

The Significance of Signs: Virtual Ontology/Actual Experience Part I

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I. Introduction

This paper is threefold. It is positioned against the background of a philosophical problem that refers to the human ability of knowing oneself and God as One. In the philosophical literature the positive answer to this problematic is usually delegated to the mystical realm; in the realm of concrete practical experiences the answer would have been negative as based on the apparent impossibility of connecting the human with the divine in real life. Such a connection is often posited as being “beyond the limit of all human understanding” (Kearney 2001: 104) and delegated to the mystical realm. This paper’s argument is that while this connection may seem to exceed human understanding, it does not have to remain as such. To construct the argument of how to overcome the great divide separating the human from the divine, the paper will examine three sources crossing over

philosophy and natural science and grounded on a common foundation represented by the logic of the included middle.

The first is Basarab Nicolescu's (2002a; 2002b; 2005) program of transdisciplinarity. The second is the cutting edge of contemporary science called *coordination dynamics* that posits the natural world in terms of "The Complementary Nature" (Kelso and Engstrom 2006). The third is a broad corpus of work by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze whose striking ontology of the virtual and method of transcendental empiricism will constitute the focus of this paper. In brief, disciplinary, or *in vitro*, knowledge is based on the classical logic of the excluded middle that induces a separation between subject and object and reduces the nature of knowledge to knowing merely the "objective" facts of the external world. Nicolescu (2002) posits transdisciplinary, or *in vivo*, knowledge as exceeding scientific knowledge of the external world independent from the subject. Yet, transdisciplinary knowledge does not reject science altogether. It is founded on the logic of the included middle that connects subject and object. The holistic (*in vivo*) intelligence enabled by a triadic relation brings in the dimension of meanings which is traditionally (*in vitro*) considered subjective, that is, located outside science. Transdisciplinarity presupposes passing through a transpersonal dimension and developing a transrelational attitude.

We need to better understand such a transpersonal element of experience. Kelso and Engstrom (2006) use the *tilde* "~" as a symbol for relation that reconciles the apparently dualistic opposites and assert that in "the case of human beings, complex nonlinear self-organizing systems of energy~matter have managed to evolve to the point of organizing a

sense of self~other” (2006: 253). A self-referential relation establishes meaningful correlations between/across the different levels constituting a system in the form of *complementary* pairs that are connected via *coordination dynamics* enabled by the logic of the included middle. Contemporary mathematician Louis Kauffman (1996) calls it *virtual* logic that “goes beyond reason into a world of beauty, communication and possibility” (Kauffman 1996: 293). The dichotomies of “either-or” thinking (*in vitro*, as Nicolescu would say) are being transcended and traversed by virtue of the “both-and” (*in vivo*) science of coordination dynamics.

To clarify further the problematic of self-reference, the paper will present Deleuze’s larger ontology that expands the limits of our understanding and perception and posits Being in terms of two *enfolded* levels of reality: virtual and actual. The virtual is *not identical* with the actual; the relation between them is com-pli-cated (*le pli* is “fold” in French). Significantly, “the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is...actualisation” (Deleuze 1994: 211) that, due to Deleuze’s philosophical method of transcendental empiricism, enriches human experience with an extra, religious or spiritual, dimension, especially if we understand the meaning of *re-ligio* literally as a self-referential process linking backward to its (virtual) origins.

The virtual and the actual are related triadically in the manner of Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic structure of signs. A triadic structure of a genuine sign enables a correspondence or communication between two seemingly disparate levels. It is the actualization of the virtual potentialities in real experiences comprising human existence that enables us to make connections or *bridges*, as Nicolescu says, between different levels of

reality. The triadic logic forms a self-referential semiotic structure folding back via a relation symbolized by *tilde* “~”. The different levels therefore “communicate” with each other via a feedback loop, in accord with Nicolescu’s transdisciplinary knowledge that therefore cannot but be grounded in the relational dynamics where terms form a complementary pair rather than being dualistic opposites.

