

PRACTICAL MYSTICISM AND DELEUZE'S ONTOLOGY OF THE VIRTUAL

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Abstract: Deleuze's philosophical method is analyzed and positioned against the background of the intellectual/religious tradition of practical mysticism that has been traveling the globe across times, places, languages, and cultural barriers. The paper argues that Deleuze's unorthodox ontology of the virtual enables a naturalistic interpretation of the functioning of mysticism when the triad of concepts, percepts and affects is formed in accordance with the logic of the included middle.

Keywords: Deleuze; Neo-Platonism; the levels of reality; transversal connection; affects, self-reference; transcendental empiricism; the logic of the included middle.

This paper proposes to examine a tradition of practical mysticism mostly associated with Plotinus and Neo-Platonic thought as a blend of Plato's and Aristotle's teachings and the form of *knowledge that impels practical virtuous action and includes an intense self-knowing coupled with the knowledge of God as One*. Tracing the continuity of this intellectual/religious thought that has been traveling the globe across times, places, languages, and cultural barriers, we briefly revisit the legacy of Aristotelian *phronesis* as it pertains to the historical development of mystical teachings in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. We further move to continental philosophy and an apparently unlikely confluence of some of the elements of mystical tradition with *Jürgen Habermas*' third way of knowing as well as the philosophical thought of Gilles Deleuze (cf. Semetsky & Lovat 2008).

The focus of this essay is specifically on Deleuze's ontology of the virtual and his experiential method of transcendental empiricism that, we argue, enables a naturalistic understanding of the functioning of practical mysticism. Even if Deleuze is usually considered to be a radical materialist, some cross-currents between his philosophy and the discourse on religion have recently been addressed (Bryden 2001) covering topics as diverse as spirituality, cosmology, and biblical themes. We will analyze in detail the logic of the included middle as the basis of/for Deleuze's philosophy. The paper asserts that because for Deleuze percepts, affects and concepts constitute an irreducible triad, knowledge becomes necessarily grounded in a religious dimension of experience, espe-

cially if we understand the meaning of *re-ligio* literally as an auto-referential self-reflective process linking backward to the origins.

In contrast to solely faith-based religion, practical mysticism enriches it with action as the level of practical experience. Plotinus, having captured the best of what went before him in Greek philosophy, also was instrumental in the later development of higher forms of mysticism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam especially in terms of his “favoring of love over understanding” (Idel & McGinn 1999: 22). Each of these three religions is particularly associated with an ethical impact and practical action as constituting the keystone of faith in their traditions, be it the practice of the Ten Commandments, Jesus’ Great Commandment to love God and neighbour, or the Five Pillars of Islam. Hence practical mysticism can be conceived as the blending of spiritual foundation with practical good.

Plotinus’ thought as embodying both Plato’s and Aristotle’s teachings (cf. Armstrong 1996) has resulted in the Neo-Platonic form of philosophy that influenced both early medieval thinking and the conceptual world of Christendom. Aristotle’s philosophy, even as his model was organic, was also inspirational for a number of interpreters in the Semitic tradition, such as Abu Al-Ghazzali, Aquinas, or Cordovero. While Al-Ghazzali was devoted to Jesus, his intellectual guide was Aristotle with Muhammad being his prophetic hero. Al-Ghazzali contributed to reforming the Islamic expression of the Semitic mystical tradition, Sufism, away from pietistic religiousness and towards practical mysticism as an integration of the virtue of self-knowledge and the practical action for good. The text of the Muslim Gospel attributed to Al-Ghazzali says, “*Jesus said: It is of no use to you to come to know what you did not know, so long as you do not act in accordance with what you already know*” (Khalidi 2001: 178). For Cordovero, while God’s attributes remained outside human virtue and could only be achieved through mystical experience, this very experience was supposed to have been confirmed only by their having been achieved. Such obvious circularity is what makes practical mysticism appear, in fact, *mystical*. Aristotle’s *Intellect* (*nous poetikos*) is still subject to disputes whose historical or philosophical scope is beyond the scope of this paper; what is important, however, is that it blends inner knowledge with an impersonal, cosmic and transcendent, entity as both of them “think” each other.

