

Grounding Deleuze

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Last year an early series of lectures by the 32-year-old Gilles Deleuze surfaced on Richard Pinhas's internet archive of Deleuze's seminars, *Les Cours de Gilles Deleuze*.^{*} The 42-page document is entitled *Qu'est-ce que fonder?*, which I shall translate as *What is Grounding?*, for reasons explained in a moment. It consists of a set of more or less complete lecture notes taken by a student, Pierre Lefebvre, of a course given by Deleuze at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris in 1956–7. This fascinating text has been lying in the vault, its existence or nature apparently unknown, for fifty years. Its appearance is of major significance for those who want to understand what Deleuze was doing in his most obscure and interesting book, his 1968 opus *Difference and Repetition*. In fact, it helps to make sense of the philosophical context and aims, the methodology, and the concepts of all Deleuze's writings up until 1968.

The lectures' central task is to distinguish three different methodological approaches to the philosophical task of *grounding* – the existentialist, the rationalist-logical and the Kantian critical. In *Difference and Repetition* itself, these approaches end up being mixed in together and the reader is left unaware of the potential importance to Deleuze of such distinctions of level and methodology. In *What is Grounding?*, though, we see that Deleuze is beginning from a conscious distinction between these three approaches to philosophical principle. Everything that later becomes separated out into studies in the history of philosophy and literature, or into the chapters of *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, appears to have its original source in the sophisticated enquiries of *What is Grounding?* This is nothing less than the ur-text for Deleuze's pre-1970s philosophy, an original sketch of his main themes and problems, which are all present in intensely compacted form, before they shatter into the mosaic of his written work.

What is Grounding? is the only one of Deleuze's lecture courses to devote itself directly to fundamental philosophical themes, rather than ventriloquising through the ideas of a philosopher of the canon. With the exceptions of those devoted in the 1970s to the

Capitalism and Schizophrenia project and to cinema, his lecture courses were expositions and interpretations of major modern philosophers, such as Kant, Spinoza or Leibniz. This course concerns grounding, the great theme of modern philosophy: the starting point, the beginning. How does one begin in philosophy? Which is the privileged approach in modern philosophical thought – the epistemological, the logical, the ethical, the existential?

But how should we translate the French *fonder*? *Qu'est-ce que fonder?* could be translated as 'What is Founding?' or even 'What is it to Found?' The conceptual differences between Deleuze's uses of *fondement*, *fond* and *fondation* in *Difference and Repetition* have been noted by translators before.¹ It might appear that Deleuze's *fondement* is approximate to the English 'foundation', while his *fond* translates the German concept *Grund*. The problem is that both *fondement* and *fond* can translate the German *Grund*, the meaning of which stretches from 'reason' (as for instance in Kant's reformulation of Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason as 'principle of determining ground' in his early *Nova Elucidatio*) to the 'deep', abyssal sense of *Grund* conjured up by the later Schelling. In the 1956 lectures, Deleuze is interested in all of these possible meanings of *Grund*, and *fonder*, but there is a particularly strong emphasis on the Kantian and post-Kantian senses of 'grounding', and (this is one of the surprises of the text) there are numerous references to the ideas of Heidegger, not just his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, but his essay 'On the Essence of Ground' (*Von Wesen des Grundes*), both published in 1929.

The main philosophical focus of *Qu'est-ce que fonder?* is the tradition of thinking about autonomous self-grounding, from Kant and post-Kantianism to Heideggerian existentialism. In a key passage, Deleuze sums up his aim in the course:

The fact that Heidegger's theses in his book on Kant are a renewed encounter with the reflections of the post-Kantians invites us to enact a repetition of the Kantian enterprise. The great theme of that enterprise will be that of constitutive finitude.

* www.webdeleuze.com/php/sommaire.html.

Deleuze will end his ‘repetition of the Kantian enterprise’ with the affirmation of a hybrid of Heidegger’s account of the ‘transcendental imagination’ and Novalis’s project for a ‘philosophy of imagination’ which combines truth and poetry. The ideas generated about the nature of ‘grounding’ are nevertheless ultimately quite distinctive. Deleuze stresses the importance of a process of ‘psychic repetition’, which results in ‘something new [being] unveiled in the mind’ [*esprit*]. Grounding, he concludes, following Hegel, gives you more than you bargain for: ‘Does not every ground bring with it an unexpected surprise? ... The operation of grounding is split by the transformation which the operation brings with it.’ Indeed, what would be the point of grounding, he asks, if nothing is changed in what is grounded? ‘To ground is to metamorphose’, as he puts it in *Difference and Repetition*.² The course is thus the record of a philosophical voyage, participating in the core tradition of modern philosophy, which Deleuze takes it upon himself to ‘repeat’.