Importantly, the concept of communication exceeds verbal exchange, encompassing much broader semiotic categories representing what Deleuze called *transversal communication*. The supposedly mystical experience with which we started this paper would be, in Deleuze’s terms, an event of the actualization of potentialities or awakening of perceptions by raising them to a new power oriented towards a virtual object of perception that remains as yet *imperceptible*. The dynamics of the process is analogous to the coordination dynamics of the “self~other” complementary relation. What plays the role of “~” would be, for Deleuze, an immanent *affect* that together with *percepts* forms new *concepts*, new understandings. Affective understanding transcends what is usually given to sense-perceptions in ordinary experience: *empiricism is radically transcendental*. Hence, it is in the reality of our human experiences that the transversal connection, a necessary condition for “the famous mystical principle of *coincidentia oppositorum*, beyond the limit of all human understanding” (Kearney 2001: 104), is being established.

The paper will have demonstrated, however, that expanding the limits of human understanding to encompass an extra affective, or transpersonal, dimension should enable us to build a bridge over the gap between the dual opposites. What was traditionally called the

mystery of *coincidentia oppositorum* is grounded in Deleuze's totally realist ontology that understands cosmos in terms of virtual reality comprising several levels of existence. At the conclusion of the paper a specific example of applying and using the logic of the included middle embedded in the interpretive art of Tarot in practical experience will be introduced and described in detail. The Deleuzian transversal communication as a constituent part of the semiotic system becomes established in practice and therefore demonstrates how our real-life human experience become enriched with deeper, spiritual, significance, thus moving us closer to knowing self and other (other minds, God, Nature, etc.) as One, provided we understand the symbolic "language" embedded in such transversal communication that links together the disparate levels of reality.

II. Transdisciplinarity

The term "transdisciplinarity" as used by Basarab Nicolescu (2002a; 2002b; 2005) refers to overcoming the split between the sciences and humanities. Transdisciplinary knowledge belongs to what Nicolescu specifies as *in vivo* knowledge that exceeds scientific knowledge of the external world as independent from the subject. Bound to the internal world of human subjectivity, it necessarily includes a system of values and meanings exceeding objective facts alone. Yet transdisciplinary knowledge does not reject science, instead it is based on new scientific foundations (to be addressed in the following section) so that

disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge *complement* each other. Positing what he calls *transdisciplinary education* in the context of the increased specialization and fragmentation of knowledge, Nicolescu (2005) comments that “transdisciplinarity” was first coined by Jean Piaget in 1970 as something between and across the disciplinary divide. Nicolescu reminds us that the UNESCO report of the *Commission internationale sur l’éducation pour le vingt et unième siècle*, chaired by Jacques Delors, strongly emphasized four pillars of a new kind of education: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together with, and learning to be*. *Learning to do* will have included the creative emergence of novelty and bringing to light our creative potential. Moving from static knowledge to the dynamic process of *learning to know* based on the actualization of potentialities means becoming capable of creating multiple connections or *bridges*, as Nicolescu calls them.

Disciplinary, *in vitro*, knowledge is based on the classical logic of the excluded middle that induces a separation between subject and object and reduces the meaning of knowledge to knowing merely the “objective” facts of the external world. The new transdisciplinary *in vivo* knowledge however is founded on the logic of the included middle that connects subject and object so that they will have, in Nicolescu’s words, *corresponded* to each other. Analogously, transdisciplinarity refers to dynamics pertinent not to a single level of reality but simultaneously across and between several levels of multidimensional reality.

Contrary to the so-called spectator theory of knowledge limited to the objective knowledge of external world, transdisciplinary knowledge is founded on the *interactions* between the external world of objects and a subjective world of “inner knowledge” (*in vivo*)

that ancient philosophers called *Gnosis*. Contrary to analytic thinking that induces a separation between the mind and the world when an individual mind *observes* the natural world with the cool gaze of a Cartesian *Cogito*, a subjective mind that *participates* in the world demonstrates holistic intelligence which exceeds conceptual thought alone. Such holistic intelligence derives from understanding the harmony between the mind and world. Mind and nature cease being binary opposites but are related or coordinated, thus complementing a theoretical *episteme* with practical *phronesis* resulting from the feedbacks between knowledge and action; the unity of knowledge.

