

Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990 [*Logique du sens*, Minuit, 1969])

Galloway reading notes

Context and General Notes

- *The Logic of Sense*, along with *Difference and Repetition*, represents the culmination of the first phase of Deleuze's work on core philosophy, which roughly coincides with the decade of the 1960s. If *Difference and Repetition* concerns itself with ontology, *The Logic of Sense* turns instead to logic, language, discourse, meaning, and the paradoxes between sense and nonsense.
- The book consists of 34 “series” or short chapters and takes as its subject the work of Lewis Carroll and the Stoics. Methodologically, the book relies heavily on paradox, both the explanation and identification of paradox and the deployment of paradox as a generative technique of thought.

How to Read the Book

The chapters that should be read in the greatest detail are as follows:

- 1st-3rd series: on pure becoming, the surface, and the proposition.
- 5th series: on the paradoxes of sense.
- 9th series: on the singularity, the event, and the problematic.
- 16th-17th series, plus the 25th series: on the static genesis, ontology, univocity of being. These three series are the core of the book's ontological argument.
- 18th series: on the three images of philosophers.
- 21st series: on the event, ethics.

While it is infinitely superior to read the book in its entirety, a handful of chapters are candidates for skimming if one is pressed for time or feeling overwhelmed:

- 4th series, on dualities.
- 8th series, on structure, signifying and signified series.
- 10th series, on games in *Alice*.
- 13th series, on Artaud.
- 14th series, on causality and the quasi-cause.
- 20th series, on the Stoic egg, divination, the quasi-cause.
- 22nd series, on Fitzgerald, the “crack,” alcoholism.
- 23rd series, on Aion and Chronos.

At end of the book (27th-34th series) Deleuze shifts registers dramatically to focus on psychoanalysis, the schizoid, sexuality, Melanie Klein, Freud, the phantasm, etc. For those interested in psychoanalysis in general, or the more psychoanalysis-influenced works of Deleuze such as *Anti-Oedipus*, these chapters are crucial. These chapters will be less interesting to others.

Reading Notes

2nd Series: Surface Effects

the Stoics distinguish between two kinds of things:

- 1) bodies (nouns and adjectives)
 - a being
- 2) events/effects (verbs)
 - a way of being
 - these do *not* exist. they are “attributes” that “subsist” or “inhere” (5).
 - **From the 9th Series:**
 - “Events are ideal. ... They have therefore an eternal truth. ... Events are the only idealities” (53)
 - Events as replacement of essence: ** “To reverse Platonism is first and foremost to remove essences and to substitute events in their place, as jets of singularities” (53) **

3rd Series: the Proposition

- 1) Denotation: proposition as denotation or indication (12)
 - true vs false.
 - the proposition's relation to the world.
- 2) Manifestation: proposition as statement of desires and beliefs (13)
 - true vs illusion.
 - the proposition's relation to the speaker.
- 3) Signification: proposition as signification vis-a-vis general concepts (14)
 - true vs absurd.
 - the proposition's relation to other propositions (discourse).



the “circle of the proposition” (17)

** “Sense is the fourth dimension of the proposition. The Stoics discovered it along with the event: sense, *the expressed of the proposition*, is an incorporeal, complex, and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition” (19) **

- Note that Deleuze does not mean that sense is a fourth *type* of proposition. It is the transcendental condition of all three moments in the circle (denotation, manifestation, signification)
- Husserl calls it expression (20)
- “We will not ask therefore what is the sense of the event: the event is sense itself” (22).

Interlude -- Definition of Key Terms

What is sense?

- sense is the pure ideational *event* of the proposition (other writers might call this “discourse”).
 - “The splendor and the magnificence of the event is sense. The event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed” (149)
- sense is the *expressed* of the proposition. (other writers might call this “connotation” or “metalanguage.”)
- sense is at the surface of things.
- sense does not have a physical or mental existence. in other words, sense is not an object, and sense is not an idea. Sense is “neither word nor body, neither sensible representation nor *rational representation*” (19)
- sense does *not* exist. rather, it “insists” (“inheres,” *insister*)¹ or “subsists” (21)
- sense is in a paradoxical relationship to nonsense
 - “Sense is a nonexistent entity, and, in fact, maintains very special relations with nonsense” (xiii)
 - “The logic of sense is necessarily determined to posit between sense and nonsense an original type of intrinsic relation, a mode of co-presence” (68)
- the neutrality of sense (101)

What is paradox?

- “paradox is the affirmation of both senses or directions at the same time” (1)
- “Paradox is initially that which destroys good sense as the only direction, but it is also that which destroys common sense as the assignation of fixed identities” (3). see also *Difference and Repetition* for more on good sense and common sense.
- “The force of paradoxes is that they are not contradictory; they rather allow us to be present at the genesis of the contradiction” (74).
- “Paradox is opposed to *doxa*, in both aspects of *doxa*, namely, good sense and common sense” (75)

What is an event?

- an event is an ongoing modulation of an existing series.

5th Series: Four Paradoxes of Sense

- 1) Paradox of regress (28)
 - regress follows a *serial* form (36)
- 2) Paradox of sterile division (31)
- 3) Paradox of neutrality (32)
- 4) Paradox of the absurd (35)

1 Note that while Lester translates *insister* as “inheres” and *insistance* as “inherence,” the straight cognates “insist” and “insistence” seem to be more appropriate. See for example *Difference and Repetition*: “It no longer exists, it does not exist, but it insists, it consists, it *is*. It insists with the former present, it consists with the new or present present” (82).

