

# [Ontologies of schopenhauer’s will and deleuze and guattari’s desire](https://assignbuster.com/ontologies-of-schopenhauers-will-and-deleuze-and-guattaris-desire/)

Compare and contrast the ontologies of Schopenhauer’s will and Deleuze and Guattari’s desire.

‘ Desire’ is a central term in Deleuze’s philosophy. In his work with Guattari, he came to define ‘ desire’ as a positive and productive force that was able to form connections and enhance the power of bodies in their connection.’[1]For Schopenhauer, the answer to the riddle of what is the inner nature of things ‘ is given to the subject of knowledge appearing as individual, and this answer is given in the word Will ’[2]which gives us the key to our ‘ own phenomenon,’[3]and the true objects and meanings behind representation, namely the thing-in-itself. For Schopenhauer the world we know consists of representation and will .[4]Ultimately, ‘ his doctrine of thing-in-itself as will identifies thing-in-itself as existing within the subject at the core of all phenomenal willing.’[5]The concept of ‘ willing’, for Schopenhauer, underpins all human beings (and animals).[6]

This essay will attempt to show  that whilst there seems to be a similarity in how ‘ Desire’ and ‘ will’ function in Deleuze and Guattari’s  and Schopenhauer’s discourse respectively, they come from very different `ontologies.

Deleuze and Guattari, liken everything in this world to a machine, humans included.[7]Ultimately, they say, underlying every single thing is a process of production.[8]Underlying this process of production is the concept of desire , which causes all things to flow.[9]It is through desire that reality is produced.[10]

The traditional understanding and psychoanalytic explanation of ‘ desire’ link it with lack in the sense that one can only desire what one does not have.[11]Desire, from this point of view, is the external relation between the subject that desires and the object that is desired.[12]In other words, desire is transitive and representational because it desires a representation of the thing that is lacking. Deleuze’s and Guattari’s concept of ‘ desiring-production’ amounts to the ‘ intransitivisation of desire – desire becomes productive at the point where it is no longer tied to representation through lack.’[13]Desire now becomes a positive productive force, which like labour, is actualised in practice.[14]Hence, ‘ all life is desire , a flow of positive difference and becoming, a full series of productive connections.’[15]Desire is also freefrom representation.[16] By removing representation from desire, and seeing desire as an act of the body itself, we can also free desire from the human.[17]

Schopenhauer employs a concept of pure will. When the aspects of the physiological will, which are ‘ the cause and motivation for willing, the willing subject and with it necessarily the object’[18]are removed from phenomenal will one is left with the concept of pure will. Schopenhauer says, ‘ the knowledge I have of my will , although an immediate knowledge, cannot be separated from that of my body.’[19]This is because the will is known only through its ‘ individual acts,’ and the body is ‘ the condition of knowledge’ of our will .[20]In other words, whilst we have access to the will through our own bodies, this does not mean that we know the wholeness or completeness of the will , but rather, we only know it as it exists within ourselves, in its individualised form, in other words, it’s nature.[21]Furthermore, Schopenhauer considers humans to have a ‘ double knowledge’ of our bodies.[22]This double knowledge is the knowledge we have of our body as representation, and also the knowledge of it in itself .[23]

Deleuze and Guattari claim that to think of desire only in terms of that of a rational human is to limit one’s thinking and understanding of desire .[24] Desire is to be understood, they say, as being ‘ one immanent plane of life as desire ,’ and not as ‘ desiring subjects set over against an inert and lifeless object world.’[25]Every object ‘ presupposes the continuity of a flow; every flow, the fragmentation of the object’.[26]Each human interprets the world from the perspective of their own personal flux, but there is always a connection between other flows along a transverse path.[27]

So, we see that both Schopenhauer’s conception of will and Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of desire are considered to be transcendent and metaphysical, above and beyond the world. Similarly, desire and will are individual to every person, and also shape the way in which each individual sees the world. For Schopenhauer, through the knowledge we have of our own will, we can see and assume the will of other things. Likewise, for Deleuze and Guattari, through our individual flow of desire, we can see the connection of flows between all things we connect with in the world.

