

Ontologies of schopenhauer's will and deleuze and guattari's desire



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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 free from 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, its 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.*

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

| *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.