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Naturalism and Process Ontology for Rhetorical Theory and Methodology: Reconsidering the
Ideological Tautology

by

Caleb Micah Cates

Under the Direction of David M. Cheshier, Ph.D.

A Dissertation submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2022

ABSTRACT

Rhetorical Theory and Criticism primarily features modes of close reading that reconstructs the meaning of a text by constructing meaning through contingent textual moments within a theoretical perspective, typically ideological criticism. The dominant mode of ideological critique projects ideology as an anterior and universal cause; this projection strips individual and group agency from within various systems by totalizing them under one system. I strive to answer how we can preserve descriptive acuity while opening and exploiting contingent gaps to make scholarship more efficacious for social justice. Chapter one explores the inevitability of infinite regress in response to problems of vagueness endemic to the philosophical enterprise. Chapter two explores Bergson's Retrospective Illusion: strict modes of ontological necessity in a transcendental reasoning pattern produce tautological ontologies in which an effect becomes projected backwards as universal but, ultimately, illusory cause. Chapter three maps out Bergson's solution to the "Retrospective Illusion" and names it the "Prospective Illusion." In short, chains of sufficient reasoning are projected out towards tendencies in becoming such that universals are always in construction and never fully actual. Ontologies founded upon spatial necessity are replaced by a process ontology closely attuned to scientific process that folds space and time topologically into tendential becoming. Chapter four applies both illusions to rhetorical theory in its ideological and new materialist modes to argue for the usefulness of both models in breaking rhetorical theory out of its tacit methodological reliance upon reconstructive close reading and by re-evaluating some of rhetorical theory's ontological assumptions. The project concludes with prospective directions in methodology.

INDEX WORDS: Rhetorical Theory, Argumentation, Methodology, Ideology, and Ontology

A Construction of a Naturalist Ontology and Methodology in Rhetorical Theory and Criticism

by

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Georgia State University

August 2022

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my students whose aggressive questioning of the dominant paradigms of rhetorical theory led me to ask better constructed questions of the same.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank the following people and or things that have helped me produce this project through an already trying time compounded by chronic pain and mania. I want to extend my thanks to: Dr. David Cheshier, Dr. Jennifer Barker, and Dr. Tim Barouch for allowing and aiding me in constructing an atypical dissertation and working through some of my stranger moments. To my family, who have provided the financial privilege and emotional support to keep me from far worse fates than academia. To my friends, who put up with untreated manic and depressed versions of me, spewing rambling ideas and philosophy at both appropriate and inappropriate times. To my cohort, who did the same in and out of classes. To the doctors I have had who took the time to listen and think clearly beyond the flow charts of the medical disciplines' myopias. To Lyrica, Lamictal, various NSAID's, and painkillers for being useful chemicals.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AO: Abstract Object

ASS: Assumptions

C's: Contexts

G/C/S: Goal / Contribution / Significance

$I \rightarrow R \rightarrow A$: Ideology \rightarrow Rhetoric \rightarrow Action

$I \leftarrow R \rightarrow A$: Ideology \leftarrow Rhetoric \rightarrow Action

LEM: Law of the Excluded Middle

LNC: Law of Noncontradiction

PM: Primary Method

PO: Primary Object

PP: Perspectival Projection

R/R/R: Rhetoricity / the Rhetorical / Rhetoric

$R \leftarrow R \rightarrow R$: Rhetoricity \leftarrow the Rhetorical \rightarrow Rhetoric

$R \rightarrow R \rightarrow R$: Rhetoricity \rightarrow the Rhetorical \rightarrow Rhetoric

TC: Theoretical Concepts

$V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$: Virtual \leftarrow Intensive \rightarrow Actual

$V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$: Virtual \rightarrow Intensive \rightarrow Actual

PREFACE

It is my understanding that a preface is meant to give context to considerations too personal for formal writing and the contextual exigences that impute the creation of the work. The best prefaces are second prefaces written after a publication to situate a work in terms of its historical significance in context. I doubt strongly that this work will ever merit such a preface. However, this work strains the definition of a dissertation, and it comes from a strange and stubborn source. This preface branches out in two directions: First, I will discuss the primary exigences, the discipline named rhetoric, teaching the discipline named rhetoric, and teaching the discipline named rhetoric after 2016 in the American context. Second, I will discuss the material exigencies that help account for why this dissertation takes on such a range of disparate philosophical source materials, even at the risk of textual messiness.

The first exigence might could be considered personal problem or boon depending on who considers it. I have never been the person who can do a thing without having good reasons to do it, a thorough understanding of why I have chosen how I am doing going to do it, and what it means to do the thing. This personal problem was compounded by the almost random set of occurrences that led me into academia and rhetoric. My undergraduate life saw the following progression of majors: engineering aimed at biomedical engineering, public policy, psychology, and, finally, English with an unfinished art minor after ten semesters of ceramics. Of course, I applied to studio art graduate programs instead of English ones and, ironically given the philosophical bent of this dissertation that had already manifested in my undergraduate English work, I was turned down because my ceramics portfolio was “insufficiently conceptual.” I applied to the communications department at Georgia State because my father said I should have a backup plan and they admitted me for some obscure reason dealing with my writing sample.

An outsider wary of a new inside, I spent all my masters and much of my PhD trying to figure out precisely what it means to study rhetoric and do rhetoric as someone who has struggled to ever do a single thing with unity of purpose and specificity ever.

My coursework in rhetorical theory did not aid this confusion nor did it discipline me adequately. As noted, this lack of discipline may be more my fault than my teachers', but I think there is another cause here that runs deeper in the discipline. Seminar after seminar we would read through debates about what it meant to do rhetorical theory and or criticism. On the one hand, I flourished in the utter ambiguity of what it means to do rhetoric and got to do a great many things more restrictive understandings of rhetoric would not consider rhetoric. On the other hand, the multitude of theoretical turns and constant disciplinary introspection frustrated and frustrates me deeply. The turns seem to me to be a way to maintain the production necessary for promotion under the duress of academia's political economy and an age in which everything must be quantified under the regime of so-called neoliberalism. Rhetorical theory tends to find some new branch of continental philosophy or a new branch emerges – an example is, the nascent return to realism across several new classifications, including thing theory and new materialism – and they reevaluate old rhetorical concepts through these new philosophical structures.

Then rhetorical critics craft heuristic tools from these theory pieces. Famous texts that have already been thoroughly worked get worked more. This is not necessarily bad, as producing new readings from within a new historical context and theoretical understanding generates new meanings, but it also can produce cookie cutter type criticism. Theory X says we will find Y in object type Z and my specific text fits the pattern. Alternatively, new theory opens a new field of objects for study. The new objects are criticized through the new theory and are then criticized

through old theory such that a bloom of new work appears. When it works best, applying the rhetorical theoretical concepts to objects not immediately presenting as rhetorical can produce novel meanings about the world around us. Otherwise, the readings can be a reach. The best work in both tendencies finds the messy excess of actual expression and uses it to push back against generalized ways of reading so that they must be revised, but I do not often find work that reaches this aspiration. Meanwhile, as these endless “turns” obscures two potentials that, were they to manifest, could conceivably be labeled a turn towards methodology or interdisciplinarity.

The humanities and social sciences, broadly conceived, appear inefficient and inexact to me. I remember sitting in on one of GSU’s new hire’s “meet the students” sessions. The candidate does health communication research from a quantitatively oriented content analysis and big data perspective to study how health communication works online. There was an awkward moment when the group heard I was from the rhetoric side of the department. I was asked, quite candidly and from a place of curiosity, something to the effect of: “I remember rhetoricians at my old university. I never quite figured out what you all do.” Another rhetorician in the room sat there, unresponsive I expect, because it is normal to be unsure and anxious when asked to explain what we do. So, I responded: “You know the normal curve? You use quant methods to crunch the big part in the middle. We use qual methods, namely close reading, to figure out what the wild outliers off to the side can tell us about the whole.” Despite the limits on that analogy, I found it a bit surreal when both a health communication professor and the rhetorician student looked at each other, looked at me, and said “Oh, yeah, that makes sense.”

It seems to me the communication discipline’s inherent interdisciplinary potentials are not being fully utilized, in the particular sense that we lack a sufficient body of work that reveals

how different methodologies are tangibly effective in deploying a range of readings, collaboratively undertaken, to comprehensively map out a system or set of phenomena. Put differently, we all read groups like the Frankfurt, Birmingham, or Chicago groups approvingly but rarely forge our own beyond strings of coauthors working within a single theoretical-methodological framework. I hope this work brings us close to this potential and helps me find ways to be a part of larger working groups.

Considering rhetoric's efficacy as a part of a broader commitment to, or project aimed at enhancing, social justice reveals a second exigency of this project: a moment of epiphany I experienced while trying and perhaps failing in teaching an undergraduate section of rhetorical theory and criticism, in a unit focused on stirring ideological critique. I view ideological critique as the dominant theoretical orientation behind most rhetorical theory and criticism produced in the last twenty years, particularly analyses that invoke the dreaded and omnipotent idea of neo-liberalism. This is an important issue to take up with students, especially those with shorter lifespans, because there is a reason reactionary forces so fully despise higher education. As we talked, my students more or less understood the false consciousness idea; they got some notions of how discourse can embody power and social norms; they saw how repressive state apparatuses enforce these ideological norms. In a seminar reflecting Georgia State University's demographic diversity, I wasn't teaching them anything they have not personally experienced in a variety of ways. What they did not see strikes me as more important: they did not see the utility of ideological critique.

This gap led to a classroom moment that I believe will haunt me until I die. We had finished working through the canonical series of rhetorical theory texts on ideological critique, ending on excerpts from McKerrow's "Critical Rhetoric." One of my particularly bright students

raised their hand and asked something like: “if the system is going to win anyway, what's the point?” I was taken aback. I had read any number of rhetorical theory texts justifying the case for making ethical judgments in the process of rhetorical criticism; I had read competing accounts attending to how we should theorize ideology and its relationship to rhetoric; I had read many case studies in which the ideological structure of one or another discourse was laid bare to reveal power oppressing the oppressed. I had not read many success stories outside of some of the more ethnographically inflected work; I just read analyses of social problems primarily read by other academics analyzing the problem.

The story, perhaps, merely indicates that I was not teaching the right stuff or teaching well. Maybe my own investigation of ideological critique was inadequate. Or, at some level, the story and the student’s poignant question indicates that not all is right with how some portions of academia attempt to do social change. The moment led me to start thinking multi-methodologically in ways that would empower myself and my students, so they don’t end up stuck in an infinite regress of negative critique. I have never believed the line between biography and historical context and philosophy or theory to be as robust as we all like to believe in the wake of the linguistic turn’s murder of the author. Certainly, biographical and historical reductionism should be avoided, but we typically do not sunder the texts we analyze from their contexts. Why should we do so with more abstract work?

The 2016 election, the paucity of effective leftist organizing, the rhizomatic Black Lives Matter movements, my encounter with academic Leftists at Emory, and the Covid pandemic all live in this dissertation. Much of my anger in response to these exigences has faded as survival in the face of disability have drained my capacities, but my will and resolve to do something about these problems has not. In a sense, this work is a prolegomenon to my career. The obsessive

concern I display in what follows with *infinite regress*, problems of *vagueness*, and *process ontology* are not detached theoretical concerns but arise from reckoning with identity in America and the diffractive cross patterns of inclusion and exclusion across multiple registers. It seems to me that there are two broad tasks for a more progressive politics: to find ways to work through the fissures between oppressed groups to increase solidarity and to pressure the fault lines in the ever-shifting borders of hegemony. This work does not get there explicitly, but these considerations should be considered an introduction to work to come.

Finally, the influence of my health on this project should not be ignored. The summer before I started doctoral studies a femur cam shaft deformity tore through the labrum in my hip. Bodies, what well organized and flawless things, right? This led to misdiagnosis and painful physical therapy, PT becomes painful when it is not actually working on what needs to be worked on, until new health insurance provided me access to Emory Hospital orthopedists who promptly arranged a surgery to get my hip back into functionality. The problem worsened as I navigated down that path: other joints began hurting bilaterally. Finally, in 2020, at the end of the fourth year of my Ph.D. program, I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia. The first line treatments for fibromyalgia involve SSRI SNRI combo medications and these landed me in the emergency room, sometimes out of my mind. Neurotypical brains don't react in this way and these events led to a bipolar type II diagnosis. Suddenly, my more insane moments, terrible life choices, and tendency towards delirium made sense. It is only three months ago, as I sit here writing this in October 2021, that medications began to mitigate both the fibromyalgia symptoms and the bipolar excesses. I am thankful for that.

What does this self-disclosure mean for the project below? Primarily, and I do not say this facetiously, if it seems as though the dissertation was written by several different people, that

is because it was. I have a pain dimension with a quantitative gradient and a mental state Borromean Knot with the three states, bipolar has always been a misnomer, that oscillate between tendencies towards depression, irritability, and hypomania. I imagine anyone who knows me well enough may be able to tell which alignment of Micah wrote which of the following sections, even through editing or through noting when I use “we” to refer to my selves and when I use I. I hope this disclosure dispels potential confusion about the winding and somewhat wild texture of the text below.

INTRODUCTION

My comportment towards rhetorical theory, philosophical metaphysics, and the recent intersection of the two can be reduced in allegorical fashion to a children's show named *Adventure Time*. Episode twenty-six of season five is called "Wizard's Only, Fools" and follows a scientifically inclined character named Princess Bubblegum on a journey to a city populated by bizarre, even by the standards of adult television, wizards. As a scientist, Princess Bubblegum sees magic as best understood naturalistically, and she resents one of her subjects refusing medication for the common cold, insisting he needs a cold potion in line with his religious beliefs. The following exchange happens between Princess Bubblegum and a potion seller in the wizard city:

Wizard: This baby right here, right here, this... is what you WANT... brothers!

Princess Bubblegum: How's it work?

Wizard: It works by magic... It's a spell.

Princess Bubblegum *with increasing frustration*: What? I'm curious... So, what's in it?

Wizard *mirroring her frustration*: It's my secret brew, dog!

Princess Bubblegum: So you want to sell me a product with no information?

Wizard *menacingly*: It's a cold spell.


Princess Bubblegum *intensely menacing*: MADE FROM WHAT.

Wizard: MAAAAGIC

Princess Bubblegum: WHATS THE MAGIC MADE OUT OF, DING DONG.¹

In a reductive sense, this theoretical thrust of this entire project can be summed up by the analogous line: "WHATS THE METAPHYSICS MADE OUT OF, DING DONG."

¹ *Adventure Time*, "Wizards Only, Fools," 5:26-5:54

The new proliferation of metaphysical and ontological modes of realist philosophy, despite tending to different conclusions, are established by logical warrants and argumentative structures that supposedly account for the tical capacities, as opposed to ontic materializations, of all beings – or becomings. While such positions can seem straightforwardly compelling, I am not so convinced. I believe much in realist philosophy is constructed out of various modes of logic beyond the necessity of expressing thought through speech or writing. These accounts end up implicitly relying on the notion that the universe is an ordered place beyond the provisional and contingent order that interests us humans. If such a reading is correct, it should trouble disciplinary accounts that typically see themselves dedicated to, or even founded on, an ontological commitment to contingency.

Two strands of the return to ontology, I argue, can help specify a naturalist response to the return to ontology (and without recourse to a vulgar materialism in which the parts automatically account for the properties of a whole): a re-working of the materialist interpretation of Deleuze performed by Manuel DeLanda and the philosophy-physics of Karen Barad. DeLanda defends a sociological materialism against two problematic tendencies: “micro-reductionism...reduction to a mere aggregate of many rational decision makers...” and “macro-reductionism, as when one rejects the rational actors...in favor of society as a whole, a society that fully determines the nature of its members.”² These two constructs function as straw-people; that is, no theorist of society fully fits either tendency when one dives into the weeds of their work. DeLanda does not always provide discrete examples of either mode. Still, the broad orientations he names are useful in identifying tendencies that never obtain in a pure sense but can still be used to describe bodies of work. For example, early to mid-Habermas exhibits some

² Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 9-10. Italics removed.

tendencies towards micro-reductionism given his early tendency to center deliberative processes around rational actors. Or Niklas Luhmann and his accounts of systems theory, which tend to explain social phenomena at mid and lower scales as epiphenomena of giant social systems that are rarely if ever affected by individual agents. This reductionism in both theorists is undone, at least in some measure, by their later work, especially in Habermas' *Between Facts and Norms* and as Luhmann's moves into dynamic systems theory obtains.

The distinction between macro and micro-reductionism can assist rhetorical theorists thinking about analogous problems, such as the relationship between individual subjectivity, its individuation at the micro level, and its structural determination through ideology at the macro-level. Foregrounded in such frameworks are the problematic accounts often offered of causality, emergence, and scale. Any well-constructed rhetorical theory must acknowledge that parts have effects on wholes and can belong to many different wholes at the same time. And meanwhile, larger scale social organizations do exert some amount of top-down causal force evinced, in part, by their ability to persist despite environmental and internal pressure. The work of Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze's various manifestations both alone and in combination with Felix Guattari, and Manuel DeLanda's work can thus help rhetorical theory achieve a fuller understanding of agency while preserving a plausible ontological contingency that functions as a necessary condition of rhetoric, at least to an extent.

In what follows, I examine the benefits for rhetorical theory of engaging this literature, while also trying to sustain what I argue is a well justified sense of caution. Any New Materialist rhetorical theory, that is, must be wary of the New Materialism they claim: Deleuze and DeLanda both, at times, posit the existence of entities like "the plane of consistency" or Bergsonian Duration as temporal Absolute that introduce purely metaphysical entities in their

laudable attempts to escape the problems they position as inherent to representation in philosophy.

A naturalist account, offered in combination with Karen Barad's philosophy-physics fulfills a vital conceptual role in this project for both the close reading of recent New Materialist research, with necessary attention to the role of logic and Absolutes, and a commitment to rethinking criticism considering the elements of New Materialism that we take on. On the theoretical side, naturalism "entails rejecting the distinction between empirical and *a priori* truths, where the *a priori* truths are those that are known independently of experience and immune to revision in the light of it."³ Naturalism requires experimental verification but does not disallow a speculative bent to the theories that guide future experimentation. Models are warranted, even those that make metaphysical arguments, but treating these structures as real without empirical verification is not. The question remains one of how we justify the inferences our minds make through patterns logical and mathematical.

One might think such a conclusion obvious, and philosophy has been performing this maneuver (to offer knowledge claims but then also to interrogate them against the available natural evidence) for a long time even while claiming access to universal truths. Philosophy and science were not exactly separable in the classic period: Aristotle does biology as much as he does ethics. Even as disciplinary specialization picks up, a relationship between philosophy and science persists. Big breaks in science can be correlated to big breaks in philosophy. Kant reacts to Newtonian physics and calculus by positing time and space as eternal containers; Bergson reacts to Darwin and Einstein with a kind of panpsychism that treats different beings as temporal durations that evolve as part of an open system; Deleuze, in many ways, reacts to Paul Dirac's

³ Michael D. Resnik, "Quine and the Web of Belief" in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mathematics and Logic*, 416.

Quantum Field Theory by positing an immanent dialetheic virtuality in which the entire universe shares a monistic fabric of self-differencing difference. And so on. Positing theoretical constructs that exceed falsifiability can assist human understanding but granting ontological priority to the model's logical validity through argument and not empirical, i.e., not replicable nor falsifiable, experiments problematically commits to what I will later name the "Retrospective Illusion" (RI), a move influenced by following Jankèlèvich's reading of Bergson.

To connect the philosophical accounts I'm naming with the everyday theorizing work of rhetorical studies, I want to claim that a conceptual re-orientation towards naturalism requires a re-evaluation of the relationships between rhetorical theory in constitutive rhetoric and new materialism with regards to the modelling excesses of the philosophical systems they rely upon and an expansion of methodologies and interdisciplinary work to provide greater empirical acuity through diverse measuring apparatuses. Putting it differently: working with reified concepts as retrospective totalities like "*rhetoricity*," *ideology*, *subjectivity*, *energy*, and the *virtual* as Absolutes guiding rhetorical criticism through retrospective close reading in which textual elements are inferred as symptoms of deeper causes by matching up theory-context-text is a practice must be challenged.

The details of both the RI and the Prospective Illusion (PI) will receive detailed attention in chapters two and three respectively. In short, a RI happens when a thinker deploys a universal conception or categorical term, like *ideology*, and projects it back as the anterior cause of its specific historical individuations, their ramifications, and further self-differencing. This process relies upon transcendental reasoning in the mode of necessity: *it is necessary for universal X to exist to explain the logical conditions required for things Y, X, and what have you*. In such a configuration, universal X tends to function as an Absolute and runs into the problems associated

with Absolutes, namely Sorites and Liar's Paradoxes, a problem given greater attention in chapter one. The universal X also runs into the problems mapped out in Deleuze: the category does not adequately explain the phenomena in question but must have its own emergence explained by tracing its genesis through both things itself and not itself. Categories can help us compare and establish quantitative gradients between items in their set, but they do not necessarily grant us any agency living within the empirical world and run the risk of obscuring useful difference under similar characteristics.

To establish the problem more clearly, consider two different reasons these Absolutes are problematic for the analysis of social phenomena and where we can find these kinds of categorical Absolutes beyond discrete individuation in rhetorical theory. Latour's work on society as totalized reification can be extended relatively simply to various rhetorical totalities: "...it's crucial not to conflate all the agencies overtaking the action into some kind of agency — 'society', 'culture', 'structure', 'fields', 'individuals', or whatever name they are given — that would itself be the social...we should begin... not from..." these kinds of reified totalities as anterior causes "but rather the underdetermination of action."⁴ Or, in simpler terms: when we start with a theoretical construct like *ideology* and then analyze some set of social "texts" broadly conceived, an analytic cookie cutter situation can result. The critic finds precisely what they thought would be found because the critical gesture failed to begin with the speech itself as free from assumptions as possible. Instead, the critic reads the speech as the apparent manifestation of a hidden cause: "...social forces play the complicated role of being simultaneously what has to be postulated to explain everything and what, for many reasons, has to remain invisible."⁵ Ideological critique provides a clean example of this problem because it, and the constitutive

⁴ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory*, 45. Italics Removed.

⁵ Ibid, 102.

rhetoric derived from various theorizations of ideology, revert into an infinite regress where each determination of ideology through analysis always already belies just another deeper ideologically mystified structure.

One ends up with ideology read “all the way down” in a retrospective mode when it may be better to follow something like Latour’s solution: “We simply have to make sure that their diversity is not prematurely closed by one hegemonic version of one kind of matter of fact claiming to be what is present in experience...”⁶ For Latour, this proper inoculant is Actor Network Theory and the enumeration of specific agencies that map out networks that account for social asymmetry through controversy and underdetermination, among other things. I construct an alternative solution, by reading Deleuze and DeLanda to both clarify and complicate recent New Materialist rhetorical theories. This reading results in a prospective orientation towards both the emergent genesis of a discrete individuated rhetoric and the development of cartographic tools able to better map events and topological invariants characteristic of rhetorical becoming. In a sense, all we do here is return to the synchronic vs. diachronic question and attempt to put it on a different philosophical footing to argue that methodological pluralism and an attention to the problematic over the categorical can provide rhetorical studies with greater tools to make scholarship an active, as opposed to reactive, social force.

DeLanda makes an analogous critique of various Marxist totalities that derive from classical Marxist commitments to versions of historical determinism: “Much of the academic left today has become prey to the double danger of politically targeting reified generalities (Power, Resistance, Capitalism, Labour) while at the same time abandoning realism. A new left may yet emerge...if it focuses its efforts at the right social scale...if it leaves behind the dream of a

⁶ Ibid, 118. Italics Removed.

Revolution...”⁷ To DeLanda’s list one might add other Marxist reifications favored in rhetorical theory, such as *ideology* and *subjectivity*. DeLanda’s solution with regards to “Capitalism” employs Fernand Braudel’s distinction between “market economy” and “capitalism”; in such a distinction no *economic system as Absolute* obtains because economic-governmental-ideological and other interpretive motifs function as discrete individuations and assemblages better analyzed and intervened against at the scale of organization.⁸

Alongside Latour, DeLanda suggests that critics start at the middle level, aiming first to account for the discrete and historically contingent individuation of empirical social organizations, without recourse to some deeper level of social being that necessarily accounts for the population of all social organizations. Any other intervention against an invisible historical Absolute like *ideology* appears hopeless because it is hopeless; you cannot hope to out theorize a concept that you have made into a spectral god. Interventions made against individuated organizations populated by human beings invariably reveal uncertainties in how organizations interact across scale and within the ecosystem populated by other organizations: *hegemony*, or the association of dominant assemblages in many social organizations, itself becomes less an anterior force or re-produced product and more a system of production or process that can be attacked at both junctures of over and under determination.

We will evaluate the conceptual apparatus through which this shift operates at a deeper argumentative and ontological level in chapters three and four, but the connection to rhetorical theory can be previewed here: constitutive rhetoric’s *subjectivity* and *ideology* and new materialist rhetoric’s *rhetoricity*, *energy*, and version of Deleuzian *virtuality* all commit rhetorical critics to reified totalities that hamstring social efficacy because they reduce the

⁷ DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 48.

⁸ Ibid, 40-45.

genesis of qualitative diversity to that of a gradient of quantitative and metric differences. This problem will be investigated deeply with constitutive rhetoric and the kind of new materialist rhetoric expressed most clearly by Diane Davis and Thomas Rickert in chapter four. I do not deal with *energy* nor *virtuality* at length in this project, but the critique holds for them as well through analogic extension.

When rhetorical theorists reduce rhetoric to a reified generality like *rhetoricity*, *energy*, and so on, the qualitative genesis of discrete individuations of rhetorical systems becomes obscured by the act of generalization. Rhetorics are transmuted into quantitatively different manifestations of some fundamental thing that constitutes rhetoric or provides its necessary condition of possibility: all rhetoric can be said to be energy but we do not, from this literature, get great information about how different specific energies vary qualitatively, nor what the stakes for critical judgement might be given such an insight. Rhetoric becomes an oddly comparative venture: differences in quality are subsumed under identity under category. Disciplinary practitioners engage in a strange kind of rhetorical imperialism, where different individuated disciplinary fields in academia are *secretly* rhetorical simply because they involve contingency or relationality. Whether their secret rhetorical status, once revealed, affords us analytic and creative tools will be taken up extensively in chapter four.

No quote more clearly reveals this tendency in New Materialist rhetorical theory than the following from Scot Barnett and Casey Boyle: "...we take ontology to be fundamentally rhetorical... We thus take ontology to be the pervasive *relationality* of all things — the means by which things come into relation and have effects on other things that resonate strongly with existing and emerging understandings of rhetoric."⁹ Because rhetoric deals with relationality and

⁹ Scot Barnett and Casey Boyle, "Introduction: Rhetorical Ontology, or, How to Do Things with Things" in *Rhetoric Through Everyday Things*, 8-9. Italics in Original.

contingency, and many strands of the return to ontology focus on relationality and the contingent emergence beyond deterministic physics, it must thus follow that ontology is “fundamentally rhetorical.” What reified universal term occupies this status as “fundamentally rhetorical” varies in the literature. Diane Davis works through Derrida to produce “rhetoricity” or “an irreducible and...irreducibly rhetorical ‘text’ that structures the living on...of ‘life itself,’”¹⁰ a rendition meaning that “Rhetoric is not first of all an essence or property ‘in the speaker’... but an underivable obligation to respond that issues from an irreducible relationality.”¹¹ “Rhetoricity,” then functions like other reified totalities (e.g., “*ideology*”) by serving as an always anterior and spectral condition that somehow opens the ontological and totalizing potential for rhetoric, by constructing relationality, and by extension rhetoric, not as conceptual category but as fundamental to the universe.

Many rhetorical studies texts¹² follow the same pattern with substitutions – “*energy*” or “*force*” that derive from or at least resemble George Kennedy’s speculations: “Rhetoric in the most general sense may perhaps be identified with the energy inherent in communication...one might even seek to identify some quantitative unit of rhetorical energy...by which rhetorical energy could be measured.”¹³ This rhetoric-as-energy “is prior to speech” as a necessary cosmological condition,¹⁴ which is then conceptually and speculatively expanded into a rhetoric of “subatomic particles,”¹⁵ that provides “some universal rules of the rhetorical code.”¹⁶

¹⁰ Diane Davis, “Rhetoricity at the End of the World,” 432.

¹¹ Davis, “Creaturely Rhetorics,” 89.

¹² See the following: Catherine Chaput, “Rhetorical Circulation in Late Capitalism: Neoliberalism and the Overdetermination of Affective Energy,” 7-8; Amanda Nell Edgar, “The Rhetoric of Auscultation: Corporeal Sounds, Mediated Bodies, and Abortion Rights,” 351; Debra Hawhee, “Rhetoric’s Sensorium,” 13; Byron Hawk, “Sound: Resonance as Rhetorical,” 322; Chris Ingraham, “Energy: Rhetoric’s Vitality,” 260; Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder, “Rhetoric’s New Materialism: From Micro-Rhetoric to Microbrew,” 446.

¹³ George A. Kennedy, “A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric,” 2.

¹⁴ Ibid, 4.

¹⁵ Ibid, 13.

¹⁶ Ibid, 3.

It is to Kennedy's credit that he stops short of the problems of the Absolute that beset universal categorical constructs: "Research on the forms of rhetoric in nature can be a first step toward a theory of general rhetoric and a comprehensive history of its development...what is seen among animals is only analogous to features of human rhetoric, not its direct sources."¹⁷ Despite this, Kennedy's formulation is a cautionary tale. An account of rhetoric as a manifestation of fundamental and universally cosmic energy clearly carries the baggage of the always anterior rhetoric as rhetoricity introduced above. Rhetoric is reduced to energy, and this becomes a universalized declaration; this universal energy picks up a cosmological quantitative gradient, and analysis of discrete and individuated rhetorics becomes difficult to do because they will only ever be epiphenomenal of some deeper reality that has already been named. And yet Kennedy appears to snap back against this construal at the end of the essay and proposes a significance argument that, for us, directly implicates a kind of Deleuzian "Transcendental Empiricism." Rhetoric as energy, in Kennedy's final rendition, is revealed as an *illusory* though productive starting point for analyzing the specific emergence of qualitatively different historical individuals and the differences in kind arising across different rhetorical intensities. Animal and human rhetorics share a common condition of potential emergence, but overdetermine their quality underneath a category can obscure the very distinctions that make their emergence meaningful.

Both rhetoric-as-energy and New Materialist rhetorical theory (e.g., following the work of Diane Davis) have been criticized for their lack of attention to qualitative differences and the reduction of rhetoric to ever more reified and cosmically fundamental categories that always commit the critic to a strategy of withdrawal from the object of analysis. Liska criticizes

¹⁷ Ibid, 20.

Kennedy: "...I believe that his characterization of rhetoric as 'an energy existing in life,'...is far too broad to be conceptually useful..."¹⁸ because not "all definitions are created equal: critical assessment of their utility and/or heuristic value is essential in the development of theory."¹⁹

Carolyn Miller offers a similar critique, although her understanding of the potentials of Actor Network Theory are off: "Rhetoric, like sociology, is interested in associations...A rhetorician, however, wants to know something about the nature and quality of these associations..."²⁰ She finds Latour insufficient to these ends, despite (and this is where I believe her reading goes astray) *Reassembling the Social* having plenty to say about ambiguity, underdetermination, and asymmetry in networks that can be adapted to providing qualitative descriptions of discrete individuals with relatively little supplementation. Regardless of quibbling about Latour, both Liska and Miller point directly at the problem with reifying categorical and conceptual universals or abstractions: they do not provide us with sufficient theoretical resources to account for the genesis of a *given* assemblage, its qualitative tendencies in a *local* sense, nor the *various* transformations it may undergo while maintaining recognizably spatial and temporal coherence. Kennedy right that studying animal rhetorics could provide useful insights to the genesis of human rhetoric in a nondeterminative sense and may be worth studying alongside biologists. In this mode, neither rhetoric nor biology can sufficiently pose the problem of communication in their own disciplinary terms. Cooperation and interdisciplinary work become necessary. However, reducing all phenomena to manifestations of an essential cosmological scale rhetoric does not help us to analyze their qualitative differences and, in this incapacity, cannot fully effect socially efficacious change on the issues pressing human agents, racism and so on, nor

¹⁸ Jo Liska, "The Role of Rhetoric in Semiogenesis: A Response to Professor Kennedy," 31.

¹⁹ Ibid, 32.

²⁰ Carolyn R. Miller, "Counterpoint: The Appeal(s) of Latour" in "Forum: Bruno Latour on Rhetoric," 456.

necessarily the climate change that affects many processes human and otherwise on this planet. Essentializing rhetoric to push against anthropocentrism may function as a necessary preface to future work (after all, part of the impetus of this work is to problematize it), but I do not believe it sufficient on its own.


What we need, then, is a New Materialist conception of rhetorical theory that takes reified generalities, categories, and concepts to task through a thoroughgoing naturalism that can both remove metaphysical content from New Materialist theories and suggest novel methodologies beyond reconstructive close reading as approaches more suited to understanding both emergent genesis and qualitative differentiation in a process ontological framework applicable to both human and nonhuman systems. Gilles Deleuze's work and its uptake by Manuel DeLanda are integral here because they provide highly rigorous philosophical conceptualizations of the relationship between science, philosophy, and mathematics, and their research is taken seriously as providing the conceptual foundation for many contemporary New Materialists. Yet, as a precise argumentative critique will reveal, their variety of "transcendental empiricism" harbors the very same tendencies towards reified universals that they claim to escape, especially in any formulation of the virtual register that functions within a logic of the set of all sets. This metaphysical tendency towards the Absolute must be dealt with through naturalistic inquiry before other lessons from these philosophers can be leveraged in untangling the various anterior and universal structures that find their ways into rhetorical theory. Chapters three and four are largely dedicated to this task.

Advocating a rhetorical naturalism appears counter-intuitive to both the sophistic and constitutive bents that permeate rhetorical theory with a thoroughgoing subjective relativism. Broadly conceived, rhetorical theorists typically position themselves as hostile towards some

construction of scientism. The legitimacy and diverse specificity of these constructions exceeds the scope I can handle, but two renounced orientations continue broadly to shape rhetorical studies, both of which incline to anxiety about the possibility of objective knowledge. First, many scholars critique Enlightenment Rationalism in which the cosmos has a determinant order that can be uncovered through scientific methodologies through the erasure of subjective influence by objective methodologies. These critiques generally invoke Descartes' *Meditations*, the Port Royal school of logic that sundered all things logical from the rhetorical canon from Aristotle, or something similar in which disagreement indicates an epistemological lack in the face of a deistic cosmos. Contingency and probable knowledge, those sacred elements of classical rhetorical theory, become fleeting illusions better left to their eventual resolution by what passed for the scientific method back then.

Second, scholars critique Positivism in which mathematical or scientific models do not describe reality but give up reality's essential characteristics and eliminate subjective bias through rigorous experimental or mathematical apparatuses and a distinct lack of theoretical speculation on the meaning of the models. Positivism, perhaps more than Rationalism, strikes directly at the heart of the critical enterprise: objective data should be quantifiable, and the quantitative models should provide predictive acuity. Control through prediction becomes the primary goal of human thought and more traditionally rhetorical practices like meaning making or exploring relativistic perspectives are marginalized.

The rhetorical theorist's response to these perceived threats throws Thomas S. Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* or some postmodern text about perspectivism and the inescapability of language at "objective" knowledge in favor of a more perspectival mode of

rhetorical criticism²¹ or a more constructivist take on science itself.²² In a highly reductive mode: scientists are humans and scientific process involves groups; humans and human groups have to use language to communicate in experimental process and to deliver the results of experiments; therefore, science itself cannot escape the epistemological relativity inherent in the linguistic enterprise. Sometimes these critiques  work through scientific controversy to hammer down on this point; sometimes the critiques marshal the results of bad science that is revealed to have reproduced bias baked into study design. Subjectivity, meaning, and perspective end up opposed, in this staging, to objectivity, data, and methodology in order to save the pertinence of humanistic inquiry. But I am not always sure of whether the epistemological limitations in quantum mechanics nor bad science should truly warrant the justification of humanistic enterprise in a relativistic way that relies heavily upon reconstructive close reading to accomplish its work. After all, rhetorical theory and criticism comported towards social change *does* want to predict and exert influence on different social organizations. Otherwise, why would we do it?

Some scholars committed to the ideological turn appear aware of these problems. Brummett provides a more measured approach by arguing for both “experimentalism” and more “holistic” modes of inquiry: “More important than the experimental focus which produces data is the organizing and guiding perspective which interprets that data.”²³ Rhetorical theorists should provide “holistic” takes that attempt to integrate data produced by “isolation” in experimental apparatuses²⁴ and, presumably, vice versa. Rhetorical methodologies attempt to see how experimental analyses generalize into larger contexts; experimental methodologies attempt to test these generalizations, so forth and so on in an infinite machine. The problem with this construal

²¹ See Michael Calvin McGee, “Another Philippic: Notes on the Ideological Turn in Criticism.”

²² See Barry Brummett, “Some Implications of ‘Process’ or ‘Intersubjectivity’: Postmodern Rhetoric.”

²³ Ibid, 43.

²⁴ Ibid, 46-47.

comes down to what we mean by “experimental methodologies.” Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar presents an astute take by analyzing several well-regarded nodes in the progression of how rhetorical theorists conceptualize critical practice to conclude: “From Wichelns to McGee, the object gradually recedes and finally disintegrates into fragments. But even as it recedes and disintegrates, object continues to hold the method captive.”²⁵ In this sense, the opposition between ideological critique epitomized by Michael Calvin McGee and the close textual analysis advocated by Michael Leff dissolve because, for both, methodological questions are reduced to the matter of how best to ascertain the object of rhetorical criticism, to determine which theory should be used to criticize these objects, and to do so while tacitly relying on reconstructive close reading as the ur-methodology of rhetorical criticism.²⁶ Regardless of our theoretical outlook or how we construe the significance of the critical act, rhetorical critics largely, with some progressive and activist-ethnography scholars serving as exceptions to the rule, hold ourselves in bondage to a method of reconstructive close reading in which textual elements evince deeper structures that only leave traces in whatever rhetorical object we analyze.

Little wonder then, as Appendix I and chapter four demonstrate, that the significance sections of publications in rhetorical criticism betray that the authors rarely feel as though they have done the work they set out to do when all they have found is that the overbearing neo-liberal or other ideology they knew was at work in the text even before it was engaged, ends up giving up the textual effects predicted all along! This mode of critique is not wholly without value – for example, it might make Republicans and some Democrats nervous by documenting the myriad patterns of oppression – but it derives from our field’s not-so-secret reliance on

²⁵ Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, “Object and Method in Rhetorical Criticism: From Wichelns to Leff and McGee,” 308.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 290, 292, and 312.

hidden entities and, I argue, must be aided by a naturalistic comportment towards both methodology and theory.

Experimental apparatuses discursive and material are capable of measuring reality and breaking away from a primary focus on reconstructive close reading if critics are open to a more expansive set of social scientific and artistic methodologies that facilitate an escape from always anterior causality. Hidden causes must either be measured and acted upon or discarded; we must be extremely careful with rhetorical theory by attending to how our conceptualizations of the underlying philosophy (and these philosophies themselves) break from naturalistic norms by positing hidden entities that rely upon logical existence criteria instead of empirical ones. A revised New Materialist philosophy, rewritten to embrace a naturalistic set of truth criteria, can help justify methodological pluralism in this way, but only if the genesis of New Materialism in the work of Gilles Deleuze can be freed from its lurking insistence upon a strange mode of Platonic Idealism.

To put the argument in a critical register: the point of socially efficacious rhetorical criticism *is* control through prediction and effect through intervention, and an expanded sense of methodological pluralism will help us undertake this work more powerfully. Reconstructive close reading need not be removed from the methodological repertoire of rhetorical studies, but contextualized as one among many methods and one suited to explaining the divergent features of the singular instead of the recurring of the ordinary. Let us take metaphysical fictive categories, like ideology, as useful modelling functions that stall out the infinite regress of retrospective analysis seriously for a moment. Different rhetorical criticisms of specific texts map out how this spectral and anterior cause manifests; new texts and events in culture build upon or complicate the model, but we know what to expect and the typical pattern of criticism is

reasserted through the diachronic and discipline reproducing assumptions of the field itself. We may wrap this thing up in terms of meaning making or the constitution of subjectivity, but the implication that a similar rhetoric given similar contingencies through a similar context function strongly. The whole point of finding exemplary objects that break with the pattern justifies the existence of the predictive bent of the field! Why not own it? Let us move away from slow and relatively microscopic methodologies into more robust ways of mapping the singular and ordinary sets of speech and rhetorical objects.

CHAPTER I: INFINITE REGRESS AND ARGUMENTATIVE WARRANTS

It may be helpful to clarify at the start that I do not find rhetorical theory different from philosophy, nor philosophy a singularly existing edifice transcendent to processes mundane and human. Philosophy cannot be understood apart from the lived experience that generates it any more than it can be from the language that conditions it in its articulation. Philosophy's myriad methodologies and individual philosopher's idiosyncrasies or individual methodologies cannot be read apart from the context of their lives, bodies, times, their friendships or rivalries, academic or personal, and the background condition of other, ever-growing libraries filled by dead philosophers. This matters because argumentative warrants, following Toulmin as the link between evidence and claim, in philosophy have a tropological bent. It does not matter which "kind," methodology, or overall structure of philosophic enterprise one engages: from Deleuze's "Transcendental Empiricism," to Marx's "Dialectical Materialism," to Derrida's "Deconstruction," to Aristotle's love of categorization, formal logical patterns constructed through series of inference repeat that end up simply reproducing conceptual vagueness as totalizing categories emerge at the logical limits of definition.

This chapter examines two argumentative structures constructed by Graham Priest: "The Inclosure Paradox" and "The Domain Principle." In short, the act of measurement or definition makes some things precise but, in doing so, create higher order vagueness. Philosophers tend to deal with this higher order vagueness by creating chains of logic through their preferred philosophic warrant/s that converge towards some form of totality, which can also be understood as a domain or range of applicability. The process then begins anew as younger philosophers take up the work of their predecessors' constructions.

Providing some examples of philosophical warrants will help make the necessity of this endeavor more concrete. The Law of Noncontradiction has been codified since at least Aristotle and is still cited today by philosophers given to a certain tendency to demarcate spatiality or mechanism.²⁷ The Law of Noncontradiction simply states: At any given time, a thing must either be A or not.²⁸ At an immediate intuitive level, it is difficult to imagine how we could define or clarify a thing without such a warrant! Philosophic warrants represent the logical articulation of inference but the lines between them and argumentative structures blur. Warrants like the Law of Noncontradiction seemingly commit a philosopher to an ontology and, when re-constructed retrospectively, the argument can be re-articulated as exhibiting an argumentative structure. These terms should be taken as heuristic, permeable, and open.

Argumentative structures exhibit greater complexity because they can be represented as deploying different philosophical warrants in strategic places. Jankélévitch's "Retrospective Illusion" takes Bergson's critique of what he finds to be a bad pattern of transcendental inference common in Western philosophy and sublimates it into more concise formulation. In short, sometimes we project something about ourselves or the way we work into our analyses of Being when we should not. It is not my aim to build a typology or taxonomy of philosophical warrants nor to undertake genetic work to determine which one/s are more fundamental or temporally anterior on logic's family tree than others. I am not sure such an argument could ever reach resolution. However, a sense of complexity emerges all the same: the representation of inferential processes appears to be than finding patterns in their deployment that can construct

²⁷ Mechanism indicates a model of causality that becomes best articulated in work after Sir Isaac Newton's massive advances in physics and mathematics. Mechanism views the universe as a sort of churning machine assemblage in which things have causes that are discernable with precise enough observational and experimental capacity. To use a metaphor: the executive ball clicker. You pull the ball to one side of the swing, release it, and can clearly see how the motion and collision of the end ball is transmitted through the other balls to cause the other end ball to fly up in the air, and so on, until enough energy has been lost for the body to return to rest.

²⁸ Laurence R. Horn, "Contradiction," 2.

structures of greater complexity. The primary goal of this chapter is to show that Priest's Inclosure Paradox and Domain Principle describe through formalization a process of infinite regress and conceptual totalization that underlies other philosophical warrants that they have been created to remedy but, in the end, only replicate. To this end we proceed in the following steps:

1. *Why Should We Speculate and Formalize?:* Where the introduction covers the topic's pertinence to rhetoric, this section describes the background tendencies in philosophy and offers an example from rhetorical theory that tend towards conceptual totalization and provides an ethical rationale for why this process has merit.
2. *Hegelian Infinities, Domain, and Inclosure:* I cover the problems of the Absolute from above through everyday thought experiments and Hegelian infinities to provide an intuitive and lightly mathematical demonstration of given system's tendency to project an Absolute domain, and to reveal that domain's own paradoxical qualities.
3. *Rhetoric, The Rhetorical, Rhetoricity: Regress and Domain in Rhetorical Theory:* Where the previous section approaches Absolutes and vagueness from above, this section takes on a material analogy from below to illustrate the inevitability of these problems when we try to draw precise definitional or empirical borders. Typical solutions to this problem from the history of philosophy are quickly evaluated and an analogy to Rhetoricity / the Rhetorical / Rhetoric (R/R/R)²⁹ will be drawn.

²⁹ Rhetoricity comes from, as noted in the introduction, Davis' work and refers to ontology's fundamentally rhetorical characteristics. I do not share the assumption concerning rhetoricity's anterior priority in becoming, but I do believe the term usefully signals any discussion about the ontological characteristics of rhetoric, however one construes that term. The Rhetorical refers to what powers, capacities, things, processes, however you label ontological existences persuasive valences. What counts as rhetorical has a link to small r rhetorics that emerge from the world and big R Rhetoric that signifies a theorist's set of all sets conceptualization of Rhetoric. These terms are, as everything in this dissertation, heuristic and permeable. What someone considers rhetorical doubtlessly relates to

Why Should We Speculate and Formalize?

We need to elaborate on the role of formalization and speculation in theory. Rhetorical scholarship will benefit from more explicitly defending our ontological claims, rather than leaving them implied, unspoken, or uninterrogated. Scholars experience philosophical systems outside of time and experience, folding projects from widely separated centuries onto one another. Education in philosophers sometimes gives the impression that philosophers entire careers have been spent fiddling with a rubrics cube until all the sides click together in a satisfactory way, the concepts aligned like the colors. We get to see the completed cube by reading the books and associated secondary texts led to read philosophical work as seamless and emergent neat and complete from thought, but not everyone gets to see the speculative process that required an ungodly cycle of iteration to result in relative coherence, nor how these completed works are themselves iterations in a longer lineage.

Theorists do the same thing but within the particular domain of some loosely bounded object – *society, rhetoric, literature, film, art* – and sometimes even attempt to systematize understanding in some cohort below or between areas, like notions of *story* or *agency*. So, we either are doing, are a component of, or make use of this very system-building process in our respective disciplinary histories. Even in everyday conversation, we undertake this speculative process and typically with less systematic rigor. We get into gardening and find out just how many problems of plant, climate, soil composition, and so on arise when one gardens; we decide to paint miniatures and learn just how many problems of style, tool, material, and so on arise when one models and paints. Once wholly competent in a thing, everyday or academic, one quickly learns how varying possibilities arise out of multiple practices, where each path evokes

the rhetorics they study, implies a notion of the ontology necessary for such things to emerge, and may be bounded in the first place by what the theorist thinks Rhetoric is.

different consequences. Just as some materials used in miniatures are dangerous or some gardening practices have ecological consequences, philosophical positions have consequences for any theory or for the person embracing them. These consequences follow to students who then take them into the world. In a certain sense this is an obvious inevitability: taking a position on a problem always creates a consequence! If it did not, there would be little reason to do it. But danger lurks in insufficiently speculative and rigorous philosophy-theory: little problems and positions that produce bad consequences can stay hidden, such that an apparently impressive theory harbors dangerous modes of purity or hierarchy that you did not realize were in there. You become the gardener who suddenly finds dead bees around their garden, at the very moment when we and other animals very much need bees to be alive.

Let us start with the idea of logical necessity. In a sense, the development of any given position in one area or topic of philosophy entails and constrains the available positions in adjunct areas of philosophy. For example: If you have taken the position that persuasion inheres strictly in *mana* or as an essence-power projected by words themselves, you imply and require an ontology that potentiates essences or a materialist view that stipulates an *animus* of energy coursing through all things, or so on. Options remain, but you have implied there is a hidden power in things and demonstrating how this entailment works should burden you. In short, this process of ever-expanding schematization derives from the paradoxes and ambiguities that inevitably arise in making ideas clearer and more carefully differentiated by reliance upon some particular method. The fact that language is the medium of theory only compounds the ambiguity given the vagueness inherent to expression.

There is a further problem: the gaps between what is made systematically explicit versus what is left to implicature often reproduces the distance in real life between what gets said and

the quiet parts you are not supposed to say aloud. For example: your mana-essence theory might have some nasty consequences when you, or someone writing in your wake, try to explain how different beings appear to be differently suited to channel mana, or that some beings do or could possess more mana than others. Does this imply that some essences are superior to others? Have you created a hierarchy of Being based upon the pure power of mana that, by implication, could justify oppression? Or are you willing to defend the alternative, that there is no quantitative gradient of power, only qualitative difference? Is that even *really* better?

Making things explicit through speculative philosophical process and/or having a go at conceptual formalization fulfills an ethical purpose in this sense: the exclusions we make silently in pursuit of one philosophical ground over another have material consequences because of their political implications. These quiet parts tend to speak loudly when we push a system to account for Absolutes or the philosophical warrants it employs to prevent the fall into infinite regress. Pushing out or at least noting our ontological, epistemological, ethical, and methodological positions is not only logically inevitable, then, but ethically necessary.

Should the mana or gardening examples leave one unconvinced, consider this from the theory-discipline of rhetorical studies.³⁰ Richard Cherwitz and James Hixons elaborated a version of rhetorical epistemology across 1982-3. In 1982 they write: “First, we assume that matters of epistemology are both conceptually and logically *prior* to matters of ontology... What we offer is a concept of knowledge which makes no ontological statement regarding the nature of the objects of reality.”³¹ “No ontological statement” shifts remarkably quickly into the production of a full ontological inquiry in 1983. They turn to ontological matters whose “formulation is a

³⁰ My sense is that this example is unusual, though knowing so would await a more exhaustive content analysis of the literature in top journals of Rhetoric and Communication.

³¹ Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hixons, “Towards A Rhetorical Epistemology,” 140. Italics in Original.

prerequisite to understanding *rhetoric's* inherent epistemological function.”³² Presumably, the period bookended by these two publications must have featured some epiphany or “oh no” moment that can account for a dramatic about face from the “logically prior” epistemology to the “prerequisite” ontology.

Cherwitz and Hikins then formulate ontological orientations that, perhaps unsurprisingly, anticipate some of the typical arguments of New Materialist rhetoricians: a universal relationality, a sort of gestalt psychology of consciousness, and a remarkably flat ontology.³³ This example highlights a moment in which two authors beneficially realize their epistemology entails a certain kind of ontology then proceed ethically to do the work to flesh out what those problems and positions look like. To my knowledge, Cherwitz and Hikins do not take their partnership into spelling out what a perspectival rhetoric entails in connected philosophical fields, or what it requires ethically, and nor does methodology get their attention, but all this can be made right as the ramifications of their projects unfold through future work in the discipline. Life interferes with philosophical world building, of course, though footnotes can give direction to the footsteps tracked in the works cited page to let someone else beget that iteration in the longer speculative bent of the discipline.

Cherwitz and Hikin’s work to repair their initial attempt at a pure epistemology is a rarity in rhetorical theory³⁴ and this rarity has ethical and analytic consequences: philosophy should be speculative because it provides greater analytic rigor by making the implicit explicit, and this same process of clarification makes philosophical inquiry more ethical. Whitehead’s definition

³² Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hikins, “Rhetorical Perspectivism,” 251. Italics in Original.

³³ Ibid, 252-253.

³⁴ There are two acceptable reasons for this seeming sparsity: theory tends to occupy a lower level of generality than philosophy because of its interest in a particular kind of object and the publishing complex in neoliberal academia actively poisons scholars against more general modes of inquiry. This said, footnote practices that note ambiguity and adjunct fields, more aggressive review processes, and different methodologies or compartments could mitigate the rarity, as chapter four will argue in part.

of speculative in his *Process and Reality* resonates: “Speculative Philosophy is the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our own experience can be interpreted.”³⁵ What “necessary” entails is a fraught subject itself, but Whitehead’s rationale for the speculative bent argues for its analytic necessity: “The importance of philosophy lies in its sustained effort to make such schemes explicit, and thereby capable of criticism and improvement.”³⁶

Karen Barad makes the ethical stakes explicit with regards to her justification for engaging in ontological inquiry: “How *reality* is understood matters. There are risks entailed in putting forward an ontology: making metaphysical assumptions explicit exposes the exclusions on which any given conception of reality is based.”³⁷ Thus Barad calls for “something like an *ethico-onto-epistem-ology* — an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being — since each intra-action matters, since the possibilities for what the world may become call out...”³⁸ I agree with Barad’s sentiment entirely, even if my own speculative bent does not always bend enough in its prevailing focus on ontology and methodology when engaging rhetorical theory and criticism (a partial remedy, I hope, will be found in my footnotes).

There are at least two ways to show that the pattern hinted at above holds for thought endeavors at a more general level. The first would be to map out the moments and accompanying rationalizations for expansion in a genealogical-descriptive mode that shows tendencies in the empirical development of thought across the work of individual thinkers, academic disciplines, and so on, in orders of scaling cardinality. A comprehensive work of that scale may not be possible in an individual’s lifetime, but a second path, which proceeds inductively to formalize a

³⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid*, xiv.

³⁷ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 205.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 185. Italics in original.

structure and inferential devices, can work as a more achievable substitution. However, risk proliferates on this approach: the exact risk inherent in retrospective ventures that this exact project will spend much time discussing. This mode risks flattening the texture, contradictory moments, and ambiguities that tether philosophy to life itself and do not treat some generalization of a work as monolithic.

Despite that risk, in what follows, I take this second route using Graham Priest's *Beyond the Limits of Thought* as a vital text by explaining Hegelian infinities, doing an empirical metaphor with ants, and applying this problematic to rhetoric broadly conceived. In the next chapter, I will let some ambiguity and confusion creep through as I do a different kind of Priest that looks at regress, totalization, and the inevitable messy materialist strains. With that work in place, the later chapters map out the implications for rhetorical theory and explore the methodological considerations that necessarily follow.

Hegelian Infinities, Domain, and Inclosure:

Priest develops what he names "The Inclosure Paradox," reading through several nodes in Western Philosophy and Mathematics' that conceptualize the Absolute to argue that, at the limit of thought, "such limits are dialetheic; that is, that they are the subject, or locus, of true contradictions."³⁹ Whether or not we ultimately accept dialetheism as the proper posture regarding the limits of thought, I am interested in extracting two linked philosophical warrants from this text, the "Domain Principle" and the "Inclosure Paradox," since these schemas illustrate how thought expands and gives logical necessity to this process. In short, the lived process of doing thought creates vagueness in two strata. In highly reduced form: making a concept precise produces higher order vagueness, and, dealing with this vagueness frequently

³⁹ Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 3.

requires creating a chain of definitions that represent series of inferences that otherwise compound this vagueness; finally, a categorical projection or an Absolute suture the vagueness of the system itself. Along the way, insufficiently exact concepts emerge because each system is only a logical model of reality and, as we will see, reality itself features a heavy dose of indeterminism when thought from a materialist – empiricist mode. In a sense, Priest provides compelling evidence that the engine of thought is paradox because of inevitable problems of infinite regress and liar’s paradoxes that are typical to conceptual spatialization or in the deployment of language to articulate theory.

The “Domain Principle” and “Inclosure Paradox” are mutually imbricated in the sense that both describe through formalization two sides of the same speculative process of thought. The Inclosure Paradox describes it from below in the sense of the potential infinite: some “infinity generator,”⁴⁰ to use Priest’s terms, gets applied some arbitrarily large number of times to produce an infinity. In argumentative terms, definitions run into ambiguous border cases or are put in dialogue with other definitions and produce more definitions, *ad nauseam*. The “Domain Principle” describes a perspectival projection from the point of view of the regress or system in question, in which the limit statement of a series both is and is not a member of itself. Definitional chains imply ranges of application (in this they are not unlike mathematical sets), but as they approach the limit case, at least according to Priest, objects, terms, ideas, and concepts, emerge as dialetheic in the sense of both being and not being members of themselves. Sometimes these concepts end up starting their own series, operating in the same way as definitions of an infinite set can be made to do in mathematics. In a sense, these two resulting moments of motion are not separable and are conceptually fuzzy, when considered against the

⁴⁰ Ibid, 27.

actual processes they purport to describe. Domains are conceptual objects of speculation while steps are followed; the positing of a domain immediately implies new steps. The “Domain Principle” and “Inclosure Paradox” thus describe the same process from two different perspectives, above and below respectively.

The everyday metaphor that best articulates the different and yet inextricably linked nature of these two formalizations can be illustrated through the experiences of two different kinds of shoppers. Let us return to the miniature painting and wargaming metaphor. I am a shopper from below and the Inclosure Paradox definitely applies to me. When I decide to make a new unit in a wargame, I just go to the hobby store and get what I think I need in a process of messy iteration, return home and get to work, realize as I paint that I’m missing what I need to paint this or that feature, project a total domain for the materials required for this or that miniature set, and shamefully order what has been omitted. This kind of shopping analogizes the process from below: I set out with a color concept, find vague moments and new problems as I paint, and then attempt to demarcate the total number of things required from below.

My friend Andy differs from me greatly, perhaps because he is an engineer and data scientist. Andy precisely knows everything he needs to produce in advance; he has stipulated a domain well before he gets in the store. Andy’s problem starts once he has gotten in the store. In the wargame we play, there are different options you can take for the unit composition of your army. Andy knows the domain of what he has come for and then ends up leaving with a new regress after he buys options to add on top of the start of his unit. His completed domain becomes the first term in a new series of scaling up his one set of models into a small army, so that his initial set acquires more variety than anticipated in terms of model options for the little war game we use these things for. Perhaps you have already considered your own and, likely,

your partner's grocery shopping tendencies in terms of this metaphor. Not unlike shopping, philosophy and theory can be said to work in a remarkably similar way, albeit one that takes far more time, produces far more complexity, and tends create a messy muddle of both the "inclosure paradox" and the "domain principle."

If where we start does not logically matter, then we might as well start with the Domain Principle because it lets us get into Hegelian infinities a bit faster than starting from below, and doing so will prove organizationally useful as we apply all this to rhetorical theorizing. Priest formalizes the Domain Principle as follows: "For every potential infinity there is a corresponding actual infinity. Following Hallett ((1984), p 7) let us call this the *Domain Principle*. I take it to be a formulation of the Kantian insight that totalisation is conceptually unavoidable..."⁴¹ Put differently, for any potentially infinite convergent series there is some limit statement that defines its infinitude. The implication should also already be clear: any defined infinity can be given a new infinity generator and iterated into an infinity of higher cardinality. What Priest means by this statement and its implication requires an example from the immediate mathematical-philosophical context and I think Priest's treatment of Hegel is the most accessible and necessary among many. Actual and potential infinities,⁴² despite having analogues throughout philosophy, as Priest compellingly argues, acquire explicit definition by Hegel who "distinguishes between two notions of infinity: the false or spurious infinite and the true genuine infinite. Each of these manifests itself in a qualitative and a quantitative guise."⁴³ The finite and false infinite qualitatively conceived require one another for definition: "Something is finite if it

⁴¹ Ibid, 124. Italics in original.

⁴² The following problem should be noted: Priest glosses the quantitative/ qualitative infinity distinction and something tells me that I am opening myself up to all manner of Deleuzian "but you take Hegel on the quant / qual distinction uncritically" by having not read *The Science of Logic* and matched Hegel's quant qual, to Bergson's, and finally to Deleuze's to see what falls out. I recognize this weakness to the argument, but I think a full treatment of the qualitative and the quantitative need wait.

⁴³ Ibid, 105.

is determinate (in his terminology), that is, limited or bounded by something else. Something is infinite (in the false concept) if it is not finite.”⁴⁴ Qualitatively, we can think of finite as a collection of things without far ranging variability; we can think of the spurious or false infinite as a collection of things in progress with what Priest calls an “infinity generator.” For Hegel, qualitatively true infinities have this infinite range defined whereas qualitatively false infinities are simply undefined infinite regresses. As we will see in the next chapter, dealing with infinite regress by projecting a domain, as Hegel has done here, is a recurring part of philosophical speculation.

As per usual, making the qualitative infinite intuitive through an everyday analogy is the correct precursor to making it formally rigorous when we move to discussing the Hegelian infinities in their quantitative guise. In the collection “plushies on Micah’s bed,” there are the Kurzgesagt Duck, a Sylveon from Pokémon, and Chomusuke from *KonoSuba*. To convert this qualitative collection into a quantitative collection we assign number to plushie and have the determinate finite collection [1,2,3,4]. This collection does not change because there is no variable quantity, like a plushie X where X can be any value of plushie, nor a function to apply to the X , such as the number of plushie increases by one for each time Micah completes a semester or simply $f(x) = x + 1$. Making a series out of the function brings in considerations of the spurious infinite as we attempt to enumerate how many plushies Micah could someday acquire, or to determine the range of potential plushies. To do this, we simply start running the function to produce a series of the values: one plushie per semester or [1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10...].

This analogy features a useful moment of disanalogy that helps us start to clarify the difference between empirical and logical necessity. Empirically, we know that Micah will die

⁴⁴ Ibid.

and there will, eventually and disappointingly, be a finite and determinate collection of plushies he has managed to acquire, but logically and mathematically the story differs. The spurious infinite attempts to produce the largest value from within the process of infinity and we are presented with a problem: for each highest value we reach there is always a higher value to infer and so infinity is always deferred by finitude. Priest articulates the problem more technically: “In fact, the flip-flop here is simply an infinity generator: another thought of the finite, if x is a thought of the infinite; another thought of the infinite, if x is a thought of the finite. And this false infinite is simply its corresponding potential infinity.”⁴⁵ For Hegel, quantitative infinity by implication from the inside is “never more than finite”⁴⁶ and we must look elsewhere for a definition of the true quantitative infinite.

If the spurious infinite can be conceptualized as approaching the infinite from below, then the Absolute infinite can be conceptualized as defining a given infinity’s limit from above.⁴⁷ It helps to start with the quantitative side of this process, before weighing the qualitative implications. Priest discusses the Absolute infinite in its “Quantitative guise:” “For example (*Logic*, pp. 246ff.), Hegel considers the infinite sum $1+a+a^2+a^3 \dots (-1 < a < 1)$. This is a false (potential) infinity which, by adding successive terms, gets as close to some number as we wish, but never reaches it. The true (completed) infinity is just this limit, $(1-a)^{-1}$.”⁴⁸ Translating this argument to the everyday may stretch the plushie metaphor’s seam to its breaking point, but we can grasp it intuitively in by doing some math and citing a professional proof that Priest does not provide because he assumes his audience is technically competent. I am not fully technically competent in these maths and assume many of my readers are not either, so best to take it slow.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 106. Italics removed.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 118.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 121.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 107.

Let us imagine an example with a value for a in the specified range of between -1 and 1: $\frac{1}{4}$.

Then, let us see how a scientific calculator reacts to the limit statement Priest gives us. Using a scientific calculator, we get the following values:

$1 + \frac{1}{4}$	$= 1.25$
$1 + \frac{1}{4} + \left(\frac{1}{4}\right)^2$	$= 1.3125$
$1 + \frac{1}{4} + \left(\frac{1}{4}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{1}{4}\right)^3$	$= 1.328125$
$1 + \frac{1}{4} + \left(\frac{1}{4}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{1}{4}\right)^3 + \left(\frac{1}{4}\right)^4$	$= 1.33203125$
$\left(1 - \left(\frac{1}{4}\right)\right)^{-1}$	$= 1.333333333$

Figure 1. Produced by Author.

The first four lines iterate the series manually; the final line plugs the value into the limit statement Priest provides; we can already infer that any fraction raised to successively higher powers approaches its own limit inasmuch as each successive value added approaches zero.

Intuitively, from the first four lines, we can sense that no matter how many values we add to the series it will never exceed some value because the values we add decrease asymptotically, tending towards zero. The limit statement Priest provides derives from geometric proofs about the relationship of the series to itself: these proofs have been provided in the footnotes.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ There are two things worth noting here. 1. The math behind divergent and convergent series can be found at Stuart's *Early Transcendentals* 6th edition at 688-689 and the formal proof of Priest's identity in "Infinite Series and Geometric Distributions" by Bill Husen. 2. The rules noted are for convergent series that do indeed converge on some value or diverge to some defined infinity. As I understand it, there are proofs for doing something like this with fully divergent series that Deleuze makes use of in his philosophy. I have not quite gotten that figured out yet, but it deals with Taylor and Power Series and I hope to get into that, with its notion of strange attractors, when we deal with Deleuze on Leibnizian infinities more closely in chapter three.

Priest cleverly states the qualitative impact of the true infinite in Hegelian terms: “The triple <finite, false infinite, true infinite> is not an official Hegelean triad. However, the false infinite is the negation of the finite, and so these two categories are related to each other as the first two members of a triad. The true infinite is the third: the negation of the negation (*Logic*, p. 239).”⁵⁰ The form of Hegelian dialectic bears uncanny similarities to Priests’ Inclosure Paradox and Domain Principle, but within the register of using dialectical negation as a philosophical warrant to deal with ambiguous borderline cases, whereas the Inclosure Paradox supports more Philosophical Warrants than simply dialectical negation. When we push this motion past any particular given series into the notion of the finite and infinite as such, a truly bizarre thing happens: “The true infinite is the coming together of the two moments in the shape of an absolute totality, which yet can be broken out of; a limit which, none the less, can be transcended; a bounded unbounded.”⁵¹ The Absolute Infinite appears to be dialetheic: it is bounded by domain because it can be defined and formalized, but, by doing so, we create the first term for a new potentially infinite series. Priest spends the remainder of the book tracking this dialetheic moment in systematic absolution through various moments in mathematics in which some new math attempts to deal with the contradictory nature of the Absolute from the previous maths, only to end up replicating the problem again.⁵²

This seemingly unbounded process within mathematics considered from an empirical perspective suggests that developments in mathematics and physics follow a Chicken or Egg logic. For any sufficiently rigorous mathematical model, predictive acuity obtains within the

⁵⁰ Ibid, 108.