Among continental philosophers, such unity of knowledge is exemplified in Habermas’ concept of communicative action in the latter’s function as mediation and harmony between self-knowledge and understanding others (see Lovat 2004, 2006). While much of Habermas’ scholarship appears to be defined by forms of neo-Marxist atheism, his later work has turned to issues related more explicitly to theology, spirituality and the mystical thought (Habermas 2001; cf. Martin 2005). As noted by one author (Lovat 2004), Habermas’ theory of knowledge reaches further back to the tradition of mysticism in antiquity. In regard to practical mysticism, he re-defined (for a secularized generation) a concept that has, in a sense, been in the tradition for millennia, in both religious and secular contexts, namely that the best knowledge is that which would have

produced a real impact in terms of our practical action for good.

Beginning with Aristotelian *phronesis*, Habermas expands on it by decentering the self; thus implicitly problematizing its very logic. As Nicolas Adams comments in his recent book *Habermas and Theology* (Adams 2006), Habermas may be considered as heir both to the idealist readings of German mystics and to the Jewish critique on the basis of Kaballah. Suggesting “linguistification” as a process of achieving mutual understanding in practice, describes it dynamically as first of all distancing oneself from the religious consensus up to “shrinking down the domain of the sacred” (1987: 83) as an obvious critique of idolatry or dogma. Nonetheless, Habermas touches on distinctively mystical ways of knowing in challenging us to consider a particular self-reflective (classified as third) way.

Habermas clarifies linguistification as a narrative regarding the power of reflection. Significantly, “[t]his narrative does not place Habermas at odds with theologians” (Adams 2006: 83) but rather transfers an explanatory focus from uniquely the domain of the narrowly understood sacred to the communicative action by us humans that involves the transformation of the self and engaging in *praxis* as a radical and quasi-mystical means of making a difference in the world. Habermas’ emphasis on the *ideal* speech act has “a curious afterlife in theology long after it disappears from Habermas’ own texts [and] [t]heologians recognize in it a faint echo of... aspirations to a healed world” (Adams 2006: 36). Reciprocally, it is only as based on a profound self-knowledge that an effective practical action for good takes its turn.

As such, the philosophical mystical tradition should not be confused with contemporary “New Age controversy [which] explains away” (Kearney 2001: 47-48) transcendence but instead grounded in the fact that it is human action in our very practice that can “make the world a more just and loving place, or not to” (Kearney 2001: 5). The said injunction (“or not to”) is significant. The fecundity and we ourselves becoming able to make a difference means for mystics to “*partake in God’s life ... share in God’s life-giving love... break through existing theological theories in order to stress the unity of love and cognition*” (Idel & McGinn 1999: 13-14, 22). As Kearney comments, “Creatures need a Creator and a Creator needs creatures” (2001: 103) in a mutually harmonious action: both “think” each other, indeed...

Moshe Idel, contemporary scholar in Castilian Kabbalah, mysticism, and messianism of Abraham Abulafia (Idel 1998), underlines the unity between the human and the divine as well as the mystery involved in self-knowledge as leading to the confluence of cause and effect, that is, an appearance of a mystical self-cause in the noblest forms of human action:

... in the profundities of human thought there is no one more profound and more excellent than it (= the product of mystical union) and it alone unites human thought with the divine (thought) to the extent of the human capability and according to human nature. And it is known that human thought is the cause of his wisdom, and his wisdom is the cause of his understanding, and his understanding is the cause of his mercy, and his mercy is the cause of his reverence of his Creator (Idel 1988: 147).

The problematic of such circular self-reference has been considered an unsolvable philosophical problem; it simply could not have been explained within the usual rationalist linear method akin to one borrowed from classical science with its direct mechanistic causality; therefore qualified irrational hence thoroughly mystical.

