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Rudolf Steiner commented concisely on the whole history of philosophy to his time. After his death the French took on an acute role for the rest of the 20th century. Just where did they get to? Fred Amrine looks at Gilles Deleuze.

Art has much to do with feeling, and feeling may one day stand higher than thinking. Michael Howard is an artist and thinker who follows the forms of change.

How can art best live in the world? How can it be retrieved from its role as an investment and returned to its place as moral and spiritual capital? Free Columbia and friends are working on that.

The (Mirror-)Image of Thought

by Frederick Amrine, PhD

Editor's Note: As lovely and reassuring as we may find the pastel colors and felt toys of a Waldorf kindergarten, Rudolf Steiner reported that it is in those years, and the even earlier years of infancy, when we human beings do the most powerful thinking of which we are capable. Our "helpless" infancy is when a lively and intuitive thinking knows the world for the first time, matching the raw data of the new physical senses to concepts living in the adult care-givers around us, even before we have words. All too soon this fresh, original experiencing becomes a mere habit for almost all of us.

Philosophers who deal with the basic question of "how do we know anything" (their term for this is *epistemology*) fight their way back, in effect, toward this first stage of cognition, of knowing, in order to try to experience *thinking* itself. Almost all of us, however, pass our days mistaking thinking for its product, thoughts, and experiencing those thoughts mostly as familiar, recalled, habitual, not newly met. We are just managing old thought-pictures, and dismissing thought itself.

In fall 2011 *being human* published a lecture by Yeshayahu Ben-Aharon who pointed to the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze as someone striving toward the living reality of thinking. In the spring 2012 issue Frederick Amrine followed with an essay "Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Freedom"; it opened with words of Michel Foucault, read at his funeral by Deleuze: **"There are times in life when the question of knowing whether one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all."**

To know and to perceive *differently* are essential, evolutionary challenges for humanity. Rudolf Steiner showed us how much is possible along this path. So despite the difficulty and strangeness of pushing back at what has become utterly normal and habitual, we will now drop in again, as it seems, to a graduate seminar of Prof. Amrine, confused at first by odd terminology and unfamiliar references, to try to regain a sense for *that other world of knowing that is possible*...

I want to focus on a text that Deleuze himself identified as central to his work: chapter III of *Difference and Repetition*, "The Image of Thought." Nearly the whole history of modern philosophy has fallen into this delusion, this trap, mistaking the "image of thought" for thinking itself, which has a fundamentally different nature. The problem begins with Descartes at the latest: "This is the meaning of the *Cogito* as a beginning: it expresses the unity of all the faculties in the subject; it thereby expresses the possibility that all the faculties will relate to a form of object which reflects the subjective identity." Another name for this reflected thought is *doxa*: "namely, the model itself (harmony of the faculties grounded in the supposedly universal thinking subject and exercised upon the unspecified object). The image of thought is only the figure in which *doxa* is universalized by being elevated to the rational level." Propositions such as that the three angles of a triangle should be equal to two right angles are merely *hypothetical*, "since they presuppose all that is in question and are incapable of giving birth in thought to the act of thinking." Sense is what is expressed by a proposition, but what do we mean by *expressed*? We cannot reduce that which is expressed either to the lived experience of the knower or to the object.

Deleuze calls this false image of thinking *recognition*, and his critique of it is scathing: "Recognition is a sign of the celebration of monstrous nuptials, in which thought 'rediscovers' the State, rediscovers 'the Church' and rediscovers all the current values that it subtly presented in the pure form of an eternally blessed unspecified eternal object." Because recognition sanctions only the recognizable and the recognized, it can never call forth anything but conformities. All the thinking faculties may be entirely taken up with its objects, "but such employment and such activity have nothing to do with thinking. Thought is thereby filled with no more than an image of itself, one in which it recognizes itself the more it recognizes things." Can we really believe that the destiny of thinking itself it captured by this reflected image? *Is mere recognition actually thinking?* Surely thought should "seek its models among stranger and more compromising adventures." Such a stance is actually a "hindrance" to real philosophizing; "this image does not betray the very essence of thought as pure thought." We must transcend this mere image of thought, which presupposes the act of thinking itself. This act of thinking is the sense, and *sense* is the genesis even of the true. "Truth is only the empirical result of sense."

