to terms with the couplet of the virtual and the actual at a broad level. For Deleuze what is 'actual' is that which appears to us in spatio-temporal reality. A knotted rope is one such example of an actual object. The virtual, on the other hand, explains the development of the actual object. In this case, a knot exists as the solution to a problem, perhaps, 'how do we fasten one object to another?' This problem exists

independently of the various *actualised* forms of objects that provide a solution to it. Of course there are many ways to secure two objects, one such way is to use rope and to perform a knot. However, as we are well aware, there are many different materials we could use, and many different styles of knot. In this way the virtual problem may become actualised in differing ways using a variety of techniques and materials. We will have much more to say on the detail of this relationship in subsequent sections.

1.2 Intensive/extensive

Similarly we must gain a general understanding of the couplet of the intensive and extensive before moving forwards. Using the same example of the knot, we can also differentiate between the sensible form of the material and the properties of which the material is composed. At a certain level of generality that will be developed in more detail below, the material we use to tie our knot (lets say rope) is obviously extended in spatiality. It has *qualitative* extension (we can sense it has a quality, we can touch it, smell it etc.). However, we must also recognize that the rope is composed completely of elements of *energetic difference* (as informed by particle physics) that are only distinguished by said difference. These elements of difference form the underlying quantitative fabric of extended quality and quantity (a certain quantity of particles form the basic fabric of all objects extended in space and time). Thus in a broad sense we can state at this initial stage that to discover the *intensive quantity* of an object is to explore the conditions that give rise to the extension of the object in time and space. This is what Deleuze refers to as the 'difference of intensity.'[1]

SECTION 2: THE COUPLETS IN DIFFERENCE AND REPETITION AND TWO INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES

2.1 The relationship between the virtual and the actual

Having come to a broad understanding of the two 'couplets' of importance for this paper, the virtual and the actual, and the intensive and the extensive, we can move onto a deeper discussion of the way in which these concepts are presented in secondary work on Deleuze. This will be done by approaching the seemingly problematic stance Deleuze takes in combining the account of the virtual and the actual with his univocal ontology. Following this we can move fully into the two general groups of secondary thinkers, the 'reciprocal view' and the 'virtual

priority' view.

2.1.1 Univocity.

There is an initial tension when we consider Deleuze's account of the relationship between the virtual and the actual in light of his ontological commitment to univocity. Deleuze's thesis can be appreciated in contrast to substance dualism where, in the latter, Being is composed of two distinct substances, for example, the Cartesian mind/body distinction. For Deleuze, however, Being is to be conceived as *a single sense*.[2] This is not to state that everything is the same, rather, every modality shares Being in common. As Deleuze states "the essential in univocity is not that Being is said in a single and same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, *of* all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities."[3] However the relationship between the virtual and the actual can seem problematic as a result of this univocal statement, as the virtual and the actual seem at first to be two distinct ontological domains. The key to Deleuze's account lies in the *reality of the virtual*. We can accommodate the thesis of univocity as long as we consider the virtual and the actual as two *fully real* halves of the object. In this way the virtual and the actual form the two halves of the object, and they are both inherently composed of *difference*.

2.1.2 Virtual and Actual: Two halves of the object.

We are faced with an apparent problem: describing an object as both composed of the virtual and the actual while also maintaining ontological univocity.[4] However, as we have witnessed in brief above, we can resolve this seemingly paradoxical interpretation by understanding the virtual and the actual as both composed of difference in the Deleuzean sense: Being as a single modality including all of these differences and individualities. Furthermore, we must understand the relationship between these two modalities as one of movement, that is, they are in *a process of actualisation*. Deleuze often uses the language of 'problems' and 'solutions' to speak of the virtual and the actual, and we can use this to our advantage here in relation to our previous example of the knot. We might restate our example thus: we are faced with a problem, namely, how to tie our shoe. The problem (or virtual) provides the impetus for the actual, and the solution to our problem, a knot, becomes actualised as our hands do their work. If we take a snapshot of the process at work, the knot exists as at once *both virtual and actual, but fully real*. We must understand, however, that Deleuze is describing a *process*, and it is

the movement from the virtual to the actual that we will find to be of the utmost importance moving forward.

2.1.3. Two interpretations: 'reciprocity' and 'virtual priority'.

Now that we have a rudimentary understanding of the basis for the relationship between the virtual and the actual, we can move to highlight one of the central problematic spheres of Deleuzean scholarship. This is how the relationship between the virtual and the actual is interpreted. We can highlight here two broadly defined approaches to this relationship: one based on 'reciprocity,' the other, 'virtual priority.' Much of the confusion over Deleuze's concepts, especially concerning the virtual, can be traced back to a misreading of the fundamental ideas presented most fully in *Difference and Repetition*. It is with this in mind that we will first approach the views regarding reciprocity.

The most crucial interpretive decision that divides these views is the level of ontological and metaphysical influence ascribed to the virtual. For thinkers of reciprocity the virtual cannot be abstracted from the actual states of affairs to which it is connected. According to Williams, we cannot consider the complete reality of the object if the virtual "is considered in abstraction from the processes it is connected to."[5] Williams views Deleuze's philosophy from the point of view of a holistic process. That is, one aspect of the process cannot be judged out of the context within which it functions. The core issue here though is the reading of the relationship between the virtual and the actual as one of reciprocity.