Another consideration about the translation of *fonder* is suggested by the structure of the course. The first lecture in the course is devoted to mythological conceptions of the act of *fonder*, with Deleuze speculatively suggesting the lineaments of a fundamental shift in human history, from the ritual repetition of the mythological ‘founding acts’ to the becoming ‘conceptual’ of the act of grounding. It would not be inconsistent with Deleuze’s meaning to characterize this in English as a movement from mythological *founding* to philosophical *grounding*. In the ‘mythological’ stage of the development of culture, human ends have been transformed from natural ends by the activity of ritualization. The task of ‘philosophy’ follows from this: to transform these unconscious, ‘felt’ ‘cultural ends’ into ‘rational ends’, and to pursue the ‘realization of reason’ in the material world. The rest of the course is an elaboration of the nature of philosophical grounding. The title of the second lecture is a quotation from Heidegger, ‘What Constitutes the Essential Being of a Ground or Reason?’, the third lecture is ‘Ground and Question’, and the final one ‘The Ground of Principles’. Although there will be plenty of problems left unresolved at the end of Deleuze’s 1956 ‘repetition’ of the history of post-Kantianism, it is arguably not entirely unsuccessful in sketching out a novel post-Kantian account of the possible ‘realization of reason’ by finite beings (and in some ways is more intelligible than the finished product that emerged twelve years later, *Difference and Repetition*).

Lefebvre informs us that the beginning of the course is missing from his manuscript, but that

Deleuze commenced by ‘evoking the founding heroes of mythology’ with Ulysses/Odysseus as his example. Myths of founding have three aspects: they produce an ‘image of the world’; they invoke ‘an origin deeper than a simple beginning’, and which is commemorated in acts of ‘repetition’. Mythology retells the stories of founding figures, like Ulysses and Hercules, who undergo ordeals and earn the right to legislate. The one who seeks to ‘found’ is in the first instance the one who claims or pretends to something by virtue of a right, and who must demonstrate that right through some sort of ordeal.

The foundation is that which will or will not give us the right. It presents itself as a third. To claim is to pretend towards something. The act of claiming implies submission to a comparison by that which can give or confirm our right. It is to accept to submit oneself to an ordeal. The foundation is the third because it is not the pretender, nor that to which he pretends, but it is the instance which will yield the claimed thing up to the pretender. The object never submits itself on its own part to the claim ... That which grounds is therefore the ordeal [*Ce qui fonde alors c’est l’épreuve*] ... There is always a third and one must seek it out since it is the foundation which presents itself as a third.³

Deleuze’s notion that myth and ritual involve a fundamental ‘repetition’ is indebted to Mircea Eliade’s theory that the meaning of religious rituals derives from their ‘repetition of a primordial act’ (Deleuze had presented an important passage on the concept of repetition from Eliade’s *The Myth of the Eternal Return* in his 1953 anthology *Instincts and Institutions*).⁴ For Eliade, mythical presentation exists to tell us what *really* happened at the origin, *in illo tempore* (‘in those days’), what was really singular and is worthy of perennial repetition.⁵ Deleuze argues that the emergence of ritual repetition in early human societies opens up a fundamental gap between humans and animals, which remain driven by ‘natural ends’. Once the primordial act of repetition is instituted at the centre of culture, human groups become subject to ‘infinite tasks’. The act of commemoration is never done; ‘our love for our dead ones is an inexhaustible task’. Because the foundation is recovered only in acts of mythic and ritual repetition, the realization of human ends is however no longer ‘direct’, and strictly speaking only ‘felt’ or ‘lived’ in the work of imagination that supports mythic repetition. These ‘cultural ends ... are not yet rational ends’, and are at most ‘felt’ as ‘values’.

