

REVIEW

Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ISBN: 1107002613

While many specialists working in the history of philosophy would agree that over the past 20 years the series of Cambridge Companions to Philosophy has yielded a stock of varying quality, the appearance of *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze* marks an important milestone in contemporary Continental philosophy and Deleuze scholarship for two reasons. The first concerns the relative popularity of the series among non-specialists seeking an introductory companion to philosophers whose works can appear wholly intimidating (and Deleuze is certainly no exception to this). Although the English speaking world has seen a proliferation of excellent studies on Deleuze's philosophical work, the appearance of this volume should serve to further entice those less inclined to take up a serious study of a philosopher too often and mistakenly labeled as belonging to the unfortunate camp of willful postmodern obscurantists. The second reason bears on the impressive roster of contributors, which brings together so many of Deleuze's most influential interpreters in English. These authors have done an admirable job taking on the increasingly daunting task of representing, if only even approximating, the growing sea of philosophical literature on Deleuze. The main contents and bibliographical references alone provide a useful reference point marking the current state of this burgeoning and quite frankly somewhat crowded area of contemporary philosophy.

What new readers will perhaps find most useful is the organization of the papers in accordance with whatever interests the newcomer may have already developed, such as the history of philosophy (Smith, Williams, Lord, de Beistegui, Lawlor, Olkowski, Holland, Somers-Hall), phenomenology (Lawlor), French intellectual history (Dosse, Genosko, Holland), literature (Bogue), ethics/political philosophy (Braidotti, Patton), science and mathematics (Protevi, DeLanda), psychoanalysis (Holland), etc. Notably, the volume lacks a sustained engagement with Deleuze's readings of both Hume and Leibniz, the latter of whom is even absent from the index. Less surprising, save for Dosse's remarks on Peirce (137, 146-7), is the volume's lack of engagement with Deleuze's fruitful relationship to the traditions of classical American philosophy, an area which is still little explored even amidst the recent explosion of Deleuze literature, but which nevertheless remains a fertile ground for developing a richer understanding of Deleuze's philosophical growth. The papers are not thematized in a strict linear fashion but rather, as Somers-Hall suggests in his introduction, "provide a series of interpretations, each emphasizing a different theme in Deleuze's work, with the aim as a whole of providing a rich portrait of the range and sophistication of Deleuze's thinking" (8). This is in keeping with

Deleuze's variable status as both a systematic thinker as well as a kind of free-range source-book of arguments for the creative reader to extract and develop independently of their assignments by Deleuze himself. As is made clear throughout the volume, the blurring of the line between what Deleuze borrows and that which he constructs is grounded in what he takes to be a distinctively *creative* rather than representative principle of philosophical inquiry, a theme skillfully nuanced in both Smith's paper (22-5) and Williams' overview of Deleuze's 1968 philosophical masterwork *Difference and Repetition* (39-46).