The relation between a knowing subject and an object to be known has a triadic vs. dyadic structure; the terms of the relation are not dualistic opposites but are engaged in correspondence, in conversation, in communication. Such mutual connection – a symbolic *bridge* between the terms – establishes a network as the proper structure for knowledge. The triadic relation as a foundation for network is akin to a feedback loop connecting in a non-linear manner subject and object, cause and effect, self and other; or any other binary opposites for that matter. The apparently *independent* dual opposites in fact form an *interdependent polar structure* in which both poles are bridged. Epistemologically, therefore, transdisciplinary knowledge is based on logic where terms form a complementary pair vs. being dualistic opposites: they are connected or interrelated.

Since the days of Aristotle, classical syllogism is based on the logic of the excluded middle, which means, as Nicolescu reminds us, that there is no middle or third term which is at the same time both A and non-A. But the logic of the included middle is a multivalent logic

containing all three elements, A, T (the third term), and non-A. Therefore this logic is structurally equivalent to the triad of sign-object-interpretant embedded in what Charles Sanders Peirce called a genuine sign (Fig. 1):

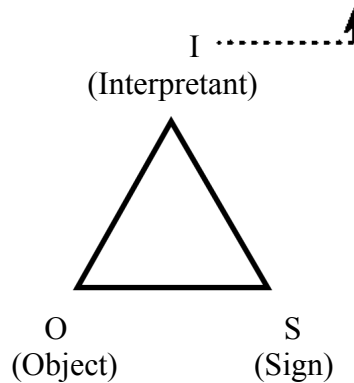


Fig. 1.

Logic as semiotics includes a third term as an interpretant “located” between a sign and its object that performs the function of the included Third or included middle in the overall Peircean relational trichotomy. Interpretant is what provides a sign with its meaning which, however, can always be interpreted further (as symbolized by a dotted line); that is, meanings are evolving. Peirce posited a category of “Thirdness” or mediation, without which no communication, synthesis, integration, or evolution are possible. Such unorthodox logic (really, a contradiction in terms within strictly analytic reasoning in the framework of *in vitro*, disciplinary, knowledge) is akin to what contemporary mathematician Louis Kauffman (1996) calls *virtual*, or archaic, logic that “goes beyond reason into a world of beauty, communication

and possibility” (Kauffman 1996: 293) as well as beyond given facts into a world of interpretable symbols, meanings and values. For Kauffman, it is virtual logic that allows us to move from one world of ideas to another, from one level of description to another; from one level of reality to another.

The emphasis on communication indicates that there is an interdependent network in which each level as if “speaks” to each other, desperately trying to understand each other’s expressive “language”, to thus create *shared* meanings along the communicative link embedded in a triadic relation. Logic is not a pure invention of logicians but is a *ratio* that always already exists in human praxis, and the world perfused with genuine signs, that is, grounded in the triadic relational dynamics, would be orderly and harmonious by its very nature. No wonder that Nicolescu is adamant that transdisciplinarity leads to the emergence of the interrelational or, better to say, transrelational attitude passing through transpersonal dimensions of experience. The terms in the logical relation do not oppose but sustain each other because of the included third.

The constructive, creative logic of the included middle is what “energizes reason... [and] provides the real possibility and the means for opening of communication across boundaries long thought to be impenetrable” (Kauffman 1996: 293). To summarize, *in vivo* knowledge is not just a static knowledge of the “objective” facts *per se* but the dynamic understanding of meanings that not only differ in principle from predictability and knowledge of facts but by necessity bring in dimensions of meaning, purpose and value that are traditionally (*in vitro*) considered “subjective”, i.e. located outside of science (read: classical,

“normal” science). But are meanings doomed to forever stay outside science?

III. The science of coordination dynamics

If not “normal” science, then what? What is the governing dynamics that informs transdisciplinary knowledge? Back in 1972, it was Ludwig von Bertalanffy, the founder of the General Systems Theory, who first addressed the insufficiency of the analytical procedures of classical science based on linear causality between two basic variables, and attracted our attention to “new categories of interaction, transaction, teleology” (Bertalanffy 1972: xix) as problematizing the old mechanistic paradigm: indeed, interactions between more than two objects create an unsolvable problem within the equations of classical mechanics. Importantly, the “interactions do not have to be *physical*; they can also be thought of as a transference of *information*” (Cilliers 1998: 3) that takes place along Nicolescu’s *bridges* constituting the networks of conversations or correspondences embedded in transdisciplinary, *in vivo*, knowledge. The said transference is the defining feature of the new science of coordination dynamics embedded in the world conceptualized as “The Complementary Nature” (Kelso and Engstrom 2006).

