

Thu Nov 7 – (Reading: “What Is a Concept?” (pp. 15 - 34)) - Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* - “philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts”

There are no simple concepts. Every concept has components and is defined by them. It therefore has a combination. It is a multiplicity, although not every multiplicity is conceptual. There is no concept with only one component. Even the first concept, the one with which a philosophy “begins,” has several components, because it is not obvious that philosophy must have a beginning, and if it does determine one, it must combine it with a point of view or a ground (reason). (p. 15)

Every concept has an irregular contour defined by the sum of its components, which is why, from Plato to Bergson, we find the idea of the concept being a matter of articulation, of cutting and cross-cutting. The concept is a whole because it totalizes its components, but it is a fragmentary whole. Only on this condition can it escape the mental chaos constantly threatening it, stalking it, trying to reabsorb it. (p. 16)

Components remain distinct, but something passes from one to the other, something that is undecidable between them. There is an area *ab* that belongs to both *a* and *b*, where *a* and *b* “become” indiscernible. These zones, thresholds, or becomings, this inseparability, define the internal consistency of the concept. But the concept also has an exoconsistency with other concepts, when their respective creation implies the construction of a bridge on the same plane. Zones and bridges are the joints of the concept. (pp. 19-20)

The concept is in a state of survey in relation to its components, endlessly traversing them according to an order without distance. (p. 20)

The concept is defined by its consistency, its endoconsistency and exoconsistency, but it has no reference: it is self-referential; it posits itself and its object at the same time as it is created. (p. 22)

Finally, the concept is not discursive, and philosophy is not a discursive formation, because it does not link propositions together. Confusing concept and proposition produces a belief in the existence of scientific concepts and a view of the proposition as a genuine “intension” (what the sentence expresses). Consequently, the philosophical concept usually appears only as a proposition deprived of sense. (p. 22)

This new concept has three components forming the “proofs” of the existence of God as infinite event. The third (ontological proof) assures the closure of the concept but also in turn throws out a bridge or branches off to a concept of the extended, insofar as it guarantees the objective truth value of our other clear and distinct ideas. (p. 26)

To start with, the preceding analysis must be confirmed by taking the example of one of the best-known signed philosophical concepts, that of the Cartesian cogito, Descartes's *I*: a concept of self. This concept has three components: doubting, thinking, and being (although this does not mean that every concept must be triple). The complete statement of the concept *qua* multiplicity is “I think 'therefore' I am” or, more

completely, “Myself who doubts, I think, I am, I am a thinking thing.” According to Descartes the cogito is the always-renewed event of thought. (p. 24)

The Cartesian plane consists in challenging any explicit objective presupposition where every concept refers to other concepts (the rational-animal man, for example). It demands only a pre philosophical understanding, that is, implicit and subjective presuppositions: everyone knows what thinking, being, and I mean (one knows by doing it, being it, or saying it). This is a very novel distinction. Such a plane requires a first concept that presupposes nothing objective. (p. 26, and preceding passages)

Such is the cogito. The other concepts will be able to achieve objectivity, but only if they are linked by bridges to the first concept, if they respond to problems subject to the same conditions, and if they remain on the same plane. Objectivity here will assume a certainty of knowledge rather than presuppose a truth recognized as preexisting, or already there. (p. 27)

For this reason philosophers have very little time for discussion. Every philosopher runs away when he or she hears someone say, “Let's discuss this.” Discussions are fine for roundtable talks, but philosophy throws its numbered dice on another table. The best one can say about discussions is that they take things no farther, since the participants never talk about the same thing. Of what concern is it to philosophy that someone has such a view, and thinks this or that, if the problems at stake are not stated? And when they are stated, it is no longer a matter of discussing but rather one of creating concepts for the undiscussable problem posed. Communication always comes too early or too late, and when it comes to creating, conversation is always superfluous. Sometimes philosophy is turned into the idea of a perpetual discussion, as “communicative rationality,” or as “universal democratic conversation.” Nothing is less exact, and when philosophers criticize each other it is on the basis of problems and on a plane that is different from theirs and that melt down the old concepts in the way a cannon can be melted down to make new weapons. It never takes place on the same plane. To criticize is only to establish that a concept vanishes when it is thrust into a new milieu, losing some of its components, or acquiring others that transform it. But those who criticize without creating, those who are content to defend the vanished concept without being able to give it the forces it needs to return to life, are the plague of philosophy. (p. 28)

Every concept shapes and reshapes the event in its own way. The greatness of a philosophy is measured by the nature of the events to which its concepts summon us or that it enables us to release in concepts. So the unique, exclusive bond between concepts and philosophy as a creative discipline must be tested in its finest details. The concept belongs to philosophy and only to philosophy. (p. 34)

By retaining the infinite, philosophy gives consistency to the virtual through concepts; by relinquishing the infinite, science gives a reference to the virtual, which actualizes it through functions. Philosophy proceeds with a plane of immanence or consistency; science with a plane of reference. (p. 118)

The Parmenides shows the extent to which Plato is master of the concept....(p. 29)