One motif that shines throughout the essays is the orienting of Deleuze as primarily a thinker of practice (see especially Williams 46-9, de Beistegui 76, as well as Braidotti and Patton). In spite of what may initially seem to be a proliferation of rather abstract references throughout his work (e.g., to calculus, microbiology, contemporary physics, or even French New Wave cinema), as de Beistegui argues, for Deleuze a concept is "at once a political weapon, a moral tool, and an aesthetic ideal," a value of practice-centered thinking Deleuze ultimately inherits from Plato (58). More generally, Deleuze's turn toward immanence away from all forms of posited transcendence reflects this focus on experiential concreteness, wherein the value of a concept or moral strength of an action stems not from the degree to which it conforms to or confirms received understandings, where thought is satisfied with a simple rearrangement of its prejudices, but rather consists in the degree to which it is capable of adapting to the contours of new experiences. Deleuze's project thus constructs an image of thought, as de Beistegui says, not "of imitation and resemblance, but of production through combination" (63). This openness to the new in experience, I would add, implies a realist denial of the correlationist equivalence of thought and being, a theme which opens Beth Lord's essay on Deleuze's complex relation to Kant. As she observes, the Kantian noumena are precisely, as Kant says, that which can only be thought, but since it is the faculty of the understanding that is the origin of pure thought, the noumenal remains that which cannot be thought: "The being of thought is both what *must* be thought and what *cannot* be thought" (82). Lord's paper is outstanding, yet it would have benefitted from more engagement with Kant's third *Critique*, since this is where Deleuze's lifelong fascination with Kant truly hinges. When Lord writes, for example, that "it is not that transcendental idealism is unwilling to investigate the conditions of being in the idea, Deleuze thinks; rather, it is unable to do so, for it cannot trust the power of ideas except insofar as they are considered *not* to be constitutive of being," what is left out is not only the productive and transformative power of "aesthetic ideas" in Kant's discussion of genius (which grants a role to the ideas of reason a constitutive power in creative activity beyond the strictly epistemic interests of the first *Critique*), but also the decisive influence of this notion on Deleuze's reconstruction of the transcendental role of ideas, which moves away from a theoretical, regulative function toward a problematizing practical and creative function (this is addressed later in Olkowski's paper; see 272, 282). As Lord observes with Deleuze, Kant's rejection of the immediacy of the Cartesian "I think," if only for a brief moment, achieves a robust temporalization of thought itself displaced by the indeterminacy that attends the real experience of futurity. Kant thus introduces the new value of determinability within thought, where the "I think" becomes a subject of determination rather than an immediate given à la Descartes (91). As Deleuze argues, the merciless line of time thereby fractures the self in rendering it subject to variations and new possible determinations.

This discussion of the fissured self raises the issue of whether Deleuze is indeed a celebrator of Dionysian undifferentiated chaos, as some have charged. Against this misreading, Lawlor's essay argues that through an engagement with and criticism of phenomenology, Deleuze wages a two-front battle against traditional metaphysics (with which the latter polemically includes phenomenology) and pure chaos by developing a concept of "the event" as an unlimited (or "eternal") process of constitution (donation of sense) in what Deleuze calls real experience. On Deleuze's view, traditional metaphysics forces a false dilemma on thought, wherein we are obligated to choose between undifferentiated chaos, at one extreme, or the complete conceptual determination of experience, at least in principle, at the other. Whether through logical predication of being (metaphysics) or a self-identical subject as epistemic agent, metaphysics and phenomenology, says Deleuze, agree in a shared positing of the alternative, namely, sheer chaos. By contrast, as Lawlor shows, Deleuze's discussion of events as *singularities* walks a tightrope between these static alternatives, where events are conceived as sensitive points of variation (curves, bottlenecks, points of fusion, moments of joy or tears, etc). The reason why Deleuze groups such phenomena together into events when we would normally break them up into separate categories (such as physical, psychological, biological phenomena) is that the *real* experience of events forms a mixture that defines the singularity of the experience, while the multiple elements of the experience become distinct only *after* the event. In the event, for example, that water must be channeled in a precise way in order for it to reach its crops, the constructing of the channel, the muscle contractions in the construction, the anticipation attending the first trial runs of the channels all form a singular experience, whose differences define its ipseity, radical concreteness, or deep particularity (as opposed to normalized particulars subsumable under universals without remainder). Such events are conceptualized only at a crucial loss, where quantified physical, psychological, or biological factors are related to one another as functions of their own distinct domains, while the real experience of the event itself exhibits mixtures that puncture these well-defined borders to form a singular experience. As Lawlor suggests, philosophy becomes a creative activity in lending determinations to these mixtures *as* events, rather than representing them (120), thereby charting a different course than that which saddles thought with the false all-or-nothing dilemma of traditional metaphysics.

