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Philosophy as Heterology

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The aim of the article is to ground a new conception of philosophy, namely, philosophy qua heterology. This grounding coincides with an overcoming of the philosophy as an onto-theological project. The main issue is considering being qua difference. We should base our understanding of being on difference instead of the difference between being and beings, as being and beings emerge "between". This "between", however, is not a moment in time or a position in space, but, on the contrary, this is time-space, the operation of being as an event which precedes any objectivation in space and time. Explication of philosophy qua heterology necessitates the transformation of a number of fundamental philosophical concepts, such as becoming, difference, event and multiplicity.

Keywords: philosophy, heterology, becoming, difference, event, multiplicity.

The article aims at formulating a new conception of philosophy, namely, philosophy *qua* heterology. That is to say, heterology signifies the beyond of philosophy as an onto-theological project and breaks all the ties with classical metaphysics and philosophy of science. The advent of heterology entails a radical transformation of philosophy's very nature. The transformation is ambiguous: firstly, ontology transforms into onto-genesis – the study of becoming of various systems and phenomena; secondly, ontology becomes heterogenesis – the study of becoming as becoming of difference, plurality and multiplicity (Kerimov, 2012, p. 83-84). In heterological sense, becoming is always becoming of difference and multiplicity. Difference and multiplicity are, accordingly, the notions that are momentous for the appreciation of heterology.

However, before we consider heterology as such, let us recapitulate the two classical approaches to being, that is to say, the two possibilities of describing being in the sphere of ontology. Although both approaches formally belong to ontology, they are, in effect, radically different.

The essence of the first approach lies in the substitution of the question of being with the question of the origins of beings. In this respect, being, as it is understood, is nothing else, but a ground. Then, a ground is made tantamount to a cause which, in turn, becomes the Absolute. Such an understanding of being is, needless to say, traditional for philosophy. Indeed, the metaphysical gesture *par excellence* is to correlate being with the ground of beings. From Thales to Husserl, philosophy had been preoccupied with finding the grounds of beings. At different

periods we had the elements of nature, God or the transcendental ego as the ground of beings. Thus, the question of being of beings coincides with the search of the supreme beings as the measure and the limit for what beings as such is capable of.

What is the limitation of the first approach? According to this approach, being becomes inseparable from the “transcendental signifier”, situated outside of beings. However, it does not relate being to a “transcendental signifier” taking the very question of being outside of its sphere. Indeed, the gesture of taking being outside of itself is precisely what inevitably turns metaphysics into a closed and total system. Furthermore, this very gesture makes any metaphysical search indistinguishable from the search for God. Heidegger has clearly identified ontotheological structure of the first approach: “But if we recollect once again the history of Occidental-European thought, then we see that the question of being, taken as a question about the being of beings, is double in form. On the one hand it asks: What are beings, in general, as beings? Considerations come within the province of this question in the course of the history of philosophy under the heading of ontology. The question ‘What is beings?’ includes also the question, “Which being is the highest, and in what way? The question is about the divine and God. The province of this question is called theology. The duality of the question about the Being of beings can be brought together under the title of “onto-theo-logy” (Heidegger, 1976, p.23).

Let us now return to the second approach. In this perspective, the focus is not on the origins of beings, but on the very being of beings. More precisely, the second approach rejects the metaphysics of origins and preoccupies itself with beings-without-ground. That is to say, nothing engenders being but beings. By the same logic, there is no being apart from beings.

There is, thus, an unbridgeable gap between being and beings. There is no causal relationship

between them. What does this mean? If there is no causality between being and beings, then being cannot be said to determine beings. Yet, being is the very ground of beings. How is this possible? In essence, being is an abyss, it is always an abyssal, lacking ground. Such abyss is, however, generative. To refuse to provide ground to beings is the act of liberating beings, of letting it be. To formulate it differently, the abyssal ground is the only true ground. Only the abyssal ground engenders unfettered beings, beings that are beyond their ground, beings as excess.

