Dramatization as Life Practice: Counteractualisation, Event and Death

Janae Sholtz   Alvernia University

Abstract

The concept of dramatization represents a rhetorical and conceptual tension in Deleuze's philosophy in that it refers both to autopoietic ontological processes and to a critical philosophical method. Commentators are wont to refer to either one or the other, saying little about how or if these two fundamentally distinct usages can be thought together; that is what we aim to do here. By unravelling the conceptual transformations of the term, we can gain an appreciation for the double characterisation of dramatization and its centrifugal nature. We begin with the hypothesis that dramatization is linked to actualisation in the first sense and counteractualisation in the second. The fundamental question that we would like to address is: how are these two views to be reconciled? Addressing this question leads us to the conclusion that dramatization becomes an ethical imperative for philosophical subjects to perform certain philosophical exercises, that is, to become worthy of the event. The particular philosophical exercise that is emphasised is the dramatization of a paradoxical thought of death. Ultimately, we suggest that dramatization can be galvanised for both an emancipatory politics and an ethico-aesthetic life practice.

Keywords: counteractualisation, event, Stoicism, death, dramatization, spiritual exercises

I. Setting the Stage

The paradigm of philosophy as theatre resonates throughout Deleuze's work, and within this paradigm the powers of the false, the simulacrum, fabulation, performativity and aesthetic artifice serve as Deleuze's palette for imagining the creative and dramatic nature of life. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze describes the processes of will to power in the terms of theatrical artifice: 'a new force can only appear and appropriate an object by putting on the mask of the forces already in possession of the object' (Deleuze 1983: 5/5[1]), while in *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze dramatizes the history of philosophy as a series of conceptual personae. Indeed, in 'Theatricum Philosophicum', Foucault underscores the centrality of this paradigm, invoking the many masks through which Deleuze presents his philosophy, a veritable cast of philosophical characters (Foucault 1977: 196).[2] These examples reveal a rhetorical tension, one which we suggest gets repeated within another key term related to the theatricality of Deleuze's philosophy, dramatization. The former suggests that life itself is the theatre, while the latter suggests that artifice belongs to philosophy, leading us to wonder if thought is merely the mime of life – a doubled repetition; or if this tension is the productive space of thought itself, reflecting the intimate level to which thought is imbricated in immanence. This paper interrogates this tension by focusing on its insistence within the concept of dramatization.

Dramatization embodies this bifurcation in that it refers both to autopoietic ontological processes and to a critical philosophical method. Commentators are wont to refer to either one or the other, saying little about how or if these two fundamentally distinct usages can be thought together; that is what we aim to do here.[3] By unravelling the conceptual transformations of the term, we can gain an appreciation for the double characterisation of dramatization and its centrifugal nature. We begin with the hypothesis that dramatization is linked to actualisation in the first sense and counteractualisation in the second. The fundamental question that we would like to address is: how are these two views to be reconciled? Addressing this question leads us to the conclusion that dramatization becomes an ethical imperative for philosophical subjects to perform certain philosophical exercises, that is, to become worthy of the event.

Specifically, in 'The Method of Dramatization' dramatization specifies a stage in the process of different/ciation, the core of Deleuze's ontology of becoming. It marks the emergence of things and concepts, as spatio-temporal dynamisms incarnate selective elements of an Idea.

Not synonymous with the actual, dramatization is the process that initiates and animates actualisation as part of an ever-developing process or flux. In *The Logic of Sense*, however, Deleuze explicitly pits the ontological version of dramatization against another, one that invokes the philosophical subject as actor: 'the actor actualizes the event but in a way that is entirely different than the actualization of the event in the depth of things' (Deleuze 1990: 150/176), referring specifically to this as a process of counteractualisation. Rather than a matter of description and elucidation of the Idea/event, which the method of dramatization comes to be in relation to the ontological process, this version of counteractualisation involves an imperative and a different method or procedure; the imperative is to affirm the intensive differences that populate any event. The procedure is to go back in to the chaosmos of immanence and explicate the myriad potentialities that insist therein, a dramatic counter-movement that opens and intensifies the event, or particular aspects of the event. From this perspective we can say that dramatization is aimed at transforming the present – the liberation of the ideal events implicated in the actual and of the affective and intensive field within us. Dramatization on this level can be galvanised for both an emancipatory politics and ethico-aesthetic life practice.

However, the idea of an imperative presents us with a problem, that of agency. If dramatization, even as counteractualisation, concerns the pre-individual, pre-subjective level of spatio-temporal dynamisms and the virtual, intensive plane of immanence, how can we speak of a philosophical, necessarily individuated, subject *doing* something? As a way of addressing the problematic of operating dramatization from what seem to be two incongruent levels, we propose that implicit to the concept of dramatization is an ethico-aesthetic imperative to *counteractualise* ourselves as a necessary precursor to entering into processes of dramatization or engaging on the level of affective interaction on the plane of immanence. In other words, dramatization *as* counteractualisation includes the paradoxical imperative for individuals to de-individualise themselves so as to engage the virtual elements of the event.
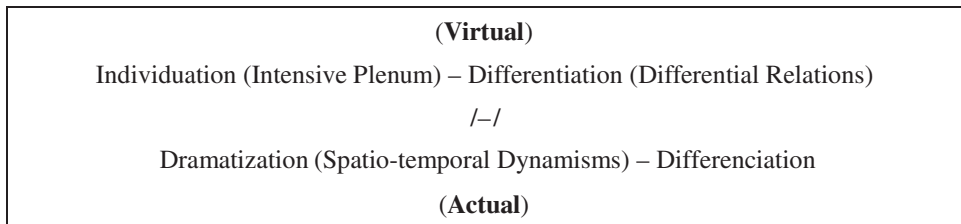
II. The Many Masks of Dramatization