⁵¹ Ibid, 109.

⁵² The mathematically astute reader will recognize that my treatment of Hegelian infinity relies upon convergent series and does not venture into how limit statements are defined in set theory for divergent series. For the purpose of giving a rigorous foundation to the DP, I do not find a full treatment necessary.

bounds of measuring precision. When measuring precision and empirical experimentation produce new and untidy findings against the model, some new mode of mathematical modelling obtains that produces new predictive values that cannot yet be empirically validated because of a lack in the technology required for empirical precision. On and on this process goes; the key, for philosophers and theorists, is to recognize this game for what it is and be careful in justifying which side they fall on: that of the materialist chicken or the mathematical egg. For theory, we will see in chapter two that there are consequences for conceptualizing rhetorical ontology and communication that follow from these perspectives. The danger arises when we forget the larger processes of regress and domain projection of which our messy little interventions are part.

These problems with conceptualization of the Absolute may still seem obscure given the original aim of supporting and explaining the DP's connection with philosophical work and, eventually, rhetorical theory. These connections can be made explicit by returning to the DP's formulation with regards to Hegelian infinities: "For every potential infinity there is a corresponding actual infinity."⁵³ The trick comes with translating this statement into a register that makes sense with Priest's assertion that this statement corresponds to Kant's insights about conceptual totalization in philosophy. Priest notes that mathematicians "including Hessenberg, Zermelo and Frankel," noticed the connection between Kant and problems of the Absolute that involve "the dialectic between defining from below and conceiving as a unity from above..."⁵⁴ Priest lands on a quote from Martin's 1955 *Kant's Metaphysics and Theory of Science* to spell out the connection:

"This conflict between concluding and beginning anew, between forming a totality and using this totality as a new element, is the actual ground of the [set-theoretic] antimony. It

⁵³ Ibid, 124.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 121.

is this conflict that gives the connection with the Kantian antimonies. Kant saw quite clearly that the antimonies rest on this antithesis between making a conclusion and going beyond the conclusion.”⁵⁵

The problems that arise in mathematics with defining a set, series, or any other mathematical thing given to iteration and, thus, regress greatly resemble the problems that emerge with philosophical conceptualization and definition. When we conceive of something like the Kantian categories, our minds make an analogic move in which we immediately begin, through a process of analogy-disanalogy, to attempt to see just how well our definition holds from some perspective and, in doing so, project its range or domain. Priest articulates it this way: “As Kant saw so well, given a notion like that of set or ordinal [or definition], reason forces us to conceive of the totality of all things satisfying it. Totalising is part of our conceptual machinery – like it or not.”⁵⁶ The question remains to be answered whether or not this projection of an Absolute in the pursuit of conceptual totalization regards primarily our “conceptual machinery” or Being in itself, a topic that will be dealt with at length when we start looking at the roots of New Materialist philosophy and their panpsychist tendencies in Chapters Three and Four.

At any rate, the DP’s applicability to logical processes appears clear: as one does the work of defining and arguing in philosophy, the process of creating a potential infinity, one pushes the potential range of conceptual variability to its logical extent by speculating on a range of applicability for our concepts or, to use Priest-Hegel, by creating a limit that is an absolute. This process can happen from “above” when one defines the range of variability only to find that the range itself triggers the start of a new series or from “below” by working each iteration of a series until an upper bound is projected as the absolute range. These absolutes are shift: each

⁵⁵ Martin quoted by Priest at 121 of *Beyond the Limits of Thought*.

⁵⁶ Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 162.

limit we generate for a series can be taken as the first term in a new series that is of higher cardinality to the terms bounded by the limit. Priest takes this dynamic to forcefully argue for dialetheism of the Absolute:⁵⁷ the limits of systems are true contradictions as they both are and are not members of themselves and dialetheism is the only way formal logic can truthfully deal with infinite regress. We will push back on this dialetheic conclusion when we look at the domain of Deleuze's transcendental arguments with Barad's diffraction and more probabilistic or "Bayesian" reasoning in mind. For now, we need to look at the process of defining from below through the Inclosure Paradox.

In a sense, we have already examined the Inclosure Paradox as we looked at the process of the Domain Principle from below, but a more thorough elucidation that brings in an explicitly empirical-biological metaphor might help to define the mutual messiness of these two processes. The IP encompasses three conditions that refer to membership in a set: existence, transcendence, and closure.⁵⁸ We define a set widely here; that is, it might be a mathematical set such as the set of all ordinal numbers,⁵⁹ or a seemingly softer set like Kant's division of the world into phenomena, all things we experience, and noumena, the necessary objective but unknowable things in themselves that cause our experiences in combination with the categories and the fundamental intuition of space and time.⁶⁰ Priest provides a nice chart and formal logic chain on 156 of *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, for those with the formal logic technical know-how, but I would prefer to provide us with a simpler parallel overview that breaks all this into smaller situations of everyday reasoning, relying on a material or empirical hypothetical before turning to these processes' relevance in rhetorical theory.

⁵⁷ Capital A here to signify the Limit of all Limits.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 156.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 117.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 74.

The hypothetical must be material to start to shift this formal logic dynamic into an empirical register and thus, for us as proper and good materialists, into an ontological valence.⁶¹ The broader import here will be felt more clearly as we move into Deleuze and rhetorical theory writ large, but, in short, what I hope to argue is this: the philosophical warrants, especially the Law of Noncontradiction, that condition essentialism in the tradition of Being do the same in Deleuze and Bergson at the level of Becoming and this problem produces some confusing conclusions with regards to hierarchy and purity in Deleuze's thought, with further implications for its lumpy uptake into rhetorical theory.

Imagine we have a kitchen and that this kitchen has a trail of ants in it moving from a baseboard to a dead spider that they favor us by slowly removing. The existence step is easy enough. We walk into the kitchen and lo and behold: the ants exist.⁶² The problem now is to determine the domain of the ants to know what kind of ant problem we are working with here. The ants fulfill the transcendence step beyond kitchen boundary the instant we follow their tell-tale trail to find that they have been travelling through a minute crack in the baseboard molding. Our definition of the ant's domain must change to include the walls and we call in a specialist. The specialist tells us that he can eliminate the ants through poisons from our house for a time. A

⁶¹ While it will not become explicitly clear why we, as rhetoricians, should do things from a materialist-empirical and not a logical – mathematical – idealist register in chapter two, in short, logic and mathematics model the relations of the world as part of the world. We might even argue that things themselves model things in a sense if we follow the Panpsychist strains of Deleuze and Bergson to their conclusions or take at full value the scientists who attempt to prove the materiality of information. The key to avoid a hard determinist universe, of which rhetoricians have every reason to do, is to preserve the necessary relationship between the empirical and the logical as a model of the empirical. Chapter three deals with this relationship at greater length.

⁶² A skeptic might say, hold on, but what if we are all brains in a vat! Then the ants do not exist! This objection does nothing to the motion of the Inclosure Paradox: it only redirects it at two levels. We might persist in inquiring where the boundaries of the code or magic or what have you that produces the illusion of the ants ends and, if the code is adequate to the reality we experience, simply replicate the rest of the problem knowing that we are attempting to discern the boundaries of a simulation. We might also say, fine, the ants are simulated and that means that the definite border of the ants exhibits problems of vagueness within the simulation itself which would then have problems of vagueness with the next world up, and so on. Border cases emerge, infinite regress ensues, an absolute is posited, and the problems with the Absolute ensue.

bit draconian, but the Closure step obtains at last. We ask, “Why only for a time?” The specialist responds: “Fire ants in this region have what is called a super colony. I can get rid of these and lay poison around your house so they stay away for a year, but I cannot keep them from coming back forever!”⁶³ We now have a problem with closure: it seems there must be some Absolute boundary for the ants, but just where that boundary is and how we measure it become difficult to specify.

All of this treats the solution to the boundary of the ants in terms of an infinite progress, but another scale and directionality of vagueness arise when we start trying to enumerate the ants, starting precisely with a count of one. Our naïve phenomenological viscosity assures us: lo and behold, I only see a (first to me) ant, but just as we can go big by scaling up to the level of the hive, we can go small and start considering ant organs, gut bacteria, parasites, or even molecules or DNA. The relationship between steps of infinite progress towards the big and infinite regress towards the small from our perspectival starting place in terms of scale begins to tend towards the same potential absolute when we add the variable time to these considerations. We might consider a degree in entomology to attempt to provide an adequate boundary for the ants, but something tells me we may, at that point, run into ambiguous border cases within which tribe of fire ants with their specific DNA coding this super colony has and its relationship to the hive, mega colony, and individual across scalar levels, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Lord forbid we try to make this much smaller relationship precisely defined because then we are trapped considering what DNA is and biochemical interactions!

Each term in the following graphic expresses one potential conceptual or empirical pathing for different elements or aggregates that an ant could belong to in descending and

⁶³ For a good discussion on Ant Mega colonies, see Kurzesagt – In a Nutshell, “The Billion And Mega Colony and the Biggest War on Earth” on YouTube.

ascending scale respectively. These links are hardly exhaustive and at points in both infinite regress and progress directions I insert time to make the complexity of such an endeavor apparent. Each of these things has its own muddy boundaries and could become the first term in a new cosmological series of association or causation. The key here is that, were we to attempt to measure these things, that each empirical thing eventually dovetails in a strange way by positing the universe as Absolute. The universe is a different kind of absolute than Being or Becoming unified under some concept because it resists definitional closure, so far in human history, and should be considered as presenting a potential infinity that cannot, without serious empirical evidence in a mode of finality, be made to mathematically produce an Absolute domain. This may change, both math and physics people work on this problem regularly, but the Standard Model has holes and has yet to answer questions like: “Why do types of particles come in families of three? or “Is there a reason this particle tends towards this mass?”

Let us track this dynamic out visually with all the caveats that visualization entail:⁶⁴

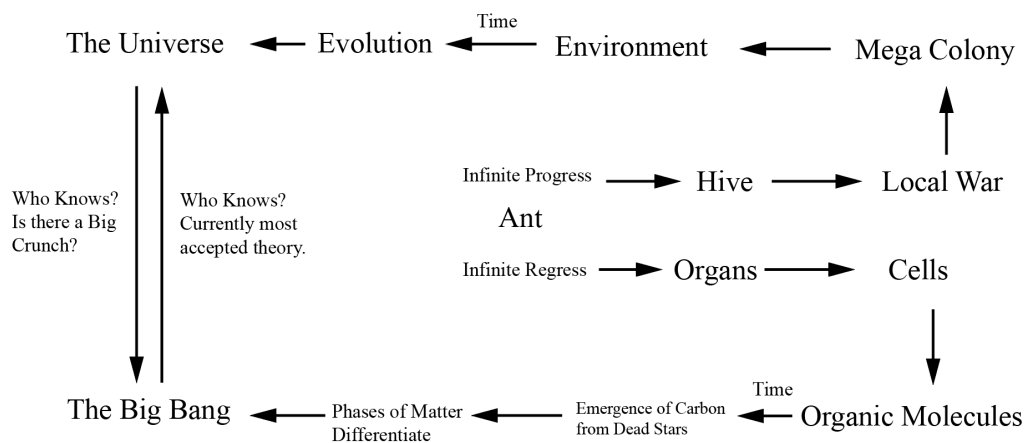


Figure 2. Produced by Author.

⁶⁴ For us, visualization represents logic in accordance with the Law of Noncontradiction because of the way visibility works through illustration in its fabrication of seemingly clear lines that signify concepts. When we use a visual it must be recognized that we are merely drawing out the logical connections to make a point and that the underlying empirical phenomenon resists total disambiguation.

The mystery of where “the ant/s” boundary is suggests in all its ambiguity the driving force of the Inclosure and Domain Paradoxes: vagueness. Formalizing different kinds of vagueness into paradoxes is a long tradition in Western Philosophy. Priest lumps several paradoxes into the Inclosure Paradox: the Sorites’ Paradox (SP) and associated paradoxes like the Ship of Theseus alongside the paradoxes of self-reference epitomized by the Liar’s Paradox.⁶⁵ Whether or not the LP and species of the SP are really all that similar need not concern us here, although there is significant debate on the issue.⁶⁶ We are concerned with how philosophers and theorists produce vagueness in acts of definition and how local absolutes or totalizing Absolutes attempt to unify this vagueness under a concept that may or may not be projected as metaphysically real instead of empirically testable. These problems necessarily arise when we attempt to make boundaries precise through empirical measurement or conceptual determination. In this sense, many human endeavors function as modelling machines that inserts a perspectival line in provisional acts of definition or measurement. I find this process explicitly analogic, if the copious amounts of analogy in this very text have not already made that abundantly clear:⁶⁷ each determination begets higher order vagueness necessitating new determinations into infinite regress. Just as we line up enough points of analogy and disanalogy until we are satisfied with the sense of our proposition. We will eventually see that this vagueness in thought is present in Becoming itself as ontological indeterminacy and ensures the emergence of relative novelty, but that is a question for chapter two’s closer look at the different kinds of philosophical warrants that deal with different manifestations of the Inclosure Paradox

⁶⁵ Priest, “Inclosures, Vagueness, and Self-Reference,” 72 cites many of these disagreements, for example.

⁶⁶ Find that one lost piece about how they are not the same thing from within the dial camp..

⁶⁷ I do not here claim that analogy *is* mind, only that it *models* mind with great acuity.

in chapter two. For now, we need one more formalization before we turn to how the process of Inclosure is relevant to rhetorical theory.

The Philosophical Warrant I want us to accept in addition to those I've described from Priest I suggest calling the Perspectival Projection (PP). In short, an illusory and fantastic line or point like those we find in geometry produces a perspectival boundary through which we unify vagueness under the aegis of some concept. Here is a visual representation of this process:

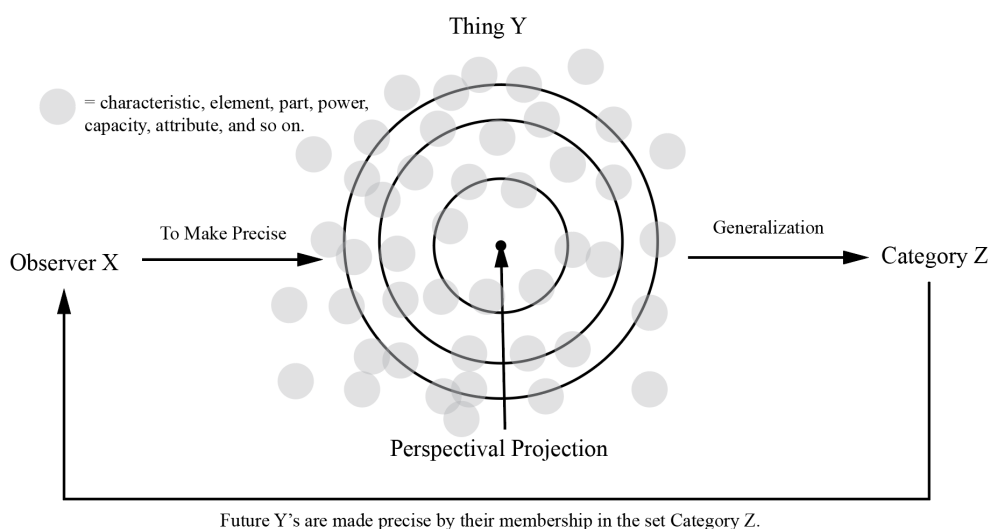


Figure 3. Produced by Author.

Of course, we may equally argue in an ontological vein that X is the passive member and Y makes X precise in a sense through passive synthesis, as both Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty do so. This line of argument has merit, but we are interested, for now, in more active attempts at the making precise of a thing conceptual-material through definition or measurement. X can be an observer attempting to make precise an object or phenomena through measurement apparatuses; X can also be a thinker attempting to make successive thought-determinations to make precise the definition of a thing or to create a concept. The little grey dots are things associated with the Y. The concentric circles indicate the tendency towards regress: how large of a definitional net or

experimental apparatus does one settle on before engaging in the perspectival projection to cut off further regress? Each of these attributes sits on or across a line to indicate problems of vagueness; each dot can serve as its own thing and suggests that to account for all dots a completed circle as Absolute would be required. The way most thinkers, through various philosophical warrants and logical arguments, keep this regress from obtaining is by unifying the ontology of objects under some or another concept at the level of absolute and various absolutes under the aegis of an Absolute. The local absolutes function like categories, they cycle back into our observer to start a new series or serve as the apparatus through which things are made precise. We will look at this process intently in chapter two through a chosen repertoire of philosophers, examining the Philosophical Warrants they use to justify the unification of a Y under some concept.

Rhetoric, The Rhetorical, Rhetoricity: Regress and Domain in Rhetorical Theory

Members of “theory-disciplines,” who primarily embrace while critiquing these philosophies through recourse to a field of objects defined through some homological material, structure, or content, participate in the use of Philosophical Warrants and Perspectival Projections for the ethical reasons outlined above. At a bare minimum, these commitments are unwittingly used when philosophy is imported into theory; they also arise even in the work of generalizing from case studies aimed at producing or edifying theory against an imported philosophy. At the most general level, the problems of vagueness in rhetoric acquires a clear formulation in Ed Schiappa’s work: “By ‘Big Rhetoric’ I refer only to the theoretical position that everything, or virtually everything, can be described as ‘rhetorical.’”⁶⁸ This formulation appears innocuous enough, except that many scholars have taken this idea and began to push it

⁶⁸ Edward Schiappa, “Second Thoughts on the Critiques of Big Rhetoric,” 260.

towards a logical limit in ways Schiappa did not anticipate. Let us start at the level of content with a hardly exhaustive enumeration of things at the least rhetorical and at the most categorized as rhetoric now: animal behavior, sound in itself,⁶⁹ the infinitesimal in mathematics,⁷⁰ energy at varying levels of confidence and ontologizing,⁷¹ the rhetorical as virtuality-potentiality,⁷² food,⁷³ and microbiology's chemical interactions.⁷⁴ The pattern matches that of the much feared consequence of logical explosion feared by Aristotelian essentialists everywhere: *If we have no identity, we are all things! The definition of rhetoric has explicitly and implicitly become so broad that it can encompass anything!*

The caricature I have just named rehearses an alarmist argument Schiappa aims to defeat, it's true. But his position warrants closer examination because it deploys a common move in rhetorical studies. Schiappa carefully sidesteps a sort of rhetorical imperialism through a perspectival argument in his work: "*Any* phenomenon can be described using *any* disciplinary vocabulary."⁷⁵ A sociology of presidential rhetoric; a rhetoric of economic systems. What determines whether or not we *should* leverage our "rhetorical perspective" depends, for Schiappa, on whether or not the leveraging produces "quality work."⁷⁶ This argument produces a different truth criterion than the one we have labored under so far. Perhaps what makes a definition or measurement "good" relies not upon its precise fit to reality, but upon its pragmatic utility.

⁶⁹ Hawk, "Sound: Resonance as Rhetorical."

⁷⁰ Mitchell G. Reyes, "The Rhetoric in Mathematics: Newton, Leibniz, the Calculus, and the Rhetorical Force of the Infinitesimal."

⁷¹ Kennedy, "A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric" and Ingraham, "Energy: Rhetoric's Vitality."

⁷² Laurie Gries, *Still Life with Rhetoric: A New Materialist Approach for Visual Rhetorics*, 11.

⁷³ Katie Zabrowski, "Alinea Phenomenology: Cookery as Flat Ontography" in *Rhetoric Through Everyday Things*, 55-66.

⁷⁴ Pflugfelder, "Rhetoric's New Materialism: From Micro-Rhetoric to Microbrew."

⁷⁵ Schiappa, "Second Thoughts on the Critiques of Big-Rhetoric," 268. Italics in original.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 268 and 271.

Certainly, there is a strain of truth in this argument (I return to it in the fourth chapter's commentary on the utility of rhetorical theory and limitations in close reading analytic methodology). However, with regards to New Materialist rhetoricians work, the argument has already been dealt with by Carolyn Miller on two fronts.

The first is semi-ideological: "And this is part of its appeal to the new materialist rhetoricians: ANT [Actor Network Theory] distributes agency into a heterogenous network, relieving the human actor of the burdens of modernism."⁷⁷ While this claim is not entirely fair to Latour, as he deals with questions about asymmetry and oppression in *Reassembling the Social*,⁷⁸ it can be applied, in my view, to new materialist rhetoricians who tend to focus on energy or ambient music while bracketing the myriad forms of oppression still quite alive and well in 2020. The second deals with the quality of work produced: "Rhetoric, like sociology, is interested in associations — in identifications, communities, adherences, agreements. A rhetorician, however, wants to know something about the nature and quality of those associations, in addition to their number..."⁷⁹ While there is something satisfactory in the erasure of qualitative differences in Being for the sake of some environmentalist ethos, doing so contradicts the philosophy of some of New Materialism's precursors, including Bergson and Deleuze. Monism at the level of Being and/or Becoming does not erase the production of

⁷⁷ Miller, "The Appeal(s) of Latour" in "Forum: Bruno Latour on Rhetoric," 456.

⁷⁸ See Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 76: "ANT is not, I repeat is not, the establishment of some absurd 'symmetry between humans and non-humans'. To be symmetric, for us, simply means *not* to impose a priori some spurious *asymmetry* among human intentional action and a material world of causal relations." Actor Network Theorists find unequal power distributions when they analyze an expanded social being by tracking controversy; they simply do not impose a pre-existing theoretical distribution between actants. Latour goes further with regards to social issues: "It's worth noting at this point that ANT has been accused of two symmetric and contradictory sins: the first is that it extends politics everywhere, including the inner sanctum of science and technology; the second is that it is so indifferent to inequalities and power struggles that it offers no critical leverage—being content only to connive with those in power." at 251. ANT strives to leave conflicts as undetermined as possible not to bend the knee to prevailing ideology, but to be careful and thorough in finding potential sources of agency in the fight against it such that the fight has not already been decided at the outset!

⁷⁹ Miller, "The Appeal(s) of Latour" in "Forum: Bruno Latour on Rhetoric," 456.

genuine difference in quality in either philosopher's work. Or, to put it differently, the acceptance of a flat ontology does not preclude the elaboration "difference that makes a difference," to use Barad's language, in the analysis of existing nor the synthesis of new Being itself. Work that finds something resembling human rhetorical agency in an ant trail carries a useful ethical message and may tell us something about ants, but it does not necessarily produce good work aiming at intervention in human modes of oppression.

Miller's problems with new materialist rhetoric alongside Schiappa are useful, but the route that I take in responding to Schiappa's pragmatic defense deals, predictably, by applying infinite regress to the argument and noting one of his own caveats. Infinite regress should be already obvious in Schiappa's argument: what we judge to be "good work" has something to do with our overall philosophical-theoretical-metaphysical orientations, yes? Surely these, in some way, depend on how we spend our time and how we undertake criticism and thus link to particular methodologies? Shifting from truth value to pragmatic utility as the measure of scholarly quality thus introduces infinite regress when one attempts to determine why we find one thing or another pragmatically useful. And when Schiappa turns to "critique the critiques," he offers a telling caveat about his argument: "Note that the definitional dispute is not a metaphysical one."⁸⁰ Yet, as we will see, the dispute about definition has become explicitly metaphysical and so we must be doubly careful with pragmatism as a truth condition. This is because vagueness in the ontologically and metaphysically oriented definitions of rhetoric, the rhetorical, and rhetoricity complicate the production of "good work" advocated by Schiappa because they replicate the problems of the Absolute introduced earlier in this chapter. In short,

⁸⁰ Schiappa, "Second Thoughts on the Critiques of Big Rhetoric," 268.

definitional disputes have always carried ontological assumptions and the times have changed such that some theorists explicitly engage ontological questions.

Scott Barnett and Casey Boyle outline two varying intense approaches to ontology and rhetoric in their Introduction to *Rhetoric, Through Everyday Things* that reflect two relevant disciplinary tendencies. The milder formulation: “Rhetorical ontology builds on the philosophical definition of ontology as the study of being or ‘what is’ to develop an inclusive rhetorical theory and practice. Rhetorical ontology highlights how various material elements – human and nonhuman alike – interact suasively and agentially in rhetorical situations and ecologies.”⁸¹ Here we see a recapitulation of Schiappa’s argument that many phenomena can be named “rhetorical” and sustain analysis through a “rhetorical perspective.” Barnett and Boyle’s second formulation escalates in intensity: “...we take ontology to be fundamentally rhetorical. That is, ontology is an ongoing negotiation of being through relations among what we might, on some occasions, call human and/or nonhuman. We take ontology to be the pervasive *relationality* of all things...”⁸² “Pervasive relationality” is thus conflated rhetoricity, in a move that follows from the perspective produced and defended by Diane Davis.

Davis writes: “Rhetoric [later rhetoricity] is not first of all an essence or property ‘in the speaker’ (a natural function of biology) but an underivable obligation to respond that issues from an irreducible relationality.”⁸³ Davis’ use of the term *rhetoricity* follows from Derrida: “The rhetoricity of this text is a fundamental addressivity and responsivity, the (genetic and psychic) mattering of which grants ‘all History,’ Derrida writes, ‘from what metaphysics has defined as ‘non-living’ up to ‘consciousness,’ passing through all levels of animal organization...’”⁸⁴ In

⁸¹ Barnett and Boyle, “Introduction” in *Rhetoric, Through Everyday Things*, 2.

⁸² Ibid, 9, italics in original.

⁸³ Davis, “Creaturely Rhetorics,” 89.

⁸⁴ Davis, “Rhetoricity at the end of the World,” 442-433 quoting Derrida 1977, 47. Italics in original.

short, “rhetoricity” presents a relational ontology as conceived from the perspective of rhetoric. “Rhetoricity” has proved influential in several NM rhetorical theory texts, such as Thomas Rickert’s *Ambient Rhetoric*⁸⁵ or entries in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*’s “Forum: Bruno Latour on Rhetoric.”

The problem with all this is that it involves rhetorical theory in an insipient grasping towards an Absolute, without fully navigating the challenges presented by that maneuver. Here the same structure noted in Priest’s Inclosure Paradox is evoked. We start with something seemingly bounded, *rhetoric*. As disciplinary history evolves, more border cases are brought under the “Big Tent” based on the idea that many phenomena can be understood as suasory, thus the term rhetorical is revised to start the process where categorical transcendence → closure. Finally, we reach a metaphysical Absolute, *rhetoricity*, that reads Rhetoric into the essence of Being as such, such that *everything* is to some degree rhetorical, because relationality itself is rhetorical. We have reduced quality into retrospective quantity under a category. Thus, Schiappa’s syllogism at 261 should now read: “Rhetoric deals with things that are rhetorical → things that are rhetorical are relational → the fundamental quality of relationality is rhetoricity → therefore: in the strong formation, all things are rhetoric or in the weak formation, all things can be studied from a rhetorical perspective.” The weak version of the rhetoricity claim does not necessarily corrupt the critical enterprise: after all, nothing is necessarily wrong with the use of a rhetorical perspective apart from the risk of occasionally veering into the uncanny, where the application of rhetorical critical principles finally seems to generate underwhelming insight. A rhetorical critique of microbiology, in hypothetical, only produces evidence that Being is relational and tells us nothing about the quality of microbial exchange that microbiologists have

⁸⁵ Thomas Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being*, 15. See the similarity with how he defines rhetoric at 34.

not already nor can extend these insights into systems in which humans more typically participate. On the other hand, and this is troubling because of the easy embrace often made of the stronger position, rhetorical theory has triggered Problems of the Absolute but without having done the necessary work to build a sufficiently rigorous vocabulary to deal with the consequences.

CHAPTER II: THE RETROSPECTIVE ILLUSION

Although I introduce a new perspective in this chapter as a way to clarify my concerns about the directions of the rhetorical theoretical enterprise, it bears noting that we will continue to engage the infinite regress issue; this is so because the philosophers dealt with here also take it up, also perhaps because the problem may be endemic to *Becoming in Itself* to the extent that *Becoming* is understood spatially as a lattice of imbricating perspectives, of insides and outsides and inside outsides and outside insides, in an infinite conceptual regress. By engaging rhetorical theory through the perspective of infinite regress, other things are omitted, but that is one of the necessary risks of critique.

In this chapter, I introduce Aristotle, Leibniz, Bergson, Deleuze, and Barad into discussion of the two paradoxes earlier introduced, the Inclosure Paradox from below and the Domain Principle from above. I hope to do this work reflexively, aware that I am essentially doing the very thing I am analyzing: I will be making elements of argumentation comply with a schema on infinite regress that occurs from a given perspective. It would be strange to argue that the perspectival projection of an absolute results in an incomplete model of the thing it breaks into bits and not be candid about the reality of that process in the work of this very chapter. Expression through writing, in a sense, spatializes thought when it translates ideas into coordinates of words on the page.

All this means I will not, in what follows, trace the path taken by Deleuze, Lacan, or Judith Butler when they attempt to wrench from writing's strange spatiality a spectral meaning by doing violence to language. Authors who pursue this expressive strategy do important work by bringing to light how violence to thought can be accomplished through violence to language, but the tack I prefer to follow is one of flattening and compressing complex membranes together

such that they are useful as more than abstractions. To use Deleuzian terminology, this chapter is one of *counteractualization*, where the actual expressions of a text are read as producing unexpected problems that are read back into the virtual or potential being of philosophy and theory as such. However, my expression is not without stylistic conceit. Perhaps someday there will be a truly philosophical medium that can convey life and being as life and being through some miraculous technological conceit. For now, there is only writing and talking, and I would like to write more closely to how I talk, as I think we have grasped in this project already. The overriding point of this chapter is to tell a story about a messy materialism that has the power to subvert hierarchy and purity as the grounding feature of Western thought, a necessary precursor before one can turn to how rhetorical theory can be made messier and, thus, more socially efficacious.

This story has several movements within each chapter division by philosopher. First, I trace how each philosopher moves along the inclosure paradox from below: where do they stop and draw the line and what kind of concept unifies or totalizes the thing as a projection that accounts for the messy remainders that occur when thought is made to model reality? Each philosopher I'll engage offers their own philosophical structure reliant upon philosophical warrants for producing the line or the inclosure, and defends how concepts from this imposition feel or are formed. We will thus touch on which ontological consequences obtain and, when appropriate, assess the status of communication in their systems.

Second, I am interested in the kinds of domains they project at the level of the absolute when regress sets in, and then, how they re-integrate this absolute understanding as an *onticology of ontology*. What a terrible turn of phrase! However, it describes a common metaphysical gesture these days. Philosophers have largely given up on the ontology of ontology because the

Being of Being appears to elude precise conceptualization. We might say it suffers too acutely from problems of the Absolute, and so they settle for the onticology of ontology or the typical being of Being by describing the characteristics, powers, and capacities that all Being/s have in common. In this sense, philosophy has become an exercise in virtual conceptualization more interested in potentiality than actuality. Consideration of the first two motions in tandem, returns us to the ant-graph and the meeting of twin absolutes at the interval where infinite progress and regress run aground.

Third, when the philosopher and my reading of them allows,⁸⁶ I hope to be careful to identify moments of indeterminism and/or materialist doubt, occasions when the philosopher adopts a stranger stance towards materiality, in which something resists all potential of conceptualization and we must act on it to make it act. In short, the process of doing philosophy in this life results in moments of ambiguity and doubt that are highly worth tracking out.

Finally, I examine the gap between formal-final conceptualization and fuzzy efficient-material indeterminism through a metaphor of the Chicken and the Egg to suggest that, while both can be valuable approaches, the kind of hierarchy and purity that the conceptualization side favors also carries dangerous essentialist ethical implications for critical practice. To put it differently, the acceptance of a materialist remainder of fuzzy indeterminacy has preferable ethical consequences compared with the perspectival projection of a totalization. Qualitative differences in kind become subsumed by quantitative differences of degree and our analyses can only suggest how much or how little a thing complies with the category.

⁸⁶ This comment is, for now, for Leibniz. I have tried reconfiguring and reading for doubt in his work and I just cannot find it. Leibniz may be *the* mathematical Platonist of all mathematical Platonists. There may well be no messy materialism to extract from Leibniz, but that is not a reason to exclude Leibniz from the reading. He has profound influence on one of the versions of Deleuze, Badiou's Deleuze of the virtual as mathematical absolute, that we must set up to critique the tendencies from this Deleuze in New Materialist Rhetorical Theory.

Aristotle the Essentialist

Aristotle constructs his essentialism on the back of two PW's named the Law of Noncontradiction (LNC) and the Law of the Excluded Middle (LEM). Paraphrasing Laurence Horn's formalization of both laws: LNC – It cannot be the case that something both is and is not itself; and LEM -- Given some thing, it must be itself or not itself at a given instant.⁸⁷ The LNC deals with spatiality and borders; the LEM deals with states of property expression and introduces the issue temporality. At a given moment, an ant moves or it does not. Aristotle uses the ontological formation of the LNC, named the Principle of Noncontradiction, as an indubitable first principle beyond demonstration because “if the PNC could be demonstrated, then everything would be subject to demonstration, which would lead to an infinite regress.”⁸⁸ It did not take us much time to find regress, did it? Aristotle's reasons for wanting to avoid infinite regress become circular with his justification for the LNC and LEM as originally offered: were we not able to say a non-contradictory thing, truth and signification would not be possible.⁸⁹ Because we do experience the ability to signify and find truth, the world must be configured consistent with the configuration of the LNC and LEM.

Aristotle's argument in this bears uncanny similarities to the transcendental arguments,⁹⁰ although these will not be formalized until Kant. Aristotle takes the experiential assumption that we experience truthfulness in signification as a sufficient argumentative warrant to argue that there is some necessary state of affairs that must exist in order for this experience of truthfulness to obtain.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Horn, “Contradiction,” 6.

⁸⁸ Paula Gottlieb, “Aristotle on Non-Contradiction,” 3.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁹¹ Robert Stern, “Transcendental Arguments,” 1.

For this version of Aristotle, questions of the ant's definitional and empirical boundaries must comply with the LEM and LNC: either the ant is here or not here in this moment and the ant either is or is not an ant. We can pile the LNC and LEM on top of each other to get: the ant either will be an ant, with ant capacities and ant expression of them, tomorrow or it will not. After all, the ant might be squished or fall for a deadly poison trap and a change of this magnitude would change the ant enough to break any kind of regress along the Ship of Theseus Paradox. Some percentage of ant or mixed state cannot obtain in the Aristotelian universe: an alive ant and an ant corpse are categorically different and some precise boundary between the two exists.

To prevent mixed states and the dangers of regress, Aristotle must project a domain to tidy up a swarm of ant-accidents. This perspectival projection in Aristotle is named Essentialism. Gottlieb sums it up nicely: "Aristotelian essentialism is the view that there exist what modern philosophers would treat as natural kinds..." like ants whose "essential natures [are] definable."⁹² These "essential natures" are "definable" because the world itself complies with the PNC. It appears that there is some amount of collapse between empirical measurement and logical definition in the Aristotle's thought. These "natural kinds" or essences contrast with what Aristotle calls accidents or things that an essence can do that do not substantially change the essence. So, our little ant and every step on the ant regress has an essence such that their essential being persists through accidental changes. The ant may or may not express any number of powers at a given moment, but its essence remains the same until some change occurs that changes its essence. We can see that the division between essential and accidental holds for a time, until Aristotle has to start explaining how changes in essence or the emergence of new

⁹² Gottlieb, "Aristotle on Non-Contradiction," 5.

essences are possible at all. If essences can change, how does an essence not become an accident to an essence of higher cardinality?

Aristotle offers a way out of this problem by dividing the potential and the actual that follows from the LEM: “An object can be potentially *F* and potentially *not F*, but it cannot be actually *F* and actually *not F* at the same time.”⁹³ The problem with this route comes down to temporality, precision, and measurement. Time must flatten out into an instant and instants must be distinct from one another such that at one instant the ant is dead and at the next instant the ant is alive. However, perfect instants may prove to be more of a human fantasy than an empirical reality. As we try to make precise the instant at which the ant dies, we will inevitably produce more ambiguity through the precision of our measurement in itself: the question of whether time is a continuous or discontinuous thing emerges and we are off on another regress. Aristotle forestalls this regress out by insisting that, beyond any potential measurement, there is still an actual state of affairs that is determined by the ant’s essence. This response resonates with the epistemic response to problems of vagueness and empirical measurement: it is not that the precise boundary created by the essence that follows the PNC does not exist or is a perspectival projection; it is the case that our previous measurement or definition of it was simply wrong!⁹⁴ Absolute precision exists despite our fumbling human attempts to measure it. Error against an absolutely spatialized being explains away any kind of ontologically based indeterminacy or fuzziness.

The general structure of the perspectival projection particularized to Aristotle the Essentialist becomes:

⁹³ Ibid, 7.

⁹⁴ Bruno Dinis, “Old and New Approaches to the Sorites Paradox,” 6.

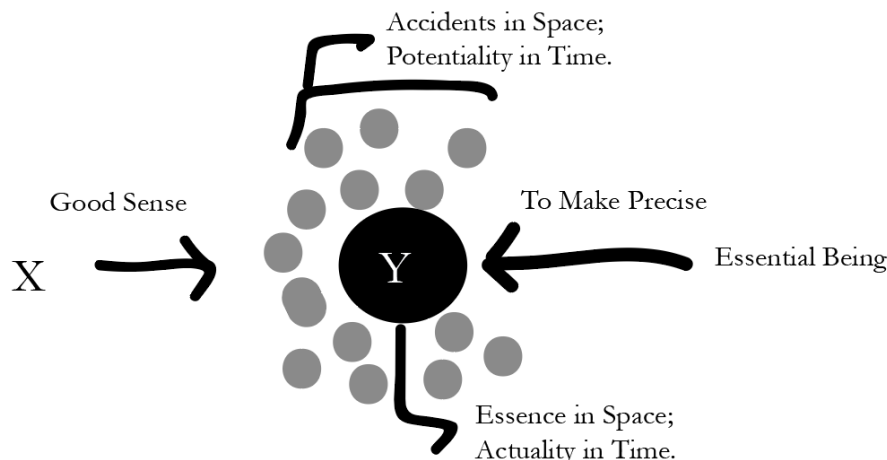


Figure 4. Produced by author.

This modality of Aristotle is the Aristotle Deleuze so abuses in chapter three of *Difference and Repetition* and largely reflects the uptake of Aristotelianism in Western philosophy. The IP produces vagueness and infinite regress and we try to make precise our empirical measurements and definitional boundaries. This process leads the philosopher to posit a concept that unifies messy being, a move needed to prevent infinite regress and this concept is then reified on the side of domain or the Absolute and retro-actively applied to all beings. For Aristotle, this tendency plays out as the projection of a hierarchical logic of the pure and essential essence that accounts for the apparent stability of the thing, despite its accidents.

Essentialist thought poses problems for both ethics and theories of communication. The ethical problems in this ontology should be clear to anyone who has read any critical theory in the past hundred plus years: when we create a distribution of the pure and essential against the messy and inessential and map this distinction against social objects or subject, patterns of exclusion and oppressive hierarchy inevitably emerge. The problems with communication more subtly deal with the role of contingency-in-becoming. That is, only accidents are contingent, communication deals with contingency, and communication is an epiphenomenon that does not

deal with real changes to substance most of the time. Essentialist thought figures communication more as a burden to be overcome in the interactions between substances more than anything that could be causally efficacious or important in its own right. Anyone who believes that words have consequences and that social hierarchies should be eschewed in favor of novel ways of existing together must be skeptical, at the least, of any philosophical system that distributes the singular and ordinary along a logic of the essential and the accidental.

Aristotle the Indeterminist

Aristotle is much more complex than the above indicates because “to make precise” can also be read “determine.” The instant spatial boundary considerations shift into a temporal register, causality immediately seeps in. Aristotle’s essentialism implies a theory of causality that he addresses through his famous fourfold of material, hypothetical, final, and efficient causes. This fourfold causality follows us into our analyses of other thinkers because it points out one crucial feature-bug of the thinkers who follow: they exhibit the tendency to marginalize or erase material causality in favor of formal and final causality, where this marginalization has an oddly gendered texture that follows from Aristotle himself. Aristotelian causality rests on a familiar transcendental argument that Andrea Falcon phrases as: “Where there is regularity there is also a call for an explanation, and coincidence is no explanation at all.”⁹⁵ Put differently, there must be some cause of the apparent order in the sense of regularity in the world.

However, when we push Aristotelian causality to its logical extent, a murky form of non-causality emerges that relies upon a strange kind of indeterminism: “the accidental cause” or chance causation. This section reconstructs that progression in Aristotle’s thought before turning to its implications for and eradication by Leibniz in the next section.

⁹⁵ Andrea Falcon, “Aristotle on Causality,” 5.

Aristotle develops his fourfold “causal pluralism” according to his *doxastic* methodology to make a “theory” of past “uses” of causality.⁹⁶ Where “most of his predecessors recognized only the material and efficient [causality],”⁹⁷ Aristotle adds a “teleological explanation”⁹⁸ to these more plainly empirical modes by imposing the more idealistic and oddly purposive, inasmuch as they resemble human will, formal and final modes of causality to the other two. We end up with a fourfold that can be described as follows with the Ant-Diagram in mind: (1) “The material cause: ‘that out of which,’” for example: the atoms, molecules, DNA, organs, and so on the ant is made of; (2) “The formal cause: ‘the form’, ‘the account of what-it-is-to-be,’” for example: the repeating shape and relationships between the ant’s material components; (3) “The efficient cause: ‘the primary source of the change or rest,’” for example: factors in the ant’s environment that it reacts to like wind or rain and the chemical-social relationships it has with its hive; (4) “The final cause: ‘the end, that for the sake of which a thing is done,’” for example: the process of evolution, the survival of the colony, for Aristotle, the sublunar striving of the ant to become the perfect ant and attain the perfection of the unmoved mover.⁹⁹ Aristotle follows his general tendency in causality by producing more categories in an effort to stall infinite regress by unifying border cases under new categorical banners. As we will see, doing so simply displaces the regress by creating what is referred to as higher order vagueness.

Aristotle’s “causal pluralism” only displaces regress in at least two ways. The first is that it performs a conceptual sleigh-of-hand regarding the relationship between entities of different scales. The Ant-Examples above keep things relatively tight to the singular ant in scale, but we run into a difficult problem if we push scale harder. DNA doubtlessly affects the ant and,

⁹⁶ Ibid, 1.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 4.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 3.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 2.

arguably, all organic life. Yet, DNA also has its own relationship with the environment in the form of the epigenome that can modulate and even over-code DNA based upon environmental factors. DNA is a scale jumping entity such that physical contiguity becomes challenged by a kind of causal continuity between entities of different scales. Different components jump scales in surprising ways that make precisely defining the ant start to push away from whatever the essential boundary is towards a system of relationships and, ultimately, to the Absolute.

Aristotelian causality in its essentialist guise depends upon an active synthesis in which the perceiver can accurately determine causal chains by categorizing them through conscious action; it misses the different passive syntheses that condition the determining subject before analytic action has taken place.

The second displacement is that Aristotelian causality has a fractal or kaleidoscopic motion to it because we can submit each part of the ant's fourfold analysis to its own fourfold analysis, and thus also into regress. DNA acts as a causal system but DNA's material causality revolves around the specific proteins found in DNA. The fourfold analyses can then be applied to a specific molecule, then particle, *ad infinitum*. We could do the same thing scaling up from ant to hive and so on. We are back at the twin absolutes of chapter one because Aristotle's fourfold causality is an "infinity generator" that produces infinite regress. The outcome is ironic since they emerge precisely out of philosophical warrants Aristotle had imposed to forestall infinite regress in the first place. But because each thing must be itself and only itself, the relationship between part and whole compels the Aristotelian thinker to produce higher order vagueness that complies with the LNC and LEM.

Aristotle has two strange and seemingly contradictory, given the status of the PNC and LEM, solutions to this infinite regress that come out once we start to trace how he deals with his

own theory of causality when border cases, such as monsters or the Absolute, arise. On the one hand, Aristotle does a typically Aristotelian thing by dividing the fourfold along two related categories: the split between Absolute and Hypothetical necessity and their link to feminine and masculine genders in hylomorphism. On the other hand, this link and its oddly gendered implications become difficult to maintain when Aristotle starts to blend categories to deal with borderline or paradoxical cases, such as the status of chance events within efficient causal chains and the large number of accidents that crop up in the empirical side of his work.

The diathetic un-category that holds Aristotle's apparent contradiction together is what we might call a fifth category of causality named chance, but that cannot be a category since it flaunts the requirements of identity within Aristotelian causality, without which no thing can be a substance and, therefore, a category. The important relationships to track out in what follows bear directly on our coming discussions of Leibniz, Bergson, and Deleuze. All three philosophers mirror and diverge from Aristotle in ways that are valuable because they indicate the thinker's odd recalcitrance to material causality and the oddly gendered features of their philosophies, and help us understand their positions on communication and rhetoric. "Deleuzians," in particular, should be interested in the following because it suggests, despite the rage against Aristotle-the-essentialist that Deleuze undertakes in Chapter three of *Difference and Repetition*, that Deleuze does not finally break with the Aristotelian cosmology nearly as much as he claims. This lack of breakage emerges most clearly when he maintains the LNC in his reading of extensity vs. intensity and the virtual vs. the actual. This tendency also becomes an acute problem in Badiou's reading of Deleuze in which the virtual scales up into a totalizing force or set of all sets over all Being.

The Aristotelian fourfold is further complicated by an anterior division Aristotle makes between the necessary and contingent that informs the division of the necessary into absolute and Hypothetical necessities. John Dudley explains: “Aristotle defines the necessary as that which cannot not be.”¹⁰⁰ But Aristotle’s notions of hypothetical and absolute necessities somewhat boggle the mind because, without his broader cosmology in view, the way it maps onto the fourfold appears counterintuitive. In general, Efficient and Material causes follow Absolute necessity and follow from the Absolute unqualified ground of the unmoved mover inasmuch as they comply with the final cause of becoming, striving for perfection, and the usual properties of their substances. In distinction, final and formal causes are hypothetical and follow from the contingent will of either the unmoved mover’s absolute positioning of substance or the sort of causal break, or free will, presented by human endeavors. We will see how these distinctions becomes muddy and how, in that ambiguity, they reveal a key fact about Aristotelian causality: when pushed to its limits it exhibits surprisingly gendered qualities and a surprising uncertainty about indeterminism.

With respect to Absolute Necessity, Dudley continues: “Absolute necessity is the necessity belonging to eternal things... Thus the necessity in mathematics is absolute necessity, e.g. since a straight line is what it is, it is necessary that the angles of a triangle should be equal to two right angles.”¹⁰¹ Things that follow from Absolute necessity must always happen. Aristotle will hardly be the last of our philosophers to ground a strict mode of necessity in the ideals of and illusion of mathematical purity. This move works well with the LNC and LEM because most maths exemplify the ideal purity in which many thinkers want to found their theories of reality. Material and efficient causality, when operating within the bounds of what

¹⁰⁰ John Dudley, *Aristotle’s Concept of Chance: Accidents, Cause, Necessity, and Determinism*, 102.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

nature intends, are considered to have Absolute necessity.¹⁰² This attribution logically follows from Aristotle's cosmology, splitting the universe into lunar and sublunar realms, but requires a further division into qualified and unqualified absolute necessity. The chain of qualified absolute necessity is grounded in the Unmoved Mover who starts the universe's motion; this entity has unqualified absolute necessity because no external cause was applied to it to affect its movement by efficient causality.¹⁰³ The unmoved mover's absolute and unqualified necessity grounds the qualified necessity of three interrelated processes: (1) "the heavenly bodies and... their movement..."¹⁰⁴ (2) becoming itself "because becoming is eternal..."¹⁰⁵ (3) the absolute necessity of the final cause of striving for perfection: "The eternal cycle of generation and decay is an imitation of – resulting from a striving for – the eternal active rest of the Unmoved Mover."¹⁰⁶ It is in this backhanded way that material and efficient causality possess absolute necessity: they only do so when they comply with the expected course of an unqualified necessity in the form of a final absolute cause in the striving for the perfection of the Unmoved Mover.

To understand what happens when material causality and efficient causality do not comply with this universal finality, we must first understand hypothetical necessity with regards to formal and final causality and its connection to the unmoved mover. Dudley explains: "Hypothetical or conditional necessity is the necessity of the means once the end (final or formal cause) is given."¹⁰⁷ Hypothetical necessity introduces a moment of contingency within entities that can will or have purpose in the sense of being self-moving: these things are not absolutely

¹⁰² Ibid, 103 and 111.

¹⁰³ Ibid 107-108.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 102.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 103.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 117.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 108.

necessary in the same way as a rock falling or the sun orbiting the earth. Hypothetical necessity tracks what is required once a choice has been made: a rock may drop from absolute necessity if it rolls off a hill, but the absolute necessity of gravity may join human will in hypothetical necessity if someone chooses to pick up and drop a rock. Formal and Final causality, shape and purpose, are the two kinds of cause that fall under hypothetical causality because a thing's shape and its purpose derive from contingent choices in some entity that has a self-moving will capacity within it.

When we push the hypothetical and absolute modes of causality up against Aristotle's cosmology, strange things happen with the unmoved mover: "The final causality of the unmoved mover also operates on all living beings, including plants, in the sublunar area, but *without* producing absolutely necessary results."¹⁰⁸ Were the chain of causality perfect in the sense of mathematical unqualified absolute necessity, unusual occurrences could not happen, but we know they do happen because of monsters and mutations.¹⁰⁹ Aristotle allows that, while these things cannot be studied scientifically because they do not always or usually occur, there is a sense in which the universe is replete with usual amounts of unusual occurrences.¹¹⁰ It appears as though the final causality set by the unmoved mover actually requires an anterior mode of indeterminacy or chaos, that Aristotle will locate precisely in material causality, to prevent the universe from becoming hard determinist and governed by unqualified absolute necessity. We have a strange situation in which an uncaused cause must cause something its cause cannot fully overdetermine.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 274.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 275.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 294.

The connection of this to the Liar's Paradox comes immediately to mind. The Liar's Paradox describes a family of paradoxes, such as the sentence "this statement is false," and can be submitted to the same kind of inclosure paradox analysis undertaken earlier. In short, the statement resolves in a dialetheia in which it is both true and false, indicating that such paradoxes have a constitutive dimension in which undecidability becomes logically productive because of, instead of, in spite of, the statement's ambiguity. This kind of ambiguity operates at the juncture between hypothetical and absolute causality in Aristotle: the unmoved mover as the sole cause without external cause of the universe appears to have caused indeterminacy under the guise of an absolute material causality that it cannot directly cause. Put differently, Aristotelian causality does not logically cohere without material causality understood as an active, as opposed to merely passive, form of causality; a strange indeterminism and a fifth form of causality is thus introduced under the guise of the "accidental cause."

Monsters are accidental substances¹¹¹ and because they are substances, both in the cases of spontaneous generation of an entire organism or the monstrous in what we modern readers would call mutation, they "seek the full perfection of their form and therefore belong to nature..."¹¹² Regardless of whether we are dealing with spontaneous generation, mutation, or mythic creatures, the monstrous occurs when a substance arises via essential definition, but that also in some way defies the formal or final causality typical to its kind.¹¹³ Dudley explains: "Thus what occurs contrary to the usual in nature is monstrous. It is possible, in the case of the female, for nature not to achieve its end in a way that is *usual*. In this case Aristotle speaks of a *natural* deformity."¹¹⁴ A child with a mutation is monstrous; a deer jumping out of sea foam is

¹¹¹ Ibid, 166.

¹¹² Ibid, 184.

¹¹³ Ibid, 167.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 192.

monstrous; my own fibromyalgia and bipolar type II are monstrous because they emerged from me and subvert the formal and final causality of the usual human psyche striving for perfection.

Aristotle's explanation of how such chance substances arise¹¹⁵ uses misogynist hylomorphism to preserve the logical and purposive texture of his cosmology: monsters arise when the masculine causality found within the formal or final causality that influences the development of kinds cannot master the "passive not recalcitrant" feminine causality found within material causality.¹¹⁶ Finally, I am fully become a monster! This configuration reflects earlier formulations found in, for example, Plato's *Timaeus*: "Reason (the Demiurge) has to prevail over Necessity (the resistance to order in matter)."¹¹⁷ We are confronted with a strange solution to the apparent Liar's Paradox of the Unmoved Mover: a force must actively subvert the absolute causality found in material causal forces such that the unmoved mover's final causality does not absolutely determine reality. This theory is thoroughly misogynist and ableist, but when we start to read monsters against accidents and then scale back up to Aristotle's entire cosmology, we can subvert and remedy this problem by fully embracing the sort of chance causality and indeterminism implied elsewhere in Aristotelian accounts.

Accidents tend to be qualities that elude local efficient causal chains: "Thus those aspects of the material cause (the matter) or of the operation of the efficient cause on the matter, where they do not contribute to the accomplishment of the form or final cause, are accidental to it."¹¹⁸ Aristotle often uses the example of the essential purpose of the eye against its accidental color to demonstrate this point.¹¹⁹ The purpose or final cause of the eye is seeing, not having a color,

¹¹⁵ Yes, I am going so far as to push on the accident / monster split already: my disability is not accidental to me it is indiscernible from my sublunar striving.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 170.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 140.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 125.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 127 and 128.

such that any purpose through exaptation, such as cultural meanings attached to eye color, are secondary to the metaphysically primary final cause in eyes seeing. This relies upon the essential // accidental distinction outlined in the Aristotle the Essentialist section, but one can now sense that the distinction Aristotle uses to distribute the singular and ordinary relies on a cosmology in which the universe follows from a final telos of categorical rationality. Usual accidents, like having a blue eye, join monsters “in the category of accidents of that which has a purpose, i.e. accidents arising from the development of natural substances.”¹²⁰

And yet, there are also unusual accidents, though the role of these in mapping out the contours of Aristotle’s theory of causality at an ontological level are strained. Do only usual unusual eye colors count? Are heterochromatic eyes a form of a monstrous accident? Dudley admits that “for Aristotle the question of determinism and of contingency depends on epistemological considerations.”¹²¹ The question of a usual accident, someone having a blue eye, against an unusual accident, the coincidence of meeting someone you owe money to at market when you went to go grocery shopping,¹²² clearly places the distinction in an epistemological register. The usual against the unusual accident depends upon human perception and categorical rationality and, thus, ties back into Aristotle’s *doxastic* methodology that seeks to explain the universe from the opinions of the common and the wise. We might even go so far as to read the final telos of the unmoved mover as a projection of this form of rationality into the heart of Being as such.


When we attempt to translate this distinction from an epistemological in a fully ontological register, things get weird. On the one hand, we could fall back on Aristotle’s full

¹²⁰ Ibid, 127.

¹²¹ Ibid, 317.

¹²² Ibid, 165.

LNC and LEM essentialism to argue that an accident that appears unusual must actually have a firm causal chain that we simply cannot perceive because of epistemological limitations, but is fully real and waiting for us to discover at the ontological level. Unusual accidents are just categories of substance we have not yet figured out in the great determinist chain of essential being. On the other hand, when we bring monsters back into the equation and speculate upon how the new emerges in Aristotle, we can see that Aristotle's categories of substance depend on a prior materialist indeterminacy, such that rationality always depends on a background condition of irrationality found in blunt material existence. Accidents cannot have a purpose because they are not substances; monsters are substances and, thus, have a purpose after the fact of their emergence, but violate the conceptual unity of their kind through their imperfection. In a sense, then, monsters are novel modulations of substance whose novelty depends on their strange mixture of accidental qualities, where they only appear monstrous against the background distribution Aristotle sets up in his essentialist mode between the essential and the accidental. The monstrous is the emergence of the new beyond the purpose of becoming, of striving to reach the conceptual perfection embodied by the Unmoved Mover. A strange causal loop emerges in which final and formal causality appear less as anterior and solid modes of causality and more as future tendencies that will never be perfectly embodied by sublunar striving entities in a division of the universe into the rational and irrational.

 Dudley does not go this far but provides the necessary materials to do so when he discusses “accidental causality” and the relationship between the lunar world of telos and rational category against the sublunar world of striving and imperfection. The relationship between category-based perfection and the world we experience follows: “The final causality of the Prime Mover does not necessitate the events that occur in the sublunar world, but merely the

general orientation of the sublunary world (repetition of kinds of events).”¹²³ This repetition has no logical meaning without a different kind of repetition beneath it that produces drives the unusual occurrences without which the order would have no logical meaning.

It is in this sense I find it curious that Deleuze so marginalizes Aristotelian thought when it appears that the sort of repetition of the different that Deleuze theorizes was already a necessary constituent of a logical rendering of Aristotelian cosmology. This unusual occurrence emerges in two places. The first we have talked about at length, when there is no logical conclusion between the hypothetical cause and the material cause, and a monstrous substance emerges. The second is a kind of causality that cannot be causality under the regime of the LNC alongside essentialist identity because it is causality as unexpected difference that inheres in efficient causality:


...Aristotle, in identifying the cause of a chance event, turns immediately to the *per se* or substantial (efficient) cause. He does not classify an accident contrary to expectation under one of the four causes, but views it as a separate kind of cause an ‘accidental cause’ which comes to inhere in the [efficient cause] when the chance event occurs (i.e. is perceived to be a chance event.)¹²⁴

Slippages in the transmission or communication of the final telos of Being, into the passive but not recalcitrant material register, can derive from an imperfection in the transmission through efficient causality: the spark of a monstrous substance, a thing that does not comply with category until part of nature, can be said to derive from accidental causality at an ontological level. The Aristotelian fourfold depends upon a presumed yet hidden non-causality named “the accidental cause,” found when the hypothesis of final or formal causality does not match up with

¹²³ Ibid, 319.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 165.

the results to explain how new categories of substance come into Being. We might even push the argument as far as to say that a necessary irrationality, indeterminism, or chaos underlies the conceptual, categorical, and ordered Aristotelian universe without which emergence and substantial change would be inconceivable. The chains of LNC and LEM reasoning that push outwards towards the twin absolutes found in the ant diagram resolve with the production of something more than a dialetheism: they resolve with an immanent indeterminism.

 This attention to Aristotle is not digression since it stages several vital problems that recur later in the thesis. The first deals with philosophical methodology itself. Anyone who has read chapter three of *Difference and Repetition* by Deleuze would doubtlessly view Aristotle as an ancient fuddy-duddy, so bonded to the concept of identity that he could think nothing else. Aristotle's fourfold causality teeters on doubts precipitated by a strain of indeterminism connected to material causality and chance in his work: theories of order and identity invariably produce chaos and non-identity when pushed to their logical extent. Against the dialetheic response in which a thing both is and is not itself, a diffractive sense that previews Karen Barad emerges in which a thing both is itself and is others, a view that in a positive way doesn't rely on a dialectic grounded in a reified conceptual absence. In this sense, Aristotle previews both the retrospective and prospective illusions alongside the solution to them that this project advocates.

With regards to the retrospective illusion, Aristotle projects an anterior and causally dominant reified human logic as the totalization of the universe with his unmoved mover who sets the general telos of all Being. The world becomes dominated by a sense of active determination that functions parallel to consciousness' subjective determination of the object. With regards to the prospective illusion, Aristotle does something truly bizarre with his theory of the sublunar world of striving and becoming. The apparent order and telos of the universe can

never obtain because their absolution is forever deferred to the future. Perfection only attains in the formal and final causes forever deferred as potentially emergent in the future, but not determinative from the past. In both cases of projective illusion, the sort of hierarchy and purity found in human conceptualization becomes the determining orientation of being and becoming. As we will see, this double projection also well maps onto the two dominate trends of rhetorical theory and criticism. Ideological critique retrospectively projects an ideology that is its own cause and effect; new materialist rhetorical theory backloads potentiality to project a never attained actuality in the future. Both must be disputed in terms of the LEM because they exclude the messy, materialist, and indeterminate middle which we live in and experience in favor of conceptual purity as totalized projection.

Second, we see that Aristotle, despite his acknowledgement of an anterior materialism-indeterminism required to explain the appearance of rationality in Being, does his absolute best to marginalize it in favor of identity/substance, ideality in the formal and final causes, and, in so doing, attaches a strangely misogynist and ableist hierarchy to this causality. When it comes to material causality, this pattern repeats time and time again. Philosophy, even accounts of difference as in Deleuze, does its best to project a human sense of rationality into Being and Becoming through different philosophical warrants, particularly the Law of Noncontradiction, that presumes while erasing an anterior chaos within Being. Categorical and Western thought has hierarchical consequences baked into its very notion of the distribution of the singular and ordinary or the essential and the accidental. What is judged essential follows from a construal of logic in which determination follows from logical categories more so than messy empirical investigation or even creation.

Finally, the foregoing analysis of Aristotle confirms something strange is underway in the relationship between material and accidental causality and the ontological foundations of communication itself. When the communication or causality found in the efficient cause is incapable -of failing or of partial determination, the universe oddly flattens out into a hard determinist world where conviction as coercion predominates, and persuasion drops out of the picture. Put differently, without the genuine ontological capacity for things to have been otherwise we end up in a universe in which communication is mere epiphenomenon to the movement of substances in their essential sense. Communication studies in a universe determined by an absolutely necessary totality without some materialist remainder would be better figured as a mode of information science than a rhetoric which requires genuine contingency to make sense.

Leibniz and the Principle of Sufficient Reason

Leibniz articulates the Principle of Sufficient Reason and its relationship to the Law of Noncontradiction in “The Monadology”:

31. Our reasonings are based on *two great principles, that of contradiction*, in virtue of which we judge that which involves a contradiction to be false, and that which is opposed or contradictory to the false to be true (sec 44, 169).

32. And that of sufficient reason, by virtue of which we consider that we can find no true or existent fact, no true assertion, without there being a sufficient reason why it is thus and not otherwise, although most of the time these reasons cannot be known to us (sec 44, 196).¹²⁵

¹²⁵ G. W. Leibniz, “The Monadology” in *Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, 217. Italics in original.

Leibniz goes on to delimit two different modalities of truth that correspond to each of these laws and the key with extending his philosophical warrants to the ant metaphor deals with this split by clarifying the different registers of truth claim: “The truths of reasoning [those derived from the Law of Noncontradiction] are necessary and their opposite is impossible; the truths of fact [those derived from the Principle of Sufficient Reason] are contingent, and their opposite is possible.”¹²⁶ The “truths of reasoning” take on a decidedly mathematical bent when one considers the possible and the impossible, whereas the “truths of fact” reproduce the same problem illustrated by our ant chart, where contingent facts presuppose a long chain of other contingent facts.

A question arises: what happens to these truth categories when they are pushed to their logical limit, run aground in infinite regress, thus delimiting the relationship of one to another. Leibniz’s cosmological solution to this relationship pushes Aristotelian essentialism to its logical limit by establishing eternal structures that suture both sides of the absolute to the messy middle; Leibniz essentially maintains the Law of Excluded Middle by universalizing the Law of Noncontradiction through his speculative cosmology, bounded on one side by an all-powerful, knowing, and good God and on the other by the Monad. The messy middle becomes the excluded and inessential by a spatializing trick in which God has chosen one configuration of universe against all other potential configurations at the level of universal essence.

In fleshing this out, let us start with the two kinds of truths. Simon Duffy explains them in this fashion: “While $2 + 2 = 4$ occurs in all time and in all places, and is therefore a necessary truth, the proposition that ‘Adam sinned’ is specifically dated, i.e., Adam will sin in a particular place at a particular time. It is therefore a truth of existence, and, as will be demonstrated, a

¹²⁶ Ibid.

contingent truth.”¹²⁷ The Necessary Truths are simple enough at face value: they are the conclusions of logic and mathematics that cannot be otherwise. We could, of course, start to push on Leibniz and wonder whether or not, for example, all branches of mathematics can be theoretically unified, as Albert Lautman would later attempt, but for the moment we can set that aside and let simple arithmetic do the trick. But contingent truths are trickier: “There is an infinity of past and present shapes and motions that enter into the efficient cause of my present writing, and there is an infinity of small inclinations and dispositions of my soul, present and past, that enter into its final cause.”¹²⁸ On the one hand, contingent truths are shaped by contingent events of position and qualities that might have happened otherwise. On the other hand, a relationship does seem to exist between the final causality Leibniz positions on the side of the absolutely necessary, for him the “best of all possible worlds” situation, and contingent everyday events. It appears we must revert to the ant chart with its problems of infinite regress and progress. Leibniz, not unlike Aristotle, resorts to positing an entire metaphysics with an associated cosmology to solve this problem while maintaining the law of noncontradiction at a universal level.

Leibniz follows a familiar pattern to resolve this ambiguity by casting a concept beyond all empirical explication as the first cause of the chain of sufficiency from both absolutes. Following Aristotle’s essentialism, he denies the potentiality of material causality through indeterminacy by grounding a never-ending chain of efficient causality in an absolute finality: “It must be the case that the sufficient or ultimate reason is outside the sequence or *series* of this multiplicity of contingencies, however infinite it may be... This is what we call God (*Theod.*

¹²⁷ Simon Duffy, *Deleuze and the History of Mathematics: In Defense of the ‘New’*, 31.

¹²⁸ Leibniz, “The Monodology” in *Philosophical Essays*, 217.