In this lies the ambiguity of being *qua* abyss. It is, at one and the same time, an abyss and a ground. This is the essence of Ab-gründung which signifies both the lack of ground (Ab-gründ) and lack as ground (Ab-gründung). Still more precisely: being *qua* abyssal ground is the ground of beings, according to the second approach.

However, the grounding movement in question is, again, ambiguous. Neither being nor beings come first. That is to say, being cannot truly precede beings because it is, in effect, an abyss. Yet, beings cannot precede being either, for they need being *qua* abyss as their ground. This is a paradoxical yet momentous point.

In the light of this, it is necessary to reverse the order of the ontico-ontological exposition properly. The reversal is the following: being does not precede difference *qua* supplement, instead, difference/multiplicity is the very essence of being: “Let us take up the matter again, then, not beginning from the Being of being and proceeding to being itself being with-one-another [étant l’un-avec-l’autre], but starting from being—and all of being—determined in its Being as being with-one-another. [This is the] singular plural in such a way that the singularity of each is indissociable from its being-with-many and because, in general, a singularity is indissociable from a plurality. Here again, it is not a question

of any supplementary property of Being” (Nancy, 2004, p. 60). I will elaborate more on this later.

Let us first recapitulate the two approaches to being exposed above: the first approach assimilates being with the ground of beings. In this perspective, the question of being as such is canceled out. Thus, there remains only the question of grounding beings. In contrast, the second approach allows us to gain access to being itself. Yet, this approach still contains a rather problematic paradox. The paradox is that, literally, being *is not*, for “*is*” can only refer to beings. This does not mean, however, that being is nothing. Rather, being is no-thing. Being is, then, different from beings, however, it is also inseparable from them.

The answer to this enigma is that being is always being of beings and there is no being without beings. By the same logic, there are no beings without being. In light of this, how can being be different from beings? An appropriate formulation of the relationship between being and beings would be the following: being is the operation that lets beings be. Alternatively, being makes beings enter presence. Also, being *is* via its difference from beings. Emmanuel Levinas explains this in a very fair way: “The most extraordinary thing which Heidegger brings us is a new sonority of the verb “to be”: precisely its verbal sonority. To be: not what is, but the verb, the “act” of being. (In German, the difference is easily drawn between Sein [to be] and Seiendes [beings], and the latter word does not have in German the foreign sonority that the French *étant* [a being] carries, such that Heidegger’s first translators had to write it in the quotation marks.) This contribution is unforgettable in the work of Heidegger. It has the following consequences: 2. The radical distinction between being and beings, the famous ontological difference. There is radical difference between the verbal resonance of the word being and its resonance as a noun. It

is the difference par excellence. It is Difference. Every difference supposes a certain community; between being and beings, however, there is nothing in common... 3. Language. It is the site of this difference; it is here, in language, where being is lodged. Language is the house of being. 4. The forgetting of the difference. This difference has been forgotten, and that forgetting constitutes Western thought. (Levinas, 1993, p. 122) Thus, before it becomes a noun, being is always an indefinite verb. Beings come into presence through substantification of being as a verb. In this way, being becomes something, a thing. Consequently, in order to preserve the difference between being as a verb and substantified being, let us use “to be” in lieu of “being”. Once again, what is important for us here is to preserve the procedural, verbal character of being.

Being is becoming, the event of becoming. Taking clue from Heidegger let us regard “to be” as the original event due to which anything or any event, including language, takes place. In this respect, does not being become the singular event, the event of all events? In other words, being is the eventness of all other events: “This way of being finds itself somehow at the limit. At the surface of being, the nature of which is not able to change: it is, in fact, neither active nor passive, for passivity would presuppose a corporeal nature which undergoes an action. It is purely and simply a result or an effect which is not to be classified among beings ... [The Stoics distinguished] two radical planes of being, something that no one had done before them: on the one hand, real and profound being, force; on the other, the plane of facts, which frolic on the surface of being, and constitute an endless multiplicity of incorporeal beings” (Deleuze, 1998, p. 20-21).