The ontological reading of dramatization has its roots in Deleuze's approach to Nietzsche's philosophy. Deleuze says that it is Nietzsche who brought theatre to philosophy (Tomlinson 1983: xiii) – and, by this, he intends a theatre of forces. The transformations which Nietzsche's characters undergo express subterranean and unconscious forces of

which the motives and objectives of the human will are only symptoms (Deleuze 1983: 78/89), such that 'the method of dramatization surpasses man on every side' (Deleuze 1983: 79/90). Thus, as early as 1962, Deleuze is thinking of 'an approach to ideas whose indeterminate experience exceeds the subject, which sets them into motion through a process of intense characterizations' (Mackenzie and Porter 2011: 42). This approach will be systematised in the 1967 article, 'The Method of Dramatization', and further developed in light of the problematic idea/being and its solutions in *Difference and Repetition* (1968).

At the most basic level, dramatization indicates the transition from the virtual to the actual, and indicates the specification and organisation of concepts and things in terms of quantity and quality that occurs from out of a vast pre-individual continuum of matter – energy flows, intensities and dynamisms: 'through dramatization, the Idea is incarnated or actualized, it differentiates itself' (Deleuze 2004: 94/132; also Deleuze 1994: 218/282). The virtual Idea is composed of differential relations which are reciprocally determinable and distributions of singularities which correspond to these differential relations; while spatio-temporal dynamisms suggest a materialist 'plane of immanence', a pre-individual continuum of matter – energy flows, these remain undifferentiated until incarnating a particular set of differential relations as the solution to a particular problematic Idea. In other words, dramatization combines spatio-temporal determinations with conceptual or ideal determinations (Hughes 2009: 149). Dramatization traces the move from the Idea to sensibility, underscoring that every concept has a material basis: 'the concept would never be divided or specified in the world of representation without the dramatic dynamisms that thus determine it in a material system beneath all representation' (Deleuze 2004: 98/137). But, in order to understand this process, we must position dramatization vis-à-vis the entire process of different/ciation. In a fascinating and little-noted addendum, Deleuze (1994: 246/317) says that the total notion would be:

Indi-drama-different/ciation

(**Virtual**)
Individuation (Intensive Plenum) – Differentiation (Differential Relations)
/–/
Dramatization (Spatio-temporal Dynamisms) – Differenciation
(**Actual**)

One way we might do this is to pull apart the notion of drama from the activity of dramatization and, finally, from the dramatized. As Deleuze claims, there is always 'a drama beneath every logos' (Deleuze 2004: 103/144); he says this to distinguish his understanding of the nature of Ideas from the traditional view of the Idea as essence. Drama refers to the Idea as a multiplicity, that there is a plurality of determinations that comprise the categories of any system. These conditions constitute the drama, such that the stage includes the field of individuation with its series of intensive differences, singularities, precursors, couplings, resonance, and the players are spatio-temporal dynamisms (98/136).

Within this ontogenetic picture, the differential is the virtual Idea, a system of differential relations and singularities, that is, structure (Deleuze 1994: 183/238). All differential relations and distributions of singularities 'coexist in the virtual multiplicity of Ideas' (Deleuze 2004: 100/139); this is an intensive spatium, which pre-exists every quality and every extension. Thus we can speak of ideas, as demarcated vicinities or problems, within the larger or more encompassing Idea/Virtual, and we can say that this intensive spatium itself constitutes an environment of individuation, which indicates a stage of determination within the virtual. Individuation of the intensive field happens through a 'difference operator', a role filled by an obscure precursor, which acts as an agent of communication between series of differences. 'The act of individuation consists ... in integrating the elements of the disparateness into a state of coupling which ensures its internal resonance' (Deleuze 1994: 246/317), establishing certain affinities and connections that produce consistencies within the intensive plenum, almost like marking out boundaries/milieus. According to Deleuze, individuation happens via the problematic character of the Idea and its 'powers',[4] underscoring the genetic, pre-personal character of the Idea:

> It is as though every Idea has two faces, which are like love and anger: love in the search for fragments, the progressive determination and linking of the ideal adjunct fields; anger in the condensation of singularities which, by dint of ideal events, defines the concentration of a 'revolutionary situation' and causes the Idea to explode into the actual. (Deleuze 1994: 190/246)

The powers of adjunction and condensation, which constitute the individuation of ideas and their perplication with/in one another and eventually lead to its bursting into the actual, are like Empedoclean forces. These conditions determine the spatio-temporal dynamisms,

which incarnate (take up residence) in the individuated aspects of the Idea. These forces carve out a territory that demands to be filled. Dramatization is the way that spatio-temporal dynamisms take up the positions and possibilities set forth in individuation; they perform a role given to them by the Idea (Hughes 2009: 148; also Deleuze 1994: 216/279).

