Deleuze, Lévinas, and the Art of Perception

0. Introduction: Ethics and Perception
0.1 Quest for ethical meaning

This paper is an attempt to establish a connection between two major themes that seem to dominate today's scene of thought including philosophy, art and science. This overly general claim can by no means be justified here. The list of core references and the most telling quotations would in themselves fill a paper. Let us state most boldly instead that the heterogeneity of the era commonly and most intriguingly characterized as "post" (post-structural, post-colonial, post-cultural, postmodern, post-postmodern, etc.) has curiously unleashed a *quest for ethical meaning*, or in other words, for a new rationality. As if, by the (Hegelian) irony of fate, even after the decline of master narratives we could, and in fact were prompted to, ask: Whence this heterogeneity? Why this insistence on amassing and juxtaposing the most disparate elements? What is their ensemble supposed to constitute? What is this compilation a compilation of? Or in more philosophical terms *à la* Wittgenstein: what is the *point* of playing so many games at the same time? Or *à la* Deleuze: whence this rhyzomatic world of non-compossibles? Or most simply and paradoxically: What is the congruity in this incongruity? Is there a rationale for the irrational cut? Is there a sense in non-sense, a significance in the a-signifying, a unity in heterogeneity? And since intermediality is a form of heterogeneity, today's art, if it is correct to use the term to what encompasses the most extravagant and the most banal forms of our life, cannot but raise such questions.

   After the debunking of the concept of representation the turn toward ethics is even logical. Naturally, the call for ethical meaning did not always imply anti-representationalism. For long ethics meant morally characterizable choices, i.e., it presupposed the existence of norms or moral laws. Art appeared to be moral so far as it represented or exemplified actions which are *universalizable* as instances of acceptable norms. When we witness the rise of ethics in relation to heterogeneity or intermediality, however, the issue is no longer the representation of morality but the *conditions of ethics*. It is not the portrayal of situations which demand specifically moral action but rather the *genesis* of singular situations. Following authors like Emmanuel Lévinas, Jean-Luc Marion and Schmuel Trigano, we would say that basically these are situations which challenge all knowledge the agent may have: they resist any kind of conceptualization based on past experience. They are singular precisely in the sense that they cannot be universalized with respect to possible action.[1] In them the agent is singled out or is addressed in his or her singularity. The prototype case is a love scene in which a third party appears. The scene is ethical not because one is obliged to follow pre-existing rules or norms (e.g. faithfulness) but because one is directly addressed by the Other (his or her partner) in a way that displaces the application of a comparison with respect to a third person (or a neutral element) for it would imply that the Other is exhaustible or reducible to knowable characteristics that can be compared and evaluated according to some scale. The Other would appear to be quantitatively, and not qualitatively, different from another third person. To put it another way, one is kept hostage by the Other and it is this fact that prevents the intrusion of a third person. A very similar point is being made in Deleuze's writings when he speaks about the need to confront the radically new or to

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[1] In what sense is „possible" meant here?

think creatively. It can also be expressed in Lévinasian terms as the non-substitutability of the agent: the situation calls for an action such that the agent's singularity is a constituent of it. We will not further analyze the nature of such situations here; rather, our concern is their conditions of possibility, i.e., how they are generated. It is to answer this question that we suggest we turn to the second major theme in current thought.

0.2. The perceptible and the intelligible

The theme can be variously identified as the problem of bridging the gap between the sensible or perceptible and the intelligible. The has a strong Kantian reminiscence. As well-known, he assigned this key role to intuition. It is by intuition that the manifold of sensory experience (pure percepts) get subsumed under the *a priori* categories of understanding (concepts). But it also pertains to intuition to find a sensible form to the product of (creative) imagination. Yet, the reintroduction of the problem today is due rather to the fact that after the linguistic turn categorial understanding is taken to be essentially, if not exclusively, linguistic. That is, concepts are regarded as the product of man's linguistic ability: they provide the only means by which the world is accessible. This conception, however, bypasses the fact gaining growing emphasis these days that the linguistic categories are a far cry from the achievements of human perceptual system: the latter is extremely more fine-grained than what is categorizable in and by language. It has also been shown that perceptual discriminations predate the acquisition of language. So, perception both structurally and (onto)genetically overrides language. This idea culminates in the debate about non-conceptual perceptual content in philosophy as well as in recent scientific investigations about the non-modular structure of human perceptual system, the existence of contested modalities (e.g. vomeronasal) and the lack of subjective experience (qualia).