9th Series: the Problematic

- Singularity (52, 103)
 - [Deleuze's is a theory of “impersonal and pre-individual” singularities (102) . In other words it is radically incompatible with Heidegger and phenomenology.]
- Event (53)
- Problematic (54)

16th & 17th Series: Static Ontological Genesis and Static Logical Genesis

- "**static**" refers to equilibrium, or the opposite of dynamic change. Deleuze also calls this a "passive" genesis. Static also means that it's knowable in advance, without any recourse to seeing the situation dynamically “in play” (similar to the idea of an *a priori*).
- "**genesis**" because it's a question of the structural origins of something, that is, how something comes to be.
- static genesis operates through *limitation*. it intervenes in the series of singularities by limiting them (into things like persons, individuals, and worlds). He hints that the static genesis is something akin to an immaculate conception (149), in that it is, as it were, unexplainable or uncaused.
- "**ontological**" versus "logical"
 - "ontological" refers to the being of entities.
 - "logical" refers to the existing or appearing of entities. Not just *that* something is (the ontological question), but *how* it is what it is.
 - the proposition operates in both the ontological and logical orders (120). he describes these as “two aspects of the genesis” (120).
 - for the ontological order, it is: “the denoted, the manifested, and the signified.”
 - for the logical order, it is: “denotation, manifestation, and signification.”

The <i>Ontological</i> Static Genesis		The <i>Logical</i> Static Genesis
First stage	Second stage	Third stage?
individual monad	person no one object = x [the “imperson”]	Deleuze doesn't say as much about this stage, just that it consists of “multiple classes and variable properties” (118), by which he means multiplicities and affects.
<i>Umwelt</i> (environment) the individual is a reflection of the world; the world is “within you.”	<i>Welt</i> (world) [the world is “without you”]	
sense	nonsense	
good sense	common sense	
Eve, Alice	Ulysses, Sylvie & Bruno	
from out of the preindividual	from out of the impersonal	
classical discourse (140)	Romantic discourse (140)	

the orders of series:

	↑ etc...	
<i>tertiary</i>	3rd series	the proposition
<i>secondary</i>	2nd series	the surface; surface effects the organization of sense; “sense [is] unfolded upon [the surface] as an effect” (125); a doubling, a fold.
<i>primary</i>	1st series	pure becoming “the primary order which grumbles beneath” (125)

In this context see also the **25th Series on univocity**.

- The clamor of being: “Being is Voice,” “it is said in one and the same 'sense' of everything about which it is said” (179). “...one Being and only for all forms and all times, a single instance for all that exists, a single phantom for all the living, a single voice for every hum of voices and every drop of water in the sea” (180).
- For further reading, Badiou's *Deleuze* book is absolutely essential on this point.
- ** pure saying *and* pure event (180) -- this is what univocity means. this is also why language has to be associated with being, because only language is the site of insistence. **
- see also 185

18th Series: the Three Images of Philosophers

Note: compare to “image of thought” chapter in *Difference and Repetition*.

- the “popular and technical” image of the philosopher is that of *ascension*: heights, rising, elevation (127). Example: Plato.
- Nietzsche and presocratics as exploration of depth and the depths (see also Alice's: “Down, down, down.”).
- Cynics and Stoics. “This is a reorientation of all thought and of what it means to think: *there is no longer depth or height*. ...not Essence but event” (130). Remember that sense is a pure event.
 - Hercules (131)
 - “...the surface, the curtain, the carpet, and the mantle...” (133)

19th Series: Humor

- to descend we need humor (135)
- the “adventure of humor” is surface-oriented (136). “...all height and depth abolished” (141)
- “Who speaks?” / “Who is speaking?” (137-140). on the three types of (humorous) irony: classical, Kantian, and Romantic.

** 21st Series: the Event **

Note that there are two kinds of phenomena here: (1) the mere level of things that occur, which Deleuze calls “accidents,” and (2) the pure event which is selected from out of all those accidental occurrences.

- the event is realized only in one's subscription to it. “My wound existed before me, I was born to embody it” (148). events become event, when I make them mine.

- one must will the event (149)
- [compare Deleuze's "the event is mine" to Heidegger's "being is 'mine'"]
- ** "Either ethics makes no sense at all, or this is what it means and has nothing else to say: not to be unworthy of what happens to us" (149) **
- "The splendor and the magnificence of the event is sense. The event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed" (149)
- the event "must be understood, willed, and represented in that which occurs" (149)
- Deleuze's theory of agency: how the actor actualizes the event (150)
- the double structure of the event (151-153).

26th series: Language

- Epicureanism vs Stoicism: "the Epicureans created a model based on the *declension* of the atom; the Stoics, on the contrary, created a model based on the *conjugation* of events" (183)
 - language in this chapter means quite literally grammar: Epicureans are nouns+adjectives, while Stoics are verbs.
- Against diversity of voice (equivocity): "Equivocity is always the equivocity of nouns. The Verb is the univocity of language, in the form of an undetermined infinitive, without person, without present, without any diversity of voice. It is poetry itself" (185).