Following Plato, Schopenhauer considers Ideas to be the original forms of things.[28]Each Idea ‘ is one only, for it is the archetype itself, a single and specific determination of the will ’.[29]Since Ideas are outside of time and space, they are ‘ metaphysical realities, determinations of the will at the universal level’.[30]Each Idea ‘ is an objective image … having no physical existence’.[31]However, each Idea has an ‘ empirical correlative … mediated by the principle of sufficient reason’.[32]In this way then, the will , which is unitary, formless and metaphysical, gives rise to the world of empirical reality through the Ideas.[33]

For Deleuze and Guattari ‘ desire produces reality’.[34]There is no special form of existence to desire ,[35]hence it is metaphysical. Desire is productive, and ‘ intrinsically produces an imaginary object  [lack] that functions as a double of reality.’[36]In this way, the lack produced as a side-product of desire causes the ‘ mental production behind all real productions’.[37]The end product, reality, is made through the passive syntheses of desire as an autoproduction of the unconscious, creating a mental image which is displayed in reality.[38]

So, we see that even though will and desire and the manner in which they function are described in different ways, both have an empirical correlative which in both ontologies explains how reality is formed.

The will which is the being-in-itself of the body which is representation presents itself first in the voluntary movements of the body. These movements are ‘ one and the same thing’ as the will and are distinguished from the will simply because they ‘ have become representation.[39]These acts are grounded in motivation, but these motives reveal no more of the will than the particular time and place of its manifestation. The will lies ‘ outside the province of the law of motivation.’[40]

Deleuze and Guattari compare life to a machine and consider ‘ desiring-machines [to] work only when they break down, and by continually breaking down’.[41]In order for the connective process of desire to work, it must couple production with anti-production,[42]hence the breaking-down of desiring-machines. Lack is ‘ counter-produced as a result of the pressure of antiproduction’.[43]

The will , since it is metaphysical and beyond the province of laws, acts in a way that is irreducible to human understanding or explanation. Unlike will , the process of desire can be explained. But like will , desire does not conform to laws, and works in a way that is literally counter-productive and contradictory.

The will shows itself differently in every particular phenomenon, but this change in this presentation of the will is foreign to the will itself, and is merely according to the phenomenon.[44]Due to the principle of sufficient reason, which is the universal form of every phenomenon, each object is subordinated by every individual action.[45]Thus each object is the phenomenon of the will , and not the will itself, and is therefore under the law of the principle of sufficient reason.[46]

Deleuze and Guattari do not explicitly explain the Real in Anti-Oedipus in anywhere as much detail as Schopenhauer does. Whilst we know that ‘ the object being of desire is the Real in and of itself’,[47]it can only be assumed that desire, in its empirical counterpart, conforms to the laws of the world, since it is simply stated that ‘ desire always remains in close touch with the conditions of objective existence’.[48]This would draw similarities between the manifestations of the will and desire within the empirical world, since they both conform to laws of objective existence and the principle of sufficient reason alike.

Due to the will in its particular phenomena being subordinated by its particular universal form, this is how Schopenhauer explains that the will is found in both inanimate and animate objects alike. Ultimately, the will is found in every aspect of nature, from humans, to animals, to plants, to gravity etc.[49]Therefore, ‘ this power, the will is that which lies at the heart of each separate object and which holds it in being.’[50]

Whilst it can only be extrapolated that desire too is subordinated by its empirical counterpart, Deleuze and Guattari do highlight the importance of difference. Namely ‘ desire is the affirmation or production of difference all the while bearing in mind that difference is different in each of its becomings.’[51]This difference can be interpreted as similar to Schopenhauer’s explanation of how the will manifests itself in all aspects of nature but shows itself in many different ways, since the will is subordinated by its particular phenomena.

For Schopenhauer, the will-to-live is the underlying foundation of the will , namely that the will wills life.[52]Since the will is the thing-in-itself, the essence of the world and life in general is the phenomenon of the will , and the representation of the will .[53]The will-to-live is shown in two ways: first as a sexual impulse to produce offspring, and second as the passion and care shown to offspring to ensure the continuity of the species.[54]This is why the individual is merely seen as a means to an end in terms of the will-to-live of the species.[55]

Deleuze and Guattari state that desire desires death, since ‘ the full body of death is its motor, just as it desires life, because the organs of life are the working machine’.[56]However, whilst also desiring death, desire desires life. This is shown by the fact that  ‘ the pure “ thisness” of the object produced is carried over into a new act of producing’.[57]So, every object produced also produces another, giving objects a ‘ producing/product identity’.[58]This identity further ‘ constitutes a third term in the linear series: an enormous undifferentiated object’.[59]All objects are thus stuck in a continuous wheel of birth and rebirth which cannot be escaped.[60]

Similarly in both the will and desire , they both aim to ensure continuity. The will wills to live, whilst desire desires to produce. These can both essentially be seen as one and the same thing.