Kelso and Engstrom use a squiggle, tilde “~”, for pinpointing the *relation*, the symbolic punctuation for reconciling apparently dualistic opposites, and assert that in “the case of human beings, complex nonlinear self-organizing systems of energy~matter have managed

to evolve to the point of organizing a sense of self~other” (Kelso 2006: 253). Different disciplines have their own *complementary* pairs that, rather than being alien to each other in the manner of Cartesian dualism, are connected via what Kelso and Engstrom specify and present as the science of coordination dynamics. Different “self~other” (self~not-self) pairs do belong to a variety of discourses; their commonality is derived from the same relational dynamics “contained” in the logic of the included middle that brings in the transpersonal dimension: human mind transcends the boundaries of an individual ego and cannot be separated from the collective, relational and social domain: individual~society is one such “self~other” complementary pair in which the terms of the relation sustain each other.

Among complementary pairs in which the terms are related, or coordinated, are the following: cause~effect; *res cogitans~res extensa*; rationalism~empiricism; science~humanities; organism~environment; immanence~transcendence; body~mind; nature~nurture; being~becoming; certainty~uncertainty; novelty~confirmation; conscious~unconscious; and so on. Ultimately these pairs call into play a dialectic of the human and the divine that also functions as a dialectic of interdependent polarities vs. irreconcilable opposites. Thus, Kelso and Engstrom comment on shamanism as a precursor to Taoism and Confucianism in Chinese philosophy in which the “principle of yin~yang [is] an icon symbolizing the fundamental conflict of opposites in nature” (2006: 20). Conflict or unity? Or something in-between?

Defining complementary nature as “a set of mutually depended principles responsible for the genesis, existence, and evolution of the universe” (2006: 39), Kelso and Engstrom use

a “complementary pair” as a minimal unit of analysis akin to Leibniz’s monad – a paradoxical windowless window serving as the means for studying and understanding complementary nature as a whole. Sure enough, as noticed by Kelso and Engstrom, “coordination dynamics bristles with apparent...paradoxes” (2006: 193). The semiotic triangle in Fig. 1 represents a rather paradoxical structure because of its self-reference. It is precisely “sentience and self-reference [that] have been making trouble for philosophers for centuries” (Kelso and Engstrom 2006: 253). The self-referential relation tilde “~” is what establishes the meaningful correlations between/across the different levels, dissolving the dualistic split between private experience and the public world.

It is almost ironic how in the course of the modern epoch the complementary science~magic pair has gradually become separated into dualistic opposites. While acknowledging what the pure reason of modernity considered to be a supernatural action, the attempt to explain this very action was made in terms of the method of classical science customarily connecting cause and effect directly, without any symbolic mediation. The “prompt” conclusion was therefore in terms of some anomalous effect, as in magic, without attributing the possibility of existence to yet “another kind of causation” (Peirce CP, 6.60). But the natural world is not limited to its solely mechanical aspect, similar to human experience not being reducible to blind action and reaction. What is customarily called magic, then, may in fact be considered a science of hidden relations – akin to coordination dynamics – that are capable of producing real effects when their cause is not at all obvious. The apparent dichotomies and antinomies of the old “either-or” narrow reasoning are being transcended

and traversed in accordance with the new “both-and” science of coordination dynamics equally applicable to natural and socio-cultural systems. Importantly, coordination dynamics as governed by self-organization, that is, “spontaneous formation of patterns in open systems” (Kelso and Engstrom 2006: 112), does not require the presence of a *physical* coordinator.

Indeed, such a relational dynamics of experience that sounds foreign to materialist science has all along been familiar to religious thinking. The relational, complementary, structure of Nature is the very condition of its knowability by the method of analogy – or likeness – that, while preeminent in spiritual teachings with regard to essential kinship and Oneness with the world, remains foreign to physical causality that deliberately separates the observer from what is observed. Mystics, however, as well as creative artists or true philosophers, play an intensive, *participatory*, role vs. remaining detached observers. Their presence in the world proceeds in accord with “subtle and seemingly mysterious ways. What one perceives affects what one does and what one does affects what one perceives” (Kelso and Engstrom 2006: 41).