Yet, spatio-dynamisms are differenciating agents (Deleuze 1994: 214/276) as well. Spatial directions determine differenciation of types, and temporal accelerations and decelerations regulate the passage from type to type, creating other spaces and transformations in and from within the dynamisms (Deleuze 1994: 216/278). As actualisers, they 'make something happen', producing the qualities and extensions that become the elements of our world. Importantly, since dramatization is a selection of a finite number of singularities from an 'ideal continuum [which includes] the coexistence of all the variations of differential relations, and of the distributions of singularities that correspond to them' (Deleuze 2004: 101/142), there is always something excessive to any 'event' of actualisation. That the Idea is a continuous multiplicity of co-existing, relational Ideas, which are perplicated with one another, means that there is an endless fluidity or overflow between Ideas.[5] Therefore, though dramatization cancels or explicates intensive differences in the Idea by incarnating them, the Idea can never be completely determined. Deleuze also identifies an irreducible inequality in the differential relation, which tends towards a limit but is never cancelled completely (Deleuze 1994: 222/286). This asymmetry portends perpetual movement, demonstrating the power of dramatization as an autopoietic renewal. Dramatization is a delimitation of the virtual, but one that inherently implies the possibility of its own transgression. The challenge is that the actual erases its own conditions, and the potentials or remainder of the Idea do not appear in the actualised event. It requires a specific type of procedure of thought to trace these conditions.

Vice-diction

In *Difference and Repetition*, this process of tracing the virtual conditions of particular actualisations, which implies the reversal or transgression of the limitations of the actual, is named vice-diction, and could (or does) double as a method adequate to dramatization. But, just as with dramatization, the sense of vice-diction undergoes a transformation. In *Difference and Repetition*, vice-diction is spoken of

as both an ontological process and a procedure for grasping the Idea, while in The *Logic of Sense*, vice-diction is used interchangeably with counteractualisation. These different articulations reflect a progression in Deleuze's thought in relation to the ethics and the event. Vice-diction, as a procedure developed in *Difference and Repetition*, mimics the powers of adjunction and condensation that characterise the idea, while vice-diction/counteractualisation, as a procedure developed in *The Logic of Sense*, is a matter of intervening in the event in order to intensify and transform it. This is the crux of the possibility of a political future that is creative rather than merely repetitive or given over to fate or determinative causation.

Our first question pertains to the dual sense of vice-diction found in *Difference and Repetition*. How can it be both a power of the Idea and a method of our approach to the Idea? This equivocation is built in to the text, and, though we do not have the space to comprehensively develop this idea, we offer a few indications of the ambiguity, both in order to explain the interpretation of the term as method but also to defend our counter-intuition that it is primarily associated with ontological process. Deleuze does initially describe vice-diction as a procedure capable of following and describing multiplicities (Deleuze 1994: 189/245).[6] Its two procedures – (1) progressive determination of the conditions, discovering the adjunctions which complete the initial field of the problem, and (2) the condensation of singularities, precipitating a point of fusion, or actualisation – are often interpreted in light of a philosophical agent.[7] Yet immediately after, Deleuze implies that these are procedures that we can apply; he relates the forces of adjunction and condensation, those characterised in the two procedures, to objectivity: 'Ideas no more than problems do not exist only in our heads but occur here and there in the production of an actual historical world' (190/246). As we saw, these powers are the powers of individuation, which happens at the virtual and pre-personal level. Later, Deleuze says explicitly that vice-diction happens in the Idea (213/275), indicating that vice-diction has its own generative potential. Vice-diction is also presented as a power of decision,[8] which leads many commentators to associate it with an ability to reanimate the Idea through thought. Yet, Deleuze says,

> the power of decision . . . at the heart of problems . . . is nevertheless not our own . . . the imperatives are those of being. Ontology is the dice throw, the chaosmos from which the cosmos emerges. (Deleuze 1994: 199/257)

Clearly, it is not we who decide. Instead, we are swept up by and in the processes that determine the Idea, which we must then live.

What then is the status of vice-diction? This goes to the heart of our quandary, the relation between ontological processes and philosophical method. To reiterate, 'How can it both be a power of the Idea and a method of our approach to the Idea?' It can be both if one understands these as two aspects of radical immanence. Vice-diction, as a method of thought, would be a doubling procedure whereby we follow and acknowledge this internal becoming of the Idea, re-traversing the process of determination in reverse.[9] Vice-diction is thus a procedure for *discovering or identifying* the drama, where the method or role for the philosophical subject is that of the spectator: 'the "theatre" draws spectators, setting and characters into the real movement of an apprenticeship of the entire unconscious' (Deleuze 1994: 249/192). If, through the procedures of adjunction and condensation, one can maintain a description of the multiplicity or potentialities in the Idea/event rather than eliminating them, vice-diction can 'throw an Ideal problem into the greatest clarity with respect to all its components' (Williams 2013: 167). This method allows a more accurate view of the engendering conditions of any event, an epistemological project.

The Logic of Sense builds upon the aspiration to trace or map the virtual potential of the Idea by carving out a more pronounced role for the subject to intervene on or transform the Idea, therein conceived as the Event. Consequently, dramatization is associated with the activity of a philosophical subject, and the method and aim are therefore changed significantly, that is, the spectator becomes an actor and the project becomes ethical/political. Moreover, this actor-oriented dramatization is starkly contrasted to dramatization as part of an ontological process, and the aligning of dramatization with counteractualisation is made on this basis. Here is the remarkable passage:

> The actor thus actualizes the event, but in a way which is entirely different from the actualization of the event in the depth of things. Or rather, the actor redoubles this cosmic, or physical actualization, in his own way which is singular and superficial ... Thus, the actor delimits the original, disengages it from the abstract line, and keeps from the event only its contour and its splendour, becoming thereby the actor of one's own events – a counter-actualization. (Deleuze 1990: 150/176)

In order to properly understand this quote, it must be put into the context of the logic of the event, and, even more crucially, it must be addressed in light of what Deleuze considers to be our sole ethical

imperative: to be worthy of the events that befall us; 'willing the event whatever it may be' (Deleuze 1990: 144/169).