So ‘when does the problem of foundation become philosophical?’, Deleuze enquires. In order for ‘felt

cultural ends' to become 'rational cultural ends', and in order to 'pass from mythology to philosophy', the new founder 'must propose that infinite tasks are something that must be realized in *this* world alone'. Deleuze will later go on to talk of the true object of philosophy as *immanence*, and here in *What is Grounding?* we have an early clue to that mysterious concept: the goal of philosophy is to find a way to realize the infinite in *this* world. As in his *Kant's Critical Philosophy* (1963), Deleuze contends, following Kant, that the realization of reason does not proceed through acts of knowledge alone, but through a hierarchy of other types of cognition, comprising a 'system' of the 'ends of reason'.

However, Deleuze more than once warns us that 'immanence is the vertigo of philosophy', and first philosophy must undergo its own hazardous and anarchic apprenticeship.⁶ Starting with the second 'chapter' (the lectures are presented as 'chapters'), Deleuze sketches an immanent account of the dialectic of grounding in philosophy, starting with Plato but vaulting immediately to the problems of a specifically 'modern' philosophy. Philosophy begins with Plato, who allows the philosopher to emerge as the 'claimant' of the rational idea, the one who is 'tested' as to their degree of 'participation' in the idea; but Plato remains tethered to mythic thought (particularly in his conception of reminiscence), and, Deleuze claims, philosophy only truly sets about its task – the grounding and realization of reason – with Hume, Kant and post-Kantian philosophy. Philosophy ceases to be mythic and becomes modern when it sets out on the path of *epistemological* grounding: it only emerges for itself with the enquiry into the grounds for our claims to knowledge, or the *criteria* we rely on to make claims about the world.

In the second chapter, Deleuze sets about retracing 'The Formation of the Kantian Idea of the Transcendental'. He contends that the conditions for the Copernican turn in philosophy – for the realization that 'it is not the object but the subject that permits one to discover the ground' – are first intimated in Hume's encounter with the problem of induction in the *Treatise on Human Nature*. By asking *how* we know that the sun will rise tomorrow, Hume inaugurates the tradition of modern philosophical reflection on grounding that becomes central to Kant's philosophy, and remains the obsessive refrain of the philosophies of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.

Hume foresaw the problem of grounding; he already poses the question 'by what right' (*quid juris*) ...

By what right can one make an inference from the past to the future?

How can I make *universal* claims about the world? When I make a knowledge claim, I 'go beyond' or transcend (*dépasser*) the given by making appeal to universals (for instance, when I claim that water *always* boils at 100°C). But if I go beyond what is actually given in such judgements, what grounds their validity? It is the problem of the guarantee of this highly specific 'transcendence' of the given, Deleuze says, that incites the modern approach to the problem of grounding and generates the notion of subjectivity that characterizes modern philosophy. From Hume onwards, what grounds knowledge cannot be anything other than subjective principles: 'It is not the object, but rather the subject that permits one to discover the ground.' Deleuze's remarks about the meaning and scope of the concept of subjectivity are worth citing at length; despite superficial appearances to the contrary, it may be that he never abandons this basic framework:

Hume brought along something new: the analysis of the structure of subjectivity. The word 'subject', as it happens, is very rarely used by Hume. This is not by chance. Hegel too analyses subjectivity without pronouncing the word 'subject'. And Heidegger goes much further and says that the word 'subject' must not be used. Instead, it is necessary to designate it by the essential structure one discovers. If one gives an adequate definition of the subject, then one has no more reason to speak explicitly of it. Heidegger and Hegel both tell us that the subject is nothing more than a self-development. Hegel analyses this dialectically: self-developing as self-transformation, with mediation as the essential process. Heidegger says that the essence of subjectivity is transcendence, but with a new sense: where previously this term was used to refer to the state of something transcendent, with Heidegger, it becomes the movement of self-transcendence. It is the mode of being of the movement that transcends.