Even if seemingly “getting information” from the realm that appears inaccessible to sense-perception, they (mystics, artists, philosophers, lovers, poets, madmen...) still “do not conjure things out of thin air, even if their conceptions and productions appear as utterly fantastical. Their compositions are only possible because they are able to connect, to tap into the virtual and immanent processes” (Ansell Pearson 1997: 4) embedded in Gilles Deleuze’s virtual ontology. This information is what Kelso and Engstrom call *functional*, that is

“*meaningful* and *specific* to any kind of coordinated activity... Information is functional if it allows people to communicate...learn and remember. Functional information can take many forms, and many forms can realize functional information. ...According to coordination dynamics, functional information transcends the medium through which parts and processes communicate” (2006: 98-99). We can construct another semiotic triangle with its included middle of information as the third term to the usual dyad of matter and energy (Fig. 2):

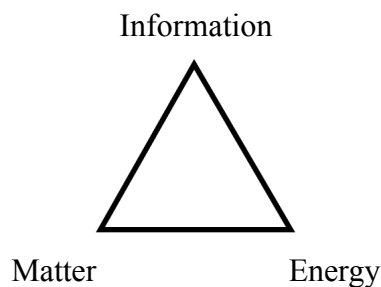


Fig. 2.

One example of functional information would be what Deleuze called the *transversal communication* that confers shared meanings on experience. This link, or communication, in which “observer and observed are one” (Kauffman 1996: 295) is what guarantees self-reference embedded in the multileveled, virtual~actual, world.

4. Deleuze's ontology of the virtual

This paper began with a promise to explain how the apparently dual opposites of real human experience and the transcendental realm of the divine can be bridged so that this mystical connection does not remain “beyond the limit of all human understanding” (Kearney 2001: 104). The transdisciplinary science of complementary nature and coordination dynamics took us closer to solving the riddle of reconciling these opposites. Gilles Deleuze's philosophical method of transcendental empiricism and his ontology of the virtual will take us even closer.

Deleuze's method is empirical by virtue of the object of investigation being regarded as real, albeit sub-representative, experience, yet it is transcendental because the very foundations for the empirical principles are *a priori* left outside the common faculties of perception so as to require a transcendental analysis of their implicit conditions. In this respect, transcendental empiricism purports to discover conditions that exist prior to the actual commonsensical experience. According to Deleuze's ontology, there is more to the world as compared to how it appears to common sense. The observable facts is not all there is to experience: the dynamic understanding amounts to creating meanings in/for novel experiences and events that may confront us. Thinking is not a pre-given exercise of some cognitive faculty but is always a second power of thought, born under the constraints of experience as a power, an *objective* capacity embedded in the total experiential situation,

which is able both to affect us and itself become affected. As Deleuze says, something in the experiential “world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but a fundamental ‘encounter’...It may be grasped in a range of affective tones” (Deleuze 1994: 139).

Such a forceful perilous act of thinking demands attention to our implicit assumptions so as to be able to express them explicitly: this is a self-reflective element in Deleuze’s philosophy. The experiential world is *folded*, and “we go from fold to fold” (Deleuze 1993: 17) within the unfolding experience. The fold is described as *the inside of the outside*, that is, a self-referential relation functioning in accord with “the logic of sense” (Deleuze 1990), the logic of the included middle. And the functioning of this logic is grounded in Deleuze’s larger *virtual ontology* according to which the virtual level is not opposed to the real but itself possesses a full reality; what it apparently opposes is merely the level of the actual.

The realm of the virtual exceeds the possible. Possible can be realized, and the real *thing* is to indeed exist in the image and likeness, as the saying goes, of the possible *thing*. But the virtual is always already real – even without yet being actual! The Deleuzian object of experience is considered to be given only in its *tendency* to exist: the very nature of any “thing” is, according to Deleuze, just an expression of tendency. Virtual tendencies have the potential of becoming actual through the double process of different/ciations of the transcendental and “initially undifferentiated field” (Deleuze 1993: 10). The universe of knowledge is structured and Ideas are intensive multiplicities. How should we understand this notion? The unfolding proceeds not like a regular linear information processing between input and output, inside and

outside, but on the very border along what Deleuze called a line of becoming which “is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) in the fold. This line, as Deleuze says, underlying its mediatory quality, “has only a middle. The middle is not an average; it is fast motion, it is the absolute speed of movement. A becoming is neither one nor two” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 293), says Deleuze, presenting us with a powerful visual metaphor for the third term in the relation constituting the logic of the included middle.