This theme highlights an important aspect of human perception. Namely that there is proper part of the manifold of experience that cannot be subsumed under any known or *a priori* categories and thereby cannot be individuated consistently as determinable objects of experience. As Antonioli puts it, "the sensible is opposed to the model of recognition since it is not a component a remembered, imagined or conceived object...". (Antonioli 1999: 85) It escapes or challenges all knowledge innate or based on previous experience. In Kantian terms the sensible introduces an essential discordance into the operation of the faculties. In the sensible appears the radically new that thought cannot think but at the expense of pulling down or bypassing all its existing categories and concepts and by creating new concepts. At least this is how Deleuze conceives the task of philosophy. The challenge that the singularity of the sensible presents for thought cannot be overestimated. It constitutes a starting point, albeit differently, for both the Lévinasian project of ethics as first philosophy and Deleuzian creativity in thinking. It is a stage punctuated by loss of (intending) subjectivity and objecthood, viz. the perception of "pure" qualities as if detached from supporting substances.

No doubt that the existence of such a perceptual state is both ontologically and epistemologically hypothetical. At the same time the theme of unstructured perception runs through twentieth century art, art history, philosophy and science. Examples from art history abound from the extensively discussed Proustian text on the Venteuil sonata (Fontanille 1987, Jaquemet 1991, Marks 1998) and Cézanne's technique (Imdahl 1979, Groupe ###, 1992b) through Blanchot's novels (Libertson 1982, Wahl 1997, Robbins 1999) and American minimalist artist, Tony Smith's highway experience (Fried 1967, Didi-Huberman 1992) to contemporary music. Here are some excerpts from films.

Detailed theoretical discussions of these and like cases can be found in radical phenomenology (Lévinas 1961, Merleau-Ponty 1964, Ouaknin 1992), visual hermeneutics (Boehm 1978), ontogenetic semiotics (Fontanille et Zilberberg 1998), visual rhetoric (Groupe μ 1992), and last but not least in Gilles Deleuze entire work. Finally. the idea that the indentification of objects and the conceptualization of scenes, viz. hermeneutics, is late product of visual processing is supported by recent findings in ecological and cognitive psychology. Roughly the insight is that the analysis of shape and form and the processing of motion are accomplished by a bifurcating, and in may respects independent, processing systems. For our argument here it suffices to point out that the quest for ethical meaning and the art of perception as a state that precedes objectification or conceptualization are closely connected in current thought. We would like to elaborate that connection especially in Lévinasian and Deleuzian philosophy and show its relevance to the understanding of the moving image as an instance of intermediality.

1. The intransitivity of Perception
1.1 Non-conceptual perceptual content

In what follows we will refer to pre-conceptual perceptual state as the intransitivity of perception. The essential difference between perceptually made discriminations and distinctions available in and through language has been pointed out in relation to various sensory modalities. This difference is two-tiered. On the one hand it seems to be an established fact that there is always more to perceive than meets the mind: "[t]here are many more phenomenal experiences than there are concepts of them." (Block 2002: 135). We are much better at distinguishing specific shades of color, tones of sound, tastes of food, individual faces and gaits than at categorizing and expressing this manifold linguistically On the other hand, there is a smooth glide from one sensation to another. The idea is commonly associated with philosophers of passion, like Hume whose theory of sympathy is based on the easiness of slipping from one passion (affect) into another. (Cléro 2002: 241)

But it is Leibniz who formulated a theory of "small perceptions" which establish "an uninterrupted continuity between the sensible and the intelligible" (Antonioli, 1999: 114) It is in his book on Leibniz where Deleuze states most clearly how strongly micro-perception (the sensible) and modulation (the intelligible) are interrelated: objects are nothing but an infinity of small folds, or points of inflexion (Deleuze 1965: 131), that is a series of microscopic variations of matter and form. On the other hand each point is but a singularity, a "bubble of event" that is pre-individual. It is a series of such points that can individuate things or subjects as such. Continuity and singularity appear to be the two sides of the same coin: they are both constitutive of what Deleuze calls intensive series or intensivity. That there can be divergence, or even an irrational interval, between singularities within a series and that each point possesses an infinite modulatory power do not constitute a contradiction. We contend that they follow from the fact that perception is always a perception of micro-movements, or what comes to the same, a constant modulation of scene (aspects or profiles). Micro-movements do not constitute cuts in themselves. It is only when we inquire about the condition of possibility of perception: the existence of an exteriority from which an interiority (a monad or "subject") gets separated. Although the interval (cut) is what makes perception possible, it is how exteriority (world) is „represented within", or rather is expressed by, the interior that cuts acquire sense. For it becomes clear that what is subject to constant