Unlike Hume's psychological account of the subject (based on the notion of habit), 'Kant's transcendental subject is distinguished from empirical or psychological subjectivity'. It is no longer a question of 'fact' (*quid facti*), of what we happen to know through empirical observation or science, but of how *we think we know* such 'facts'. The possibility of a direct correspondence between our a priori ideas and the world itself (intellectual intuition) is ruled out, as Deleuze notes, in Kant's letter to Marcus Herz of 1772. Kantianism opens up an inquiry into the logic of the implicit criteria to which we make appeal when we make claims to objectivity or reality. As Robert Pippin puts it, for Kant and the post-Kantians alike:

when S claims to *know* P, S must be implicitly understanding himself to be participating in the practice of judgment and justification, and ... must contextually or implicitly understand enough of such a practice to count as participating in it.⁷

Deleuze infers from the Kantian criterial account of knowledge that ‘the act of claiming implies submission to a comparison which gives or confirm our right’,



Ruth Collins, Greeny, 2005

that the making of a claim (a *prétention*) is always implicitly to situate oneself as ‘reclaiming a right’. Claiming is implicitly reclaiming; and herein lies the *task* of grounding, the part that requires individual mental and physical effort. What is implicit must be unfolded or made explicit. How can such a task be realized? Through a specific kind of thinking, says Deleuze: what, at the most elementary level, can be called the ‘question’.

Just as ‘the sphinx formulates a question’ in mythic founding, in philosophical grounding the ‘appeal to a ground’ takes place within a structure of ‘questioning’. Deleuze goes on to elaborate this thought in the third and longest chapter of *What is Grounding?*, ‘Ground and Question’, where three different elementary ‘structures’ of questioning as such are laid out. First, there is an existential questioning of the kind exemplified by Kierkegaard in his *Philosophical Fragments*, a questioning which ‘refuses all responses’, and for which the operation of grounding consists in the confrontation of ontological ‘paradox’. *What is Grounding?* shows Deleuze’s concept of repetition to be firmly rooted in Kierkegaard’s treatment of repetition. In this section of the chapter, there are discussions of sin, anxiety and the stages of life (aesthetic, ethical and religious) which are not replicated elsewhere in Deleuze’s elaboration of

the concept of repetition, but are fundamental to understanding it. The second type of question ‘claims to lead to the science of all the solutions to possible problems, according to a universal principle’. Here, there are extensive discussions of the rationalists, focusing mainly on Leibniz’s metaphysics of counterfactual contingency and his calculus of compossibilities. Finally, appearing as a new subset of the ‘ground as question’, there is the ‘critical question’ that motivates Kantianism: how to distinguish between true and false problems, how to track down metaphysical illusions and assign them to their source. Without the grounds afforded by this kind of questioning, there will be no way ultimately to distinguish true and false problems.

At first it appears that Deleuze is claiming here that philosophical grounding takes place in three irreducible ways, and that *each* of these – the existential, the logico-rationalist, and the critical kinds of questioning – is necessary for the acquisition of autonomous

thought and for reason to be realized. But he indicates that he sees these three different structures of questioning as a ‘triple function of grounding’. If epistemic or critical questioning is the *first* procedure undertaken by philosophy, that does not mean that epistemology and the ends of knowledge are the *highest* ends of philosophical thought. Deleuze’s *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* takes pains to show that the realization of reason itself proceeds in a more complex manner, sublimating itself into the acts of practical reason, and then into more reflective species of thought devoted to art, beauty and organic vitality. Rational ends are not realized simply through acts of knowledge, but through ethical acts, in the space of aesthetic experience, in the study of living nature, and (as Deleuze suggests in his remarks on Kant’s ‘Ideas for a Universal History’ in his Kant book) in the re-conception and actualization of new social forms devoted to the collective realization of autonomous subjectivity.

In the final chapter, ‘The Grounding of Principle’, Deleuze takes a step further and argues that the triple function of grounding ‘perpetually oscillates between two poles’, according to whether principles are taken to ‘relate to us and our simple knowledge of things’, or, on the contrary, express ‘things in themselves’. Following Hegel in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*,

Deleuze christens the former approach as the way of ‘method’, and the latter as the way of ‘system’. Method treats the object as already there, and its principles concern the best way to acquire knowledge from that pre-existing object. Descartes and Bacon are Deleuze’s examples of philosophers of method. On the other hand, there are the philosophers of system, Fichte, Maimon, Schelling and Hegel. Deleuze claims that Kant’s own approach to grounding is vitiated by his inability to settle on the side of method or system. Kant places his ‘Architectonic’ of the realization of reason right at the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, when he should have placed the construction of the system at the beginning. The post-Kantians rightly demanded access to the *unconditioned*, self-grounding principle of subjectivity that must lie at the basis of knowledge. Fichte argued for ‘the need to substitute an *act* of consciousness for the fact of consciousness. Kant had not yet raised himself to the position of the pure act.’ The task of philosophy for Fichte was to recover this fundamental act of the subject, performing the process a ‘genesis’ of the real conditions of knowledge and thus uncovering the ground of our already ‘constituted’ experience. Fichte and Hegel both affirm the possibility of a ‘dialectic’ rooted in this act of genesis, which will recover ‘the movement of things themselves’. In 1990, Deleuze was still able to affirm that ‘I believe in philosophy as system’,⁸ but what is striking is that in the 1956 lectures Deleuze does not resist the Hegelian destination of post-Kantian systematicity, giving it a qualified affirmation.