Deleuze uses some terminology from the theory of communication that belongs to the family of complex systems, namely: how information is transmitted in a channel as a sign/signal system. A signal is produced at the moment of coupling between two heterogeneous series of events operating at different levels. This does not mean that “something” actually flows through the channel, just that a relation, or interaction, is being established. A sign as a “bit” of information is Janus-faced: it provides a link as a squiggle “~” constructing a semiotic bridge between events without actually passing from one to another (cf. DeLanda 2002) but rather being engaged into what Leibniz would have called “a dance of particles folding back on themselves” (Deleuze 1995: 157). A sign has to be Janus-faced because of its own self-reference. It closes “as if” on itself; however – and this is crucial – by its very closure, or coupling, it is capable of becoming another sign, contributing to the process of *becoming* along the multiplicity of levels.

According to Deleuze’s radical empiricism, thinking, while exceeding solely rational thought, is still “fundamentally linked to a logic – a logic of multiplicities” (Deleuze 1987: viii) in

accord with “a theory and practice of relations, of the *and*” (Deleuze 1987: 15). It is the relational dynamics constituting the logic of the included middle that forms the *triad* of affects, percepts, and concepts. It is the presence of *affect* – or desire, or love, or Eros -- that connects the levels of reality by crossing over, or traversing, the difference between the virtual and the actual and exceeding the reductive model of purely analytic thinking. One has to “pursue the different series, to travel along the different levels, and cross all thresholds; instead of simply displaying phenomena or statements in their vertical or horizontal dimensions, one must form a transversal or mobile diagonal line” (Deleuze 1988: 22), a line of flight or becoming. Becoming is not reduced to terms of a relation; it is a relation *per se* as a pure sign that maintains an ontological priority. The dynamics proceed in a double movement of differentiation (with a “t”) by means of which differences in intensity establish a flow of information; and differentiation (with a “c”), by means of which unobservable virtualities do actualize themselves.

The logic of multiplicities means that there is no simple addition of information even if Deleuze uses the conjunction “and” to describe the process. The information becomes active or what Kelso and Engstrom call functional. The “*and*” of Deleuze is the in-between squiggle *tilde* “~” as a symbol for the mediating relation constituting a triad of a Peircean genuine sign based on ontological difference between the virtual and the actual that itself is capable of making a difference of the second order in the world of real experiences. This logic would have represented “not the emanation of an ‘I’, but something that places in immanence the always other or a Non-self. ... I do not encounter myself on the outside. I find the other in me”

(Deleuze 1988: 98). This is a process of summation that, while suggesting a simple adding of information, in fact *intensifies* it (the multiplicity is intensive!) by means of forming a logical product akin to multiplication, to forming power series. Deleuze is adamant that “there is not a simple addition, but a constitution of a new plane, as of a surplus value” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 313).

The addition will have indicated the linearity of the process. But a triadic relation is based on a non-linear dynamics of experience interrupted now and then by “a new threshold, a new direction of the zigzagging line, a new course for the border” (Deleuze 1995: 45). By virtue of experimentation thinking-as-becoming escapes the old habitual frame of reference within which the movement along the line of flight seems like a sort of immaterial vanishing through some imaginary event horizon, and creates its own terms of actualization thereby leading to the “intensification of life” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 74) by means of “an increase in valence, a veritable becoming” (1987: 10). What Deleuze calls *becoming* means always *becoming-other* in accord with the foundational self~other complementary pair embedded in the science of coordination dynamics.