It is here that Deleuze's powerful philosophical method of transcendental empiricism enters the picture (Semetsky 2003, 2006, 2008). His method is empirical by virtue of the object of investigation regarded as real, albeit sub-representative, experience; yet it is transcendental because the very foundations for the empirical principles are *a priori* left outside the common faculties of perception so as to require a transcendental analysis of their implicit conditions. In this respect, transcendental empiricism purports to discover conditions that exist prior to the actual commonsensical experience. Deleuze's ontology of the virtual (cf. Boundas 1996; May & Semetsky 2008) emancipates thinking from common sense. The Deleuzian object of experience is considered to be given only in its *tendency* to exist: the very nature of any "thing", according to Deleuze, is just an expression of tendency; therefore making it "no-thing" rather than an actual "thing" given to common sense.

It may appear that Deleuze's philosophy is anti-metaphysical and negative (not unlike negative theology; cf. Kearney 2001¹) but only at a first glance. Even if for Deleuze the question of Being is not amenable to conceptual identification proper, he still qualifies "Being as Fold" (Deleuze 1988a: 110). If we step away from the familiar philosophical notion of identity, the question of Being can be presented in slightly more positive terms in terms of the virtual and the actual. The actual, while composed of identities which we perceive and interact with, is not *all* there is. Behind, beneath, and within the actual is the virtual. The virtual gives rise to the actual, and yet remains a part of it in a manner of Japanese origami. A piece of paper can be conceptualized as the virtual "field" that yields different actual figures when the paper is folded and unfolded in a multiplicity of ways. The actual is composed of identities, the virtual is not. The virtual is not a mirror of the actual, the relation between them is complicated (*le pli*, in French, means the fold) and, significantly, "the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualisation" (Deleuze 1994: 211).

But if the virtual is distinct from the identities of the actual, and if it is itself real, then what is it? It is difference, the ground of difference, out of which the actual emerges and which the actual carries with it. Being, then, is this virtual/actual nexus of difference, the mutual enfoldment of "two inseparable planes in reciprocal presupposition" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 109). For Deleuze, difference "is the noumenon closest to phenom-

1. We are grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on the first draft of this paper and one reviewer's specifically noticing the relevance of Kearney's naturalistic position in onto-theology that indeed compromises the assumed division between being and non-being. However, rather than staying at the level of the metaphorical language, as Kearney does, for elucidating mystical experience, we strengthen our argument by bringing into this conversation the new science of coordination dynamics (see further below) that enables a naturalistic explanation of the functioning of practical mysticism in the world which is at once both virtual and real and where immanence-transcendence divide can being traversed within our actual, practical, experiences.

enon” (Deleuze 1994: 222), that is, by virtue of its own ontological status it is difference that can also *make a difference* in the world of human experiences. The dynamic of difference is of double movement: difference presents itself as both differentiation (with a “t”) in the virtual; and as differentiation (with a “c”) in the actual. The structures of multiple differential relations comprise Ideas as intensive multiplicities. Deleuze considers Ideas as “‘differentials’ of thought, or the ‘Unconscious’ of pure thought...related not to a Cogito...but to the fractured I of a dissolved Cogito” (Deleuze 1994: 194) that would have described a pre-conceptual (indeed, decentred) subject of experience.

The realm of the virtual exceeds just the possible. The possible can be realized, and the real *thing* is to exist in the image and likeness, as the saying goes, of the possible *thing*. But the virtual is not realized, it is always already real—even without being the actual! Instead it actualises itself through multiple different/ciations so that virtual tendencies have the potential of becoming actual by means of different/ciations of the transcendental and “initially undifferentiated field” (Deleuze 1993: 10). The actual does not resemble the virtual as a mirror-reflection might. The two are related not mimetically but semiotically; they are different, and it cannot be otherwise because the virtual is posited just as a tendency, therefore *no-thing*. Virtual tendencies as potentialities or *no-things* become actualized as though created *ex nihilo* and embodied in the actual *things*, in the guise of new objects of knowledge, new meanings.

The nuance is significant, and Deleuze and Guattari use a sort of Neo-Platonic language to elucidate their point: it is “[f]rom virtuals [that] we descend to actual states of affairs, and from states of affairs we ascend to virtuals, without being able to isolate one from the other” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 160). While not all of the virtualities may become actualized in the present, they are nevertheless real. Because virtual ideas exist as implicit tendencies they define the immanence of the transcendental field. Deleuze introduces his notion of the plane of immanent consistency as the infinite becoming of the virtual *qua* virtual.