III. Dramatization as an Ethical Imperative of the Event

This invective reflects the influence of Stoicism on Deleuze's thought, coupled with the appreciation for a Nietzschean *amor fati* – not just to *accept*, but to *affirm* the event (Sellars 2006). Stoic moral teaching consists of willing acceptance of what occurs, precisely because what occurs is what should be, given that nature is ordered by a fundamentally rational principle, and, as such, what occurs is governed by a series of determinate causes. The Stoic ethic to will the event ultimately implies living in accordance with nature, where such an accord requires us to deepen our awareness of our ultimate connection to the order of causes and what we may call a cosmic perspective that surpasses our limited individual experience of the world.[10] Thus, in order to understand Deleuze's ethical imperative, one must inquire about the nature of the event.

Deleuze models his event on Stoic ontology, which reverses the (Platonic) causal relation between ideas and the physical world. The Stoics held that only bodies exist, hence only bodies could be said to be 'causes' of the event. However, though mixtures of bodies are the cause of certain effects, the effects themselves are not bodies (Deleuze 1990: 19/31); they are incorporeals (4/13), what the Stoics call *lekta*, or sayables. These effects *sub*sist in the event, rather than exist, and, according to Deleuze, they constitute the sense of the event. What this means is that though the event cannot be grasped without its being referred to the corporeal cause from which it results, it is not a mere reflection of these material interactions because of the proliferation of the surface effects of sense. Therefore, willing the event is a complex matter that requires grasping physical causes or recognising one's place in the system of causation (143/168), while at the same time being aware of the play of surface effects and their numerous potentialities. Given that the event exists before us, willing the event can only mean that we are a quasi-cause of said event. Being the actor, *quasi*-cause, of one's own event would mean to assent to what is happening, but only by making a proper or true judgement about the nature of what happens. A truly comprehensive understanding would be engendered through attentiveness (*prosochê*) to the event, which includes not only the present moment but regard for the past that inflects this moment and the infinite potentials of sense that insist within this moment.

But, it is not enough to merely *understand* the event (vice-diction as the mapping of the Idea). To will the event one must also select it, actively *affirming* 'the embodiment and the actualization of the pure incorporeal event in states of affairs and in his or her own body and flesh' (Deleuze 1990: 146/172). Again, it is helpful to invoke the Stoics, for whom philosophy is not merely a theoretical exercise but an activity aimed at transforming one's life that requires the incorporation of philosophical principles into daily practice through exercises (*askêsis*) (Hadot 1995), which would also mean that to counteractualise is not merely to reverse the actualised event, to make it incorporeal rather than incarnate or merely a matter of thought; it is to incarnate the event differently, to release more of the incorporeal/virtual intensive difference of the event and live the surface differently. As the quasi-cause, the actor changes the sense, or surface-effects, but in doing so, the actor enacts his or her own rebirth, by opening other possibilities and, by incarnating these, becomes the actual cause of his or her own events. 'Thus to will and release the event, [is] to become the offspring of one's own events' (Deleuze 1990: 149–50/175–6). In doing so the actor necessarily limits the event in a singular lived moment once again, and this limitation makes that instant all the more intense – it becomes dramatic.

Accordingly, we can derive two more things from our passage on counteractualisation. First, the activity is no longer what is by chance or accidentally, marking the way in which it is entirely different from the actualisation of the event in the depth of things (see Lawlor 2012). That it is not by chance necessitates that we posit a principle of selection, further delineating this ethical imperative. We can find this in Deleuze's invocation of Spinoza: 'From random encounters with bodies, we can select the idea of those bodies that agree with our own and give us joy in that they increase our power' (Deleuze 1997: 144–5).[11] Through selection of those bodies that intensify our own, we find the capacity to actualise, incarnate new concepts and ways of being. Second, extracting and intensifying some potentials within the event is what makes it uniquely and entirely one's own, thus making sense of what it means to become the actor of one's own events.

It is only at this point that we are in a position to enact the other implication of the ethical imperative: to know the event more fully. The deliberate repetition of the event, which is to say 'making the event one's own', is a way to animate the forces that lie dormant within the event. The intensification of a portion of the event through its re-enactment by a singular being *disengages* the original actualisation from its abstract line, initiating a divergence from this original trajectory and constituting

a redistribution of the singularities. In this it is similar to how an already existing screenplay is brought to life by the individuals who take up its pages. Each rendition provides the possibility of discovering something anew, as audience and actors alike put the script into new forms of communication (Mackenzie and Porter 2011: 119–21).

To know the event is never to know just one actualisation of the event; it is to understand the event as an infinite potentiality: 'Counteractualising each event, the actor-dancer extracts the pure event which communicates with all the others and returns to itself through all the others' (Deleuze 1990: 178–9/209). Part of the imperative of willing the event is to engage in a way of life directed by the intent to take the event to its limit, to always experience more of the event. But if the event is infinite, the limit would be limitless. This is where the Nietzschean element of affirmation melds with Stoic acceptance of fate, and we can understand Deleuze's emphasis on experimentation as integral to his ontology of the event. To bring one's will in harmony with fate is 'to will the embodiment of a pre-existing event' (Sellars 2006: 161), but given the infinite nature of the event, this is a process of affirming as much of the event as we can stand to experience. Deleuze wants us 'to explore all distances' (Deleuze 1990: 179/210), transforming ourselves through the process, rather than succumb to any particular actualisation of the event and resign ourselves to our 'fate' in a limited fashion.