In terms of Deleuze’s ontology of the virtual (cf. Boundas 1996; May and Semetsky 2008; Semetsky 2009), it is the dynamics of pure events that constitutes virtual reality. The actual does not resemble the virtual in the manner of Plato’s model and copy. Deleuze presents us with *reversed* Platonism. The two are related not mimetically but semiotically; they are *different*, and it cannot be otherwise because the virtual is posited just as a tendency, therefore *no-thing*. Virtual tendencies as potentialities or *no-things* become actualized as

though created *ex nihilo* and embodied in the actual *things*, in the guise of new objects of knowledge, new meanings. The nuance is significant: it is “[f]rom virtuals [that] we descend to actual states of affairs, and from states of affairs we ascend to virtuals, without being able to isolate one from the other” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 160).

Ontologically, “Being as Fold” (Deleuze 1998: 110) is grounded in the very *difference* enfolded in the virtual~actual nexus. Difference is not an individual construct as a feature of personal uncertainty or Cartesian doubt: it is a quasi-ontological category and is considered by Deleuze “the noumenon closest to phenomenon” (Deleuze 1994: 222). The difference makes thought encounter a shock, or crisis, embedded in the objective structure of an event *per se*, thereby transcending the faculties of perception beyond some apparently “given” data of sense-perceptions. An encounter with difference is intense, and the intensity of difference is a function of affect or desire as complementary to a purely cognitive understanding. Precisely because of experience being excessive, that is, spilling above and over the cognitive confines of an individual mind, the infamous object of desire would be “the entire surrounding which it [desire or affect] traverses” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 30) forming, as such, a transversal connection between affects, percepts and concepts in a triadic relation of the included middle embedded in the Moebius strip of the Deleuzian folds of Being. Another semiotic triangle (Fig. 3) illustrates a structural analogy with Figs. 1 and 2:

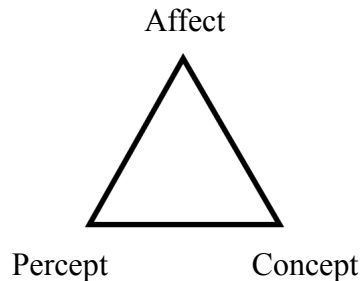


Fig. 3.

Deleuze used a biological metaphor of a rhizome to describe a model for knowledge-structure akin to Nicolescu's transdisciplinary, *in vivo*, knowledge. As a symbol for unlimited growth through the multitude of its own transformations, rhizome is contrasted with a tree, the latter symbolizing the linear and sequential reasoning rooted in finite knowledge. The tree metaphor accords with the infamous tree of Porphyry, which is an example of the classificatory system, or a hierarchical structure based on precise definitions that serve as the foundation for rationally justified knowledge. The tree of Porphyry incorporates an arborescent reasoning, that is, a type of syllogistic logic based on the method of division – of the excluded middle – to form a precise catalogue. The hierarchical structure precludes any interdependence, relationships, or harmony between “things” located at separate branches of the sacramental tree, contrary to the rhizomatic network of relationships based on the logic of the included (in-between) middle. This network, in contrast to a map representing a given territory, engenders the very territory to which it is supposed to refer. Accordingly, a static representation of the

order of references gives way to a relational dynamics of the order of meanings when concepts are created in experience.

A concept inhabits the empirical happening; it is, as Deleuze and Guattari say, a living concept, but the practical task is “to set up...to extract” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 160) the meaning of the event in the newly created concept; to treat concept not as object of a prior recognition but “as object of an encounter, as a here-and-now...from which emerge inexhaustibly ever new, differently distributed “heres” and “nows”. ...I make, remake and unmake my concepts along a moving horizon, from an always decentered center, from an always displaced periphery which repeats and differentiate them” (Deleuze 1994: xx-xxi). It is the very repetition of the different that is the essence of transcendental empiricism grounded in the ontology of the virtual. What is defined as the ontological Outside is both virtual and yet real by virtue of its very pragmatics, that is the effects it produces at the level of human actions and experiences. As affective, experience is as yet a-conceptual and is not limited to what is immediately perceived: it needs mediation or interpretation for the creation of concepts, creation of meanings by virtue of learning from experience *per se*.