This is expressed in another fashion by Hughes, who makes clear that, in his reading, "[t]he object is not at all constituted by the one-directional creativity of the virtual."[6] In other words, the virtual and the actual are related in a more reciprocal way wherein the object is *both* virtual and actual without any hierarchy of influence. Another key reader, Somers-Hall, attests "[i]n Deleuze's system, everything in fact takes place 'in the middle'."[7] This is really to move our discussion from a *static* picture of the object to a *dynamic actualisation*. This is to describe the object in the language of a *movement from the virtual to the actual*, and in turn, a movement *in the actual* that opens the object up to a new virtuality.

The importance of this 'double movement' is clearly exhibited in an example from Smith:

at every moment, my existence [is] constituted by virtual elements and divergent series ... [however] when I actualize a virtuality ... that does not mean that the problematic structure has disappeared. The next moment ... still has a problematic structure, but one that is now modified by the actualisation that has just taken place. In other words, *the actualisation of the virtual also produces the virtual*.[8]

This is a crucial statement that highlights the role of the actual in the process of actualisation. The solution to a problematising virtual is not once and for all. It is in the realm of the actual that dynamic movement engenders the opening of a new range of virtual problems. Importantly, *this is a feature of the reciprocal view*. In other words, it is only when we conceive of the relationship between the virtual and the actual in *reciprocal* terms that we can understand the role of *both* the virtual and the actual within the univocal object.

Contrary to this reciprocal reading is the 'virtual priority' view. Thinkers so aligned understand a problematic counter-move in Deleuze's philosophy. This group of thinkers is labeled with the term 'priority,' as they read an implicit prioritisation, or *reification*, of the virtual in the work of Deleuze. As stated briefly above, many of the implications of this view stem from the determination that Deleuze imbues the virtual with sole creative potential, whether he realises it or not. Although we may choose to view this as a positive element of Deleuze's thought, in many cases it is seen as detrimental to his philosophical project as it reduces the actual being to a state of subservience, dominated by the creative power of the virtual.

We have already summarily encountered the first particular area of critique. This rests in the uneasy distinction of Being as One (univocal) but composed of the Two of the virtual and the actual. Even with Deleuze's insistence that the virtual and the actual form the two halves of the object perhaps this is not always the case. For example, on Badiou's analysis, the virtual "is without any doubt the principle name of Being in Deleuze's work."[9] The logical conclusion of this interpretation is that the virtual, as 'Being,' has a hierarchical relationship to the actual 'being.' In other words, according to Badiou, Deleuze's philosophy does nothing but affirm actual beings as *grounded* and *animated* by the virtual.[10] Univocity is then lost, as the virtual exists in another order entirely to that which it creates. Badiou's critique has been challenged elsewhere.[11] However we can appreciate here the way in which the relationship between the virtual and the actual is problematised by the suggestion of a priority of the virtual.

This implicit priority of the virtual also plays out in Hallward's reading of Deleuze. Crucially for Hallward, Deleuze's philosophy abstracts the power of creation to the realm of the virtual, leaving actual beings able to truly interact. According to Hallward, this is due to the fact that, "relations *between* the actuals as such, one actual to another, are deprived of any productive or creative force … [therefore] the only effective relation between actuals … is determined by the differentiation of the virtual or virtuals that they actualise."[12]

Therefore, for Hallward, Deleuze's philosophical project is forever hamstrung by the inability of the actual, extended being to ever form a creative connection with another being and together determine their own destinies. Again, this is due to Hallward's conclusion that "an individual only provides a vessel for the power that works through it."[13] The consequence of this framing of Deleuzean ontology is clear. Extended actuality becomes defined by its *passivity* compared to the *active* force of the virtual.

Deleuze's position may be that of a "secret dualism."[14] This is perhaps of no particular importance in itself. The real problem lies in defining the virtual and the actual by a *hierarchy of influence*. To put this simply, it may be the case that the virtual is prioritized for Deleuze. Conversely, we may also conclude that neither the virtual nor the actual are of particular importance in-themselves. This suggests that what is important is the role that each plays within a system that is 'always-already' involved in the *reciprocal process of creation*. We have seen the lack of consensus shown to exist in the interpretive differences outlined above[15]. We will also find below that with the concept of intensity, we come to another lack of consensus regarding a fundamental Deleuzean concept.