Sec. 7).”¹²⁹ This division of causality into Sufficient and Necessary, a warrant that often recurs in the philosophical tradition, extends the division of soul and body into Being itself: “79. Souls act according to the laws of final causes, through appetitions, ends, and means. Bodies act according to the laws of efficient causes and that of final causes, are in harmony with each other.”¹³⁰ It appears that the contingency the Principle of Sufficient Reason speculates is merely epistemological: it is only contingency for us as imperfect observers of reality, but has no ontological existence because it has already been grounded in God’s final causality.

Leibniz grounds this division at both ends of the Absolute: the actual infinity that only God enacts and comprehends at one end, chosen from the set of all potential absolute infinities or worlds, coupled with the infinitesimal monad or simple substance that expresses all other Being as a part of its continuous fabric, and from a minute perspective.¹³¹ The monad’s substance and infinitesimal perspective on Being are set by God such that both ends of the Absolute follow from the god-totality. Deleuze usefully provides a matheme for this relationship: “The individual notion, the monad, is exactly the inverse of God to the degree that reciprocals are numbers that exchange their numerator and their denominator: 2, of $2/1$ has as a reciprocal $1/2$. And God, whose formula is $\infty/1$, has as its reciprocal the monad, $1/\infty$.”¹³² Put differently, God as Absolute Infinity and immanent will selects from potentially infinite series of worlds one world within which each monad is that world from one perspective, from one series that converges with universal finality. To attempt to put this in an everyday register, Leibniz nails, well before its time, the famous feeling many people get on acid in which their consciousness is the biggest

¹²⁹ Ibid, 218.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 223.

¹³¹ Duffy, *Deleuze and the History of Mathematics*, 32-33.

¹³² Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, 49.

thing they will ever experience, but also just a tiny portion of the world by being a perspective on the whole.

Predictably, trouble sets in at the precise juncture in the pattern where it set in for Descartes' reasoning: presuming we have these two orders of things, an absolute series selected and imbued with the final causality of god and an infinitely small perspective on it tethered to a body... how do monads and their bodies interact? The answer is metaphysical: "The monad is prior to the multiplicity that constitutes the body, and the monad exists phenomenally only through the body it constitutes."¹³³ Here, Leibniz resorts to a strange immanence in which the Monad still has causal anteriority despite only being identifiable through its phenomenal existence. For us, the Monad is a logically necessary idealist projection required by Leibniz's construal of cosmology beyond the physical body to guarantee its substance beyond the phenomenal change of attributes. Monads guarantee phenomenal things their identity, but in a different way than Aristotelian essentialism because monads are predicated upon their infinitesimal difference in perspective from one another alongside their ultimate convergence into God's finality. Leibniz reverses the materialist order of causality such that the phenomenal is projection, whereas the ideal is the real: "What to each monad is its everyday spatio-temporal reality is to Leibniz a phenomenal projection, which is only rendered intelligible when it is understood to reflect the mathematical order that determines the structure of Leibniz's metaphysics."¹³⁴ Leibniz bases his understanding of reality in the necessity of the final causality of God in producing the best of all possible worlds such that the harmony of a given world is determined at the level of final causality such that the phenomenal friction between and extension of monads are contingent illusions that have no effect on the universe's *telos*. Leibniz

¹³³ Duffy, *Deleuze and the History of Mathematics*, 39.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 41.

goes much further than Aristotle here: there is no free will as a category nor indeterminacy to support the emergence of novelty in any meaningful way within a given universe because God has already made all of the Monads.

Let's try to make Leibniz fit in our nice Ant-Variable Charts and talk about the tendency shared by him and Aristotle against material causality and the moral implications that result:

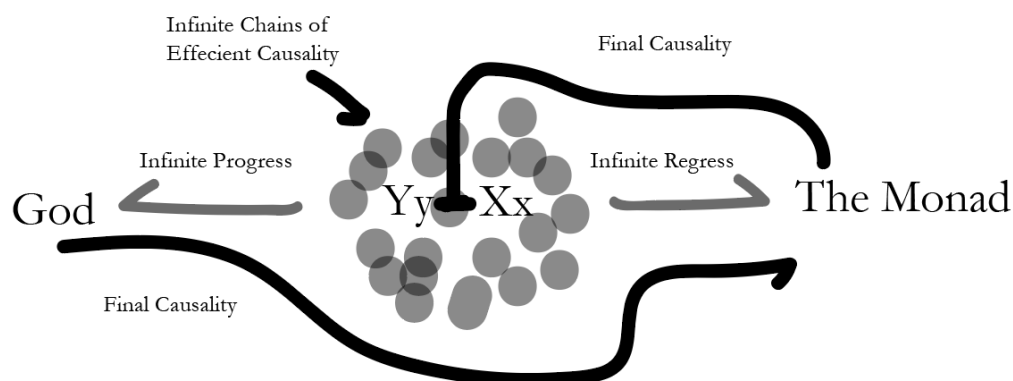


Figure 5. Produced by author.

Where Aristotle the essentialist comfortably projects an ideal being at any level of scale, Leibniz follows infinite progress and regress at the level of the universe to support the existence of a God who chooses among variations on the universe to place us in the best possible universe. Genuine ontological contingency in the middle is projected outward and spatialized into all possible universes, but with agency resting on the side of the Absolute because the contingency of the middle is an epistemological illusion. Properly speaking, the little line between Yy and Xx represents the modality of the formal cause in Leibniz or “The Law of Continuity” stipulating that monads, regardless of their body’s spatial-phenomenal orientation, exist in a continuous membrane such that their infinitesimal perspectives on the universe gel within God’s final causality for this best possible universe.

Strictly speaking, Monads commune but do not communicate. Monads are infinitesimal perspectives on all other monads and all at once; they are the universe in miniature from a point

of view such that they each have a perspective on each other but do not interact with each other in a phenomenal sense. Phenomenal appearances act out the scripts of their monads in contingent ways that do not affect their substance; their substance is set in harmony with all other substances by God. Aristotle stops at assigning the everyday observable world, sublunar being for him, a general orientation in terms of striving for the categorical perfection stipulated by the unmoved mover. This motion allows for indeterminacy and genuine chance events to produce the emergence of novelty and supports communication between things, in the rupture of efficient causality, as capable of bringing the new into being. Leibniz has none of this: infinitesimal differences among monads have already been predetermined by God such that the universe is in perfect harmony and converges necessarily towards God's telos no matter the phenomenological illusions that might suggest otherwise. The new and the emergent are but perspective errors that confuse a phenomenological and contingent iteration with the mathematical substance that always already contained it.

The Leibnizian system has strange consequences for communication:

However, among monads there is no direct communication. Instead, each dominant monad or individual subject is harmonized in such a way that what it expresses forms a common compossible world that is continuous and converges with what is expressed by the other monads. So it is necessary that the monads are in harmony with one another, in fact the world is nothing other than the preestablished harmony among monads.¹³⁵

Communication between monads does not exist because of the pre-existing and determining final causality of the universe as set by God: communication shifts to a sort of universal communion through this pre-established and divine harmony. The relationship between the middle that we

¹³⁵ Ibid, 41.

live in and the Absolute becomes clear. The invisible Absolute that is logically necessary for Leibniz sets the essential rules of communion such that any act of communication is merely the expression of friction between two monad's phenomenal extensions but has neither agency nor causal priority in interaction. The traditional rhetorical notion of persuasion in which a moment of genuine contingency between some number of agents becomes determined through the consequences of speech and the genuine free will of the agents involved becomes an ontological impossibility. Speech, individual agency, and persuasion become illusory epiphenomenon to the monads simply expressing their final causality and anterior conviction determined by their emergence from God.

Rhetorical theories focused on the manifestation of a speech thing from an anterior pool of infinite potentials a an anterior structure, not unlike Deleuze's Virtual, can err on the side of Leibniz by sacrificing the contingency and indeterminism of persuasion for an information science of probabilities that indicates a communion of the preestablished such that change only derives from a mode of coercion-conviction and is only ever apparent change between potential differences in a metaphysical set of all sets. Things and things rhetorical in this model change their states based upon efficient causality almost entirely because of the constitution of their internal states: we become a communication studies in which audience is the determining factor in our analysis of all other parts, text, rhetor, and context. Such a conception of communicative process may be reasonable, but it would certainly force us to make decisions about what methodologies are best suited to an information science of communication beyond one of more traditional modes of persuasion that presume at least the possibility of genuine ontological contingency. This is an issue we will revisit more fully in chapters three and four.

For now, let us read Leibniz against Aristotelian causality to see precisely how this formulation differs and what its ethical consequences are: Leibniz sacrifices any agency or indeterminacy in material causality to form a fully determined and masculine universal finality in which only substances possess causality and all causality is an active force. Far from Aristotle, who must presume some countervailing force to explain the new and the usually unusual, Leibniz eliminates material causality to reduce the Aristotelian fourfold to a set of three: “Three species of cause: efficient causes (in accordance with laws of mind and active forces), final causes (in accordance with the law of appetites and ultimately God’s aim of universal and maximum harmony), and formal causes (in accordance with the Law of Continuity).”¹³⁶ This shift follows Aristotle’s attempt to deny accidents any causal mode to let only substance have causality, but does so by removing chance as an ontological force and by positing a fully final and absolutely necessary determined universe by way of divine fiat. Chance events through human perception in Aristotle are merely epistemological mistakes; monsters do not arise because material causality does not exist. Were it to exist, Leibniz’s cosmology would fall apart because there would be some force that is capable of subverting the all-powerful, all knowing, and all good God such that we might not live in the best of all possible worlds and God, therefore, could not be all good. One wonders whether it was logical necessity that pushes Leibniz to his Absolute God in the first place.

It becomes difficult, with Leibniz as with any philosopher, to tell what ontological premises derive from logical necessity and which from moral conviction. An oddly masculine, along the traditional misogynist logic of the active and the passive, ensues: “Leibniz defines ‘efficient cause’ as ‘active cause... The purely passive cannot do anything unless it is acted

¹³⁶ Marc Bobro, “Leibniz on Causation,” 13.

upon. At times, Leibniz seems to think that only the truly active exists...’’¹³⁷ Leibniz appears to have absorbed elements of Aristotle’s misogynist theory, wrapped it in the language of the active against the passive, and pushed it to its logical extent by eliminating all impotence in causal transmission or agency on the side of a material which is acted upon. There are no partial chains of causality in which a kind of ontological disagreement or friction produce the new as monstrous; there are only failsafe efficient causes that transmit God’s final causality in the form of continuity into the universe. Of course, Leibniz was not a hylozoist; he was a Christian who believed the life of all things becomes the life imbued by God. Philosophy that does not recognize creation’s divine providence in Leibniz mode defies the will of this God. Leibniz positions materialist philosophies as having moral consequences in a letter to “the Princess of Wales”: “that next to corruption of manners, the principles of the materialists do very much contribute to keep up impiety.”¹³⁸ Materialists’ “impiety” derives from insufficiently extending the metaphysical precepts found in the Law of Noncontradiction and the Principle of Sufficient Reason into philosophy in a deductive sense such that they would resolve into a Christian understanding of the all-powerful, all knowing, and all good God.¹³⁹ The traces of the feminine as material causality from Aristotle are present: were a material causality to exist, the entire universe could exert a feminine causality not unlike Eve’s in the garden that subverts the final causality of the masculine God. Such a cause cannot exist because passive bodies as traditionally conceived do not exist, in the strong reading, or exert, in the lighter reading, causal force in the Leibnizian universe.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 10.

¹³⁸ Leibniz, “I. Leibniz’s First Paper, Being an Extract of a Letter (November 1715)” in *Philosophical Essays*, 321.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 323.

An incredible and strange set of ethical precepts follows from the erasure of material causality: “88. This harmony leads things to grace through the very paths of nature. For example, this globe must be destroyed and restored by natural means at such times as the governing of minds requires it, for the punishment of some and the reward of others (sec. 18 & seq., 110, 244, 245, 340).”¹⁴⁰ Yet, this universal requirement for punishment arises from the predestination of monads or souls qualities from the very final causality of God himself: good and evil become strained in a fully harmonized universe. Punishment becomes not an ethical question to argued, but an ontological requirement set by the arrangement of the universe. We do not necessarily need recourse to arguments about the Active and the Passive to see that Leibniz’s totalization of Being under his divine Absolute has extremely questionable consequences.

Leibniz deals with the paradoxes that inherently result from thought’s infinite series by totalizing the series under the will of an Absolute God, such that the world is a continuous membrane of monads, infinitesimal local perspectives on all other perspectives, the substance that determines phenomenal being’s false appearance of contingency. While Leibniz shifts the ground slightly from Aristotelian notions of identity by shifting the defining feature of Monads to infinitesimal difference, his erasure of ontologically agentive materiality, indeterminacy, and passivity pose serious questions for theories of rhetoric that consciously or unconsciously follow from scholars indebted to Leibniz, such as Deleuze. Two readings of Deleuze suffer from the problems we have found with Leibniz: that of Badiou and DeLanda. As we will see later in looking at DeLanda’s Deleuze, Deleuze’s notion of singularities is greatly indebted to Leibniz’s Monads, although Deleuze manages to find space for divergent series such that the Best Possible World need not obtain. In Badiou’s Deleuze, the problem takes form in the totalization of the

¹⁴⁰ Leibniz, “The Monadology” in *Philosophical Essays*, 224.

virtual into an anterior existing and causally efficacious Absolute infinity. In both cases, Deleuze's concepts fold to analysis within the Inclosure Paradox and produce results unsatisfactory to a philosophy of communication or theory of rhetoric aiming to ground itself in persuasion and, therefore, the possibility of genuine ontological contingency.

Jankélévitch's Bergson and the Retrospective Illusion

Jankélévitch's noted book on Bergson nicely encapsulates two interrelated intellectual-linguistic predispositions towards the kind of infinite regress we have occupied ourselves with so far that nonetheless fail properly to address the question because of their spatialization of temporality: "the illusion of retrospectivity" and "the idols of distance."¹⁴¹ These are novel philosophical structures that point to a deficiency in a particular modality of transcendental reasoning through which one starts with a concept and makes active and subjective determinations on an object set (as other to the subject) in order to create a chain of necessary conditions that explain the conceptualization. I do not believe Bergson claims that all transcendental reasoning is by necessity flawed, for after all, he makes use of his finding of duration in human memory as a shared feature of all Being in *Creative Evolution*.

Bergson's own transcendental reasoning operates more in terms of attempting to find the passive syntheses that operate prior to active determination. For Bergson, the intuition of what he calls "Duration" or the inextricability of the past from the present is the key passive synthesis that must be recognized so that transcendental reasoning possesses a sufficient ground for active synthesis. In a sense, Bergson renders his ontological assumptions explicit such that the intuition of duration functions as the dominant philosophical warrant for why each step of transcendental reasoning functions. Of course, as we will see when we look at Bergson's method more closely,

¹⁴¹ Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson*, 16 and 24.

older philosophical warrants, particularly the Law of Noncontradiction, remain operative in his methodology. When philosophers and theorists are not fully conscious of these ontological assumptions at the level of argument itself or in the connection between warrants and ontology problems can ensue.

This problem operates with what I will call *projective reasoning*, both in the retrospective and prospective senses found in Bergson and Deleuze. Identifying retrospective argument's structure and assumptions provides a valuable critical tool for metanalyses within a field because doing so allows the field to break circular reasoning between the forces that account for behavior associated with the field and the field's conceptual reifications of the tendencies of this behavior. Bergson recommends an intuitive methodology that approaches each problem as new so that all assumptions must themselves be explained to remedy this problem, but whether his own solution and work truly escapes this illusion or merely displaces it will be a question for the next section. For now, let us get into detail about what these twin illusions are, how they work, and provide examples of the process with regards to infinite regress in everyday life and within academic disciplines, particularly rhetoric.

Jankèlèvich sums up the first of the two illusions: "The retrospective illusion consists in leaving what is *in the making*, in placing oneself *after the fact*, and in performing, a posteriori, a little justificatory reconstruction thanks to which belated abstractions become primitive only because they are simple and poor."¹⁴² The retrospective illusion describes a fundamental philosophical orientation predicated upon mechanistic philosophies,¹⁴³ but its full implications do not emerge without the second mistaken habit, which is to leverage how these "belated abstractions" are actually reified images of thought more so than movements in becoming.

¹⁴² Ibid, 17. Italics in original.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 20.

This idea is important, and also is the essential flaw of the retrospective illusion: it substitutes a fully spatialized modality of causality in which partial causality fades in favor of primary efficient causes that are determinative in the last instance. In this sense, mechanistic causality resembles an executive ball clicker in which the pendulum clearly isolates mechanical causality from a messier reality and the material causality it is inextricable from. The key is the realization that the ball clicker is itself an apparatus that is highly selective. The “idols of distance” describe “the false perspective of intellectualism [that] derives largely from the fact that the mind perpetually splits, it projects an image of its own activity away from itself in order to contemplate it objectively.”¹⁴⁴ The faulty mode of transcendental reasoning splits off some human concept assumed to be natural, makes an object of it, and then engages in a series of transcendental steps in the guise of active subjective determinations to find that the reified abstraction is its own cause.

The idea of the ball clicker is an apt physical metaphor: the entire apparatus is designed to isolate a mechanistic motion that it, as a physical model, well draws out. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. The ball clicker isolates both action and reaction through its very construction, though action and reaction past simple systems cannot be viewed so simply. In parallel fashion, “The Idol of Distance” draws out the thing to be explained by separating it from its environment such that the causal lineage appears simple. “The Retrospective Illusion” then attempts to explain for the reified concept’s emergence in terms of dominant active cause and can succeed only by ignoring the causal efficacy and multimodality of the concept’s referent in its empirical environment.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 24.

Among the most important examples of this process in Bergson, as his critique of nothingness and spatialized time are the basis for his theory of Duration, deals with attempting to consider time for itself beyond the limits of a mechanized universe. Bergson accomplishes this by theorizing time as organism or organistic in a positive sense that denies the constitutive necessity of nothing, which he dismisses as a human fantasy within quantity that we retrospectively project behind any active synthesis of transcendental reasoning. This process has two aspects with regards to nothing in spatial boundaries and this nothing's influence on the conceptualization of time. Nothing is nothing more than a reification of the absence of number, an absence that cannot be empirically verified or produced anywhere in the universe.¹⁴⁵ When we can find no empirical referent for a reified conceptualization or the referent for the conceptualization is a messy aggregate, we can be relatively sure we are off on a "Retrospective Illusion." These illusions frequently arise when the logical maneuver of part-for-whole is deployed. Looking at how Bergson's critique works gives a particular body to the schema of the twin illusions in their formalized state and sets out important ontological arguments that persist across the entire project. These illusions combine to create a quantized spatialization of time that manifests in the analytic and retrospective division of an object to account for its being by unmanifested possibilities of it's becoming out of nothingness.¹⁴⁶

Any number of scientific metaphors put forward in the guise of mechanistic theories can help us understand this confusion of the infinitesimal point, the zero, or infinity with Being itself, but we will, for now, focus on time as spatialized instant in Newtonian Mechanism. We can view an instant of time as an infinitely small slice of a loaf of bread or as a single page of the book; time itself and change become illusions because time is just a spatialized dimension in which we

¹⁴⁵ See Frank Close, *Nothing* for a thorough scientific treatment of the empirical impossibility of nothingness.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 32.

are trapped. Could we see the entire loaf of bread or the whole book, time and change as we know it would not exist. This ontology makes causality relatively easy; when we analyze past occurrences to explain them in the future, we explain each page of the book by reconstructing the pages that came before it to the best of our ability, often never realizing that this very methodology relies on our already existing assumptions of mechanized time and the Law of Noncontradiction as applied to these temporal slices. Hard determinism is the necessary outcomes of this worldview: when we push each instant of time into another and regress is introduced, we will inevitably push for a fully spatialized and eternal temporal dimension in which change is illusory.

In a sense, we have already observed this process happen arise in Leibniz's totalization of the universe under God's command, with some complications. Leibniz projects all modalities of difference in cosmological makeup out into an infinite series of minutely different universes, thus adding a layer of cardinality to the fully spatialized universe of Newtonian Mechanism. However, the spatialization trick is the same: The universe is fully determined by the mathematical causality of God, and the appearance of change in the phenomenal register is an illusion. The entire configuration of the universe already exists; through scientific reconstructive analysis we discover what has already been here and will be here in a flattened temporality in which change and time are phenomenological illusions buried under idealist totalizations.

The imaginary fabrication of an absolute presence in the mathematical point model of the present is the very construct that demands a negative, not as positive and negative number's state of contradiction, but the negation of Being itself, nothingness, to buttress the idea of a complete one, an already completed infinite in which the universe and each moment within its spatialized

temporality are coordinated. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, working through while pushing against Bergson, puts a fine point on this problem, worth quoting at length:

We are not thinking of [nothing] as negative if we treat it as an ‘object of thought’ or try to say *what it is*: that is to make of it a more subtle or more rarefied species of being, it is to reintegrate it into being... more precisely, as calling for being in order to not be nothing, and, as such, called forth by being as the sole supplement to being that would be conceivable, a lack of being, but at the same time a lack that constitutes itself into a lack, hence a fissure that deepens in the exact measure it is filled.¹⁴⁷

What Merleau-Ponty describes here addresses the infinite regress arising in philosophies that invoke a causal nothing as they attempt to track out the logical links that we earlier described with the name The Inclosure Paradox. At each logical link, nothing behaves as a necessary logical projection, the next anterior step to a step filled by any positive being. Philosophies of nothing becomes self-actualizing prophecies in which something must always arise from nothing because nothing lurks beyond something at each step of reasoning. The Law of Noncontradiction facilitates this process through implication: for being to have identity it must be strictly separable from nothing and this separability grants nothingness an ontological status despite it being a reified abstraction. We are presented an illusion that shores up shaky boundaries of Being because beyond any given being there is its own illusory non-being that somehow guarantees the initial Being’s determinate existence in the first place.

And yet, such maneuverers subvert our ability to conceptualize change and time.

Merleau-Ponty makes the connection to temporality explicit: “Thus to fill up the fissure is in reality to deepen it, since the present one throws into it does not negate the negations that have

¹⁴⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 53. Italics in Original.

been or will be in their own time, and displaces them only by exposing itself to the same imminent fate.”¹⁴⁸ What Merleau-Ponty gives us here recalls Graham Priest’s “Inclosure Paradox” in which a limit becomes logically dialetheic; the point at which a thing both is and is not itself.¹⁴⁹ In effect, we have two inclosure paradoxes that Merleau-Ponty outlines, both owing their form to Bergson. On the one hand, nothing emerges as a truly imaginary signifier because to measure it anywhere would automatically convert it into somethingness. Nothingness must always be projected one step beyond the somethingness in an ontotheological sleight of hand. On the other hand, the entire temporality of negative ontologies relies on Western notions of an absolute and real present as real and the basis of our consciousness. The present is a strange philosophical trap; our verb tenses support it as do our philosophies, but the absolute fullness of the present is the very philosophical assumption that logically entails an absolute void.¹⁵⁰

Bergson places this apparent ontological dialetheia in a phenomenological register in his analysis of the messy aggregate formed by perception and recollection: “What for me is this present moment?... But there can be no question here of a mathematical instant. No doubt there is an ideal present – a pure conception, the indivisible limit which separates past from future. But the real, concrete, live present – that of which I speak when I speak of my present perception – that present necessarily occupies a duration.”¹⁵¹ For Bergson, the logical solution is to posit, at first, a dialetheia resultant upon analytically condensing the thing in question into an impossible point: the point at which past and present meet. Hence, for Bergson, the present is both itself and is the past in the guise of duration. As with nothing in a spatialized sense, making precise the present instant results in an infinite regress in which the present must be itself and not itself at the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 54

¹⁴⁹ Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 3-4.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 65.

¹⁵¹ Bergson, “Matter and Memory” in *Key Writings*, 155.

same time: “Nothing *is* less than the present moment, if you understand by that the indivisible limit which divides the past from the future. When we think the present as going to be, it exists not yet, and when we think it as existing, it is already past.”¹⁵² The absolute present is a mathematical point that is nothingness’ fantasy twin; the absolute present indicates a fullness beyond all relation and nothingness an emptiness beyond all relation. Such concepts only acquire logical necessity by adherence to a strong version of the Law of Noncontradiction at the level of spatialized Being.

Let us provide a chart of the retrospective illusion to extend our arguments beyond Bergson’s breaking of the nothing // something dialectic or messy aggregate into a more general argument:

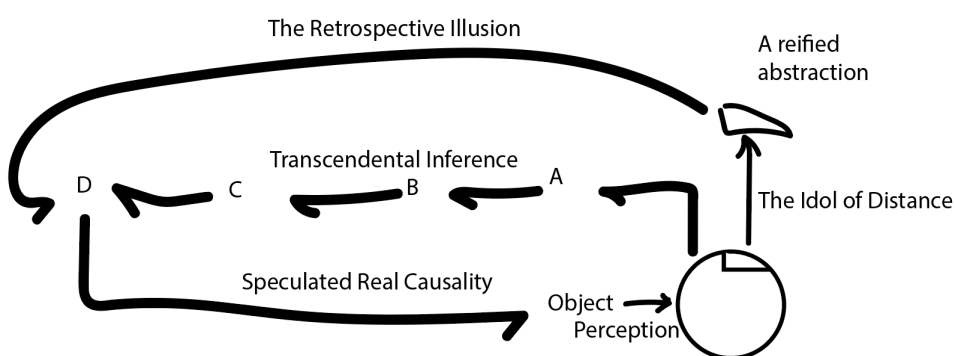


Figure 6. Produced by author.

In formalizing the retrospective illusion, and adding considerations from Priest’s Inclosure Paradox, and considering each illusion as a set tending towards a potentially infinite cardinality, a sense that the retrospective illusion can provide an interesting model of analytic thought itself begins to emerge. When we project the reified abstraction, we have already done an active synthesis that determines an object by taking part from whole or whole from part in a

¹⁵² Ibid, 159.

conceptual space. Working through some thought experiment examples will help us make the consequences of the retrospective illusion more clear in the everyday case so that its consequences can be analyzed with regards to social theory, including rhetorical theory.

The ant chart presented earlier itself contains a retrospective conceit: the movement of synecdoche along a transcendental pattern that relies on mereological and active inference in the guise of subjective determination drives the motion of thought as it attempts to determine the spatial and then temporal boundaries of an ant towards the Absolute through both infinite regress and progress. This process involves both the continuous thought-content we land on at each lettered step, but it also involves some philosophical warrant by which each step holds logical validity. The curious thing about the Law of Noncontradiction is that it necessitates each further step in order to unify each new messy aggregate underneath some new dominant cause that is logically distinct from the previous step. These steps are hidden to us when we fall into thought: only by breaking thought up into the image of thought by thinking about thought do we explicate these inferential steps in a new series of thought that we can diagram against its results as objective determinations. In this sense, thought thinking thought cannot tie a knot that resolves in only a string; thought about thought does not express thought as such, but only the image of thought. I argue that there is no immanence of the model to the real, only perspectival partiality.

Certainly, the visual representation above, while diagraming the relevant features, falls far short. It portrays the retrospective illusion as analytic determination in a single series; while conscious thought can be theorized as such, we also know that the self-system does not stop with single series and does not always work in a conscious register. For this reason, among many, Bergson and in a fuller sense Deleuze, turn to elaborating the passive syntheses that underlie

active subjective determination. However, whether their thought adheres more closely to the real or simply multiplies perspectives has yet to be interrogated.

One important feature of the retrospective illusion for understanding the analytic and reconstructive mode of thought deals with the very ideal projection that Bergson claims leads people astray: without some mode of retrospective illusion through which the infinite series of thought resolves momentarily in a perspectival projection that closes the loop, thought could provisionally determine nothing. The retrospective illusion functions as a limit statement to a thought series that forces a convergence upon some value that the series will never actually reach. We saw this cycle in chapter one through the logic of the inclosure paradox and Priest's exhaustive study of the process in thought about the Absolute. The Absolute, like nothingness in Bergson's analyses of time, is a retrospective illusion in a similar way. Projecting zero projects a quantitative abstraction of the absence of number, a thing that we know does not empirically exist. Projecting an Absolute projects a fantasy of totality and its accompanying notion of purity through which the parts of the totality and related things can be arrayed on a quantitative gradient from most pure to least pure with regards to a given category or projection. A human abstraction explains a human abstraction; the problem arises when this abstraction, totality or zero, is assumed to have some ontological primacy over how the empirical world works.

However, without this kind of projection the infinite motion of thought could not be snipped off and represented in the spatializing mode of speech or writing with their typical temporal rhythms and literal spatialization in the case of the written word. Were these illusions, these perspectival projections, not potential within a system of thought, there would be no way to cap localized sections of thought under some totalizing concept for the purpose of expression and transmission. The problem arises when we believe that the convergence of the thought series

indicates its correctness through logical criteria that are only partial perspectives on world.

Illusory though they may be in the endless cycle of inclosure that we find in thought unexpressed and becoming as such, they are useful for representation and conceptualization. Without the ability to totalize a segment of thought and, in doing so, generate the first term for a new series of thought, we would live in an impoverished and solipsistic world. The illusion is a delirious movement in which we substitute the mental model for the real, but that does not mean it has no value nor any predictive thrust. The forms and patterns of inference by which we determine our models of thought must be particular to us, but as particular to us (as beings in the world) they must share the order of being as a partial cause.

We return to the earlier example, having not yet decided on the precise boundary of an ant! We do not know where the line between ant and not-ant splits being apart. The parallel to which I have aimed is to make the point that, in a similar manner, our rules of inference or philosophical warrants, such as the Law of Noncontradiction, are also illusions built on the fantastic purity and infinite determinability of our conceptual spaces. Objects have a naïve phenomenological appearance of being separate entities in space when observed with our visual apparatuses, our eyes, and we experience our own persistence and difference through subjective time... too easily returning us to a commonsensical but naïvely concluded Law of Noncontradiction! But we also now know, thanks to the newer sciences and more complex measuring apparatuses, that there exists many cases, such as the double slit experiment with photons, in which this strict visual separation does not hold.

But is there not some truth to the law of noncontradiction? My laptop is not the cat next to me, though the environment may imbricate them in the shared sea of relations and forces that affect both. The philosophical warrants through which we move from active sensory

determination to active determination of the causal forces between objects in thought can be read as negotiations between *being in the world* and *being in thought*. They are provisional, incomplete, modelling apparatuses, and deeply perspectival. They are, in a sense, illusory, but they are immensely productive illusions all the same. There is a sense in which a realist mode of philosophy can only find truth through the recognition of the incomplete and partial relationship to reality given by its cognitive machinery and formalized methodologies. Realism and perspectivism; perspectivism and realism. Illusions and the totalizing perspectival projections the modes of thought we have looked at in terms of infinite regress so far are not by necessity wrong; they are models of being from a given perspective that must be edified by the always incomplete multiplication of perspectives and through careful attention to the ethical consequences their expression of Being produces.

One way to bring these ideas back to a more everyday level, at least for academics, and without recourse to the ant chart, is by evaluating a parallel argument about the status of analysis in sociology that operates along the form of Bergson's retrospective illusion: Latour's critique of sociology by way of his critique of the social. Latour expresses his argument: "...when social scientists add the adjective 'social' to some phenomenon, they designate a stabilized state of affairs, a bundle of ties that, later, may be mobilized to account for some other phenomenon... Problems arise, however, when 'social' begins to mean a type of material..."¹⁵³ With far less analytic rigor and no recourse to mathematics in the form of set theory, cardinality or infinite series, Latour has more or less pinned down the preceding pages' argument with regards to sociology: A series of parts are analyzed through some methodology with underlying ontological assumptions to attempt to ascertain something about the social.

¹⁵³ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 1.

The problem begins when the reified construct (e.g., “the social,” or whatever bit of the social the theorist is stipulating) takes its place as the first term of a new series in which it appears to have occurred naturally, rather than understood as an assembly of the forces, social and non, that produce it. The reified chunk, here, the *social*, acquires the status of a retrospective illusion the instant social things start to be inserted into the causal chain of thought’s determination as the root cause of more social things. The retrospective illusion in sociology thus sustains a closed causal chain in which the social becomes both cause and effect, emergent as the projection of a reified concept into a transcendental schema of active subjective conceptual determination.

Latour makes this process more particular with regards to agency: “For the social sciences to regain their initial energy, it’s crucial *not* to conflate all the agencies overtaking the action into some kind of agency — ‘society’, ‘culture’, ‘structure’, ‘fields’, ‘individuals’, or whatever name they are given — that would *itself* be social.”¹⁵⁴ Such a move has the effect of projecting a necessary, but invisible and spectral, cause behind the apparent and empirically verifiable social assemblages that operate without regards to analytic distinctions. This move leads to a strangely ontotheological position, where “social forces play the complicated role of being simultaneously what has to be postulated to explain everything and what, for many reasons, has to remain invisible.” The very phenomena sociologists set out to explain becomes “the social in which it is ‘really’ built.”¹⁵⁵ In summation, the analytic mode of reconstructive reasoning sets out to explain some totality by reconstructing it out of parts that become marginalized in their own articulations and causal variability by being nothing more than symptoms of what the scholar set out to explain in the first place.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 45.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 91.

While we will take a deeper look at the formulation of this problem in rhetoric with regards to materiality, potentiality, and ideological critique in the next chapter, it is worth pausing to make the analogy explicit to rhetoric departments. Rhetoricians have analyzed texts in a reconstructive mode through various theoretical apparatuses for the entire duration of our field. Strictly speaking, many of these analyses resolve in a retrospective illusion in which something that should be theorized as an effect, such as ideology, norms, audience, agency, potential, and so on, have been retroactively posited as a cause of the arrangements that produce them, instead of the other way around. In theory, this tying of the knot could function under some regime of a philosophy of immanence, as we will see in Deleuze, but in its current state it does not. At its logical limit, such reasoning leads to the path in which rhetoricity has been projected backwards into being to give all things relational a rhetorical tint, instead of all things rhetorical an irreducible relational bent.

The recognition of the retrospective illusion in rhetorical studies, operating as one of many devices that freeze the infinite movement of thought, is not a decisive blow against the prospects for rhetorical theorizing. Rhetoricity can still be understood as a category useful for the examination of patterned relationality read from a rhetorical perspective. Actionable truths emerge from this process of reconstructive analysis: where the whole becomes a strange Absolute god, the parts gain greater clarity when read through the perspective of some totalizing whole. The key is to keep always alive the recognition such a reading practice can result in conceptual overdetermination, where a totality ends up projected in a way that separates critical practice from the possibility of fomenting change and initiating action. This becomes particularly problematic when the bent towards the analytic-reconstructive mode in our field precludes the

development of novel methodologies better fit to contemporary philosophies of Becoming and to produce social change.

Taking Stock: From Retrospective to Prospective Illusions

I have discussed at length a mode of subjective-active determination in which conscious thought makes meaning by separating things into components analytically, such that each step in the asserted causal chain is determined via the principle of identity found in the Law of Noncontradiction, leading invariably to the assertion of a primary cause positioned as the Absolute. I have aimed so far to have formalized this process through Priest's notion of the "Inclosure Paradox" as an approach to conceptual infinite regress that leads to conceptual totalization when projected through some arbitrary perspectival point through the "Domain Principle." Jankèlèvich's reading of Bergson's Retrospective Illusion elaborates the argumentative or propositional structure of this process through which some conceptual reification within thought becomes retrospectively posited as its own primary cause as the "Idol of Distance" and the kind of false problem that positions nothing as the anterior guarantor of absolute something-ness. The quality, characteristic, or general orientation of the Absolute becomes reintegrated into Being as the true, even if scientifically or empirically impossible to measure, and first cause within reality.

I have critiqued this process by reading it through Aristotelian substance, and outlined this process via Leibniz, who grounds the phenomenal appearance of contingency in a necessary and absolute final telos of the all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good God. And, finally, I have attempted a logical formalization of this process through a reading of Jankèlèvich's Bergson.

The retrospective illusion is important to this project in several ways but is of particular relevance today because Bergson's critique of it suggests a clear alternative that I have named

the *prospective illusion*, a position that emerges most clearly in Deleuze's book *Bergsonism*. Deleuze and Bergson tout the superiority of their own orientation/s towards philosophical methodology, but it remains to be measured to what degree Deleuze and Bergson's philosophical methodological alternative truly diminishes the, for a naturalist problematic, perspectival point that the retrospective illusion brings in when it moves from regress to totality. Bergson builds his methodology in a strange way and Deleuze follows this methodology, at least in his reconstruction of Bergson's method in *Bergsonism*, with some important divergences in terms of thinking space and iterating the structure common to all being/s through myriad adjunct content fields. The goal of both Deleuze and Bergson revolves around thinking being in terms of becoming, to produce an adequate process ontology.

The rhetorical structure of these philosophical projects is invariably dialectical. On the one hand, Bergson builds his philosophical method by critiquing broad dualistic tendencies in the thought of his lifeworld through the work of past philosophers. *Matter and Memory*, for example, is full of these moments: realists vs. idealist, mechanists vs. dynamists, conceptualists vs. nominalists, and so on.¹⁵⁶ In this sense, Bergson's philosophy and Deleuze's (with particular attention to chapter three of *Difference and Repetition*) are inherently critical, although defenders of philosophy as eventual occurrence could argue that these critiques are a problem of expression and not of philosophy. When we move into methodology more fully considered in its own right, I will suggest that Maurice Merleau-Ponty furnishes plenty of arguments against this interpretation.

On the other hand, both Deleuze and Bergson claim a kind of naïve intuition in which philosophical methodology and duration as temporal ontology merge such that a chiasmus

¹⁵⁶ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 15 and 157.

results: duration emerges from intuition and intuition emerges from duration. In this regard, the retrospective illusion and prospective illusions converge. They are both the motion of tying a knot between ontology on one side and philosophical methodology on the other. Or: models of being tend to ontologize models of thought or methodologies by analyzing thought's relationship to being. Methodology is ontology in action; Ontology is methodology in theory.

The key difference between retrospective and prospective illusions is that the latter will mobilize systematic isomorphy as the level of the distribution in differences at the level of process-structure-event instead of being-object-eternity. Understood in this manner, both prospective and retrospective illusions are forms of transcendental reasoning: each starts with experiences and attempt to explain through argumentative and logical warrants with ontological underpinnings how these experiences can arise. The retrospective illusion projects knowledge backward as a mechanistic and necessary cause; the prospective illusion attempts to specify the ontical characteristics of being sufficient for the experience to obtain. As both methods select when and how to rely upon the LEM and LNC, one wonders just how much difference in consequence exists between active and passive transcendental reasoning.

The consequences of these different orientations in thought are deep, but they can be tracked out at a highly general register. Deleuze articulates this duality when discussing determination in the virtual register: "In going from A to B and then B to A, we do not arrive back at the point of departure as in a bare repetition; rather, the repetition between A and B and B and A is the progressive tour or description of the whole of a problematic field."¹⁵⁷ We can also consider the same to be true of moving from B to A and then A back into B. Leaving the ontological baggage aside for the moment, repetition does not occur in philosophical method in

¹⁵⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 210.

the same sense of a scientific experiment in which open systems are manipulated to be comparatively closed and change is measured by breaking intensive qualities up into quantitative chunks.

Deleuze articulates this idea most clearly in his analysis of Nietzsche's eternal return: "The mechanist idea affirms the eternal return but only by assuming that differences in quantity balance or cancel each other out between the initial and final states of a reversible system."¹⁵⁸ Thought does not operate like a conceptually purified thermodynamic experiment where a quantitative zero state is made to reach some level of excitation before being released back to its zero state or viewed as an unchanged whole based upon the law of conservation of energy. Of course, we now know that because of entropy at both the thermodynamic and quantum levels, neither does material being. The point is the same for Deleuze either way: thought is never bare repetition and the order of thought produces different results each time it is iterated. The same never returns as the same; the same is always the different.

To use a more everyday example to attempt to put these thoughts in a different way with a different intonation: think of the game at state fairs to "test your strength." You wield the mallet and whack the pressure plate such that a disc flies towards a bell before falling back to this apparent zero state. For Deleuze, the point is that any number of subsequent strikes on the pressure plate are not the same because, whether we perceive them when we break up change into broad quantitative chunks, elements of the game have changed. The fair device wears down and no two strikes from any one person are exactly the same. To take Deleuze's A and B and modify them into the language we are developing here: analysis and synthesis work the same way. The structure of the journey from thing to thing, accomplished by a regularized process,

¹⁵⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 46.

even as we construct new things, changes each future iteration such that each part of the process matters. To use Barad's language: each difference makes a difference. Part to whole followed by whole to part is not equivalent to whole to part followed by part to whole, and so on: thought is incapable of bare repetition, and each path produces different inflections. We can iterate this through any number of scales of thought and levels of formalization. For now, it is enough to know that A to B can signify the retrospective illusion and B to A the prospective.

Let us re-sum the work done so far with this A to B language in mind. Philosophical warrants, while themselves emerging in the history of thought, are treated as indicative of Being's structure and used as active-subjective determinations of messy aggregates to produce causal chains from some conceptual projection that explains everyday life or empirical reality. These modes stop at some value along an infinite series of thought replete with active and subjective conceptual determinations to then project some concept from some perspective to forestall infinite regress. These modes of perspectival projection embody Bergson's Retrospective Illusion that formalizes this process as follows: what we find at determination B is actually just a reified chunk of thought A such that $A \rightarrow B$ in conceptual analytic space and shares equivalency with $B \rightarrow A$ as an ontological feature of the world.

This mode of reconstructive analysis is clearly flawed at the level of causality thanks to its partiality and in its singular velocity in its modelling function: we have taken something that emerges from world within thought, and injected it back into being to stop infinite regress, without using different methodologies to see what the thought thing shares with being and what is truly novel to it because we seek a primary cause in the chain of efficient causes. The philosophers so far, with Aristotle's strange relationship to indeterminism partially withstanding, work in mechanistic modes. We have yet to see a philosopher who starts with the ontical

capacities of Being and Becoming from the start to account for the passive synthesis of subjectivity as such, outside of quickly noting Bergson on duration. We have not observed the process reversed through which we move from $B \rightarrow A$ and back again.

I do not argue for a radical epistemological break: we think in world and therefore thought is partially caused by world. There is no strict separation between world and thought; there is only the same creative and productive separation that characterizes and textures the ontical quality of ontology as such, as we will see more clearly when we take up Karen Barad's work. One can maintain a flat ontology while recognizing asymmetry in complexity and agency at the level of the ontical: the best way to do that is to add the thinkers of $B \rightarrow A$ to more consciousness focused and active modes of determination. Retrospective Illusions produce truths about the parts through their substitution of the reified whole and are useful in the analytic critique of objects constructed by critics engaged in the reconstructive mode. But they hardly exhaust the conceptual schemas and methodologies available, even within an analytic vein.

Meanwhile, the section on the prospective illusion turns to a different orientation within the analytic world that attempts to branch the two modalities of synthesis and analysis by moving from $B \rightarrow A$ and then $A \rightarrow B$ by turning cause and effect on their heads through a different temporality than the one presumed by analytic processes within the retrospective illusion. The fundamental stipulation for this move relies on Bergson's Duration as figured in *Creative Evolution*: "The universe *endures*. The more we study the nature of time, the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new."¹⁵⁹ At first, we are less interested in an Absolute first cause and more interested in the ways in which manifestations of being ramify outwards as part of a monistic whole that

¹⁵⁹ Bergson, "Creative Evolution" in *Key Writings*, 216.

divides itself through self-differentiation. The fundamental move here presages that of systems theory's systematic isomorphy such that shared forms in many cases indicate some fundamental structure that repeats across individual beings. Spinozist monism is clearly implicated: the prospective illusion will reason from many adjunct fields back into singular forms that account for the shared capacities of all beings. To do this thing, duration must be extended to all of Being such that we do not actively synthesize the shared elements of duration but are passively synthesized by them. We intuit the whole duration by intuiting our own duration. Everything starts at the beginning and the beginning still insists in the subjective experience of the now knowing that the Absolute now is a fantasy and we are always already in a now-then.

CHAPTER III: THE PROSPECTIVE ILLUSION

I focus on Deleuze's *Bergsonism* more fully than on a close reading of Bergson himself or of Jankèlèvich's Bergson in this chapter because Deleuze's Bergson, with its careful attention to his arguments and conceptual structures that most closely presage Deleuze's own philosophy. The pathway that runs from Bergson through Deleuze has also been the most influential in rhetorical studies. *Bergsonism* provides an uncannily clear take into the constituent pieces of Deleuze's own ontology without the tortuous writing and almost absurd obscurity of Deleuze's main texts. There are also differences between Deleuze and Bergson that end up refracted or sidestepped in *Bergsonism*: Deleuze will favor a virtuality that encompasses spatiality (where Bergson prioritizes time over space) and will take examples from biology and mathematics in support of metaphysics far further than Bergson had conceptual resources in his time to accomplish. In the end, both philosophers are exceptionally useful to re-thinking how argumentative structure can align with ontology through argumentative warrants, even though

neither significantly breaks with the prior philosophical tradition in terms of essence and the denial of material reality for a higher ideal plane.

Deleuze and Bergson both occupy prominent roles in setting the philosophical groundwork for the vague movement named New Materialism and other realist philosophical camps that today are regularly imported into the theory disciplines. We see terms and structures like the *virtual*, sometimes thought as *potentiality*, sometimes as *energy*, sometimes explicitly called the virtual, in contemporary rhetorical theory, but the expanding use of this terminology makes pinning down a clear meaning difficult. Do rhetoricians use the terms primarily to ontologize contingency and therefore rhetoric as what is essential within being? Is the virtual to be understood as a reservoir of potentiality in a localized scheme or does it carry the full monistic-topological weight assigned it by most Deleuzian iterations? Do our disciplinary readings confuse possibility with potentiality? Are these conceptualizations of the virtual adequate to Bergson's own theorizing? To answer these questions requires as firm a grasp of the virtual in Bergson from Deleuze's articulation of it as can be specified.

I name Bergson's intuitive methodology the *prospective illusion* because my aim is to reverse the already negatively charged retrospective illusion into a positive project of clarifying in a simpler way the relationship between theory and praxis. Where the retrospective illusion moves backwards through the LNC towards first cause, the prospective illusion might alternatively be understood as selecting some aggregate and moving it forward to conceptual clarity at the level of *tendency* or *becoming* where the LNC can still hold despite our empirical experiences of things falling into paradox when we try to strictly delineate their boundaries. In this sense, I view Bergson's early work as containing an interesting potential strain in which the

virtual and the actual are two poles, neither fully realized, that help us to model everyday reality without being ontologized as determinates of it.

Pure actuality offers an impossible future tendency that nonetheless helps us understand material actuality, while pure virtuality presents an impossible fantasy of pure difference through memory that would have no content nor material without actuality. Considered as such, the prospective illusion would be an illusion, yes, but a useful one in that it motivates clearer thinking about becoming and changes our perspective by changing our orientation towards ontology. Unfortunately, Bergson will eventually hedge his bets and position this conceptual purity as anterior cause in an Absolute virtual figured as universal duration and self-differencing difference in a distinctly temporal register; this path reflected his late encounter with Einstein's relativity theory, which he worked through in *Duration and Simultaneity*. A lovely ontology of local and cascading inside-outside durations with varying temporal and spatial rhythms blend together with an Ideal-Absolute that a certain mode of logic requires, but has no capacity to be empirically verified. The problems of conceptual purity-totalization and hierarchy that haunt Western philosophy still possess both Bergson and Deleuze.

The prospective illusion features perspectival projections as much as the retrospective illusion does, but their comportment and temporality differ. The retrospective illusion projects a domain in reaction to infinite regress backwards towards first cause in the register of being; the prospective illusion projects a domain in reaction to the infinite progress, a regress towards a future perfect form that never obtains, at the level of the logical tendency purified by reason at the level of becoming. Ramifications of some messy aggregate tend towards a qualitative limit statement towards its purified tendency by iterating out a series of terms through a logic of sufficiency. Regress as progress terminates through the projection of a domain, as in the

retrospective illusion, but a domain that accepts its fantastic status as synthetic concept in a messy reality conceived as an open system. When sufficiency has been reached in *Bergsonism* depends, as in the retrospective illusion, on when infinite regress has been followed enough for plausibility even if the foundations of the entire system have never been justified or are unreachable. Dualism by dualism Deleuze's Bergson builds his oeuvre, but how do we know when, say, perception has been sufficiently well established to justify a jump to pure perception?

If the world is a monistic system, as Bergson follows Spinoza in believing, then how could any one series be sufficiently constructed without ramifying all Being? What justifies the cutoff and the projection? As with the retrospective illusion, some combination of lived, bodily, historical, contextual, or other potential factors determine a starting point and a cutoff for the infinite regress of thought. While pursuit of this strategy appears to result in the same conceptual dead end, Deleuze will posit a fourth moment of Bergson's method, where an explicit conceptual totalization of the virtual as *virtual of virtuals* will be retrospectively inserted, resulting in the assertion that this conceptual totalization escapes the problems with universality in the retrospective mode.

I am not wholly convinced this argumentative move escapes the problems of the prior philosophical tradition. It may merely shifts registers, from a focus on being as object-essence to formal essence as multiplicity. Meanwhile, this move towards conceptual totality relies on a strange argumentative structure that has commonly been accused of panpsychism, since it starts with mental experience and generalizes the structures it finds there to all Being. But there is a conceptual rejoinder to this problem: a way out for those working through the logic of prospective illusion is to make a double claim about monism and immanence that produces panpsychism: (1) Being is monistic with a dialetheic but positive split, conceived of as

contradiction without negation, between quantitative and qualitative multiplicities. (2) Conscious thought emerges as one ramified series of self-differencing difference within the Being that is one-multiple and has the same self-differentiating capacity as Being because of its complexity or “zones of indetermination.” (3) The distribution of differences peculiar to thought must, at a formal and final level of causality, be isomorphic to other multiplicity-structures in Being because Being is one-multiple. (4) Therefore, we have access to Being’s one-multiple through thinking about and experimenting upon the emergence of our own selves through the passive synthesis that produce us.

Several issues arise once the prospective illusion is formalized. One question hinges on whether the monistic plane of cosmic scale, virtuality’s projection of an Absolute domain for all being, truly follows the logic of the prospective illusion: is reliance on a one-whole account that is split into qualitative and quantitative aspects able to account for all of Being’s ramifications or does the projection of a *necessary* domain always obligate us back into the entailments of a retrospective illusion? Put differently, do the twin higher cardinality warrants of immanence + monism really escape the problems of previous constructions of some Absolute division in Being? Where might the criteria for the truth of this cosmic virtuality reside, in empirical or logical truth criteria? After all, we cannot measure the virtual because the condition cannot resemble the conditioned.

For a posthumanist, panpsychist claims are problematic because they bind the human up in all of being or, perhaps, all of being up in some kind of anthropomorphized sense of the human. If genuine differences in kind inhabit a monistic becoming, we must attend carefully to the differences between ramified chains and not too readily attribute any characteristic whatsoever to a monistic virtual that lacks scientific necessity. For a naturalist, with regards to

mathematics and a phenomenological or genealogical take on logic, the argument that we can discern pure tendencies at the level of becoming and that these are the virtual-evental-ideal determinants of actual-material-concrete reality will always be deeply concerning. The risk is that the prospective illusion may not so much reverse Plato in any meaningful way, as it might merely shift the ground of the LNC and the Absolute from being to becoming.

Meanwhile, for any anti-essentialist ethicist, an insistence on purity in the register of the event such that the *pure-event* and *accident* dichotomy obtains should be deeply disturbing. We have mapped what notions of purity, read into the heart of being and causality, produce in Aristotle and Leibniz: does transferring the purity from being to becoming really alleviate these problems? Finally, to what extent does materialist indeterminacy eat at the base of *Bergsonism*? If the prospective illusion eventually rebounds into a retrospective illusion, will it end up having the same hidden reliance on a mode of materiality it explicitly eschews in favor of ideal Absolutism?

I argue that the prospective illusion is a useful illusion up until the move from sufficient chains of ramifications backlashes into the positing of a necessary Absolute in the form of the one-many with its dialetheic guises of qualitative and quantitative multiplicities. *Bergsonism*, ironically, makes a Hegelian move, but instead of Absolute Spirit emerging through the eventually sublimation of all things, it has already happened as the cone of universal memory in the past-present aggregate. Potentiality as the virtual becomes a self-actualizing force through intensity. In Aristotelian terms, self-differencing difference becomes the final cause of Being and the virtual its structural formal cause. Materiality as the actual becomes an almost dead force poised at the limit before spatiality. In Aristotelian terms, efficient causality between the surface regions of things merely carries out their actualization, and material causality is merely the

stumbling block of potentiality's endless creativity, particularly the creativity of mind and life. It is the problem that must be solved by the ideal's actualization in a way that uncannily reintroduces the limits of Aristotle's larger cosmology. The solution to the problem is to reclaim the version of Bergson in *Matter and Memory* that does not require a necessary Absolute to usefully model Becoming.

To sketch this case, I'll initially map out the higher order structure of Bergson's prospective illusion given Deleuze's reconstruction in *Bergsonism*. Next, we will examine the ontological-methodological problems emerging when the ontological entailments of the methodology are elaborated. And finally, we will attempt to provide a solution in which the prospective illusions stays prospective without positing a necessary cosmological scale virtuality.

Bergsonism: Problematizing the Problems

Deleuze's account of Bergson's philosophical method is not strictly separable from the ontology that it produces through its application: "...Intuition, as he understands it methodologically, already presupposes *duration*."¹⁶⁰ Here, and as discussed earlier in chapter two, *duration* indicates a conceptualization of time that exceeds the mathematical or point model of the present by making the present "only the most contracted degree of the past,"¹⁶¹ and the past a kind of "coexistence without succession" at various levels of relaxation or tension in terms of differently stratified virtual dimensions.¹⁶² Intuition does not attempt to determine duration from without by actively analyzing its various parts, but attempts to understand itself as a qualitatively differentiated strand or series of duration from within, by attempting to account for the sufficient conditions of its own passively synthesized condition. In a sense, this approach

¹⁶⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 13.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 75.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 60.

requires mechanistic temporality to break from the start. For the past-present to enjoy an immanent causality such that the present is only the most compressed area between the past and the future, the past and the present, at the least, cannot be fully separable by the LNC.

Deleuze's Bergson finds a merely phenomenological approach inadequate: while we start with a kind of naïve experience, we must "[push] beyond experience a direction drawn from experience itself. It is only in this way that we can extract a whole aspect of the conditions of experience."¹⁶³ *Bergsonism*'s method starts with the messy composites of experience as a sufficient condition, but, instead of finding a necessary universal condition anterior to the things we cognize about to ground their possibility, as in the retrospective illusion, we elaborate the ramifications in terms of the "natural articulations" or the tendencies in becoming in a comportment towards the future, towards what will be called actualization.¹⁶⁴ The logical chains start with virtual potentiality and are pushed out into their ramifications through a movement resembling the principle of sufficient reason, until the series resolves once more in a virtual-ideal point in which the articulations are unified through universal duration.

The move to sufficiency comported towards a final formal cause attempts to elide the problems of vagueness that beset retrospective models by substituting time for space, becoming for being, and tendency for identity. However, the prospective illusion remains, in a sense, a form of transcendental reasoning because we are still reasoning from conditioned to condition that, while inextricable at the level of being, is strictly differentiable at the level of becoming. Deleuze articulates the relationship between Bergson's "method of division" with transcendental reasoning in this way: "...there is some resemblance between intuition as method of division and transcendental analysis: If the composite represents the fact, it must be divided into tendencies or

¹⁶³ Ibid, 25.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 18 and 20.

into pure presences that only exist *in principle*... We go beyond experience, toward the conditions of experience.”¹⁶⁵ The key point to remember is that we can take liberty in how we read the virtual/actual relationship: these registers of being can be considered as tendencies never fully obtaining in material reality. In a fully actualized future, the logical conditions of becoming would become fully reified static actualized elements of being. In a fully virtualized past, that is, the play of differences would slip off each other *ad infinitum* and never take root in materiality. We would be left with a sterile world of ideas on one side and a static universe incapable of emergence or the new on the other. Only when the virtual is pushed into a kind of temporal Absolute, with full causal determinacy on its side through the retrospective illusion, does the potential infinity implied by early Bergson shift through a sneaky retrospective illusion into a domain that produces an Absolute or actual infinity for all of being for all of time. These differences are difficult to pin down and will emerge with greater clarity iteration after iteration: for now it is enough to recognize that to theorize *being* in terms of *becoming* focalizes the proliferation of differences in kind based upon real potentials and not abstract possibilities.

This construal of the relationship of thought to being presents immediate problems that must be dealt with before elaborating the moments of the method. For example, how is it that we have access to these “real conditions of experience” and how do they relate to the things they condition? Both Deleuze’s Bergson and one iteration of Deleuze answer this question through a clever feint that ties the knot around the principle of sufficient reason. We are part of the ramified series of being and, in a sense, are the culmination of being itself with our miniature durations and our embodied tendencies to act as difference making engines.¹⁶⁶ We are privileged as catalysts of universal becoming, operating on a much smaller time scale in terms of creation

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 23.

¹⁶⁶ The anthropocentric theme comes in clearly in *Bergsonism* at 106.

and invention, as compared to the cosmos. If we are a qualitatively differentiated portion of a monistic whole that is itself a qualitative difference producing engine, then we can make differences and think about how they work when we read them back into being. We can engage in the strange form of transcendental reasoning peculiar to Bergson where, through the intuitive method, we are opened “up to the inhuman and the superhuman (*durations* which are inferior or superior to our own)...”¹⁶⁷

The move here is to utterly violate the LEM at the level of being: cascading durations indicate both a monistic construal of the virtual as simultaneously “a primordial totality”¹⁶⁸ and yet one simultaneously indicating “a new metaphysics which now only takes into account immanent and constantly varying durations.”¹⁶⁹ Put differently, the virtual violates the LEM by being two different things at the same time: “...at each instant pure duration divides in two directions, one of which is the past, the other the present; or else the *elan vital* at every instant separates into two movements, one of relaxation (*détente*) that descends into matter, the other of tension that ascends into duration.”¹⁷⁰ When we drill being down into the fantastic instant only to find that no such instant obtains in time as such, Deleuze’s Bergson divides the tendency in becoming between virtual and actual such that as potentiality condenses, more viscous modes of becoming obtain, and as actualization comes into relation with more actualization, new potentials evaporate back into the virtual register.

Here the clever conceit around access is conveyed with phenomenal force: Deleuze’s Bergsons methodology truly merges with the ontology it settles on by the end of the book: when we attempt to “go beyond the turn of experience” we encounter “so many difficulties in trying to

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 28.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 95.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 116.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 95.

reach this focal point that the acts of intuition, which are apparently contradictory, have to be multiplied. Bergson, thus, sometimes speaks of a movement that is exactly appropriate to the experience, sometimes a broadening out, sometimes a tightening and narrowing.”¹⁷¹

Methodology and ontology merge such that panpsychism obtains. Just as the virtual contracts into the actual and the actual relaxes into the virtual, the intuitive method parallels the ontological action with its methodological discipline. To find these logical conditions, thought must focalize, or we might say it must produce a perspectival projection, around some messy aggregate drilled down into a point of contradiction at the level of being such that purity in tendency can obtain. Contradiction, and thus logical identity, cannot exist at the level of being because science has pretty well squashed any pretensions to that with relativity and quantum mechanics, but we can preserve it if we create an ideal-real stratum of being named the virtual.

Whether or not this move *really* works and what the motivations may be for maintaining purity and an ideal stratum at all will be taken up at great length later. For now, it is enough to know that Deleuze’s Bergson ontologizes methodology and methodologizes ontology. And yet, the immanence of monistic becoming is a difficult concept to grasp. I prefer to think about it with a topological metaphor of shrink wrap: somehow this virtual “primordial totality” seeps into every pore of becoming such that the condition-that-conditions-all-conditioned is not an abstract universal possessing more generality than local objects. Rather, it is immanent to them. We can only identify the clear shrink wrap through its play with light in a conceptual realm of ideas. Deleuze: “...these conditions are neither general nor abstract. They are no broader than the conditioned: they are the conditions of real experience.”¹⁷² The immanence argument coincides with the monism argument in their mutual attempt to ground the metaphysical elements of the

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 27.

¹⁷² Ibid, 27.

ontology-method beyond logical contradiction: we are presented with a monism-that-is-one with two qualitative aspects. On the one hand, this seemingly contradictory position is secured by the prospective illusion being more concerned with tendencies in becoming such that the perspectival projection it engages in is comported towards future actualization. We do not need to read some aspect backwards against its own non-existence such that we sneak concepts like nothing into becoming and find more in nonbeing than in being. On the other hand, this feint may not accomplish the work it attempts: there is a sense in which these “conditions of real experience” are tailor made to the object: “...it is a concept modeled on the thing itself, which suits that thing, and which, in this sense, is no broader than what it must account for.”¹⁷³

Immanence strains at the notion of the virtual as “primordial totality” because we must question how open and closed systems can participate in the same whole given their different temporal rhythms or viscosities. How can a sense of the virtual-as-Absolute not relapse into the problems besetting retrospective universals; how is it not larger than the local-conditioned-in-itself? This question is intractable when adhering closely to Bergson’s writings: “Bergson’s texts seem to vary considerably on this point.”¹⁷⁴ At times, the virtual appears local, while at others as a universal Absolute, metric and determinant though a multiplicity, won through a differently comported logic at others.

We will explore the detailed ontological arguments as to which construal of the virtual – localized plural time or universal Absolute time – ends up making the most sense and along what criteria sense should be made, but, for now, we should note an argumentative device lurking beneath the high-flying metaphysics. We can be more certain about the condition by tracking out systematic isomorphy or analogous distributions of difference across adjunct fields in human

¹⁷³ Ibid, 28.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 76.

experience beyond the phenomenological. Put differently, that we find analogous distributions of differences in systems like the *progress of evolution* or the *history of mathematics* to the construction of the virtual-actual in thought indicates that they emerge from the same monistic system. In fact, this analogy through systematic isomorphy is suggested quite early in *Bergsonism*: "...the very notion of the problem has its roots beyond history, in life itself or in the *élan vital*: Life is essentially determined in the act of avoiding obstacles, stating and solving a problem."¹⁷⁵ Stated even more directly, Deleuze explicitly justifies the recursive circularity in terms of systems theory when he discusses Bergson's analysis of finalism and mechanism: "...there is a proof of finality to the extent that we discover similar actualizations, identical structures or apparatuses on divergent lines (for example, the eye in the Mollusk and in the Vertebrate)."¹⁷⁶ These virtual problematics that we intuit within the horizon of duration are not universal conditions that arise out of nothing: they are, at the least, localized to different ramifications of becoming itself and, at the most, indicate an absolute or totality that can be logically and empirically justified for Deleuze's Bergson. Just as philosophers intuit a generative problematic and examine its consequences or solutions by matching it to its conditions, the progress of organic life can itself be considered as engaging in an analogous process via systematic isomorphy. Philosophical methodology and ontology once more blend even as they proliferate horizontally: intuition as "method of division" functions in an isomorphic fashion to life's ramified proliferation into ever more forms in reaction to environmental factors. Where transcendental reasoning within the retrospective illusion posits anterior conditions for possible existence universalized from a singular case, the prospective illusion in Bergson starts with "real

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 16.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 105.

experience” and applies itself as a “method of division” to find “natural articulations” that ramify forwards towards actualization..

The preceding attempts to get some of the thornier ontological and epistemological questions out of the way without wading even more deeply into the associated philosophical literatures will become necessary of Bergson’s intuitive method. What I want to suggest here is that we move instead into a discussion over the general movements a human might attempt, and only then, to return to further examination of the methodology’s ontology and a resulting argumentative formalization. As Deleuze follows this path, an action focus generates the following methodological determinations: “Bergson distinguishes between essentially three distinct sorts of acts that in turn determine the rules of the method: The first concerns the stating and creating of problems; the second, the discovery of genuine differences in kind; the third, the apprehension of real time.”¹⁷⁷ The first step is distinctly critical: “the stating and creating of problems” deals as much with the critique of “false problems” found in the philosophic *doxa* of one’s time as it does with “the creative upsurge of true ones” or a kind of naïve encounter with the sufficient conditions of Being in experience purified by intuition.¹⁷⁸

The special status of problems already evokes the ontological assumptions of the Prospective Illusion as it manifests in both Bergson and Deleuze’s broader oeuvre. I suggested earlier the analogy to biology, in which “the construction of the organism is both the stating of a problem and a solution,”¹⁷⁹ but we have not yet noticed how starting with sufficiency alters the relationship of problem and solution. For Deleuze: “... stating the problem is not simply uncovering it is inventing... Already in mathematics, and still more in metaphysics, the effort of

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 14.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 15.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 16.

invention consists most often in raising the problem, in creating the terms in which it will be stated.”¹⁸⁰ The analogy to mathematics will, at times, function as far more than an analogy because, in the analysis of the relationship between Riemann and Bergson, mathematics will perfectly, formally, and virtually account for the tendencies in becoming in a way that, given how many maths work, preserves the LNC at the level of becoming.

Mathematics is the paradigm case of ontology for one of many Deleuzes and he exhibits this tendency already in *Bergsonism*. Deleuze’s rendition of mathematical Platonism should give rhetoricians interested in this philosophical lineage pause, because the degree to which it escapes problems of essentialism by substituting event for essence are highly suspect. For now, it is enough to note that this relationship between intuitive methodology and mathematics produces the following conclusion: “...it is the solution that counts, but the problem always has the solution it deserves, in terms of the way in which it is stated...and of the means and terms at our disposal for stating it.”¹⁸¹ This construal of the relationship between problem and solution is one iteration of the prospective illusion in its distilled form. Solutions or the actualization of a virtual problematic, at this point in Deleuze’s work, do not do what he will later call counter-actualization or evoke a defensible account of virtual being as such. A deterministic relationship exists between the construal of problem and its solution, as in mathematics: once the problem has been matched against its conditions or the organism against its environment the solution necessarily follows. Inventiveness, creation, and privilege are on the side of ramifying potentiality through self-differencing, not on materiality that emerges as nearly bare repetition. The prospective illusion displaces the chain of logical necessity from an anterior position,

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 15.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 16.

leading back to the possible conditions of all being to a starting place whose solutions radiate out along a logically determined path towards the future.