Undoubtedly, Deleuze is deeply concerned with the consequences of the imperative to take the event to its limits:

> If to will the event, how could we not also will its full actualization in a corporeal mixture . . . ? If the order of the surface is itself cracked, how could it not itself break up, how is it to be prevented from precipitating destruction . . . how can we prevent deep life from becoming a demolition job? (Deleuze 1990: 157/183)

Attempts to capture the flows of desire and infinite powers of the event can be disastrous: Artaud's madness or Fitzgerald's alcoholism, which suggest an inherently destructive aspect, prompting Deleuze to question whether we should limit ourselves to the counteractualisation of an event that would not include actual physical destruction – to the actor's simple, flat representation. But then Deleuze flips the question: are we merely to speak of these risks taken to the body and to the extremities of psychic awareness while remaining on the shore? These individuals who succeeded in communicating something of the event only did so through great risk, vulnerability or excess. Remaining at the shore, as a spectator, is not an option for Deleuze. We must 'extend

the crack but not enough to deepen it irremediably' (Deleuze 1990: 157–8/184). So, there is a fine line between tracing the incorporeal crack at the surface and letting this crack deepen, but, as the Stoics reveal, the relation between the incorporeal and corporeal is indelible. Counteractualisation cannot be just a thought experiment; it exists in tandem with the inscription on bodies: 'The eternal truth of the event is grasped only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh. But each time we must double this painful actualization by a counter-actualization which limits, moves, and transfigures it' (161/188). We have to take literally the challenge to take ourselves to the limit, to experiment, to intensify our experiences, and to find out just how far our bodies can go. But these embodied encounters, risks, have to be accompanied by the doubling activity, which is to say a way of approaching each actualised event with the intent to counter that particular actualisation, to release more of the event by creating a passage beyond that singular limit.

This leads us to the final aspect of becoming worthy of the event. Deleuze says,

> it would be necessary for the individual to grasp herself as event ... Each individual would be like a mirror for the condensation of singularities and each world a distance in the mirror. This is the ultimate sense of counter-actualisation. (Deleuze 1990: 178/208–9)

The individual must become a conduit for the intensities and forces immanent to the event. Yet, if the event is purely virtual, composed of pre-individual and pre-personal intensities and singularities, and we as subjects are hypostasised, already organised and actualised, then how can the subject recognise or engage these virtually imperceptible movements? Of course, this is a form of the question concerning the reconciliation of ontological process and philosophical method with which we began. Brassier succinctly addresses this problem, posing it as central to Deleuze's ontological account:

> The philosopher tries to extract this reservoir of pure unactualised virtuality; she tries to identify what is irresolvable in every actual solution ... [Yet] [h]ow exactly are macro-physical perceptual competences anchored in constituted individuals supposed to be 'isomorphic' with pre-individual, microphysical processes? (Brassier 2015: 73)

The answer is pre-figured in the tension generated from the twofold sense of vice-diction elaborated earlier, in relation to which Deleuze says, 'If the imperatives of Being have a relation with the I, it is with the fractured I' (Deleuze 1994: 199/257). In other words,

counteractualisation, if it is to be an engagement with the virtuality of the intensive Idea/event, needs the dissolution of the subject; *the 'I' must counteractualise itself*. The individual must 'transcend his form and his syntactical link with a world' in order to 'attain the universal communication of events' (Deleuze 1990: 178/208). This is the position that we find in both *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, where Deleuze calls for the dissolution of self as a kind of performance which would allow the individual to re-engage the intensive plenum, the realm of the Idea or Event, and corresponds to concepts of becoming-imperceptible and dismantling the Self in order to become a body without organs in *A Thousand Plateaus*. This process of taking oneself to extreme limits in order to dismantle one's own molar structure, in all of its various guises throughout Deleuze's work, is perilous and requires finesse, even caution (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 150, 160), which would have to be born from a kind of serious and reflective practice. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze suggests that the process of working through problematic Ideas leads us to the fractured I and the dissolved Self (Deleuze 1994: 259/332), and immediately following this claim he begins a discussion of the generative capacity of the death.

IV. Counteractualising the Self through the Spiritual Exercise of Death

The problematic Idea that is presented is the doubleness of death, the empirical event and the transcendental instance that constitute the constant, incongruent interface of the personal and the impersonal faces of death. Deleuze attributes the identification of two aspects of death to Blanchot. It is Blanchot who first recognises that the immense power of confronting the doubleness of death includes a 'radical reversal ... [that] loosens my hold upon myself by casting me out of my power' (Deleuze 1994: 112/148; Blanchot 1982: 106, 154–5). In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze links this Idea, giving priority to the impersonal, to the ethical imperative to be worthy of what happens (the event): 'the impersonal and infinitive death, which "distances" the ego, causing it to release the singularities which it contains and raising it to the death instinct on the other surface, where "one" dies, where one never succeeds in, or finishes, dying' (Deleuze 1990: 222/259). What we seek to understand then is how this problematic initiates the experience of a dramatic counteractualisation of Self, or, in a more Stoic vein, leads us to recognise the illusion of the substantial Self as a false judgement.