2.2 Placing intensity

2.2.1 Intensity and the virtual/actual.

Intensity is a crucial concept in the understanding of the philosophy of *Difference and Repetition*, especially with regard to the way in which the virtual and the actual are related. This is because it is with intensity that Deleuze is able to conceive of the move from pure difference to extended quality and quantity. However, just as with the virtual, the exact role and definition of intensity, or intensive properties, is contested. Again we are faced with differing interpretations that are

presented as 'standard' definitions. As will be explored below, Williams conceives of intensity as a property of the virtual,[16] Roffe counters this with intensity as part of the modality of the actual,[17] and DeLanda understands in intensity a separate ontological register altogether.[18] It is clear then that in order to provide an appropriately exhaustive account of the relationship between the virtual and the actual, we must also explore the role and position of intensity within, or even outside of, the two modalities of the virtual and the actual. We will delve into this issue by surveying the lack of consensus in three secondary sources concerning intensity and the relationship between the virtual and the actual. It is worth pointing out here that these views, while they differ, all derive from Deleuze's philosophy in *Difference and Repetition*, and as such we must acknowledge that we can indeed find support for these views in the aforementioned text. While this is certainly possible, we will argue towards the close of this paper that the role intensity plays within the modality of the actual is the most significant and desirable reading. However this is to get ahead of ourselves, for now we must explore the details of this secondary divide within Deleuze scholarship.

2.2.2 The placement of intensity within the relationship between the virtual and the actual?

2.2.2.a. Williams. James Williams provides us with the first view on the location of intensity within the relationship between the virtual and the actual. For Williams intensity is to be conceived as *purely virtual*, where the interplay between intensity and spatial extension "describes reality as a dynamic relation between the virtual and the actual."[19] Therefore the movement of becoming that characterises the relationship between the virtual and the actual in the reciprocal view also finds expression here through the dual concepts of intensity and extensity. Williams outlines his view on this matter, stating that: "Many of the most important arguments of *Difference and Repetition* are developed either to show the reality and necessity of intensities as a condition for significant events or to show that there are such things as virtual intensities that cannot be accounted for in terms of actual identities."[20]

We can see here that Williams aligns the intensive with the virtual. Furthermore, for Williams, the characteristics of intensity "imply a necessary relation to the actual and condition for the actual but also *a resistance to being fully thought in terms of the actual*."[21] This is a crucial point. For Williams, we can only comprehend intensity in its *relation to the actual*, as an individuating process *on the side of the*

virtual. The consequence of this account runs almost parallel to Hallward's argument, in that the creative potential of intensity is sided with the virtual over the actual.

2.2.2.b Roffe. With Williams we have seen a distinction made between virtual intensities and actual extension. However with the work of Jon Roffe, intensity holds a different position. For Roffe, it is in the final chapter of *Difference and Repetition* that Deleuze provides the conclusion to his metaphysics with the concept of intensity. In other words, it is intensity, and the intensive individual, that provide the site at which the virtual and the actual display the *dynamism* at the heart of their creative process. Counter to the view of Williams, for Roffe, "intensity *is the actual*: it is actual being."[22] According to Roffe, rather than a *virtual* intensity cancelling itself in the explication of an actual form, *intensity is to be thought fully in the terms of the actual*.

Importantly for Roffe "the entire process of actualisation (or differenciation) necessarily lies on the side of the actual itself."[23] This is to suggest that the movement from the differen*t*iated virtual Idea to the actualised form takes place *wholly in the actual*. In order to support this position, Roffe states that intensity must be grasped "as *the determinative context and content of actualisation*."[24] In other words intensity serves a dual role for Roffe, both providing the initial actual differential element of the object and linking the virtual Idea to its actualisation (in the form of an 'intensive individual'). In proposing that intensive individuation is a process of the actual, Roffe argues that the actual possesses a fluid creativity that is denied in accounts in which the virtual provides creative movement. Clearly not only does Roffe give more weight to the actual, by extension his account limits the role of the virtual within Deleuze's metaphysics.

2.2.2.c DeLanda. Manuel DeLanda provides us with our third and final account of intensity, where the concept is placed as an intermediary ontological domain *between* the virtual and the actual. For DeLanda the novelty of Deleuze's philosophy lies in the recognition of the philosophical importance of the "two kinds of space relevant to our human identity [...] extensive spaces [... and] zones of intensity."[25] The important point of difference between these two concepts is that, while the extensive *is*, "intensive differences are productive."[26] As DeLanda states:

> wherever one finds an extensive frontier (for example, the skin which defines the extensive boundary of our bodies) there is always a process

driven by intensive differences which produced such a boundary (for example, the embryological process which creates our bodies, driven by differences in chemical concentration, among other things).[27]

For DeLanda this difference in kind between intensive and extensive spatiality illuminates the relationship between the virtual and the actual.

Key to DeLanda's formulation of the relationship between the intensive and the extensive is the concept of 'multiplicity.' This concept refers to the multiple real, virtual potentialities that can become actualised in any particular moment. Thus for DeLanda's understanding of the virtual and the actual, the virtual multiplicity acts a structure that guides the movement of intensity. DeLanda's conclusion is that the virtual, "the intensive and the actual would constitute the three spheres of reality, with virtual multiplicities constraining and guiding intensive processes which in turn would yield specific actual entities."[28] The virtual has the specific role of determining—in DeLanda's terms 'constraining and guiding'—which potentiality becomes actualised through the intensive process, into an actuality. Thus for DeLanda, intensity becomes a separate intermediary domain between virtual multiplicities and extended actuality.[29]

2.2.3. Conclusions on intensity

Through exploring three differing views on the specific role and placement of intensity within the relationship between the virtual and the actual, we have come to understand the existence of a lack of consensus concerning the concept of intensity. With Williams, intensity is a process of the virtual, opposed to actual extensive form. Countering this is Roffe, who approaches intensity as wholly on the side of the actual being. Finally, DeLanda produces an account in which intensity holds an intermediary position between the virtual and the actual. We must concern ourselves with this divergence of views in order to fully approach the relationship between the virtual and the actual as presented in *Difference and Repetition*. Although the precise placement, or relation, of intensity in regard to the virtual and the actual may be contested, what is unchallenged is the notion that intensity is a crucial component of the metaphysics of *Difference and Repetition*. As such intensity has an unequivocally important role in the relationship between the virtual and the actual that must be explored in greater detail.