The two kinds of “false problems” temper the next step of the method: to “rediscover the true differences in kind or articulations of the real.”¹⁸² The two false problems fundamental to the orientation of the retrospective illusion prevent us from finding these genuine qualitative differences in the second step. The two kinds of false problem are “‘nonexistent problems,’ defined as problems whose very terms contain a confusion of the ‘more’ and the ‘less’; and ‘badly stated’ questions, so defined because their terms represent badly analyzed composites.”¹⁸³ The first kind of “badly stated problem” corresponds closely to the analysis of being and nonbeing in the section on the retrospective illusion in Jankèlèvich outlined previously. Deleuze states it concisely: “We mistake the more for the less, we behave as though nonbeing existed before being, disorder before order and the possible before existence.”¹⁸⁴ This “kind of badly stated problem” takes a human thing, like the signifier *nothing* that simply symbolizes the *absence of something*, and projects it back as an anterior cause despite the fact nothing has been demonstrated to lack empirical being.

Of course, at this point, it should be clear that zero’s use in mathematics is perfectly fine inasmuch as the structure of mathematics can be said to inhere at the level of the virtual. Deleuze’s formulation pushes back against Priest’s dialetheism: the projection of the thing-not-the-thing at the level of the Absolute is only necessitated by a kind of problematic transcendental illusion in which all things must have a necessary condition instead of serve as a sufficient starting point for an analysis of the ramifications of real becoming.

¹⁸² Ibid, 21. Italics removed.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 17. Italics removed.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 18.

The second “kind of badly stated problem” is more particular to Deleuze’s reading of Bergson: “This time it is a case of badly analyzed composites that arbitrarily group things that *differ in kind*... If the terms do not correspond to ‘natural articulations’ then the problem is false for it does not affect ‘the very nature of things.’”¹⁸⁵ For Deleuze, this kind of false problem is the ground of the first kind of false problem because when we do not think difference in terms of quality, we think it in terms of quantitative intensity.¹⁸⁶ Things end up defined in terms of their superiority or inferiority along some unrelated quantitative gradient that invariably privileges one side over the other such that real differences in quality are erased. Being end up tractable only when conceived against some universal metric, where the most intense beings on this metric are more real than others and their emergence as the most real must derive from the possibility of their own nonexistence. Of course, the insistence upon an Absolute virtual theorized as a set of the potential of all potentials would appear to exhibit this exact problem without the immanence + monism conceit. However, the fundamental form tracks in a critical vein against the retrospective illusion: treating becomings in terms of their “natural articulations” as positive markers of difference instead of making a metric under some human category presents a useful alternative in a philosophical methodology that wants a closer relationship to empirical science.

The formulation Deleuze pushes against of this problem of problems relies upon a faulty use of negation as argumentative warrant such that we could define, for example, perception as the negation of memory or memory as the negation of perception. A quantitative gradient is stipulated based on the privileged superior term in a dichotomy and then its opposite is viewed as the negation of the quality in question instead of as its own kind. This is the basic shape of Deleuze’s critique of Hegelian dialectic, one he largely draws from Bergson, phrased in a

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 18.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 20.

hilarious punchy fashion: “negation is not added to *what it* denies, but only indicates a weakness in *the person who denies*.”¹⁸⁷ What the intuitive identification of “natural articulations” facilitates in terms of critique of older philosophical methodologies “is thus a double one insofar as it condemns, in both forms of the negative, the same ignorance of *differences in kind*, which are sometimes treated as ‘deteriorations,’ sometimes as oppositions.”¹⁸⁸ The opposition noted in general terms between perception and memory functions as contradiction through negation: memory is only ever an inferior perception and perception only ever an inferior memory when one term is taken as the quantitative metric for both. The dialectic provides us with contradiction through negation whether it strictly matches a thing upon a zero-negative or a quantized quality gradient. The retrospective illusion forces this problematic even further: the quantized quality is simply not read into what qualities, objects, values, and so on that it appears to relate to at an intuitive level, but pushed, through the domain principle’s tendency towards conceptual totality or the Absolute, as the quality that founds an universal metric. All being/s are then arrayed on a universal gradient according to their proximity to the pure category in a great hierarchical chain of Being.

For Deleuze’s Bergson: “There are differences in being and yet nothing negative.”¹⁸⁹ The proper construal of problem to conditions attempts to facilitate a kind of contradiction that results in the division of potentialities, not possibilities. Bergson’s famous dualisms attempt to ground the “experience [that] offers us nothing but composites” by “[dividing it] into tendencies or into pure presences that only exist *in principle (en droit)*.”¹⁹⁰ Purity cannot obtain at the messy level of empirical being, but can be discerned through intuition at the level of becoming: “Only that

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 19. Italics in original.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 46.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 46.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 23. Italics in original.

which differs in kind can be said to be pure, but only *tendencies* differ in kind.”¹⁹¹ This move marks the fundamental feature and significant difference between Bergson’s work and most of that which came before: we shift the ontological orientation of philosophical methodology from being to becoming, from object to process, and different results can obtain. For Bergson in our terms, this means that the LNC and the LEM are intractable at the level of empirical being such that becoming accessed through intuition becomes the register in which clear and distinct ideas can be construed as logical conditions of an empirically nonlogical being.

While this method shares “some resemblance...as method of division [with] transcendental analysis...”, Deleuze argues that the methodology exceeds mere modelling: “We go beyond experience toward the conditions of experience (but these are not, in the Kantian manner, the conditions of all possible experience: they are the conditions of real experience).”¹⁹² This is a strikingly strong claim and one that appears to contradict the image of Deleuze as an anarchic philosopher of flux, change, and the demolition of Absolutes. I do not understand how one who believes that “...the Absolute has two ‘halves,’ to which science and metaphysics correspond...” and that “...[science] demands a metaphysics...” could be so certain they have found the real metaphysical basis for reality itself.¹⁹³ Deleuze will also argue as rigorously that his construal of the Virtual-Actual split, that deals with the problem in Bergson in which he marginalizes the virtual capacity of spatiality, provides the real conditions of not only experience but empirical reality itself beyond a mere modelling function. But to any skeptic, and to any rhetorician, these proclamations will always seem suspect.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 22. Italics in original.

¹⁹² Ibid, 23.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 116.

Deleuze seems to realize the presumptuousness of the project, and even notes in *Bergsonism*: “To continue Bergson’s project today, means for example to constitute a metaphysical image of thought corresponding to the new lines, openings, traces, leaps, dynamisms discovered by a molecular biology of the brain...”¹⁹⁴ We may even construct a parallel sentence to Deleuze’s work: “To continue Deleuze’s project today means reworking it with attention given to bioelectric feedback studies, epigenetics, category theory’s ascendancy over set theory, fractal topology, nonlinear dynamics in systems theory, and so on.” A concession lurks here: until science hits a deductively certain unified theory of everything, metaphysics will be just that, plural and on the same infinite progress as science with the same standards of falsification.

Several argumentative warrants underlie the jump to *tendency* in the method. Deleuze writes: “Bergson, thus, sometimes speaks of a movement that is exactly appropriate to the experience, sometimes a broadening out, sometimes a tightening and narrowing. For, in the first place, the determination of each ‘line’ involves a sort of contradiction in which diverse facts are grouped according to their natural affinities...”¹⁹⁵ Here we have, once again, the merger of methodology and ontology such that the human doing intuition is a microcosm of universal duration itself, but for now let the metaphysical-cosmological problematics take a back seat. What is the argumentative process upon which the intuitive division of “messy aggregates” depends? The movement to find qualitative differences in “natural articulations” depends on mobilizing higher order vagueness, by pressing towards a perspectival point, a kind of fantasy of perfect precision that allows logic a fantastic background, oriented towards the future until sufficiently differentiated characteristics obtain before turning them outwards as limit statements

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 117.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 27.

that are the logical conditions of becoming. The prospective illusion reverses the retrospective illusion. Put differently, the retrospective illusion presses down on vagueness through a perspectival point that resolves with difference in identity through the LNC or LEM and accounts for this difference through transcendental reasoning to determine an anterior primary cause; the prospective illusion presses down on vagueness to account for difference but finds the singular differences thought as tendencies that ramify outwards towards a future formal finality that never obtains. Deleuze describes the process with regards to the perception and memory dualism: "...we push each line beyond the turn, to the point where it goes beyond our own experience: an extraordinary broadening out that forces us to think a pure perception identical to the whole of matter, a pure memory identical to the totality of the past."¹⁹⁶ For these force vectors in thought to take form, the messy aggregate must be pushed out in divergent fashion to a state of contradiction in becoming: "...the determination of each 'line' involves a sort of contradiction..."¹⁹⁷ In Deleuzian terms: this is the point at which a quantitative gradient can no longer explain differences in kind.

We can consider this process of pushing out into "a sort of contradiction" as strictly analogous to the borderline case problem in "The Inclosure Paradox" with regards to higher order vagueness. As one starts to enumerate differences, these differences in turn produce more differences as their borderlines become more precise through some mode of determination, conceptual or experimental. What Deleuze's Bergson does, then, to forestall infinite regress at the level of being is to shift the determination of "the natural articulations" into becoming through a series of perspectival projections such that the LNC and the LEM hold. The pure concept that is the localized enunciation of the Absolute virtual is the condition of the messy

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

actual aggregate that it conditions: the virtual-ideal is strictly separable from the actual-material through the Law of Noncontradiction and the dualistic and local tendencies of any given messy aggregate are strictly separable through the Law of the Excluded middle when thought through becoming.

Yet, the second step in the methodology has a second half. The broadening out towards a conceptual limit statement articulated as “tendencies in their purity” may provide the “sufficient reason of the thing” but the divergent dualistic series must “converge again to give us this time the virtual image or the distinct reason of the common point.”¹⁹⁸ This second part of the second step is confusing because it refers more closely to Deleuze’s own imposition of the fourth moment of his Bergson’s methodology, the moment when Bergson’s prospective tendency snaps back into a retrospective illusion that posits duration as temporal Absolute. The reason for this move, at this point in the text, is as follows: “Dualism is therefore only a moment, which must lead to the re-formation of a monism.”¹⁹⁹ I find it unclear whether there is argumentative necessity on the side of the sufficient chains of reason brooking out into a potential infinity or if the necessity rebounds back into the ontological: monism plus immanence is what guarantees our access so therefore we have to knit divergent series back into, at the least, a local virtual or, at the most, a universal virtual. Deleuze’s argument, at this point, is tentative; He will spend the end of *Bergsonism* fleshing it out and we will return to it more closely when we analyze that part of the text.

Immediately after the passage quoted above Deleuze goes with a math metaphor in regards to making the series converge upon a virtual point: “just as integration follows

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 28-29.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 29.

differentiation.”²⁰⁰ The remarks on the divergent series’ relationship to math helps here:

“...infinitesimal calculus: When we have benefitted in experience from a little light which shows us a line of articulation, all that remains is to extend it beyond experience – just as mathematicians reconstitute, with infinitely small elements that they perceive of the real curve, ‘the curve itself stretching out into the darkness behind them.’”²⁰¹ Or at least, the remarks appear to help. Deleuze notes in the footnote for this passage that “Bergson often seems to criticize the infinitesimal analysis...” but follows this remark with “But more profoundly, Bergson requires that metaphysics...carry out a revolution which is *analogous* to that of calculus in science... in order to ‘carry out qualitative differentiations and integrations’: CM, 216-217.”²⁰² On the one hand, Bergson appears to be against mathematical Platonism because the relationship between the calculus and his method is merely “analogous.” Deleuze will, of course, attempt to rescue this construal of the relationship between Bergson and Math by arranging Bergson’s insights alongside those of Riemann.²⁰³ On the other hand, the contours of this analogy’s diffractive pattern of like and unlike are still unclear to me because there are multiple modes of integration and the “the curve stretching out into the darkness,” while an appealing metaphor, does not tell us whether we deal with definite or indefinite integration or an even higher mode of math. Functions come in family groups: do we re-constitute a specific curve with its differentiations and when do we know when to stop integrating? The metaphor leads us back into the question about localized versus Absolute virtuality and the perspectival projection: until we have differentiated down into linear functions or constants, any given curve could be our starting place or a differentiation or an integration.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 29.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 27 citing Bergson, *Matter and Memory* 1986, 185.

²⁰² Ibid, 121.

²⁰³ Duffy, *Deleuze and the History of Mathematics*, 89.

Deleuze may be referring to the process of the Taylor power series expansion: “In general, the power series converges with a function by generating a continuous branch of a curve in the neighborhood of a singular point. To the extent that all of the regular points are continuous across all of the different branches generated by the power series of the singular points, the entire complex curve or the whole analytic function is generated.”²⁰⁴ I must be candid: I never made it to calculus 2 so my capacity to actually do power series analysis and transformations between them tests the limit of what could be considered even remotely competent. Let us attempt to keep it simple out of necessity and hope that this simplicity does not present a *reductor ad absurdum* in its relative ignorance. A curve represents the real logical conditions of being that the method pushes towards as it anneals some messy aggregate towards purity by drilling down towards a point through successive differentiations or making a concept precise on a chain that tends towards infinity. When Bergson does this thing in *Matter and Memory*, we can see a series develop starting with the perception / recollection aggregate, such that perception forms a series involving qualitative differentiations into parts of perception, such as body, habit, the cerebral interval, affect, and so on. The disanalogy between Bergson’s method and Taylor series emerges at how an analysis terminates. Taylor series use mathematics to create an infinite series whose limit statement is the equation of the original curve; Bergson’s method does not have the deductive certainty of mathematics. As different qualities in the series are determined, a conceptual cut off must still be made to prevent regress. To use Priest’s language, a domain must be posited because there are not mathematical rules for bounding qualitative series through strong deductive reasoning. Ratios between numbers and ratios or rational connections between qualities do not function in exactly the same way unless you are willing to argue that your

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 21.

metaphysical Absolute *actually is* reality. We will see Bergson and Deleuze make exactly this argument to assure the metaphysical weight of their analysis beyond speculation through logic in the open system of the world.

An astute reader should notice that this qualitative series does not extend to infinity nor the totality of potential terms and, thus, the analogy between an infinite quantitative series and a finite qualitative series strains Deleuze's metaphor. Does such a method really constitute a "superior empiricism"²⁰⁵ or does it recapitulate Platonic problems only in another register? One might think that we could still cast this step of the prospective illusion as providing an approximation of some inaccessible real curve or, at the least, a useful model that has no reference to essence as event or pure tendency, but that is not how Deleuze thinks about it: this procedure gives us "the real conditions of experience."

The final portion of the second part of the second step further complicates the issue, begging the question of interpretive differences; that is, in how we might interpret the material Deleuze marshals in support of the integration via power series as either simply metaphorical or something more. Deleuze marshals three examples from Bergson's oeuvre: aphasia in *Matter and Memory*, memory's intersection with mysticism in *Morality and Religion*, and a trinary line that converges in *The Creative Mind*.²⁰⁶ The content of these examples can be read to comply generally with the chiasmatic form given to matter and memory above: because pure perception would be dead matter and pure memory a dream, we have perception – memory and memory – perception. The problem arises with what precisely Deleuze means by "a superior probabilism": "It should be noted that this method of intersection forms a genuine probabilism: Each line defines a probability... in the intersection of the real to which they proceed, they now define a

²⁰⁵ Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 30.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 29-30.

superior probabilism, one capable of solving problems and of bringing the condition back to the conditioned so that no distance remains between them.”²⁰⁷

And yet the texts Deleuze marshals that mention “lines of fact” and probabilism do not necessarily support this reading. Deleuze pins the pertinent passages of “Life and Consciousness” to pages six, seven, and thirty-five in the English translation and, it must be confessed, perhaps in speaking French Deleuze here sees something I don’t.²⁰⁸ Bergson here sets out to differentiate his methodology from that of the systematic metaphysician: “But it seems to me that in different regions of experience there are different groups of facts, each of which, without giving us the desired knowledge, points out to us the direction in which we may find it.”²⁰⁹ True to the first two steps of the method, according to Deleuze, we start with experience and push it through purity in tendency towards “one and the same point, and it is that point that we are seeking.”²¹⁰

The discrepancy between Deleuze’s account emerges with his degree of certainty regarding this point. For Bergson, “Each [line of fact], taken apart, will lead us only to a conclusion which is simply probable; but taking them all together, they will, by their convergence, bring before us such an accumulation of probabilities that we shall feel on the road to certitude.”²¹¹ Interestingly, the match up of these directions functions analogically here: “Reasoning by analogy never gives us more than a probability; yet there are numerous cases in which that probability is so high that it amounts to a practical certainty.”²¹²

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 30.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 122.

²⁰⁹ Henri Bergson, “Life and Consciousness” in *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*, 6.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 6-7.

²¹¹ Ibid, 7.

²¹² Ibid, 9-10. Bergson once more uses “practically equivalent to certainty” at 248 of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

A rhetorician cannot help but see a similarity with the Aristotelian mode of truth as probable knowledge: the certainty is not absolute in the guise of knowledge but “practical” in the sense of probability. We are certainly distant from demonstratable knowledge figured as mathematics at two different places. Bergson argues that this method functions “hypothetically” and that “for my part...no principle from which the solution of the great problems can be mathematically deduced”²¹³ and “But let us not insist that the evidence shall be complete, precise and mathematical: if we do, we shall get nothing.”²¹⁴ I fail to see how “we shall *feel* on the road to certitude,”²¹⁵ “practical certainty,”²¹⁶ or either section on the method’s relationship to math equate to “a superior probabilism” that eliminates the distance between condition and conditioned in line with Power series expansions as more than metaphor.

The passage Deleuze could be noting on page thirty-five does not help his case but further confuses the issue, because here Bergson discusses the potential of life after death. Because mind already overflows the bounds of matter, “...that preservation and even intensification of personality are not only possible but even probable after the disintegration of the body...”²¹⁷ But Bergson immediately walks back this suggestion: “I admit this is no more than a hypothesis. We were just now in the region of the probable, this is the region of the simply possible.”²¹⁸ Why Deleuze finds support for “superior probabilism” in a passage speculating about the potential of life after death is elusive, but the naturalistic and speculative notes found in the English translation are not. The role of hypothesis in both pages emerges clearly: “philosophy...progresses like a positive science.”²¹⁹ In this text, Bergson appears to intimate that

²¹³ Ibid, 6-7.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 9.

²¹⁵ Ibid, italics mine.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 10 and Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 248.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 35.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 7.

the kind of qualitative probabilism he advocates resides at a theoretical and falsifiable level in line with naturalistic values, not one that proclaims the convergence of its “lines of facts” as demonstrating the merger of condition and conditioned along a logic of immanence.

These different “lines of fact” from Bergson suggest two different ways of reading his philosophical methodology and a certain skepticism towards Deleuze’s articulation of it. Bergson appears to leave open a line of inquiry that could develop into modes of probabilistic, at the most, and paraconsistent, at the least, modes of philosophical warrants that facilitate a messier materialist ontology and even one that might be friendly to the rhetorical tradition, given the methods analogic inflection at pages nine and ten of “Life and Consciousness.” Perhaps there is a sense in which tendencies purified through successive determinations conceived as differentiations may be capable of expression in terms of analogic relations between the tendencies, assertions of their real but ideal tendential limits. The “virtual point” any number of “lines of fact” converge back into becomes a provisional model as potentially infinite with no absolute domain, in a sense, and as messy as the empirical aggregate we began with. Deleuze’s own position, at least as read out of *Difference and Repetition* and *The Fold*, that philosophy conceived of as mathematics does not approximate the logical conditions of being but delivers their reality such that a sub- or super-stratum of inaccessible idea-events remain that can only be mapped through their effects.

The third rule in the methodology will take this Deleuze’s perspective fully, albeit without his vindication of space within virtuality, and, perhaps unsurprisingly for a Platonist, inject the methodology and ontology with notions of purity and hierarchy. This third rule appears simple but its consequences are complex and its logical necessity questionable: “State problems

and solve them in terms of time rather than of space.”²²⁰ For Deleuze’s Bergson, “the principle division [is] between duration and space...” and this division places all qualitative-intensive, both internal and external, change on the side of duration and all quantitative-extensive change on the side of space.²²¹ A kind of virtual-point as Absolute is thus stipulated in the hierarchical contradiction between time and space.

Visualizing the prospective illusion is significantly more complicated than mapping the retrospective illusion, but consider the ontological problems with this argumentative structure:

The Prospective Illusion.

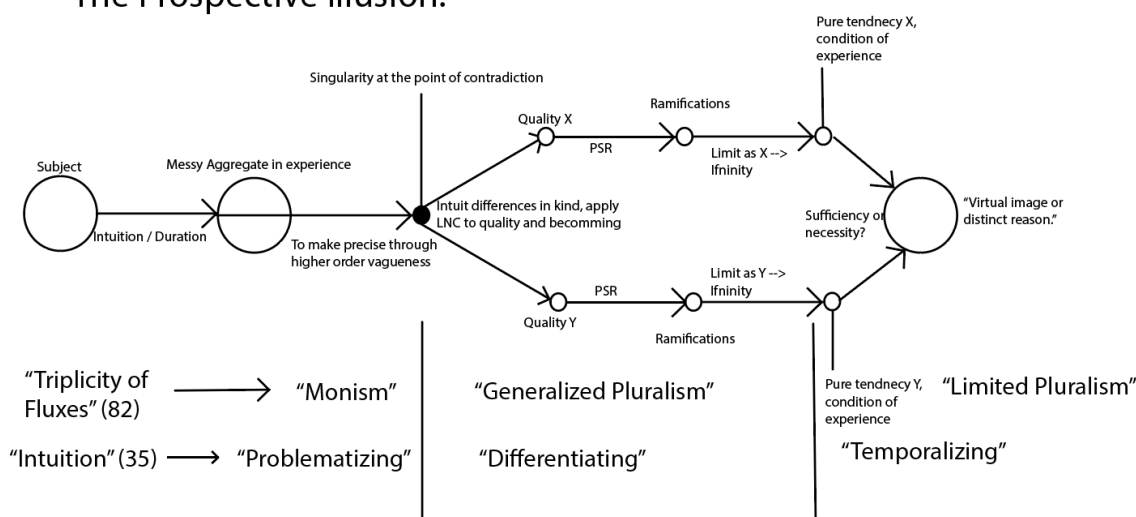


Figure 7. Produced by author.

It is useful as well to supplement this form with Deleuze’s summary of *Matter and Memory*:

²²⁰ Ibid, 31.

²²¹ Ibid.

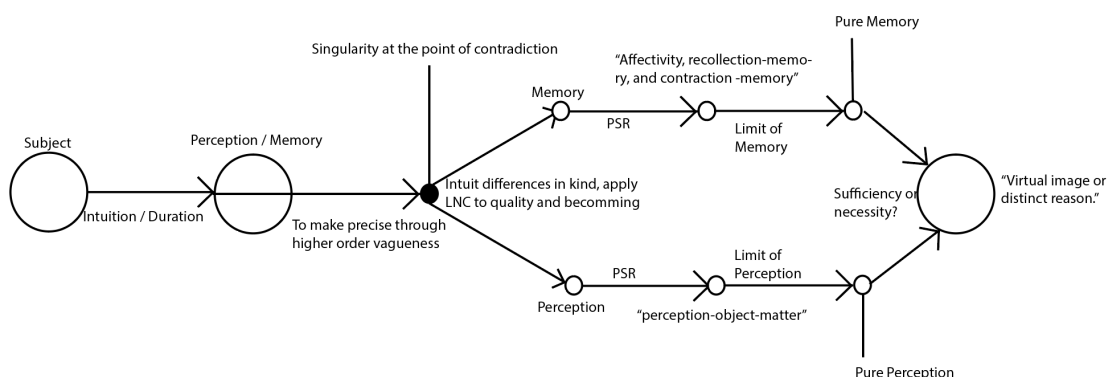


Figure 8. Produced by author.

The Prospective Illusion's Problems

Deleuze's claims that he presents a kind of "reversal of Platonism" through his historical reconstructions and primary body of work give me pause, and parallel Hannah Arendt's reservations about Nietzsche's similar claims:

The quest for meaning, which relentlessly dissolves and examines anew all accepted doctrines and rules, can at any moment turn against itself, produce a reversal of the old values, and declare these contraries to be "new values." To a certain extent, this is what Nietzsche did when he reversed Platonism, forgetting that a reversed Plato is still Plato, or what Marx did when he turned Hegel upside down, producing a strictly Hegelian system of history in the process... All critical examinations must go through a stage of at least hypothetically negating accepted opinions and "values" by searching out their implications and tacit assumptions...²²²

²²² Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 176.

Arendt perfectly expresses my own anxieties about philosophers who claim that they have exceeded the dominant forces that shaped their development as philosophers. Such grandiose claims tend to obscure genetic strands left unenumerated, such as the odd recurrence of formal and final causality in much of Western thought or the tacit reliance upon the LNC and LEM in continental philosophy. And Arendt also leads me to question what could truly constitute a “reversal of Platonism.” Can a Western philosopher trained in Western philosophy truly escape the shadow cast by one of the most strident divorce lawyers for the marriage between truth and experience? Arendt is correct: choosing the other side of the Platonic division maintains Platonic form, purity, and hierarchy.

I do not think I can construct an alternative to Platonism here. I will try by supplementing Deleuze and DeLanda’s slightly different notions of transcendental empiricism with a naturalistic orientation that attempts to fully strip metaphysics from these systems. They maintain essence, purity, and hierarchy through the Law of Noncontradiction. But this occurs at the level of multiplicity or one-whole, instead of singular substance, such that the self-differencing difference is the Absolute with its two guises of the virtual-intensive-qualitative and the actual-extensive-quantitative, and where the virtual as Absolute is the final determinant of the actual in the final case. Have we truly overturned Plato if the ideal-virtual member of the pairing maintains causal efficacy and essence over the material-actual?

The prospective illusion snaps back into retrospective the instant we cast a closed domain, a “primordial totality,” or an Absolute over its potentially infinite ramifications analyzable in experience through provisional sufficient reasoning. The notion of an upper bound on being that counts as substance and requires a metaphysics ultimately resulting in logical

necessity instead of empirical sufficiency must be dealt with to demonstrate the problems of totality at the highest level and, by implication, the theory world as well.

Make no mistake: Deleuze should be vaunted as the thinker who poses the problematics and notion of the problematic necessary to philosophy's development to critique in the first place. However, his project strains the limits of being any kind of materialist or empiricist conceived from a naturalistic perspective because of how his own "reversal of Platonism" can be read to maintain the Virtual as an Absolute. This passage in *Logic of Sense* strikes me as particularly apt to contour the shape of this problem: "Events are ideal...The distinction is between event and accident. Events are ideational singularities which communicate in one and the same Event. They therefore have an eternal truth...Events are the only idealities. *To reverse Platonism is first and foremost to remove essences and to substitute events in their place, as jets of singularities.*"²²³ These events have determinant causal efficacy parallel to that of the construal of problem and conditions from which solutions necessarily derive: "...the singularities preside over the genesis of the solutions of the equation."²²⁴ In other texts, Deleuze iterates this construal of becoming in different ways: the ideal-event's singularities becomes iterated through the virtual in *Difference and Repetition*, the Body without Organs in *Anti-Oedipus*, the cosmic plane of consistency in *Thousand Plateaus*, and of course the at times porous and at times fabric like pleats in being in *The Fold*. These iterations inflect the concept differently as they ramify it out into different modalities, but I see the same tendency towards purity and hierarchy insists through its elaborations.

This structure is most clearly on display in *Bergsonism*. Deleuze's "reversal of Platonism" upends the hierarchy, with Platonism privileging the eternal object in the eternal to

²²³ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 53. Italics mine.

²²⁴ Ibid, 54.

privileging flux, figured as the event generated when singularities generate the conditions for problematics whose generative potentiality fades as they tend towards the actual and causally inert matter. One truly wonders just how far away we are from Plato when these events have “eternal truth” and just how far Deleuze breaks with Aristotle. We still have hierarchy between “events and accidents” that skews causal efficacy towards the incorporeal event that parallels thought’s determinations, just like Aristotle’s formal and final causality as the thought-world determinants of material causality. The singular generates the ordinary, the event its accidents.

Could it be that the same classical warrants, the LNC and LEM, feature prominently in maintaining and martialing conceptual purity in reality, by making the truth condition of a thing depend upon logic and not measurement? The moments where Deleuze invokes Plato in *Bergsonism* and the rationale combined with its consequences for the third step of the method must be put under a microscope given that “to reverse Plato” does not mean what many, except perhaps Alain Badiou and Manuel DeLanda, believe it means.

Meanwhile, the fourth step of the method shows that we are not really reversing Platonism at all, only shifting its ontological register from being to becoming. The following outlines the consequences and considerations of Deleuze’s fourth step, which he reads into Bergson.

Naivety vs. Critical Philosophy

To what extent can a naïve intuition be said to break with the philosophic *doxa* of the day, given that a philosopher typically learns before they think to be naïve in the first place? A disconnect arises between ontology and methodology in *Bergsonism* when we add the expression of philosophy to our considerations. Bergson critiques dualisms made of aggregations of past thought, such as idealism vs realism, as frequently as he pushes forward through naïve intuition

the sufficient ramifications of dualisms like matter and memory to provide for a genesis of quality.

Bergson argues: “In order to have the new understood, it must be expressed in terms of the old; and the problems already stated, the solutions provided, the philosophy and science of the times in which he lived...But it would be a strange mistake to take for a constitutive element of doctrine what was only the means of expressing it.”²²⁵ Bergson here portrays the frequently critical bent of his philosophy as one of necessity in which expression and the spatializing tendencies of writing cramp philosophy’s truth. One page later, Bergson compares philosophy to an organism or evolutionary process and then says: “A philosopher worthy of the name has never said more than a single thing: and even then it is something he has tried to say, rather than actually said.”²²⁶ These positions recapitulate the Platonic critique of language’s relationship to philosophic truth across several texts: thought loses some of its truth value or its quality as intensity through expression in the imperfect medium of language in the act of speech or writing. This structure has isomorphy with Deleuze’s Bergson’s take on matter: speech is the comparatively dead extensive actualization of intensive thought.

This problem has more than simply a rhetorical valence: the question here cuts to that between the relative speed of intensities between matter and life-force. Bergson makes an analogy between thought’s relationship to words and life’s relationship to inert materials: “Just in this way does matter distinguish, separate, resolve into individualities, and finally into personalities, tendencies before confused in the original impulse of life.”²²⁷ Bergson maintains the matter // idea dichotomy here in an extremely Aristotelian vein: matter’s resistance to thought

²²⁵ Bergson, “Philosophical Intuition” in *Key Writings*, 288.

²²⁶ Ibid, 289.

²²⁷ Bergson, “Life and Consciousness” in *Mind-Energy*, 28.

is generative as the foil of thought's manifestation in the virtual as final telos enforced through the twin formal structures of qualitative and quantitative multiplicity. And we fully encounter the Aristotelianism he continues the analogy's entailments by intersecting matter and art, a favorite example of Aristotle himself: "By the resistance matter offers...[it] is at one and the same time, obstacle, instrument and stimulus."²²⁸

Yet, a discrepancy arises between different parts of "Life and Consciousness" with itself and with "Philosophical Intuition." From a different part of "Life and Consciousness:" "Thought is a continuity, and in all continuity there is confusion. For a thought to become distinct, there must be dispersion in words."²²⁹ This "dispersion in words" does not inhibit expression, it intensifies it: "The effort is toilsome, but also it is precious, more precious even than the work which it produces, because, thanks to it, one has drawn out from the self *more* than it had already, we are raised above ourselves."²³⁰ Here, the difficulties of expression do not inhibit or sully the genesis of philosophical truth; the spatializing process of expression can be generative beyond the self of the philosopher and, I argue, the concept itself. The transduction of one intensity to another multiplies the zones of indetermination that, far from diminishing meaning, function as a methodology or, perhaps, artistic pursuit that generates more and more complex meanings. This cycle continues when a philosopher engages critically with their predecessors: the written text counteractualizes back into a person's thoughts. It seems to me more plausible that actualization and virtualization, virtualization and actualization, condition and conditioned, are a perspectival chicken and egg type game. The relationship between expression and thought

²²⁸ Ibid, 29.

²²⁹ Ibid, 28.

²³⁰ Ibid, 29. Italics added.

prefigure more complex iterations as we scale up into philosophical analysis through necessary logic and sufficient intuition.

Deleuze's Bergson and Platonic Resonances.

Cataloguing the references to Plato in Deleuze's *Bergsonism* provides an understanding of the hierarchy of time over space at play in Deleuze's Bergson and presages the parallel priority of the virtual over the actual in Deleuze and DeLanda's materialist rendering of him. This analysis serves to explicate that the foundational works of Deleuzian New Materialism are less grounded in empiricism than we might think because they maintain the Platonic split between appearance and reality even as they reverse his hierarchy that prioritizes eternal static forms over fluid accidents in the world of becoming. These references emerge piecemeal from the text, so I have catalogued and explicate each in turn.

1. "Intuition as method is a method of division, Platonic in Inspiration."²³¹ Methodologically, this line references the division of messy aggregates into qualitative tendencies that branch out towards a conceptual limit or pure state. I believe that this line foreshadows Deleuze's addition of the fourth step of the method in *Bergsonism*, in which the sufficiently differentiated qualitative tendencies are integrated into a virtual whole signified by Duration and serve as a necessary Absolute for generating a new series.
2. "When Plato formulated his method of division, he too intended to divide a composite into two halves, or along several lines. But the whole problem lay in knowing how to choose the right half..."²³² As is well known, Plato privileges the pure ideal plane of forms that humans access through dialectical philosophy through a process named *reminiscence*. We knew perfect things like equilateral triangles, pure equality, or the pure form or idea of a rock

²³¹ Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 22.

²³² Ibid, 32.

before we were born and, though philosophical dialectic in the Platonic mode, we access this knowledge as they are revealed through logical proofs. What Bergsonism offers is not a refutation of the ideal, but a re-working of which side of this formal divide we privilege by assigning the value of essence: “For by dividing the composite according to two tendencies, with only one showing the way in which a thing varies qualitatively in time, Bergson effectively gives himself the means of choosing the ‘right side’ in each case; that of the essence.”²³³ Temporal duration and qualitative elaboration are the essential side over spatiality and quantitative difference: Hierarchy based upon essential purity delimited through thought reverses the content of Plato’s hierarchy while maintaining its form.

3. “Once again there is a Platonic tone in Bergson. Plato was the first to deride those who said ‘the One is multiple and the multiple one – Being is nonbeing,’ etc. In each case he asked *how, how many, when and where...* Those metaphors of Plato about carving and the good cook...correspond to Bergson’s invocation of the good tailor...”²³⁴ We have here two things. The insistence that philosophical division in the Bergsonian mode does not produce abstract universals because it well fits its objects of analysis through “contradiction without negation” and the immanence + monism equals the return of the condition to the conditioned, even as it maintains their ontological separation at the level of the LNC.
4. “The point of contact between Bergson and Plato is in fact the search for a procedure capable of determining in each case the ‘measure,’ the ‘what’ or the ‘how many.’”²³⁵ While Plato believed a different mode of dialectic could get there, Bergson does not: “The dialectic passes by a true method of division, it can do nothing other than carve out the real according

²³³ Ibid, 32.

²³⁴ Ibid, 44-45.

²³⁵ Ibid, 124.

to articulations that are wholly formal or verbal.”²³⁶ On the one hand, the method made explicit in *Bergsonism* certainly exceeds what was even available to Plato and Aristotle in that the “lines of fact” through which it extends messy aggregates frequently begins with the scientific knowledge of Bergson’s day. Bergson does present us with a kind of empiricism that concerns itself with measuring. On the other hand, if the totality of all lines of fact leads Bergson to posit the virtual as a “primordial totality” have we really done anything other than locate the pure world of forms in a different but equally ideal or metaphysical and essentialist register? Immediately subsequent to the long comparison with Plato’s metaphors, Deleuze writes: “Duration is opposed to becoming precisely because it is a multiplicity...”²³⁷ Essence may become a complex structure, but the kind of process ontology frequently attributed to Deleuze’s Bergson resolves in a set of all sets situation. Deleuze’s Bergson presents a mode of ideal-potentiality that, once all the lines of fact converge, results in temporal duration as an essential and invisible condition, outside of its actualizations conditioned that occur in matter and neuter its generative force by reducing quality to quantity. Put differently, the “Platonic inspiration” leads to the positing of an anterior Absolute. We cannot measure the virtual through experience; we can only verify it with logical necessity. The dominance of final and formal causality has been maintained through the exact same argumentative warrants, the LNC and LEM because the condition must be separable from the conditioned in terms of space and time, out of which it was constructed in the first place.

5. This problem intensifies as Deleuze moves into noting the resonances between Plato in Bergson in the directly ontological chapters: “...Not only does the past coexist with the present that has been, but, as it preserves itself in itself (while the present passes), it is the

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid, 46.

whole, integral past; it is *all* our past, which coexists with each present.”²³⁸ This quote elaborates Duration as virtual or a temporal multiplicity as pure virtuality outside of the infinitesimal presents of successive becoming; the mode of duration outside and superior to becoming. Deleuze explicitly compares this to a difficult and, to a naturalist, absurd Platonic concept: “The only equivalent thesis is Plato’s notion of Reminiscence. The reminiscence also affirms a pure being of the past, a being in itself of the past, an ontological Memory that is capable of serving as the foundation for the unfolding of time. Yet again, a Platonic inspiration...”²³⁹ Recall that the Platonic theory of reminiscence argues that knowledge is the process of remembering the pure forms to which our immortal souls had access to before being actualized in imperfect material bodies. At this point, we must ask the question as to whether *Bergsonism* is accomplishing a reversal of Plato or is vindicating him. How did we move from a notion of present as temporal compression to a virtual that is outside of becoming in a realm of pure potentiality? How can there not be more in the concept of a total field of the past figured as potentiality in the guise of qualitative self-differencing than in the local durations and virtuals sketched out within local analyses of empirical things? This shift presents a bizarre moment in which the potentially infinite ramifications of the prospective illusion whiplash back into the positing of an Absolute domain through a kind of retrospective illusion, albeit without negation. Potentiality against potentiality is better than something against nothing in the register of the possible, but only by a margin if it strives to totalize becoming into a primordial totality as ideal multiplicity.

6. Finally, “...The coexistence of all the degrees, of all the levels is virtual, only virtual. The point of unification is itself virtual. This point is not without similarity to the One-Whole of

²³⁸ Ibid, 59.

²³⁹ Ibid, 59.

the Platonists. All the levels of expansion and contraction coexist in a single Time and form a totality; but this Whole, this One, are pure virtuality.”²⁴⁰ The One-Whole at times appears to follow from the LNC and LEM and at other times appears to depend on a different kind of argumentative warrant. The One-Whole relation expressed here maintains the LNC and LEM with a reversal of Aristotle’s solution to the Ship of Theseus Paradox: “This Whole has parts, this One has a number – but only potentially...”²⁴¹ and, with regards to the singularities that guide intensive differentiation, “...these points are themselves virtual...they form the potential parts of a Whole that is itself virtual.”²⁴² The priority has been reversed from antiquity. Aristotle starts with a substance and comports it towards the future: it is one actual substance now and exhibits a determinate set of qualities in the present. This identity and current qualities are a thing’s actuality, but it may potentially become another thing or exhibit other qualities in the *future*. For Deleuze’s Bergson, the monistic fabric of the virtual is one thing, the Absolute as two-faced multiplicity, that may potentially divide itself into an infinite number of actualities. The past-present messy aggregate is purified through the LNC at the level of multiplicity: there is one Absolute temporal multiplicity that is responsible for the emergence of quality and another spatial multiplicity that, as it neutralizes differences in intensive quality, produces the actual in its quantitative gradients across extensity. In this way, Deleuze’s Bergson maintains the LNC at the register of Being as Multiplicity instead of Being as Substance: there is nothing contradictory here because we are dealing with a multiplicity or set like structure in the register of potentiality and not a discrete object at the level of actuality. The temporal multiplicity is a one that is potentially many: it insists across

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 93.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid, 100.

a monistic fabric of past → present such that each actualization is one potential creation of an Absolute *past* that never dies. Once more, monism serves as the argumentative warrant to ward off the LEM: because we have made time a past → present there is no point like present to force quality into a state of contradiction. We have a truth glut in which all quality resides in a monistic temporal fabric; the point-dialetheia of the present has been logically exploded into an Absolute that does not tolerate contradiction through negation, but instead internalizes contradiction within quality as self-differentiating process. In these senses, Deleuze's Bergson maintains the form of the actual // potential split from Aristotle but does so by reversing its hierarchy from actuality to potentiality through the doubled argumentative warrant of monism + immanence.

To follow the argumentative flow of *Bergsonism* by tracking the Platonic references is to see a strange conceit or a flourishing sleight of hand within one of the foundational texts in new materialism. Deleuze's Bergson is not concerned with materiality at all but maintaining older ontological forms, despite reversing their hierarchy, by moving the register of metaphysical analysis from singular substances to multiplicity. The hierarchy in which the ideal determines the material from antiquity, the ideal that the cosmos has an order like that of the human mind and intentionality, has been posited, only at a different level. The Idea becomes a self-actualizing set of virtual singularities; actualities become acts of creation born of infinite potentiality, but ones destined to only become the matter that will serve as future stumbling block for more elaborations of the monistic virtual fabric of which they are the most congealed part.

Bergson and Einstein

The argumentative-ontological shift in *Bergsonism* with regards to Einstein suggests the move from prospective to retrospective modes of working based upon strange argumentative

assumptions related to the insistence on the primacy of temporality over spatiality and the lingering demand that matter be comparatively neutral and dead actuality trapped in a kind of eternal present of repetition. Deleuze maps out the series in which Bergson handles temporality: “There is only one time (monism), although there is an infinity of actual fluxes (generalized pluralism) that *necessarily* participate in the same virtual whole (limited pluralism).”²⁴³ The weight of the word “necessarily” here cannot be overstated. Earlier in the layout of the method, the focus was on building chains of sufficient reason such that we can consider a thing at the level of becoming in terms of tendency. Different “lines of fact” drawn from an at least empirical if not naturalistic outlook are used to analyze some messy aggregate and push its parts out towards a conceptual limit to produce a better understanding of it and its internal parts in a “contradiction without negation.” The method is provisional, speculative, and always incomplete; the logical conditions that we extract present one articulation of becoming given the “lines of articulation” available in the historical period through scientific experimentation and theorization. If scientific inquiry continually advances, and we do not solve the mysteries of the universe, the relationship between empiricism and metaphysics remains a fully open system. The infinity is potential and the projection of a domain provisional. Working through this shift in *Bergsonism* is vital to set up the distinction between philosophical-theoretical models that set up an anterior cause, such as the virtual or ideology, that function as metaphysical causes for empirical reality and naturalistic orientations that position concepts as useful fictions that help human minds understand reality but have no metaphysical priority over measurement.

The movement to positing a necessary “virtual whole” presents the moment *Bergsonism* changes vectors from $B \rightarrow A$ into $A \rightarrow B$ and embraces the problems of the Absolute and

²⁴³ Ibid, 82. Italics added.

transcendental reasoning by casting the virtual as a multiplicity at the level of being outside of temporality and then starting a new mode of division based upon this Absolute. This problem arises clearly with the last shift and Deleuze's understanding of the consequences of it; it necessitates a "fourth moment" that deals largely with how this virtual conceived of as temporal multiplicity at the level of potential being can actualize at all without being reduced to a quantitative gradient.²⁴⁴ The argumentative path here arises as Deleuze attempts to remove the contradictions from the progression of Bergson's work by more rigidly adhering to the notion of potentiality as qualitative multiplicity being the determinant of actual being.

Deleuze tracks the idea of duration with regards to mereology or the part-whole problem through several of Bergson's texts. *Matter and Memory* and "Introduction to Metaphysics" feature a "radical plurality of durations" in which "each rhythm is itself a duration" such that we are "caught between more dispersed durations and more taught, more intense durations..."²⁴⁵ No totality or whole exists; we have only cascading durations varying in terms of their temporal rhythm, comparative closed or openness in terms of system boundaries, i.e., interaction with one another, and the analysis of qualitative tendencies ramifies towards a potential infinity not bound by any notion of the Absolute. On the one hand, *Creative Evolution* treats organic life as occurring in a kind of duration or memory both in the differentiation of the individual and the history of evolution.²⁴⁶ On the other, this text imposes a wedge between organic life and dead arrangements of matter: "The only ones that [have duration] are the beings similar to us...living beings that naturally form relative closed systems, and finally, the Whole of the universe."²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 94.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 76-77.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

Deleuze describes this step as the move from “general pluralism” to “limited pluralism.”²⁴⁸ In the limited pluralism model, matter has no distinct duration outside of being a part of the totality and has an oddly anthropocentric bent as it has “a certain relative way of participating in our duration and of giving it emphasis.”²⁴⁹ The Aristotelian primacy of final and formal causality over material causality has been re-asserted.

Finally, *Duration and Simultaneity* projects a domain through conceptual totalization: “...there is only a single time, a single duration, in which everything would participate...”²⁵⁰ This new formulation leads to the “triplicity of fluxes” that follows Bergson’s later work in attempting to include and account for each formulation of duration: “There is only one time (monism), although there is an infinity of actual fluxes (generalized pluralism) that necessarily participate in the same virtual whole (limited pluralism).”²⁵¹ This triplet appears to follow the structure of the prospective illusion inasmuch as we could conceive of monistic time as a messy aggregate, the actual fluxes as lines of fact, and the virtual whole as their eventual reconstitution “beyond the turn in experience.”

However, I may have forced the dough into a cookie cutter. First, the way time works in Bergson depends greatly on its dualistic pairing with adjunct terms: space, quality and quantity, matter against potentiality, the past and the present in terms of relaxation and contraction, and the virtual and the actual. The degree to which the Time//Space pairing truly acts as the foundational pairing appears suspect to me when it consistently depends on adjunct dualisms that are far more general than the more phenomenological and empirical ones such as perception//memory. Second, Deleuze has changed the order in which these insights occur

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 78.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 82.

between their two explications. In the first part of this section, we are provided with the chronological explication of General Pluralism → Limited Pluralism → Monism of Time that emerges from reading Bergson's works in sequence. Why now is this presented as the sequence Monism → General Pluralism → Limited Pluralism? In part, because that is how Bergson lays out his analysis of his own work in *Duration and Simultaneity*, but also because Deleuze will add a fourth step to the method. This moment is the moment in a shift from moving from B → A (prospective) into A → B (retrospective) modes of argumentation. Deleuze's analysis of method will call for a "fourth step" that clarifies this shift formally: "But now we are speaking of a completely different type of division: Our starting point is a unity, a simplicity, a virtual totality. This unity is actualized according to the divergent lines differing in kind; it 'explains, it develops what it had kept enclosed in a virtual manner.'"²⁵² I fail to see how this "completely different type of division" does not engage in the positing of the exact kind of metaphysical Absolute that these works supposedly strive to escape.

The logical necessity for the fourth step of the method derives from Bergson's "confrontation with the theory of Relativity."²⁵³ In Deleuze's recapitulation of Bergson's understanding, relativity produces "a multiplicity of times, a plurality of times, with different speeds of flow, all real, each one peculiar to a system of reference."²⁵⁴ This formulation would appear to share a concord with the kind of "general pluralism" espoused by Bergson in the *Matter and Memory* formulation of duration. Yet accepting this construal of relativity without the hard determinist consequences it produces in Einstein's later career, especially in his encounter with quantum mechanics, violates Bergson's own strict belief in the separability of

²⁵² Ibid, 95.

²⁵³ Ibid, 79.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 79.

time and space. Deleuze puts it succinctly: “By confusing the two types – actual spatial multiplicity and virtual temporal multiplicity – Einstein has merely invented a new way of spatializing time.”²⁵⁵ One rationale for the confrontation and potential misunderstanding between the two deals with the tendency that emerges in Bergson’s work outside of *Matter and Memory*: to insist upon temporality being on the side of essence. The necessity of a “right side” requires that Bergson either change his mind about the ascendancy of time over space or read his own metaphysical division into Einstein’s work.

For Deleuze, the role of Riemann multiplicities takes center stage, in part, because it allows him to rehabilitate Bergson on the plane of mathematics beyond Bergson’s own phenomenological examples. Deleuze’s problem with Bergson’s construal essentially deals with choosing the wrong dualism to be essential: “Bergson’s agenda of decomposing the composite mixture of space and time that he sees as operating in Einstein’s response to Riemann means that he is intent on dividing the composite into duration, on the one hand, which is pure, and space, on the other hand, which is an impurity that denatures it.”²⁵⁶ In privileging the temporal over the spatial, “Bergson fails to appreciate the implication of Riemann’s work for reassessing the concept of space.”²⁵⁷

By way of shifting the emphasis through considerations of quantity/extensity and quality/intensity, Deleuze will replace the time//space dualism with the virtual//actual dualism as the primary condition of all conditioned with the privilege on the side of the virtual: “...Deleuze deploys the full potential of a concept of the virtual modeled on Riemann space, where Riemann space is composed of sheets, each of which is a Riemann surface.”²⁵⁸ I find this explanation

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 85.

²⁵⁶ Duffy, *Deleuze and the History of Mathematics*, 107.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 112.

unsatisfactory because I can find no reason why Riemann Spaces and Surfaces, as opposed to say Group Theory, Category Theory, or Set Theory, should have primacy over other modes of maths in expressing, in the weak case, or Being, in the strong case, a fully real and totalized virtual. It is one thing to engage in a soft form of mathematical Platonism where the structures of a development in mathematics can be said to serve as a metaphor or maybe more for some ideal condition of being. After all, physics and math are closely bound in a mutual process of creation at this point in the history of science. It is another thing entirely to show why, if math guides the virtual actualization of being or serves as a limit on the static being of the actual, that this or that branch of math transcends model and directly expresses a hidden substrate of Being. Put differently, the task of a mathematical Platonist dovetails into that of a hard determinist: the contingent quality of which maths and math's own progressive bent towards new creation and physical prediction must be explained without vague mystical reference to a unified theory of everything mathematical and physical. I have yet to see an adequate answer for why Hilbert spaces so well express quantum phenomena, except quantum gravity, and why Einstein's Riemann based maths work so well for macro scale phenomena. Naturalistic skepticism does not face this problem: any such unified theory can arise and falsify the predominant framework in line with the position of naturalism itself because the system remains speculative, it does not need to project a domain in a metaphysical sense. Theories in science are falsifiable: metaphysics derived from the "lines of fact" available at some historical period should be falsifiable as well, instead of hinging their truth values upon logical necessity when we cannot be sure that the cosmos really is all that logical.

The two primary examples Deleuze reports from Bergson rely upon strange modes of contradiction to do their work against the spatialization of all time by leveraging logical warrants

against Einstein's empirical predictions and rigor. First, we have a strange section about a human observer in a network with a flying bird and a river.²⁵⁹ Bergson makes a move eerily similar to Leibniz's monads: "The flowing of the water, the flight of the bird, the murmur of my life form three fluxes; but only because my duration is one of them, and also the element that contains the two others...two fluxes could never be said to be coexistent or simultaneous if they were not contained in a third one."²⁶⁰ The conscious duration in this network: "divides in two and is reflected in another that contains it at the same time as it contains the flight of the bird."²⁶¹ This leads to duration having a triple power: "to disclose other durations, to encompass the others, and to encompass itself ad infinitum...it is not simply succession but a very special coexistence, a simultaneity of fluxes."²⁶²

From the perspective of a spatialized reading of being along the logic of the LNC, this construal of duration appears contradictory: how can the perception of other things figured as durations divide my duration such that it is one thing and yet also multiple things? Presumably, by causing each duration to divide into a novel duration through relation. But why does this local regress require an Absolute to function? And why resolve local contradiction by subsuming it to an Absolute Duration in which contradiction exists without negation? Bergson subsumes the local contradiction into a monism: because there is one duration that is a one, but a one that is a specific kind of multiplicity, where many things are manifested at once without being entangled in relations of contradiction. In a sense, the division of durations encountering durations within a continuous manifold of virtual-being greatly resembles Leibniz's theory of monads. Each contains a perspective of the entire universe from its own perspective: at the level of the LNC

²⁵⁹ Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 80.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid, 80-81.

they are one, but at the level of the LEM they are virtually many. The notion of a virtual multiplicity as potentiality through universal memory as duration attempts to do the same thing as Leibniz to wiggle out of contradiction, but the curious part for me is why such a strange Absolute gets to be immune to contradiction through monism as warrant when Einstein's Relativity Theory does not.

The second example dealing with relativity in the apprehension of the other between Peter and Paul presents greater difficulty. Deleuze, for his part, admits its difficulty: "...the Bergsonian demonstration of the contradictory character of the plurality of times seems obscure."²⁶³ For Deleuze, this obscurity results from Bergson's refusal to allow intensive quality in spatiality such that a rigorous construal of the virtual could obtain, a problem he will fix in his own work. For us, it is because Bergson selectively applies notions of contradiction and ignores the gap between empirical verification and thought experiment.

General Relativity, in philosophic terms, destroys the notion of space and time as Absolute categorical reference points for both human consciousness and, presumably, objects not under human observation. Special relativity, in philosophic terms, features an outright contradiction at the level of the LNC and LEM: the speed of light is invariant regardless of if you travel at 2 meters a second walking about or 100 meters a second flying because you have somehow acquired super-powers. Similarly, the two clocks experiment empirically confirms that relativity's predictions hold: time dilation happens when you fly two linked clocks around the Earth at macro-relevant speeds. Were you to move close to the speed of light the rhythm of your duration would change compared to a statistical distribution of typical human aging.

²⁶³ Ibid, 83.

Relativity demonstrates that the typical logic associated with time and space may, to use Bergson's terms, present a poorly posed question. It is not, as Bergson insists, that time/space in Einstein is a messy aggregate, but that Bergson's division of being into temporal and spatial multiplicity presents a poorly posed question based upon the doxa that time and space are qualitatively different things. Experimental verification demonstrates that the apparent contradiction in Einstein to Bergson derives from logical-metaphysical criteria and not empirical ones.

Let us return to "Peter and Paul" to grasp the precise mismatch in when contradiction counts and does not in Deleuze's Bergson account. Deleuze describes Bergson's thought experiment as follows: "When we admit the existence of several times..." we cannot simply have time A and time B, "we are forced to introduce a strange factor: the image that A has of B, while nevertheless knowing that B cannot live in this way. This factor is completely 'symbolic': in other words, it opposes and excludes the lived experience and through it (and only it) is the so-called second time realized."²⁶⁴ I find this example strange because, assuming even a modest sense of realism, given that reality relativities when we do the clock experiment, we can assume, given a similar environment and cosmological history, that reality will relativity *whether there is a human observer or not*. I believe this "symbolic factor" describes a kind of perspectival projection itself that has an ontological grounding more than a representational one. Entities ground themselves in relatively actualized relationships through permeable boundaries; entities exhibit a kind of perspective when acute environmental stimuli agitate a response. In the passivity of reception, a passive synthesis lurks in which the systems themselves determine what

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 82.

quantitative threshold of a given stimulus necessitates a response and which qualities can even be responded to.

Bergson construes relativity as: "...based on the following hypothesis: There are no longer qualitative fluxes, but systems, 'in a state of reciprocal and uniform replacement' where the observers are interchangeable, since there is no longer a privileged system."²⁶⁵ We must be careful to note the slippage between how Bergson reads "observers" and how a naturalist would read "observers." Observers measure reality with experimental apparatuses; they are oriented in the flux of becoming in a relative sense by how they attempt to close a system for measurement. Observers do not merely provide a perspective on reality conceived as a mathematical point or a symbolic edifice. Furthermore, inasmuch as experimental apparatuses are part of the phenomena they elaborate upon through demonstration, we must assume that the things we measure would exhibit these properties with or without human intervention in similar cases. The universe can be conceptualized as an experimental apparatus that observes itself. Deleuze sums up Bergson's remarks on a thought experiment in which Peter and Paul attempt to measure each other's times: "In short, the *other* time is something that can neither be lived by Peter nor by Paul, nor by Paul as Peter imagines him. It is a pure symbol excluding the lived and indicating simply that such a system, and not the other, is taken as a reference point."²⁶⁶ The footnote in which Deleuze attempts to make this insertion of a symbolic thing as perspectival point clearer makes it worse: "The image that I make to myself of others, or that Peter makes to himself of Paul, is then an image that cannot be lived or thought as livable without contradiction (by Peter, by Paul, *or by Peter as he imagines Paul.*) In Bergsonian terms, this is not an image, it is a 'symbol.'"²⁶⁷ So

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 83. Deleuze quotes Bergson from *Duration and Simultaneity* (1965) at 71, 77-78, and 101.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 84.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 130.

there we have it: because the thought experiment version of relativity relies upon perspective and, for Bergson, perspective indicates a symbol, contradiction has been brought into reality by treating reality as a language.

The problem with this argument is where Bergson domesticates logical contradiction in his own system, by positing Duration as a Temporal Absolute that features contradiction without negation. This edifice depends upon Deleuze's Bergson selective deployment of what counts as a symbol and what, therefore, must comply with classical logic, particularly the LNC and LEM. After all, we have already grasped that monism serves as a supplementary warrant for *Bergsonism's* system that complicates the quality of contradiction with regards to multiplicities by attempting to remove perspective from rigorous ontology. On the one hand, we have this frame of reference as symbol in the Relativity thought experiment. We can conceive of this frame of reference as a perspectival point whose sole purpose is to signify that two systems are being taken as reciprocal for the purpose of drawing out some characteristic of simultaneity with regards to Relativity. Bergson argues that this symbol cannot be lived because it is contradictory; yet, anyone who does their own Hafele-Keating experiment by flying atomic clocks around the globe will find that this seemingly contradictory reality can indeed be lived.²⁶⁸ The people on the planes with the clocks are not in some ideal thought experiment world: they are living it on a plane.

Simultaneity in Relativity, that is to say, is not a merely epistemological problem in which some contradiction can be erased that deals with human perception, such as in the case of thunder and lightning, the contradiction presented by simultaneity in relativity is ontological.²⁶⁹ In short, the thought experiment involves a symbolic perspective or signifier *because* it is a

²⁶⁸ John Matson, "How Time Flies: Ultraprecise Clock Rates Vary with Tiny Differences in Speed and Elevation."

²⁶⁹ John D. Norton, "Discovering the Relativity of Simultaneity."

model of reality built with language and that underlying reality, from the perspective of classical bivalence and the LNC, *is* contradictory. To be clear: Bergson cannot have “zones of indetermination” and a logically consistent universe within a mathematical-bivalent understanding of science. On the other hand, we know from the Inclosure Paradox and the Domain Principle that absolutes are given to paradox: Bergson’s duration figured as primordial totality does not escape this problem from the perspective of the very argumentative warrants he deploys against Einstein by being posited as a Riemann space or a specific kind of continuous or temporal multiplicity. The projection of the singular and identical time appears as symbolic inasmuch as it totalizes all local and qualitatively differentiated times as the frame of reference in the Relativity thought experiment. In short, from the perspective of classical logic with bivalence: both Relativity and *Bergsonism* are contradictory and Deleuze’s Bergsons selective application of the LNC and LEM with regards to the symbolic content of a thought experiment flagrantly shifts the goalposts.

To reframe the preceding argument with explicit reference to classical logical warrants:

1. Relativity has impressive empirical results²⁷⁰ with time dilation and spatial contraction with regards to motion. It also has impressive results with regards to the relativity of “simultaneous” events being dependent upon motion at non-quantum scales.
2. These empirical results are expressed in mathematical terms with Riemann spaces. One could take this relationship, alongside a strong stance in favor of the logicism of mathematics, to indicate that Relativity does not exhibit contradiction.

²⁷⁰ Tom Roberts and Siegmar Schleif, “What is the Experimental Basis of Special Relativity?”

3. Mathematical logicism aside, both Relativity and Bergson's notion of immanence as a cosmological scale virtuality are contradictory at the level of at least the LEM and potentially the LNC.
 - a. For Relativity, contradiction obtaining depends on whether one follows Einstein and some subsequent physicists, Stephen Hawking for example, in positing an eternalist notion of cosmological time such that these local and relative displacements can be non-contradictory in a fully spatialized universe. I perceive this answer as the shadow twin of Bergson's: the Absolute multiplicity being spatial instead of temporal. Of course, this option has been complicated by quantum mechanics noncompliance with Relativity and competing ideas at the macro scale that eschew the big bang and or the potentiality of a unified theory of everything. Relativity can maintain the LNC and LEM by projecting an Absolute domain at the limit of everything, despite Relativity theorized at a local level destroying the notion of simultaneity such that all being is a flux of becoming that can only be spatialized through a kind of perspectivism.²⁷¹
 - b. For Bergson, the universal and singular time is a necessary condition of simultaneity as we experience it beyond the kind of contradiction presented by what he claims is a "symbol" in the thought experiment. The Bergsonian temporal multiplicity clearly violates the LEM without the monistic potential-actual conceit: it is itself and its qualitative differentiations at the same time. Bergson subsumes these into the potential//actual distinction just as Aristotle does. The question is to whether it violates the LNC. On the one hand, it is clear that the framing of a multiplicity that is one with the kind of multiplicity that it is attempts to escape stages an essence-based contradiction. On

²⁷¹ Norton, "Discovering the Relativity of Simultaneity."

the other hand, Bergson and Deleuze's need to strictly separate the condition from the conditioned all the way to positing an Absolute beyond all local manifestation suggests that they are attempting to not run afoul of the LNC. How can any set of all set type mathematical structure *not* run into the set theoretic antimonies? Positing time as a Riemann space positions it as an actual infinity: actual infinities fall prey to even increasingly large mathematical structures in terms of cardinality. As with Relativity at the limits of all cosmology, Bergson attempts to escape local contradiction by projecting a domain to be expressed mathematically even though the mathematic totalization itself does not escape problems of contradiction. Put differently, internalizing contradiction within an Absolute still maintains a generative *dialetheia*.

- c. Why does Bergson find Relativity's violation of the LEM contradictory but his own violation of the LNC and LEM legitimate? In part, because Bergson will follow Aristotle's solution to the LEM in which essential "outstanding points" that are qualitatively different exist only as "potential parts of a Whole that is itself virtual."²⁷² While shifting the register and the complexity, Bergson maintains some dualisms to evade the problems of contradiction that we have already argued as problematic: the essence//accident and potential//actual distinctions.
 - d. It is in this sense, that the virtual and the actual can be articulated as perspectival projections that encompass an infinite processual regress in being under conceptual totalization.
4. The thought experiment's use of the signifier for perspective to help model the empirical reality's use of contradiction from Bergson's perspective matters extremely little if empirical

²⁷² Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 100.

verification has occurred. In both thought experiment and empirical experiment, the scientist creates a model of reality that is comparatively closed compared to the open system of the universe to draw out capacities of the universe that can be assumed through abduction, given similar conditions, to operate with or without the human measuring apparatus and its technological extensions. Thought emerges from reality in a partial sense; reality will not always comply with the strictures of thought.

5. Among the central findings of Relativity is that space and time cannot be considered absolutes, yet, Bergson, despite his reading in *Matter and Memory* of local areas of cascading durations, imposes an Absolute Time such that Time and Space are not a messy aggregate. Yet, they only appear a messy aggregate if we have already assumed them to be different things, just as the past and present, in Bergson's own work, only appear to be a messy aggregate because we assume past and present are different things. The very thrust of Relativity and then even more so in Quantum Mechanics is that the time//space distinction is not a messy aggregate, but a poorly posed question because it relies upon the philosophical doxa that time and space are different because we experience them to be different in a naïve phenomenological register. In this sense, Bergson has violated his own methodology in unequally applying the poorly posed question stipulation. A new line of fact emerges with Relativity that, instead of its ramifications being tracked in terms of sufficiency and tendency, has led to the retrospective positing of an Absolute.
6. Bergson describes the frame of reference in relativity as a symbol that does not present a genuinely phenomenological image. As a symbolic artifice, it is subject to contradiction and therefore cannot be true of the real. Yet, what happens if we recast the terms of the thought experiment with higher fidelity to the experimental process? Would perspective and symbol

not turn into orientation and measurement? Could it be said that in the absence of a human constructed system that things themselves function as experimental apparatuses in states of tension with one another?

7. Perspectival projections and the positing of Absolutes derives from ontological commitments that reality shape itself like thought, particularly the kind of logical thought bound up in classical logic and bivalence. The problem with metaphysics' uptake of science, in the continental and analytic traditions, derives from continental philosophy's continued and hidden reliance upon the LNC and LEM in patterns of inclusion and exclusion to prop up their Absolutes. The foregoing part of this chapter maps out what that looks like with Bergson; the next chapters map it out with Deleuze, DeLanda, and rhetorical theory. The problem in parts of analytic tradition, that we have already observed with Aristotle and Leibniz, emerges when classical bivalence is preserved, although several other enticing options exist that have ontological applicability through advances in relativity and quantum mechanics. We have not escaped the problems of the Absolute noted in the first chapter: instead of embracing modes of logic that tolerate a contradictory cosmos we displace contradiction from the local into the Absolute, thinking we have evaded it, but, in reality, we have only displaced it into a new register.
8. Logic is a human modelling apparatus and not an inexorable universal truth and we must be careful with the ontological assumptions that underly our most fundamental argumentative warrants in their philosophical application. If reality itself is contradictory from the perspective of the LNC and LEM and potentially contradictory beyond logic through features like quantum indeterminacy then we must regard philosophical systems as relatively closed systems that model reality in terms of meaning through various argumentative warrants that

carry ontological commitments that are always incomplete and challenge the regime of classical bivalence through the LNC and LEM on which they are founded. Probabilistic reasoning and truth values more in line with empirical findings, a doing of things instead of a thought experiment of things, provide appealing alternatives.