Deleuze distinguishes between these faces of death in several ways. First, the personal face of death represents the cancellation of large differences in extension (Deleuze 1994: 259/333) – it is something that we experience empirically as diminishment or annihilation of a particular 'I' or ego. It is a death that comes from without that I can confront 'in a struggle or meet at a limit … [and] which causes everything to pass' (112/148). It is important to recognise that even when Deleuze speaks of empirical death, he is not just referring to a final state, which would be an objective model that reduces death to pure negation. This is a view that he associates with Freud, for whom death exists only as an extrinsic, scientific and objective definition (111/147), which reduces the death instinct to a desire for the return of the living to inanimate matter. As opposed to this, Deleuze says that death is present in the living in the form of a 'subjective and differenciated experience' (Deleuze 1994: 112/148). The personal face of death concerns an encounter, a singular experience, in a present that causes transformation through the cancellation of differences, that is, actualisation. As Adkins observes, death, for Deleuze, is radically circumscribed, a most common experience as it is found in every intensity as passage or becoming (Adkins 2007: 120; Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 330).

By contrast, impersonal death represents the 'liberation and swarming of little differences in intensity' (Deleuze 1994: 259/333) and is related to what Deleuze refers to as the transcendental instant. Elsewhere, Deleuze refers to this as the model of death, linking it to the presence of zero intensity or the body without organs (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 329). Zero intensity is not a negation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 153/189). Even in *Anti-Oedipus* where the BwO is decidedly viewed in more negative terms than in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze understands zero intensity as a state of afflux or immobility, which signifies neither the growth nor diminishment of intensity, but always as a full plenitude (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 330). If intensity increases through capture and blockage, the precepts of organisation, and decreases through cancellation of intensities through their expression, the dissolution of form, to approach zero intensity would suggest the eradication of all blockages, a space of pure passage, which itself confounds the idea of the limit. But this space would also signify the inclusion rather than the eradication of what would be free intensities. Thus, the thought of zero intensity is itself a kind of regulative ideal (transcendental instance), but an ideal that induces one to think the incessant transgression of the limit, and hence the dissolution of any closed-off form. In light of this we can understand that the other face of death 'refers to the state of

free differences when they are no longer subject to the form imposed upon them by an I or an ego' (Deleuze 1994: 113/149). Since the model of death exceeds the I, given that the experience of death that the I undergoes is the passage towards and then through the zero state of intensity that the model represents,[12] death as a model is always to come, the source of incessant becoming which indicates the illusoriness of my own limits. Resolving these two forms of death provokes what Blanchot calls a radical reversal, whereby that which was the most extreme form of my power, to die, becomes that which casts me out of my power, and signifies my powerlessness because of the interminability of this model. The limits of the Self are surpassed by recognising that the transcendental instance implies a more general regime of passage, where decomposition and disorganisation as forms of death apply to the nature of the model itself, not to any one experience.

Deleuze suggests that it is the very practice of contemplating the incommensurability of the two faces of death that constitutes a method of cracking the Self. Moreover, one could argue that the realisation of impersonal death transforms the perspective associated with personal death, which is originally approached only in terms of the individual's particular 'world'. There are two simultaneous ontological levels at play here. At the molar level, the level of empirical death, incompatibilities exist between individuals, or persons, and worlds that are actualised; which means that changes or encounters between different individuals potentially destroy the integrity of those individuals. Here death is seen as the destruction of personal boundaries and easily viewed as negation. At the other level, that of impersonal, pre-individual singularities, there are no incompossibilities because these illusory boundaries fall away in light of the affirmation of the intensive plenum and pure connectivity, hence death is affirmed as generative becoming.

If we view this empirical experience, now in relation to the impersonal, we recognise the *experience* of death as a passage between zero intensity (the BwO or model of death) to new intensities as a matter of affirmation, which is to say, the positive sense of willing the event and willing that one become an event. It becomes our responsibility to find ways to enter into such fluctuations of intensity, that is, to will said events, such that our very being is transformed. This is an affective engagement with external events, things, forces, affects. It is to be provoked, vulnerable, exposed to the outside and to actively promote these encounters in order to be affected. So, the theoretical and

meditative engagement with death issues in a transformed approach to our interactions, engagements, and physical practices.

V. Conclusion

The dissolution of self is a perpetual undertaking, which has to be repeated as an initiating gesture for thought to begin again and again. Thus, thinking the duplicity of death as incommensurate and irreconcilable is but one exercise, though a paradigmatic one. Counter-actualisation of the Self can happen vis-à-vis certain spiritual exercises, reminding us of the need for constant and rigorous analysis of the impressions/sources of beliefs and evaluation of these first impressions which the Stoics systematised. Only, Deleuze inverts this process by challenging the priority of the rational subject that the Stoics sought to purify. In other words, the belief in the Self and its rationality is the erroneous value judgement. Nonetheless, the procedure is the same: re-peatedly reminding ourselves to be wary of false judgement and keeping our philosophical principles 'ready to hand' (*procheiros*), in order that our own dramatizations do not align themselves with molar narratives and transcendental illusions. Our meditative exercises will involve sys-tematically reminding ourselves of the erroneous judgement concerning the permanence of the actual and the illusion of the Self, exercises of depersonalisation: 'the multiple, mobile and communicating of individu-ality ... must therefore be constantly recalled' (Deleuze 1994: 254/327). This inversion means that the individual is directed outward, inducing a sensitivity to immanence and becoming which serves as a countermea-sure to the tendency towards hypostatisation that impedes creativity and political transformation. Dramatization as a practice of doubling and miming is a way of provoking this insight, of pointing to the irreality of our selves, just as contemplating how to make oneself a BwO is to simultaneously perform an exercise of reminding oneself of the improper assent to the belief in the substantial unity of the Self. By situating our discussion in terms of a type of spiritual exercise, we avoid the hyper-bolic – 'you don't reach the BwO by wildly destratifying' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 160/199). Experimentation can be a patient and sober practice, informed by the practice of holding our illusions up to rigorous scrutiny. Thus, to dismantle the Self is neither to literally destroy one's body, nor is it to enact a dematerialisation of thought in order to escape or retreat from the actualities of the world.[13] Instead, it is to enter into