The corollary of this passage is the following: being is not a thing which appears in space and time, but, instead, it is unsubstantial and incorporeal. As I have argued above, being

is no-thing. However, by being no-thing, being unfolds “between” closure and disclosure, presence and absence. The “between” in this respect is not, however, a moment in time or a position in space, but, on the contrary, it is time-space. To be more precise, the very operation of being *qua* event precedes any objectivation in space and time; being ultimately escapes Ptolemaic physics, Aristotelian physics, and Newtonian physics and even the curved and finite space-time of the general theory of relativity. The space-time of being is rather the coincidence of the past, the present and the future. That is to say, the future and the past emerge simultaneously with the present. Each moment the present bifurcates into two opposite streams – the past and the future. In this sense, the present is a pure event; its role is to divide and break itself up into the past and the future. As a pure and empty presence, the present reveals the very negativity of time’s origins. Although the present is the passage from “already not” to “not yet”, it is a passage without passage. It is the indefinite verb “to be” that is situated at the void between the future and the past. This void is the present. This means that the present is not really between the two instances of time. Rather, it is the very timelessness of a pure event. Once again, the present, the “between” is, in effect, emptiness. A pure event is always emptiness. In consequence, time in its proper sense emerges from the bifurcation of the present moment as a pure event. This event liberates both the past and the future.

Let us now study the economy of the event more closely. Whereas temporalization is, in effect, the dissolution of the event and the liberation of the future and the past, spatialization is that which puts a check on this uncontrollable diffusion. Essentially, spatialization insulates the process of temporalization. Time is diffusion, space is assembly. Space is spatialization of time;

time is temporalization of space. More precisely: the becoming of space is the becoming-time of space; the becoming of time is the becoming-space of time. Time, then, becomes finite via space. At this junction: being is finite time. It is exactly such horizontality of space in time that signifies the point of intersection between being and finitude.

Time and space can only be understood via that which is liberated by the event. The emptiness of the event is precisely the gape which hosts the multiplicity of events and possibilities. Moreover, the event opens up through the opposition between various trends; it is the very clash of antagonisms: presence and absence, *fort* and *da*, the past and the future. These clashes result in precisely the spatialization of space and the temporalization of time; the advent to presence coincides with the retreat into absence.

Hereby, the decisive issue for us becomes thinking being *qua* difference. That is to say, we should base our understanding of being on difference as such instead of the difference between being and beings. Being *qua* difference is the very between out of which the difference between being and beings emerges. It follows that being is the original generative fissure or scission. Being separates and brings together at one and the same time. Once again, being as difference is not simple diffusion but also assembly. It is neither just time *qua* diffusion nor space *qua* assembly. It is space-time, diffusion-assembly. In this perspective, being *qua* the “between” is a perpetual *generative violence*. The passage from the ontico-ontological difference between time and space to the ontological difference *qua* the “between” *qua* space-time is central to post-Heideggerian philosophy.

This way, we take ontico-ontological difference to its very origins – the unfolding of being *qua* event. However, upon discovering that the original event itself is difference, we find

out that being as difference precedes onto-ontological difference between being and beings. It follows that the event is the very difference as the becoming of the world. Difference as becoming is the ground for all the other differences, including, the difference between being and beings.

Thus, our explication of being necessitates the transformation of a number of fundamental philosophical concepts, for example, becoming, difference, substance and event.

From being to becoming. It is philosophy's traditional move to posit being as presence against becoming as process. This opposition was sanctioned by Plato and is still in circulation today. In the context of this opposition, being is stable and consistent with itself, while becoming is, in essence, an ongoing difference from itself. For example, in Hegel becoming still remains a captive of an artificial movement of the mediated and the unmediated, the movement of thought towards the universality of the Concept. In this movement, the concept of becoming is already mediated by the Concept, since the movement of philosophy is always positing that which is already contained in the Concept.