Hegel’s achievement is to produce a self-grounding system by reconstructing the sequence of previous ‘transcendental illusions’ as the narrative of the realization of reason in history. He ‘takes up the thread of a universal history which passes through [previous philosophical positions], unlocking the meaning [*sens*] of their discourses’. For Hegel, the two most fundamental aspects of real history are ‘labour and struggle’, the elementary manifestations of ‘negation and transformation’. ‘Man is the malcontent of the given’, and it is only because labour and struggle are real processes that the discussion of philosophers can take on their meaning [*sens*]: ‘Kant and Hegel say that the will raises itself to the absolute when it is taken as the will of freedom. In this activity of freedom, the activity of rational being is realizing the infinite task. For Hegel, this realization occurs through History.’ Deleuze’s reservations about Hegel’s identification of reason with universal history are qualified. ‘The way totalitarian regimes claim themselves to be in favour of systems cannot be denied’, but it is a mistake to

confuse actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] in the Hegelian sense with mere reality. What is truly actual and rational is not what simply happens or has happened to be real, but rather the force of negation that is at work through it, and visible in constituted experience only fragmentarily, in the *Erfahrungen* of dialectical experience. This is why the Hegelian system is not intrinsically ‘closed’ to the future or ‘totalitarian’.

It is a mistake to demand that the system will tell us the future ... in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel states that critique is not the same thing as experience. What is required is the description of experience in such a way that something necessarily escapes the one who has the experience, and it is precisely this that is the sense of this experience. It is no use [predicting the future] because the conditions of action do not imply any future condition of the future state. [Experience] finds its point of departure in the present contradiction.

However, Deleuze’s ideas about how to ‘realize’ the system in a world of finite beings do depart from Hegel’s. Deleuze’s Bergsonian system of bifurcating differentiations driven by the polarity of duration and matter is already in place in his early writings on Bergson, also produced in 1956, and its influence is felt here, along with the pluralizing account of differentiation found in Solomon Maïmon.⁹ The space is therefore already there for the replacement of Hegel’s dialectic of reason in history with a more pluralistic account of the multiple ‘lines of flight’ generated by the dialectical movement of bifurcation and development.

Moreover, Deleuze is keen to distance himself from the inflationary metaphysical aspects of the Hegelian system, such as the identification of the dialectic with the unfolding of God’s essence.¹⁰ He criticizes the idea that modern philosophy ends up putting human beings in the place of God.

In fact these philosophers do not give man the powers of God. They give to finitude a constitutive character, and do not raise man to the infinite ... In the system, [too], man no longer puts himself in the place of God, as the system replaces the idea of creation with other concepts.

Ideas of intellectual intuition, creation, and so on, are no longer valid in the post-metaphysical climate of critical philosophy.

Post-Kantian systematic philosophy does not claim to occupy the place of God. When Hegel talks of an absolute knowledge he says to us that ‘this reveals to us no other world than our own’. Absolute knowledge is knowledge of this world here. What is involved here is the substitution of the trans-

cedental imagination for the infinite intellect. The systematic point of view replaces the concept of the infinite intellect with the transcendental imagination that belongs to constitutive finitude. So many notions can no longer be conserved. For instance, the notion of creation, which is a theological idea which can only be understood starting from the postulation of an infinite intellect and will. If the latter falls, then the concept of creation cannot be maintained. It is absurd for an atheist to conserve the idea of creation because he cannot avail himself any longer of concepts that are inseparable from the idea of God. From that moment on, philosophy, in its difference from theology, and *as* philosophy, cannot recover the idea of creation.