a radically open, affective engagement with the world, to dissolve the illusory boundary between the Self and this outside (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 160/198). This spiritual exercise transforms the subject in light of its hitherto obscured resonance with an immanent field from which it arises, moving from a personal perspective to a cosmic one.

Philosophy becomes a life practice of making and unmaking the Self rather than an epistemic discourse about life, bringing Deleuze closer to what Hadot describes as a classical sense of philosophy aimed at self-transformation. This dismantling includes both spiritual and bodily exercises. Spiritual exercises are 'intended to effect a modification and a transformation in the subject who practices them' (Hadot 2004: 6). The dissolution of the subject through the spiritual exercise of contemplating the doubleness of death does transform the subject, loosening the psychic boundaries in order that one may begin the work of making oneself a BwO, which itself is 'not a notion or a concept but a practice, a set of practices' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 149–50/186), while experimentation leads us to new problems/Ideas, which effectively renew the fracture for us, prolonging the effects of dismantling the Self and the realisations wrought by impersonal death.

Spiritual exercises always require the delineation of a particular and rigorous method for their practice; dramatization is Deleuze's method. It is a method of repetition that disciplines us against certain transcendental illusions. It is a method of miming that reminds us of the externality of thought. It is a method informed by the nature of the event, which allows us to place ourselves within its ebbs and flows in order that we become worthy of that event. Finally, it is a method of counteractual-isation, which reactivates the event in order that we may envision new futures. To counteractualise the present, and, concomitantly, our selves, is not to deny the world or advocate for excessive self-destruction, but to believe in the future and the possibility of its transformation.

Notes

1. Throughout, the second page number refers to the non-English edition.
2. This is Foucault's 1970 review of *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, in which he indicates that Deleuze's philosophy represents the possibility of new thought that is affirmative, genetic, intensive; this image of thought is path-breaking in that it is 'capable of thinking the event and the concept' (Foucault 1977: 177); where thought is the creative repetition (miming) of the conditions or processes that form it: 'the role of thought is to produce the phantasm theatrically and to repeat the singular event' (179).
3. Laura Cull is one of the few who makes this distinction explicit, attempting an exposition of the method of dramatization as an approach to philosophical

texts while acknowledging its broader application as a differentiating process from a virtual plane of individuation. Cull wonders about this relationship, suggesting that the stage and performance may be the place in which this process of becoming can be amplified, positing art itself as a kind of thinking (Cull 2013: 498–520).

4. 'Anger and love are powers of the Idea which develop . . . from a problematic being' (Deleuze 1994: 191/246–7).

5. Ideas are 'objectively made and unmade according to the conditions which determine their fluent synthesis' (Deleuze 1994: 187/242).

6. This is a procedure that would complete the objective in 'The Method of Dramatization', to discover the drama (multiplicity) of the concept (Deleuze 2004: 98/137).

7. For instance, Bogue describes vice-diction as a 'topical survey of proliferating virtual connections and an activation of their potential' (Bogue 2010: 107).

8. 'It presides over the distribution of distinctive points within the Idea: it decides the manner in which a series must be continued . . . it determines whether the series obtained within the Idea are convergent or divergent' (Deleuze 1994: 190/245).

9. 'Thought, however, is vice-diction or counter-effectuation: it goes the other way from production. It is a matter of establishing the Idea/multiplicity of something—"constructing a concept"—by moving from extensity through intensity to virtuality' (Protevi 2007).

10. The development of a cosmic perspective derives from Marcus Aurelius's insistence on developing modes of thought whereby we recognise ourselves in harmony with the Universe (Aurelius 1997: Med. 4.23, 4.40, V.13) and acknowledge the ephemeral nature of human life (Aurelius 1997: Med. 4.3, 4.48). See Sellars 1999 for the relation between this cosmic perspective and a Deleuzian ethics.

11. Deleuze makes this point by referencing Spinoza's *Ethics*, Proposition 10: As long as we are not torn by affects contrary to our own nature, we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the body according to the ordering of the intellect.

12. Brent Adkins, developing his account from a reading of *Anti-Oedipus*, explains that 'the experience of death is the passing through this zero degree of intensity to another affective state' (Adkins 2007: 120), which corresponds to the idea of the empirical experience of death as being affected or encountering a limit which causes something to pass that one finds in *Difference and Repetition*. Attempting to compare the readings of death in these two books is not without problems; it seems that Deleuze inverts the relation between the two faces of death from his original interpretation – whereby it is the experience of death rather than the model (transcendental instance) of death that never ceases.