Hegel's experience shows us that differentiating between being and becoming inevitably leads to essentialism. When we exhibit a certain thing via its becoming, we, on the contrary, distance ourselves from essentialism. Indeed, once we reject transcendental essences and fully commit to immanent actualities, essentialism is gone. However, thinking the process may easily turn into thinking the essence of the process, as well. The fallacy of such a transformation is that it results in becoming being taken outside of itself and, thus, referred to something external, for example, another subject. Yet, does not becoming involve nothing but itself? It does not produce anything but becoming as such. By the same token, the subject of becoming is the becoming itself.

In this light, the reformulation of being as "to be" entails the reformulation of the notion of becoming, as well. More precisely: the passage from being to becoming becomes possible precisely at the moment when "to be" is understood as the genetic and differential condition of reality. That is to say, being ceases to be mediated via the Concept, instead, it is construed as the actual process of becoming of beings, that is, being *qua* becoming. At this junction, I propose the following reformulation of the ontological difference: difference-becoming of being (and) beings.

Let us dwell (study) on the notion of becoming little longer: becoming is never a linear process *qua* passage from actuality to another actuality. On the contrary, it is the movement from the actual to the actualization of the virtual, that is, the new actual. Becoming is difference; it is the virtual space between actualizations. Still more precisely: becoming takes place exactly between the virtual and its actualizations. In this sense, "to be" is the virtual, while beings are the actual. Furthermore, becoming is fully immanent to reality. It follows that becoming is also always excessive in regard to reality. No actualities exhaust becoming. Consequently, becoming *qua multiplicity* is always virtual. In addition, becoming is never given by itself, for it is inseparable from beings.

Becoming – being, a non-linear process of transition from one actual to another actual – can be seen as a transition from the actual through the dynamic field of virtual tendencies to the actualization of this very field into the new actual. Becoming is understood here as the very difference insofar as it divides and separates actualizing virtual differences (Deleuze, 1998, p. 57-58).

The fact that the virtual is real and forms an aspect of real is of principal significance here.

The actuality of the virtual is constituted upon differentiated elements, their inter-relations and the singular points correlative to them. It means that the virtual is fully defined and denotes genetic differentiated elements. Nevertheless, virtual, in spite of its definitiveness, is just an aspect of an object. Actuality constitutes another aspect. Between these two aspects of an object or of an actual, takes place a transition, a transposition, but not mediation. Mediation takes place solely among readymade, already constituted and individualized things, while becoming – is a movement of actualization from virtual to actual. Consequently, actualization – is another aspect of the process due to which a phenomenon phenomenalizes. The question here is how virtual multiplicities realize as actualities. The relationship between these two sides is not the relationship of sameness and likeness, an authenticity and an image, a model and a copy. Insofar as virtual is repeated in actual, it is repetition-in-difference. And if virtual is repeated in actual, it is repetition through difference, the result of which is heterogeneity between repetition and the repeated.

The transformation of the notion of becoming that I suggest signifies the turning away from the metaphysics of substances and essences. Instead of essences, difference is introduced as structuring the relationship between being and beings. In other words, the relationship between them is of perpetual differentiation. In this perspective, “to be” – as a virtual multiplicity and not an essence – is the event. Thus, instead of grounding beings, “to be” ungrounds them. Once again, being as becoming is an abyssal ground, a gape or an original fissure which, nevertheless, generates order and continuity.

