Non-Conceptual Negativity: Damaged Reflections on Turkey

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Is difference in Deleuze an unmediated difference? At this juncture, it is important to stress that the dialectic criticized by Deleuze is the Hegelian one. Moreover, it should be added that when the Platonic dialectic is in particular prioritized over the Hegelian one, Deleuzian thought gets much closer to Adorno, especially in the context of the non-conceptual and the non-identical. According to Deleuze:

It is not difference which presupposes opposition but opposition which presupposes difference, and far from resolving difference by tracing it back to a foundation, opposition betrays and distorts it. Our claim is not only that difference in itself is not ‘already’ contradiction, but that it cannot be reduced or traced back to contradiction, since the latter is not more but less profound than difference. On what condition is difference traced or projected on to a flat space? Precisely when it has been forced into a previously established identity, when it has been placed on the slope of the identical which makes it reflect or desire identity, and necessarily takes it where identity wants it to go — namely, into the negative.¹

Why does Deleuze reject this negativity? It is all because in Hegel the negative, considering its concept and its object as identical, reduces the two down to the same and with conceptuality and representability thus produced, synthesis, which is to appear only at the end, has at the beginning already been decided.

On the other hand, difference when reduced to identity disappears immediately because it is surrendered to representation, which reduces everything down to the same and the identical. It is impossible to think difference in itself when it is subjected to the protocols of representation. Yet there is a way of thinking difference in itself without representing it, without surrendering it to identity, without rendering it mediated; and it is only possible to think difference without conceptualizing it. And all this can only be achieved by the paradoxical element we mentioned earlier.

There are two possible conclusions which can be derived from this discussion:

1. Since it leads to Hegelian synthesis, Deleuze does not indulge in representation insofar as difference is concerned; he is convinced that unmediated thought cannot be maintained by the negation of difference but by Nietzschean affirmation. The paradoxical element will empty capital of all its signification due to its non-locatability obtained by double affirmation, yet right at this extremely critical point, Deleuze seems to be unaware of the fact that his preference for unmediated thought or the power of affirmation of this thought is maintained by being subjected to the double negation of capital itself. You are free to affirm as long as you let yourself be doubly negated by capital. Such a position, of course, plays into the hands of the Speculative Realists who insist on a philosophy of the subject in the face of the “non.”

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2 Ibid., 262.
3 Speculative Realists’ insistence on the “non” finds its point of departure in François Laruelle’s philosophy. For his positioning of the subject within a seemingly new and radical perspective, see François Laruelle, Principles of Non-Philosophy, trans. N. Rubczak and A.P. Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
2. Re-read Deleuze in the light of Adorno where negativity is rendered non-conceptual. If behind Deleuze's affirmative thought, as Adorno would have it, there still remains a negativity even after the negation of the negation, it is so because it is a nonceptual negativity resistant to being reduced to a programme. What would be the implications of reading the positive obtained under such circumstances—a positive which can no longer preserve its primacy—both as the negative which does not allow for the reconciliation of contradictions, and also as the positive which preserves difference as difference by rejecting the same and synthesis? Isn't there a shared nonceptuality, or rather a non-conceptual negativity, at the origin of such a strange positive, a positive that is condemned to be determined by its shadow and the negative as a residue? Re-read Deleuze in the light of Adorno where negativity is rendered non-conceptual. If behind Deleuze's affirmative thought, as Adorno would have it, there still remains a negativity even after the negation of the negation, it is so because it is a nonceptual negativity resistant to being reduced to a programme. What would be the implications of reading the positive obtained under such circumstances—a positive which can no longer preserve its primacy—both as the negative which does not allow for the reconciliation of contradictions, and also as the positive which preserves difference as difference by rejecting the same and synthesis? Isn't there a shared nonceptuality, or rather a non-conceptual negativity, at the origin of such a strange positive, a positive that is condemned to be determined by its shadow and the negative as a residue?
Fig. 10. “Last Vestiges of a Rhizomatic Life,” watercolor, acrylic, pen, pencil, 15 × 20 cm, 2016.