13. Erik Bordeleau addresses this particular critique in 'A Redemptive Deleuze? Choked Passages or the Politics of Contraction' (2014). Hallward's original critique of becoming-imperceptible as the desire for apolitical blissful virtuality is found in *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (2006).

References

Adkins, Brent (2007) 'A Rumor of Zombies: Deleuze and Guattari on Death', *Philosophy Today*, 51, pp. 119–24.

Aurelius, Marcus (1997) *Meditations*, ed. William Kaufman, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications.

Blanchot, Maurice (1982) *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock, Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press.

Bogue, Ronald (2010) 'Deleuze's Immanent Ethics', in David Jones, Jason Wirth and Michael Schwartz (eds), *The Gift of Logos: Essays in Continental Philosophy*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.

Bordeleau, Erik (2014) 'A Redemptive Deleuze? Choked Passages or the Politics of Contraction', *Deleuze Studies*, 8.4, pp. 491–508.

Brassier, Ray (2015) 'Deleveling: Against Flat Ontologies', in Channa van Dijk, Eva van der Graaf, Michiel den Haan, Rosa de Jong, Christiaan Roodenburg, Dyane Til and Deva Waal (eds), *Under Influence – Philosophical Festival Drift 2014, Omnia*, pp. 64–80.

Cull, Laura (2013) 'Deleuze and Dramatization in the Context of Performance Philosophy', *Modern Drama*, 56:4, pp. 498–520.

Deleuze, Gilles (1983) *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, New York: Columbia University Press. [Deleuze, Gilles (1962) *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France].

Deleuze, Gilles (1990) *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, London: Continuum. [Deleuze, Gilles (1969) *Logique du sens*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit].

Deleuze, Gilles (1994) *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press. [Deleuze, Gilles (1968) *Differénce et répétition*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France].

Deleuze, Gilles [1993] (1997) 'Spinoza and the Three Ethics', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles (2004) *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina, Los Angeles and New York: Semiotext(e). [Deleuze, Gilles (2002) *L'Île déserte et autres textes. Textes et entretiens 1953–1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, Paris: Éditions de Minuit].

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari (1983) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. [Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari (1972) *L'Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit].

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari (1980) *Mille Plateaux: vol. 2 Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit].

Foucault, Michel (1977) 'Theatricum Philosophicum', in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Hadot, Pierre (1995) *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase, Oxford: Blackwell.

Hadot, Pierre (2004) *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Hallward, Peter (2006) *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*, New York: Verso.

Hughes, Joe (2009) *Deleuze's* Difference and Repetition*: A Reader's Guide*, London: Continuum.

Lawlor, Leonard (2012) 'Phenomenology and Metaphysics, and Chaos: On the Fragility of the Event in Deleuze', in Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 103–25.

Mackenzie, Iain and Robert Porter (2011) *Dramatizing the Political*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Protevi, John (2007) 'Water', *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*, 15 (Winter), available at http://www.rhizomes.net/issue15/protevi.html (accessed 6 June 2015).

Sellars, John (1999) 'The Point of View of the Cosmos: Deleuze, Romanticism, Stoicism', *Pli*, 8, pp. 1–24.

Sellars, John (2006) 'An Ethics of the Event: Deleuze's Stoicism', *Angelaki*, 3:2, pp. 157–71.

Tomlinson, Hugh (1983) 'Preface to the English Translation', in Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, New York: Columbia University Press.

Williams, James (2013) *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

**Your short guide to the EUP Journals
Blog http://euppublishingblog.com/**

*A forum for discussions relating to
Edinburgh University Press Journals*

1. The primary goal of the EUP Journals Blog

To aid discovery of authors, articles, research, multimedia and reviews published in Journals, and as a consequence contribute to increasing traffic, usage and citations of journal content.

2. Audience

Blog posts are written for an educated, popular and academic audience within EUP Journals' publishing fields.

3. Content criteria - your ideas for posts

We prioritize posts that will feature highly in search rankings, that are shareable and that will drive readers to your article on the EUP site.

4. Word count, style, and formatting

- Flexible length, however typical posts range 70-600 words.
- Related images and media files are encouraged.
- No heavy restrictions to the style or format of the post, but it should best reflect the content and topic discussed.

5. Linking policy

- Links to external blogs and websites that are related to the author, subject matter and to EUP publishing fields are encouraged, e.g.to related blog posts

6. Submit your post

Submit to ruth.allison@eup.ed.ac.uk

If you'd like to be a regular contributor, then we can set you up as an author so you can create, edit, publish, and delete your *own* posts, as well as upload files and images.

7. Republishing/repurposing

Posts may be re-used and re-purposed on other websites and blogs, but a minimum 2 week waiting period is suggested, and an acknowledgement and link to the original post on the EUP blog is requested.

8. Items to accompany post

- A short biography (ideally 25 words or less, but up to 40 words)
- A photo/headshot image of the author(s) if possible.
- Any relevant, thematic images or accompanying media (podcasts, video, graphics and photographs), provided copyright and permission to republish has been obtained.
- Files should be high resolution and a maximum of 1GB
- Permitted file types: *jpg, jpeg, png, gif, pdf, doc, ppt, odt, pptx, docx, pps, ppsx, xls, xlsx, key, mp3, m4a, wav, ogg, zip, ogv, mp4, m4v, mov, wmv, avi, mpg, 3gp, 3g2*.