SECTION 3: THE COUPLETS DRAMATISED—ACTUALISATION AND INDIVIDUATION IN DIFFERENCE AND REPETITION

We have come to see a clear lack of consensus among select, but representative, secondary commentaries on both the relationship between the virtual and the actual, and the ontological status of intensity. As such, we must now turn to the text of *Difference and Repetition* in order to explore an understanding of Deleuze's intended relationship between the virtual and the actual, and the role and placement of intensity in that relationship.

3.1 Ideas & the virtual

3.1.1 Deleuze's 'Idea'.

To understand the relationship between the virtual and the actual we must first concern ourselves with Deleuze's use of the term 'Idea.' If all philosophy has been but a footnote to Plato, Deleuze would most certainly be one of the most interesting. It is with his 'inversion' of Platonism that we come across the particular aspect of the Idea that Deleuze 'inverts' from its Platonic form. While for Plato the Idea is external, transcendent, and based on resemblance (this bookshelf can be said to be such due to the resemblance to a perfect Idea of a bookshelf), Deleuze's Idea is *immanent* and concerned with *difference*. It is in this sense that, for Deleuze, Ideas are *problematising*. That is, Ideas are *problems* to which actual objects are the *solution* (a bookshelf is so because it is the answer to the problem "How can I best store my books?"). Importantly, problems do not disappear in their solution, but rather, maintain a *virtual* existence, in that they can be solved (or actualised) in other ways (there are many different designs of bookshelf that all solve the same problem).

3.1.2 Ideas and the virtual

Furthermore the virtual describes the state of problematising Ideas that exists as a *structure*. Crucially, according to Deleuze, "the virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so for as it is virtual*."[30] In other words, while we may commonly consider something that is not yet actual to be *unreal*, Deleuze is stating that the virtual is fully real, it is just yet to be actualised. The virtual, in this sense, denotes a realm of *potentiality* as opposed to mere *possibility*. For example, in knitting a scarf, one does not *realise* some *possible* next stitch in

the pattern. Rather, the problematising Idea (how best to entwine and fasten this wool) becomes *actualised*. Again, the Idea does not cease to exist with the solution (in this case the next stitch) but is maintained as part of the virtual structure to be actualised in varying degrees as the scarf continues to be constructed. It is in this way that Deleuze is able to affirm both the difference and immanence of Ideas, in that Ideas are contained within their solution (the problem of fastening wool is encapsulated in the stitch, just as the problem of a cold neck exists in the scarf), and they are judged not by identity ("this stitch is not perfect in relation to my Idea of a stitch") but by difference (each stitch is affirmed in its difference to both the Idea and the other divergent actualisations in the row). In reality, however, the relationship between virtual Ideas and actual objects is more detailed and contains a movement that is not easily encapsulated in this discussion of 'problems' and 'solutions.'

3.2 Differentiation and differenciation: the virtual and actual in motion

3.2.1 The complex notion of 'different/ciation'

To state that objects are at once both virtual and actual is a simplistic representation of a more complex process Deleuze terms 'differen*t/c*iation.' This is to describe a movement from the undifferen*c*iated state of Ideas to the actualised object. According to Deleuze: "We call the determination of the virtual content of an Idea differentiation; we call the actualisation of that virtuality into species and distinguished parts differenciation."[31] Rather than be satisfied with describing the object as both 'virtual' and 'actual,' we must delve into the detail of this notion in order to highlight the way in which the virtual and actual relate in the *process of actualisation*.

3.2.2 Differentiation of the Idea

In order to comprehend fully the way in which Ideas are differen*t*iated, we must first highlight (in brief) the way in which Deleuze makes use of differential calculus. We will not delve into the complex mathematics here; it is enough to say that from the traditional interpretation of the measure of the infinitesimal in the calculus Deleuze forms *a theory of relations*.[32] Put simply, a 'differential' represents an infinitesimal measurement, a measure of a number so small it is but a *tendency towards being zero*. Differentials only exist in reality in relation to another differential (in the calculus this is expressed as 'dx/dy'). What is important for us

here is that calculus shows that relations have a *reality*. It is with this knowledge that Deleuze is able to formulate a process of determination in regard to Ideas, based on *differential elements and the relations between them.*

Deleuzean Ideas then, as based on the differential, consist of three aspects: differential elements, relations, and singularities. In turn, these correspond to three elements of determination: determinability, reciprocal determination and complete determination. The process as a whole is termed 'progressive determination.'[33] Ideas exist as a *structure* populated by differential elements that have the propensity to become *determined*. As with the differential in the calculus, the relations that exist between them determine these differential elements; this is what Deleuze calls 'reciprocal determination.'[34] In turn, singularities, or 'singular points,' are established between these relations. This is for the Idea to be expressed in a more stable form. Importantly, we must remember that although we may say the Idea is completely determined, it is still entirely *virtual*, or potential. What remains is for the Idea to be actualised according to both the relations and singular points that inhabit it.