For Deleuze and Guattari, ‘ desiring-production is pure multiplicity, that is to say, an affirmation that is irreducible to any sort of unity’.[61]Desire, producing everything in the Real, does never unify not totalise anything, but simply establishes paths of flux between all things.[62]This sense of flux, whilst not stated in these terms by Schopenhauer, can also be seen in his conception of the will . This is because the will manifests itself in all things, and ultimately creates all things, but each empirical thing has manifested itself in its own phenomena in its own particular way. So, whilst everything is ultimately linked through the will , nothing is unified or totalised by the will , in the same way as desire .

In conclusion, after having noted some similarities and dissimilarities between how Schopenhauer and Deleuze and Guattari present will and desire, it must be pointed out that their ontologies are fundamentally  at odds. In Schopenhauer’s ontology, the innermost nature of things consists of the will which is in everything. All of  nature, including humans, are an expression of a will to life, and everything consists of will and representation of will. For Deleuze and Guattari, the problem with representation is that it assumes a distinction between the mind that represents and the world which is represented.[63]The mind ‘ images’ the world, but reality, in all its difference and complexity cannot be reduced to any images we can form.[64]They see the world as consisting of ‘ free differences’ and this ‘ suggests a defence of the particular against all forms of universalisation or representation. Every time there is representation, he argues, there is an “ unrepresented singularity” which does not recognise itself in the representant.’[65]

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[1] The Deleuze Dictionary , ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 65, 66.

[2]Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation , tr. by E. F. J. Payne, Vol. 1, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), p. 100. (Henceforth abbreviated WWR.)

[3]WWR 1: 100.

[4]WWR 1: 105.

[5]Dale Jacquette, The Philosophy of Schopenhauer , (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 73.

[6] Ibid.

[7]Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus , tr. by Robert Hurley and Mark Seem, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), p. 12.

I Ibid.

[9] Ibid. , p. 16.

[10] Ibid., p. 43.

[11]Claire Colebrook, Understanding Deleuze , ed. by Rachel Fensham and Terry Threadgold, (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2002), p. 98.

[12] Ibid.

[13]Alistair Welchman, ‘ Schopenhauer and Deleuze’, At the Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian philosophy, ed. by Craig Lundy and Daniela Voss (Edinburgh: Edinburgh `University Press, 2015), pp. 231-252, p. 251.

[14]Jihai Gao, ‘ Deleuze’s Conception of Desire’, Deleuze Studies , 7. 3 (2013), 406-420 (p. 406-7).

[15]Colebrook, p. 99.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid .

[18]Jacquette, p. 73.

[19]WWR 1: 101.

[20]WWR 1: 102.

[21]Stephen Cross, Schopenhauer’s Encounter with Indian Thought: Representation and Will and Their Indian Parallels , (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017), p. 110.

[22]WWR 1: 103.

[23] Ibid.

[24]Colebrook, p. 100.

[25] Ibid., p. 99.

[26]Deleuze and  Guattari, p. 16.

[27] Ibid .

[28]Cross, p. 122.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., p. 125.

[34]Deleuze and  Guattari, p. 43.

[35] Ibid .

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid. p. 38.

[38] Ibid. p. 39.

[39]WWR 1: 106.

[40] Ibid.

[41]Deleuze and Guattari, p. 19.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., p. 41.

[44]WWR 1: 112.

[45]WWR 1: 113.

[46] Ibid.

[47]Deleuze and Guattari, p. 39.

[48] Ibid., p. 40.

[49]WWR 1: 287.

[50]Cross, p. 115.

[51]Colebrook, p. 116.

[52]WWR 1: 275.

[53] Ibid .

[54]Cross, p. 116.

[55] Ibid.

[56]Deleuze and Guattari, p. 19.

[57] Ibid., p. 17.

[58] Ibid., p. 18.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., p. 56.

[62] Ibid. ), p. 58.

[63]Colebrook, p. 70.

[64] Ibid., p. 69.

[65]Parr, p. 76.