



TYPE: Article

Title: The Metaphysics of Indeterminacy: Postmodern Religious Theory and the Ruin of Referentiality

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Source: Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory (JCRT)

Published by: Whitestone Publications

Stable URL: <https://jcrt.org/archives/02.2/taylor/>

DOI (newest version): [10.17613/k526x-4vh58](https://doi.org/10.17613/k526x-4vh58)

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Taylor - The Metaphysics of Indeterminacy - JCRT 2.2
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—
The glory of Him who moveth all that is
Pervades the universe, and glows more bright
In the one region, and another less.

—
-- Dante, *The Divine Comedy*

Shall some selected appearances rule the others? We shall have to verify this selection by another selection, the second by a third, and thus it will never be finished.

-- Michel de Montaigne_, *Apology for Raymond Sebond_*

And the last, throughout to make enumerations so complete, and reviews so comprehensive, that I could be sure of leaving nothing out.

-- René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*

Pyramids, arches, obelisks, were but the irregularities of vainglory, and wild enormities of ancient magnanimity. But the most magnanimous resolution rests in the Christian religion, which trampleth upon pride, and sits on the neck of ambition, humbly pursuing that infallible perpetuity unto which all others must diminish their diameters, and be poorly seen in angles of contingency.

Pious spirits who passed their days in raptures of futurity made little more of this world than the world that was before it, while they lay obscure in the chaos of pre-ordination, and night of their force-beings. And if any have been so happy as truly to understand Christian annihilation, ecstasies, exolution, liquefaction, transformation, the kiss of the spouse, gustation from God, and ingression into the divine shadow, they have already had an handsome anticipation of heaven; the glory of the world is surely over, and the earth in ashes unto them.

To subsist in lasting monuments, to live in their productions, to exist in their names and predicament of chimeras, was large satisfaction unto old expectations, and made one part of their Elysiums. But all this is nothing in the metaphysics of true belief. To live indeed is to be again ourselves, which being not only hope but an evidence in noble believers, 'tis all one to lie in St. Innocent's churchyard, as in the sands of Egypt: ready to be anything, in the ecstasy of being ever, and as content with six foot as the moles of Adrianus.

*Tabesne cadavera solvat,
An rogos, hand refert.*

-- Lucan

--Sir Thomas Browne, *Hydriotaphia, Urn-Burial*

Pure Being without exteriority, without analogical reference, giving rise to a desire ¹ to find one's way from here to there'Dante, Montaigne, Descartes . . . The seventeenth century theological vision of a bicameral reality guides Sir Thomas Browne's (1605-1682) ² poetic affirmation of faith to a distressed compromise between doubt and reason. This "fideism" or futility of a this-worldliness against the infinitude of God makes clear his belief in a life lived ingressing into the "divine shadow." Not Descartes and certainly not Montaigne, Browne advances a theory of religion as a resolvable disjunction between blind faith and rational and skeptical processes. The finality of his judgment comes only in a form of condemnation of the here and now, the finite. It is a necessary repudiation if one follows a deconstructive logic, insofar as the limitless derives its value from the limited, negatively. The materiality of this world gives way to the spirituality of the next, forming not a dialectical synthesis but an annihilation of the former. Monuments, pyramids and obelisks, for Browne, are further testament to the failure of the material-temporal to satisfactorily render the divine. And yet "noble" and common believers dedicate monuments in all forms to ephemeral lives, last signs of a continuity between an ever-expanding singularity and its deictic parameter, all last signs, "ready to be anything, in the ecstasy of being ever." From Browne's text, God becomes the *telos* and (necessarily) the process by which everything is annihilated and again restored. God is that which equates the solidity of marble and the fluidity of sand, form and dissemination, with finality a subdued readiness to become anything, all things without end. The invocation of an ecstatic God, not an "immortal diamond" as Gerard Manley Hopkins would later declare, a God in process representing an "infallible perpetuity" making time and space immeasurable by the fact that measure is impossible, creates a radical limitlessness in the center of theology, an epistemological infidelity by which the concept of God in Christianity, through the perpetuity of creation in the resurrection, exceeds its own ideational boundary.