Matter and Spatiality

Let us take stock before moving into Deleuze's Bergson's construal of causality and its recapitulation of the marginalization of materialist causality, and therefore the ontological indeterminacy necessary to facilitate contingency. The first three steps of the method form the basis of the prospective illusion in which series of qualitative tendencies ramify outwards towards future forms that never obtain in reality but help us to model phenomena. The fourth step of the method, that arises from Bergson's encounter with Einstein, snaps Deleuze's Bergson into a retrospective mode in which Duration as temporal Absolute becomes a "real but ideal" multiplicity that is necessary for the self-differencing difference of becoming. This line of reasoning problematically brings back in the problems of the Absolute from Aristotle and Leibniz in which a metaphysical entity exerts causal efficacy on reality beyond measurement and material intervention. We can only know this metaphysical thing through logical means, namely a selective deployment of the LNC and LEM. Explicating this tendency in *Bergsonism*, and eventually Deleuze and DeLanda, can help us find similar patterns in rhetorical theory with regards to ideology and *rhetoricity* that need to be similarly challenged through a naturalistic ontology that foregrounds intervention and measurement over logically produced anterior Absolutes.

The gap between the first three moments of the method and the final one recapitulates the animus against material causes first mapped out in Aristotle. With regards to the difference

between $B \rightarrow A$ and $A \rightarrow B$: “In the first type, it is a reflexive dualism, which *results from the decomposition of an impure composite*: It constitutes the first moment of the method. In the second type it is a genetic dualism, *the result of the differentiation of a Simple or a Pure*: It forms the final moment of the method that ultimately rediscovers the starting point on this new plane.”²⁷³ The prospective illusion builds out different dualisms towards their virtual but only potential totality; the retrospective illusion then, contra Deleuze and Bergson, reads the highest cardinality dualism, for Bergson Time//Space and Deleuze Virtual//Actual, back into Being as the pure-ideal point of departure. Were these structures offered as mere methodological modelling functions, we would be done here and ready to deploy these nice argumentative structures or illusions in rhetorical theory. But they are not: they ostensibly explain to us the real condition/s of Being itself. Their underlying ontology raises problems because of the Absolute and the difference in hierarchy and purity between the ideal-virtual and the actual-material. At times, matter seems a mere obstacle for virtuality to overcome in parallel fashion to Aristotle’s final causality’s relationship to material causality. At times in these accounts, matter appears to take on a life of its own. Ultimately, we will see, in the final section of this chapter, that Deleuze’s Bergsons methodology-ontology shares with the modes of the retrospective illusion a tacit reliance upon indeterminacy in a materialist vein to prop up its construal of Being’s ideality.

We have made much of the time side of the Time//Space dualism, but how does the status of spatiality and matter shift in response to the Einstein crisis? In response to supposed reduction of time to space, Bergson pushes the tendency of the quantitative multiplicity that is the other side of duration out: “At the limit of expansion...we have matter. While undoubtedly, matter is not yet space, it is already extensity.”²⁷⁴ We reach space when we push matter’s tendencies

²⁷³ Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 96. Italics in original.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 86.

towards bare repetition to find that “Space, in effect, is not matter or extension, but the ‘schema’ of matter, that is, the representation of the limit where the movement of expansion would come to an end as the external envelope of all possible extensions.”²⁷⁵ One wonders why Duration or the virtual as totality is not similarly a “representation of [a] limit.” Matter, at this point, retains a measure of agency in terms of the capacity to create or self-differentiate because it does not become fully sterile by becoming a “schema” unto itself.

Deleuze articulates this relationship as a chiasmus: “What is expanded if not the contracted – and what is contracted if not the extended, the expanded? This is why there is always extensity in our duration, and always duration in matter.”²⁷⁶ Similarly, duration itself never reaches a pure virtuality outside of the pure-ideal conditions of reality: “duration is never contracted enough to be independent of the internal matter where it operates...”²⁷⁷ Everything is a mess of time and space in experience; duration could not exist as pure virtuality and matter could not exist as pure actuality; we can discern their logical conditions by pushing them out into a state of contradiction at their limits.

Deleuze’s account strains the more processual model of overlapping durations once the virtual as totality is introduced alongside the fourth moment of the method. We are given a sense in which “...Duration is differentiated according to the obstacles it meets in matter, according to the materiality through which it passes, according to the kind of extension that it contracts.”²⁷⁸ We are still residing in an Aristotelian frame, but at least the recalcitrance of materiality is generative in the sense of friction and not taken as the constitutive element of disability or monstrosity. Actualizations push back upon duration and condense or counter-actualize back into

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 87.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 88.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 94.

duration figured at potentiality; potentialities only exist as they ramify out into ever new configurations and complex structures in actuality. We have an infinite regress here with no totality: the actualization of one thing is the potential of the future actualization of the next in an infinite regress or potential infinity such that the problems of the Absolute do not enter the system. We are also given a sense in which “Duration is differentiated within itself through an internal explosive force”²⁷⁹ or “the virtual...must create its own lines of actualization in positive acts...”²⁸⁰ or “the characteristic of virtuality is to exist in such a way that it is actualized by being differentiated and is forced to *differentiate itself*.”²⁸¹ Somehow the virtual has causal primacy and this causal primacy becomes an ontotheological totality when the fourth moment of the method projects an immanence as universal condition beyond all discrete conditioned actualities. Causality functions like a knot that somehow generates its own string. Instead of leaving it that things differentiate over cosmological timescales in ways that produce the congregation of memory in matter that then begets more differences, we are presented with something awfully close to an unmoved mover: a virtual that is “a simple or pure” that somehow actualizes itself internally. Matter once again becomes subsumed under an ideal construction that is logically necessary but beyond empirical measurement and idealism, albeit in a reversal of Plato’s hierarchy between static form and potential becoming, is maintained.

Duration as Absolute; Virtual as Totality

I fail to see how moving from the possible to the potential and from identity to divergence, while remaining on an ideal plane that is posited as necessary to account for the actual measurable world, does anything more than shift the goalposts in a more rigorously

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 97.

²⁸¹ Ibid, 97. Italics added.

mathematical direction that, at first, avoids the problems of the Absolute endemic to categorical projection. Put differently, the re-work of metaphysics previewed by *Bergsonism* focalizes difference and potentiality over identity and possibility but it still finally insists on a form of essence in the event and insists that reality complies with logical entailment by finding refuge in mathematics. This shift problematically displaces contradiction without truly transmuting it into productive paradox. Philosophy appears like cleaning a messy floor with a messy mop: we just shove the contradiction ever more into the corners of the room with classical argumentative warrants and hierarchical dualistic pairs instead of changing the water.

Here is the metaphysical argument offered in *Bergsonism* to provide a temporary conclusion before moving into Deleuze and DeLanda:

1. The Virtual: "...the virtual as virtual has a reality; this reality, extended to the whole universe, consists in all the coexisting degrees of expansion and contraction."²⁸² Here we have the ontological linkage of the virtual that is graphed out at page 60 of *Bergsonism* in a psychological register by the cone diagram in which successive differentiations, as illustrated by the A, A'²⁸³ notation between the levels, portrayed as circular sections of the cone as it tapers towards its point, coalescing towards the present, represent the contraction of universal memory towards the present. Yet, the diagram at page 60 refers to how memories can coalesce into things like perceptions that influence our phenomenologically lived present. One of the fundamental justifications for the virtual relies tacitly upon panpsychism: "The idea of a virtual coexistence of all the levels of the past...is thus extended to the whole of the universe.... Everything happens as if the universe were a tremendous Memory."²⁸⁴ The

²⁸² Ibid, 100.

²⁸³ In Calculus, this would read as A, A prime.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 77.

justifications for this move are subtle and rely upon many different adjunct areas, argumentative warrants, and truth criteria that we will explore and critique below. In short, we know there is a virtuality that we have special access to because similar distributions of differences pop up in the world that we are a microcosm of. Therefore, the way memory works in mind and the way virtuality works in Being has similarities.

2. The Virtual as Real: “We must take this terminology seriously: The possible has no reality (although it may have an actuality); conversely, the virtual is not actual, but as such possesses a reality... ‘real without being actual, ideal without being abstract.’”²⁸⁵ Here we have a justification and qualification of the virtual through critique: when Bergson or Deleuze refer to the possible they are referring to metaphysical models driven by mechanism that function through the retrospective illusion. For a thing to exist, it must be possible that it exists as part of a necessary universal that it resembles in a logic of identity. When we think the possible against an actualization, we project a vast reservoir of universal resemblance that is cognitively anterior to the thing, even though we produce this possibility based upon the thing. We perceive apparent differences between water, ice, and steam and between these things and more apparently ephemeral forces like electricity and heat make categories like matter and energy. Time passes, science extends our perceptual apparatuses through technological invention and we discover that matter and energy are not all that differentiable: matter are apparently more stable arrangements of energy and energy more fluid arrangements of matter insomuch as all arrangements exhibit wave-particle duality. There only appears to be a category named matter because we have bundled similarities and magnified the apparent differences between things based upon the similarities and then

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 96.

projected a category constructed of the similarities backwards to account for the condition of their possibility against their own nonexistence.

Deleuze's Bergson attempts to shift the ground from possibility to potentiality and identity to difference or, perhaps better phrased, divergence, to account for the structures that sufficiently facilitate the production of a category reduced to a line of fact in the first place. This route interests itself less in fitting things into categories based on identity and more in accounting for the division of potentials, for example, of matter as qualitatively distinct from energy, into solid, gas, liquid, and plasma²⁸⁶ and attempting to account for the logical structure underlying matter's cosmological and local self-differentiation. In short, matter changes phases from variations in thresholds of an intensive quality named temperature and these thresholds can be mapped out through mathematical methods.²⁸⁷ Yet, matter does not resemble temperature either in its manifestations after the emergence of matter with regards to changes in temperature nor in matter's emergent genesis from the singularity in the Big Bang cosmology.²⁸⁸ Despite this non-resemblance, we can say that temperature is immanent to matter: you cannot separate a thing from the layers of intensive force across different intensive kinds and scales that permeate it.

For Deleuze and Deleuze's Bergson, this discrepancy indicates that the logic of the possible in which the conditioned resembles the condition in terms of identity is incorrect, such that the conditioned do not resemble the condition in terms of divergence or difference.

²⁸⁶ Or any of the newly discovered or created phases of matter see Natalie Wolchover, "Physicists Aim to Classify All Possible Phases of Matter."

²⁸⁷ DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 116.

²⁸⁸ DeLanda appears to conflate these two different moments. On the one hand, we can see how changes in temperature, as one "parameter" among many like pressure and so on, can beget intensive changes at a local scale. On the other hand, in the cosmological view, does temperature itself function as a universal present for all cosmology or does this intensive parameter itself emerge during the extremely early moments of the Big Bang, assuming that the big bang is correct? What else is required for matter to have phases?

There appears to be a reciprocal relationship between comparatively intensive and comparatively extensive qualities; the question for an ontology of *Bergsonism* comes with the status of the virtual as immanent and monistic. Why do we need to project, or perhaps, introject this extra-empirical membrane into the ontology? Why does the matter // energy messy aggregate appear messy from one perspective, but useful as a starting place for different states of matter from another?

3. Immanence and Ideality: The logic of immanence strains under the physical inseparability of intensive qualities, extensive quantities, and what Deleuze argues are their necessary virtuality that tends to play out as a Platonist extension of the mathematical models we use to describe these physical phenomena. When we bring in the virtual as Absolute, the logic of the condition // conditioned maintains the LNC in terms of causality, the virtual singularities are points in series cancelling of self-difference, such that actualities result, and the LEM in terms of the potential // actual split through an underlying dichotomy between intensive and extensive qualities. In a sense, the status of the LNC changes: two things are not different because their identities are necessarily different but because their structural distributions of differences are sufficiently different. This move into multiplicity and structure theorized as the distribution of differences presents a useful tool, but it still shovels contradiction off into a different register with new Absolutes and introduces a hierarchy between virtuality and potentiality against extensity and actuality. Intensity becomes a difficultly differentiable bridge between cause and effect. This begs the question: if many mechanist metaphysics rely on badly posed questions and messy aggregates and philosophy is a progressive tendency in thought to reformulate these, could not Deleuze and Deleuze's Bergson harbor similarly poorly posed questions also work against their goals?

The argumentative structure of the prospective illusion can be recursively applied to the metaphysical content of the prospective illusion such that some new philosophical resource emerges at the level of argumentative warrants. We have already observed that Bergson's insistence that the Time // Space dualism possesses the highest cardinality challenged: can we, in turn, challenge Deleuze's solution that wraps the Time // Space dualism into the Virtual // Actual dualism in terms of "spatiotemporal dynamisms?" I argue that the extensive // intensive dualism that underlies this distinction in Deleuze and those who work from him functions as the poorly posed aggregate that requires a lurking contradiction between the intensive and actual conditioned and the virtual condition deriving from logical and not empirical criteria. Deleuze may work through contradiction and not negation, but any split that requires contradiction with a metaphysical fantasy, as we will see that extensity and metric properties are, sneaks in the very problematic argumentative warrants in the LNC and LEM and the retrospective illusions that it seeks to supercede.

4. The Multiplicity as One that is Potentially Many: I believe that most ardent Deleuzians would accuse me of *reducto ad absurdum* for my apparent reduction of virtuality to potentiality and perhaps they would be right to do so, since after all there are singularities and intensities that function as elements in the self-differentiating virtuality. We will get to Deleuze's tripartite schema in good time. For now, we are concerned with the connection between these multiplicities and Aristotle's solution to the Ship of Theseus Paradox and the re-distribution of the substance // accident dichotomy. Remember, "This point is not without similarity to the One-Whole of the Platonists...This Whole has parts, this One has a number – but only potentially..."²⁸⁹ or, with regard to the singularities in the virtual, "...they coexist

²⁸⁹ Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 93.

in a Unity...they form the potential parts of a Whole that is itself virtual.”²⁹⁰ The violation of the LEM in Bergsonism and Deleuze happens at the level of the Absolute as a qualitative-intensive and quantitative-extensive multiplicity at the same time. The LNC is oddly maintained through the splitting of the virtual condition and the actual conditioned such that essence as potentiality maintains hierarchy over comparatively sterile actualizations. On the one hand, the contradiction becomes internalized in terms of qualitative difference without negation, and this does present a satisfying content based *dialetheia* in which, at the level of the Absolute, a thing is and is not itself. Why do we need an Absolute at all? Does the virtual as totality of cosmological history’s potentiality not present a conceptual totality that must fall prey to the problems of actual infinities graphed out in the first chapter? Perhaps, depending on how we take the warrants of immanence and monism. So long as the borders between the virtual and actual are policed through the LNC along the logic of the condition and conditioned requiring a strict separation at the level of the Absolute as in the fourth step of the method, yes. Were we to diffract the boundaries of virtual and actual in a local cascade with no Absolute in a potential infinity, no. The question comes down to how the actualization can be a genuinely divergent creation, given the analogies between mathematics and life and how the virtual attempts to blend singular accidents while remaining an essential universal condition.

5. Potentials somehow Actualize because Singularities and Lines: in the opening paragraph to this section, I touched on how the virtual actualizes itself through some strange explosiveness with absolutely no material referent nor apparent efficient or material cause through a kind of pure differentiation. How does this work in *Bergsonism*? It comes down to the different

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 100.

levels of expansion and contraction in duration with new friends, singularities here, inside of them: “On each of these levels there are some ‘outstanding points,’ which are like remarkable points peculiar to it...” and “Nevertheless, each of these lines corresponds to one of these degrees that all coexist in the virtual; it actualizes its level, while separating it from the others; it embodies its prominent points...”²⁹¹ We are given no idea what these points are at the level of metaphysics and it seems suspect to me that Deleuze’s Bergson grants these points ontological status while staunchly refusing to when it comes to an instant model of time and the sort of perspectival point or “frame of reference” from the Relativity thought experiment.

6. The fourth moment of the method strains the conceptual resources available in Bergson and, to grasp clearly the metaphysical and methodological stakes of Deleuze’s intervention through Bergson, we must turn to Deleuze himself.

We now have the prospective and retrospective illusions mapped out, although how they are fully linked in Deleuze still must be worked through. The retrospective illusion relies upon a mechanistic and substance-based ontology in which universal categories are reified through the idol of distance and cast back as the anterior cause of observable phenomena through necessary chains of transcendental reasoning. The truth criteria are logical, the conclusions metaphysical. The prospective illusion takes some aggregate of experience and ramifies qualitative tendencies within it out towards conceptual purity by mapping out chains of sufficient reasoning comported towards a virtual whole. In Bergson’s encounter with Einstein, we see his messy and indeterminate stance towards becoming, in which the boundary formation’s paradoxical quality ramifies ever outwards in ever self-differentiating material causality, only to snap back into a

²⁹¹ Ibid, 100-101.

retrospective mode in which it is the virtual as Absolute that has always already been self-differentiating.

Bergson goes from $B \rightarrow A$ only to subsume $B \rightarrow A$ under $A \rightarrow B$ and, in doing so, reproduces several of the problems found in thinkers like Aristotle and Plato. A kind of idealism-essentialism reigns once again, only one made more complex. The key to producing an argumentative structure capable of critiquing the retrospective tendencies in rhetorical theory while mapping out prospective options through novel methodologies lies in how Deleuze's ontology will attempt to break out of the problems in causality found in *Bergsonism* by, in part, placing the regress between $A \rightarrow B$ and $B \rightarrow A$ on equal causal footing through a notion named counter actualization and eliminating both the LNC and LEM in a naïve sense in favor of paradox or indeterminacy as productive forces. The rest of this chapter maps out, in short form, different structures in Deleuze's work that are conducive to this goal and supplements them with a thoroughgoing naturalism that pulls back on their more idealistic tendencies.

The Double Illusion, Deleuze, and Naturalism

Deleuze's solitary works and his collaborations with Guattari should be used as an experience of generative problematics because systematically rendering their work, as my reading through DeLanda will demonstrate, presents immense difficulty because there are at least two ontological models at play. Deleuze has his own version of the $B \rightarrow A$ and then $A \rightarrow B$ that casts the virtual as the determinative register, but a different line of argument can be extracted that mirrors Bergson's more messy overlapping durations one by taking assemblage theory to indicate a cascade of overlapping intensities. There are structure-themes in Deleuze's work that recur regardless of which year the book in question emerged and which model has been focalized. For example, the tripartite schema of virtual/intensive/actual finds itself iterated

through different terms in works as early as his book on Hume²⁹² and within the collaborative works with Guattari.²⁹³ In DeLanda's book on Assemblage Theory, he puts a fine point on the difficulty of working through Deleuze: "[Assemblage] is given half a dozen *different definitions* by its creators...Each definition connects the concept to a separate aspect of their philosophy...when taken in isolation the different definitions do not seem to yield a coherent notion."²⁹⁴ DeLanda attempts to systematize these different modes with a particular emphasis on materiality, but the project may not succeed because the two different models may not be truly compatible, and the effort to establish a latent idealism within the Virtual as a set of all sets type metaphysical entity may not be functional within a processual and materialist ontology.

I will forever find it strange that "Deleuzians," such as DeLanda here, take great pains to argue that terms such "as 'multiplicities' or 'Ideas'" do not *really* "suggest something Platonic."²⁹⁵ We have already grasped the great pains Deleuze takes to link Bergson to Plato in *Bergsonism*. If there are multiple Deleuzes, the one that favors the fourth step of the method in *Bergsonism*, especially the Deleuze of *Difference and Repetition*, has the problems associated with Platonic essences because he simply displaces them and their idealist resonances into a different register, namely the Virtual as a kind of metaphysical wellspring of self-differentiating potentiality.

Alain Badiou argues as much: "Deluzianism is fundamentally Platonism with a different accentuation."²⁹⁶ While some Deluzians have found fault with Badiou's reading of Deleuze, I

²⁹² Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, 2.

²⁹³ Daniel Smith and John Protevi, "Gilles Deleuze," 37.

²⁹⁴ DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 1.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 121.

²⁹⁶ Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, 26.

believe that Badiou's comments on the strangeness of Deleuzian orthodoxy merit full consideration:

...contrary to the commonly accepted image (Deleuze as liberating the anarchic multiple of desires and errant drifts), contrary even to the apparent indications of his work that play on the opposition multiple/multiplicities...it is the occurrence of the One—renamed by Deleuze the One-All—that forms the supreme destination of thought and to which thought is accordingly consecrated.²⁹⁷

Badiou is correct – a kind of latent Platonic Idealism does subsist in some of Deleuze's texts – but this does not make other scholars of Deleuze who focalize the elements of his work that produce a process ontology wrong. There are many Deleuzes, and the key is to select your problematic and follow its line of argument to the end. Badiou's reading appears correct when we focalize virtuality as self-differencing and real-but-ideal multiplicity that autonomously ramifies out into qualitatively differentiated intensities and extensities in a highly mathematical fashion. DeLanda's reading suffers from assuming that these Deleuzes can be systematized, but his attempt to construct a materialist Deleuze by using examples from the sciences to remove the metaphoric or analogic content²⁹⁸ points towards the correct line of argument. I argue for a version of Deleuze that foregrounds cascades of intensity and assemblage, that starts in the middle and stays there, and that does not require recourse to metaphysical entities. I do not believe DeLanda gets there in the end, but without his staking out of the path, we would not be able to get there at all.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 11.

²⁹⁸ DeLanda, *Assemblage theory*, 124 and DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 20 and 76.

The Virtual Model

The Deleuze of *Difference and Repetition* grants virtuality, and then intensity, casual determinacy over quality and extensity: "...we believe that individuation is essentially intensive, and that the pre-individual field is a virtual-ideal field, made up of differential relations...Individuation is the act by which intensity determines differential relations to become actualized, along the lines of differentiation and within the qualities and extensities it creates."²⁹⁹ Tracing this line of argument through the Deleuzian texts in which it is the dominant model would be a project unto itself, but others have produced nice encapsulations of what this section indicates for this ontology. John Protevi, for example, articulates the causal flow in Deleuze's tripartite schema, at least in *Difference and Repetition*:

"...in all relations of being (1) intensive morphogenetic processes follow the structures inherent in (2) differential virtual multiplicities to produce (3) localized and individuated actual substances with extensive properties and differentiated qualities. Simply put, the actualization of the virtual, that is the production of actual things of the world, proceeds by way of intensive processes."³⁰⁰

Protevi starts with intensive processes, but if they must follow the structure of virtual multiplicities that, as we saw from Badiou above, also follow the logic of the one-all then it is difficult to see how the virtual does not have the causal efficacy as the wellspring of being or the Being of all beings. Deleuze, at times, makes this linkage explicit: "...the Idea thus defined possesses no actuality. It is virtual, it is pure virtuality. All the differential relations, in virtue of the reciprocal determination, and all the distributions of singularities in virtue of the complete

²⁹⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 246.

³⁰⁰ John Protevi, "Mind in Life, Mind in Process: Toward a New Transcendental Aesthetic and a New Question of Panpsychism," 95.

determination , coexist in the virtual multiplicity of Ideas.”³⁰¹ To harken back to Badiou: how can an idea with a capital I that self-differentiates in series of ordinary and singular points that establish the virtual problematics, equivalent to Ideas, that guide the morphogenetic processes in intensity, itself beneath and transcendently necessary to actuality, be anything other than a Platonic model?

The argumentative warrant for these moves should be immediately familiar: “It is the transcendental principle which maintains itself in itself, beyond the reach of the empirical principle.”³⁰² The transcendental reasoning is required because the condition cannot resemble the conditioned, just as in *Bergsonism*. This kind of transcendental reasoning is necessary because virtuality, in its never ending self-differentiation, changes in kind each time it self-differentiates such that it remains hidden behind the individuated intensive flows that in turn produce divergent qualities through quantitative self-cancellation such that actuality and extensity obtain.³⁰³ We are given the exact kind of projection of an Absolute, this time a kind of pure Virtuality anterior to all empirical differentiation, that must exist for logical reasons beyond any empirical intuition or measurement.

The model of the virtual can then be expressed as Virtual→Intensive→Actual (V→I→A). The structure of the pure virtual as One-All involves series of singular and ordinary points that guide the individuation processes of the intensive register into actual things in terms of qualities and extensity. As will become clear later, there are subcurrents in Deleuze that complicate this image by suggesting that actuality can sublimate back into virtuality, thus creating a tautological version of the Virtual Model that greatly resembles the tautology of

³⁰¹ Deleuze, “The Method of Dramatisation,” 97.

³⁰² Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 241.

³⁰³ Ibid, 223 and 230.

Ideology in an ontological register. Counteractualization will facilitate the transduction of this model into the fully process one, a process discussed later at greater length.

The Process Model

I want to start with a long quote that encapsulates the process model of Deleuze's ontology succinctly and provides several fundamental Deleuzian terms with great acuity. The problem will be mapping out the different intersections between this model and the more virtual-centric one:

"...any concrete system is composed of intensive processes tending toward the (virtual) plane of consistency and/or toward (actual) stratification. We can say that all that exists is the intensive, tending towards the limits of virtuality and actuality; these last two ontological registers do not "exist," but they do "insist," to use one of Deleuze's terms. Nothing ever instantiates the sheer frozen stasis of the actual nor the sheer differential dispersion of the virtual; rather, natural or worldly processes are always and only actualizations, that is, they are processes of actualization structured by virtual multiplicities and heading toward an actual state they never quite attain. More precisely, systems also contain tendencies moving in the other direction, toward virtuality; systems are more or less stable sets of processes moving in different directions, toward actuality and toward virtuality...neither the structures of such processes nor their completed products merit the same ontological status as processes themselves. With this perspective, Deleuze and Guattari offer a detailed and complex "open system" which is extraordinarily rich and complex."³⁰⁴

³⁰⁴ Smith and Protevi, "Gilles Deleuze," 37.

This passage describes the process ontology model in Deleuze and Guattari that I represent as Virtual \leftarrow Intensive \rightarrow Actual ($V\leftarrow I\rightarrow A$) and oppose to the model found in Deleuze's solo work that follows from *Bergsonism*, represented as $V\rightarrow I\rightarrow A$ to show the causal determinacy of the virtual and Actual \rightarrow Intensive \rightarrow Virtual ($A\rightarrow I\rightarrow V$), when we start to discuss counteractualization. In the process ontology model ($V\leftarrow I\rightarrow A$), The Virtual and the Actual are qualitative tendencies towards flux through a multiplicative structure in which there is contradiction but not negation and towards a final actuality in which change would cease and a kind of permanent homeostasis between all intensive flows obtain. These twin tendencies are absolutes more so than two aspects of one Absolute that encompasses the entire model: they are not real-ideal because they do not "exist" but instead "insist." The open system has no determinate border and is non-totalizable through the casting of a final metaphysical domain or universal category. Actuality and Virtuality describe tendencies with no end and tendencies whose usefulness to ontological endeavors may end should they stop proving useful and only as general as reality requires.

These two models' structures can be easily transposed into rhetorical theory's tautological construction of ideology in the constitutive rhetoric mode and the problematic imperialism of rhetoricity in new materialist rhetorical theory. Before that chapter's efforts start, the two models and the links between them must be enumerated before moving into how naturalism can strip both of them through the removal of metaphysical content by making their status as measuring apparatuses who do their work with definition clear.

We start by looking at two problematic lines of argument in DeLanda's uptake of Deleuze: the simultaneous use-elimination of extensity in the intensive-extensive dualism and the ontological priority given to singularities in the singular-ordinary dualism. DeLanda's

account of Deleuze is particularly interesting for this reason: at times, he appears to take *Difference and Repetition's* ontology at full force; at other times, he stresses the value of indetermination and counteractualization. The path I take attempts to unwind the disparity between these two argumentative routes and their concomitant model to suggest a naturalist-materialist take on counter actualization that does not rely on the positing of transcendental Absolutes.

Extensity and the Virtual Model

DeLanda's materialist reconstruction of Deleuze's Virtual ontology provides a shortcut to mapping out the argumentative moves that underwrite the $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow A$ model and how this model can be transduced into the Process Model. The vital dualism that requires a reworking as a poorly posed problem is that between intensity and extensity. DeLanda explains extensity here:

A typical extensive property, such as length, area, or volume, is divisible in a simple way: dividing the area into two equal parts results in two areas with half the extension. But if we take a volume of water at, say, 90 degrees centigrade, and divide it into two half volumes, we do not get as a result two parts having 45 degrees of temperature each, but two parts with the same original temperature.³⁰⁵

We have two broad ways of thinking about properties that are deeply linked to measurement and mathematics: extensive ones that are conceptualized as perfectly divisible and resultant of differentials in intensive gradients, and intensive ones that do not change immediately upon being subjected to an extensive change. The challenge with this division rests with deciding what constitutes generative and nongenerative changes. That is: why does the causal efficacy move from virtuality to intensity to extensity without producing an Absolute?

³⁰⁵ DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 111.

This question presents a fundamental division in DeLanda's work in terms of what warrants a truth consideration: logical or / and empirical criteria. We have already grasped that the Deleuze of *Difference and Repetition* finds logical criteria structured through transcendental reasoning adequate to explicate Being. DeLanda takes the realist-logicism route in which the universe exhibits order and, therefore, this order can be uncovered through logical argumentation: "The virtual...leaves behind traces of itself in the intensive processes it animates, and the philosopher's task may be seen as that of a detective who follows these tracks or connects these clues..."³⁰⁶ This stance relies upon a kind of empiricism that wants to find recurring patterns in reality, treat the empirical measurements as symptoms of a logical structure, and use the analogy between these patterns and the philosophical-logical edifice to "remove...its metaphorical content" through empirical examples.³⁰⁷ This line of argument follows Deleuze's in *Bergsonism* closely: the virtual wholes are the hidden condition that we can argue for the logical existence of when we perform the prospective illusion by pushing out empirical aggregates towards conceptual purity.

The important question, for now, is whether this extensive // intensive split derives from some logical necessity to prop up a vast empirically inaccessible virtual or whether we can push on this division itself as a poorly posed question. DeLanda puts a finer point on intensity: "Deleuze argues, however, that an intensive property is not so much one that is indivisible but one which cannot be divided without involving a change in kind."³⁰⁸ Deleuze takes intensity to indicate his reading of the infinitesimal: "The expression 'difference of intensity' is a tautology.

³⁰⁶ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 35.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 26, 80, and 49.

³⁰⁸ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 18.

Intensity is the form of difference in so far as this is the reason of the sensible. Every intensity is a differential, by itself a difference.”³⁰⁹

Intensity as a kind of differential of difference can be difficult to grasp, but it makes a bit more sense with an empirical example. Thermodynamics is a favorite for Deleuze: “The important implication of this is that what allows work to be done by a system is not intensity (temperature in this case), but rather difference in intensity...”³¹⁰ It follows logically that some transcendental element must account for different kinds of intensities: temperature and flow are linked empirically but only differentiable assuming a topology of intensity as pure differential. Think of it this way: differentials in calculus are rates of change; temperature pervades everyday physics despite not being one of the fundamental forces of the universe found in the standard model; the way Deleuze looks at temperature as an empirical manifestation of intensity is not interested with the metricized measurements of temperature like how many degrees one body is that is in proximity to another body; Deleuze is after the potential for change or the difference in differentials between two thermodynamic systems.

We can get to this level of modelling temperature as intensity by positing a depth, gradient, or membrane that accounts for the emergence of the spatialized or metric measurements of a temperature by transcendently reasoning that this gradient accounts for the measurement-features of the phenomena. The question, then, is threefold: is transcendental reasoning necessary, i.e., is temperature in the capacity of a differential gradient really hidden, does a monistic membrane of the differential of all intensive differences sufficiently account for the profusion of qualitatively differentiated empirical intensities, and is the Virtual as potential structure required to transcendently account for the series of purely intensive differentials?

³⁰⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 222.

³¹⁰ Henry Somers-Hall, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: An Edinburgh Philosophical Guide*, 167.

The argumentative structure that warrants the construction of a virtual as Absolute or a more abstract reading of *Thousand Plateaus*' Plane of Consistency derives from the accretion of transcendental reasoning such that a set of all sets structure is necessary because of systematic isomorphy. First, the messy profusion of localized virtual phase spaces, or the internal structure of a relatively closed system, is posited but only as a metaphor: "This metaphor supplies us with a target for a theory of the virtual: we need to conceive a continuum which yields, through progressive differentiation, all the discontinuous entities that populate the actual world."³¹¹ It appears to me that this Virtual connects to the plane of pure intensity. DeLanda chooses to populate this "heterogenous" virtual Absolute, described "a space of spaces," with the "notions" contained in "mathematical models."³¹² The development and genesis of quality out of differences in differential quantity, then, can only be explicated with resource to mathematical models as metaphors for or, in a strong version, literally Virtual structure.

It is unclear why this construal of the Virtual does not lead to math as metaphor or a full on realist mathematical ontology: "This is a task which will involve a specific philosophical transformation of the mathematical concepts involved, a means of detaching these concepts from their mathematical actualization, so to speak."³¹³ Furthermore, these "mathematical concepts" strain application because the "space of spaces" has "consistency...as the synthesis of heterogeneities..." but has "nothing to do with logical consistency, that is, with the absence of contradiction."³¹⁴ A great many mathematical models are predicated upon the removal of contradiction, but allowing them full metaphysical status without some kind of transduction or metaphor would violate the Deleuzian stipulation that there is no contradiction through negation.

³¹¹ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 72.

³¹² Ibid, 72-72. Italics Removed.

³¹³ Ibid, 73.

³¹⁴ Ibid, 72. Italics removed.

DeLanda is aware of the difficulty here: "...the question may arise as to the legitimacy of taking features of a model and reifying them into the defining traits of a real entity."³¹⁵ The removal of metaphoric content comes back in to attempt to specify how this Virtual as "set of all sets" does not present the exact kind of metaphysical ontologies transcendental empiricists want to deny. DeLanda argues: "Eliminating the metaphorical content will involve not only a thorough ontological analysis of state space so that its topological invariants can be separated from its variable mathematical content, but in addition, a detailed discussion of how these topological invariants may be woven together to construct a continuous, yet heterogenous, space."³¹⁶

This path to removing metaphorical content relies upon systems, complexity, and chaos theories' deployment of topological invariants, or mathematical singularities that are resistant to change, to insist that these models of reality do more than model. Another path to "removing metaphor content" derives, oddly enough, from something that may not be full on negation, but has to be a form of disanalogy: "What guides this speculation? One way of looking at this question is to see Deleuze as engaged in a constructive project guided by certain *proscriptive constraints*, that is, constraints which tell him not what to do but what to avoid doing."³¹⁷ In the strong case, this dictum suggests definition through negation at the level of philosophical argumentation. In the weak case, it suggests that disanalogy, as a kind of gradient of contradiction without negation, guides the entailments of Deleuze's philosophical system. The ontological precepts are not the negation of what is wrong from past philosophical systems, but one among many contingent options that are potential as different choices are made and philosophical warrants leveraged.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 20.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid, 21.

The greatest “proscriptive constraint” on Deleuzian thought comes from the critique of the essentialism found in reified totalities that is closely linked to the transcendent // immanent dualism. Essentialism reduces emergent organizations to elements of a transcendent universal category; Immanence *attempts* to escape this problem by hewing closely to material processes.³¹⁸ Yet, DeLanda notices a great risk that I believe is the same risk we have already uncovered in *Bergsonism*: with regards to “similarities of process” whose regularities “demand an explanation,” “...when accounting for these common features we may be tempted to reintroduce essences through the back door...essences of processes, yet essences nevertheless.”³¹⁹ Could there be a more apt description of what happened with Duration as the Absolute in Bergson’s encounter with Einstein? Except, it was not an “essence of process,” but an essence of the multiplicity as structural one-all, an essence that I believe DeLanda shares despite his warning of its risk of obtaining. Following the critique of essences: “It is in order to break this vicious circle that multiplicities are introduced.”³²⁰

Bergson also introduces Duration as temporal multiplicity to break the contradictory infinite regress that many models of Relativity elicit. But this account of the Virtual as the “space of all spaces” suffers from the same problems already mapped out on *Bergsonism*. The structure of the Inclosure Paradox indicates a tendency towards eliminating infinite regress through a perspectival projection such that some kind of Absolute obtains. In that move, this construal of the Virtual reintroduces the problems of the Absolute by casting a totalizing domain over all Beings.

³¹⁸ Ibid, 2.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

The problems of the Absolute iterate out through several adjunct constructions of virtuality in different areas of Deleuzian thought. Deleuze's methodological-ontological arguments deals with clarifying the relationship between problem and solution. Philosophers act as conduits for an incorporeal event in which they discern what is a generative virtual problematic hidden behind its actualizations by discerning the "objective distribution of the singular and the ordinary."³²¹ Problems are matched against their conditions in terms of "solvability" or mapping potential solutions without exhausting the generative quality of the problem-condition relationship such that we can make a genetic account of the different ramifications, that produce new problematics, in an infinite "progression of [sufficient reasons]."³²² In short, regularities in how problems can be posed without regard to the truth of their solutions tells us a lot about different mathematical groups and regularities in the material world modelled by things like group theory that seek to map out qualities or singular points that are invariant across a group under transformation.³²³

For the extensive // intensive split, this stipulation means that DeLanda "will argue that by extending each singularity into an infinite series, and defining these series without the use of metric or quantitative concepts, multiplicities can becomes capable of forming a heterogenous continuum."³²⁴ To define the problematic of the virtual well, then, relies on two things. DeLanda must set up an opposition between variously phrased dualisms such as virtual//actual, qualitative//quantitative, nonmetric//metric, and intensive//extensive. Remember, because the condition does not resemble the conditioned and both virtual singularities and intensive gradients hide themselves as they actualize, some mode of transcendental reasoning must engage in a

³²¹ Ibid, 129. Italics removed.

³²² Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 180-181.

³²³ Duffy, *Deleuze and Mathematics*, 84-85.

³²⁴ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 73.

perspective game. Behind each measurable event, some reason must exist for its occurrence. It is necessary that there be a self-differentiating virtuality to explain the intensive manifold of differences of differentials of intensity from the perspective of intensity. It is sufficient that this kind of virtuality exists to account for the form of ramifications of intensity such that there is an Absolute structure that guides the differentiation of pure intensity.

One of the primary goals in “reducing the metaphoric content” could be said to eliminate perspectivism or relativity from the Deleuzian ontology by positing this Virtual as Absolute in explicitly mathematical terms, but somehow sundering mathematics from contradiction. DeLanda describes the solution: “Deleuze often speaks of the anexact yet rigorous style of thought which may be necessary whenever we need to think about nonmetric entities.”³²⁵ He provides the example of work in biology in which distributions of cells are conceived of in an ordinal, or relating to position internal to a quantitative continuum such as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, scheme of distance instead of one that provides precise values along a cardinal logic of 1, 2, 3 and so on.³²⁶ The ordinal // cardinal distinction comes from Russell’s early work on set theory: “...an ordinal distance cannot be divided, and its lack of divisibility into identical units implies that two ordinal distances can never be exactly compared” but the quality of their differences or the quality of relationships like greater and smaller can be compared.³²⁷ Put differently, in ordinal series precise and external metrics like length do not work because there are variable differences between attributes, such as distance, in the internal ordering of the set’s elements. We can think of an ordinal set of towns along a highway: the distance between each exit on 75/85 varies such that the internally defined unit distance between two exits varies and cannot be divided. We

³²⁵ Ibid, 57.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid, 76-77.

could make this ordinal continuum metric by inserting an infinity of infinitesimal points, as we do with miles, such that the distance can be divided without regard to relative but internal positioning.

This mathematical reasoning is legitimated by an appeal to systems isomorphy. DeLanda provides an important stipulation in his discussion of divergent and convergent series:

“Moreover, we can also check empirically that a portion of the same symmetry-breaking cascade is exhibited by other processes (embryological processes, for example) which depend on such different causal mechanisms that they almost demand we postulate a mechanism-independent entity as part of their explanation.”³²⁸ The argument relies explicitly on how systems theorists conceptualize information: statistical modelling establishes probabilistic correlations such that the probability of a change in one system produces a change in the probabilities of a system in the same environment.³²⁹ In short, we reach immanence instead of transcendence when apparently different phenomenon, from a naïve phenomenological stance under analysis, “reveal a topological isomorphism between singularities in the model and singularities in the physical system being modelled... This isomorphism” then warrants the assumption that “the model and the physical system are co-actualizations of the same virtual multiplicity.”³³⁰ When we subject this logic to infinite regress, the necessity of the Virtual as an Absolute “set of all sets” logically follows.

The requirement that this logic emerge from empirical systems to become immanent instead of transcendent is a better step than a purely logical model, but it is the very intensive//extensive split that prevents it from eliding the problems of the Absolute. First,

³²⁸ Ibid, 80.

³²⁹ Ibid, 81-82.

³³⁰ Ibid, 176.

granting ontological priority to intensity through extensity does not hold up when the definitions of extensity provided indicate it as a pure perspectival fantasy in the first place that cannot support removing metaphorical content because, empirically, it is metaphorical. When we measure and cut lengths in real life, we operate along a “good enough” or tolerance standard. You have a piece of lumber that is approximately ten feet long and you use a band saw to cut it into two approximately five feet pieces. But how precise has this ended up being? Have we really divided ten feet into exactly five feet? Certainly not. Divisions like these only happen in geometrical planes. Extensity itself is an idol of distance that projects a fantasy of perfection in a world in which empirical intervention does not comply. Defining intensity by that which is not extensive suggests that the analogic with its patterns of analogy and disanalogy that undercurrents of thought’s actualization into philosophy has snuck contradiction in the form of disanalogy with a fantasy right back into a model that claims to have eliminated it. This problem only exists in the Virtual→Intensive→Actual model; the Virtual←Intensive→Actual model does not feature it because we start with a process ontology in which all things are intensive systems in various states of viscosity. Intensity is partially defined by its tendencies towards actuality and virtuality, not in terms of its disanalogy with the fantastic *doxa* of extensity.

Second, when Deleuze notes that intensity is not about the ways we use technological apparatuses to measure it but about differences in differentials, he oddly leaves open a more naturalistic and experimental reading of thermodynamics. DeLanda gets extremely close to it with an example: “The temperature of a given volume of liquid water...can indeed be ‘divided’ by heating the container from underneath creating a temperature difference between the top and bottom...” this empirical example can also push the body of water into a phase change into a

gas.³³¹ The differences in temperature will become subdued over time, but a precise extensive cut between different temperature flows would be extremely difficult to measure. What DeLanda omits is that this process can also arise from adding pressure, which can be made to have a linear relationship with temperature. When it comes to fluid and gas dynamics, pressure and temperature are two intensive forces that have this kind of probabilistic relationship with one another.

The point here, however, is the relationship to volume and surface area: manipulating an experimental or environmental apparatus such that a liquid body has more surface area bounded by the heating apparatus or separating two volumes out of the body of liquid and placing them in two different cups will change the intensive gradient's difference of differentials. Volume counts as a metric or extensive property in DeLanda's system, but changes to volume and the topological shape of the water within surface area will produce changes to the vital points in a specific body of water's intensive gradient. You can do this experiment in your kitchen. A flat pan that better fits an electric burner will boil the same volume of water in a thinner and taller pan precisely because greater surface area of the pan touches the heating element and the water's volume spreads out along the basin. The relationship is not a linear one from intensity to so called extensity, but one characterized by intensity all the way down.

Third, we have already demonstrated how a metric dimension like length operates as a fantasy of the purely precise within a perfect mathematical reasoning, but we have not yet explicated how changes in ordinal distance between different scales of matter change the behavior of bodies. We might say that scale and ordinal distance are themselves intensive gradients that may be altered by cutting or conglomerating matter. Cutting would doubtlessly be

³³¹ Ibid, 18.

considered a metricizing operation in DeLanda's framework, in part, because it violates the range of permitted operations to a topological manifold because it brings discontinuity into what must be continuous deformations.³³² Conglomeration of different surfaces does can fall within the purview of topology.³³³

Two potentials are worth mention here: nanotechnological scales and macro realism. Nanoscale's, for some materials, have emergent properties that differ unexpectedly from their molecular-chemical and larger conglomerated mater or mixture properties. For us, this means that performing operations like cutting change the distribution of differentials in some modes of materiality. Of course, this suggests an infinite regress: what appears extensive from one perspective – how many atoms are stuck together or how much we cut apart – produces intensive changes. The line between experiment and event blurs here: natural processes of self-differentiation do this without laboratory intervention.³³⁴

Macrorealism, a set of theories that challenge the assumption that quantum phenomena exert a scale up causality, provides another interesting example. At the risk of oversimplification, macrorealists argue that at certain scales or conglomerations of mass, top-down causal properties emerge that challenge the quantum understanding of the universe. Of course, bodies with this much mass produce dramatic changes in terms of density because of the pressure generated by the mass' interaction with gravity as intensity. We have regress once again: layers upon layers of intensity that produce something that appears extensive because it involves mass, or at least we can measure it through mass, that in turn *may* exert causal agency in how the laws of physics themselves may vary by scale. Is mass a fantasy or does it, as an extensive property, share in the

³³² Richard Earl, *Topology: A Very Short Introduction*, 5.

³³³ Ibid, 24.

³³⁴ Viviane Callier, "How Animals Color Themselves with Nanoscale Structures."

explication of density? DeLanda is aware of the problems of scale: "...causal problems should be framed at the correct level given that each emergent level has its own causal capacities, these capacities being what differentiates these individuals from each other."³³⁵ Why then use extensive properties as a kind of dead actuality to prop up intensity and then the Virtual at all if, at the limit cases of extensity intensity is all that can be found in reality?

The Virtual relies upon argumentation by analogy, particularly the kind of structural analogy typical of dynamical systems theory as in system's isomorphy and this reliance produces problems of the Absolute.³³⁶ Reaching systems isomorphy as a justification for the Virtual requires "removing metaphoric content" such that some logically necessary structure remains to explain the appearance of order or recurring tendency in becoming. However, this produces a regress that produces a retrospective illusion as the Virtual: "...problems are not only independent of their solutions, but have a genetic relationship with them: a problem engenders its own solutions as its conditions becomes progressively better specified."³³⁷

The regress becomes clear: if we take a local articulation of virtual as opposed to a transcendentalized Virtual, what counts as a problem and as a solution derives from a perspectival projection. There must be some mechanism or a reverse in the causal flow of $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ that accounts for ontological emergence such that the Virtual need not be a totalizable set, but, instead something closer to the $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ model in which virtuality is an upper bound. Some novel actualizations rise to the level of new problems; the examples about organic life and intensive systems that accrete on top of old actualizations, like hurricanes and the climate, are clear about the potential of an actuality becoming a new virtual problematic.³³⁸ This regress

³³⁵ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 162.

³³⁶ Ibid, 175 and 177.

³³⁷ Ibid, 175.

³³⁸ Ibid, 111 and 145.

between problems and solutions, virtuality, intensity, and actuality, leads into a difficult territory, that of counteractualization. This strange and under-theorized device serves as the conceptual link between the Virtual and Processual Models.

Towards the Virtual we have the quasi-cause: virtual multiplicities have “only a mere capacity to be affected” because while “... (the same multiplicity may be actualized by several causal mechanisms) they do depend on the empirical fact that some causal mechanism or another actually exists...” to follow the immanence criterion.³³⁹ The quasi-cause functions to allow communication between virtual series as “a pre-actualization. It would endow multiplicities with a minimum of actuality and, in this sense, it would represent the first broken symmetry in the cascade that culminates in fully formed actual beings.”³⁴⁰ DeLanda gestures, in a footnote, to Deleuze’s example of lightning in *Difference and Repetition*:³⁴¹ “Thunderbolts explore between different intensities, but they are preceded by an invisible, imperceptible *dark precursor*, which determines their path in advance but in reverse, as though intagliated.”³⁴²

Deleuze’s explanation for the importance of this empirical allusion is characteristically obscure: “Given two heterogenous series, two series of differences, the precursor plays the part of the differentiator of these differences...it is the in-itself of difference or the ‘differently different’... the self-different which relates different to different by itself.”³⁴³ This strange object mirrors the time of the Aion: it is a kind of pure fantasy of difference that bears uncanny resemblance to Lacan’s *object petit A* placed into an ontological register: “...it has no place other than that from which it is ‘missing’, no identity other than that which it lacks: it is precisely the

³³⁹ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 78.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, 127.

³⁴¹ Ibid, 143.

³⁴² Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 119.

³⁴³ Ibid.

object = x...”³⁴⁴ What we have here is another iteration of the “aleatory point” from *Logic of Sense*: an object that logically spatializes ontological-materialist indeterminacy through paradox. The problem comes in with DeLanda and Deleuze’s sublimation of these “quasi-casual operators” into a plane of mathematical consistency.

Karen Barad provides a more thoroughly empiricist reading of lightning. The “Dark Precursor” in this example has a name and is facilitated through the transmission of electrons: “These barely luminous first gestures are called stepped leaders...the buildup of negative charges (electrons) in the lower portion of the cloud does not resolve itself by a direct channel...*the ground* responds next with an upward signal of its own.”³⁴⁵ The relationship between ground and sky does not follow a linear path nor one only determined by the “dark precursor:” “...a lightning bolt does not simply proceed from storm cloud to the earth...flirtations alight...as stepped leaders and positive streamers gesture toward possible forms of connection to come.”³⁴⁶ This division of multiple unclear potential paths presents “a quantum form of communication — a process of iterative intra-activity.”³⁴⁷

The question of the quasi-causal operator is not necessarily one of singularities best modelled by mathematical series, but one of the kind of ontological indeterminacy measurable by Bohrian quantum mechanics and Quantum Field Theory, subjects we will explore more deeply later. For now, it is sufficient to grasp that materiality and material causes are at work here: the quasi-cause as a differentiator of differences need not logically entail the existence of a virtuality that becomes intensity through “symmetry breaking cascades,” to use DeLanda’s

³⁴⁴ Ibid, 120.

³⁴⁵ Karen Barad, “Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings,” 397.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 398.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

language, because there is a measurable materiality at work.³⁴⁸ The Quasi-Cause as paradox renders indeterminacy and zones of indetermination in logical and spatialized expression, but need not have any real-ideal status beyond its usefulness as a definitonal apparatus.

Counter-actualization presents the other side of the $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ model and is as obscure as the quasi-causal operator: “The second task of the quasi-causal operator, to extract virtual events from intensive processes may, in turn, be seen as a veritable *counter actualization* since it would follow in a direction opposite to that which goes from the virtual to the intensive, and from there to the extensive and qualitative.”³⁴⁹ To stay with our lightning metaphor, the quasi causal operator entails the “stepped ladder” and counter-actualization as the “positive streamers.” The requirement that counter-actualization exist derives from the requirement of immanence: “we cannot simply postulate the existence of an ideally continuous cosmic plane...but must account for its production and maintenance.”³⁵⁰

Yet, far from linking counter-actualization to the science of lightning, DeLanda takes a highly peculiar path. After arguing there are not “scientific and mathematical fields” to provide immanence to counter-actualization, he goes with the experience of “psychoactive chemicals that can be deployed to go beyond the actual world...” as a kind of experience that “allows us to follow it [counter-actualization] *phenomenologically*, by treating our minds as intensive spaces.”³⁵¹ The clear argumentative warrant here is systematic isomorphy by way of panpsychism: if the acid-mind achieves counter-actualization then surely things in the world do too.

³⁴⁸ It may be argued that because group theory effectively describes quantum mechanics and their application in this case to lightning that the virtual is necessary and directly analogous to the mathematical predictive quality of group theory. The question of whether mathematics indicates the necessity of analogous metaphysical entities will be evaluated at greater length below.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, 127.

³⁵⁰ DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 131.

³⁵¹ Ibid, 133.

To make the argument directly by tying back in the intensive // extensive split: it is the marginalization of extensity, especially in the form of entropy, that maintains the flawed causality of the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model, complicates its inverse, and we can see this limitation most clearly in the places DeLanda attempts to give immanence criteria to the virtual as Absolute. DeLanda reads a metaphysical Virtual into cosmology to support this Absolute: "...spontaneous symmetry breaking [self-differentiation] ...is helping unify the four basic forces of physics...as physicists realize that, at extremely high temperatures [like those in the pre-bang singularity]...these forces lose their individuality and blend into one..."³⁵²

This understanding derives explicitly from the Big Bang cosmology: "The hypothesis is that as the universe expanded and cooled, a series of phase transitions broke the original symmetry and allowed the four forces to differentiate from one another."³⁵³ The singularity at the start of the universe as we know it, assuming the Big Bang cosmology does not yield to novel models, presents the empirical immanence requirement for a kind of virtual as Absolute, but one that ultimately fails because of infinite regress and the counter-actualization potential presented by entropy, qualified as extensity erroneously by DeLanda.

First, scientists are not settled on the features of the Big Bang: there could be other universes, the Big Bang may be incorrect, and there may be cycles of Bangs and Big Crunches that produce a higher cardinality set to deal with the regress. The answer, from the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model to this regress doubtlessly positions the virtual as Absolute one step back from our attempts to empirically measure this potentiality. Now, the virtual as the "space of all spaces" would sit in a noumenal roost one step behind our best mapping of the potential and actual characteristics of this newly modelled phenomenon, whichever novel model begins to accrue

³⁵² DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 19.

³⁵³ Ibid.

scientific consensus. In this sense, the virtual as Absolute is a problem from a naturalistic perspective because it cannot be falsified through empirical means and its logically necessary character must be recognized.

Second, entropy presents a materialist mode of counter-actualization because intensity must have a sufficient reason to differentiate itself. For DeLanda, entropy lacks causal efficacy because of its extensive status: “Extensive properties include not only such metric properties as length, area and volume, but also quantities such as amount of energy or entropy.”³⁵⁴ We measure energy by spatializing it in some measuring apparatus and it may be said to be metric in this way, but Entropy presents a more difficult empirical example. New research, into clocks of all things finds the following:

Energy tends to dissipate – and entropy, a measure of its dissipation, tends to increase – simply because there are far, far more ways for energy to be spread out than for it to be highly concentrated. This numerical asymmetry, and the curious fact that energy started out ultra-concentrated as the beginning of the universe, are why energy now moves towards increasingly dispersed arrangements... In precise terms, entropy is a measure of the number of possible arrangements that a system of particles can be in. These possibilities grow when energy is spread more evenly among more particles, which is why entropy rises as energy disperses.³⁵⁵

Entropy, then, sounds like a re-structuralizing effect of differential individuation and actualization itself. Entropy in an intensive register does not measure dispersed energy as the reduction of the ability to do work, but instead measures how interaction itself changes the “possible arrangements that a system of particles can be in.” In Deleuzian terms, entropy

³⁵⁴ Ibid, 18.

³⁵⁵ Natalie Wolchover, “The New Thermodynamic Understanding of Clocks.”

provides a materialist way in which the structure of the virtuality of a local system changes through the very forces of actualization.

The question comes down to one of causal efficacy: does the energy unilaterally determine the entropy through a relationship of anteriority or is there something buggy going on, as in the stepped ladder lightning problem? I argue, in a highly speculative mode, that something genuinely weird and buggy is afoot. The liar's paradox of the "object=x" indicates a kind of irrational non-relation in mathematical terms or an ontological indeterminacy in quantum terms that can be construed as positioning indeterminacy as entropy in an intensive register. The more precise a system or "clock" is, the more potential system states it has; the more system states the more information gets lost to entropy; this loss leads to imbalances in the system; and the system becomes qualitatively self-differentiated in response. The causality goes both ways: from intensity to virtuality and from intensity to actuality. We end up with an infinite regress of systems: as a system produces new actualities that are also intensive systems their own structure changes in virtual terms *ad infinitum*. We can draw an analogy from entropy in clocks to definitional systems: the more precise we attempt to make a definition the more potential states the definition has and thus the more sub definitions are required.

Contra DeLanda's suggestion that there is "no suggestion that these spaces actually form a hierarchical structure,"³⁵⁶ this construal of cosmic history clearly features a hierarchy that prioritizes the virtual that tends towards conceptual purity a necessary to any and all empirical manifestations.³⁵⁷ The $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ structure maintains Platonic problems despite reversing the order of importance from essence to event, accident, and structure. The problem with Plato from

³⁵⁶ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 72.

³⁵⁷ See in particular footnote 30 of *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* at page 43; this construal of cosmology relies explicitly upon the unified field theory and its hierarchical implications.

a naturalistic outlook revolves around falsifiability and what criteria can be marshalled for falsification. The Virtual as the set of all sets, behind but found in a trace of everything we learn eventually to measure through ever more complex scientific devices, cannot be falsified because it relies upon logical evidence in the form of transcendental reasoning.

As we will see, concepts like ideology work in the exact same way. The most ontologically rigorous path, to phrase the above in older terms, is not to follow the path from $A \rightarrow B$ and $B \rightarrow A$ from *Difference and Repetition* and fall into problems of the Absolute, but to follow the path of $I \leftarrow B \rightarrow A$ found in the summary of *Thousand Plateaus*. If we address this split through the very empirical-naturalistic instead of the logical-empirical approach, it appears that what counts as extensity and what counts as intensity, outside of the Absolute intensive in *Difference and Repetition*, derives from a perspectival projection or a vector within the spatialization of a phenomenon through thought and then expression to resolve fuzzy borderlines. Intensity is not hidden to anything other than naïve phenomenology and we do not need to construct a set of all sets or a “space of all spaces” if we start in the middle and posit the overall model as an open system such that it does not fall prey to the problems of the Absolute found in Priest. Each model presents useful theoretical tools, but only one model insists that it has metaphysical status beyond its utility in the methods most in use across the humanistic disciplines.

Diffraction the Prospective and Retrospective Illusions and Naturalism

There are several loose ends here that need to be resolved; I have mentioned naturalism as a better framework than transcendental empiricism, but I have not done a terribly great job in terms of positive exposition. While it should be recognized that naturalism has several diverse

strains,³⁵⁸ the general thrust is quite simple: “Alongside the familiar pursuits of physics, botany, biology, and astronomy, the naturalist asks how it is that human beings, as described by physiology, psychology, linguistics, and the rest, come to reliable knowledge of the world, as described by physics chemistry and so on.”³⁵⁹ Ontological lines of inquiry, at least in the Quinean trajectory, focus on questions of how different theoretical-modelling, empirical-experimental, and logical-philosophical fit together by using the methodology of science to describe science itself.³⁶⁰ Put differently, for naturalists questions of methodology and ontology are inseparable because of how measurement in experimentation works.

The difference between naturalism and the kind of immanence through empiricism that Deleuze and DeLanda favor deals with falsifiability, the status of transcendental reasoning and the kind of conceptual totalities it tends to produce: “...idealizations are the life-blood of science – but we need to be aware of them just as we are elsewhere in science, so that we can assess their aptness.”³⁶¹ Philosophical idealizations in metaphysics are useful parallel to mathematical systems like set theory: they help us to model truths about the order we make of the universe through scientific experimentation. The final arbiter of truth comes not from logical adequacy, but the world itself: “Where the world fails to cooperate, our logic no longer applies. If the world overall were less cooperative, logic would not apply at all.”³⁶² The idealized and conceptual excesses of a given model, mathematical, philosophical, logical, or theoretical, system are useful in orienting ourselves within naturalistic inquiry, but they must be falsifiable or they are the kind

³⁵⁸ Penelope Maddy, “A Naturalistic Look at Logic,” 61.

³⁵⁹ Penelope Maddy, “Three Forms of Naturalism” in *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Math and Logic*, 438-439.

³⁶⁰ Ibid, 439 and Maddy, “A Naturalistic Look at Logic,” 63.

³⁶¹ Maddy, “A Naturalistic Look at Logic,” 74.

³⁶² Ibid, 77.

of transcendental reasoning that the very philosophy of immanence we have investigated above claims to be incorrect because they produce metaphysical fantasies.

I believe Karen Barad's variety of materialist naturalism, alongside Maddy's arguments about logical warrants, is indispensable for making the $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ model more robust. The following arguments need to be worked through in what follows to make this transition clear: Barad's ontology offers us a shift in register towards diffraction and auscultation that collapses the condition and conditioned in an infinite material regress with a fully material indeterminacy potentially capable of grounding zones of indetermination; Logic within the LNC and LEM modes bear a strange relationship to human history, but one that unnecessarily focuses on logics of sight instead of touch. We need, then, argumentative warrants more amenable to spatializing in expression the thought-system's own diffraction and probabilistic reasoning is a preferable step compared to dialetheism. Finally, chiasmus will be evaluated as the best spatializing trick to get one to think of an inside-outside and outside-inside necessary to dealing with fuzzy borderline cases.

Barad bases her ontology in Bohr's understanding of quantum mechanics. At a basic level, Bohr's interpretation opposes Heisenberg's more prevalent and common in popular culture version and is the commonly accepted practice in Quantum Mechanics today.³⁶³ Heisenberg interprets the experimental and mathematical results of Quantum Mechanics to demonstrate that we can know either the position or momentum of something like an electron, but that this limit is an epistemological limitation.³⁶⁴ Prior to striking the electron with the measuring photon, it has a determinate position and momentum, but we are limited by the paradox of measurement in which the measuring apparatus itself necessarily disturbs the thing we measure. This problem

³⁶³ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 19.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, 116.

exists at larger scales of being, but really comes into its own with Quantum Mechanics when we translate to sight the results of shooting particles at each other with a Scanning Tunnelling Electron Microscope.³⁶⁵ In short, measurement at this, and by implication all, scale does not simply represent the phenomena being measured but intervenes within them; the measuring device is not separable from the phenomena. Bohr interprets this result differently than Heisenberg: “Therefore we arrive at Bohr’s conclusion: observation is only possible on the condition that the effect of the measurement is indeterminable.”³⁶⁶ Indeterminacy, then, is not an epistemological block but an ontological feature of the world that, outside of laboratory processes, can be observed measuring-observing itself: resolving indeterminacy by producing more indeterminacy.³⁶⁷

The paradox of measurement does not indicate an epistemic lack but an ontological excess that follows into analyses stranger and higher scale than the photon-electron problem: “...hauntings are lively indeterminacies of time-being, materially constitutive of matter itself-indeed of everything and nothing...the dynamism of ontological indeterminacy of time-being/being-time in its materiality.”³⁶⁸ “Hauntings” is certainly poetic, but does the work in Quantum Field theory not resemble the kind of virtuality described by Deleuze? Yes, and no. Yes, it indicates a realm of being in which the vacuum is not nothing, but, instead, a strange quantum sea with particles popping in and out of being that we describe through various mathematical constructions.³⁶⁹ But no, these strange fields are not necessarily indicators of some transcendental virtuality because they *can* be measured: “However, the implication that the

³⁶⁵ Ibid, 356.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, 113. Italics Removed.

³⁶⁷ Ibid, 161.

³⁶⁸ Karen Barad, “No Small Matter: Mushroom Clouds, Ecologies of Nothingness, and Strange Topologies of Spacetime-mattering,” 113.

³⁶⁹ Close, *Nothing*, 108.

vacuum is filled with virtual particles can be detected by careful and precise measurements.”³⁷⁰

Quantum virtuality is not hidden along a logic of the condition and conditioned with the problematic visual phenomenology implied: indeterminacy is a generative materiality that can be felt at play in both larger scale organizations, such as “photosynthesis, bird navigation, and olfactory function,” and measured empirically by entangling various technological apparatuses within phenomena.³⁷¹ The condition behind the conditioned can be measured. In this sense, we have a kind of infinite regress between measurement and indeterminacy conceptually: every measurement produces new potentiality and contingently resolves old indeterminacy only by becoming entangled with the thing measured in the first place.³⁷²

For Barad, the paradox of measurement with its attendant immanent indeterminacy indicates that a phenomenon named diffraction is a better causal and boundary iterating metaphor, and real empirical phenomena, than others. The core thing to note here, avoiding the more complicated matters of explaining how everyday light, waves, and particles diffract, is that knowing itself is a becoming. Karen Barad puts it this way: “...the point is not merely that knowledge practices have material consequences but that practices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world.”³⁷³ We do not produce separation through knowing, both experimental and exercises in philosophical definition, but instead diffract through a pattern of resonances and dissonances from within the phenomena we describe. Measurement and metrics are intensive and immanent, their appearance as extensive and introducing negation confuses the scientific enterprise and invites the introduction of a metaphysic through definition against what is already a fantasy.

³⁷⁰ Ibid, 107.

³⁷¹ Barad, “Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Reaslitities and Queer Political Imaginings,” 410.

³⁷² Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 127.

³⁷³ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 91. Italics Removed.

The problem, then, with the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model arises in this gap between the condition and the conditioned and its implicit reliance on a transcendental mode of reasoning based on contradiction, whether such a view entails negation, that requires the positing of an Absolute to account for variation in becoming. Diffraction offers us a way out towards the $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ model conceptually but that presents difficulties expressively: there are no conditions that are not themselves conditioned in an infinite regress of entangled materiality with patterns of dissonance and resonance accounting for the visually apparent separation of phenomenon. Concepts like virtual structure and actual viscosity are useful theoretical fictions that cease their usefulness the instant they are taken as determinative of intensity in a hierarchical fashion tending towards and emerging from a pure Absolute. In this sense, matter *is* memory and memory has an indeterminate internality that produces contingency and thus the meaningful self-differences between things, from one perspective a condition and from another perspective conditioned, in terms of potentiality. The problem is spatializing this relatively abstract model into words: can we express these things without the patterns of analogy Deleuze, DeLanda, and Barad all rankle against? I do not think we can, and I think that analogy exceeds relationships of mere homology: patterns of analogy and disanalogy express through speech, as opposed to language, or interaction, as opposed to structure, by translation through semantic definition. The patterns we experience as apparatuses in world that are already translations of qualitatively distinct forces in a kind of material accretion.