3.2.3 Differenciation (or actualisation)

The virtual Idea forms only one half of the object. It is with the process of differen*c*iation that we will come to the way in which the Idea is actualised into extended spatiality. Indeed, for Deleuze the terms 'differen*c*iation' and 'actualisation' signify the same process: the movement of the virtual to the actual. As we uncovered above, the virtual Idea consists of differential elements and the relations between them. In the process of actualisation these aspects of the Idea correspond to the two features of extended actuality: *quality* and *extension*. Furthermore we can never have one without the other because there is no quality without extension and vice-versa. For example, we can never experience the colour 'red' without an object corresponding that corresponds to this description and the reflection of light. As Deleuze states "a difference in quality is always subtended by a spatial difference."[35] These are the double aspects of differen*c*iation that constitute the relationship between the virtual Idea and the actual object.

We may well ask how it is that these two aspects of the Idea are first actualised into quality and extensity. The answer lies in 'spatio-temporal dynamisms.' As Deleuze states, "beneath the actual qualities and extensities, species and parts, there are spatio-temporal dynamisms. These are the actualising, differenciating

agencies."[36] It seems we have a potential answer to our question; it is the spatio-temporal dynamism that provides the agent of actualisation. That is, according to Deleuze, "they are precisely *dramas*, they dramatise the Idea."[37] This to introduce a third and crucial element into the process of actualisation: *time*. A dynamism is a process that takes *time*; *the actualisation of the Idea has a temporality*. We now have three elements to the actualised Idea: quality, extension, and time.

3.3 *Intensity and the process of individuation*

3.3.1 Uncovering the intensive

This is where we will turn fully to the fifth chapter of *Difference and Repetition* and the concept of intensity, clarified by Deleuze: "Everything which happens and everything which appears is correlated with orders of differences: differences of level, temperature, pressure, tension, potential, *difference of intensity*."[38]

Intensity, then, exists as the lowest level of difference. It is in this sense that Deleuze takes the idea of intensive and extensive zones from thermodynamics, namely, that the flow of energy exists in an intensive frame, covered over by extensive quality.[39] As Deleuze states: "intensity (difference of intensity)—is the sufficient reason of all phenomena, the condition of that which appears."[40] Intensity performs a very unique function in the Deleuzean metaphysics: that of a *transcendental illusion*. If we remember that Deleuze uses the term 'transcendental' to mean what explains the genesis of *real* experience (opposed to the *possible* experience of Kant), we can see more clearly the role intensity plays in Deleuze's philosophy.

Intensity has the illusory characteristic of being cancelled in the production of extended form. Simply, we do not come into contact with intensive properties; we only ever experience the extensive. This is what Deleuze calls the 'transcendental illusion.' [41] He writes: "it is the case that intensity is cancelled or tends to be cancelled in this system, but it creates this system by explicating itself."[42] Intensity thus fulfils the role of the transcendental for Deleuze as *the reason behind that which appears*. In other words, behind every object are the remains of an intensive process that was cancelled in producing the extensive form, the 'illusion' being that we only come into contact with fully extensive forms. Once we overcome this illusion, we can understand the intensive as the *structural determinant* of actualised objects.

3.3.2 Intensity as individuating

Deleuze never ceases to remind us that intensity is individuating. Indeed, he writes: "The essential process of intensive quantities is individuation. Intensity is individuating, and intensive quantities are individuating factors."[43] Deleuze's philosophy of individuation here rests on the work of Gilbert Simondon.[44] For Simondon, we must recognize the distinction between the *pre-individual field* and *specific cases of individuation*. In other words, there exists a field of pre-individual relations that does not become exhausted in the production of the individual, but in a sense 'overflows' the individual, continuing to influence its development. This is the sense in which we said earlier that problematising Ideas remain so even after they are actualised (or 'solved') in a specific case. We can easily see then that intensity plays a crucial role in the metaphysics of Deleuze, and in turn, the relationship between the virtual and the actual. However, we will have to delve into the process of individuation in more detail to truly uncover how this is so.