Shifting gears, the papers of Dosse and Genosko delve into the historical themes of Deleuze's place in French intellectual history, the former focusing on the influence of structuralism and the latter on the nature of Deleuze's collaborations with Felix Guattari (1930-1992). Dosse shows that Guattari's concept of a "machine," intended to capture a sense of pure, material potential, is inspired by his early readings of Deleuze, while Genosko turns Guattari back on Deleuze himself, rightfully arguing that the influence of former is illegitimately deemphasized in most studies of and references to their collaborative works. As Dosse observes, while Guattari's Deleuze-inspired concept of social machines is intended to replace the notion of structure in the standard sense (135), so too does the influence of Guattari on Deleuze result in a reconstruction (and in some cases abandonment) of Deleuze's early conceptual formations (154).

The volume then turns to consider practical philosophy explicitly with two papers that introduce ethical and political themes in Deleuze. Braidotti's paper, perhaps the richest in the

collection, argues that Deleuze's rejection of ethical universalism avoids the pitfall of post-modernist relativism by providing an alternative view of moral subjectivity grounded in a Spinozist-Nietzschean description of alterity as the cite for the production of values not yet sustained by current conditions (170-2). The frame of her paper in one sense mirrors Lawlor's, where Deleuze's two-front battle between chaos and metaphysics now takes shape in the practical register as a fight to resist the chaos of moral relativism as well as the ethical universalism implied by metaphysics. As Braidotti argues, the result is a radically relationist ethics which emphasizes "the 'situated' nature of all entities," (174), where ethics involves forging relations with others (in all senses, human and environmental) that are both sustainable and inclusive. Continuing this theme, Patton's essay on Deleuze's political philosophy pushes into yet another of Deleuze's two-front struggles, namely, against the shared "macropolitical" focus of both Anglophone political philosophy, which seeks to reconstruct existing principles of autonomy and right implicit in liberal institutions, as well as Critical Theory, which envisions the public domain as an ideal space in which oppressive practices, either implicit or explicit, can be exposed and critiqued. Naturally, Deleuze and Guattari do not reject such notions wholesale, but their focus is rather on "micropolitical" variations in sensibility, affect, and allegiance in what are described as "minoritarian becomings that provide the affective impetus for political movements" (205). In their collaborative view, politics is a simultaneous assemblage of "molar" institutions, principles, and social classes and "molecular" elements of individual and collective affect and desire, where changes in the former must always be traced back to variations in the latter as the experimental source of revolutionary impulses in politics. As Patton observes, theirs is a politics grounded in an affective social ontology rather than a politics of the state viewed as an embodiment of an ideal treaty or social contract entered into by pre-individuated agents.

The next two papers consider Deleuze's appropriations and interventions in the sciences, DeLanda covering the influence on Deleuze of the physics of dynamical systems, while Protevi surveys the discussions of organic life in both the early and collaborative works. The former is not light on the technical vocabularies of contemporary physics and mathematics, and so might prove difficult reading for the uninitiated; DeLanda argues that Deleuze's attempt to replace the Aristotelian model of species and genus with a metaphysics more appropriate to dynamical systems marks a serious contribution to debates in Anglo-American metaphysics of modalities. By comparison, Protevi's paper on Deleuze's biophilosophy proves more accessible, serving as a concise source for clarifying the often dizzying array of conceptual creations and neologisms that frustrate new readers, especially in the collaborative works (e.g., non-organic life, body without organs, de/re-territorialization, etc).