Deleuze’s model of learning is based on the explication of extra-linguistic signs embedded in experience among which may be involuntary memories (similar to those awakened by Marcel Proust’s famous *madeleine*) or images as potential (virtual) sources of meanings in accord with the logic of sense, the logic of multiplicities. The logic is grounded in Deleuze’s radical empiricism because “only empiricism knows how to transcend the experiential dimension of the visible” (Deleuze 1990: 20) – or sensible, in Platonic terms –

therefore establishing a *relation* by virtue of connecting in practice with the realm of invisible but nevertheless intelligible, using a Platonic term again. The underground sprout of a rhizomatic plant, rather than having a traditional root, has a stem, the oldest part of which dies off while simultaneously *rejuvenating* itself at the top. This naturalistic metaphor for creativity is potent because it is precisely when the old is dying off that the new may be created. At this critical point a rhizomatic line would zigzag, as Deleuze would say, into a new direction, therefore betraying “the principle of linear progressive ‘building up knowledge’” (Deleuze 1995: 139) as prescribed by the *in vitro* model. Learning is “infinite ... [and] of a different nature to knowledge” (Deleuze 1994: 192), but that of the nature of a creative process as a method of inventing concepts in practice.

The creation of concepts in experience demands, for Deleuze, “the laying out of a plane” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 36). To think means to construct the plane of immanence – to actually show that it is there rather than merely “to think” it – so as to “find one’s bearings in thought” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 37) by means of stretching, folding, unfolding, enfolding, that is by multiple movements of this plane’s intensive lines of becoming. At the level of perception by regular senses such zigzagging non-local connections would have remained imperceptible. But learning by means of the interpretation of facts, re-valuation of experience and “an apprenticeship in signs” (Bogue 2008) enables one’s perception to vitally increase in power due to the logic of summation, thereby tending to *becoming-percept*, that is, becoming able to perceive something previously imperceptible.

Connecting the experiential dots in the multileveled rhizomatic network enables one to

make sense out of the disparate bits and pieces of information, that is, de-stratify one's old way of thinking by means of some novel interpretations, by the dynamic understanding of meanings implicit in the experiential events; thus constituting a process called by Deleuze and Guattari the *transformational pragmatics*. The transformation along the transversal line of becoming actualizes the virtual and as such is real even if physically "we don't see it [the line of becoming], because it's the least perceptible of things" (Deleuze 1995: 45).

While not all virtualities may become actualized in the present, they are nevertheless real. Maximilian de Gaynesford (2001) relates Deleuze's philosophy to the fourth- to fifth-century theology, and Michael Hardt (1993) indicates a subtle connection of Deleuze's thought to Scholastic ontology. In Scholastic terminology *virtual* means the ideal or transcendental, but not in any way abstract or just possible: it is maximally real, *ens realissimum*. Because virtual ideas exist as implicit tendencies they define the immanence of the transcendental field. The transversal communication along the *in-between* line of becoming enables one to potentially cross the threshold of one's old habitual universe of thinking and acting by virtue of forming "an echo chamber, a feedback loop" (Deleuze 1995: 139) embedded into the semiotics of experience. What is traditionally called a mystical experience is, for Deleuze, an existential real-life practice: it is an experiential and experimental art of perceiving the otherwise imperceptible.

Deleuze purports to show the as-yet-imperceptible by laying down a (visible) map of (invisible yet intelligible) territory or, in other words, creating a mediatory link – Kelso's "~" that belongs to the family of transversal "non-localizable connections" (Deleuze 1994: 83) –

between what are customarily considered the dual opposites of sensible and intelligible, matter and mind. This subtle, as if intuitive, transversal communication makes Deleuze's empirical method "patterned after Bergson's intuition" (Boundas 1996: 87). Intuition enables the reading and interpretation of implicit signs and symbols above and over the visible world of physical objects. As "the presentation of the unconscious, [and] not the representation of consciousness" (Deleuze 1994: 192), intuition leads to laying out what Deleuze called the plane of immanent consistency aiming "to bring into being that which does not yet exist" (Deleuze 1994: 147) in actuality but is subsisting in its virtual potential form. A philosopher as a creative thinker – an artist of their trade – becomes capable of bridging the difference between the apparently dual opposites of the actual and the virtual (ontologically) by virtue of the conscious~unconscious (epistemically) complementary pair connected by a transversal communication signified by "~".

To Be Continued Next Issue....

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Semetsky is a gifted Tarot reader with two decades of experience internationally. Her readings are based on the understanding that once upon a time "the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." (Genesis 11:1) See [Tarot](#).

For more of Semetsky's publications, please visit her [website here](#).

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