The LNC and LEM share this modelling function as warrants that underlie higher cardinality argumentative structures and are indispensable to philosophy and theory in the way that mathematic inquiry is indispensable to scientific method.³⁷⁴ However, their ontological

³⁷⁴ Maddy, "Three forms of naturalism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mathematics and Logic*, 454-456.

status as metaphysically more than defining and boundary creating apparatuses is untenable. Maddy argues, with “the law of noncontradiction” and other classical bivalent warrants, in mind: “...it is hard to see how these laws could be revised without crippling the scientific enterprise.”³⁷⁵ Definition through argumentative warrants is a “boundary making processes” that resonates with both the experimental apparatuses and mathematical frameworks used in the hard sciences.³⁷⁶ We can take this linkage a step further to suggest that different methodologies in the humanities deploy argumentative warrants through higher order argumentative structures, like the retrospective and prospective illusions, such that better models of social reality and meaning making obtain. The key difference between a naturalist and realist take in this regard is that the apparent order or recurring isomorphic structures identified through an empirical effort at making philosophy immanent and not transcendent do not by necessity have an autonomous metaphysical existence beyond their role in the modelling apparatus. Positing them as causal or quasi-causal agents beyond any given conditioned necessarily relies upon necessity itself: they become dialetheic absolutes based upon logical and not empirical truth criteria.

This problem scales up to mathematics regardless of which among many positions you take on the relationship between mathematics and logic, and there are too many to cover in depth here.³⁷⁷ There are equally many takes on the central problematic of philosophy of mathematics that Shapiro outlines quite succinctly: “The burden on any complete philosophy of mathematics is to show how mathematics is applied to the material world, and to show how the methodology of mathematics (whatever it may be) fits into the methodology of the sciences (whatever it may

³⁷⁵ Ibid, 443-444.

³⁷⁶ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 148. Italics Removed.

³⁷⁷ Stewart Shapiro, “Philosophy of Mathematics and Its Logic: Introduction” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mathematics and Logic*, 7-8.

be).”³⁷⁸ We will hardly get to a complete philosophy of how logic entails mathematical modelling nor will we exhaustively probe the depths of mathematics’ relationship to metaphysical inquiry; the aim here is to establish a baseline of naturalist answers to these different problems before moving onto how the ratio based modelling system of both argumentative warrants and mathematics inflects our ontological considerations.

I want to supplement Maddy’s naturalism with a strange evolutionary account from Quine and draw special attention to the role of contingency in the fit between mathematical model and empirical phenomena. Mathematics broadly conceived is indispensable to scientific process, but the naturalist is wary of overly ambitious generalizations into metaphysics because of the empirical requirements of naturalism.³⁷⁹ Empirical verification of some of mathematic’s predictive capacity “does not confirm its ontology... the empirical confirmation does not transfer holistically to the mathematical existence claims.”³⁸⁰ There are a multitude of mathematical models that have applications to one or another physical theory; take, for example, Einstein’s correspondence with Marcel Grossman, where the mathematician suggested Riemann’s non-Euclidian geometry as a model both conducive to the conceptualization of relativity and predictions within the model.³⁸¹ So, Riemann in, Euclid out? Not necessarily: new correspondence to physical theories does not refute the value of mathematical models’ potential applicability: “To see how, consider the case of Euclidean geometry. General relativity did refute it in its original role as a theory of physical space, but it still has important mathematical models, and survives through reinterpretation as a theory of Euclidean spaces.”³⁸² To be precise, the

³⁷⁸ Ibid, 4. Italics Removed.

³⁷⁹ Maddy, “Three Forms of Naturalism” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mathematics and Logic*, 444 and 453.

³⁸⁰ Ibid, 457.

³⁸¹ Maddy, “Some Naturalistic Reflections on Set Theoretic Method,” 25.

³⁸² Resnik, “Quine and the Web of Belief,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mathematics and Logic*, 423.

expansion of Euclidean geometry to Euclidean spaces of infinite dimension results in the “Hilbert Spaces” that are used to represent the “phase space” of a quantum system.³⁸³ Maths do not die because math can be articulated as a system of ramifying ratios, even with regards to irrational and complex numbers that present one among many expansions of the concept of number itself, that serve as a modelling function based loosely upon predictivity and expression or how well it serves physics’ aims.

In this sense, math is creative and pseudo-contingent: “...we have seen already that mathematics is not only a medium of proof; it is an engine of discovery...”³⁸⁴ and “‘Predictions’ were made in a new way...mathematics was used to show what is possible, the assumption being that what is mathematically possible is physically actual.”³⁸⁵ Math is a creative enterprise even when its applications may seem obscure or inconsistent: “Physicists insist on the form of equations even when their content is obscure...Feynman introduced mathematical notation for calculations in quantum electrodynamics...which...lack a consistent mathematical interpretation even today.”³⁸⁶ There are two things to note here: first, mathematical systems frequently elaborate without regard to physical explanations by “the application of mathematics to itself.”³⁸⁷ Mathematics ramifies outwards as ever increasingly complex systems of deductive entailment within a given mathematical framework internal to a given system, builds on itself with new categories of mathematical object and new systems, and the connections between a given math and a given physical phenomena may remain obscure or be replaced by new maths. A layer of contingency exists in which maths get applied where: what applications and predictive powers

³⁸³ Mark Steiner, “Mathematics—Application and Applicability” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mathematics and Logic*, 637.

³⁸⁴ Ibid, 644.

³⁸⁵ Ibid, 641.

³⁸⁶ Ibid, 645.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, 647.

are understood, and which ones are not. In short, any fully Platonist mathematics must account for why this math in this case but not another or fully schematize the whole of mathematics consistently under set or, more likely, category theory. I have not yet found an undisputed effort at doing so and must leverage Humean skepticism that any apparently successful effort may not stay that way in the arc of disciplinary history.

Second, the case of quantum mechanics presents a far greater challenge to becoming itself characterized by indeterminacy and contingency. Within the Standard Model of particle physics, there are two glaring holes: mass and gravity have not yet been demonstrated to possess the properties of the particle wave formation empirically, nor have scientists or mathematicians sufficiently explained why certain groupings of mass volumes obtain over others.³⁸⁸ The relationship between model and the real blurs at radical scales and intensity of becoming, but this relationship is pseudo-contingent in a diachronic and synchronic sense.

On the diachronic hand, it is highly likely that the completion of the standard model only raises more questions, especially as our technological capacities expand to provide more measuring apparatuses to transduce phenomena from registers perceptually distant to our cosmological scale into experimental apparatuses through which we can manipulate these phenomena and into data through which we can understand them. Science, mathematics, and the models they share may themselves form an infinite progress, especially if becoming itself *is* an infinite progress. In this sense, our best models are perspectival projections that attempt to capture a potentially infinite universe in temporarily actual infinite absolutes. On the synchronic hand, the reason why a given model fits a given phenomena well must be clarified, as must the capacity of powerful mathematic theories like category theory to unify diverse ramifications of

³⁸⁸ Quanta Magazine, “The Most Successful Scientific Theory Ever: The Standard Model.”

different branches of mathematics. In a purely speculative mode, I doubt we will manage to do this thing: if the physical laws of the universe themselves may well be mutable then the math that we describe these laws with will ramify ever outwards to keep up with the universe itself. If we know the masses of muons, we still do not know why these masses and not others obtain. Math is pseudo-contingent then: which maths for which problem presents contingency, but within a given model the maths operate by conviction and the necessary entailment rational and deductive thinking, regardless of whatever intuitive and so on components their genesis is wrought.

Yet, we can examine the relationship between mathematics, theory, and logic in a more everyday sense. First, the phenomenological experience of doing maths is not quite the same as the pure idealized space of the models nor the extremely abstract work we find in physics. Eugenia Cheng draws this aspect of mathematics out clearly with the examples of “ $8 + 1 = 1 + 8$ ” and “ $2 \times 5 = 5 \times 2$.”³⁸⁹ Children, in her experience, have greater difficulty with “ $1 + 8$ ” compared to “ $8 + 1$ ” because the cognitive process of counting one above eight is easier than counting eight above one.³⁹⁰ “Commutativity,” or the ability to change the order of mathematical operators and achieve the same solution, helps with this cognitive difficulty, but this skill that appears given in mathematics is one that must be phenomenologically learned in the application of model to problem. Consider the next problem with cookies and bags in which bags is the left term and cookies the right: two bags of five cookies is not phenomenologically the same as five bags of two cookies, even if their product is the same and the equation is commutative.³⁹¹ The experience of doing something as simple as simple algebra and counting suggest that mathematics is not exactly this pure ideal some like to cast it as, at least in our cognitive

³⁸⁹ Eugenia Cheng, “Category Theory in Life – Eugenia Cheng,” 20:20-24:00.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

machinery, and that not all proofs are created equally inasmuch as they require the conviction of cognitive machinery. The experience of both applying and generating new models cannot be erased underneath the apparently pure solutions of mathematics.

I have spent much time discussing the role of Soritic Paradoxes in logic, but we will not go into the set-theoretic antimonies nor the consequences of Gödel for mathematical systems' consistency. More productive to the larger claims of this dissertation is to examine the scientific-empirical version of the Sorites Paradox, the Forced March Paradox, to suggest an immanent probabilism superior to dialetheic projections at the level of the Absolute. Not unlike the cookie counting and potentially cookie hoarding child, the Forced March Paradox requires dispelling the ambiguity of borderline cases by making a choice through active determination instead of falling into the Soritic Paradoxes by insisting upon a categorical determination or definition before empirical investigation. Laurence Goldstein articulates this idea without cookies: "The Sorites paradox, usually treated as a problem in logic or formal semantics, also lends itself to experimental investigation."³⁹² The forced march paradox forces a set of human subjects to make a determination along a sliding borderline case.³⁹³ An experimenter might have 50 cards on a gradient between purple and blue and subjects press the button when they want to cut off the infinite regress and empirically determine that purple has become sufficiently blue.³⁹⁴ This seemingly simple example has connections to the more abstract work above: it sheds light on the issues examined earlier relating to the Inclosure Paradox, philosophers push their own button when they cast a domain on infinite regress. In this sense, the Forced March Paradox is poorly named and only a paradox from the perspective of classical bivalence. A set of active

³⁹² Laurence Goldstein, "The Sorites is Nonsense Disguised by a Fallacy," 61.

³⁹³ Ibid, 62.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

determinations given by a population can be mapped out statistically such that a limited, local, and subject to change definitional boundary can be constructed without recourse to a spectral Absolute that attempts to sort the boundaries for all time.

The problem comes in with classical bivalence and arguments from necessity given that the probabilistic distribution of empirically selected definitions or boundaries will not be amenable to true or false truth values, we must change our stance towards bivalence, dialetheism, and fuzzy logics. To put it differently and in a way relevant to the Deleuze models: there can be no strict boundary between any given condition and its conditioned or else the messy quality of the definitional apparatus will lead to the positing of an Absolute and will violate the immanence criteria. The $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ model attempts to deal with the problem of contradiction by reducing various absolutes to tendencies that never obtain, thus keeping the ontology of the universe and the metaphysics of the model comported towards potential infinity or an open system. It internalizes contradiction reconceived as probabilistic indeterminacy and warrants truth criteria through empirical adequacy and verification. Hierarchy and purity become relativistic quantitative gradients of a given quality that can be determined locally, through a given apparatus, within a certain orientation, with a given perspective, and are provisional but useful excesses of logic. The goal is not to overturn Platonism; what we have is simply an alternative which suggests a possible path for avoiding others that are fully absorbed by process and affect. In this sense, the ramifying progress of academic disciplines and theories produce models of becoming that yield a massive forced march paradox with no final term nor singular convergence.

Back to the big picture

It will be helpful, in my view, to tally the main claims of this extensive chapter so that the reader can better take stock of their implications for rhetorical theory, which are taken up next:

1. The structure of the prospective illusion derives from Bergson before his encounter with Einstein. Many different durations exist and inflect each other at once with no final term. We can analyze them by differentiating their qualitative tendencies and pushing out their ramifications towards a conceptual purity that never fully obtains.
2. Bergson breaks from his own *Matter and Memory* cascading duration system in *Duration and Simultaneity* when he reacts to logically contradictory results from general and special relativity by positing a retrospective illusion based upon the poorly posed question involved in the time // space dualism. The results of a prospective analysis become re-integrated into the monistic fabric of virtual being conceived of as Duration as Absolute or what I have argued is a rather strange one-all multiplicity.
3. Deleuze takes the model in *Bergsonism* into a different register by displacing time//space into virtual//intensive//actual and quantity//quality into metric//nonmetric in the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model. Virtual singularities in an Absolute Virtual self-differentiate themselves into a homogenous space of intensity theorized as a plane of the differential rates of change of all intensive differences that change their quality when they affect one another such that the actual phenomenal world obtains.
4. DeLanda attempts to give this “space of all spaces” or “plane of consistency” ontologically realist status through transcendently reasoning that different systematic isomorphies or distributions of differences imply a single source, the Virtual as Absolute. But in doing so, he

violates the stipulation against inference by logical necessity required by naturalist immanence to posit a realist metaphysical entity that cannot be falsified.

5. Yet, DeLanda also provides a transduction between the Process and Virtual models in his invocation of the quasi-cause and counter-actualization. The quasi-cause acts as an operator of pure difference that causes virtual series to communicate by maintaining a substratum of actuality; counter-actualization suggests that actuality itself has the capacity to sublimate back into the Virtual.
6. However, extensity itself presents a metaphysical fantasy of pure metric precision that has no grounding in empirical being. Any construction of intensity as pure difference and the Virtual as the potential structure of difference that relies upon defining itself against this fantasy appears invalid through both the immanence and negation criteria.
7. The reduction of entropy to extensity presents a difficult problem for DeLanda. As extensive, it is causally only ever an effect. But his own empirical example of the Big Bang's progressive differentiation requires entropy to obtain and some level of ontological indeterminacy in which chance itself accounts for the seemingly arbitrary, modally speaking, values that various forms of matter tend towards.
8. Indeterminacy as a materialist ontological agent, through Karen Barad's philosophy-physics, provides the ontological grounding for indeterminacy as a material excess and generative force in Bohr's model of quantum mechanics and quantum field theory.
9. The paradoxes of measurement indicate that any apparatus designed to translate phenomena into forms amenable to human perception becomes a co-participant in the phenomena it seeks to determine.

10. With Barad, we have methodology all the way down because experimental apparatuses attempt to close off the open system of the universe to draw out particular tendencies with the assumption that these tendencies exist outside of the laboratory setting. Acts of definition and semantic apparatuses are not separate from this process; humanistic and social science methodologies are apparatuses as well that participate, in their own way, in the becoming of the universe. This stance implies a universal, to humans, naturalism in which the ultimate criteria for truth are empirical adequacy through fit to model, probabilism, and the predictive power of a given theory based upon experiments.
11. Logical warrants such as the LNC and LEM may not be suitable for all empirical situations nor for history of the universe and our participation in this history. I find them inadequate because they tend to lead to modes of necessity and transcendental reasoning to shove paradox and indeterminacy off into an absolute that, in turn, produces more paradox and indeterminacy as new theories about it arise.
12. However, if the model – real relationship remains in stark focus through naturalism, these kinds of systems and logical warrants can be viewed analogously to mathematics in physics: as useful fictions whose conclusions must be watched carefully.
13. Mathematics and logic's relationship is far from certain, but modern science uses math as a creative language to iterate out potential structures. These structures are used to model different physical phenomena; different structures fit different natural systems differently. The key is not to make a metaphysical leap of faith where none is needed.
14. Mathematical Platonic Idealism cannot obtain so long as mathematics has not been made consistent under a specific theory through a specific method and some reason as to why this

model with this phenomenon obtain. Given the iterative and ramifying process of both sciences and mathematics, I take a skeptic but open stance to this potential obtaining.

15. Soritic Paradoxes only inhere at the level of the logical structure of language; we can eliminate them through empirical inquiry or the forced march paradox and by accepting a more probabilistic universe in which boundaries are fuzzy.

The general structure of both the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ and $A \rightarrow I \rightarrow V$ and $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ models is the key predicate for my examination of rhetorical theory and critical methodology because it formalizes the prospective, retrospective, and the diffraction of both orientations. Each orientation, the tautological and the diffracted, have applications to humanistic inquiry as long as we acknowledge, in line with naturalism, that they are modelling excesses that help human cognition produce perspectival projections that usefully close off some parts of an open system such that others can be studied more closely. The question is methodological: what humanistic methods are well suited to the tautological and diffracted models respectively?

In rhetorical theory, we will see that an over-reliance upon close reading as methodology and constitutive rhetoric as theory brackets the vast majority of work within tautological cycles that project the very totalities, namely ideology or hegemony, that they strive to subvert. The diffractive model suggests that methodological pluralism may better deal with empirical phenomena, and suggests a mode of rhetoric as creation that can eschew modelling entirely by intervening in the world. To naturalizing rhetorical theory and criticism we now turn.

CHAPTER IV: ILLUSIONS AND RHETORICAL THEORY

The preceding chapters have produced three different argumentative apparatus-structures. First, the retrospective illusion that abstracts an attribute, universalizes it into a category through necessary chains of transcendental reasoning, and uses a quantitative form of reasoning to account for and predict variation in empirical things. Second, the prospective illusion that attempts to explain the genesis of a thing by ramifying its qualitative tendencies towards an illusory conceptual limit in chains of sufficient reasoning. Despite its different vector, the prospective illusion can still result in a retrospective one when the conceptual limit becomes retroactively applied as the necessary condition for genesis as such. Finally, the diffractive apparatus that suggests that the vectors $A \rightarrow B$ and $B \rightarrow A$ that generalize how each illusion deals with problems of vagueness are themselves a kind of necessary perspectival projection that arises in measurement-definition. A naturalistic footing positions the illusions as a kind of necessary logical fiction subject to empirical verification in the world of definition parallel to mathematics necessary function in science. Metaphysical fictions and categories appear unavoidable as part of the human conceptual apparatus and its given-ness to regress, and we should not avoid them because they afford us models of reality that facilitate social action. However, we must be careful in treating them as ontologically anterior or totalizing to avoid being trapped by our own fictions.

These broad philosophical apparatus-structures are not only relevant to philosophy. Theory and philosophy differ only in perspective and vector combined with a tendency towards difference in scale. Theory tends to move from some set of objects whose membership is determined by academic discipline (A) to universal categories (B) derived from exploring the objects through a set of partially shared disciplinary methodologies, like close reading for the

humanities. Other scholars then take the universal categories (B) and use them to explicate the objects of their discipline (A) to create meaning or to modify the parameters of the universal itself. Philosophy presents greater difficulty because many tendencies coexist within each philosopher: intuitivist, speculative, analytic, and critical name some broad orientations towards philosophical endeavors. In general, philosophers are interested in universal questions such as what is extensive and intensive or how do we tell apart one from many. Philosophers move from universals (B) to experience, empirical example, intuition, critique of their forebears, or logic games (A) to then move back into edifying their universals (B), even if their way of doing so, as is Deleuze's, is to argue that B is better expressed by generality than universality! Both pursuits move in both directions; The difference subsists in perspective, initial vector, and final goal. Theory tends towards explaining the particular at a concrete level; philosophy tends towards explaining the universal at an abstract level. The difference between philosophy and theory is merely historical and apparent. Historical, because philosophy has typically been granted the privileged role in the dyad and been mythologized as occurring first; Apparent, because the difference derives from perspective and not orientation.

This chapter switches registers from the intersection of argumentation with philosophy to theoretical pursuits. Specifically, the pursuits of rhetorical studies, although analogy to other fields can be drawn. The movement here parallels that from the previous chapters' model of Deleuze with the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ structure in mind. I argue that $\text{Ideology} \rightarrow \text{Rhetoric} \rightarrow \text{Action}$ ($I \rightarrow R \rightarrow A$) describes the prevailing mode of ideological ontology and prescribe $\text{Ideology} \leftarrow \text{Rhetoric} \rightarrow \text{Action}$ ($I \leftarrow R \rightarrow A$) as an alternative. The same structure and remedy holds for new materialist rhetorical theory: $\text{Rhetoricity} \rightarrow \text{Rhetorical} \rightarrow \text{Rhetoric}$ ($R \rightarrow R \rightarrow R$) must be made into $\text{Rhetoricity} \leftarrow \text{Rhetorical} \rightarrow \text{Rhetoric}$ ($R \leftarrow R \rightarrow R$). The basic move of this chapter

follows the exact critical logic it attempts to reform: the philosophical apparatus-structures will be used to identify retrospective and prospective tendencies in each kind of rhetorical theory to see where the pattern fits and benefit from analyzing where it does not. In short, the retrospective illusion largely dominates both modes of rhetorical theory by producing a conceptual totality that overdetermines human agency and analytic options for scholarship. The remedy involves considering the benefits of a prospective illusion perspective, pushing on the duality between perspectives with the diffractive apparatus, and exploding the methodological tools and ontological assumptions available to rhetoricians.

Ideology and Rhetorical Theory and Criticism

Broadly conceived, ideology describes the difference between the material way we live our lives and the stories, ideas, or representations that we have about ourselves and the way we live our lives. How a scholar constructs ideology varies widely: it can follow a vulgar Marxist bent in which ideology only functions as an intentional tool of the ruling class for class war; Laclau and Mouffe describe it more as a system in which a hegemonic ideology maintains its position through partial incorporation of minority ideologies; Althusser positions ideology as material inasmuch as it exists in social organizations that determine the flow of everyday life and in our very construction as subjects. The above rundown hardly exhausts the nuances of available positions, of course, but most theories of ideology offer some variation on the idea of false consciousness. Simply, the idea that political-economic reality and how we think of it differ and that this difference ends up oppressing some while empowering others.

Ideological critique frequently follows a logic of unmasking. If the critic can reveal contradiction between what we are told and what we can measure, then oppressed people will realize their state of false consciousness and resist it, whether through progressive politics or

outright bloody revolution. This critical orientation exerts useful force for social change because, were it completely devoid of value, repressive forces in our country would not so rankle against academics teaching critical theory.

Some social ontologies, however, offered in the spirit of the ideological turn, present conceptual difficulties that follow from a retrospective illusion that posits ideology as a universal category with no outside. Critique becomes a never-ending negative critique that only reacts to worldly events and can conceptualize no outside to ideology. Ideology all the way down, so to speak. The dominant methodology, which centers on the close reading of texts to find meaning through the contingent gap between what was said and what could have been said, follows from a commitment to ontological contingency as a necessary universal feature for the emergence of rhetoric. But, when close reading exhausts our methodological repertoire, we can end up in a strange documentarian mode, where rhetoric becomes a slow science that claims to be about meaning making and not prediction yet, from the vantage of disciplinary history, appears very much about prediction. Making meaning is important, but if the goal is social change why would we not want to use more quantitatively rigorous methods to predict typical occurrences, close reading to explain statistical outliers, and creative methodologies like activist ethnography to attempt to produce change through positive action instead of negative critique?

This section, and chapter, cannot take us through this journey in its entirety, but will endeavor to at least lay bare the ontological assumptions of ideological rhetorical theory, its fundamental goals, typical methodology and its ontological commitments, and to push back on totalizing modes of ideology with alternatives drawn from the broader process ontology constructed in previous chapters. We move these themes in the following pattern: foundational texts in ideological rhetorical theory set up a problematic, the relevant parts of the content

analysis found in full in Appendix I demonstrate the problems influence, and then partial solutions are offered to supplement existing theory and method.

The Necessity of Contingency

Contingency is a necessary ontological feature for the broadest assumptions of rhetorical theory to have a ground. In a hard determinist universe, a discipline that stresses varying degrees of free will that make the choice between different speech articulations in its instrumental rhetoric guise or the gaps in the sociological formation of the subject meaningful could not exist. We would be better served embracing rhetoric as information science and the illusion of choice as a catalyst for advancing a predetermined Universe. Physics has not managed to eliminate indeterminism from its frameworks nor unified them under a common mathematical expression that could account for all beings. The movement in rhetorical theory with regards to contingency can broadly be mapped through the following progression: individual choice in instrumental and active speech making → context provides a way to make contingency meaningful → contingency exists not only in individual speech but in ideology as anterior social force. Put differently, ideology becomes the ur-context of rhetoric. The following documents early formulations of contingency in foundational ideological texts and then demonstrates their persistence with reference to the content analysis. I do not proffer a solution for contingency, only a reorientation in how we work within it from a retrospective to prospective mode.

McGee and Brummet provide tight enunciations of contingency. Brummett's grappling with positivism produces this formulation: "No physical stimulus is inherently meaningful, for meaning must be given to experience, it is not a part of it automatically... The answer is that people get meanings from other people through communication... if contexts give meaning, then

the meaning of a person or thing or idea is constantly changing.”³⁹⁵ McGee follows a similar line of argument at the intersection of individual and society: “...there is a lack of necessity in social control...Nothing *necessarily* restricts persons who wield the might of the state...nothing *necessarily* determines individual behavior and belief”³⁹⁶ and “No individual...is *forced* to submit in the same way that a conditioned dog is obliged to salivate or socialized children are required to speak English.”³⁹⁷ While contingency may be necessary to rhetoric in general, no local necessity does more than constrain individual choice at an empirical level. Whether working in an individual-action-instrumental mode or one that links the social to ideology and ideology to rhetoric,³⁹⁸ the fundamental argument that one place to find contingency arises between what is said and the context of what is said may well be ubiquitous for rhetorical theory in general.

Charland’s “Constitutive Rhetoric” expands contingency at the level of instrumental choice into the register of subjectifying, and therefore constitutive, narratives: “First, audience members must be successfully interpellated; not all constitutive rhetorics succeed. Second, the tautological logic of constitutive rhetoric must necessitate action in the material world; constitutive rhetoric must require that its embodied subjects act freely in the social world to affirm their subject position.”³⁹⁹ We are given contingency at three levels. Constitutive rhetorics are ontologically necessary to subjectivity as such, but, because constitution may fail, any specific constitutive rhetoric emerges contingently in the positive sense or without necessity in

³⁹⁵ Barry Brummett, “Some Implications of ‘process’ or ‘Intersubjectivity’: Postmodern Rhetoric,” 29.

³⁹⁶ Michael Calvin McGee, “The Ideograph: a Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology,” 5. Italics in original.

³⁹⁷ Ibid, 6. Italics in original.

³⁹⁸ McGee makes this argument explicitly: “...I will suggest that ideology in practice is a political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior.” in “The Ideograph: a Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology” at page five. This sentence does not quite rise to the level of constitutive rhetoric, but it does come close because ideology appears to be anterior to “political language” that materializes in “rhetorical documents.”

³⁹⁹ Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*,” 141.

the negative sense. The host bodies that have been ideologically interpolated must somehow act freely, or perhaps he means under the assumption of freedom, to reproduce the constative rhetoric through material action. Contingency emerges at the level of interpolation, the yes or no to a subjectifying force, and at the level of future action, how a given individual chooses to “act out” the ideological fantasy. These modes of contingency exhibit a regress that factors in more later in this chapter but provide a third form of contingency early on. How do these ideological narratives emerge in the first place? Opportunities to identify with *Québécois* identity, and thus be interpolated, draw from many sources historical and contemporary to the movement and emerge against their configuration of Canadian identity. We are already off on a regress when we either try to totalize Canadian identity as a local absolute the *Québécois* position as other or attempt to account for the features and choices of that Canadian identity against its precursor ideologies. At some point, the perspectival projection must be made by both the scholar analyzing the event and the people living it. For now, let it suffice to say that an individual’s reaction to ideology varies and the historical content of that ideology itself does not follow from ontological necessity because it is inextricably bound with its materialization.

The “ASS: Contingency and Affordances/Constraints” category in the content analysis demonstrates the persistence of contingency as a necessary characteristic of being for rhetorical theory and criticism. Thirteen of the sixteen articles in the sample exhibit reliance upon contingency at some ontological scale. Refer to the appendix for a more detailed analysis.

Three fundamental assumptions emerge from the above: hard determinism does not adequately account for human behavior because there is something about the human that brings contingency into at least social affairs; the meanings we make in response to this contingency are

made from communication (and therefore rhetoric); contexts are vital to explicating these meanings, in constant flux though they may be.

I have no great suggestion for remedying the necessity of contingency as described in ideological rhetorical theory because, while it does not sufficiently account for the qualitative becomings of historically discrete rhetorics or ideologies, I have spent immense time in each preceding chapter attempting to argue that contingency and indeterminacy are features of reality. The problem with contingency and ideology as accounted for in the rhetorical tradition emerges at a different place when degrees of contingency become rationales for assigning agency, when the question becomes which structure or agent exerts the majority of agency in a given causal interaction. Perhaps, some theory of the quality of different kinds of contingency that underly distributions of agency could emerge, but it will not do so here.

Constitutive Rhetoric: Agency, Materiality, and Regress

These three topics in constitutive rhetoric deserve, and in some cases have, entire books written about them. A comprehensive treatment exceeds the possibilities of this project, but we can identify the tendencies in two foundational texts and note the categories emergent from the content analysis that support their continued influence in the field. Regress emerges at two levels: the problem of expressing the structures and assumptions from my reading of the sources and that these topics are themselves inextricable because of the speculative bent of this kind of theory. Each term, and the next section on critical method, entails one another and enumerates ever more positions through the systematic mapping of different intersections. Social ontology is ontology and features the speculative bent inherent to this kind of effort. The key will be close reading the texts selected for moments of under and over-determination around vital problematics, namely materiality and agency. This reading informs us that the current social

ontology of ideological rhetorical theory bends towards a retrospective direction and suggestions for at least incorporating a prospective perspective will be evaluated.

Charland's "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*" is among the richest works in rhetorical theory and criticism ever constructed and many of the difficulties of social ontology of ideology emerge here. Constitutive rhetoric emerges in an argument between persuasion and identification: "...rhetorical theory's privileging of an audience's freedom to judge is problematic, for it assumes that audiences, with their prejudices, interests, and motive, are *given* and so extra-rhetorical."⁴⁰⁰ The question here ties back into the earlier commentary on Schiappa's big vs little rhetoric in determining what counts as rhetorical. Intentional or instrumental modes of rhetorical theory implement a perspectival projection at the level of audience by bracketing any prior persuasion that brought them to the speech event. One of the fundamental moves of constitutive rhetoric involves pushing that perspectival projection into wider valence. The speech act itself becomes symptomatic of wider socially constructed discourses at a structural level that occur prior to persuasion.

Causal regress slips in immediately: "...attempts to elucidate ideological or identify-forming discourses as persuasive are trapped in a contradiction: persuasive discourse requires a subject-as-audience who is already constituted with an identity and within an ideology."⁴⁰¹ Presumably, identity and ideology likewise rely upon material-discursive acts for their emergence and articulation. Causal efficacy becomes difficult to determine in multimodal regress between audience, rhetor, and ideology. We have run into the Chicken and Egg problem between the domain of an Absolute and the potential infinity of material agency once again.

⁴⁰⁰ Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*," 133.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 134.

The move from persuasion to identification shifts the regress to that between discourse and materiality. We can see this problem clearly near the start of the essay: “Political identity must be an ideological fiction, even though, as McGee correctly notes, this fiction becomes historically material and of consequence as people live it.”⁴⁰² What we have here resembles a classical problem in Marxist theory: given the base // superstructure split, which side has greater causal efficacy? For Marx, it must be the mode of production. He reverses the priority found in Hegelian thought from the dialectic of thought tending towards Absolute Spirit into a superstructure that serves primarily to justify, not determine, a given system of production. Does the material exert agency over the discursive? Does the discursive exert agency over the material? Is there, perhaps, a blurred construal that gives both concepts clear tendency while recognizing their inextricability?

Charland appears aware this problem in at least two places that mention tautology and at two levels of scale, one at the level of empirical phenomena and the second at the level of theoretical generalizations about the phenomena. One of the tricks of constitutive rhetoric is “the positing of a transhistorical subject” such that “today’s Quebec residents...have a right to their own state because members of their community have discovered and occupied the land.”⁴⁰³ At the level of phenomena, constitutive rhetoric “...is perfectly reasonable. It is also perfectly tautological, for it is a making sense that depends upon the a priori acceptance of that which it attempts to prove the existence of...”⁴⁰⁴ We must take great care here to note that this description is of constitutive rhetoric in an empirical sense and that the process an individual engaged in when they accept interpolation has a similar structure to the retrospective illusion. An identity

⁴⁰² Ibid, 137.

⁴⁰³ Ibid, 140.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 140.

has been projected backwards to account for itself in a chain of historically necessary causes. Yet, we know that individuals must accept this interpolation and that they may have to read a great many newspapers on Quebec identity, go to some meetings, or hangout at a separatist bar. It appears to me that the retrospective bent with interpolation in which an identity-event happens, “oh, this is me!” conflates the model with the reality and erases persuasion in favor of conviction. I am unsure as to whether constitutive rhetoric requires this moment of conversion as “a priori acceptance.”

The second regress is difficult because the description of the social ontology of the empirical process named constitutive rhetoric and the ontological assumptions of the rhetorical theory named constitutive rhetoric commit to the same kind of retrospective illusion:

“Audiences are, to use Althusser’s famous phrase, ‘always already’ subjects. This is to say that if we disregard the point at which a child enters language, but restrict ourselves to ‘competent’ speakers within a culture, we can observe that one cannot exist but as a subject within a narrative. The *necessity is ontological*: one must already be a subject in order to be addressed or to speak.”⁴⁰⁵

Interpellation, as glossed in the preceding paragraph, replicates the retrospective illusion of the empirical processes it studies: we have some evental and local absolute that attempts to forestall regress but leaves out the usefulness of regress in determining differences in kind through potential-infinite chains. I find the attribution of “always already” to Althusser curious. The strange preposition, to my knowledge, originates with Heidegger, but we will not go down this rabbit hole here. The “always already” indicates that the theory of constitutive rhetoric shares features with the empirical phenomena it ostensibly describes: to tie subjectivity to cultural

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, 141. Italics mine.

narratives and make it narratives all the way down. In a sense, the theory of subjectivity advanced is itself constitutive rhetoric in this way. The history of the subject becomes as tautological when we consider discrete subjects and specific narratives: “Constitutive rhetorics of new subject positions can be understood...as working upon previous discourses, upon previous constitutive rhetorics. They capture alienated subjects by re-articulating existing subject positions...”⁴⁰⁶ Charland’s explanation provides us with the two sides of the Inclosure Paradox: a domain in which a conceptual interpolation bounds any specific interpolation as an absolute alongside a potential infinity of subject positions whose existence and efficacy depends upon previous subject positions. Subjects may be “always already” subjects but, if the narratives they are subjectified to work through regress and are a multitude, determining which narrative and its quality requires a move away from interpolation as conviction event towards a more processual and persuasive register.

Charland’s approach to agency in this tautological regress varies. One perspective follows the linguistic-structural determination of the subject and severely curtails individual agency to the point of erasing it in its strongest articulation. Charland relatively follows Burke and Freud in an interpretation of the individual-social relationship that skews towards top-down causality: “...Burke moves towards collapsing the distinction between the realm of the symbolic and that of human conceptual consciousness...their very constitution in rhetoric as a structured articulation of signs.”⁴⁰⁷ This statement typifies the kind of social ontology found in linguistic turn thinking. We appear incapable of articulating ourselves without signification and every act can be given significance in the signifying regime of a given culture; therefore, we are signification. Charland deploys psychoanalysis to support this point: “...as G. H. Mead and

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, 142.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, 137.

Freud have made clear, subjectivity is always social, constituted in language, and exists in a delicate balance of contradictory drives and impulses...⁴⁰⁸ and narratives repress the reality of constant process and change in favor of the fantasy of pure totality. Regress creeps in here as well the instant we question the relationship between drive and desire, but a full treatment of that relationship would take us far off course. The focus in these quotes resonates clearly with linguistic turn themes: we are interested in language as a top-down and determinative signifying structure in which specific ideologies are constituted of rhetoric and dominate human agency. We have the tautology-regress typical of the linguistic turn which is a retrospective illusion: sometimes ideology, sometimes language, sometimes narrative, sometimes subjectivity, sometimes society are determinative totalities at once anterior to and yet also somehow produced by their own parts. The category bounds regress and becomes an end to itself.

Human agency becomes strained at best and impossible at worst if we accept Charland's "third ideological effect of constitutive rhetoric"⁴⁰⁹ at its full force. He argues: "Freedom is illusory because the narrative is already spoken or written...because the narrative is a structure of understanding that produces totalizing interpretations, the subject is constrained to *follow through*, to act so as to maintain the narratives consistency."⁴¹⁰ This passage puts a finer point on the above: the linguistic structure requires totalization such that the only agency at the level of the human is a simple yes or no.

But would a scholar committed to a hard version of ideological constraints and affordances in a totalizing logic accept a no as agency? A linguistic turn purist might offer something like this pushback: "Ah, but the no is an action conditioned by a different ideology

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, 139.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, 141.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

that fits into the system of hegemonic ideology, so it too is determined in the last instance by the regime of signification typical to a given historical subjectivity.” This line of reasoning problematically prioritizes linguistic structure over everyday speech.

Charland’s own analysis centers on one organization’s written declaration of Québécois identity but does not measure the everyday conversations that led to this document’s formation from the perspective of those working within the organization nor the everyday speech of those who pull towards identification or not. At times, conviction explicitly overtakes persuasion: “The process by which an audience member enters into a new subject position is therefore not one of persuasion. It is akin more to one of conversion...”⁴¹¹ The ideological move to any everyday persuasion moves the perspectival projection of ideology back a step like a strange spectral spirit, always lurking behind each empirical event. The linguistic-ideological-subjective event at the level of theory has totalized the persuasive speech underneath it and an entire network of productive disagreement. The relationship, then, between discourse and materiality proffered here casts bodies and the material as the puppet of ideology: “The form of an ideological rhetoric is effective because it is within the bodies of those it constitutes as subjects... ‘An ‘ideology’ is like a god coming down to earth...like a spirit taking up its abode in a body...”⁴¹² Ideology from the perspective of constitutive rhetoric is a retrospective illusion: it is a spectral totality cast back as its own cause and effect in the exact same way as the phenomena it describes.

Raymie McKerrow’s “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis presents similar difficulty when dealing with questions of causality but adds a finer point to the commentary on Charland above. This difficulty and opportunity derive in part from the argumentative structure of his

⁴¹¹ Ibid, 142.

⁴¹² Ibid, 143.

effort being split into the “critique of domination,” the “critique of freedom,” and his final list of recommendations for the practice of critical rhetoric. The critical tension for agency remains: how and where does agency exist underneath ideology’s supposedly totalizing quality?

The role of the dominant class and its relationship to ideology splits. On the one hand, “These restrictions are more than socially derived regulators of discourse, they are institutionalized rules accepted and used by the dominant class to control the discursive actions of the dominated.”⁴¹³ Ideology figured as rhetorical norms at the level of institutions serve the dominant class in class war. On the other hand, “Power...is not a possession or a content—it is instead an integral part of social relations...Power is expressed anonymously, in nondeliberate ways, at a ‘deep structure’ level...”⁴¹⁴ The clear objection to my alignment of these two quotes is that I force a false dilemma upon McKerrow where no such false dilemma exists. Power can exist in discursive structure and the ruling class can both intentionally deploy this power or unconsciously act it out. I still do not find the potential dilemma here merely illusory because the question of agency remains whether we take ideology or power as the key term.

For McKerrow, agency emerges muddled within his construal of the constraints and affordances of a social system read. The top-down influence of discourse and unconscious “deep structures” resonate clearly in McKerrows’ deployment of Laclau and Mouffe. In summary, no outside to ideology exists because non-discursive practices will be represented and acted upon in a discursive register such that “discursive totalities” have always already captured the non-discursive in a web of discursivity.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹³ Raymie E. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” 93.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, 99.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid, 103, citing Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Social Strategy*, at 107.

McKerrow articulates the primacy of discourse clearly: “This is not to diminish the importance of non-discursive practices, but rather to acknowledge that the discussion of such practices takes place in terms of discursive practices.”⁴¹⁶ We have here the kind of “always already” explicated in Charland. Rhetoric figured here as discourse functions “all the way down” such that even non-discursive practices are absorbed into discursive ones. I think that this construal preemptively figures discourse as dominant against other strains in the Marxist tradition, namely Marx himself who positions the relations of production as primary or that of Fernand Braudel who focuses on material production and the emergence of capitalism. If discursivity persists as a totalizing and spectral ghost, what if these very non-discursive options presented by inventions that change the mode of production are part of the answer precisely because they present an event that cannot immediately be assimilated into the discourse of capitalism?

Several dimensionalized categories from the content analysis laid out in the appendix demonstrate that the top-down model of ideology as discourse that determines human action through a mixture of affordances and constraints have come to dominate the contemporary literature on ideology. First, item 1. ASS: Constitutive Rhetoric features in nine of the sixteen articles. The fundamental tautological bent appears clearly: textual choices are both somehow conditioned by ideology but also produce it. Second, ASS: Top-Down Power, in twelve of sixteen articles, in conjunction with 3. ASS: Contingency and Affordances/Constraints, in thirteen of the sixteen articles, strongly indicate a bent that figures discourse as dominant over materiality. The kind of ideological tautology featured in Charland, though more stridently argued by McKerrow through Laclau and Mouffe, presents a defining characteristic of the field.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

The dominant ideology cannot be escaped because no non-ideological outside exists because of a totalizing model of top-down causality. Any effort to resist is conditioned by the dominant mode of ideology's constraints and affordances and therefore cannot exit ideology; the most one can hope for is to exert enough pressure on the dominant ideology for it to partially incorporate a marginalized ideology into hegemony.

Appropriately, potential solutions to the top-down model emerge from internal contradictions and discontents from within the fundamental texts themselves. The primary discontent with the top-down model derives primarily from rhetoric's need for contingency against more deterministic modes of Marxist theory. McKerrow attempts to sneak in agency against the discourse all the way down approach in terms of "influence" instead of "causality" arguing "the structural causality inherent in... "pure Marxist reductionisms" need not result in hard determinism."⁴¹⁷ His suggestion for how this works replicates the Aristotelian split through the LEM of potentiality vs. actuality: "Presence of a symbol is not actuality, but at least is potentiality."⁴¹⁸ Discursive things exert a kind of influence through their status as potential that may constrain action as more discourse, but does not determine it in the last instance. There may be no ideological outside, but we can at least reshape the inside. McKerrow is right to seek a way out of tautological causality modes, but so long as a rhetorical system is discourse all of the way down, we will not get there by changing persuasion to identification nor linear causality to a logic of influence.

A second line of disciplinary discontent involves frustration with the overdetermining role of structure, at least as perceived by rhetorical theorists, in the very philosophical works by

⁴¹⁷ McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," 106.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

Althusser and Foucault they deploy to assert a perspective of rhetoric as process.⁴¹⁹ Brummett takes this line of argument the furthest by positioning mechanistic causality as an Enlightenment based fantasy, following an argumentative path remarkably close to Barad about the role of observation as participant in the phenomena it claims to objectively measure.⁴²⁰ Brummett does well to center rhetoric around process, but then is less successful when he inadequately qualifies how rhetoric differs from natural processes by reducing “sensation” to the “‘meaningless’ material of ‘experience.’”⁴²¹ His impulse to find a qualitative tendency in rhetoric, for him the intersection of communication and context thought as process,⁴²² beyond universalizing rhetoric is praiseworthy. On the other hand, to find what capacities, tendencies, and qualities rhetoric has by defining it through the negation of the brute sensate materiality of our bodies follows from definition through negation instead of ramifying out qualitative tendencies.

A third line presages the jump from rhetoric as discourse to rhetoric as energy alongside potentiality through a kind of dynamism and, perhaps, even, assemblage: “...considered rhetorically, as *forces*, ideographs seem structured horizontally... in this sense, ideology is dynamic and a *force*...”⁴²³ McGee is characteristically prescient: viewing rhetoric as force opens up affective registers that more language or structure centered models of rhetoric struggle to accommodate. However, substituting discourse or ideology with equally spectral terms like force or power displace one spectral construction with another one. What qualitative differences discrete historical forces must be analyzed and dealt with the prospective illusion lest we reduce all rhetorics to gradients of quantitative “force,” whatever that ends up meaning.

⁴¹⁹ Brummett, “Some Implications of ‘Process’ or ‘Intersubjectivity’: Postmodern Rhetoric,” 41, McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” 100, and McGee, “The Ideograph,” 12 and 13.

⁴²⁰ Brummett, “Some Implications of ‘Process’ or ‘Intersubjectivity’: Postmodern Rhetoric,” 24, 26, and 28.

⁴²¹ Ibid, 28.

⁴²² Ibid, 29.

⁴²³ McGee, “The Ideograph,” 12 and 13. Italics in original.

A connection to assemblage theory emerges through McGee's conscious use of the diachronic//synchronic split: how ideographs exist in a distributed web of personal belief and the potentiality of persuasion matter to him, and he even favors a messy regress of the synchronic to diachronic overdetermination.⁴²⁴ A problem remains: "...ideology... [is] always keeping itself in some consonance and unity, but not always the *same* consonance and unity." and "Each ideograph is thus connected to all others as brain cells are linked by synapses..."⁴²⁵ Process and dynamism become too easily subsumed into a metaphysics of presence, but with the relata//relation split shoving the contradiction problem into a new register that originally existed with the actual//potential or substance//accident splits. Structure creeps back in through the priority of relationships without irrational disconnection or indeterminism within the formations of hegemony itself.

I have spent much time arguing that regress is inevitable, but whether we deal with by reliance on some form of the retrospective illusion and categorical-quantitative gradients or the prospective illusion and qualitative tendencies remains our choice. Ideology-oriented rhetorical theory has tended to solve the regress between discourse and material by favoring the discursive as an always anterior structure that both constrains and affords actions. Ideology always lurks one step behind speech, but the retrospective mode only expresses one perspectival line. Reversing our perspectival vector with the prospective illusion could find singularities in the formation of historically discrete ideologies that help account for their emergence and quality in a diachronic sense. We might also use retrospective and quantitative mappings of ideology's differential manifestations to find synchronic areas of over or under-determination to study prospectively as statistical outliers where action can be taken. Finally, rhetorical historians and

⁴²⁴ Ibid, 14 and 16

⁴²⁵ Ibid, 13-14 and 16

political economist's rolls must merge with that of the rhetorical theorist. Have we given up the game too soon? Political economists like Fernand Braudel believe so: perhaps the totalizing influence of ideology deals more with our theories' emphasis on structure and an orientation towards the influence of the nondiscursive on the discursive could open new areas for scholars to become activists.

The Critical Act

The top-down discursive orientation of ideological rhetorical theory has an inextricable relationship to what it means to do criticism. After all, ontology, epistemology, ethics, and methodology share permeable boundaries with some logical entailment between them. Regardless of which theory of ideology a rhetorician accepts, the overwhelming tendency in the literature performs close textual analysis of a "text" constructed from many fragments by attending to contingent moments. These moments are symptoms of ideology, and their meaning emerges through the gap between text and context or text and text. The critical act becomes one to "unmask" or "demystify" ideological illusions, but by being caught up in notions of never-ending critique, can end up documenting oppression more so than fighting it. Charland and McKerrow both embrace while agitating against this mode; contemporary rhetorical critics from the content analysis sample follow suit. Moving theory and criticism forward requires contextualizing close reading in a larger system of potential methodologies and paying close attention to how to find quality in singular points of quantity.

I take from Philip Wander's "The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism" the term "unmasking" to name criticism comported towards dispelling false consciousness: "...it [ideological theory] could accommodate an approach to criticism bent on 'unmasking' rhetoric in light of the way it functioned in an historical context and which expanded the traditional

definition of rhetoric to include literature and philosophy.”⁴²⁶ The word “unmasking” does not recur in the article, but I believe suitably names a version of ideological criticism that adheres to the false consciousness precept imported from critical theory. Unmasking requires careful attention to the textual contingency afforded in the gap between text and context: “An ideological turn in modern criticism reflects the existence of crisis, acknowledges the influence of established interests and the reality of alternative world views, and commends rhetorical analysis not only of the actions implied but also of the interests represented.”⁴²⁷ Wander’s rationale for doing criticism demands ethical judgement because “...criticism carries us to the point of recognizing good reasons and engaging in right action...to situate ‘good’ and ‘right’ in an historical context...”⁴²⁸ Wander’s formulation sets the standard for ideological rhetorical criticism: we find the meaningful gaps to unmask false consciousness by attending to text and context and then judge the ethics of this action through some moral-ethical framework.

Charland provides a strange speculative answer to the question of the critical act: “A transformed ideology would require a transformed subject (not a dissolving of subjectivity). Such a transformation requires ideological and rhetorical work.”⁴²⁹ Charland provides three tentative ways to accomplish this “work.” First, to make new stories to resolve old contradictions; second, a strange and unfinished argument about producing art to operate aesthetically on what appears to be affects; third, to “see through the ‘givenness’ of what appears...” or critique as the unmasking of false consciousness.⁴³⁰ It seems to me that these are great ideas strained with a strict reading of interpellation and without dissolving spectral

⁴²⁶ Philip Wander, “The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism,” 4.

⁴²⁷ Ibid, 18.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*,” 148.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

totalities such as subjectivity itself. The potential for a rhetorician's work to shift from analysis to production, however, could foster a performative methodology that shifts the ground of our social ontologies as we encounter problematics totalizing modes of ideology cannot account for. Calls for performance in rhetoric come and go, but close textual analysis remains dominant, perhaps here we should follow Charland.

McKerrow's answer wavers between the two poles of discourse and materiality. Towards the top-down pole, "...the impetus to so function and the possibility of change, is muted by the fact that the subject already is interpellated with the dominant ideology. Actions oriented toward change will tend to be conducive to power maintenance rather than to its removal."⁴³¹ This orientation derives clearly from Laclau and Mouffe. Social change can only happen against the backdrop of hegemony as dominant ideology and totality so any effort of a subaltern ideology only contributes to the maintenance of the system. Towards a more agential pole, McKerrow finds agency in a place like Charland's notion of the contradictions between constitutive rhetorics as a place for potentially successful intervention: "Nevertheless, a focus on the hierarchy of dominant/dominated may deflect attention from the existence of multiple classes, groups, or even individuals with varying degrees of power over others."⁴³² McKerrow's fifth principle, that no deterministic causality exists because of the existence of ontological contingency guarantees that things could have been done differently in a logic of influence instead of causation, leads him to argue that one role of the critical rhetorician is to productively draw attention to social contradictions.⁴³³ While more agentially capacitating, regress now sets in at the level of critique against ideology. How does one know when one's act of critique affects

⁴³¹ Ibid, 94.

⁴³² Ibid, 96.

⁴³³ Ibid, 106-107.

the system and when its very enunciation has been provided for by the system? Perhaps answering the question cannot happen at the level of totality, and we must evaluate each critical intervention in its specificity and haecceity, but we are not given guidelines for what that looks like here.

This infinite regress of discourse or ideology or norms or whatever you would like to name the totality produces a hellish regress of negative critique: "...the telos that marks the project is one of never-ending skepticism, hence permanent criticism. Results are never satisfying as the new social relations which emerge from a reaction to a critique are themselves simply new forms of power and hence subject to renewed skepticism."⁴³⁴ Regress above, so below. One wonders how we should know what is right and what is wrong within this regress: are all stipulations of power wrong and the only task to counteract whatever is dominant *ad infinitum*? Surely, we can have good reasons for why one set of potentialities opened by critique are preferable without falling into the "business of moving us towards [an impossible] perfection" in a "transcendental...Habermasian sense?"⁴³⁵ Surely, we are afforded more agency than merely opening "the possibility of revolt?"⁴³⁶

McKerrow follows older modes of ideological critique whose primary goal is unmasking seemingly natural discourses through criticism to "undermine and expose the discourse of power...to thwart its effects,"⁴³⁷ by unveiling how truth is produced in contingent practices,⁴³⁸ by mapping out unconscious structures through implication by absence,⁴³⁹ and "[uncovering] a subordinate or secondary reading which contains the seeds of subversion or rejection of

⁴³⁴ Ibid, 96.

⁴³⁵ Ibid, 97.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid, 98.

⁴³⁸ Ibid, 100.

⁴³⁹ Ibid, 107.

authority...”⁴⁴⁰ Rhetorical criticism in its ideological mode, for McKerrow, deals with the infinite regress of the discursive through a never ending negative critique that uses different modes of contradiction to de-naturalize or read contingency through discourse such that a kind of unmasking or unveiling occurs.

Returning to the content analysis categories of the appendix, now consider Dimensionalized category 4 – G/C/S Unmasking and/or Resistance – which reveals the dominance of McKerrow’s orientation towards ideological critique as it features in fifteen of the sixteen articles sampled. The goal of ideological rhetorical criticism is to unmask the workings of deep structure in the logic of symptom-disease and this work will never end because the ideological superstructure’s ability to rig the game from the outset. Critical methodology then becomes typified by dimensionalized category 5. ASS and G/C/S: Perspectival Metaphors for Criticism arises in fourteen of the sixteen articles reviewed. Criticism becomes a perspective game that results in the same finding, the documentation of systemic oppression without much resistance to it. A “text” is assembled through the grouping of fragments, contingent moments analyzed by close reading for the gap in text and context, and the domination of the oppressed is condemned. Unmasking type criticism makes the powerful nervous, as evinced in both American political parties’ animosity to the humanities. However, I am nervous that negative critique or “power operating in this way is bad because it oppresses” misses the opportunities afforded by a more performative approach that argues forcefully for the utility and value of progressive ethics.

I am not alone in this anxiety. Charland well articulates problems with the never ending negative critique the field has largely adopted from McKerrow’s “Critical Rhetoric:” “Critical Rhetoric demands that critique precede the invention of new rhetorics...The difficulty with all of

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, 108.

this, however, is that Professor McKerrow does not guide us out of the infinite regress of negative critique.”⁴⁴¹ Critical Rhetoric as negative critique resembles Nietzsche’s “slave morality”⁴⁴² in which definition of good has no positive content but is only ever done as “not bad.” Democrats and progressives are good because Republicans are bad; Republicans are good because they are not Communists nor Socialists, and so on. The people are left with a paucity of policy solutions in a never-ending game of defining identity through negation and I believe this tact to be intentional on the part of the ruling class. Charland makes this point without recourse to the ever-problematic Nietzsche: “Foucault...does not seek to judge discourse...he provides no ground or rationale for developing better forms of discourse or structures of power...[because] Foucauldian discourse analysis lacks the element so central to rhetoric: a concern with ‘audience.’”⁴⁴³ Charland’s audiences may be constructed through interpolation as spectral god, but I do not disagree with his point here. Negative critique and the regress of ideology as social totality do not provide adequate methodological resources for breaking out of definition of self as the negation of other. Methodologies must arise that define identity and ethics in positive terms by focusing on their empirical results and I believe we are starting to see this very thing outside of academic circles in local strikes against Amazon and new ways of considering gender identity at LGBTQIA+ bars all around America. Methods better suited for participating in these movements must emerge and could challenge ideology as totality at the level of theory.

⁴⁴¹ Charland, “Finding a Horizon and Telos: The Challenge to Critical Rhetoric,” 71.

⁴⁴² It should be noted that the uptake of this element of Nietzsche into fascism presents one of the greatest cases of fascistic idiocy at the theoretical level. One of the vital elements of fascism is the construction of the scapegoat, as Burke tells us, that presents all things antithetical to whatever counts as the master race. Similarly, aristocracy in medieval times was warranted by a vague divine right, but equally underwritten by all of the dirty and awful things those common folks are. Slave morality is as much or more so a jibe at so called masters as it can be oppressed people who, often understandably, take moral consolation from negative definition. For a video commentary on the utility despite the risks of using Nietzsche, see Natalie Wynn, “Envy.”

⁴⁴³ Ibid, 75.

Reconstructive close reading is not necessarily the most conducive methodology to this goal because it is reactive in the same way inasmuch as it makes speech the symptom of some always already anterior ideological-structural cause. McGee challenges this idea in “Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture.” He condemns negative critique: “A circle of negativism (decentering, deconstructing) should be broken, however. I think it is time to stop whining about the so-called ‘post-modern condition’ and to develop realistic strategies to cope with it...”⁴⁴⁴ The “realistic strategy,” for McGee is a return to speech over structure. The second piece makes this argument clearly with regards to Althusser: “That blind spot is a tendency to begin one’s thinking about a subject, not in the subject itself, but in the context or field of the subject, and then to discover little more about the subject than has already been noticed in the descriptions of the context or field.”⁴⁴⁵ This tendency we call the descriptive aporia of ideological criticism in its retrospective mode. Ideology becomes, instead of a local boundary upon an accretion of intensities made out of speech and other things, the cause we look for in the first place by inferring that textual symptoms must refer back to ideology in general. Put differently, what if we treat ideology as an effect instead of a cause by trying the prospective illusion in addition to the retrospective one?

McGee suggests solutions extremely close to Deleuze: to consider ideology in terms of “production” instead of “reproduction”⁴⁴⁶ and for rhetoricians to “realize that the questions we ask are more important to the development of knowledge than the provisional answers we discover.”⁴⁴⁷ How close this reads to Deleuze’s arguments that genuine problematics can be found in social fields, regardless of his restriction in *Difference and Repetition* of social

⁴⁴⁴ Michael Calvin McGee, “Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture,” 278.

⁴⁴⁵ Michael Calvin McGee, “Rhetoric, Organizational Communication, and Sartre’s Theory of Group Praxis,” 5.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, 10.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

problems to “economic and social problems,”⁴⁴⁸ and the overall critique of ideology as a retrospective illusion better theorized in the discrete production of specific ideologies in *Thousand Plateaus*.⁴⁴⁹ The future question, then, becomes mapping out the problematics of rhetoric through a naturalistic investigation of rhetorical theory with recourse to rhetorical theory produced through textual analyses accomplished by methodologies, such as ethnography and content analysis, that can support working within the prospective illusion.

Summary and Broad Suggestion

We can combine the retrospective and prospective orientations to come to the following construal of ideologically inflected rhetorical theory and criticism, particularly constitutive rhetoric:

1. Rhetoricians explicate textual meaning by reconstructing it using some theoretical-philosophical framework in conjunction with close reading to account for the meaningful gaps in contingency.
2. Contingency is the ontological assumption that things really could have happened otherwise such that individuals, rhetors, and the social systems they both comprise and are influenced by have some degree of freedom. Individual choices and historical events, while constrained by anterior forces, really could have happened differently.
3. Contingency, and therefore meaning, arises between many different parts of the rhetorical transaction: between what the rhetor said and what they could have said, in the different contradictory narratives audiences identify with, in silences that mark out “deep structures,”

⁴⁴⁸ Deleuze, *Difference & Repetition*, 186.

⁴⁴⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 89-90.

in the gap between different historical positions of the dominant ideology, in the gap between fact and myth, and between dominant and subaltern accounts.

4. Rhetorical Criticism becomes ideological when it unmaskes or demystifies these contradictions, enumerates potential alternatives, or produces new narratives that produce new problems in an infinite regress.
5. The relationship between materiality and discourse presents great difficulties in causality, even one broken out of mechanism by a neglect of the LNC in which one thing must be well bounded and cause another. The predominant solution to this problem positions constitutive rhetoric as subjectivity, discourse, ideology, norms, or narrative that fosters identification in the sense of the always already or an anterior cause along an infinite regress of discursive causes. Agency by individuals does not face total erasure because of contingency, but a kind of linguistic structuralism dominates in which all non-discursive modes of action or being are taken at their representational instead of material force.
6. The rhetorical critic does not analyze speech so much as they analyze deep sociological symptoms of which speech is only symptom.
7. We attempt to make the causality make sense by making arguments that ideology is given body in specific rhetorics, discourses, literal bodies, habits, practices, and so on. Ideology haunts the material because the instant we use speech to articulate something about the non-discursive it has become discursive, and we are trapped in an infinite regress.
8. This problem leads to relatively top-down heavy theories of rhetorical agency, and we tend to select objects in which the system wins because we cannot conceptualize it losing without always already being trapped by it, making us a kind of documentarian class of the systemic oppression.

9. Ideological critique and theory, then, operate in analogous fashion to the retrospective illusion and a logic of necessity and this is not necessarily a bad thing: social aggregates like ideology and their current historical manifestation, neoliberalism for most scholars, can help us to map out a universal gradient of oppression in its quantitative guise. Difference in quantity in the diachronic or synchronic modes could indicate singularities that help to account for qualitative emergence or suggest places of over or under-determination ripe for critical intervention.
10. However, it seems to me that other modes of causal thinking, a mode of ideological critique that works beyond reified totalities in a prospective illusion mode, and methodologies beyond reconstructive close reading could serve our social justice goals more aptly. The key is supplement analytic negative critique with productive positive critique as the creation of rhetorics, their synthesis.

New Materialist Rhetorical Theory

This section enumerates the critique of the big points above already in rhetorical theory and then expands them in a positive and actionable dimension by evaluating whether New Materialist Rhetoric contributes to solving or exacerbating the problematics and supplementing them with ideas and methodological stipulations from philosophers relatively new to rhetorical theory. In short, constitutive rhetoric's emphasis on top-down causality that heavily skews towards constraint over affordance misses two broad options for more emancipatory ideological critique. Within a retrospective perspective, treating ideology as an immanent virtuality that insists more than exists facilitates a cartography of differential forces, ideological and non, such that fractures in hegemony can be attacked while fractures in counter hegemony worked on to increase solidarity across intersectional markers. Within a prospective perspective, a perfect

finality of ideology becomes something disparate assemblages tend towards but never reach because of the contradictory recalcitrance of materiality itself. Parameters can be used to track phase changes in assemblages composed of diverse elements with a process ontology in mind.

Reified Totalities: Ideology, Rhetoricity, Energy

The primary goal for this section is to map the retrospective illusion onto different manifestations of rhetorical causality and ontological definitions of rhetoric to suggest that the $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ model provides a better ontological grounding for rhetorical theory than the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model that replicates the tautological causality of constitutive rhetoric in an ontological register.

Thinking rhetoric ontologically and ontically in terms of rhetoricity, the rhetorical, and rhetoric. This move finds an early speculation in Charland: "...interpellation does not occur through persuasion in the usual sense, for the very act of *addressing* is rhetorical. It is logically prior to the rhetorical *narratio*."⁴⁵⁰ Diane Davis must be credited with building out this line of reasoning in an independent genesis and most work in new materialist rhetorical theory makes some reference⁴⁵¹ to her construal of "fundamental addressivity" as "rhetoricity."⁴⁵² Rhetoricity shifts the necessary condition of rhetoric from intentional choice to a primordial relationality: "Rhetoric is not first of all an essence or property 'in the speaker' (a natural function of biology) but an underivable obligation to respond that issues from an irreducible relationality."⁴⁵³ In other terms, relationality is prior to relata and a proper ontology of rhetoric must start with this prior relationality here named rhetoricity.

⁴⁵⁰ Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*," 138.

⁴⁵¹ For examples, see Barnett and Boyle, "Introduction: Rhetorical Ontology, or, How to Do Things with Things" in *Rhetoric Through Everyday Things*, 1-2; Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 15 and 280; Laurie E. Gries, "How Can an Ecosystem Have a Voice?" in "Forum: Bruno Latour on Rhetoric," 440.

⁴⁵² Davis, *Rhetoricity at the End of the World*, 432.

⁴⁵³ Davis, "Creaturely Rhetorics, 89.

Let us start with rhetoricity, Davis elaborates through a mixture of Derrida and empirical results from animal communication: “The question now is not whether animals have powers humans have denied them so much as whether *humans* have the power to be or to do *I*...An underivable rhetoricity is the immaterial ‘something’ from which a presumption of ‘self-knowledge arises...”⁴⁵⁴ The move, despite being routed through Derrida, bears uncanny resemblance to a Deleuzian account of the genetic emergence of subjectivity; the “I” or “the identity of the same...names a *differential effect* with no ontological foundation...an originary capacity to be repeated...”⁴⁵⁵ The key difference involves reducing the role of the virtual as a field of production through singularity: identity resembles pure intensity as “differential effect,” this kind of irreducible but immaterial relationality approximates the virtual, and repetition takes on a similar role of the return of the same.

The most significant divergence comes with the entailments of relationality: “The rhetoricity cannot be innate because it cannot *not* be relational; without an other, a trace of differentiation, there is no need or possibility for self-reference.”⁴⁵⁶ Where Deleuze attempts to keep his ontology in the potential and sufficient, Davis takes the route that positions rhetoricity in the possible and necessary sense. This construal of immaterial or virtual relationality as prior to structure erases the heterogenous multiplicities featured in all Deleuzian models and, in doing so, positions relationality as identity only in a different register. Relationality becomes an Absolute that only indicates differences in quantity but does not account for the genesis of differences in quality. Indeterminacy as materialist agency becomes bracketed: one wonders why anything emerges from this prior relationality in causal terms.

⁴⁵⁴ Diane Davis, “Autozoography: Notes Toward a Rhetoricity of the Living,” 536

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, 546. Italics mine.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, 548.

Davis appears aware of the relative flatness of the relation//relata split projected as anterior and an inherently textual form, although she insists on all relationality bearing a textual nature.⁴⁵⁷ She performs a move similar to Bergson's insistence that we dismiss false problems: "To respect the radical ruptures and infinite heterogeneities between...ways of thinking and being requires...attending to a wild dissemination of differences obscured by the positing of a single, indivisible line between thinking and being..."⁴⁵⁸ Davis supports this line with recourse to empirical examples like slime molds that challenge subject driven models of cognition and Derrida's commentary on the textuality of genetics.⁴⁵⁹ This leads to an argument extremely close to Barad's diffraction in which "...each yes is already a yes-I, both an opening and a cut..."⁴⁶⁰ except that we are mired with the relation//relata schema instead of the more immanent and process based pattern of resonances and dissonances within the diffractive model. Non-relation or irrationality has been brought in, but not at the level of generative indeterminacy. Regress towards rhetoricity as an Absolute for all of Being thought as difference but grounded in relationality obtains.