The Kantian and post-Kantian conception of the task of philosophy is 'fundamentally modern' in that what is at stake is no longer the finitude of the human mind, opposed to a divine intellect or transparently rational truth, but 'the constitutive power of human finitude'. 'Kant is the first to make of finitude the most profound aspect of reason itself, the constitutive element of the rational being.' It is precisely this finitude that is recovered by the post-systematic Kantian philosophers.

Philosophy reorients itself in a strange fashion: it is because man lives in time, because he is not God, is finite, that he has to constitute the world. In this sense, Kant is primary. The problem is how to formulate this finitude. With Heidegger, [the key concept is] existence; with Kant, it is the schematism or the transcendental imagination. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson twice reminds us that it is important to stress that the *élan vital* is finite.

Passages like these further undermine metaphysical interpretations of what Deleuze is doing as a philosopher. One of the most revelatory aspects of *What is Grounding?* is the centrality given to Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, which Deleuze reads as a development of the genre of ideas about the 'transcendental imagination' developed by Hegel (for instance in his 1802 *Faith and Knowledge*) and German Romanticism, specifically Novalis. Deleuze generates Heidegger's notion of transcendence from the same Humean–Kantian matrix mentioned above.

With Heidegger the transcendental becomes a structure of empirical subjectivity itself. The transcendental is reduced to transcendence, to going beyond. Perhaps in that case transcendental subjectivity might seem to lose its importance. With Kant, it made knowledge possible because it submitted sensible objects to human knowledge. But the transcendental subject [ends up being] what makes transcendence possible by submitting phenomena to this

very operation of transcending. The transcendental subject ends up being simply that to which transcendence itself is immanent. With Heidegger, on the contrary, the distinction between transcendence and the transcendental finally disappears. With him they are identified to the point that one can no longer distinguish that which grounds from that which is grounded. Which is why the root of every grounding is freedom.

The discussions of Heidegger in *What is Grounding?* have no equivalent elsewhere in Deleuze's writings. Deleuze goes on to affirm Heidegger's theory of the temporal structure of experience, or 'the conditions which make possible in existence our capacity for distinguishing past and future', concluding that Heidegger shows how 'finitude is constitutive in the measure in which it organizes time as *ecstasis*'. It is the transcendental imagination which is ultimately constitutive for human experience, and unless we learn the 'hidden art' of the imagination to which Kant alluded in his remarks on the schematism, the human being is destined to remain enclosed in the *constituted* frameworks of its finitude. 'It is necessary to grant the greatest importance to the poets and writers of German Romanticism', where one first finds 'a philosophy that posits the principle of a constitutive imagination'.

Novalis knew Kant's work very well. He wanted, he said, to bring about a 'philosophy' and not a psychology of imagination. ... Nature hides what it produces. Consequently there must be a reproduction by artificial means. ... Novalis suggests that the faculty of imagination possesses the capacity of corresponding with the same movement within things themselves whereby they reproduce themselves. Whence the theme of German Romanticism: the relation of truth and poetry. For Novalis, poetry possesses its own profound truth, in so far as its images are nothing but the movement of reproduction. ... The movement through which we imagine is nothing other than the movement by which nature produces things. However, this is of course true only on condition that one knows how to dream, and that a very particular tension of thought is attained: the attempt to liberate the qualities that are held imprisoned in the thing in the state of nature.

Deleuze appears to intend the Leibnizian monadic account of 'worlds' to take up a special place in this Romantic–Heideggerian grounding of the world in freedom. Leibnizian counterfactual metaphysics is in principle granted a new space in the post-Kantian philosophy of imagination, by providing a system of *de jure* constraints on thought and life and their possible realizations in practice. Deleuze is on the cusp here of igniting the fuse that will regenerate

the rationalist–Leibnizian vision of the plurality of worlds on the plane of a new ‘transcendental culture’ of human reason.