Maximilian de Gaynesford (2001) relates Deleuze’s philosophy to the fourth- to fifth-century theology, and Michael Hardt (1993: 17) indicates a subtle connection of Deleuze’s thought to Scholastic ontology. In Scholastic terminology *virtual* means the ideal or transcendental, but not in any way abstract or just possible: it is maximally real, *ens realissimum*. What is traditionally called a mystical experience is, for Deleuze, an existential *practice* of sorts as an experiential and experimental art of perceiving (seeing) the otherwise imperceptible (invisible). The movement from the observable hence known to the invisible and as yet unknown, hence mystical but, importantly, knowable takes place in the direction contra direct perception, from the actual to the virtual.

In one of his books on the analysis of cinematic images, Deleuze (1989) equates mystical experience with an event of a sudden actualisation of potentialities, that is, awakening of perceptions, such as seeing and hearing, by raising them to a new power of enhanced perception. This is percept which is future-oriented towards a virtual object of perception (appearing for the present moment as yet imperceptible) within the very dynamics of becoming-other or becoming-actual when both movements meet each other

and the ascending/descending lines cross and traverse. In these critical junctures of experience “the body plunges into the virtual or spiritual depths which exceed it” (Goddard 2001: 57).

The excess of meanings actualizes itself in a singular transformative, quasi-mystical, experience. Traditionally such experience is taken to be ecstatic but not necessarily. The discovery of the spiritual depth in oneself is *enstasy* as complementary to *ecstasy* or rapture beyond oneself: the way to *paradise* as a symbol of the most fundamental layer uniting human soul and cosmos can be found by either experience. Deleuze notices that the point of the unification of experience is not only virtual but also that such a point “is not without similarities to the One-Whole of the Platonists” (Deleuze 1991: 93). Indeed, mystics’ “vision and...voice...would have remained virtual” (Goddard 2001: 54) unless some specific conditions or events in the real experience that are necessary for the actualisation of the virtual would have been established thus expanding the perceptual field.

Percept thereby is part and parcel of conceptual understanding, and philosophical thinking, for Deleuze, is equivalent to the art of the creation or invention of concepts, of our new understanding of experience, its meaning. Concepts are not given but invented or created as if reborn in experience, at the level of practical ethical action. The creative process itself is accomplished by *affect*, or *desire*, akin to Platonic Eros. Each concept “should express an event rather than essence” (Deleuze 1995: 25) and exists in a triadic relationship with percept and affect: “you need all three to *get things moving*” (Deleuze 1995: 165; italics in original). The field of knowing is greater than truth which “has to be created” (Deleuze 1995: 126) and, for Deleuze, “there is no other truth than the creation of the New: creativity, emergence” (1989: 146-147).

Affect, Desire, Eros, Love, Creation! Whatever its name, this is what accomplishes unity or Oneness of the Neo-Platonic double, that is, ultimately, self-referential or circular movement of ascending and descending analogous to the dynamic action of the Deleuzian difference which is also of the nature of double movement: different/ciation. Eros, the mystical son of Poros and Penia, was conceived in the act that may have occurred in the middle and muddle of “groping experimentation ...that belong[s] to the order of dreams, of pathological processes, esoteric experiences, drunkenness, and excess” (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 41). Esoteric experiences border on mysticism, indeed. Still, as a culmination of desire sparked between two deities, Eros itself is a symbol of union. The desire, or Eros, de-constructs the Neo-Platonic Oneness between the true, the good and the beautiful by means of bringing it (One) down to earth into the multiplicity and diversity of real, flesh-and-blood, human experiences. Hence follows what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call their mystical and magical formula expressed as “One = Many” and which posits unity in plurality. The symbolic Eros (love) as *affect* “does not take as its object persons or things, but the entire surroundings which it traverses” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 292) or transcends: empiricism is radically transcendental. Thus it is in the reality of experience that a line of transversal connection as a necessary condition for “the famous mystical principle of *coincidentia oppositorum*, beyond the limit of all

human understanding” (Kearney 2001: 104) is being established.