The volume continues with two papers on Deleuze's interventions in aesthetics and the arts. Olkowski's paper offers a unique and much-needed analysis of the appropriation of Kant's third *Critique*, which she describes as "Deleuze's transposition of Kant's aesthetics" (276). The overall thrust of this essay is that Deleuze's entire philosophy may be encountered from the point of view of aesthetics, a field which Deleuze describes as suffering from a wrenching duality in the wake of Kant: on the one hand, aesthetics is conceived epistemically as the theory of sensibility as the form of possible experience, while on the other hand, aesthetics is conceived as the theory of art as the reflection on real experience. As Olkowski observes,

the latter unlocks aspects of sensation that are neither representations (à la a metaphysics of constitutive subjectivity) nor mere abstract chaos (à la an irrational rhapsody of sensorial flux). Rather, as Deleuze argues, real experience and the arts that embody it are explorations of pure spatio-temporal forces that interact directly with the body (“the sign”). I would add that Deleuze’s readings of painter Francis Bacon suggest that the latter instantiates in practice another two-front battle, now in the aesthetic register, against both classical representative figuration and modernist abstract expressionism. Continuing this theme of the work of art, Bogue’s paper surveys the importance of literary figures in Deleuze in authors such as Proust, Sacher-Masoch, Kafka, Klossowski, Melville, and Carroll. Of particular importance is Bogue’s discussion of the influence of Guattari on Deleuze’s reflections on literature, as evidenced by the latter’s addition of an important new chapter in the later edition of *Proust and Signs* (1964, 1970). Here, Bogue argues, Deleuze shifts from an emphasis on the interpretation of the pure sensation of signs to their very production through the Guattari-inspired concept of the “literary machine.” Deleuze thus begins to treat as more strongly distinct the problems of meaning from problems of production, in advance of its more fully developed discussion in *Anti-Oedipus* (293).

The final papers round out the volume by returning to themes in the history of philosophy. Holland’s paper outlines the complex role of psychoanalysis in Deleuze’s early work, later moving into a more detailed discussion of Deleuze and Guattari’s collaborative mapping of psychoanalysis onto the field of political economy in *Anti-Oedipus*. Holland’s paper exhibits superb clarity, emphasizing the neglected role of Jung in the early Deleuze’s more well-known appropriations of the unconscious in Kant, Nietzsche, and Bergson, and the subsequent analyses informed by these influences of “desiring production” in capitalist social institutions: “Ultimately, not only is the nuclear family a strictly capitalist institution, but psychoanalysis is, too—in that it sanctions, perpetrates, and reinforces the Oedipal psycho-dynamics of castration, obedience, self-denial, and deferral so perfectly suited to the socio-dynamics of capital accumulation” (317). Lastly, Somers-Hall contributes a discussion of Deleuze’s relationship to the Heideggerian project of interrogating the history of metaphysics as the “forgetting of being” or onto-theology. Somers-Hall argues that this takes shape in Deleuze’s critique of Heidegger’s (and one might add, Derrida’s) blanket condemnation of the metaphysical tradition and the apparent failure to see alternatives within that tradition itself opened up by thinkers such as Lucretius, Duns Scotus, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, Nietzsche, etc. Contrary to Heidegger, Somers-Hall observes, Deleuze maintains that the history of philosophy contains numerous resources for breaking out of the static predicative model of thought, possibilities which are masked by totalizing and “bludgeoning” readings of the history of philosophy (cf. Smith 14). Somers-Hall’s paper concludes with some comparative reflections on Badiou, who offers his own response to onto-theology, comparing the differing trajectories taken by Deleuze and Badiou’s attempts to escape it.

More experienced readers of Deleuze might be asking: Do we really need *yet another* introduction, companion, or general guidebook on Deleuze? If this collection had appeared 10 years ago, it would have joined the ranks of the many quality introductory volumes surveying the wide territory of Deleuze’s philosophy. But given the progressively rich tradition of more recent Deleuze criticism amidst which the volume has now appeared, what is achieved here is

much more than a standard guidebook; more importantly, it serves as a useful roadmap that marks the current state of this increasingly significant area in contemporary philosophy. Among the many introductions to Deleuze are currently available, *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze* gains an advantage in that it offers the more seasoned reflections on specific areas and problems in Deleuze's project by individual scholars specializing in these domains, as opposed to the more common offering of a single author casting a net across the wide range of issues covered by Deleuze's philosophy.

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