3.3.3 The process of individuation

The fact that intensity provides the impetus for individuation to occur is clearly stated by Deleuze: "we believe that individuation is essentially intensive, and that the pre-individual field is a virtual-ideal field, made up of differential relations."[45] In other words, from the virtual field Ideas are actualised and then individuated. Individuation is a process by which intensity, as the level of 'pure difference,' becomes explicated in spatial quality and quantity through the act of cancellation outlined above. The individual that is the result of the process of individuation is the extended object. As Deleuze succinctly states: "Individuation is what responds to the question 'Who?' ... 'Who?' is always an intensity."[46] Furthermore, and this is to highlight the broader question that provided the impetus for this paper, key to the relationship between the virtual, the actual, and the intensive, is the method of dramatisation engendered with the spatio-temporal dynamism. Deleuze explores these factors of actualisation in the latter stages of the fifth chapter of *Difference and Repetition*: "We think that difference of intensity ... expresses first the differential relations or virtual matter to be organised. This intensive field of individuation determines the relations that it expresses to be incarnated in spatio-temporal dynamisms (dramatisation)"[47]

Deleuze here firstly explains the relationship between the virtual and intensity. As the domain of pure difference, intensity incarnates the first expression of

the differentiated Idea. In other words, the Idea finds expression through the *intensive individual*. Importantly, it is contended here that the term 'expression' is synonymous with the double process of actualisation outlined above (just as with the terms 'differenciation' and 'actualisation'). This is to say that to 'express the virtual' is to *actualise the virtual Idea*, and then, as a result, to open up a new 'face' of the virtual. In this way we can clearly see that *intensity has a relationship with the virtual and is not a part of the virtual*.

Crucially, it is also with intensity that the Idea becomes *dramatised* in the form of the spatio-temporal dynamism.[48] This is where we come to the second line of the above quote. Key for us here is to realise that this is what Deleuze refers to when he states "intensity is the determinant in the process of actualisation."[49] It is intensity that traverses the metaphorical space between the actualised virtual Idea and the extended object. This is due to the specific process of intensity. To speak of intensity without recognising its individuated form is to provide an incomplete explanation. It is the ontological *actual* domain of intensity that, as the pure form of difference, becomes explicated into the form of the extended object. In order to truly justify this stance towards the placement of intensity within the broader relationship between the virtual and the actual we will have to uncover the relationship between the processes of individuation and actualisation.

3.3.4 The difference between actualisation and individuation

We have explored two separate processes that combine in the production of the individuated object, and it is now our goal to define the way in which they are related. This will also further our aim of highlighting the way in which the virtual, the actual, and intensity are linked. Importantly for us here, Deleuze expands his metaphysical notion of 'differen*t*/*c*iation' into the complete version: indi-differen*t*/ciation.[50] The implication is clear: individuation, as a process, is *different in kind* to actualisation. Crucially, this is borne out in the metaphysical priority of intensive individuation *over* the process of actualisation. Deleuze explains this matter in a key passage: "It is not sufficient, however, to mark a difference in kind between individuation and differenciation in general. This difference in kind remains unintelligible so long as we do not accept the necessary consequence: *that individuation precedes differenciation in principle, that every differenciation presupposes a prior intense field of individuation.*"[51]

Deleuze clearly states here that the movement of intensity is *primary* to the actualisation of the Idea in the process of differen*c*iation. Echoing a distinction made by Hughes,[52] we can view intensity as the 'environmental present' of actualisation. Perhaps more simply: the actualisation of Ideas is dependent upon an *already-existent field of intensity in which objects can be extended*. This distinction has important ramifications for the formation of Deleuze's metaphysics, but also the way in which we can interpret the placement and role of intensity within the relationship between the virtual and the actual.

SECTION 4: RETURNING TO OUR TWO INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES AND THE PLACEMENT OF INTENSITY

4.1 Reciprocity and virtual priority: two approaches to the relationship between the virtual and the actual

Prior to exploring the influence the placement of intensity has on the relationship between the virtual and the actual, we must briefly return to the two interpretive approaches outlined earlier concerning this relationship. The first, and more common, interpretation we have labeled the 'reciprocal' view. This is to understand the virtual and the actual as engaged in a relationship of reciprocity, that is, having a *mutual influence* on the production of reality. This is to say that within an ontology of univocity we can still locate the virtual and the actual as the two halves of being. The virtual, transcendental half and the actual, extended half.

Contrary to the 'reciprocal' view stated above is the 'virtual priority' view. As was outlined above, philosophers aligned with the 'virtual priority' view understand a counter-move implicit within the relationship between the virtual and the actual in Deleuze's philosophy. To reiterate, this group is labeled with the term 'priority' as they read an implicit prioritisation of the virtual. Two key thinkers exemplify this view: Badiou and Hallward. The critique of Deleuze's philosophy is developed in different ways by these thinkers, but always retains the core of a reading of the priority of the virtual. With Badiou the virtual becomes "the ground of the actual."[53] Further, Hallward will claim that through the hierarchical and determinate character of the virtual, "Deleuze's philosophy is oriented by lines of flight that lead out of the [actual] world."[54] Through our analysis of *Difference and Repetition*, however, we have been able to come to appreciate that the relationship between the virtual and the actual is much more complex than these two thinkers suggest, especially with regard to intensity.

4.2 Intensity and the relationship between actualisation and individuation

4.2.1 The importance of the relationship between individuation and actualisation

We initially sought to uncover the relationship between the virtual and actual in the pages of *Difference and Repetition*. In posing the relationship in the more detailed terms of 'differen*t*iation' and 'differen*c*iation' we were able to make sense of the relationship as a *process*, rather than a more static picture of the virtual and actual forming 'two halves of the object.' However, we encountered a problem, that is, what is the *agent* of actualisation? *What is it that actually provides the material conditions for the production of objects?* In more Deleuzean terms: what is it that *dramatises*? Of course, we now know it is intensity that fills this role. Indeed, it is intensity that provides the environmental conditions for the actualisation of the virtual Idea to occur. In this way we have seen that, for Deleuze, any discussion of the relationship between the virtual and the actual *presupposes a prior field of intensity*. The key for us, in light of the above discussion concerning Williams, Roffe, and DeLanda's views on the topic, is to determine where intensity fits within the relationship between the virtual and the actual. This will allow us to finally come to a concrete understanding of the way in which the virtual and the actual are related in the work of Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*.