1. _The Logic of Sense_

Philosophy merges with ontology, but ontology merges with the univocity of Being (analogy 1

2. _Difference and Repetition_

Representation essentially implies an analogy of being. However, the only realized Ontology

Deleuze's method is thus a method that rejects all recourse to mediations; indeed, this is being). But Deleuze immediately raises the objection that "There are not two 'paths', as Parmenides

3. Once Browne claims that we can be "ourselves again" he ushers in the (im)possibility of a distributed "God," a "God" that exceeds "Christian annihilation" by the force of creation and resurrection. That is, creation and resurrection become the "infallible perpetuity" superseding all design, all finality, all judgment. The duality of creation, materiality and spirituality, gives way to a discontinuous process of becoming *in perpetuity*, with Browne's "God" (everything) restoring itself to itself, re-creating creation in all instances and leaving in its wake the resonance of the all-encompassing singular, yet multiple, eternal return as morphogenesis.³ In a postmodern theological vision, with a distributed-concept-of-God, Browne's "divine shadow"

¹"There is yet another meaning of desiring theology. This is the understanding that theology written in the wake of psychoanalysis and its intellectual entailments must elaborate the meaning and importance of desire in its own discourse" Charles E. Winquist, *Desiring Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), x.

²Seventeenth century British physician and philosopher best known for his text *Religio Medici*.

³Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Paul Patton, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 41.

and “earth in ashes” are not divided one from the other, but diverge from an eternal singularity, creation. In this respect, it is Browne’s problem that becomes a postmodern solution, a metaphysics of indeterminacy superseding a tiresome sacred/profane dialectic (in which one “reality” is deemed knowable, subsuming the other and *vice versa*); “the divine shadow” mutates into a Deleuzian “univocity of Being”:

“To the limit,” it will be argued, still presupposes a limit. Here, limit [*peras*] no longer refers to what maintains the thing under a law, nor to what delimits or separates it from other things. On the contrary, it refers to that on the basis of which it is deployed and deploys all its power; hubris ceases to be simply condemnable and the smallest becomes equivalent to the largest once it is not separated from what it can do. This enveloping measure is the same for all things, the same also for substance, quality, quantity, etc., since it forms a single maximum at which the developed diversity of all degrees touches the equality which envelops them. This ontological measure is closer to the immeasurable state of things than to the first kind of measure; this ontological hierarchy is closer to the hubris and anarchy of beings than to the first hierarchy. It is the monster which combines all the demons. The words “everything is equal” may therefore resound joyfully, on the condition that they are said *of* that which is not equal in this equal, univocal Being: equal being immediately present in everything, without mediation or intermediary, even though things reside unequally in this equal being. There, however, where they are borne by hubris, all things are in absolute proximity, and whether they are large or small, inferior or superior, none of them participates more or less in being, nor receives it by analogy. Univocity Being is at once and the same time nomadic distribution and crowned anarchy.⁴

4. Theological discourse, or religious theory more generally, must address the issue of difference and repetition as a metaphysical condition of the concept of God, preparing an analytic that either affirms or rejects the referential force of language. Dante, Montaigne, Descartes, and Browne all subscribe to the notion that concepts, through a linguistic system, refer to a reality, with that reality either knowable or unknowable. The inquiry under this paradigm, then, begins with an epistemological question. How does one know? The history of philosophy offers two seemingly divergent responses to this question, Aristotle and Kant. For Aristotle the world is knowable through the division of the world into categories: Substance, Quantity, Quality, Relationship, Place, Time, Posture, State, Action, Affection. For Kant, the world is knowable only through the limit of the categories of mind, articulated as sense-making apparatuses of thought: Quantity of Judgment: Quality, Modality, and Relation; and, Categories of Quantity: Quality, Modality, and Relation. While the two corresponding schemes leave us with either an object dominated world (Aristotle) or a subject dominated world (Kant), the shared index is referentiality, an analogy extended outward or inward. That is, Aristotle and Kant initially view the question of totality (God) as an epistemological problem, with Kant seemingly providing more difficulties:

In all ages men have spoken of an absolutely necessary being, and in so doing have endeavoured, not so much to understand whether and how such a thing of this kind allows even being thought, but rather to prove its existence. There is, of course, no difficulty in giving a verbal definition of the concept, namely that it is

⁴Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 35-37.

something the non-existence of which is impossible. But this yields no insight into the conditions which make it necessary to regard the non-existence of a thing as absolutely unthinkable. It is precisely these conditions that we desire to know, in order that we may determine whether or not, in resorting to this concept, we are thinking anything at all.⁵

5. It is Kant's "thinking anything at all" that becomes the site for introducing para/inquiry alongside inquiry proper, investigating the linguistic appeals to meta-discourses of verification, e.g., reason. As a Kantian epistemological problem, the concept of God needs a corresponding reality, the "anything at all." Theology or religious theory, as central to their disciplinary *raison d'être*, provides or should, many would argue, work toward providing connective phrasings by which the concept of God is joined to the reality of God. Historically, this has been the motivation for scholarship in the respective fields, making theology and religious studies "scientific."⁶ The pre-emptory concern, however, posed by Gilles Deleuze suggests that the "crowned anarchy" of the "univocity of Being" at least "precedes" the epistemological impasse, and may dislodge it by showing that the referential imperative directing a collapse of or division between states of reality is unnecessary once the resources of the plural-One are utilized:
6. With the injunction against making one thing the equivalent of another (analogy) from the critique of epistemological certitude, one must consider the same disjunctive operation within metaphysics; that is, thinking through the internalization of the negative as a means of completing identity. Alain Badiou's insight regarding Deleuze's rejection of metaphysical "mediation" offers an equally complex problem to the epistemological crisis that is associated with theoretical inquiry. In this regard, Deleuze, contrary to Badiou, remains committed to the neutrality of Being, while Badiou insists upon the mathematicalization of Being.⁷ For Deleuze and Guattari, however, "knowledge is neither a form nor a force but a *function*"⁸ that determines "mixtures or states of affairs that are related to coordinates and to which functions refer."⁹ Knowledge, then, does not represent the joining of the mind to the world; sensible thing to Form; instead, it is a function or fold determining the limit of "variables." Knowledge, within an indeterminate metaphysical analytic, is non-referential insofar as it merely delineates planes of coordination or "planes of reference,"¹⁰ which are articulated in the multiple and non-reducible:

The three planes, along with their elements, are irreducible_: plane of immanence of philosophy, plane of composition of art, plane of reference or coordination of science; forms of concept, force of sensation, function of knowledge; concepts or conceptual personae, sensations and aesthetic figures, figures and partial observers_. Analogous problems are posed for each plane: in what sense and how is the plane, in each case, one or multiple? what unity, what multiplicity? But what to us seem

⁵Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Norman Kemp Smith, trans. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 501.

⁶See Carl Raschke, "Para/Theology: The Study of Religion and the Science of the Negative," in *The Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, Vol. 2 (2000), no.1: <<https://jcrt.org/archives/02.1/raschke.shtml>>.

⁷See Badiou, 3.

⁸Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 215.

⁹Deleuze and Guattari, 215.

¹⁰Deleuze and Guattari, 217.

more important now are problems of interference between planes that join up in the brain.¹¹