We begin to overcome this false image of thought when we realize that "something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of fundamental *encounter*. … its

primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed." Actual thought is accessed through *transcendental empiricism*, which is fundamentally different from sensory empiricism.

It is not a quality but a sign. It is not a sensible being but the being *of* the sensible. It is not the given but that by which the given is given. It is therefore in a certain sense the imperceptible [*insensible*]. … Sensibility, in the presence of that which can only be sensed (and is at the same time imperceptible) finds itself before its own limit, the sign, and raises itself to the level of a transcendental exercise: to the 'nth' power.

Our experience is no longer one of recognition. We enter a ground of pure thinking that is in constant metamorphosis, and the sign that we have accessed it is an experience of *intensity*: "it is always by means of an intensity that thought comes to us. The privilege of sensibility as origin appears in the fact that, in an encounter, what forces sensation and that which can only be sensed are one and the same thing, whereas in other cases the two instances are distinct."

Another sign that we have attained real thinking is that it is invariably *paradoxical*: "a philosophical obstinacy with no ally but paradox, one which would have to renounce both the form of representation and the element of common sense. As though thought could begin to think, and continually begin again, only when liberated from the Image and its postulates." It is the coexistence of contraries that signifies the beginning of that which forces thought, which is always *movement between the poles of a polarity*. The result is a *problem*, but not of the kind that has an analytic answer. These problems are the actual Ideas: "Not only is sense ideal [what Kant would call the *a priori*], but problems are Ideas themselves." "Problems are the differential elements in thought, the generic elements in the true." It is this movement of thought, insensibly, *in the problem*, that engenders difference.

Again, these insights are not achieved with analytic or discursive thought. Rather, they are the object of what Fichte called "intellectual intuition." This is what Deleuze means by "transcendental empiricism": "That is why the transcendental ['this properly transcendental empiricism'] is answerable to a superior empiricism which alone is capable of exploring its domain and its regions." These intuitions are subtle. "Underneath the large noisy events lie the small events of silence, just as underneath the natural light there are little glimmers of the Idea."

These intuitions are also universal. Paradoxically, Deleuze calls these *Urphänomene* (for that is what they are) *singularities*. Singularities are generative; they are Goethe's "pregnant points." They are not the universality of empty, formal abstraction, but rather, they are rich with particularities; they are more like *matrices* ever giving birth. Deleuze expresses this insight by saying that "problematic Ideas are not simple essences, but multiplicities or complexes of relations and corresponding singularities." As such, they lie in the infinite unconscious: "Every proposition of consciousness implies an unconscious of pure thought which constitutes the sphere of sense in which there is infinite regress." "For the new—in other words, difference—calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognized and unrecognizable *terra incognita*."

Ideas are problems. But in wrestling with these problems, our faculties attain "their superior exercise." We want to access not thoughts, but rather "forces in thought." This exercise of the faculties is the energy that can generate new ways of seeing—indeed, new organs of perception: "It may turn out … that new faculties arise, faculties which were repressed by that form of common sense." "Considered in this light, Ideas, far from having as their milieu a good sense or a common sense, refer to a para-sense which determines only the communication between disjointed faculties. Neither are they illuminated by a natural light: rather, they shine like differential flashes which leap and metamorphose." Discursive logic gives way to Imagination: "The Logos breaks up into hieroglyphics, each one of which speaks the transcendent language of a faculty."

It's not normal consciousness, "not figures already mediated and related to representation" that is "capable of carrying the faculties to their respective limits." We must transcend normal consciousness altogether. Then we access "free or untamed states of difference in itself. … This element is intensity, understood as pure difference in itself." It is "the being of the intelligible as though this were both the final power of thought and the unthinkable." "What we encounter are the demons, the sign-bearers: powers of the leap, the interval, the intensive and the instant; powers which only cover difference with more difference."

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Deleuze's radical argument reminds me very much of Rudolf Steiner, especially his late philosophy. Let us focus on three texts: two lectures Steiner gave in Bologna in 1911, and the last chapter of *The Riddles of Philosophy*, published in 1914. Steiner's vocabulary is different from

Deleuze's, but the underlying thought is remarkably close.