But should it really remain so? Should such conjunction of opposites be relegated to the level above and over human understanding, which provides non other than an explanation in terms of the mystical, that is, beyond what Kearney qualifies as human limitations? Expanding the limits of human understanding to encompass an extra, affective, dimension means as we said earlier quoting Idel & McGinn (1999), to stress *the unity of love and cognition* as the governing principle of practical mysticism. If human understanding overcomes the narrow rationalist knowledge akin to Habermas’ so called first way of knowing technical facts (cf. Semetsky & Lovat 2008) and allows itself to be enriched and expanded with affect/desire/love therefore seemingly blending into Aristotelian *Nous poetikos*, then the conditions for the actualization of virtual potentialities will have been created in experience *per se!*

For Deleuze, this means moving from the actual, that is, given to common sense in experience as observable and visible (the realm of the sensible in Plato’s scheme) to the virtual which appears unobservable, that is, seemingly *imperceptible* or *invisible*, however potentially knowable (the realm of the intelligible in Plato’s scheme). The unity of knowledge as the conjunction of opposites—*coincidentia oppositorum*—is thus made possible. Therefore there is a definite *method*—Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism—in the midst of what appears to be the *madness* of mysticism.

Importantly, and while exceeding a solely rational thought, Deleuze’s radical empiricism is still “fundamentally linked to a logic—a logic of multiplicities” (Deleuze 1987: viii). This unorthodox logic functions on the basis of the inclusion of the third, in-between, category that Deleuze specifies as the symbolic conjunction “and” (cf. *coincidentia oppositorum*). The static logical copula “is” gives way to the dynamics of the relation “and”, which is not “subordinate to the verb to be” (Deleuze 1987: 57) and defies the logic of identity (“is”). If the dyad amounts to identity between the two terms in a relation, the genuine triad is based on difference². What is striving to become the actual, is that what is *in virtue* and is only waiting *in potentia* for particular conditions in the real, and not merely possible, experience to come forward.

The dynamic constituting the logic of the included middle functions in accord with “a theory and practice of relations, of the *and*” (Deleuze 1987: 15), that is, it is necessarily triadic and forms a self-referential relation between affects, percepts, and concept. Such self-reference would have indeed appeared circular, senseless, irrational, or mystical to a rational, centered, independent *Cogito* but not to a religious thinker who consistently practices “the self-correcting pattern of thinking embedded in the doctrine of the Trinity” (Adams 2006: 238)³. Deleuze emphasized the triadic, we may say self-corrective, relationship based on the inseparability of percepts, affects, and concepts that together

2. For the detailed analysis of the triadic structure see one author’s (Semetsky) earlier paper “From design to self-organization, or a proper structure for a proper function”, *AXIOMATHES: An International Journal in Ontology and Cognitive Systems* (Springer), 2005, 15/4, pp. 575-597.

3. In relation to Habermas, Adams notices that he considers religion metaphysical and positions Habermas’ thought as contrary to anti-metaphysical negative theology as well as to Christian doctrine. This is a question of interpretation in our opinion.

form a semiotic triad structured analogously to Charles Sanders Peirce's genuine sign⁴. It is the presence of affect, or desire, or love, or Eros—as the included third—that connects the levels of reality by crossing over or traversing the difference between the virtual and the actual thus exceeding the reductive model of solely cognitive understanding. It is Eros that brings an affective dimension of the creative *art* into the domain of *science* by virtue of it functioning not in accord with the two-valued (true vs. false) logic but as embodying the logic of the included middle represented by the inclusion of the noumenal difference so that it establishes a semiotic “bridge, a transversality” (Guattari 1995: 23) connecting what otherwise appear as forever separate and rigid binary opposites.