Rhetoricity avoids the poorly posed question problem but follows the pattern of the retrospective illusion by projecting an Absolute rhetoricity. I have difficulty sorting out how to articulate through criticism communication between non-human interlocuters when "languages are not special *in kind* but take their place among animal languages, vegetal communications, genetic codes..."⁴⁶¹ Reducing interaction to communication fulfills a useful first step in breaking down anthropocentric specialness, but without a way to account for the emergence of different

⁴⁵⁷ Davis, "Rhetoricity at the End of the World," 432-433.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, 438.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 438-439.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, 439. Italics Removed.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, 441.

modes of communication flattens the meaningful differences we should account for. Similarly, the move to describe communication as language instead of speech begs again the question of the retrospective illusion: is not the illusion of a coherent structural system, as is language in opposition to speech, as repressive as the illusion of the I as transcendent self-unity?

Rhetoricity as anterior Absolute imperialistically reads text as a fundamental relationality anterior to all actualizations but based in the relations//relata pair. I view rhetoricity as an insufficient version of *Difference and Repetition*'s virtuality that is, itself, a tautological construal of the intensive focused model of *Thousand Plateaus*. The $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model provides a path into structure through mathematical analogy in accounting for the generation of self-differencing difference and provides the quasi-causal operator and counter-actualization to ensure that the virtuality is not a dead realm of always anterior "addressivity" or "relationality." Put differently, while retrospective the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model transduced into the $R \rightarrow R \rightarrow R$ model can account for emergence and quality where difference prioritizing relations over relata cannot. But why stop with the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model? The $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ transposed into a $R \leftarrow R \rightarrow R$ model intimates a rework in which intensities tend towards something like rhetoricity or relational structure as final or formal causes that never obtain. Rhetorical critics can then start with whatever things they find rhetorical, map out their qualities, singularities, and capacities rhetorical or otherwise, and apply these findings to larger networks of rhetorics. Deleuzian models supplemented by diffraction provide the kind of "limitrophy" or attention to fuzzy borderlines that Davis gestures to through Derrida⁴⁶² but does not provide.

Moving onto rhetorical, new materialist rhetorical theory, whether the authors take Davis' rhetoricity at full force, expands what counts as rhetoric through ontological speculation,

⁴⁶² Diane Davis, "Some Reflections on the Limit," 283.

but the force with which they leverage this expansion of rhetoric into any number of things from plants⁴⁶³ to the chemical reactions of beer⁴⁶⁴ varies. Some make the imperialistic gesture to position rhetoric as essential to universal becoming, but a more interesting line follows a dialetheic logic at the level of rhetorical as capacity or characteristic. At the limit of suasive, things express rhetorical characteristics when they are agents in rhetoric as network or assemblage. This line usefully shifts the ground of rhetorical from the register of identity to that of expression and encourages multi-disciplinary scholarship because the elements that are less suasive, that is more given to coercion or conviction than persuasion, are equally relevant to understanding a given rhetoric. Rhetoricians, then, must “attune” themselves to both rhetoric and not-rhetoric through tools both within and outside of the discipline.

One strand takes rhetoricity to indicate the inherent relationality of all being or becoming and posits that if a relation obtains but could have obtained otherwise, contingency, then that relationship is rhetorical because rhetoric properly deals with contingency. Barnett and Boyle provide the strongest articulation of this stance: “...we take ontology to be fundamentally rhetorical...to be the pervasive *relationality* of all things—the means by which things come into relation and have effects on other things in ways that resonate strongly with existing and emerging understandings of rhetoric.”⁴⁶⁵ Things are not only rhetorical when interacting in human inclusive assemblages, but all things that change through relations are rhetorical. The problem here closely mirrors that with Davis’ more imperialistic take on rhetoricity: what precisely do rhetorical concepts offer biologists that philosophy of science or just the naturalistic scientific method not already offer? It is not as though scientists are not aware that

⁴⁶³ Gries, “How Can an Ecosystem Have a Voice?” in “Forum: Bruno Latour on Rhetoric,” 440

⁴⁶⁴ Pflugfelder, “Rhetoric’s New Materialism: From Micro-Rhetoric to Microbrew,” 451.

⁴⁶⁵ Barnett and Boyle, “Introduction: Rhetorical Ontology, or, How to Do Things with Things” in *Rhetoric Through Everyday Things*, 8-9.

experimentation isolates phenomena by measuring apparatuses that attempt to close the open system of the universe. What do the definitional apparatuses offer an understanding of plants?

The typical justificatory move hedges back from full on disciplinary imperialism in which all disciplines are rightfully conceived as rhetoric and take the stance that things like animal persuasion can teach us about human rhetorics. Yet, this runs afoul of the other Davis problem: reducing all being to a quantitative gradient of relationality does not sufficiently give us theoretical tools that clarify how different rhetorical assemblages differ in kind, in terms of quality. We have traded a poorly posed question for an insufficiently analyzed aggregate, to use Bergson's terms.

The other strand takes a more reserved stance: traditionally nonrhetorical things have the capacity to become rhetorical when they enter in rhetorical assemblages, but any network or assemblage of "rhetoric," will have rhetorical and non-rhetorical elements. Within this broad orientation, the strength of takes differ and are worth noting. Laurie Gries' articulation has imperialistic undertones: "By *rhetorical*, I refer to something's ability to induce change in thought, feeling, and action; organize and maintain collective formation; exert power, etc.; as it enters into relation with other things (human or nonhuman)."⁴⁶⁶ Ultimately, Gries position falls pretty to the problems outlined above, a difference in kind between an event of human or animal contingency cannot be differentiated from raw coercion. I struggle with the claim that asteroids colliding in space offers an example comparable to the experience of living with a dog or attempting to acquire grant money. However, Gries does suggest the potential for something closer to persuasion. The move towards process and becoming works better than bare

⁴⁶⁶ Gries, *Still Life with Rhetoric*, 11.

relationality that simply replicates the problems of linguistic structuralism in an ontological register.

Other takes are more reserved. John Mucklebauer exemplifies these positions: “The point here is that everyday physical structures may not exactly be arguments...but they [are] undoubtedly persuasive...[I]t is important to consider these types of objects as crucial components of rhetoric.”⁴⁶⁷ This take follows the “Big Rhetoric” Pattern: if a thing, anything at all, exerts persuasive agency then it must be viewed as a component of rhetoric and our purview of what counts as rhetorical must expand. The asteroids colliding may not be persuasive to their bodies, but their potential collision with Earth makes them rhetorical to a great many people.

Nathan Stormer articulates a position that I find most useful: “Acceptance of multiple ontologies also requires acceptance that not all things in rhetoric are rhetorical, meaning the active ingredients in a particular rhetoric exceed the ‘doer’ and the ‘deed’ of whatever one is concerned with (persuasion, acquiescence, ekstasis, and so on). Rhetoric’s power is eventualized, it is not possessed...”⁴⁶⁸ Accounting the eventual emergence of a rhetoric does not require making the universe fundamentally rhetorical but does require the rhetorician to become more interdisciplinary and, perhaps, even a naturalist to understand scientifically the non-rhetorical capacities of a thing. Stormer notes that rhetoricians can be concerned with different things “persuasion, acquiescence, ekstasis, and so on...” This argument promotes one I will make about the differences in kind between persuasion, conviction, and coercion: all of these things can be given a rhetorical valence and interact in rhetorical events. However, conflating the kinds of suasion into degrees of coercion or persuasion misses the opportunity to ramify these parts of suasion out in terms of kind both in general and for a particular rhetoric.

⁴⁶⁷ John Mucklebauer, “Implicit Paradigms of Rhetoric” in *Rhetoric Through Everyday Things*, 36.

⁴⁶⁸ Nathan Stormer, “Rhetoric’s Diverse Materiality: Polythetic Ontology and Genealogy,” 304.

We have three models for rhetorical capacity: one that follows from rhetoricity's strange imperialism in which a thing can be said to be rhetorical if it responds to the ontological capacity that things relate; one that adds persuasion as a qualifier to this argument; one at once more reserved and yet radically open in which a given rhetoric will be composed like one of DeLanda's assemblages of heterogeneous parts that are assemblages in their own right with varying capacities, affects, and tendencies, rhetorical and non. I find Stormer's position the most favorable and useful to constructing a naturalist rhetorical theory. Rhetoricians must attend to a variety of capacities in agents in a communicative event, the rhetorical and non-rhetorical, and doing so may require scientific tools outside the typical humanities repertoire. Rhetoricians must also theorize not the thing or the object, but different capacities or potential prospective illusion chains about tendencies in suasion broadly conceived. Persuasive systems with a high degree of complexity or density catalyze becoming in ways that multiply indeterminacy and provide a higher chance of a contingent result. A difference in quality, as in Bergson, emerges from a singular threshold in a difference of quantity in which the capacity to say no to a persuasive effort genuinely differs from the kind of brute coercion involved in asteroids crashing in space.

Turning to Rhetoric, changes in the fundamental ontology of rhetoric from persuasion to identification to rhetoricity and an expansion in what counts as rhetorical both in terms of literal objects and a slight bend towards process beget a change in how theorists construe rhetoric in general. The authors who take up what rhetoric means have some features that repeat and others that are unique. Rickert presents one of the foundational takes: "Rhetoric is an *emergent* result of environmentally situated and interactive engagements, redolent of a world that affects us, that *persuades* us prior to symbolicity...is thereby the emergent result of many *complexly* interacting

agents *dynamically* attuned...to one another...”⁴⁶⁹ Gries articulates a similar take: “Rhetoric is a distributed act that *emerges* from between these affective encounters and interactions, not among individual discrete elements...”⁴⁷⁰ and adds a semi-Deleuzian twist, “Rhetoric is a distributed *event* that unfolds with time in and across networks of *complex, dynamic relations*...a *virtual-actual* process of becoming...”⁴⁷¹ Stormer and McGreavy alongside Brian L Ott and Greg Dickenson more or less follow suit in terms of process ontology while adding notions of capacity, affect, and quality.⁴⁷² The general thrust emerges clearly: rhetoric exceeds the symbolic or representational, things in the world are rhetorical, and a focus on affect or mood or ambience or environment or what have you should supersede or at least be added to rhetorical models focused on things like intent and conscious persuasion. There are several words in these definitions that require clarifying, namely “emergent,” “complexly and dynamically,” “event,” “persuasion,” “attuned,” and “virtual-actual.”

Emergence, Complexity, and Non-Linear Causality

Emergent or emergence and its cohort terms, complexly, dynamically, and event, frequently are deployed in new materialist rhetoric but pinning down their definitions and the philosophical resources from which they are drawn presents difficulty. Rickert provides a good starting place and defines “emergence” in two places. Speaking of rhetoric, “...it is emergent: an ecology of elements and forces in dynamic, mutually conditioning interaction catalyzes in holistic transformation when significant ‘tipping points’ are reached.”⁴⁷³ These “tipping points”

⁴⁶⁹ Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 34. Italics Mine.

⁴⁷⁰ Gries, *Still Life with Rhetoric*, 27. Italics Mine.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid, 32. Italics mine.

⁴⁷² Nathan Stormer and Bridie McGreavy, “Thinking Ecologically About Rhetoric’s Ontology, Capacity, Vulnerability, and Resilience,” 3, 8, and 10; and Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson, “Redefining Rhetoric: Why Matter Matters,” 54 and 79.

⁴⁷³ Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 116. Italics removed.

resemble the dynamic systems theory idea that we have already mapped in Deleuzian register through DeLanda of the kind of singularities that describe, for us, and determine, for DeLanda, the point at which a thing's capacities or phase state change qualitatively at a certain quantitative threshold. Emergence does not necessarily signify the emergence of the new, but the way in which systems undergoing a "phase shift" experience a change in their organization and capacity in the mereological relationship between parts and wholes.

Emergence has a diachronic-synchronic problem. Tending towards the synchronic pole, the series ice—water—gas has phase states that are in a sense locally emergent but well within the typical and documented capacities of this molecular arrangement's phase spaces. When water has been put into a symmetry breaking cascade through heating and sublimates into water vapor the capacity for water to change phases of matter does not emerge, this specific water experiences a change that has consequences for its component atoms' behavior and other bits of non-water stuff inevitably mixed in with it. Emergence takes on a local meaning synchronically with a discrete empirical body of water and is best described in terms of phase states. Tending towards the diachronic pole: the universal capacity for matter and all matter's different phase states must emerge from the singularity and water specifically must also emerge from the different arrangements of subatomic gloopings that themselves emerge. Indeterminacy assures us that, while unlikely, some specific glooping of water could interact with its environment to actualize some new potential because, at some point, diachronically a new emergence occurred with the capacity for matter to exist and water to manifest as an arrangement of atoms.

Rickert's second line on emergence provides insight into how he understands causality: "The terms partiality and emergence refer to a twofold sense of ambience, namely, what withdraws in that which comes to presence and what must be included—even as it withdraws—

as part of that which occasions rhetorical practices.”⁴⁷⁴ This line of argument appears simple at first. For a metal cup to exhibit the capacity to be heated to a high degree, its capacity to hold water “withdraws” because, were you to pour water into it, the water would evaporate. The capacity to hold water does not cease to exist, at least until the cup is heated enough to melt and change states from cup to melted metal. Rickert expands this line of reasoning to a discussion of Jane Bennett’s work on the agency of electricity in power grids, taking care to note its Deleuzian foundation.⁴⁷⁵ He uses her work to add detail to emergence: “Electricity...when hooked into complex systems, such as a power grid, it evinces unanticipated properties. Electricity exemplifies the vibrancy of materiality.”⁴⁷⁶ Emergence here does not clear up the ontological-epistemological nor the synchronic-diachronic questions: are the properties merely “unanticipated” by human observers or incapable of being anticipated as articulations of the new? This question plagues theories of emergence. For us, we must refer to Barad and insist that which ontic values a “vibrant materiality” manifests and what emergent newness rely upon ontological indeterminacy as their generative engine.

The difference between Heideggerian inflected new materialism and Deleuzian inflected new materialism remains another important line because of a vital difference in position regarding how to deal with regress in the relationship between the potential and the actual or the present and the withdrawn. Rickert curiously glosses over this difference: “...while Bennett never says this directly, her discussion...overlaps Heidegger’s and Harman’s point about withdrawal.”⁴⁷⁷ I do not believe that this conflation necessarily articulates Bennett well because, while she rarely mentions Heidegger and does not mention Harman in *Vibrant Matter*, she does

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid, 209. Italics Removed.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid, 210.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, 211.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid, 212.

mention the object oriented ontology adjacent “thing:” “the term’s disadvantage, however, is that it also tends to overstate the thinginess or fixed stability of materiality, whereas my goal is to theorize a materiality that is as much force as entity, as much energy as matter, as much intensity as extension.”⁴⁷⁸ Elsewhere, she demonstrates charity to the concept of withdrawal in Harman, but insists: “I concur that some dimensions of bodies are withdrawn from presence, but see this as partly due to the role they play in this or that relatively open system.”⁴⁷⁹ A larger debate exists between different stripes of object oriented ontologists and new materialists that we must leave as a rabbit tunnel unfollowed. Suffice to say, withdrawal in the sense of an essence that withdraws and withdrawal in the sense of capacities not actualized by some members of or the open set of a given assemblage to a given observer at a given time are not the same concept.

The small part of this debate I want to address deals with the role of causal regress and the Inclosure Paradox: where Bennett, Deleuze, and Delanda attempt to evade the metaphysical trap by arguing for a fully present virtuality, object oriented ontologists reaction to regress ends up stripping materiality because of what ultimately withdraws. I believe Rickert replicates the transcendence problem we have experienced elsewhere in which there may well be a “dark object” or, for him, “dark attribute,” that withdraws from all potential empirical manifestation or experimental measurement, a local and entirely metaphysical absolute. Timothy Morton describes this object: “We could go so far as to suggest the possibility of what Bryant calls a dark object, an object that has no relations with any other entity whatsoever...To think them is to think the purest possibility that they might exist. It’s the ultimate congruence of withdrawal and tricksterish illusion.”⁴⁸⁰ When we subject an object to notions of withdrawal in an infinite regress

⁴⁷⁸ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, 20.

⁴⁷⁹ Jane Bennett, “Systems and Things: A Response to Graham Harman and Timothy Morton,” 228.

⁴⁸⁰ Timothy Morton, *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*, 55 and 58 respectively. Italics removed.

within a realist-idealist stance, we get strange things like the “dark object” that are similar to Kant’s noumena: they exist because we can cognize *about* them, but we cannot have *knowledge* of them. Objects, relations, ambient events, what have you, then become dialetheic, just as in Graham Priest at the level of the Absolute, they are and are not themselves. We run into strange considerations such as “what withdraws from that which withdraws” because why could not withdrawal itself be an object if it can be thought and we are forced to posit a transcendental but impossible object based upon logical and not empirical criteria. Unless what withdraws can be measured, we have simply replicated the subject//object split in an ontological instead of epistemological level. The question is to what degree emergence can truly be said to be a “holistic transformation?” I do not believe that Heidegger nor object oriented ontologies adequately answer this question: we must go to Deleuze by way of DeLanda in terms of scale, causality, and whether emergence is a totalizing event.

The problems with withdrawal are not only ontological; they carry an ethical dimension worth noting as I have argued the inextricability of ethics and ontology. I do not think Rickert necessarily means to mire himself in the ethical quandary between new materialism and object oriented ontology, but the stakes are worth laying out to avoid the pitfalls moving forward. Scott Sundvall provides two ethical problems with object oriented ontology: the seemingly withdrawn quality of ethics within object oriented ontologies and that the consequences thereof “are not only quite real but also quite ‘dark’ in a different sense: they can easily (and logically) be read as veiled apologies for — or at the very least be appropriated in the service of — abstract imperialism/colonialism, subject-objectification, and a redoubled commodity fetishism...”⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸¹ Scott Sundvall, “Without a World: The Rhetorical Potential and ‘Dark Politics’ of Object-Oriented Thought,” 234.

Sundvall's justification for these claims can be summarized as follows. First, the fundamental dilemma between objects having autonomous lives but human speakers being capable of speaking for them through anthropomorphizing strategies in highly iconoclastic rhetorical style begs the question of just how autonomous these objects are.⁴⁸² Second, and more damningly, flat ontology in which all things are objects and their essences withdraw suggests terrible things in light of Western imperialism and its various continuations at home and abroad today. Sundvall puts it forcefully: "Bryant wants to flatten ontology and reduce human subjects to the status of objects...while failing to consider that humans already have been, and still too often are, recognized as not-human objects."⁴⁸³ This argument follows our reasoning about the dangers of reducing genuine qualitative differences to quantitative gradients, except that a fully flat ontology has difficulty accounting for asymmetry in agential powers. If all are simply objects and their true substances withdraw, how does one argue that racism produces negative consequences for bodies without attention to the "process rather than product?"⁴⁸⁴ Third, commodity fetishism flourishes under object-oriented ontologies because objects' autonomy such that any attempt to determine a mode of production results in obfuscation.⁴⁸⁵

Object oriented thought's insistence upon substance and withdrawal result in a strangely dark world in which the very necessary conditions they insist account for the capacity to change result in a world of infinite enclosure towards metaphysically withdrawn entities. Characteristics or capacities do not merely withdraw in the sense of not being present at a discrete moment, but hidden substance withdraws beyond all potential manifestation and interaction, as though when you poke an object as bubble ten new bubbles form. Regress is not necessarily a problem,

⁴⁸² Ibid, 234.

⁴⁸³ Ibid, 235.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, 236.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

projecting an Absolute to regress in the form of pure substance is because it introduces an ontotheological fallacy in which purity derives from withdrawal. I, alongside Sundvall, fail to see how such an ontology can help us deal with social or climate problems other than knock human anthropocentrism down at first, only to sneak it in the back door.

Fortunately, ontologies exist that can deal with relationality in terms of structure, as in Deleuze, or materiality in terms of process, as in DeLanda. Scale, complexity, density, and dynamic causality are linked by DeLanda in chiasmus: "...to give a complete explanation of a social process taking place at a given scale, we need to elucidate not only micro-macro mechanisms, those behind the emergence of the whole, but also the macro-micro mechanisms through which a whole provides its component parts with *constraints and resources*, placing limitations on what they can do while enabling novel performances."⁴⁸⁶

Has DeLanda ontologized the constraint/affordance model found in ideological critique? No, these constraints and affordances are found not through logical analysis or reconstruction but through empirical inquiry in which experiment and measurement diagrams a specific system conceived of as historical individual. Categorical thought gives way to a cartographic method bound to naturalistic inquiry. The causality of the micro-macro and macro-micro presents a useful trope for thinking the diffractive reality difficult to access from spatializing thought and expression in an intensive and immanent register, at least when we start with intensity. Specific and individual emergent wholes exert top-down causality through organization via the macro-micro relations of interiority and yet their emergence requires their component parts in the

⁴⁸⁶ DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, 34-35. Italics in original.

micro-macro relations of exteriority.⁴⁸⁷ Chiasmus presents a useful trope to spatialize the logic of diffraction.

Relationships of interiority and exteriority present the chicken and egg game we have become used to within the intensive model comfortable with infinite regress because we embrace, instead of attempt to supersede through metaphysical fiction, perspectivism. From a relative jump in scale and the imposition of a perspectival projection, interior relations that are relations of exteriority appear interior by virtue of making a relation. The emergent assemblage formed when these parts enter relatively stable relationships of exteriority viewed relative to a higher cardinality organization of which it is contingently part will also appear to be a component of relations of interiority from the perspective of the larger assemblage. I do not believe we need theoretically to rid ourselves of relations of interiority; we need to be aware of the sliding perspective game of relations of interiority and exteriority and avoid reducing one to the other through a logic of diffraction and not linear causality. If we take dynamic systems theory with its informational component at full force, systems are both oriented in environment and take, in a sense, perspectives on this environment in reaction to causal stimuli. Perspective and orientation are not only things that humans engage in inasmuch as the universe itself can be conceptualized and experimented within as an open system.

Scale, complexity, and density must not be confused nor conflated. On scale, DeLanda writes: “The expression ‘operating at a different scale’, on the other hand, must be used carefully. In particular, it should refer only to *relative scale*, that is, to scale relative to the part-to-whole relation.”⁴⁸⁸ Scale itself is produced immanently⁴⁸⁹ and should be evaluated in terms of

⁴⁸⁷ DeLanda would disagree, as his focus tends to be on relations of exteriority only, viewing relations of interiority as a reduction of assemblage properties to essences. See *A New Philosophy of Science* at 45.

⁴⁸⁸ DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 16.

⁴⁸⁹ Barad, “Haunted Geologies: Spirits, Stones, and the Necropolitics of the Anthropocene,” 113.

relative or ordinal distance and not absolute or cardinal length when engaging in the prospective illusion. Assemblages tend in two directions. On the one hand, sometimes new relations of exteriority scale up in terms of their spatial arrangements thought as distance, “a city is clearly larger than a human being...”⁴⁹⁰ On the other hand, and against DeLanda, sometimes new relations of exteriority are formed inside a larger assemblage itself in new relations of interiority from the perspective of the larger scaled assemblage that presents an increase in density or micro complexity. With regards to the city example, “...there is no reason to believe that [the city] possesses a higher degree of complexity than, say, the human brain.”⁴⁹¹ Scale and density, then, present two tendencies in the organization of assemblages that can be measured through complexity as an external-internal and internal-external parameter: sometimes within top down causality relationships of interiority become more complex through density, such as the evolutionary progress of the human brain from brain stem towards full cerebrum.

Nonlinear causality does not impute a semi-linear causality from big to small and small to big because continuous relationships are not determined by spatial contiguity. When parts are assemblages in their own right and can have membership in multiple “larger” assemblages, causal influence does not always move locally. Karen Barad provides several examples of this potential when she outlines quantum phenomena whose consequences are discernible to the naked sight of our phenomenological apparatus through relatively simple experimental apparatuses, such as the diffraction evident in both the two slit experiment, the light gradients you see near your windows, and the rise of quantum explanations of biological phenomena, such as “photosynthesis, bird navigation, and olfactory function...”⁴⁹² Scale does not derive from

⁴⁹⁰ DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 17.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Barad, “Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings,” 410.

relationships of contiguity through a necessary chain, as in our Ant Chart from chapter one, but is produced immanently through relativistic distance conceivable as more a topological membrane than a topographical map. Both kinds of mapping have their potentials and blindspots when it comes to methodology, but not in helping us to articulate ontology.⁴⁹³

Assemblages accrete, not unlike layers of sedimentation and compression in geology, upon one another. With regards to “relations of exteriority” DeLanda notes, “...we need to conceive of emergent wholes in which the parts retain their autonomy, so that they can be detached from one whole and plugged into another one...”⁴⁹⁴ The relative autonomy of elements does not indicate a logic of withdrawal, as in Rickert, but does emphasize his use of the term “partiality.” Partiality obtains because parts are themselves wholes and are underdetermined because of their membership in multiple assemblages at varying scales. To put it differently, things do not withdraw from relation so much as they withdraw through relation.

Within the regress of intensities, the relatively open or closed boundaries of a system interpret external stimuli in terms of their internal consistency and, sometimes, qualitatively or quantitatively, different external stimuli lead to a qualitatively the same or quantitatively varying systemic responses. DeLanda names this feature redundant causality: “Catalysis deeply violates

⁴⁹³ Mathematical metaphors dominate the discussion on nonlinear causality, but we must tread lightly here. We must express becoming in writing, diagrams, mathemes, or what have you. In the section on *Bergsonism*, we have already grasped this difficulty: for Deleuze’s Bergson the way to deal with this problem involves repressing the illusion and, for Deleuze himself, positing intensive flows of impersonal thought beyond any discrete methodology. I believe we must not repress but acknowledge the apparatus quality of defining process in a comparatively spatialized medium in its expression in writing and speech. Spatialization is itself intensity, but it is intensity that tends towards actuality because we place arguments into a spatial set of relationships through writing by expressing various argumentative structures and through various inferential or philosophical warrants. Whether one views this process as the actualization of one’s own thought or the counteractualization of latent potentials in past authors thought depends entirely upon perspective. It is one thing to say that rhetoric exhibits the nonlinear causality typical of becoming; it is another thing to say what nonlinear causality entails. We must supplement rhetorical theory’s pushing against diachronic and mechanistic causality with the multiple belonging of elements in assemblages, redundant causality, probabilistic reasoning through measuring apparatuses and statistical distributions, and by pushing back against emergence as event.

⁴⁹⁴ DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 10.

linearity since it implies that different causes can lead to one and the same effect...”⁴⁹⁵ and “...there is a large causal redundancy at the micro-level, with many collision histories being compatible with the same macro-level effect...”⁴⁹⁶ Mechanistic causality requires a primary cause that explains change, as we saw in Aristotle’s notion of efficient causality that can be said to overdetermine other causal chains. We can even return to Aristotle’s example that leads him to speculate upon the existence of chance in the first place: why does a man choose to eat spicy food on a given day? What is the efficient cause of this choice? His upbringing? A smell? Proximity to the spicy food truck equivalent of his day? A sinus infection he wants to bleed out with the powerful spices? Multiple configurations of these efficient causes can enter conjunctions that are non-necessary or not primary, but sufficient in distribution to provide a probabilistic outcome that the man will eat the spicy food.

The primary cause, then, becomes the most statistically likely cause that exerts the most quantitatively measurable power on the outcome or distribution of potential outcomes. The sea of causes specific quality does not necessarily matter from the perspective of the actualization of a specific system that wants the spicy food: qualitatively and quantitatively different causes can act in assembly to produce the same result because of the play of boundaries.⁴⁹⁷ This does not by necessity mean that their efficacy is flat because of this; we could tease out which causes have greater efficacy by measuring statistical distributions in a population through different methodological apparatuses in a retrospective mode. However, it does mean that rhetorical theorists interested in nonlinear dynamics should attend to the typical through methods suited to the typical and the exceptional as singularity.

⁴⁹⁵ DeLanda, *New Philosophy of Society*, 20.

⁴⁹⁶ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 163.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid, 169.

These problems lead DeLanda to conclude that we need a probabilistic notion of causality, but he follows this line solidly within the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model and we will have to do some work to transduce it into the $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ one. DeLanda starts with an analogy to communications: “In communication theory, the actual occurrence of an event is said to provide information in proportion to the probabilities of the event’s occurrence...These events...may be arranged in a series. When two...series of events are placed in communication...a change in probabilities in one series affects the probability distribution of the other.”⁴⁹⁸ The difference of differentials in the plane of intensity exhibits this tendency as well, not just the virtual. The “distributions of the singular and ordinary” applies directly to the empirical mapping of phase states without needing the step through transcendental necessity into virtual causality: “fluctuations...constitute the events among which correlations may be established. At equilibrium, the fluctuations are basically equiprobable...as a system approaches a phase transition, these fluctuations being to display correlations...”⁴⁹⁹ DeLanda explicitly provides different kinds of thermodynamic systems as examples; physicists did not map out thermodynamic singularities with recourse to a pure metaphysical differentiator of difference, they did so through measurement and mathematical generalization.

Regardless of my naturalist misgiving for abstract and conceptually representative entities, both the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ and $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ models use of the quasi-causal operator and indeterminacy respectively provide a strong case for probabilistic warrants and modelling to replace those based upon bivalent warrants and linear causality. Emergence cannot remain theorized at the level of unintended effects or epistemological limit for rhetoricians. Rhetorical scholars interested in nonlinear dynamics and emergence as phase state shifts should attend to

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid, 79. Italics Removed.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, 81.

both the singular moments in which individual choice exerts force and “the collective unintended consequence of intentional action, that is, as a kind of statistical result.”⁵⁰⁰ The potential for a genuinely new thing or capacity to emerge in the diachronic sense may be truly unpredictable, but typical statistical distributions and their exemplary points are predictable. Part of promoting greater social efficacy for rhetorical studies deals not with eschewing control and prediction as the tools of Enlightenment’s repression of meaning but embracing them as helping us to calculate the most apt location for intervention and singular points to deal with in terms of quality instead of underneath a conceptual totality, like ideology as such. Let me attempt to be more direct: emergence conceived rigorously suggests that metaphysical projections such as ideology as totality and rhetoricity as Absolute reproduce a metaphysical logic that renders rhetorical agency as overdetermined when it should help us account for its very emergence.

Persuasion and Attunement

New materialist rhetorical theory transduces the ideology over constraints and affordances found in Charland’s adaptation of Althusser’s interpellation into an ontological register. Instead of ideology that operates in a coercive-persuasive process such that we are always already subjects, new materialists provide us with similarly tautological constructions. Rickert provides an interesting formulation of the regress: “Rhetoric...persuades us prior to symbolicity.”⁵⁰¹ and “...rhetoric rests in the fact that persuasion is prior to rhetoric. Worldly affect, modulated in persuasion, itself hollowed out the space for rhetoric’s emergence...”⁵⁰² Once rhetoric emerges in world, one wonders if its status can serve as one among many causes for a new emergence, and so on into regress. Rickert calls this prior persuasion in which the

⁵⁰⁰ DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, 24-25.

⁵⁰¹ Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 34.

⁵⁰² Ibid, 163-164.

ambient environment, composed of things like place, nonhuman agents, and so on, “an ambient occurrence: an attunement.”⁵⁰³ I am unsure why Rickert moves from the notion of coercion central to ideological rhetoric into that of persuasion for things that appear to be anything but persuasive because environmental stimuli on a system can reduce the degrees of freedom that a system can express and should be considered coercive instead of persuasive. When a situation of prior attunements leads to something like a bear attacking me, I am unsure that persuasion aptly describes the tendency in communication that has occurred. In an ideological vein, subject formation and subjectification like racism appear to have a greater balance towards conviction and coercion respectively. To sort this problem, we need to define terms like capacity, affect, and tendency and evaluate persuasion with regards to its cohort tendencies in human change, conviction and coercion, before attempting to figure out how judgement can fit into attunement or entanglement because jettisoning judgement ethically hamstrings rhetorical criticism.

When discussing the changes to persuasion, Rickert goes with “affect” and other theorists follow suit with terms like capacities, affects, and tendencies.⁵⁰⁴ These terms have nuanced histories that I cannot fully address here and do not always operate through persuasive processes. We have to ask which systems top-down causal efficacy and complexity are sufficient for cascades of “zones of indetermination” such that something approximating choice or the expansion of degrees of freedom, and therefore persuasion, can obtain. Persuasion may well prove to be the most illusory tendency in suasion broadly conceived because materialist indeterminacy alongside underdetermination may prove an insufficient ontological grounding for genuine choice. We know that, per the Bohr model, an electron’s characteristics do not exist

⁵⁰³ Ibid, 9.

⁵⁰⁴ See Stormer and McGreavy, “Thinking Ecologically About Rhetoric’s Ontology: Capacit, Vulnerability, and Resilience” and Ott and Dickinson, “Redefining Rhetoric: Why Matter Matters.”

before interaction, but the degree to which degrees of freedom present this characteristic is admittedly suspect, as is whether a random event presents an ontological gap for free will. A full treatment of this problem exceeds the capacities of this project but does indicate my commitment to at least one potential metaphysical fiction in relative free will. Autonomous free will is impossible, but we act as though we have limited free will against constraints and the entire edifice of rhetorical scholarship must cede to information science if we find that we do not. A potential I leave completely open and will adjust my theory accordingly if it obtains.

We will take the DeLanda route while attending to the differences between our two Deleuzian models: “Deleuze, in fact, always gives a two-fold definition of the virtual (and the intensive), using both singularities (unactualized tendencies) and what he calls affects (unactualized capacities to affect and to be affected).”⁵⁰⁵ It should be noted that these distinctions iterate back to somewhere we have already been; DeLanda draws isomorphic equivalency between capacities/affects and events/attributes.⁵⁰⁶ The complete series of the above terms requires the addition of extensive properties and qualities, but this complicates the modelling function of these concepts because, for us, extensive properties’ phantasmatic existence makes them not suitable for a naturalistic model.

The $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model articulates these terms in a complex fashion. (1) Virtual capacities are the potentials for a becoming-structure to be or not to be affected based upon unactualized potentials, series of singularities that do not enter into communication, and topological invariants or mathematical singularities that do not change under transformation.⁵⁰⁷ (2) Virtual affects form a circular pairing with virtual capacities as “virtual affects are sharply divided into a pure

⁵⁰⁵ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 65.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 57.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, 78.

capacity to be affected and a pure capacity to affect”⁵⁰⁸ and depend for expression upon the quasi-causal operator as a pure differentiator of difference with regards to the event. (3) Intensive “capacities are relational” and DeLanda likes to use examples from biology in which what affects an organism or species can potentially express in a given duration depend upon the environmental assemblages in which it is enmeshed.⁵⁰⁹ (4) DeLanda appears to leave intensive affects behind, but the biological examples imply that discrete intensities with specific relationship with its environment in a given time scale indicates both the system state chosen in small time and the tendencies developed over large time, in a reciprocal fashion. (5) The definition in the preceding paragraph carefully notes that singularities as “unactualized tendencies” reside at the level of the capacity. The relationship between the quasi-causal operator in its guises as counter-actualization and pre-actualization provide the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model with the kind of causal tautology required to produce the potential infinite or universe as open system that DeLanda requires. These tendencies, shaped by iteration and relational inter and intra-action over time, sublimate back into the virtual when they reach a sufficient threshold of de-territorialization or boundary complication. The quasi-causal operator has increased potential to function when communication channels between series of virtual singularities near maximal or minimal states of system dis-equilibrium and enacts pre-actualization in which different unactualized virtual capacities become actualized in the intensive register. (6) The pre-individual processes at the level of the virtual and the intensive figured as the plane of the differentials of differences yield “actual individuals [that] differ from each other not only in their extensity (spatial structure and scale) but also in their qualities... such as color or texture.”⁵¹⁰ In

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid, 78.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid, 67 and 104-105.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, 55 and 63 respectively.

conclusion, the causal progress from $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$, with some amount of crass reductionism, results in Capacities \rightarrow Affects \rightarrow Qualities and extensive properties. Certainly, nonlinear dynamics does not impute a kind of pure linear causality, but this model only features some level of reciprocal influence in its spatialization between virtual and intensive registers. Individual's actualizations become ephemeral, even if the event as pure accident replaces transcendental essences.

It remains unclear to me how qualities that manifest in “actual individuals” do not themselves, given the “qualitative probabilism” of *Bergsonism*, possess the capacity to counter-actualize into the virtual as qualities themselves can be viewed as assemblages in terms of relationships of exteriority or as intensities in their own right. Transducing the above into the more synchronically focused $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ model presents an alternative to the nonlinear determination outlined above because all things become intensities operating at different temporal rhythms that accrete upon one another and pure virtuality and actuality are stripped of their metaphysical status by becoming the conceptual poles of our modelling apparatus. Virtuality becomes a tendency of intensity towards more rapid speeds of becoming through deterritorialization and relations of exteriority in which intensities' spatiotemporal structures destabilize such that novelty can obtain. Actuality becomes a tendency of intensity towards less rapid speeds of becoming through territorialization, irrational non-interaction, and relations of interiority such that relative stability or maintenance of system boundaries obtains. There are no set theoretic problems of the Absolute here. There is no virtual as the “space of all spaces” nor the transduction of indeterminacy into the quasi-cause as a paradoxical fantasy of a pure differentiator of difference. The environment as an open totality populated by accretions of intensities both in the cosmological progress of diachronic emergence and the synchronic

tendencies mappable in terms of phase shifts replaces any kind of Absolute domain with an endless potential infinity.

Rhetoricians working in this model want to focus on speech as intensity by embracing infinite regress and experimental-definitional apparatuses to temporarily bound this regress in consciously illusory and provisional ways instead of casting rhetoric as always anterior capacity or coercive restraint. However, a focus on persuasion becomes extremely complicated when we attempt to draw resources from Deleuzian thought because the condensation through communication of virtual singularities into differentials of differences in intensities and their own self-cancelling process through which both intensive qualities and extensive properties obtain does not afford much room for choice, only for chance. Should we want to use the diachronic acuity of this model, and I am not sure we should, we must back up to better pose the question of what different qualitative tendencies in human change present a sufficient chain of logic by mapping the differences in coercion, persuasion, and conviction.

McGee articulates coercion with force: “Nothing in the environment bespeaks our free agency; indeed, we most often mark out our own free will...by listing the ways in which we may in fact constrict the free-will of others...Rhetoric, I mean to say...is a species of coercion...it seems important in any material theory of rhetoric to describe the phenomenon as a coercive agency.”⁵¹¹ McGee suggests that the ambivalence between constraint and affordance in the always already mode within both rhetoric as subjectivity and rhetoric as attunement presents great difficulty for theorizing a positive mode of agential capacity. Individuals and individuations are both coerced by the typical line of social punishment for boundary transgression and by the expressed affects of the other intensive systems in their environment.

⁵¹¹ Michael Calvin McGee, “A Materialist’s Conception of Rhetoric” in *Rhetoric, Materiality, and Politics*, 32-33. Italics Removed.

Coercion, conviction, and persuasion may never be strictly separable, but, contra McGee, differences in the quality and quantity of coercion do matter for ethical considerations and for how they inflect the analysis and phenomenological experience of the other terms.

Rhetorical theorists rarely mention conviction and I have only one example from Charland: “The process by which an audience member enters into a new subject position is therefore not one of persuasion. It is akin more to one of conversion that ultimately results in an act of recognition of the ‘rightness’ of a discourse and of one’s identity with its reconfigured social position.”⁵¹² Charland uses the word conversion, but conviction works just as well. Conviction indicates suasion through rationality or event; those moments in human change that appear singular because they demand an all or nothing response but are normally built up through a long series of ordinary points.

It may seem strange to put rationality and religious calling within the same tendency in human change. Yet, their quality has much in common because they require an all or nothing response in reaction to an unalienable, at the level of phenomenological experience, discourse. Fisher conceives of the different elements of a narrative in terms of “narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story...[and] narrative fidelity, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives...”⁵¹³ These conditions present the series of ordinary points from which Charland’s singular “conversion” emerges. This process can be analogized to mathematics in which students learn from trial and error by doing problems and having their work checked in terms of process and solution and through working through and reproducing various proofs of different mathematical constructs. The similarity hinges upon the force as the narrative of learning or narrative of identification turns the corner when the subject

⁵¹² Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric,” 142.

⁵¹³ Walter Fisher, “Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument,” 8.

becomes a new subject, one with a new identification or a new understanding of the necessary conditions of a mathematical problem. We might say that this irreversibly changes the distribution of singular and ordinary as in a phase shift.

With narrative, each point of resonance functions like a singularity-event in a series tending towards an emergent threshold in which some new assemblage membership exerts top-down authority overall on the whole system. One may make up a sub narrative as to how they will act or how they fit into the larger narrative, but the links between story and identification follow a pseudo-logical bent. The entailments either convince or they don't relative to a chain of necessary entailments. With mathematics, there are a variety of proofs and ways of expressing different constructs and producing an adequate solution to different problem, but within a given field of application the solutions follow from conviction. A teacher may persuade a student which proof to start with or coerce them with grade-based consequences, mathematicians may argue about which proof is preferable or if a concept like the infinitesimal truly exists,⁵¹⁴ but math systems within themselves convict practitioners of their relationships of interiority while being open to systemic elaboration through mathematical methodologies. When entailments in analogic processes become necessary, the subject can either turn the corner and be redefined by them or say no.

Where do we locate persuasion? To find it, we must look at how an over-emphasis on coercion and a complete erasure of conviction overdetermine persuasion in both the constitutive and new materialist rhetorical theory corpuses with regards to ethical criticism. In constitutive

⁵¹⁴ G. Mitchell Reyes takes the strong argument that because mathematics involves contingency in its disciplinary history, it involves persuasion, and is therefore rhetoric in "The Rhetoric in Mathematics: Newton, Leibniz, the Calculus, and the Rhetorical Force of the Infinitesimal" and "Algorithms and Rhetorical Inquiry: The Case of the 2008 Financial Collapse." I do not find this take adequate to explain the development of mathematics, its predictive adequacy in some hard sciences, nor the axiomizable quality of many branches of mathematics under set theory. Mathematics as a discipline features rhetorical qualities because people argue; math systems in local terms follow deductively and not rhetorically.

rhetoric, ideology figured as anterior structure has a habit of overdetermining opportunities for human agency, especially if the critic is not looking for emergent factors. With regards to new materialist rhetoric, attunement takes on a similar role and it appears extremely unclear what we can do about our attunements other than accept them or reject them. Rickert presents this ambivalence and difficulty clearly: “On this view, a system of ethics is not applied to life. Our ethics are not something exterior we bring in and deploy but rather a set of comportments that emerge from life as it is lived...”⁵¹⁵ So, we are already attuned to an ethical system that derives from both worldly ontology and the subjectivities that structure our identities. How do we change or find which consequence of our actions to favor over another? To use Rickert’s language, how do we re-attune?

I find Rickert’s answer unsatisfactory: “...it is important to balance an attendance to what is present with an attendance to what withdraws and to what the future brings so that we are open to whatever further disclosive possibilities may become manifest...attuned simultaneously to what matters to us now while mindful that we cannot take reality for the simple presence of beings as they seem.”⁵¹⁶ We are caught in an ethical infinite regress: we are always already attuned within some system of ethics so how can we be sure that any new system of ethics we become enmeshed with or create does not simply replicate the problems of the old system of ethics to which we are already attuned? How are the concepts of disclosure and withdrawal here not simply a callback at the ontological level to the same kind of unmasking criticism in a never-ending negative critique in which criticism attempts to disclose that which withdraws? The regress here does not bother me so much as the lack of criteria for ethical judgement of one attunement against another.

⁵¹⁵ Ricker, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 223.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid, 280.

I am hardly the only one to make this point about *Ambient Rhetoric*. Ekaterina Haskins argues that "...Rickert's brief case studies in preceding and subsequent chapters only gesture in the direction of such a list, neither offering a coherent framework for critical interpretation of ambient rhetoric nor suggesting how one might approach ambience pedagogically."⁵¹⁷ I believe Haskins shares my own animus towards new materialist rhetoric: without a methodological shift in our critical orientation, all of this focus on ontology and non-human actants will do nothing but move unmasking criticism and negative critique into a new register. Doug Sweet's review presents a dire problem: "But the examples we see are limited, 'new age.' Where is work? Where are slums, echoing gunshots, structural violence, limited horizons...Where is the political? The ideological? They are absent."⁵¹⁸ What ethical precepts do ambience and attunement really give us? Is not the KKK member sitting in their den with their confederate flag on the wall attuned to their system of ethics as much as we academics are attuned to our various ones?

Perhaps nowhere does this problem come out clearer than when Rickert attempts to apply his system to the problem of Post-Truth. He finds more at fault with a naturalistic correspondence theory of truth because it "was never as secure as it was claimed and always relied on authority" than truth as "an emergent norm in human dwelling."⁵¹⁹ This erasure of ethical judgement follows an extremely peculiar vignette in which he almost justifies New Gingrich's sophistic mode because of a relativity framework for truth before backing down to argue: "From this perspective, Gingrich might be applauded for reaching out but finely condemned for not bringing public perception into line with the FBI's crime statistics. Crime

⁵¹⁷ Haskins, "Ambient Commons: Attention in the Age of Embodied Information / Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being," 299.

⁵¹⁸ Doug Sweet, "*Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being*, Thomas Rickert," 303.

⁵¹⁹ Thomas Rickert, "It is All There: From Reason to Reasoning-in-the-World," 100.

must be down, and policy must so follow.”⁵²⁰ So we must pay attention to non-human actants like technology, fine, but how can normative claims based upon naturalistic authority, on the one hand, be a problem because they deny the emergent attunement of truth and, on the other hand, be necessary for determining that Gingrich’s appeal was a bad one? Persuasion must be given a footing entangled with but qualitatively different in tendency from coercion and conviction whether we want to stay in a constitutive realm focused on social ontology or a new materialist one with a broad definition of rhetorical.

Deleuze provides two ways out of this problem with ethical judgement and Barad provides an important third. First, we have spent an exhaustive amount of time talking about indeterminacy, its relationship to Bergson’s “zones of indetermination,” and the way in which Deleuze mobilizes dialetheic paradoxes in *The Logic of Sense*. Attunement to worldly ethics and subjectivity may be coercive constraints and be enmeshed with conviction for emergence, but their actualization exceeds that capacity of reified totalities to explain when we do not start with those totalities. Taking a prospective bent that starts in the middle and maps attentively controversy, ambiguity, and patterns of excess and lack with regards to systems made of rhetorical and nonrhetorical stuff’s fuzzy spatiotemporal borders presents one way out. We are always under and overdetermined depending upon the perspectival projections we draw with our models and the methodologies through which we make a relatively closed system within becoming.

Second, while the details of incomposability and composability are obscure at best and the implications of modal ontologies exceeds what I can do here, Deleuze provides a useful way to think through Rickert’s dichotomy between disclosure and withdrawal with an eye to the

⁵²⁰ Ibid, 99.

difference between persuasion as positive creation and coercion as identification through negation in *The Fold*. The resonances to *Bergsonism*'s anthropocentric stance are clear:

Morality consists in this for each individual: to attempt each time to extend its region of clear expression, to try to augment its amplitude, so as to produce a free act that expresses the most possible in one given condition or another...Extending its clear region, prolonging God's passage to the maximum, actualizing all the singularities that are concentrated on, and even won over to, new singularities would amount to a soul's progress. In this way we might say that it imitates God.⁵²¹

Ethics becomes inextricably linked to intensive capacities and their relationship to other intensities in a given environment, in line with new materialist rhetorical theory. But we are provided with a way make judgements because intensities have both the capacity to affect and the capacity to be affected. In a sense, all things are obverses of one another and should not be placed into the passive/active dichotomy. As Stormer and McGreavy note, "...vulnerability has to be seen not merely as frailty but as a potential strength if capacities are to be understood as adaptive."⁵²² Expanding the diversity and richness of the individuations of becoming takes on the status of an ethical imperative: systems that diminish individuation potential through coercion beyond the necessary maintenance of relative stability are regarded as bad and systems that encourage the same through persuasion or the increase of capacity through vulnerability tend to be good.

Yet, specificity and intensive diversity do not provide us with a full enough criterion for judgement nor a mode of criticism to work within process ontology. Could not a bad faith actor

⁵²¹ Deleuze, *The Fold*, 73.

⁵²² Stormer and McGreavy, "Thinking Ecologically About Rhetoric's Ontology: Capacity, Vulnerability, and Resilience," 19.

claim that fascism is a necessary good because it contributes the most to systemic stability precisely by destroying diverse potentiality? Absolutely, and extremely dark readings of Deleuze can be found in the blog cracks of the Internet.⁵²³ I do not think Barad would necessarily agree with me, but her naturalism adds an ontologically entangled consequentialist⁵²⁴ ethics: “Particular possibilities for (intra-)acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail an ethical obligation to intra-act responsibly in the world’s becoming...intra-actions do not merely effect...an ethics of knowing...objectivity means being accountable for marks on bodies, that is, specific materializations in their differential mattering.”⁵²⁵

The way out of the infinite ethical regress at the level of epistemology involves following a consequentialist tack in which ethics is as much a doing as a thinking and the kind of thinking that attempts to define ethics in itself is also a doing. If all things can be said to be intensities that function like experimental apparatuses, then there never was any distance between reflection, so called attunement, and action; they are all different apparatuses that intra-act within becoming in different ways and casting attunement as always already prior to reflection betrays a maintenance of the subject object dichotomy more than its overcoming.

We can combat a thing like fascism in terms of saying that its radical withdrawal and severing of relationality and diversity for the purpose of systemic stability is wrong; we can even say it in terms of consequences or that the thing it says it does it does not do in the logic of a critical unmasking gesture, but are these things enough? Would not the fascist or authoritarian or racist simply say “no you are wrong, and these are precisely the material marks on bodies that

⁵²³ I have attempted to find this source and it has vanished within the Internet, probably for the better. Someone had taken Deleuze on emergence and tendency to primate studies to argue that our tendencies towards domination of others are evolutionarily emergent, and therefore ethically correct.

⁵²⁴ Laurie E. Gries makes an analogous argument for “meaning consequentialism” with attention to the unpredictable outcomes in dynamic systems that feature nonlinear causality at 48-52 of *Still Life with Rhetoric*.

⁵²⁵ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 278.

should be created?" Yes. They could and they do, as anyone who has read obscure branches of fascist rhetoric like eco-fascism has found out clearly.

But what should we expect from a social philosophy, or any social philosophy, that can take recourse in an always anterior Absolute such that any sign or material thing simply presents more evidence for the hidden quality of reality? In the end, it will come down to authority and, somewhat following Rickert, sophism in the sense of disclosing the reasons why a person should grant authority to a politics founded on falsifiability and naturalism. It is precisely because of this need for authority that we must re-evaluate the methodologies typical to rhetorical criticism that, for both New Materialist and constitutive rhetoric strains, overemphasize negative critique in the close reading-retrospective mode at the expense of better analytic models and methodologies that work to positively create. Put differently, in addition to the discursive quagmire of unmasking the secret truths of who is right and who is wrong, we must produce realities that people will be persuaded are right by increasing the intensive capacities and webs of belonging of as many things, broadly conceived, as we can.

Methodologies and Mapping the Curve

In a sense, the preceding sections have merely reiterated the very illusions they mapped out: indeterminacy itself may present a retrospective illusion should it prove insufficient to account for choice and emergence through logical or empirical inadequacy, the domains I have cast over other scholars' regresses, and the degree to which the diachronic/synchronic split itself is a poorly posed question by sacrificing metaphysical intuition to linguistic spatialization. However, whether we embrace tautology as productive regress with logically necessary absolutes in the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model and then counter-actualize it in the mode of $A \rightarrow I \rightarrow V$ or attempt to do cartography in the $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ model, rhetorical theorists and critics need to expand their

methodological repertoire to accommodate the interesting potentials of ontological models. Of course, many already do. Rhetoricians are not strangers to the calls for methodological pluralism that arise every decade or so, neither do all contemporary rhetoricians work within a close reading paradigm. I have attempted to pose the question without analyzing current efforts' efficacy, in part, because I believe both my criteria for success and ontological precepts would benefit by joining these rhetoricians before I judge their work. After all, thinking is a doing and a doing is a thinking. The central goal here is speculative methodology: what modes of methodology can we speculate on as likely candidates at the different ontological lines expressed above to produce social change? The overriding goal here remains to propose alternatives to negative critique while situating unmasking criticism as one method within a greater whole.

In truth, it is possible that I have been too hard on those who map out oppression in the diachronic sense through the constitutive rhetoric model of Ideology→Rhetoric→Action; this kind of work brings attention to the different ways in which rhetoric enacts oppression at a given scale of speech and material substrates. However, I do believe that synchronic analyses in the Ideology←Rhetoric→Action model opens a larger space for intervention because ideology can be viewed as an effect that derives from local analyses of rhetoric as speech with an attention to an individuated set of speech's capacities, affects, and tendencies. Ideology becomes like virtuality, a pure formal pole that never obtains, and action, an actuality never fully separable from the intensive rhetorics that constrain it. Neither model is metaphysically invalid, they both possess strengths and weaknesses that rely upon the illusory perspective games inherent in becoming.

My overall problem with ideological work in either a synchronic or diachronic mode derives more from the tendency towards using methods well suited to statistical outliers on

speech sets that are typical of a given mode of oppression. Expanding the objects that count as speech through new materialism may be capable of giving these analyses a firmer grasp of how many things contribute to ideology as effect, but without a shift in methodology I do not think they do anything more than replicate the problem with hidden causes at an ontological level. Put differently, in the retrospective mode without an adequate conceptualization of the virtual as a heterogenous anterior force and of counteractualization, we run the risk of reducing the non-linear causal forces within a given rhetoric's history to a quantitative gradient. Rhetoric becomes something like norms that give body to ideology and ideology becomes a spectral causal force conceived of in terms of quantity, more or less ideological and or oppressive, instead of a discrete ideology ramifying out through motive, affect, material practices, and speech in a qualitative and emergent sense. Rhetorical historians and political economists have, perhaps, known this problem all along. Should we want to work in the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model we need to ask about the transcendental empiricist conditions for the genesis of a discrete anterior structure more so than treating it as a given and finding precisely what we expected to find from the theory in the text.

The models suggest two continua with four qualitative tendencies in a prospective mode: the singular/ordinary (or outlier/typical) and the diachronic/synchronic continuums. We can conceive of the expressions of a discrete and individuated ideology or rhetoric by ramifying out the connections between these terms and considering what kind of method fits each connection at the level of textual analysis.

The singular-diachronic pairing requires a material culture and historiographical posture to document the different events in a series of singularities that accounts for the genesis of an individuated rhetoric or ideology. I think rhetorical historians and those who do Nietzschean or

Foucauldian genealogical analysis will say they have been doing this thing for some time, but I am not convinced on the face of the argument and, unfortunately, do not have time to survey a wide swath of that literature here. My intuition tells me that reified concepts like power or ideology that are not broken up into individuated and historically contingent and discrete powers gets in the way of this mode taking on a prospective bent. Supplementing the existing framework with notions of emergence, non-linear dynamics, evental singularities, topological invariants, and qualitative probabilism presents a daunting task, but one that I believe would make this mode more robust.

The singular-synchronic pairing requires more direct modes of intervention than are typically afforded by textual analysis, but I do not think close reading, discourse analysis, or content analysis approaches are entirely unwarranted. A singular synchronic text takes a statistical outlier that does not fit the larger cartographies and content analyses of typical texts in a discrete individuated set of speech and attempts to explain why it does not fit the typical distribution and what, if anything, it tells us about the distribution itself. The justification for this kind of analysis comes back into the significance arguments of the content analysis of rhetorical criticism executed in the first section of this chapter: rhetorical critics want to find texts that are significant because they work against oppression in some way but tend to just find more oppression.

This occurs for three reasons. First, systemic oppression is real, and ideology attempts to totalize itself across its various ramifications into different specific systems. However, when we focus on constraints and coercion over moments of contingency that derive from ideological underdetermination, we may miss novel developments. Second, not every text presents something ideologically exemplary and texts that are not surprising may only yield surprising

results when taken on at a macro level through the typical-synchronic pairing. Third, textual close reading and text-based modes of social scientific research may simply not get there because they are inherently reconstructive. Modes of more direct intervention in novel social movements as they unfold could present new opportunities for research by being research in themselves. I have specifically ethnography, natural experiments, activist-ethnography, and interview work in mind here. It is one thing to map out contingency at the level of the produced text; it is another thing to attempt to actualize potentialities through a kind of natural science in trial and error.

The typical-diachronic pair does not strive to account for genesis in a qualitative fashion but expands the purview of the typical bent of ideological criticism through methods more amenable to large data sets, such as content analysis or even natural language analysis facilitated through big data. A focus on smaller sets of individuated texts can obscure larger patterns that only come out when larger questions are asked and methodological apparatuses amenable to drawing out patterns those human readers struggle to find are employed. We might even join the social sciences in producing meta-studies of our own close reading studies. This mode concerns itself less with the genetic account of the events sufficient to produce a discrete individuation and more with the vast web of virtual constraints and necessary conditions of larger social phenomena. This mode is explicitly one that falls within the retrospective illusion, but one that will hopefully produce surprising connections between the texts it crunches.

The typical-synchronic pair primarily functions to provide the probabilistic clarity for the singular-synchronic pairing to function by creating vast cartographies of the interconnections between seemingly discrete sets of content through the same methodological apparatuses employed by the typical-diachronic pairing. What elements of these cartographies indicate a given rhetorical features' topological invariance are useful to know so scholars can zero in on

these invariances and connections between seemingly separate rhetorical assemblages through more qualitatively driven methodologies.

In a sense, the entire diachronic/synchronic distinction, and the ordinary/singular one, only function in a tentative sense because the distinction itself is a poorly posed question and a retrospective illusion because the implementation of apparatuses produces a kind of perspectivism. DeLanda articulates the first problem well with regards to space and time: “In particular, for the sake of ease of presentation I have artificially separated issues related to time and space, but in reality we are always confronted with complex spatio-temporal phenomena.”⁵²⁶ The diachronic/synchronic pairing replicates this problem. If Barad is correct and space-time are emergent features of a cosmic mattering, then the synchronic diachronic question is poorly posed and should be diffracted through novel methodologies, likely those deriving from information theory and dynamic systems theory.

I have not yet dived into these literatures to find how they do these things, so my solution to this problem is only provisional. On the one hand, diachrony and synchrony should be viewed only as temporal tendencies that speech sets can be said to enact for the purpose of stalling out infinite regress with a definitional boundary. We know, exhaustively, that these definitional boundaries are illusions that can only be partially clarified through probabilistic logic and cartographic tools that work well with fuzzy boundaries. Focus groups and interviews in which individuals engaged in the phenomena are forced to forestall regress through choice provide some leverage, but this distinction is far from complete. On the other hand, the singular/ordinary distinction also presents a retrospective illusion because of the inevitable role of perspective in focalizing the phenomenon that interests us. The best way we have to get around this problem

⁵²⁶ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 116.

involves novel methodologies that are more suitable for mapping a broad swath of empirical phenomena without attempting to push the structural homologies at the level of the differentials of differences out towards an Absolute. We must remember that what appears singular from one focalization of the critical apparatus will appear ordinary from another. The solution here involves maximizing the number of focalizations and methodological apparatuses: rhetoric must make the move science made long ago in which scholars work together to produce more comprehensive mappings through multi-methodological pursuits. We must also exceed most disciplines in terms of interdisciplinary conceptualization.

Analysis may always carry the specter of the retrospective illusion within it, but there is a fifth way that does not fall on the fourfold schematic developed above: rhetoric as an apparatus of creation. I do not here mean the kind of notion that criticism itself is a rhetorical text as much as its object nor, exactly, James Darsey's notion that criticism itself can be an aesthetic genesis. I mean something closer to what Charland pondered against the infinite regress of subjectivity he produced in the same article: "A transformed ideology would require a transformed subject... This can proceed at two levels: (1) it can proceed at the level of the constitutive narrative itself... (2) it can also proceed at the aesthetic level... [through] a range of aesthetic practices... that elicit new modes of experience and being."⁵²⁷ Charland argues for something peculiar here that I think performance studies scholars have known for a long time: the study of rhetoric does not by necessity have to be analysis in a retrospective mode; the study of rhetoric can be a doing through a creative apparatus such that we create new rhetorics through a variety of mediums. I believe it is this potential direction that most interests me and I intend to start producing work within by creating texts for consumption and then rigorously evaluating their

⁵²⁷ Charland, "Constitutive rhetoric: The case of the *Peuple Québécois*," 148.

success or failure through interview, ethnographic, and auto-ethnographic methodologies.

Creation by becoming part of the universe's infinite progress has an appeal for breaking out of the infinite regress of analysis.

Conclusion

Ontology, epistemology, ethics, and methodology are permeable categories in which a variety of positions have potential entailment between them whether these links are made determinate or left to implication. This inextricable dependence requires both theorists and critics to work in a speculative mode by mapping out the positions and potentials of their system explicitly. However, a speculative mode can easily fall prey to the problems of vagueness and the Absolute inherent in definition through language or, as Priest compellingly argues, mathematical modelling. I argue that this problem in ontological inquiry necessitates attention to the link between methodology and ontology. Constructing an ontology involves methodology both in empirical inquiry and in definition; employing or constructing a methodology involves ontology in an individual's approach to world itself prior to the application or generation of a methodology or study. Theorists, critics, and philosophers must take seriously the methodological and ontological elements of their work to work against positing metaphysical Absolutes that make the phenomenal world depend upon some metaphysical category whose truth relies upon purely logical criteria beyond empirical measurement.

Graham Priest provides a perspective from formal logic that helps us to delimit problems of vagueness and precision and the Absolute and ultimate domains through his concepts, "The Inclosure Paradox" and "The Domain Principle." "The Inclosure Paradox" formalizes what happens in philosophical inquiry when border cases emerge that suffer from Soritic Paradoxes that arise when we attempt to make the boundaries of a material thing through experimentation, to bring in Karen Barad, or a conceptual thing through definition precise. As Barad helps us grasp, definition and experimentation share in the difficulties of measurement. Experimentation requires a replicable system that attempts to close off part of the open system of the universe but

will never fully do so because of the impossibility of perfect precision, the entanglement of the measuring apparatus with the phenomena in question, and the contingent unfolding of universal becoming with its indeterminacy or “zones of indetermination” to use Bergson’s term. Definition functions as semantic experimentation: a set of definitions or categories arise, borderline cases complicate the boundaries, and the definitions or categories must be re-worked in an infinite regress until the definer casts a domain over the regress that attempts to resolve contradiction through an Absolute. Priest’s “Domain Principle” helps us understand that these totalities themselves can end up as the first term in a new series of definitions because they will run into paradoxes of the Absolute in which they must argue they both are and are not themselves. While Priest has no problem with dialetheic Absolutes, as naturalists, we do because Absolutes must be inferred through logic as a transcendental element beyond empirical measurement that exists through logical truth criteria.

Jankèlèvich’s reading of Bergson links to the “Domain Principle” by providing a higher order argumentative structures named “The Idols of Distance” and “The Retrospective Illusion.” For my position, “The Idols of Distance” signify categorical fictions that emerge necessarily through the process of “The Domain Principle” because of the LNC and LEM’s use in producing logical entailment in definitional systems. In a sense, both language and math produce fantasies that have no empirical basis, such as the temporal instant, nothingness or zero, or perfect numerical precision. These “Idols of Distance” underly the transcendental chain of reasoning towards an Absolute as primary cause, such as Aristotle’s Demiurge or Leibniz’s God, such that an always anterior totality produced by reasoning about the empirical somehow retrospectively accounts for the empirical itself. More local totalities, such as ideology, can function in this retrospective mode as well. In short, “The Retrospective Illusion” follows the logic of a

retrospective illusion in which some categorical human conceptualization becomes projected backwards as the primary and anterior cause through a chain of necessary transcendental reasoning underwritten by a progression of inferences warranted by the LNC and or the LEM. To link to the Deleuzian terminology later in this project, “The Retrospective Illusion” moves from $A \rightarrow B$.

Deleuze, Deleuze’s Bergson, and Bergson attempt to provide an alternative philosophical method that traces out the sufficient ramifications of qualities in messy aggregates towards conceptual purity in a register of temporal becoming instead of spatial being. I call the first three steps of the four step method Deleuze produces in *Bergsonism* the Prospective Illusion for its orientation towards the never complete potential of pure Being obtaining from becoming, as opposed to many retrospective illusions that account for becoming as stemming from pure Being. To put it in Deleuze’s terminology, the Prospective Illusion moves from $B \rightarrow A$. Deleuze distills Bergson’s method as follows: (1) Intuitively create problems with limited reliance upon philosophical *doxa* through a naïve perspective that does not take old solutions as determinative; (2) Phrase philosophical problematics by avoiding poorly posed questions that inject “Idols of Distance” as anterior and spectral causes, then divide messy aggregates in experience by pushing their qualities towards pure conceptual tendencies through logical chains of sufficiency comported towards future actuality; (3) State solutions in terms of time instead of space. This methodology functions well with a naturalistic comportment towards ontology and methodology: the pure tendencies’ necessity derives from their place as illusory local absolutes that help us theorize the quality of a thing instead of causing it. The cosmos as becoming becomes an open and non-totalizable thing and inquiry within it relies upon a combination of logical theorizing and getting messy in the system through empirical methodologies.

A problem arises with the fourth moment of Deleuze's Bergson method when the pure tendency that has been reached through the first three steps is retroactively posited as the virtual cause of becoming. This sudden snap back into retrospectivity derives from two sources: (1) It relies upon a tacit acceptance of a Platonic formal ontology even as it replaces essence with temporal structure figured as duration; (2) Bergson's encounter with Einstein's relativity undoes his transcendental empiricism when he projects an immanent and Absolute notion of the virtual to deal with the logical contradictions of relativity that derive from the universal impossibility of simultaneity. Simultaneity beyond overlapping duration becomes an Absolute sublimated into anterior differential structure. The logical warrants underlying the projection of an immanent but necessary virtual Absolute derive from the very LNC and LEM that earlier Bergson, especially the Bergson of *Matter and Memory*, appears to sidestep and upon the insistence that the Time//Space dualism presents a messy aggregate. The way out of the fourth step of the method requires turning Bergson against Bergson: Time//Space is not a messy aggregate, but a poorly posed question.