The crude Positivists among Steiner's contemporaries had mistaken the "image of thought" for an ultimate, while the Neo-Kantians mistakenly concluded that "difference's" absence from immediate experience was proof it lay outside any *possible* experience. The latter does not follow, because it ignores the possibility that a meditatively intensified thinking might *render* it phenomenal. That had been precisely Fichte's experience, for which he felt he needed to coin an entirely new term, *Tathandlung*—literally a "made fact." Hence the title of Steiner's first lecture in Bologna, which refers to "Certain Psychologically Possible Facts."

Boldly, Steiner begins his first lecture in Bologna with a meta-philosophical description of ascent by way of meditative exercises. Here we intuit that all objects of knowledge are correlative to a consciousness, that perception is always already suffused with thinking. It follows that strengthened thinking will lead to *expanded perception.* Meditative work lifts us up to a direct experience of *objectively real potentials*—what Deleuze calls real *thinking*, as opposed to the mere "image of thought."

This strengthened thinking has to be taken in hand and suffused with our wills; it needs to become a *force* one can encounter. It needs to become a self-metamorphosing *ground*. Meditative work is imaginative in that we are ultimately the artists of our own cognitional life, which allows us to intervene actively in the world as moral agents. Hence Steiner calls this expanded intuitive faculty "moral imagination." The holistic integration of thinking as an activity into every aspect of our experience of the world is so hard to see, because it becomes apparent only when we cease doing it; when we step back as it were to contemplate the results. But once it becomes conscious upon the ladder of inner work, the holism that had made this newly discoverable participation initially invisible becomes "the very stamp upon its passport to utility." New faculties arise out of this inner labor.

What is new in the Bologna lectures vis-à-vis Steiner's earlier philosophical writings is the idea that this meta-philosophy is limitless. It is a dynamic and evolutionary process. Steiner: "Based on indubitable phenomena of the inner life, spiritual science considers it reasonable to assert that knowledge is not 'finished' and complete as such, but rather fluid and able to evolve." As we climb ever higher on the ladder, eventually we realize that the seeming *limits* are only a horizon, and "that over the horizon of normal consciousness , there is another level of consciousness into which human beings can penetrate."

Over and over again, Steiner returns in the first Bologna lecture to the idea of *life* and *living thinking*. As Steiner says: "In this process, concepts do not act as cognitional elements but as real forces"; "such images should not be considered for their value as facts in an ordinary sense; they should be seen in terms of their effectiveness as real forces in the soul. … A spiritual scientist does not attribute value to the *meaning* of the images used for psychological exercises, but to the soul's experience of their effects." Rather than eat the spiritual seeds by converting them into unreal signifiers, we *plant* them, and they germinate as nascent organs of cognition. Steiner again: "The more alive the symbol appears as an image and the more saturated with meaning, the better it is. Under these conditions, the symbol affects the mind so that, after a certain time ... the inner life processes themselves are felt to be stronger, more flexible, and mutually illuminating." Through meditative practice, we become the sculptors of our own higher nature; our cognitional life itself calls forth "living form." It is, after all, only a living organism that can grow and evolve.

"True spiritual research involves the whole mental apparatus of logic and self-aware contemplation when it seeks to transpose consciousness from the sensory to the supersensible sphere," Steiner writes. "It cannot be accused, therefore, of disregarding the rational element of knowledge ... in passing out of the sensory world, it always carries and retains the rational element—like a skeleton of the supersensible experience—as an integrating aspect of all supersensible perception." In our newly evolved cognitive bodies, there is no longer a physical organism or a realm of sensory phenomena to provide means of external support. We will need an endoskeleton, and that function will be performed by the exoskeleton of the ladder that we climbed, turned outside-in.

The Bologna lectures end with "a few rather aphoristic observations" that underscore the differences between "spiritual science" and *all* "the various contemporary trends in epistemology," which Steiner then proceeds to describe with unqualified praise as "immeasurably great" and "subtle." This turn in his argument would surprise us greatly if we understood Steiner as a philosopher among philosophers, staking out his own philosophical position in opposition to incorrect views. But now he clearly feels no need to contend with these epistemologies, all of which are brilliant in their own way, *because he has climbed up and out of that whole arena.* He has left the "image of thought" behind once and for all.