4.3 The role and placement of intensity and the relationship between the virtual and the actual

4.3.1 Intensity as actual

While we have an appreciation and understanding of the role of intensity, we can now confront the specifics of the placement of intensity within the relationship between the virtual and the actual. We outlined three positions concerning this above. Williams defines intensity as a process of the virtual. Contrasting this view, Roffe places intensity firmly on the side of the actual. Finally, DeLanda conceives of intensity as an intermediary ontological domain between the virtual and the actual.

It is at this point that we must take up and expand on the position that Roffe puts forward. Roffe states that "intensity *is the actual*: it is actual being … it is intensity that characterises the being of the actual, both as implicated intensive quantity and as explicated quality and extensity."[55] There are some key aspects to Roffe's

account and in particular Roffe quotes Deleuze when he states that: "any reduction of individuation to a limit or complication of differenciation, compromises the whole philosophy of difference. This would be an error, this time in the actual, analogous to that made in confusing the virtual with the possible."[56]

This passage cuts to the heart of the matter, both for the placement of intensity, and for the wider significance of intensity in the relationship between the process of actualisation (differenciation) and individuation. Deleuze could not be any clearer: *individuation must not be thought of as part of actualisation*. Crucially, as was shown above, it is intensity that expresses Ideas in the form of spatio-temporal dynamisms. It is through intensive individuation that the context of the actualised Idea is explicated. Following Roffe then, it must be concluded that it is crucial that *the intensive and the extensive form the two poles of the actual*.

4.3.2 Actual intensity and the relationship between the virtual and the actual

Our final task is to come to terms with how the placement of intensity as part of the realm of the actual impacts the relationship between the virtual and the actual. In other words, to provide a complete and compelling account of the relationship between the virtual and the actual, we must first recognize that intensity provides the '*context and content of actualisation*.' Much of the concern for those who are of the virtual priority view is that the virtual holds some implicit power over the actual. This contention, laid explicitly bare in Hallward's critique, rests on assigning the virtual with intensity. However, as we have shown, this is to mistake the role of intensity, and to confuse the processes of actualisation and individuation. In line with those of the reciprocal view, then, we can state that the virtual contains only the problematising instant itself (the Deleuzean 'Idea'). For the Idea to become actualised (differenciated) is for the Idea as 'problem' to have an actual 'solution.' However, this actual solution is dependent upon an *already constituted intensive environment*. In other words, it is the dramatising potential of intensity that mobilizes these Ideas into extended form.

The consequences of this appear perhaps at first radical: if there is any priority given by Deleuze, *it is on the side of the actual*. As a consequence *the virtual has no power on its own accord*. There is no directional flow of creativity from the virtual to the actual, and the virtual does not ground the actual, as Badiou and Hallward suggest. In this sense, we are arguing for a reciprocal view of the relationship between the virtual and the actual. On the other hand what is clearly apparent,

based on our discussion of *Difference and Repetition*, is that there is much more at play here than just the virtual and the actual. Indeed, perhaps the most important relationship we have come across here is the one between actualisation and individuation. It is this relationship that truly illuminates the matter of distinction between a reading of the influence of the virtual over the actual, or one of reciprocity. Intensive individuation, as a *process of the actual*, confirms that any hint of creativity that exists in Deleuze's metaphysics occurs *on the side of the actual*. In other words, it is with the dramatising potential of intensity that Deleuze's metaphysics becomes creative, while the virtual only provides the function of the structuring problematic field.

This crucial element of Deleuze's metaphysics is often overlooked, with intensity being labeled as virtual, and with the importantly distinct processes of individuation and actualisation deemed synonymous. It is the contention here that these two factors are integral to any reading of Deleuze's metaphysics in *Difference and Repetition*, arguably his most important early statement of such matters.

SECTION 5: CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper we have come to see the lack of consensus within secondary literature concerning some fundamental concepts of the philosophy of Deleuze. These are the relationship between the virtual and the actual, and the role and place of intensity. To assess this divergence of views we can divide much of the secondary work on this area of Deleuze's metaphysics into two main groups: reciprocity and virtual priority. So too, we have explored three general orientations towards the place of intensity within the relationship between the virtual and the actual: on the side of virtuality, actuality, or as an intermediary.