What was traditionally called the mystery and mysticism of *coincidentia oppositorum* is grounded in Deleuze's totally realist ontology that understands cosmos in terms of virtual *reality* comprising multiple levels of existence. It is “the *difference* between the virtual and the actual [which] requires that the process of actualisation be a creation” (Hardt 1993: 18), and it is human creativity in practice as becoming capable of new understanding and making a difference in the actual world of actions and experiences that appears to carry a flavour of mysticism. Deleuze is careful to pinpoint a subtle difference between transcendent and transcendental: the virtual *per se* is immanent, not transcendent, to the actual, but the actual requires virtual as its own transcendental condition. It is an affect (desire, love), which is “immanent to a plane which it does not pre-exist” (Deleuze 1987: 89), that lays down the plane of immanent consistency for the construction of concepts as to overcome the apparent limits of human predicament. Such affective desire would perhaps be what Nietzsche called the will to power; according to Deleuze, however, there can be “other names for it. For example, ‘grace.’” (Deleuze 1987: 91).

Wherein the plane of immanence is being constructed, “the spiritual and the material [as] two distinct yet indiscernible sides of the same fold” (Goddard 2001: 62) do meet. The plane of immanence is enfolded analogous to the Baroque art that expresses the harmonious multiplicity of the folds (Deleuze 1993). According to the Baroque model, “knowledge is known only where it is folded” (Deleuze 1993: 49): in fact, Being (capital B) at the cosmic level is Fold. Similar to the drapes in fabric, things themselves, as Deleuze says, are wrapped up in nature; as for ideas—they are often so enveloped or enfolded “in the soul that we can't always unfold or develop them” (Deleuze 1993: 49) based on subjective rationality as one's conscious will solely unless experience itself would have presented conditions for their unfolding. Deleuze (1988b) shares with Spinoza his assertion that rather than our affirming or denying something of a thing, it is in fact the thing itself that would affirm or deny something of itself in us, overcoming in this process the limitations of narrow self-centered knowledge. The plane of immanence always presupposes an extra dimension—its own transcendental condition as though populated by “grace”—which, being supplementary to the plane *per se*, easily appears

4. Both Habermas and Deleuze knew Charles S. Peirce's work. Deleuze (1986, 1989) explicitly refers to Peirce in his analysis of cinematic images. One author (Semetsky) devoted a chapter “Becoming-Sign” in her 2006 book *Deleuze, Education and Becoming* to analysing similarities between Deleuze's and Peirce's approaches to logic and reasoning.

as mystical.

So, what seems to be a mystical experience is a potential human ability to raise “each faculty to the level of its transcendent exercise [and] to give birth to that second power which grasps that which can only be sensed” (Deleuze 1994: 165) thus connecting the levels that seemingly belong to two disparate Platonic realms of intelligible and sensible by virtue establishing a mutual bond akin to the synchronistic bridge between mind and matter (cf. Peat 1987). Perception would not become a percept without the two-way double, what Deleuze called diagonal or transversal, communication the function of which is “to show the imperceptible” (Deleuze 1995: 45) by virtue of making visible (perceptible) that what was as yet invisible (imperceptible). Perception undergoes transformation or increase in power into a future-oriented becoming-*percept* which is necessary for the creation of novel *concepts*. And the very passage between the two is an *affect*.

A newly created concept that includes in itself an affective (erotic) dimension akin to the aforementioned union of love and cognition as a condition of practical mysticism is ultimately self-referential. Being self-referential, the concept—at the very moment of its creation—posits itself and its object simultaneously. The concept stops being a propositional statement: “it does not belong to a discursive system and it does not have a reference. The concept shows itself” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 140) in experience, at the level of practical ethical action as embodied knowledge. Such is the aforementioned Habermasian unity of knowledge and action that in Deleuze acquires deeper, ontological, significance. Sure enough, Aristotelian practical wisdom is embodied in ethical action performed by a wise, virtuous person and by necessity includes a special sensitivity and sensibility (cf. Slote 1997; Varela 1999); yet how such an unusual (mystical?) sensibility operates has never been made clear in the philosophical literature. Here are two key questions: how is an epistemic access to the True and the Good possible? Whence any foundation for moral knowledge?