Deleuze and DeLanda's Deleuze provide a way out of this problem, but an incomplete one because one their solutions moves the retrospective illusion away from Time as Absolute to the Virtual as Absolute. Parsing through this problem allows us to transduce virtuality as other conceptual totalities, such as rhetoricity in rhetorical theory or ideology in critical theory, to attempt to break out of the Absolute by embracing regress. There are at least two Deleuzes that can be mapped out through two different constructions of Deleuzian ontology. (1) The $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model in which the traces of intensity can be logically inferred in actual being and the traces of virtuality as structure or the differentials of differences can be logically inferred by analyzing intensity. This model problematically maintains hidden causes by reversing the Platonic

hierarchy from pure essence and messy accident to pure accident and messy intensity. (2) The $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ model in which accretions of differently viscous intensities, overlapping durations with no final term to use Bergson's language, can be modelled by their tendency through deterritorialization towards virtuality and territorialization towards actuality.

Both models have their uses for rhetorical theory and theorizing ontology but mapping out the limitations of the first makes the benefits of the second more apparent. DeLanda's reconstruction of Deleuze's ontology lays the problem with the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model out clearly in its argumentative structure and construction of and subsequent erasure of extensity. The argumentative structures DeLanda deploys ultimately rely upon the LNC and LEM as logical criteria in transcendental reasoning beyond his apparently empiricist orientation. The general argumentative structure combines systems theory with transcendental reasoning by arguing that similar distributions of differences in different physical-scientific phenomena suggests an underlying, if nonlinear, set of all sets virtual that serves as the common cause of intensive flows and more viscous actualizations. Put differently, the elaboration of virtual series that structures intensity and intensity's own solidification into actuality depends upon the logical necessity of the similar implying a common cause and the condition not being capable of resembling the conditioned. It is through this logic that the LNC steps in: despite divergent virtuality violating the LEM, it is ontologically separable from that which it conditions through the LNC. Deleuze and DeLanda position this virtual Absolute as a self-differentiating difference in a way that embraces a kind of Priest like *dialetheia*: the Virtual both is and is not itself immanently because contradiction does not need indicate conceptual negation.

The lack of negation in this ontology does not necessarily mean that it escapes the problems of the retrospective illusion: it displaces the poorly posed question from time//space

into intensity//extensity. The problem arises with the marginalization of extensity such that $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ emerges as a trinary sequence, but one that builds itself upon a fantasy that has no empirical basis named extensity. Contradiction through the negation of an imaginary construct comes back into the system. This problem resonates with Aristotle's marginalization of material causality and the implicature of chance as a hidden fifth mode of causality, or perhaps, non-causality. In short, an ontology built upon removing a fantasy from its analysis still relies upon a fantasy and will re-introduce purely metaphysical entities at the limits of its domain. Extensity follows the fantasy of perfect boundary precision: a table is 6 feet long or entropy accounts for X amount of thermodynamic loss in a given system. DeLanda's own stipulation that philosophical precepts possess empirical adequacy suggests a naturalistic warrant that the marginalization of extensity, especially as entropy, is not valid because metric values cannot be fully enacted through experimental apparatuses. When we cut boards for a table, we know very well they are not going to be precisely 6 feet long because, even were we able to cut at the subatomic level, some material remainder would persist. Entropy's case presents greater difficulty: as a system loses information or the capacity to do work the system of connections and capacities in its assemblage will change. There is no such thing as extensity and one of the very extensive attributes DeLanda marginalizes may itself be responsible for the creativity of actualization in which the dispersion of energy facilitates the emergence of the new. Through Barad and Maddy's naturalistic ontologies and methodologies we know that entropy and the indeterminacy that comes with it suggests a material causality, familiar from Aristotle, but takes on the name counter-actualization in the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model rid of metaphorical content. Counteractualization signifies the capacity of the virtual to change based upon the contingent actualization of intensive flows tending towards, but never reaching, complete actualization. The key in transducing the

$V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model is to take this counteractualizing tendency with greater weight. The Virtual as a set of all sets does not exist as a mathematical and pure entity anymore than qualities somehow tend towards extensity as pure spatiality within actualization. Deleuzian ontologies transduce the poorly posed question of time//space into intensity//extensity.

We must return to the Bergson of *Matter and Memory* but with Deleuzian and naturalist qualifications: all things should be conceptualized as discrete individuated intensities that function as experimental apparatuses themselves that resolve indeterminacy through the ever-processual flux of relations of interiority and exteriority and our analyses of these relationships and processes must be falsifiable and replicable through empirical criteria. Indeterminacy and “Zones of Indetermination” are a mode of physically verifiable material causality by way of our best explanations of quantum phenomena. This mode of reasoning fully supports ontological contingency, an important foundation for rhetorical theory, inasmuch as it provides the ontological potential for a highly limited mode of choice or self-determination in systems with a sufficient quantity of nodes in the space between the influence of parts and emergent wholes.

Naturalism further aids us in positioning models and their fantasies as necessary to human understanding but not as warranting metaphysical status and causal influence over reality. Logical criteria have their place in theory building, but the absolutes and Absolutes they project should not be assumed to have causal efficacy. Put differently, both retrospective and prospective illusions are useful in making nonmetric reality metric provided we do not make a fallacy of either by assuming that our local analytic absolutes that forestall infinite regress are metaphysical determinants of becoming. The $V \leftarrow I \rightarrow A$ model helps us in a synchronic sense with this problem and clarifies the diachronic use of the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model by demonstrating its tautological cycle that, instead of being pushed to an absolute, should be viewed as merely a

model among models. The key becomes mapping out overlapping durations or assemblages' tendencies, capacities, and boundary production through a variety of methods, particularly those that intervene in the world in an experimental or natural experimental basis.

The conflict between these two models and their respective use cases can help rhetorical theorists recognize the illusory domains or Absolutes of both the constitutive rhetorical model as Ideology or Subjectivity → Discourse → Action and the new materialist rhetorical model of Rhetoricity → the Rhetorical → Rhetoric. The retrospective tautology of these systems emerges through analogy. Ideology somehow exerts influence on subjectivity that influences action that somehow produces ideology. Rhetoricity resembles Virtuality in which anything contingent, and therefore rhetorical, can be dealt with through the tools of rhetoric regardless of how great of a theoretical or methodological fit doing so is. Transducing the ideological model to Ideology ← Discourse → Action allows theorists to deal with historically discrete individuations and their tendencies towards both differential ideological structure and pure action without assuming a spectral cause that lurks behind each measurement. Transducing the Rhetoricity model into Rhetoricity ← the Rhetorical → Rhetoric facilitates the expansion of objects and methodologies for rhetoricians to use and almost demands a certain kind of interdisciplinary focus because rhetorical things both will and will not be rhetorical. Rhetorical becomes a capacity of many things, but not one to be analyzed through primarily textual or close reading methodologies nor through the primary theory corpus of rhetoric. Rhetoricians are encouraged to understand the ontological implications and positions of their work as the rhetorical moves towards rhetoricity while analyzing how various assemblages of the rhetorical and not tend towards creating discrete historically individuated rhetorics that are never fully solidified. Discovering genuine rhetorical problematics, thinking in terms of parameters of intensity as intensive apparatuses move towards

virtuality and actuality, and modifying DeLanda's notions of capacity, affect, and tendency with regards to specific sets of speech as discrete individuals helps alleviate this problem, even if no model can truly escape some amount of perspectival projection or metaphysical fictions.

Using the transduced models to guide rhetorical inquiry cannot obtain without a shift in the methodological orientation of the field. The close reading of exemplary texts by inferring their meaning through a theoretical lens in moments of contingency need not suffer erasure, but it must be contextualized as one methodology among many that should be employed with the singular or exemplary. The field must no longer subsist in a cycle of never-ending negative critique on discourses in which we know what will happen because we have already mapped distributions of ordinary points, albeit through insufficiently wide aperture apparatuses. We must not remain the documentarians of systemic oppression when that oppression operates well within our understanding of oppression in the given moment. Articles detailing specific ordinary cases for teaching or calling out a certain historical moment should remain, but I believe the overall thrust of the field should shift towards acts of positive creation or intervention alongside methodologies best suited for the analysis of the matrix created by singular//ordinary and synchronic//diachronic.

The directions for future research and the limitations of this project are inextricable and ironic: I have deployed metaphysical analysis through a turn to naturalism to attempt to turn us away from an overemphasis and reliance upon theoretical turns; I have deployed negative critique to critique negative critique; I have called for positive creative endeavors despite doing the precise kind of work through a mixture of close reading, argumentative analysis, and content analysis that I advocate against. Perhaps most entertainingly, I have formed my own poorly posed question by believing human thought's tendency towards spatialization as necessitating

and validating the use of the synchronic//diachronic and singular//ordinary splits as useful metaphysical fictions. I hope that my next projects take my own advice from the first three limitations as license to engage in creative projects and use mixed methodologies to map out the contours of our discipline more fully with methodologies suited to mapping distributions of the singular and ordinary. Put differently, it is time for me to make rhetoric and the discipline would benefit from wider scope meta-studies. As for the poorly posed questions, I leave it someone else to find my messy border cases, my illusory domains, and suggest new systems for these poorly posed problems in reaction to the emergence of new messy aggregates.

APPENDICES

The Epistemic Zombie: A Grounded Theory Content Analysis.

Grounded Theory Content Analysis presents several advantages over other methods because its recursive coding schema facilitates both naïve questioning and intuitive re-working of emergent categories. Lindolf and Taylor provide two primary features of grounded theory: “Emergent theory is ‘grounded in’ the relationships between data and the categories into which they are coded” and these categories’ relationship with the data is recursive because “new data [alters] the scope and terms of the analytic framework.”⁵²⁸ Categories can be, but are not necessarily, imported from previous research in the “open coding” phase that strives to find recurring things, tendencies, or structures in a data set.⁵²⁹ Open coding should be done simultaneous to “in vivo” coding during which the communicative agents behind texts or in world’s own language are experienced to produce new and amend already emerged categories.⁵³⁰ Unfortunately, this study does not have the resources or time to conduct the ethnographic work required to do “in vivo” coding properly and will be settling on an expedient middle-method.⁵³¹ In short, rhetoricians articulate how they want their own work to be viewed by elaborating on the goals, contributions, and significance of their arguments. This category of analysis gets close to what an ethnography that interviews the critic behind the article would do, even if it is still imperfect in the end. Once the data has been coded, the researcher moves to integrate the emergent codes into “axial codes” and re-apply them to the sample before dimensionalizing the content analysis into meaningful abstract analysis of the content that each coded section

⁵²⁸ Thomas R. Lindolf and Bryan C. Taylor, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*, 250.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ibid, 251.

⁵³¹ I think this potential exceeds the capacities I have for the dissertation, but you better believe a big ole’ ethnography of all research methods and fields is in my future.

indicates. The following details the production of the sample, coding process and codebook categories, and provides a dimensional analysis of the tendencies in contemporary rhetorical criticism.

The sample is a preliminary sample pending approval of the dissertation and a conversation about the necessity of an expanded sample. I read each full-length article, excluding editorial notes and book reviews, of the first two numbered issues of *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 2018 and 2019. This sample was selected because *QJS* is the flagship journal for Rhetoric; whatever tendencies exist in rhetorical scholarship should emerge from the ostensible gold standard in rhetorical scholarship. However, this sample should be expanded in the full dissertation to include work from other well-respected journals to account for error and bias predicated upon journal leadership and aim. The *QJS* under Mary Stuckey is not the *QJS* under Barbara Biesecker, as even the most cursory glance at the titles of articles will tell you. The *QJS* under Stuckey has tended towards rigorous, theoretically inflected, but relatively traditional, rhetorical criticism. I do not believe this negates the value of the analysis produced below but does indicate an important limitation that requires an expansion of the sample and addition of supplementary works selected based upon emergent categories to fill out the tendencies of rhetorical criticism. In particular, the theoretical vanguard of rhetorical criticism that engages ontological inquiry tends to express their projects not as close readings of an object, but follows Greene's argument that criticism should map rhetoric's externalities by studying circulation. Whether or not this tendency substantially differs from rhetorical analysis requires attention by selectively expanding the sample to include works that articulate themselves in this way.

The preliminary open coding phase lasted for the first six articles of *QJS* 2019 because, at least in the *QJS*, articles are remarkably consistent in what they do. I approached open coding as

simply trying to find out what published work in rhetoric tends to do and how it articulates itself with special attention to ontological and epistemological questions. In an attempt to stay true to Bergsonian intuition, I started with the most seemingly obvious questions imaginable. I found that these absurdly simple questions allowed me to bracket the enthymematic quality of academic writing because I could not just bracket whatever highly loaded theoretical term or citation by filling in the academic lineage myself. Put differently, I could not just write off wonky arguments or odd segments about causality with little mental heuristics like “oh, they must be doing something out of Althusser” and ignoring glaring contradictions. These questions made the everyday a bit grotesque at times because I realized that this scholarship is nearly inscrutable to anyone not in the rhetorical tradition. What do we say rhetoric is or does? How do we describe rhetoric? What kinds of sections repeat in the work? Why should I care about any of this work I am spending so much time reading? In short, training aside, what is going on here? These questions produced repeating categories that striate different ways of dealing with similar tendencies in becoming, after five recursive loops categories emerged. The following details the criteria for each category in terms of recursive process:

1. Primary Object (PO): Rhetorical critics work with objects, or at least they tell you that they are going to analyze some object. I am curious about what kind of objects are considered rhetorical because that would, ostensibly, tell me something about rhetoric. For example, Timothy Barney analyzes at least two different discrete objects: online project statements of “citizen cartographers” and the actual maps these cartographers produce.⁵³² Despite the amount of writing Barney expends to talk about these objects, they appear to be mere vehicles for what Barney is really after and that realization across many similar contents necessitated another

⁵³² Timothy Barney, “The Sight and Site of North Korea: Citizen Cartography’s Rhetoric of Resolution in the Satellite Imagery of Labor Camps,” 11 and 12.

category. This tendency repeats across every single article in the sixteen-deep sample, even exemplary objects are not analyzed for their own sake but for the import of abstraction.

2. Abstract Object (AO): The PO's are vehicles to reach a second level abstraction, a sort of hidden object that is the real point of analysis that tends to condition the PO by operating behind it. Barney analyzes maps and project statements because he really wants to say something about ideology, phrased as "the ideology of resolution."⁵³³ These sorts of abstract objects are generally well defined relative to the paper's analysis, but depend upon a host of other theoretical terms that necessitate the next category.

3. Theoretical Concepts (TC): The abstract objects depend for definition upon a wide array of theory deployed by each essay. This veritable cornucopia of academic buzzwords created problems for the naïve and intuitive comportment of my content analysis because these terms are frequently not defined or are given a footnote to another work that deals more with the overall meaning of the sentence and not the term in question. Each seemingly loaded theoretical term was marked down with a plus or a minus for whether it was defined, and footnotes were checked for definitions that explicitly staked a position instead of referencing another work that may or may not have staked a position. In a sense, the TC category indicates that the field of rhetoric has a duration and memory that can be tracked through reconstructive analysis of footnotes. I did not note every occurrence of each term, focusing instead on which terms are used and whether they have become reified in disciplinary talk. A term has been reified if it is simply expected to be known and not defined. Term frequencies could be constructed in retrospect with the search function if I require frequencies to make a point. For example, Eli Mangold and Charles Goehring never define any variant of the word hegemonic or hegemony in their

⁵³³ Ibid, 7-8.

article.⁵³⁴ When I search their article with the term “hegemon” to catch various endings, we find that they use some variant of the term ten times in their article. I tried my best to not allow my mind to enthymematically but uncertainly fill in the blank as I read because it seems to me that vague reconstructions of theoretical terms hamper a more philosophically inclined rhetorical theory. Typically, when I read this kind of work, I see the word “Hegemon/y/ic” and think, “huh, they are probably referencing critical something based in Gramsci or Laclau or something.” Encountering these terms in a naïve sense made this reading practice and experiences seem unproductive. What are we actually talking about most of the time? This realization necessitated the fourth category in this lineage because an unbelievable amount of terms that have extremely contentious lineages are used as though they have one meaning and this meaning is right.

4. Assumptions (ASS): Where do the moments of slippage or ambiguity between theoretical terms create problems in analysis, understanding, consistency, and clarity? Where are we being a-philosophical, taking the theory hammer to a thing, and not thinking about what kinds of questions we are asking? In short, when I naively do not fill in, assume, or guess the theory-philosophy lineage of a piece, what assumptions stand out in bold relief? This ASS category has two sides that contribute to how this category has been coded. On the one side, my own scholarship has transitioned from a need to feel like I know what is going on in seminar classes by assuming relevance and validity to reading enough of the philosophical canon to realize I have no idea what is going on or, rather, there are an unbelievable amount of ways to articulate what is going on. On the other side, the way in which articles match theory to context to text in varied configurations operates like a hammer finding object-nails all over the world. Largely, we do not ask the kind of Bergsonian questions that should be asked, preferring instead

⁵³⁴ Eli Mangold and Charles Goehring, “The Visual Rhetoric of the Aerial View: From Surveillance to Resistance,” 25-41.

to take theory to text-context or philosophy to theory, but rarely do we do our own philosophical dirty work. This category maps out these tendencies in contemporary rhetorical scholarship into assumptions about the way in which theoretical terms operate and split into two broad subcategories. The first category deals with strange uses, binarization, and conflation of terms. Concepts that are set up in a binary relationship are indicated by a // in the data set. Sometimes specialized philosophical terms are conflated: “The potentialities of aerial photography are best situated as part of a larger conversation about the rhetorical and imaginative possibilities of photography in general. Perhaps the broadest of photography’s potentialities...”⁵³⁵ I reference this sentence in the data set with the marker possible/potential. These terms are not interchangeable in the philosophical literature, as the analysis section will make clear, and the tension between them can and should be used for more nuanced criticism. The second subcategory deals with the theoretical tendencies that make sense of the use of theoretical terms. This subcategory receives reconstructive analysis in the literature review, whereas this category attempts to only note tendencies in the content analysis. For example, many articles use the term “circulation” and do not define it explicitly, but then make statements that appear to link circulation to some notion or notions. Mangold and Goehring write, with regards to the *Earthrise* image: “Becoming visible to millions around the world through media circulation, this image’s global spread played an instrumental role in constituting the ‘whole earth’ or ‘one-world’ globalist movement founded on ecological conservation.”⁵³⁶ The footnote for this sentence refers to Denis Cosgrove’s “Contested Global Visions: *One World, Whole-Earth*, and the Apollo space photographs”⁵³⁷ but provides no other elaboration. Perhaps Cosgrove goes into detail

⁵³⁵ Ibid, 29.

⁵³⁶ Ibid, 33.

⁵³⁷ Ibid, 40.

about how circulation works, how images move across networks, and how viewing an image persuades, but we do not get that here. We get an uninterrogated assumption that if an image has been viewed many times it has an effect, specifically one in which the image “constitutes” a movement, a contentious claim. I could assume that this passage likely references Michael Warner’s version of publics, but how can I be sure? Certainly, not every work must shake the theoretical-philosophical foundations of the rhetorical studies world. However, being clear about these assumptions has argumentative value and the entire structure of theory-context-text suggests the need for the final category, primary method, that combines the two streams of concerns that build into one another.

1. How is rhetoric described / used / defined (R/R/R): What even is rhetoric? To my great surprise, I have relatively little clue after completing this content analysis. Rhetoric and its accompanying terms: rhetorical, rhetoricity, rhetorically, and rhetor are rarely if ever defined. So sparsely are they defined that I moved definitions of them into the TC category as defining even a baseline formation of what rhetoric is functions more as a TC than a mainstay of work in rhetorical criticism. Similarly, persuasion and its accompanying terms: coercion and conviction are rarely referenced and placed in the TC category. I assume, in part, this tendency derives from the sample only including numbered issues of *QJS* under Mary Stuckey. I had to devise a different way to get at what rhetoricians mean by rhetoric without reconstructing it through a mixture of meticulous citation tracking or completely analytically reconstructing it. I went with the most naïve thing possible: just mark down every time the word is used and how it is used in the sentence. The R/R/R category looks at how rhetoric/al/ally/icity are used at the level of sentence grammar and the kinds of words they describe, verbs they do, and noun phrases they are part of. This led to the following coding process. First, is rhetoric a subject of a sentence (S), an

object of a sentence (O), or the grammatic subject of a sentence that is actually the object of the sentence (O) and vice versa (S), a verb (V), or an adjective beyond the object the word “rhetorical” describes (A). Here is an example of rhetoric in the objective sense: “In these works, cartography is a rhetoric of imperial power and state control through spatial abstraction of the ground below.”⁵³⁸ The word cartography is qualified by the noun phrase “rhetoric of imperial power and state control.” Rhetoric is an object (O) in this usage; it functions as a thing that signifies some state of affairs that qualifies a different thing. Here is an example of rhetoric in the subjective sense, from the same essay cited above: “This is an important reminder that rhetorics of resolution in maps have always operated by revelation and concealment, choosing for the viewer what should be clear and visible.”⁵³⁹ Here the “rhetorics of resolution” are treated as a subject; they are the ones operating and so rhetoric is, in this case, a subject (S). Occasionally, relying upon grammar to clarify the agential status of rhetoric falls short and must be clarified. Sometimes the seemingly passive object is doing all the work, for example: “they still operate within corporate and state rhetorics. Maps are always constrained...”⁵⁴⁰ “Corporate and state rhetorics” are essentially an object in the sentence; these rhetorics are what “they” still operate within. Yet, these rhetorics, alongside institutional forces, are what actively constrains the map; the dead linguistic structure is granted an active agency here that makes it more suitable for the (S) category than the (O) category. In the converse, rhetoric in the grammatic subject position can be characterized as an object by passivity: “Individual rhetoric here is limited to how well a speaker...”⁵⁴¹ “Individual rhetoric” appears in the guise of an active subject when it is really the

⁵³⁸ Barney, “The Sight and Site of North Korea: Citizen Cartography’s Rhetoric of Resolution in the Satellite Imagery of Labor Camps,” 5.

⁵³⁹ Ibid, 8.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid, 19.

⁵⁴¹ Mark Andrew Thompson, “Now You’re Making it up, Brother: Paul Robeson, HUAC, and the Challenge of Institutional Narrative Authority,” 160.

passive object being limited by the agency of a “speaker.” R/R/R can also appear as an adverb or verb (V) that indicates that R/R/R can be some form of doing: “...the ability of individuals to rhetorically assert themselves...”⁵⁴² Here the R/R/R does something, instead of is something and is marked as (V). R/R/R can also function in a more closely adjectival sense where the R/R/R term does not describe a noun but is itself the adjective (A): “...there is something deeply rhetorical about Whitman’s poetry.”⁵⁴³ Here R/R/R functions as a descriptive term in its own right without being tethered to an object. Second, the terms around the uses of R/R/R have been recorded as best as possible to catalogue the powers rhetoricians attribute to this motley group of terms.

2. Goal / Contribution / Significance (G/C/S): I needed some way to know what rhetoric was beyond the almost endless sea of words that get attached to it, so I started cataloguing the stated goals, contributions, and significance arguments of the articles. Perhaps, what rhetoricians claim to do can demonstrate the tendencies in rhetorical criticism. These statements are frequently explicit: “By recovering what I call Whitman’s ‘kosmic rhetoric,’ my goal in this essay is to inspire rhetorical scholars to discuss, debate, and reconsider several of our most deeply held assumptions about democratic politics, including anti-foundationalism and the mechanics of dissent.”⁵⁴⁴ However, there are always sub goals or more implicit contributions. From the same article: “Generally, rhetorical scholars are uncomfortable talking about questions of soteriology, ontology, being, and the good, *and for good reason*... However, we cannot divorce Whitman’s poetry from his soteriology or his metaphysics...”⁵⁴⁵ This argument sneaks’

⁵⁴² Ibid, 159.

⁵⁴³ Jeremy David Engels, “Kosmic Rhetoric: Reading Democracy Alongside Walt Whitman and the *Bhagavad Gita*,” 70.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid, 68.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, 85.

ontological inquiry into what was, ostensibly, a pragmatic argument about democracy to broaden the theoretical contribution of the article. Sometimes the G/C/S is more grounded, again from the same article: “In the rhetorical tradition I ascribe to and teach my students, individuality is a living art, and it is possible to change one’s perspective...”⁵⁴⁶ Here, the broader theoretical concerns are brought to bear on questions of pedagogy and individual political action, a frequently made move towards action and activism in the literature. For many, a kind of critical unmasking is itself a sort of action, so I needed a way to see how that process works at a structural level.

3. Contexts (C’s): This category emerged as I attempted to figure out how the G/C/S was accomplished from only looking at the way the articles are constructed in terms of structure. Each article has a kind of “context section” that lays out the scene for the “object,” but the more I tried to re-code for this category the more I found it nearly impossible to determine a boundary between text and context, context and theory, theory and text. Take Engel’s article again, as an example. The section named “Yoga, democracy, intuition” lays out context by reviewing the *Bhagavad Ghita* and American Transcendentalist thought.⁵⁴⁷ The section “Kosmic Rhetoric” features a mélange of Foucault and generalizations of Whitman.⁵⁴⁸ “The good and the god terms of democracy” reads Whitman against Weaver, Burke, Aristotle, and Charles Taylor in terms of what language does.⁵⁴⁹ “Talking to God” closely reads fragments of Whitman’s poetry while referring back to Emerson.⁵⁵⁰ I am not one to think a firm boundary between text and context has ever really existed, but the Engels’ article has some of the more clearly delineated boundaries

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid, 75.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid, 74.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid, 74-76.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid, 76-79.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid, 79-80.

between these different components of rhetorical criticism and they are still utterly muddled at the end of the day. Theory, context, and text are all leveraged against one another to produce what a thing means or can mean, has the potential to mean, in retrospect. This realization shifted the structural focus from content to attempting to form a highly dimensionalized category that describes what rhetorical critics do, so I can see how frequently this retrospective tendency towards meaning through contingent moments created by the juxtaposition of text-context-theory are the driving methodology of rhetorical criticism.

5. Primary Method (PM): With one exception, Will Penman's exercise in and commentary on ethnography, each article has the same (PM): a reconstructive methodology facilitated by closely reading fragmentary arrangements of theory-context-text to produce a retrospective arrangement that analyzes the interaction of parts in a pure analytic space to predict future action. This critical orientation becomes painfully clear in a dimensional combination of the ASS and G/C/S categories' findings. Certainly, the other findings and their frequencies, particularly what the word rhetoric indicates, are interesting and worth talking about. However, for the sake of a prospectus, the findings that explicate the PM category are the most important to founding the importance of the project and the necessity of a philosophy of rhetoric and a re-evaluation of rhetoric's ethical commitments.

To this end, the following elaborates on some dimensional categories emergent from the grounded theory content analysis: 1. ASS: Constitutive Rhetoric. 2. ASS: Top-Down Power. 3. ASS: Contingency and Affordances//Constraints. 4. G/C/S and ASS: Unmasking and Resistance. 5. G/C/S and ASS: Perspectival Metaphors for Criticism. As with everything I have found, these categories exhibit circular tendencies. Given this project's theoretical outlook, that boundaries become indeterminate and circular should hardly be surprising. I ask that the readers bear with

the categories as they are written or go full J.G. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* and read them in whatever order you want. I do not think it will make much difference because each category entails each other category. The analysis of these dimensional categories demonstrates that rhetorical criticism is a slow science that makes predictions of future actions by the retrospective alignment of theory-context-text in a highly visual language that indicates the dispassionate god's eye point of view of the scientific observer. This critical posture is not by necessity wrong but limits rhetorical criticism and theory's emancipatory potential by an overemphasis on constraint and reliance on visual metaphors for knowing. Put differently, contemporary rhetorical criticism has the tendencies Scott predicted: it shambles on as an epistemic zombie. The following breakdowns refer to both appendix I: "Data Set" and appendix II: "Prosopopoeia Breakdown." Articles are listed in the data set by volume, number, and order in the journal, such that the first article in *QJS* Volume 105, No. 1 is abbreviated as 105.1.1. I have not yet cleaned the data set up for mass consumption; it is pretty dirty and has personal notes. I feel this keeps it truer to both grounded theory content analysis and my own Bergsonian tendencies.

1. ASS: Constitutive Rhetoric: nine of the sixteen articles explicitly take the position that rhetoric, whatever it is, constitutes some part of reality whether symbolic, material, or a *mélange* of the two. The precise mechanisms for how this constitution operate are unclear and difficult to determine based upon close readings of text-context. There appears to be a tacit assumption that the text-level choices are both constituted by and constitute ideology and that we can be confident in this kind of effect argument based upon circulation. The following two examples detail this tendency while pointing out an internal tension to many of the texts in the sample: non-human actants appear to push back against this constitutive tautology.

Mangold and Goehring exemplify a heavy take on the Rhetoric's power to constitute reality: "Variations in scale can certainly reveal or conceal subject matter, but we argue that they go beyond visibility politics and instead perform their rhetorical heavy lifting through altering viewers' sense-making processes and geographical imaginations."⁵⁵¹ It is one thing to say that Rhetoric itself is a sense-making process, a sort of prosthesis that we cannot separate ourselves from; it is another thing to speculate on a phenomenological field, as in Merleau-Ponty, in which both sensation and speech participate; it is another thing entirely to say that rhetoric changes some anterior sensorial base. Mangold and Goehring elaborate on the imagination part, but the sense-making part pushes against their own constitutive take. In short, "geographical imagination...involves intuiting unfamiliar spatial dimensions through comparisons to familiar dimensions."⁵⁵² Rhetors mobilize contingency through technological enframing to modify people's "geographic imagination" through choosing to change the scale.⁵⁵³ It appears that the presence of a kind of analogic process is enough here to grant this process the qualifier "rhetorical." The everyday scales of the human experience and the brute materiality of the world appear passive against the rhetorically active choices involved in technological presentation. The effect argument here is stronger, less spectral, than most, even if it is incomplete. Sometimes close reading or references to previous research guarantee rhetorical effect.⁵⁵⁴ At other times, editorials commenting on the images themselves.⁵⁵⁵ In articles like this one, we know that rhetoric can constitute reality because the articles go for plausibility: some people may have taken a conspiracy theory route when viewing *Earthrise*, but, the image "[became] visible to

⁵⁵¹ Mangold and Goehring, "The Visual Rhetoric of the Aerial View: From Surveillance to Resistance," 32.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid, 33.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, 36.

millions around the world through media circulation” and environmentalism became a talking point, so the image at least plausibly has these effects due to rhetorical choices.⁵⁵⁶ Rhetorical effect in the constitutive vein becomes about circulation and plausibility of the textual elements being scrutinized by close reading having real effects in the world.

Yet, within Mangold and Goehring’s own analysis something at the borderline of human and only questionably rhetorical pushes back against this constitutive cycle: “This rhetorical potentiality is enabled by two unique qualities of aerial imagery: its ability to render meaning indeterminate through its scrambling of human perception, and its ability to attract viewers to perceptually and politically repellant subject matter.”⁵⁵⁷ This argument appears strained; they have already told us that it is the rhetorical choices made by the rhetor deploying scale that change perception, not some capacity of the visual image as such, only to then tell us that there are unique modes of visual pleasure and indeterminacy beyond rhetorical choice. There are a few ways to resolve this apparent contradiction. We might say that rhetorics, as they cite Ranciere as claiming, can choose to make an image unfamiliar through a device like scale to have an indeterminate effect.⁵⁵⁸ Yet, does rhetoric condition the human response to unfamiliar scale? Do we really want to go there? If we do, how does that work? It seems that this rhetorical choice does not constitute but mobilizes something between the human phenomenological field and the visual that has relatively little to do with rhetoric. We might say that what counts as familiar and pleasurable is conditioned by culture, which is contingent, and therefore rhetorical. Certainly, for the pleasure argument, Mangold and Goehring are right to note a kind of visual hegemony in Western Culture.⁵⁵⁹ Yet, here we would be again, reducing everything to some anterior cause

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, 33.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid, 34.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, 35.

named rhetoric that lurks behind every analysis. We will backslide into saying that Being is rhetorical; it seems more plausible that there is a mixture of rhetorical and non-rhetorical things that make up culture as future instead of past structure. Even in the most rhetorically reductive, at some point in the genealogy of Western visuality, we should find a moment in which rhetoric did not constitute the human eye. We should also find a point in which the processes by which we deal with the unfamiliar are more phenomenologically inflected than rhetorical; it seems unlikely that rhetoric itself accounts for analogic reasoning. This epitomizes the constitutive shell game; we have a moment in which something like visual indeterminacy indicates a dialetheic position for Rhetoric where it both is and is not itself. We can say, no it is itself, and push the dialetheia one step back along a retrospective path or we can say, as Stormer does, that rhetoric is full of non-rhetorical things.⁵⁶⁰

Let us turn to another example of a relatively heavy take on constitutive rhetoric alongside an element frequently coupled to both Constitutive and Top-Down Power claims: spectral effect arguments necessitated by the retrospective critical stance. Leslie J. Harris construes space itself as rhetorical: “Spaces can be constraining and enabling, dynamic and somewhat static, a rhetorical resource and a rhetorical invention.”⁵⁶¹ This argument rests upon a tacit assumption that there is a split between the material and the symbolic that privileges the symbolic side of the pairing: “Although material mobility remains significant, discourses of mobility help shape understandings of the material.”⁵⁶² I am not sure why this privileging emerges, given a strange moment in the reconstructive close reading Harris provides: “Spread of disease was named as one of the most significant problems with vice districts. In a literal sense,

⁵⁶⁰ See Nathan Stormer, “Rhetoric’s Diverse Materiality: Polythetic Ontology and Genealogy.”

⁵⁶¹ Leslie J. Harris, “Rhetorical Mobilities and the city: The White Slavery Controversy and Racialized Protection of Women in the U.S.,” 24

⁵⁶² Ibid.

prostitution did contribute to infection.”⁵⁶³ Harris links this concern of the “Chicago Vice Commission” to the moralizing stance taken by anti-vice advocates who extend the disease metaphors to entail spiritual concerns.⁵⁶⁴ The rhetorical partition of these boundaries, as evinced by the creation of vice laws, the circulation of the anti-vice discourse, and Harris own close reading of these discourses, are speculated to have an actual determining effect on subjectivity.⁵⁶⁵ The effect emerges from contingent choices in the close reading, but we are not given terribly much evidence that either we are not stuck back in the shell game or how people articulated their experiences of mobility in the city beyond the moralizing discourse that sublimated a material power of disease into metaphor. If it is ideology and rhetoric all the way down, how do we know that this rhetoric constitutes this mode of space and is not constituted by some anterior ideological framework? How do we know that women actually experienced their subjectivities as modified by these new constraints from dominant discourse? We do not, we are left with the same sort of plausibility based upon close reading and circulation arguments that something as intangible as ideology offers the critic.

Constitutive rhetoric claims that rhetorical choices in the contingent gaps constrained by existing ideological structures change subjectivity based upon carefully reconstructed close readings of text and context, supported by spectral effect arguments that cite large social changes or circulation numbers. Ideology given body by constitutive rhetoric becomes a godly agent responsible for its own cause and effect. Certainly, there is a sort of predictive power to these reconstructive analyses. Harris is correct to note: “Although emerging from a particular time and place, many elements of the controversy remain familiar, such as restricting women in the name

⁵⁶³ Ibid, 33.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, 34.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid, 26-28 and 40.

of ‘protection,’ scapegoating immigrants, and characterizing cities as dangerous.’”⁵⁶⁶ Rhetorical criticism becomes a slow science whose experimental arena is the reconstruction through an alignment of theory-context-text to predict similar results based upon similar environmental conditions through close reading.

2. ASS: Top -Down Power figures in twelve of the sixteen articles in the sample. As will become progressively more apparent, at some level these different dimensional categories entail one another. The specific content that fills the top-down power dynamic varies, but it tends towards the acknowledgement that either the ideology constituted by rhetoric exerts a deterministic effect on social agents anterior to individual rhetorical action or that language itself exerts a prior force that is superior to the force of material things. It should be clear, at this point, that ASS: Top-Down is closely relate to the next dimension, ASS: Contingency and Affordances//Constraints. When power operates from the top to the bottom in an anterior mode, all that is left for social agents to do in terms of free will are assemble the parts given to them into something new, something new that typically just feeds the overbearing system from which it emerges. Let us look at some examples.

Jeremy David Engels’ article in the sample is worth closely analyzing, not only because a sort of language//materiality supports its top-down approach, but because it too has this tendency towards ontology beyond the sort of epistemological or social ontological concerns that pervades the sample. Engels argues that we must consider “questions of soteriology, ontology, being, and the good” despite anxieties that these kind of arguments “have traditionally acted as cover for the proliferation of bourgeois and neoliberal claims” because his object of analysis demands it and he “believe[s] it is worth reconsidering the costs of divorcing democracy from such matters, as

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid, 38.

rhetorical scholars typically do.”⁵⁶⁷ This claim recalls a bit of Bruno Latour’s empirical metaphysics; we cannot ignore ontological questions in the populace because people frequently justify their actions in terms of what they believe the world is.⁵⁶⁸ There is a strange tension in Engels work. On the one hand, he is correct to say that ontological considerations need to be a part of the rhetorical critical venture. On the other hand, he buys a kind of top-down power dynamic that privileges language as the dominant knowable term while backhandedly glorifying affect as that which exceeds language. This seeming glorification denigrates affect. The material side of this symbolic//material binary appears glorious because it exceeds language, and yet, is unsuited for democratic theorizing *because* of its material excess beyond language. Let us look closely at how this happens.

Engels takes the Burkean model of language//material at a perhaps mistaken, given Burke’s reliance upon Bergson’s ontology and concomitant erasure of negation in favor of contradiction, negative-ontological force: “Language is dualistic. It is based on distinction, negation, and division.”⁵⁶⁹ This ontology and starting point lead to a relatively hard take on constitutive rhetoric: “A good is no good if it cannot be articulated...God terms act as ‘constitutive rhetoric,’ giving the good rhetorical form so that it can provide direction and orientation.”⁵⁷⁰ Engels takes this constitutive power at full Top-Down force: “Language is hierarchal, and god terms function by influencing the meaning of associated and subordinated words.”⁵⁷¹ This top down emphasis, ultimately, leads to a backhanded glorification of affect: “Affect is extra-discursive: it exceeds representation. And yet people can only access the somatic

⁵⁶⁷ Jeremy David Engels, “Kosmic Rhetoric: Reading Democracy Alongside Walt Whitman and the *Bhagavad Gita*,” 85.

⁵⁶⁸ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 51.

⁵⁶⁹ Jeremy David Engels, “Kosmic Rhetoric: Reading Democracy Alongside Walt Whitman and the *Bhagavad Gita*,” 73.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid, 76.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid, 78.

experience of affect by labelling it.”⁵⁷² We have a strange ontology being espoused in an article about the necessity of questioning ontological precepts for a better democracy. Language emerges as the privileged side of the symbol//material binary that sets up a kind of inclosure paradox around affect to make it a sublime object that is always beyond but only accessible through linguistic intervention. This extra discursive force cannot be accessed any other way than by a change in the linguistic superstructure; it remains a question as to whether it is really affect doing anything here or simply a change in the “god terms” that allow us to access this transcendent reservoir, this unspeakable sublime object. This kind of formation is one way in which the ASS: Top-Down tendency becomes apparent.

The other way involves a prioritization of ideology, that typically equates rhetoric, norms, and ideology, to insist upon a similarly deterministic effect. Shui-yin Sharon Yam’s article is exemplary in this capacity:

“Here, I examine citizenship as a legal status granted by the state to denote formal recognition and validate one’s self-identity and sense of belonging to the nation-state; citizenship is simultaneously juridical, political, and affective...As an ontological and structural metaphor for citizenship, the family privileges subjects and values that are familiar and beneficial to the state, while undermining the sociopolitical power of racialized others.”⁵⁷³

We have quite a bit to unpack here. Certainly, we would expect something as pervasive and sought after as citizenship to have dimensions in multiple arenas of life, although the article does not differentiate how these different dimensions are differentiable. Where power coalesces around language in Engels, for Yam there is sort of a doubling of hierarchy at play. On the one

⁵⁷² Ibid, 81.

⁵⁷³ Shui-yin Sharon Yam, “Citizenship Discourse in Hong Kong: The Limits of Familial Tropes,” 3.

hand, Her close reading focus emerges at the valence of linguistic structure, of the constitutive “rhetorical framework that represents the nation as family” and the entailments that support this metaphor.⁵⁷⁴ On the other hand, this metaphor is at the service of deeper ideological currents, both at the level of dominant interests in Hong Kong,⁵⁷⁵ in the ideologies that were dominant in Hong Kong’s colonial history, and “the broader transnational political and cultural context...”⁵⁷⁶ Yam gives us Top-Down power at its most pervasive: behind the linguistic-rhetorical framework that constrains individual action is a dominant ideology in Hong Kong, behind which are both a history of colonial exploitation and transnational white-supremacy coupled with neoliberalism. One wonders what ideological structure is behind transnational white-supremacy and neoliberalism, is it the deeper ideological-ontological commitment to racism supported by negative ontology argued by Calvin Warren in *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation* or is it some older ideology that lives on by constraining a new one in a genealogical sense? Where does ideology hit the world at a point that we can intervene in?

The Top-Down power model does not provide us an answer to this question; it positions some structure only rendered visible in symptoms, typically found in some medium of speech posited as language, as the more determining force in social action. Scholars working in this mode are quick to throw words like “affect” or “material” into this model, but it remains unclear as to what the ultimate consequences of this gesture will be. Will affect and material things remain excesses that are positioned as backhanded agents, transcendent and, therefore, only accessible by language or will we find a way to give them agency, beyond linguistic and ideological superstructures? The Top-Down model is, perhaps, the most closely related to the

⁵⁷⁴Ibid, 4.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid, 5 and 10.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid, 13.

other tendencies. It relies upon a tacit assumption that rhetoric can constitute, at the least, social reality; it tends towards requiring a method that unmask the top down power relationships; action within the model is generally construed as weighing affordances and constraints against the contingent openings afforded by whatever system happens to be doing the determining. I do not disagree with the existence of oppression; I am simply unsure that the social ontology we use to describe it is ontologically necessary and capable of changing the world.

3. ASS(es): Contingency and Affordances/Constraints feature in thirteen of the sixteen articles in the sample; this dominant frequency is in part because of the constitutive or social-ontological tendency and clearly illuminates the reconstructive theory-context-text methodology that underwrites rhetorical criticism. If discourse constructs reality in a way that privileges the symbolic over the material, then we can reconstruct rhetorical choices at the level of text by weighing textual choices against contingency, in the capacity of what was possible, given the constraints which are always also affordances allowed by a given determining structure. The job of the rhetorical critic, then, becomes to reconstruct the meaning of these choices by closely reading the text with recourse for dealing with ambiguity provided by either the historical context of the text or theoretical devices. The primary difference in how this plays out in the sample pertains to free will. At some level, there must be a tacit assumption of free will for this model of rhetorical action to have play; if there is no ontological opening in which contingency carries with it an element of genuine ontological indeterminacy, a moment in which reality really can go either way, then the model utterly fails. The degree to which an article insists upon free will varies; the following looks at one article that centers contingency upon choice and one that follows a more deterministic, structural route.

Craig C. Rood's analysis of Obama's speeches on gun violence provides a concise statement outlining the importance of weighing text against context for rhetorical criticism: "Republicans and Democrats in the late 1960s through the early 1990s described gun control as a strategy for cracking down on criminals. Focusing on dead victims of gun violence is different...The choice to focus on the dead is different, and, as I will illustrate, significant."⁵⁷⁷ These rhetor's choices produce changes in rhetoric rely upon relatively tacit metaphysical assumptions about human choice and universal necessity: "Rhetorical scholars do not need to be persuaded that the warrant of the dead is rhetorical, rather than natural, objective, or inevitable...the warrant of the dead is a strategic response..."⁵⁷⁸ Rood presents us with a sort of two world split between a necessary object realm of hard determinism and the contingent symbolic realm that free will mobilizes to choose rhetorical responses against situational exigences. This relatively tacit ontology guarantees the efficacy of retrospective reconstruction as rhetorical criticism: "All five of these factors are important for understanding why Obama turned to gun control after the shooting at Sandy Hook. Yet what is most important is the fact that there are reasons at all...the warrant of the dead is a strategic response..."⁵⁷⁹ Here Rood gives us a relatively strong take on the relationship between this kind of ontology and rhetorical criticism. The sort of "reasons" that a close textual reading of Obama's "rhetorical choices" by weighing text against context provides us with a close approximation of what actually happened. Put differently, the ontological distance between critical method and the rhetor's own method of producing the speech collapses; the process through which rhetoric emerges and is criticized is the same process because of a dichotomous ontology.

⁵⁷⁷ Craig C. Rood, "Our Tears are not Enough: The Warrant of the Dead in the Rhetoric of Gun Control," 48.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid, 50-51.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid, 52.

This collapse is, in part, due to Rood's own tacit assumption of human free will through the contingency afforded by language: "Obama has acknowledged some of these structural forces... Yet his decision to speak in the aftermath of mass shootings affirmed that our collective fate is not solely determined by media companies or cultural scripts."⁵⁸⁰ This sentence brings up an interesting dilemma when we read it against Rood on effect, citing Mary Stuckey: "...there are other ways to evaluate the effectiveness of an argument besides looking at votes; for instance, we might examine 'more subtle, indirect, and long-term effects' such as 'framing an issue in specific ways, or influencing the national understanding of an issue over time.'"⁵⁸¹ Here we have a fundamental tension that pervades the spectral effect arguments that lurk as subcategories in each dimensional category so far. I applaud Rood for his relative clarity in bringing the problem of human freedom to the forefront of considerations in the ontology of rhetoric. On the one hand, we are constrained by forces linguistic and non. On the other hand, we keep deciding to speak anyway. We are either decidedly insane because we live in a hard-deterministic universe or rhetorical theory, as we know it, requires a philosophical justification of genuine ontological free will. Certainly, this free will may not be entirely conscious and wrapped up in linguistic trappings, but it must obtain at some level in the human for choices against contingencies to have any meaning whatsoever.

Yet, not all rhetoricians read free will into the constraints and affordances produced by invisible and anterior structures in reconstructed moments of contingency. Some writers take a more deterministic stance, Jeffrey A Bennett writes: "This performative presentation of self is not one adjudicated solely through race or through gender, but via the complicated interplay of power relations that constituted Sotomayor's persona, which subtly includes her disability... The

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid, 55.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid, 61.

effects of discourse materialize incongruently among different bodies.”⁵⁸² Bennett articulates a relatively fundamental take of intersectional critique; subjectivity is produced by already extant field like interference patterns that coalesce upon a singular point that is the person’s self. We are presented with the, becoming at this point, typical weird ontological moment later in Bennett’s article. It appears that these anterior forces are at least modulated, in the way a passive sieve modulates sand, by the resistant material that does its own thing in bodies. On the one hand, I admire Bennett’s take: “Depression is not simply an effect of the body, but an array of affective states initiated by factors as disparate as racism and socio-economic status.”⁵⁸³ We should be thinking the ultimate enmeshment of both material and discourse within a monistic ontology, but I am curious as to why here brute material being is confined to the passenger seat by prioritizing Sotomayor and others’ rhetorical choices and not the agential capacities of diabetes itself. I find the section on Sotomayor’s memoir absolutely fascinating in this regard. Bennett wants it to read it in terms of “rhetorically astute crafting” that renders clear “the rhetorical composition of a diabetic subject[‘s construction].”⁵⁸⁴ Yet, there is something of the brute experience of living that takes an active role in this memoir; there is something other than discourse shaping the young Sotomayor’s experience: diabetes and depression may be shaped by discourse but they are certainly not able to be treated by it. Bennett’s analysis presents us with the social constructivist play of constituting rhetorical forms, but, does the rhetorical enframing work because it is simply clever and language at play or because there is a kernel of gritty material Being, named diabetes, that participates in these metaphors? Could this be a moment to go full Latour and say that diabetes participates as much in the metaphor as the metaphor

⁵⁸² Jeffrey A. Bennett: *Containing Sotomayor: Rhetorics of Personal Restraint, Judicial Prudence, and Diabetes Management*, 273.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid*, 261.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 270-271.

participates in diabetes? It seems unlikely to me that these metaphors that articulate diabetes as an indicator of judicial restraint without the participation of a disease that shaped the young Sotomayor's very being.

At any rate, Bennett indicates that Sotomayor's diabetes eventually stopped being an issue in her confirmation hearings.⁵⁸⁵ Where Rood would doubtlessly argue that this shift indicates the success of the metaphor, Bennett takes a different route that emphasizes spectral effects: "Even as diabetes was marginalized as a topic of deliberation during the hearing, previous coverage primed audiences to read the disease as a source personal control...Diabetes is a paradiscourse, affecting the scene even as it is seemingly absent form the space it occupies."⁵⁸⁶ One wonders why Bennett feels the need to grant the metaphor he has pretty well demonstrated the efficacy of an afterlife as a ghost, haunting public opinion without any evidence that it actually does so beyond the play of rhetorical forms that continue to constitute Sotomayor's subjectivity. Interestingly, I think the answer resides in a moment in which Rood and Bennett read similarly on critical method, despite their differences on the degree of human freedom. Pertaining to how we know criticism works: Bennett writes: "Rather than imagining static categories that engage unending invocations of identity, intersectional critique might best be thought of as a rhetorical style, a constitutive mode of signification that calls attention to the effects of discourse as contingent and contextual, both fungible over time and illustrative in their situated materialization."⁵⁸⁷ As with Rood, we have an argument that coalesces the methodology used to study constitutive rhetoric and constitutive rhetoric itself. We are presented with an ontology that argues that rhetorical forms constitute identities through their differential

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid, 269.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid, 260.

materialization on different bodies; we are also presented with an argument that the retrospective mode of reconstructive criticism within this model accurately portrays this reality because it is this reality and vice versa.

We may now formulate the dominant method of rhetorical criticism that builds out of the previous three categories before looking at its ethical consequences in category four and the methodological suggestion against perspectival modes of criticism in category five. Along with Merleau-Ponty and Bergson, we should rigorously justify the dominant mode of rhetorical criticism as a slow science that relies upon the breaking up of a thing through analytic division to view its parts from a retrospective imaginary vantage that explains a thing in terms of unactualized possibilities based upon the present “realities.” Rhetorical criticism accomplishes this methodology through a tacit ontology that we see the tendencies of in categories one through three. Rhetoric constitutes parts of human reality as an anterior and spectral force that exerts top-down agency; this top-down agency is enacted in moments of contingency created by the intersecting forces of constraint and affordance within a given spectral system, be it rhetoric, norms, language or ideology; rhetorical criticism is the process of explaining the choices a rhetor or rhetoric makes by reconstructing this ontology by close reading a mixture of theory, text, and context; we know this method of reading works because of unconscious effects, circulation numbers, the persistence of human action and assumption of free will, and the ontology supplied by the materialization of discourse theory. In a sense, this slow scientific methodology is not by necessity wrong, as even Newtonian mechanics is not exactly wrong when it comes to engineering applications, but we must be clear about what we are doing. We are approximating being through an analytic model to predict future human effort based upon congruencies in circumstance that rely upon a certain kind of ontology. Rhetoricians are scientists whose

experimental apparatus is close reading. This scientific orientation has both ethical and methodological consequences for rhetorical critical practice.

4. G/C/S Unmasking and/or Resistance describes one of the goals of scholarship in a whopping fifteen of the sixteen articles in the sample, only excepting Rood's article that articulates its contribution more in terms of disciplinary concerns than social justice.⁵⁸⁸ There are three general tendencies within this dimensional category: unmasking, focusing on constraints over affordances, and focusing on affordances over constraints. All three positions rely upon the social ontology explicated above; if anterior and spectral forces partially determine human free action, then the correct move for an ethical criticism is to do some combination of unmasking these constitutive top down power relations while mapping points of affordance or constraint for organizing resistance. This sort of criticism is sensible to a degree and, at this point, should already harken back to the Cloud Greene debate in the introduction. Certainly, bringing incongruencies between perspectives to light in unmasking can be a powerful tool against those who are acting in good faith and amenable to such critiques. I am not sure these methods work in times such as ours when few are attending the masquerade. Yet, if human free will presents a vital component of rhetorical criticism, then the materialization of discourse thesis is off as well. Cloud was right to criticize it nearly ninety years ago for its near annihilation of human agency; we will see a similar problem in some of the works that are too constraint centric in the following. When you position structure as an anterior and determining force on human agency to the degree the materialization of discourse camp does, we should not be surprised when we find constraints and oppression everywhere and affordances that are easily devoured and repurposed

⁵⁸⁸ Of course, there is still the implication of resistance in Rood; they may frame their contributions as for theoretical critics, but if the warrant of the dead works this way it could be instrumental for gun control advocates to read his article to resist the NRA and so on. Craic C. Rood, "Our Tears are not Enough: The Warrant of the Dead in the Rhetoric of Gun Control," 48 and 50.

by an all-powerful system. This is not to say oppression does not exist; clearly it does, this is to say that the onto-theological tendency to position ideology/rhetoric/norms as an unholy trinitarian god head might miss opportunities for scholarship-activism arising from different ontologies or even approaches within constitutive rhetoric.

Let us first look at the kind of statements that are emblematic of unmasking type criticism. Barney writes: “This is an important reminder that rhetorics of resolution in maps have always operated by revelation and concealment, choosing for the viewer what should be clear and visible.”⁵⁸⁹ Where there is choice, there is the opportunity for a rhetorical critic to unmask the machinations of power behind what gets concealed and revealed. This sort of language sometimes happens in a less obvious and more assumed way. Allison M. Prasch sums up one of the contributions of her article: “Second, tracing the various modalities of deixis reveals the centrality of indexicals to narrative form.”⁵⁹⁰ Once more, the contributed term or tool or perspective allows the critic a wedge to “reveal” the inner workings of narrative form and, presumptively, how power uses that form to work. We might say that the entire enterprise of rhetorical criticism is, in some regard, unmasking how power works in language through the vocabulary afforded by rhetorical theory.

Unmasking criticism is deeply related to the fifth dimensional category: perspectival metaphors for criticism. Rhetorical unmasking requires the fabrication of a term, framework, perspective, tool, or vocabulary that facilitates a virtual vantage point from which to unmask the rhetorical functioning of a text, the determining effects of a power structure, but, most frequently, some combination of the two. The new perspective-tool allows the sort of critical

⁵⁸⁹ Timothy Barney, “The Sight and Site of North Korea: Citizen Cartography’s Rhetoric of Resolution in the Satellite Imagery of Labor Camps,” 8.

⁵⁹⁰ Allison M. Prasch, “Obama in Selma: Deixis, Rhetorical Vision, and the ‘True Meaning of America’,” 61.

wedge that creates a discrepancy between reality and appearance and, thus, the aperture for the critical unmasking operation that we first saw advocated in Dana Cloud's work. Truly, that old critical tendency has become part of the memory within duration of our field. I believe this tool has two shortcomings in contemporary literature. First, a criticism of unmasking only functions when people are doing politics in good faith and the global resurgence of fascism indicates that we are not operating in good faith democratic times. Second, it leads to the next two tendencies within the ethical thrust of criticism astray when combined with relatively deterministic social ontologies that privilege various hegemony models of society.

We have a strange ethical quandary here with any given hegemony model that can be mapped out into a few different logical potentialities. I do not want to use examples from specific articles, here, because, where the other sections can be read dispassionately, I fear this one is too much provocation and names will make it immediately personal. I do not want to call out particular individuals, but, instead, map a tendency in the field. After all, many of us view the pursuit of academia itself, both in research and teaching, as modes of praxis for however we define social justice. Perhaps, a bit of indirection here facilitated through abstract formality is both practical and civil.

Should any given hegemony theory be correct, we can analyze either dominant or subaltern discourse. Scholars frequently favor subaltern discourse, likely because it is not as psychically toxic as dominant discourse, but all we most frequently manage to find terrible cycles of oppression that appear to have no outlet because any innovation within the system can be appropriated by the system. We are left with horrific descriptive aporias that become less and less surprising as you read on in the literature in which we find more and more examples of oppression in which the system does exactly what we expect it to do: constrains and affords

action and reacts to quell dissent based upon incorporating the afforded action. We are presented with a never-ending carousel of defeat and our never-ending criticism appears almost complicit with this unstoppable system that it posits. I suggest three possible solutions. First, should hegemony theory accurately describe reality, hegemony does not come without a differential amount of cost to those beneficiaries within its borders. I guarantee you there are tensions to be exploited between poor-white-midwestern-evangelicals and rich-white-landholding-moneylords but dealing with those people and their discourses can be extremely taxing and toxic. Sometimes, finding a weakness in the system itself might be more productive than endlessly re-iterating how it exploits weakness in marginalized groups. Certainly, brining attention to oppression is important, but if we cannot use our expertise to help solve it, then there is a point in which engaging in a descriptive aporia makes academia complicit with the system. Going on the attack instead of the defensive might be a viable option for any academic committed to but frustrated with a social ontology that positions the system as a *The Blob* or *Akira* type entity. Second, the hegemony model of social ontology is not the only option in the world. There are good reasons to be anxious about Bruno Latour and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, following a revolutionary take and novel ontology of the system can be used to marginalize gains won within the system by oppressed groups,⁵⁹¹ but I think we should seriously consider that hegemony theory's offering of never ending identities in never ending agonism may not be necessary if social being is truly contingent and based on our choices. Third, regardless of the ontology we use to describe social things, we might consider a pivot in methodology and the philosophy

⁵⁹¹ See Elizabeth Grosz's conversation about the same at 161-166 of *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. We have a razor thin edge here. On the one hand, if the system is the problem and it differentially hurts all people with awful gender roles, we should tear it down. On the other hand, what if tearing it down is a sneaky way to take away the protections women have gained within the bad system by just bringing patriarchy into the back door of the new system? These risks are real and difficult to navigate.

undergirding our criticism. The sort of tool-perspective unmasking model affords certain strengths but may miss the successful affordances and resistances by being too text-context centric and reconstructing *résistance* from the very God's Eye critical perspective that some sources fault Western culture for so extoling. Maybe we need to take the decennial calls, and probably all of feminist theory, seriously about ethnography.

5. ASS and G/C/S: Perspectival metaphors for criticism occur in fourteen of the sixteen articles in the sample, somewhat oddly, even in the one that deals with ethnography explicitly. Perspectival metaphors indicate a tendency in contemporary rhetorical criticism that supports Scott's argument that epistemological rhetoric has precipitated into the fundamental assumptions of the field and my own argument that rhetoric is a slow science. These metaphors are fundamental to the critical act of close-reading the meaning of contingent moments by reconstructing an alignment of theory-context-text because this analytic gesture requires a god's eye perspectival view from which to accomplish its analytic breakdown. Strictly speaking, this structure is a retrospective illusion in which some hidden condition conditions the phenomenologically apparent text. The same kind of sight logic obtains. The perspectival and sight-based epistemology tends to emerge when authors talk about their goals, contributions, or significance and the dominance of perspectival language employed to make points about their object. Barney writes of his contribution: "I define resolution as a critical lens by which to examine the discourse of cartography and serial/satellite photography, and I invoke both its technical and rhetorical meanings."⁵⁹² This sort of formulation regularly repeats and can be put

⁵⁹² Timothy Barney, "The Sight and Site of North Korea: Citizen Cartography's Rhetoric of Resolution in the Satellite Imagery of Labor Camps," 8.

in an algorithmic form: “Through X [perspective⁵⁹³/ vocabulary⁵⁹⁴/ tool⁵⁹⁵] rhetorical critics can Y [illuminate⁵⁹⁶ /points⁵⁹⁷ /look⁵⁹⁸ /map⁵⁹⁹ predict⁶⁰⁰ /highlight⁶⁰¹] some discursive artifact Z.”⁶⁰² The reconstructive mode of criticism articulates the very visual hegemony that at least one article attempts to complicate⁶⁰³ by positioning rhetorical criticism as a fundamentally perspectival act of analytic reconstruction from a god’s eye view. This sort of language emerges even in articles that express a yearning for ontological inquiry and ethnography. Will Penman draws an implicit delineation between community “orientation”⁶⁰⁴ within fieldwork practices and “[his] department’s perspective” on accountability⁶⁰⁵ only to collapse this distinction when he offers “a postcolonial perspective” as a solution.⁶⁰⁶ If these sorts of tendencies, conscious or non, have meaning in the discourses rhetoricians analyze, do they not have meaning in an analysis of

⁵⁹³ Mark Andrew Thompson, “Now You’re Making It up, Brother: Paul Robeson, HUAC, and the Challenge of Institutional Narrative Authority,” 159. Damien Smith Pfister, “Technoliberal Rhetoric, Civic Attention, and Common Sensation in Sergey Brin’s ‘Why Google Glass?’,” 191. Ignacio Moreno Segarra and Karrin Vasby Anderson, “Political Pornification Gone Global: Teresa Rodríguez as Fundgible Object in the 2015 Spanish Regional Elections,” 219. I will stop adding entries here; I think you all get the point.

⁵⁹⁴ Timothy Barney, “The Sight and Site of North Korea: Citizen Cartography’s Rhetoric of Resolution in the Satellite Imagery of Labor Camps,” 4. Craig Rood, “Our Tears Are Not Enough: The Warrant of the Dead in the Rhetoric of Gun Control,” 65. You get the idea; we really like vocabulary terms.

⁵⁹⁵ Mark Andrew Thompson, “Now You’re Making It up, Brother: Paul Robeson, HUAC, and the Challenge of Institutional Narrative Authority,” 157. Leslie J. Harris, “Rhetorical Mobilities and the City: The White Slavery Controversy and Racialized Protection of Women in the U.S.,” 22-23.

⁵⁹⁶ Allison M. Prash, “Obama in Selma: Deixis, Rhetorical Vision, and the ‘True Meaning of America’,” 42.

⁵⁹⁷ Jiyeon Kang, “Call for Civil Inattention: ‘RaceFail ‘09’ and Counterpublics on the Internet,” 148.

⁵⁹⁸ Eli B. Mangold and Charles Goehring, “The Visual Rhetoric of the Aerial View: From Surveillance to Resistance,” 30.

⁵⁹⁹ Damien Smith Pfister, “Technoliberal Rhetoric, Civic Attention, and Common Sensation in Sergey Brin’s ‘Why Google Glass?’,” 185.

⁶⁰⁰ Leslie J. Harris, “Rhetorical Mobilities and the City: The White Slavery Controversy and Racialized Protection of Women in the U.S.,” 38.

⁶⁰¹ Jeffrey A. Bennett, “Containing Sotomayor: Rhetorics of Personal Restraint, Judicial Prudence, and Diabetes Management,” 273.

⁶⁰² I am hoping that a friend and I will have put together a contribution statement randomizer by the time of the defense. It would be relatively easy to code, as he has already done one for gaming haikus, and I think nicely drives the point home about the current state of rhetorical criticism being reducible to a computer script.

⁶⁰³ See Eli B. Mangold and Charles Goehring, “The Visual Rhetoric of the Aerial View: From Surveillance to Resistance,” 38.

⁶⁰⁴ Will Penman, “A Field-based Rhetorical Critique of Ethical Accountability,” 313.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, 314.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid, 316.

rhetorical criticism as discourse? I believe they do. Scott ended up being correct with the result being that rhetoric is a slow science and an epistemic zombie, albeit a zombie with some new proclivities oddly comported towards life. I think the tendency unearthed towards ontology should not be marginalized: we have always relied on tacit ontologies to support our work and should make these explicit to short circuit the never-ending turn between theory and object that eschews methodology.

To sum up the results of the diachronic and synchronic analysis: constitutive rhetoric in a kind of perspectival analytic-reconstructive mode presents a dominant tendency within rhetorical scholarship. The ontological features of this model follow relatively closely to the $V \rightarrow I \rightarrow A$ model but are better phrased $\text{Ideology} \rightarrow \text{Rhetoric} \rightarrow \text{Action}$ with a reciprocal tautological process in which rhetorical actions serve as new rhetoric that causes or complicates ideology. I am not sure that this mode of analysis is necessarily a bad thing, especially if we start to think and pin down points of inflection within this model involving the quasi-causal operator and counter-actualization such that Rhetoric and Action have more clear causal lines in changing ideology such that it becomes almost an effect more so than anterior spectral cause. Contingency serves a great ontological purpose here, but the materialist force of indeterminacy becomes marginalized under top-down heavy conceptualizations of ideological force.

This undue focus derives from three inter-related factors. First, the object of rhetoric has become more language-structure than speech-action; when you look for ways and cases in which ideology sufficiently determines, without the gaps in under or overdetermination, you end up reifying a totality though the mapping of cases in which ideology wins. Certainly, dominant forces win regularly but mapping out how they do so at the level of representation is not likely to provide emancipatory options. Second, we do this projection of reified totalities, rather it be

ideology, rhetoric as energy, rhetoricity, what have you, because we have not sufficiently done ontology to do the analysis of speech. The work arguing against reified totalities has largely been done in chapters 1-3, but we will note ways of working against it within the reconstructive close reading approach primarily through discussing DeLanda's notion of parameters and dividing the experience of speech into coercion, persuasion, and conviction. Third, the other component of this problem involves the methodologies through which we measure structural discourses and speech both: we tend to go with texts or assemble a text out of fragments, following McGee, in a reconstructive vein and at a level of discourse that is far from everyday speech and individual decision making and motivation. Calls for methodological pluralism and interdisciplinarity come and go, but I hope that the abstract rigor of this project pushes the meter for once such that greater efforts at both the creation of rhetoric, content analysis, and ethnography obtain. The next section will evaluate these potentials in detail by mapping the inklings of the problem in old literatures, New Materialist Rhetoric's answers to the problem, and then our answer to the problem.

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