From identity to difference. Properly speaking, difference never becomes a genuine one in traditional philosophy. Let us take Aristotle,

for instance. In his perspective, difference is heterogeneity or otherness. Thus, for Aristotle, for two things to be different from each other they must, firstly, be necessarily identical with each other in some respects, for example, in genus. It is only against identity that difference can be sought for Aristotle: “the other” and “the same,” then, are opposed in this way; but difference is distinct from “otherness.” For that which is other than something else need not be other in a particular respect, since everything that is either “the other” or “the same.” But that which is different from something is different in some particular respect so that in what they differ must itself be identical, for example, the genus or the species. (Aristotel, 1975, p. 258-259)

Let us now proceed to Hegel. According to Hegel, difference is a part of the following progression: identity – difference – diversity – opposition – contradiction – ground: “And if the distinction differentiating them is then taken with greater precision, the difference turns into opposition and consequently into contradiction and the sum-total of all the realities in general into absolute internal contradiction” (Hegel, 1997, p. 393). The upshot is: diversity is negation at the point of contradiction; contradiction appears at the closing of the sequence as the truth of all previous reflections. Hegel writes: “Difference as such is already implicitly contradiction” (Hegel, 1997, p. 390). It follows that, for Hegel, difference is merely a background against which identity manifests itself. Implicitly contradiction, difference remains a subject to the identity of being as a ground. Thus, in both Aristotle and Hegel, identity precedes difference.

Additionally, both Hegel and Aristotle operate on the ontic level: for both Hegel and Aristotle, difference is a spatial category, that is, difference between identities positioned in space. In the same way, difference belongs to the

domain of the empirical. Aristotle commences with precisely the variety of that which is given and, then, tries to dissect the given by differentiating among objects in it, according to their characteristics. Hegel, on the other hand, conceives of diversity as something intrinsic to being. In consequence, each being always already contains its own diversity within itself. This way, diversity belongs to being even outside its relationships with the other beings. Hegel's approach seems different to the one of Aristotle at the first sight, however, both of these approaches contain the same weak point. To show this weak point, a brief detour by Deleuze can be revealing: "Difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse. Difference is not a phenomenon but the noumenon, closest to the phenomenon» (Deleuze, 1998, p. 222). Is this not precisely what Heidegger introduced as the difference between difference and difference? Is this not exactly what Heidegger attempted to oppose to the whole metaphysical tradition? For Heidegger, Aristotle's distinction between *ousia* and *hypokeimenon* remains true and so does the distinction between *esse* and *ens* in Thomas Aquinas, for example. However, what escapes both Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas is difference within each term. To this intrinsic difference we gain access by accepting being as the genetic and differential condition of actual experience. This way, being as becoming (as a movement from the virtual to the actual) is precisely the sought intrinsic difference.

Once again, what interests us is not the difference between things but things as differences, as becomings. The kind of difference we seek for is difference as becoming which is immanent in relation to itself. Such becoming is never eccentric to itself. It is not position-change in space, rather, it is qualitative transformation and variation in itself, immanent multiplicity-

differentiation. This is becoming as other than itself within itself.

A momentous point here is the following: whereas becoming as position-change does not affect the nature of being, becoming as multiplicity is ultimately the indefatigable qualitative variation in the very nature of being. Becoming concerns beings as such, while becoming as position-change concerns space. That is to say, we need to concern ourselves with difference within being rather than difference in space, as a supplement.

From substance to event. If being is becoming then the event is that which structures becoming: The event indicates what has to be thought at the very heart of becoming, pointing to it as something more deeply withdrawn and more decisive than the "passage-into" to which it is ordinarily reduced. Insofar, as it is understood as "passage-into," becoming primarily indicates that which is passed into, the having-become [l'être-devenu] of its result. But in order for the passage to take place, in step with the passing [dans le pas du passer], there must first be the agitated "unrest" (haltunglose Unruhe), which has not yet passed and does not pass as such – but happens. (Nancy, 2004, p. 242)

What is the meaning of substance in the philosophy of Aristotle? For him, substance as *ousia* has two meanings: 1) it is that what is given before us; 2) it is that what grounds the given-before-us. In the first sense, substance – as that what is present – can accommodate any beings. In the second sense, substance is the essence of thing, the solid and consistent core. This core always remains the same throughout changes. Aristotelian system of *ousia-hypokeimenon* is present at its utmost in Hegelian final metaphysics of subjectivity: the Absolute consciousness is not a human consciousness, but the very being/substance of the material world: "Everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as Substance, but equally as Subject" (Hegel, 1992,

p. 9). Needless to say, Hegelian telos is conceived upon the appropriation of the dynamic concept of substance.