The answers lie in Deleuze’s self-referential triad of affects-percepts-concepts which is grounded in his ontology of the virtual and enables a glimpse into the functioning of *phronesis* when, sure enough, “the concept shows itself” to the one who has the potential of becoming-wise via self-reference (self-reflection). Wisdom, then, as the highest intellectual virtue, would be the actualized potentiality, in Aristotelian terms. But most importantly, it is immanent to the plane that it itself constructs by virtue of an “unconscious psychic mechanism that engenders the perceived in consciousness” (Deleuze 1993: 95). For Deleuze, “immanence is the unconscious itself” (Deleuze, 1988b: 29). The creation of concepts always takes place “in and through the unconscious, thereby establishing the bond of a profound complicity between nature and mind” (Deleuze 1994: 165) leading to the conjunction which determines the very threshold of consciousness.

The plane of immanence, however, “does not immediately take effects with concepts” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 41): it is pre-rational and a-conceptual, ultimately enabling “the conquest of the unconscious” (Deleuze 1988b: 29) during its own immanent, at once constructive and expressive (double movement!) process. The actualisation

of potentialities, *ontologically*, is then akin, in terms of *epistemology*, to the unconscious-becoming-conscious, thereby crossing over (or traversing) in a manner of practical mysticism what ordinarily appears to be a “fundamental distinction between subrepresentative, unconscious and aconceptual ideas/intensities and the conscious conceptual representation of common sense” (Bogue 1989: 59). Any object of experience contains potentialities as virtual or implicit, imperceptible, meanings, even if they are not yet actualised or made explicit hence perceptible.

To elucidate, Deleuze refers to music “where the principle of composition is not given in a directly perceptible, audible, relation with what it provides. It is therefore a plane of transcendence, a kind of design, in a mind of man or in the mind of god, even when it is accorded a maximum of immanence by plunging it into the depth of Nature, or of the Unconscious” (Deleuze 1987: 91). For Deleuze, it is Nature itself that is essentially “contingent, excessive, and mystical” (Deleuze 1994: 57). The dynamic of the virtual is based on a natural rhythm that involves “a transcoded passage from one milieu to another...coordination ...constitution of a new plane, bridging. ...Nature as music” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 313-314). Nature as music exceeds the observable world of physical facts but must include its own virtual dimension which however is never beyond the potential capacities of human experience, hence understanding.

The corollary is another inseparable immanent/transcendent triad constituting cosmos itself: Man, Nature, God (or *Nous*) where each stands in a relation of a “reciprocal presupposition” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 109) as the included middle between the other two so as to establish rapport and coordination between one’s practical action and the world via the depth of spiritual life, that is, mystics’ knowing self and God as One as we said at the very beginning of this paper. A symbolic mediation provides “intensity, resonance...harmony” (Deleuze 1995: 86); yet it appears imperceptible and, as such, borders on a direct (hence mystical) contact with the divine. The contact in question can be described by means of “non-localizable connections, actions at a distance, systems of replay, resonance and echoes...which transcend spatial locations and temporal successions” (Deleuze 1994: 83). Concepts are forever fuzzy and their truth-conditions are never completely determined precisely because of the necessarily “added” affective dimension of experience: although “a concept...has the truth that falls to it as a function of the conditions of its creation” (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 27), the very singularity of experiential conditions makes truth “a being-multiple” (Deleuze 1987: viii).

There exist forces constraining experience or making it singular; as Deleuze says, the most important is a self-referential relation when a force impinges on itself: “*an affect of self on self*” (Deleuze 1988a: 101). It is indeed the issue of self-reference coupled with sentience that appears to “have been making trouble for philosophers for centuries” (Kelso and Engstrom 2006: 253). In their recent book “The Complementary Nature”, Kelso and Engstrom (2006) introduce a notation *tilde* “~” as a symbol for pinpointing the relation *per se*, and assert that in “the case of human beings, complex nonlinear self-organizing [that is, self-referential] systems of energy~matter have managed to evolve to the point of organizing a sense of self~other” (2006: 253) as a complementary pair.