Turning to the pages of *Difference of Repetition*, we have explored these problematic areas in a detailed and systematic way. Firstly, we came to understand that the relationship between the virtual and the actual is more complex when regarded as a process, captured in the concept of 'differen*t*/*c*iation.' We were faced with a problem, however, as we confronted the way in which the virtual is said to be actualised. That is, what actually *forms* the actualised object? The answer, of course, is found with intensity and the process of individuation. It is in recognizing the difference between the processes of actualisation and individuation that we can understand intensity *as a part of the actual*. This in turn highlights the more limited

role that the virtual plays as a problematising field of Ideas, with intensity as the creative determinate of the actualised, extended object. Although we have only been able to provide a somewhat cursory account of the way in which intensity becomes 'cancelled' in extensity, this area is one for detailed analysis based on a refreshed understanding of this process as a movement between *two poles of the actual*. While we have shown that the text of *Difference and Repetition* does not support a reading of virtual priority, perhaps more importantly we have put forward the view of intensity as a process of the actual. Crucially, this changes the way we think of the virtual and the actual, and opens up new possibilities for engagement with the philosophy of Deleuze, both within and outside philosophical discourse.

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NOTES

1. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. P Patton. (New York: Columbia University Press), 1994, 240.

2. In this point Deleuze is guided by Duns Scotus, Leibniz, and Nietzsche. *See* Deleuze, *Difference*, 39-42.

3. Deleuze, *Difference*, 36.

4. Indeed, this is the argument we find in Badiou's analysis.

5. James Williams, *The Transversal Thought of Gilles Deleuze: Encounters and influences* (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2005), 146.

6. Joe Hughes, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition* (London & New York: Continuum, 2009), 142.

7. Henry Somers-Hall, *Hegel, Deleuze, and the Critique of Representation: Dialectics of Negation and Difference* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012), 111.

8. Daniel W. Smith, *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 253.

9. Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*. Trans. L Burchill. (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 43.

10. For Badiou's full argument for the virtual as "ground" see: *Badiou*, *Deleuze*, 43-45.

11. Jon Roffe's work *Badiou's Deleuze* quite succinctly challenges Badiou's reading of Deleuze as both selective and misrepresentative. See Jon Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze*. (Montreal & Kingston, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012).

12. Peter Hallward, *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London & New York: Verso, 2006), 48-49.

13. Hallward, *Out of this World*, 163.

14. Jack Reynolds, "Wounds and Scars: Deleuze on the Time and Ethics of the Event", *Deleuze Studies*, 1,2 (2007): 144-166 quotes this phrase from Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*. Trans. Lester, M & C Stivale. (London & New York: Continuum, 1990), 4.

15. We should note here that much of the trouble interpreting Deleuze's texts could very well be laid at the author's feet. Namely, it is notoriously difficult to trace concepts through Deleuze's *oeuvre*, while it could also be argued that Deleuze himself was not clear on the *precise* nature of the concepts in question, namely the relationship between the virtual and the actual as applied to the different contexts of actualisation, individuation and so on throughout his works.

16. James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 8.

17. Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze*, 142.

18. Manuel DeLanda, "Space: Extensive and Intensive, Actual and Virtual" in *Deleuze and Space*. Eds. I Buchanan, G Lambert. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005, 80.

19. Williams, *Gilles*, 8. Of note, in 2013, Williams has released a second edition—James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide*. 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013)—of his 2003 work. However, while some changes are apparent on a comparative reading of both works, the linking of the intensive with the virtual still appears in the updated work, although he has softened his account somewhat by conceding that intensity has a relation to the virtual and actual.

20. Williams, *Gilles*, 8.

21. Williams, *Gilles*, 178.

22. Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze*, 142.

23. Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze*, 143.

24. Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze*, 143. Emphasis in original.

25. DeLanda, "Space," 80.

26. DeLanda, "Space," 81.

27. DeLanda, "Space," 81.

28. DeLanda, "Space," 86.

29. Of interest here is the difficulty with separating intensity from the processes of the virtual and the actual and still retaining the ontological formulation of univocity, as if both the virtual and the actual provide the two halves of being. Intensity seen in DeLanda's view would introduce a third process, disrupting the thesis of univocity. It follows that either there are in fact three ontological domains within the univocal being, or intensity serves to problematise Deleuze's thesis of univocity.

30. Deleuze, *Difference*, 208.

31. Deleuze, *Difference*, 207.

32. Deleuze, *Difference*, 171.

33. Deleuze, *Difference*, 210.

34. Deleuze, *Difference*, 175.

35. Deleuze, *Difference*, 210.

36. Deleuze, *Difference*, 214.

37. Deleuze, *Difference*, 216.

38. Deleuze, *Difference*, 222.

39. Deleuze, *Difference*, 240.

40. Deleuze, *Difference*, 222.

41. Deleuze, *Difference*, 228-229.

42. Deleuze, *Difference*, 228.

43. Deleuze, *Difference*, 246.

44. Deleuze, *Difference*, 246.

45. Deleuze, *Difference*, 246.

46. Deleuze, *Difference*, 246.

47. Deleuze, *Difference*, 251.

48. Deleuze, *Difference*, 245.

49. Deleuze, *Difference*, 245.

50. Deleuze, *Difference*, 246.

51. Deleuze, *Difference*, 247. My emphasis.

52. Joe Hughes, *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* (London & New York: Continuum), 2008, 121.

53. Badiou, *Deleuze*, 43.

54. Hallward, *Out of this world*, 3.

55. Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze*, 142.

56. Deleuze, *Difference*, 246.