Heterology, on the other hand, surmounts the hegemony of the substantivist ontology. Heterology's starting point is differentiation, becoming as differentiation which, in fact, precedes any identity and/or substance. Furthermore, in heterological perspective, difference is not an accident, since this would result in nothing other than heterology's back-sliding into substantivism, but an event. This is precisely the passage from the ontology of essences and substances to the ontology of events and multiplicities.

Thus, only heterology can cover events truthfully; events inevitably escape metaphysics because they lack substance. To formulate it differently, metaphysics looks for things and events are not things. Heterology, in contrast, equates being with becoming and thus abandons essences and substance. In this connection, substance becomes an event. The essence of grass is, for example, its greening. Moreover, there is really no grass, instead, there is only greening. Verbs precede nouns; nouns are a metaphysical delusion. In this light, the ontological transformation we have just exposed changes both readings of substance. That is, substance is no more than what is in front of us. By the same token, it is no more the consistent core of a thing.

From essence to multiplicity. Once again, what is becoming? Becoming is the virtual multiplicity the singular points of which are events. Besides, becoming takes place between the virtual "to be" and its actualization.

In contrast to essences, which are always abstract and general, multiplicities are singular and concrete-universal. They are singularities constitutive of actual processes. Furthermore, concrete-universality of multiplicities is always dissecting: multiplicities can never be

fully realized. They are inexhaustible in their potentialities. In other words, the gap between potentialities and actualities cannot be bridged for multiplicities. Besides, multiplicities only mold the processes and never the final results of these processes. In this connection, the results of the processes realizing the same multiplicity will never coincide. And, finally: in contrast to abstract essences co-existing together as an abstract universality, concrete universalities form a network-like continuum. Any multiplicity is always-already a *mélange* of other multiplicities forming continuous immanent space different from both the space of a genus and the space of discrete elements.

Whereas substantivism-essentialism proceeds from homogeneous and a-temporal identity, multiplicities lack unity and a-priori identity. Whereas substantivism-essentialism thinks the relationship between the essence and its actuality is similar to the relationship between the model and its copy, heterology acknowledges the divergence of realizations. Furthermore, in contrast to substantivism-essentialism describing matter as a passive receptacle of external forms pregnant with *eidos*, multiplicity – being immanent in relation to material processes – provides them with spontaneity of generation regardless of external intervention.

In heterological perspective, Being is no more equated with substance or essence, but is instead equated to an event. It is no more the foundation of being, but what being does not found

itself upon. Heterology is neither fundamental nor unfundamental ontology. Contrariwise, it

is the ontology of groundlessness. Ontology no more escapes from becoming as the only modality of being. Philosophy turns its face to this un-foundation as to the condition of becoming for the material systems and others, and explores the time-space of actualization of these systems.

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Философия как гетерология

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Цель статьи заключается в обосновании гетерологической концепции современной философии. Горизонтом этого обоснования служит преодоление онтологического проекта философии. Решающий вопрос заключается в том, чтобы мыслить бытие как различие. Нам следует мыслить бытие не на основе онто-онтологического различия (различия бытия и сущего), но на основе различия, т. е. как само «между», в котором открываются бытие и сущее. Но это «между» – не столько момент во времени или место в пространстве, сколько время-пространство, сама операция бытия как события, предшествующая всякой объективации пространства и времени. Обоснование философии как гетерологии влечет за собой трансформацию самих философских понятий – становления, различия, события и множественности.

Ключевые слова: философия, гетерология, становление, различие, событие, множественность.