A self-referential relation is what establishes the meaningful correlations—an analogy or correspondence—between/across the different levels of reality. According to the new science of complementary pairs, these levels, rather than being alien to each other in the manner of Cartesian dualism, are connected via what Kelso and Engstrom specify and present as *coordination dynamics*. Different “self~other” (self~not-self) pairs do belong to the variety of discourses; their commonality derived from the same relational dynamics “contained” in the logic of the included middle. Such an unorthodox logic (really, a contradiction in terms within a strictly analytic reasoning) is akin to what contemporary mathematician Louis Kauffman (1996), incidentally or not, calls *virtual* or archaic logic that “goes beyond reason into a world of beauty, communication and possibility” (Kauffman 1996: 293) as well as beyond given facts into a world of interpretable symbols, meanings and values.

The constructive, creative logic of the included middle is what “energizes reason... [and] provides the real possibility and the means for opening of communication across boundaries long thought to be impenetrable” (Kauffman 1996: 293). Such a transversal, using Deleuze’s neologism, communication in which “observer and observed are one” (Kauffman 1996: 295)—the very subject matter of this paper—is what guarantees self-reference. The emphasis on communication across boundaries indicates that there is a multiplicity of interdependent levels of reality as though desperately trying to understand each other expressive “language”, thus to create *shared* meanings along the communicative link expressed by the relation “~”. The apparent dichotomies and antinomies of the old “either-or” narrow reasoning are being transcended and traversed in accordance with the new “both-and” science of coordination dynamics.

Yet, what appears to be new to “objective” science has all along been familiar to religious thinking. The relational, complementary, Nature is the very condition of its knowability by analogy that, while preeminent in mystical teachings with regard to essential kinship and Oneness, remains foreign to physical causality that deliberately separates the observer from what is observed. Mystics, however, as well as creative artists or true philosophers, play an intensive, participatory, role. Even if apparently creating concepts out of “no-things” in the realm of the virtual, they still “do not conjure things out of thin air, even if their conceptions and productions appear as utterly fantastical. Their compositions are only possible because they are able to connect, to tap into the virtual and immanent processes” (Ansell Pearson 1997: 4) that constitute Deleuze’s virtual reality.

Among complementary pairs in which the terms are related, or coordinated, are the following: *res cogitans~res extensa*, rationalism~empiricism; science~religion; immanence~transcendence; body~mind; yin~yang; being~becoming; and ultimately human~divine as well. Mind and nature therefore cease being binary opposites but are coordinated thus complementing a theoretical *episteme* with practical *phronesis* resulting from the reciprocity or complementarity between knowledge and action. In this respect, Deleuze’s philosophy is naturalistic akin to ancient science as a natural philosophy contra scientism of modernity—and Deleuze and Guattari’s emphasis on nonlinear enfolded dynamics of experience (cf. DeLanda 2002) puts them at the very front of the

latest contemporary developments in the science of coordination dynamics.

Being self-referential, the concept—at the moment of creation—posits itself and its object simultaneously, thus defying a dualistic split between subject and object, matter and mind, science and art, sacred and profane. If we read *re-ligio* etymologically as linking backward to itself in the process of enriching human life with “spiritual fecundity” (Idel & McGinn 1999:13) we understand that self-reference, due to the included middle, ultimately means self-transcendence. In Deleuze’s words, it constitutes the very *becoming-other*—akin to what at the start of the paper we called the transformation of the self as a feature of practical mysticism—when it (self) “changes in nature as it expands its connections” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 8) in the extended experience that now becomes open to perception.

Changes in nature? Isn’t it surely an element of mysticism? The answer is both yes and no, or better to say, continuing the argument for complementary pairs, it is a *yes~no* relation. The human creative potential is enabled by the coordination dynamics embedded in the complementary Nature as founded on an analogical relation (“tilde”) expressed by “the manner in which the existing being is filled with immanence” (Deleuze 1997: 137). An analogical, coordinated, relation between the human and the divine, between the levels of the virtual and the actual, establishes in practice Deleuze’s transformational pragmatics of *becoming-other* which “is neither one nor two; ...it is the in-between” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 293). The practical transformation of the self takes place along the vanishing transversal line at the very limit of human experience that therefore always contains a numinous, religious, bordering on mystical, aspect.

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