Paul Klee. *Heads*, 1913

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7. Planes of coordination imply “refrains” or instances of interference. Deleuze notes two types of interference, appearing as extrinsic and intrinsic in relation to “disciplines.” The former are concepts specific to one domain (e.g., art) and imported into another (e.g., science) domain that in turn function according to the latter’s rules. The second refers to concepts that “leave a plane of immanence that would correspond to them, so as to slip in among the functions and partial observers, or among sensations and aesthetic figures, on another plane.”¹² These are non-localizable interferences insofar as “each distinct discipline is, in its own way, in relation with a negative: even science has a relation with a nonscience that echoes its effects.”¹³ Klee’s *Heads*, for instance, “expresses” this echo-effect by maintaining the human figure as “motif,” a “Genesis eternal” as an energy “discharge” distorting the natural form of the object.¹⁴ The relation to a negative, however, is not one rendered in a mirrored image nor as an opposition as we saw in Sir Thomas Browne’s articulation of a “heaven” and an “earth in ashes.” Instead, the negative is an ecstatic coordinate repeating itself in perpetuity in relation to a minimal “surface tension,” membrane, or “meshwork”¹⁵ functioning as site for interference. Through this distortion of the “natural form” by way of a “transcendental empiricism”¹⁶ or artistic abstraction underwritten by metaphysical indeterminacy, all things virtually become themselves again (as motifs) in the possibility of repetition and difference.
 8. Brains, heads: Deleuze and Klee, summoning-forth “people to come”¹⁷ or “looking for people,”¹⁸ “brain-people,” “chaos-people.”¹⁹ “Philosophy,” Deleuze writes, “needs a nonphilosophy that comprehends it; it needs a nonphilosophical comprehension just as art needs nonart and science needs nonscience.”²⁰ This “non” is not the dialectical negative but the “No” that concerns the plane of coordination; a plane formed as a confrontation with chaos, an “endogenous topological form”²¹ sustaining and exceeding itself through a minimal “surface tension” which becomes a reality in repetition for itself seeking a point of limit, a PARA/LIMIT.²² This

¹¹Deleuze and Guattari, 216.

¹²Deleuze and Guattari, 217.

¹³Deleuze and Guattari, 218.

¹⁴Paul Klee writes, in *On Modern Art*, that “[n]obody will expect a tree to form its crown in exactly the same way as its root. Between above and below there cannot be exact mirror images of each other. It is obvious that different functions operating in different elements must produce vital divergences” (Paul Findlay, trans. [London: Faber and Faber, 1948], 59).

¹⁵Manuel DeLanda, “Immanence and Transcendence in the Genesis of Form,” in *A Deleuzian Century?* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 120.

¹⁶In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze refers to going beyond the “turn in experience” in which “conditions of experience are less determined in concepts than in pure concepts.” He goes on to note that after moving “beyond the turn” the lines (of divergence) intersect at a “virtual point,” leaving, for Bergson, the philosophical process as an “infinitesimal calculus” (Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, trans. [New York: Zone Books, 1988], 28, 27).

¹⁷Deleuze and Guattari, 218.

¹⁸Klee.

¹⁹Deleuze and Guattari, 218.

²⁰Deleuze and Guattari, 218.

²¹DeLanda, 119-134.

²²Victor E. Taylor, *Para/Inquiry: Postmodern Religion and Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000).

“para/limit” is a metaphysically indeterminate (virtual) point in that it forms as an activity of the brain (for the concept), a movement in which endogenous topological forms seek *ecstasis*. Creation, then, is not *ex nihilo*, but the repeated morphogenesis of a surface, which is not to say that it forms oppositionally as a negation. Rather, it forms from a series of possibilities against chaos, supersessions not of the complex arrangement of variables indexed to a reality (language-games), but the very condition of variables in relation to a non-specified excess.

9. If we return to the metaphysics of determinacy espoused by Dante, Montaigne, Descartes, and Browne, we begin and end with epistemological uncertainties, with the prospect, perhaps hope, of a better science or a more reconciling belief-system always in the future, directing the mode of inquiry toward accuracy. The duality that arises within the difficulties of knowledge also makes visible a metaphysical problem; that is, the problem of making visible by analogy, a problem of the problem, as it were. Knowledge, therefore, as a “function” rather than a “form” or a “force” recasts the aim of religious theory and all disciplines toward the “No” that concerns it, the chaos it attempts to territorialize. And, as Deleuze writes, “it is here that concepts, sensations, and functions become indiscernible, as if they shared the same shadow that extends itself across their different nature and accompanies them.”²³ Indiscernible not uncertain; coordinated not referential; repeated not continued.

Notes

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Updated 07/28/21.
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²³Deleuze and Guattari, 218.