Steiner begins the last chapter of *The Riddles of Philosophy* by situating the great questions of "philosophy proper" we have been pursuing within the meta-philosophical context of the evolution of consciousness. Evolution rooted out the "original participation" described by Steiner's contemporaries Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl so that the mind could attain self-consciousness; paradoxically, only if human thinking becomes *maya* can it become free. Now spiritual anthropology trumps philosophy. But that same anthropological fact has an immediate and profound philosophical consequence: it follows that "the riddles of the soul" cannot be solved out of ordinary consciousness *in principle.* If "normal consciousness" in modern times is insubstantial, then the sources of normal consciousness must necessarily lie outside of normal consciousness.

Here Steiner recalls his second lecture in Bologna, specifically his concluding analogy of modern human thought to an image reflected in a mirror. The point of logical thought-structures—insubstantial, tautologous, valid but untrue—is precisely that of a mirror image: to enable self-consciousness. Real *thinking* is like light, invisible until it is reflected from a body. But real thinking remains invisible to normal consciousness for an even profounder reason: it is because we are actually not separate from it. Our higher selves live entirely within this living thinking, outside of normal consciousness. It remains unconscious for the same reason we cannot see our own face: it is because we *are* our own face; we can't stand apart from it and confront it as an object. We become conscious of our own activity—self-conscious—only by viewing it in a mirror. Except we have become so accustomed to the mirror-image that we mistake it for real.

And now we realize that the whole project of *The Riddles of Philosophy* was one long *reductio ad absurdum.* Despite their "immeasurably great" and "subtle" epistemologies (Bologna), one brilliant philosopher after another fails utterly, as fail they must. It's not that they have chosen the wrong concepts, or put them together in the wrong sequence, Steiner claims; it's that they have remained within *a consciousness that was devised for the purpose of cutting them off from reality.* The unreal thought-as-reflection (what Deleuze calls "the image of thought") has succeeded brilliantly in calling forth "onlooker consciousness." And the image of thought cannot solve the riddles of philosophy in principle because *its very nature and "mission" is to create the very problem we are trying to solve.* It is only because the image of thought has been so thoroughly successful, and because we lack any sense of the evolution of consciousness, that we mistake our innate "prejudice" for the way things really are.

We begin to see *The Riddles of Philosophy* for what it is: a feast of paradoxes. Nobody, not even Nietzsche, has managed to escape the trap, because they haven't climbed up and out of the problem. The unsolved "riddles" are meant to send a message, but they also function like Zen *koans*. For example, Steiner likens spiritual knowledge to "a memory of something one hasn't experienced yet." The riddles are nuts that logic just can't crack; instead, logic breaks itself upon them, and we break out of the tautologous circle of rational thought. While "philosophy proper" keeps searching for the highest trump card, wisdom sees that the only way to win is by changing the game, which is why Steiner concludes his account by asserting that "[f]rom one certain point of view this last chapter no longer belongs to the history of philosophy."

Kant may have been wrong about many things, but on my reading of *The Riddles of Philosophy,* the whole point is that the same fundamental criticism can be leveled against every single thinker since the advent of Nominalism in the High Middle Ages. *Modern philosophy keeps trying to heal patients by performing surgery on the reflected images of their bodies.* No amount of training, dexterity, or inventiveness can solve this problem short of realizing that we have been trying to operate on an illusory patient.

Rightly understood, *The Riddles of Philosophy* leads us up to a genuine threshold experience, a seeming limit that turns into a frontier. After climbing the upper rungs of the ladder through the meditative efforts described in the Bologna lectures, eventually we generate new forces of such vitality and strength that they lift us right off the ladder: as Steiner says, "the soul feels as though lifted out of the physical organism." The deadened reflections that had previously been directed outward have now been reoriented inward, and "as a result of the exercises, the soul feels imbued by an experience of itself." The result is an immediate intuition, a *spiritual viewing,* of a thinking that is substantive activity. Here the seeds of thinking are not consumed, but allowed to germinate. Here the forces of life overcome the deadening of abstract thought. Our thinking becomes Deleuze's "powers of the leap, the interval, the intensive, and the instant."

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