It is at this point, though, that the idea of a ‘self-grounding’ reaches a paradoxical point of identity with what Deleuze calls ‘ungrounding’ in *Difference and Repetition*, and we reach what could be the central node in the problem of immanence in Deleuze. In these lectures, he continually invokes a final type of ‘grounding’, involving a ‘confrontation with the unconscious’ and a special ordeal of ‘psychic repetition’. ‘The idea of the grounding principle’, he says, ‘invites us to take an original repetition, a psychic repetition.’ The ‘third’ that is invoked in the act of grounding ultimately ‘acts from within the shadows, in the unconscious. It is [in fact] the first; the third is what has been there from the beginning. An exploration of the unconscious will therefore no doubt be necessary.’ Deleuze here alludes to the necessity in the act of grounding of an encounter with the ‘ground’ in the obscure, abyssal sense conjured up by the later Schelling, where, as he remarks in *Difference and Repetition*, ‘the Ground [*le Fond*] become[s] autonomous’ and ‘essentially related to individuation’.¹¹ This suggestion takes us to the ultimate ‘problem’ in Deleuze’s explorations of the notion of immanence. *What is Grounding?* ends by stating:

In this psychic repetition, it is necessary that something new should be produced, in the mind [*esprit*], unveiled. Here we find the response to the question: ‘what use is grounding?’ What is unveiled (as is shown in the last chapter) is the true structure of the imagination, the meaning [*sens*] of which cannot be understood other than through the enterprise of grounding, which, far from supposing the perspective of infinity, is itself nothing other than the principle of the imagination.

The problem is that this ‘new’ thing that has been produced is a creation; it did not exist before the grounding. There is an ungrounding, a discontinuity, proper to the act of grounding. Are the philosophical notions of grounding and immanence then ultimately paradoxical?

Two things appear to have been gained by the end of the course. First, Deleuze has shown that the task of the ‘philosopher’ (and presumably, to some extent, every student of philosophy who wishes to ground their ideas) is to bring about a reconstruction of the history of culture, to account for the development of rational ends, in such a way that they are made capable of further pursuing the realization of reason. But, second, we also arrive at the consistent

position that the universal grounding of philosophy is ultimately *distributively* rather than collectively universal. In Kierkegaardian terms, the *act* is open to *each*, but not necessarily actually *all* (or at least not in the same place and time). We could describe this as the ‘inner democracy’ of the undertaking of philosophical grounding, the entrance into a necessarily shared space of ontological justice. Grounding is the task of *each*, not the all, but it produces as a doubly willed by-product the common end of establishing the realization of reason in the world; which is perhaps what ‘immanence’ amounts to.¹²

Notes

1. See Paul Patton’s translator’s preface to *Difference and Repetition*, Athlone, London, 1994, p. xiii; and Louise Burchill’s note on Patton’s translation of *fondement* and *fond* in her translation of Alain Badiou’s *The Clamour of Being*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2000, p. 132.
2. *Difference and Repetition*, p. 154.
3. All translations are my own. As can be seen from this passage, Deleuze’s style in the lectures appears to be a hitherto unknown dialect of Heideggerese; but that may be due to the state of the lecture notes. An English translation is forthcoming on webdeleuze.com.
4. G. Deleuze, ed., *Instincts et institutions*, Hachette, Paris, 1953, pp. 14–15; extracted from Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1949, pp. 4–5, 8–10.
5. In *Myth and Reality*, Eliade sums up that in the ritual mode of ‘living a myth’ what is involved ‘is not a commemoration of mythical events but a reiteration of them. The protagonists of the myth are made present, one becomes their contemporary. This also implies that one is no longer living in chronological time, but in primordial Time, the Time when the event *first took place*. This is why we can use the term the “strong time” of myth; it is the prodigious “sacred” time when something *new*, *strong*, and *significant* was manifest. To re-experience that time, to re-enact it as often as possible ... is the desire that runs like a pattern through all the ritual reiterations of myths.’ Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1963, p. 19.
6. *What is Philosophy?*, trans. G. Burchell and H. Tomlinson, Verso, London, 1994, p. 48. See Christian Kerslake, ‘The Vertigo of Philosophy: Deleuze and the Problem of the Immanence’, *Radical Philosophy* 113, May/June 2002, pp. 10–23.
7. Robert Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 23.
8. ‘Letter–Preface to Jean-Clet Martin’, in *Two Regimes of Madness*, Semiotext(e), New York, 2006, p. 361.
9. Deleuze, ‘Bergson, 1859–1941’, and ‘Bergson’s Conception of Difference’, collected in *Desert Islands*, trans. M. Taormina, Semiotext(e), New York, 2004.
10. G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller, Humanities Press, New York, 1989, p. 50.
11. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 321.
12. Cf. G. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. R. Hurley, City Lights, San Francisco, 1988, p. 29.