modulation and is structured like a fold is the contingent unity of the interior. This it could not do without being in permanent contact with the world, viz. continuously perceiving it, modulation refers not to what is being perceived (e.g. a changing scene), but to the *variable unity* of often divergent series of pre-individuals singularities making up the interior. Deleuze reinterprets Bergson's idea of memory as modulation to individuate this variable unity of non-compossible singularities both pre-individual and pre-conceptual, and he re-names them as open or changing Whole.

While in Bergson memory (duration) is the condition of possibility of perception (matter) which also immanent to it, in fact, he introduces the term „image" precisely in this double sense (the perceptible and the intelligible are continuous), Deleuze seems to privilege memory over perception. Perception becomes a reduced form of memory in that it is based on a sensorimotor scheme of action and reaction, that is, it singles out a particular relation, whereas memory introduces the virtual, that is, the co-existence of an infinite set of relation. We have, however, noted that this infinity of the virtual is in fact the exterior world as expressed by the interior. But Bergson also talks about „pure perception" when ever more numerous and distant points in space are brought into relation with ever more complex motor responses. (Cf. Rodowick 1997: 87) Thus, perception can as well serve as a figure for memory or the virtual. Moreover, if there is "pure" perception in the above sense of intransitivity, then perception can *become* memory. Not only memory is immanent to perception, but vice versa, perception must be immanent to memory. It is in this sense that micro-perceptions - by metonymic transferal - become a pure perception of micro-movements. Note Deleuze's use of the spatial metaphor of grid (*crible*) which encompasses possible and actual (small) perceptions. In the transferal, however, there is shift in meaning: micro-perceptions is a sort of "gliding" sensation, while a perception of micro-movements foregrounds the transition or the cut between independent points of inflexion, viz. singularities: in favourite Deleuzian terms it is *becoming other* where other means absolutely other.

It is important to mention at this point that when Deleuze talks about how the interior expresses the exterior he uses terms like "murmur" (*rumeur),* "mist" (*brouillard*), "sleep" (*sommeil*), which are very close to how Lévinas describes exteriority (*il y a*). They even have a common reference: chaos in Blanchot. But it is more simple terminological similarity. The underlying idea is that the exterior can enter the interior only through perception (sensibility) in a way that escapes and disrupts all fixed forms of, transitive, intentional and representing, consciousness. Exteriority arrives as if non-willed by interiority, it arrives even "against its will" (*malgré soi*). The fierce critique that both Lévinas and Deleuze level against classical concepts and representation has been strongly criticized in turn. Many authors, even those sympathetic with the project in question, have pointed out that the concept of radical exteriority (altarity) and that of a most passive subjectivity (interiority) dismissive of all initiative are naive. They find the idea of pure perception a mere fiction. Bypassing the details of their arguments, let us make a kind of new start and see if the Lévinasian and Deleuzian claims could be grounded.

1.2 The Art of Substance Relative Perception
For a possible ground we suggest we turn to the science of perception. There are, however, two parts of a founding argument. The first part is purely scientific, namely physiological, while the second is open-ended, so we have to round it up with our own conjecture. Let us recapitulate briefly the first part.

We take it to be uncontroversial that Nature "exists" in different types or patterns of energy like mechanical, chemical, electromagnetic, kinesthetic, etc. It is the task of physics to individuate these patterns. But physics also teaches us that energy manifests itself, or "appears", in innumerably various forms of what we call "matter". Matter is structured forms of energy. These latter forms tend to be unique and singular in that there are no two forms with the same material structure: there are no two snowflakes, crystals, eggs, or twins completely alike. These two aspects, identifiable patterns (of energy) and variable singular forms (of matter) are the two sides of the same coin, viz. Nature. Organs with which a proper trade-off between pattern and variability can be accomplished are normally called 'sense organs': they are said to be attuned to particular types of energy, or 'modalities'. The variability of the physical substance that constitutes the source of stimuli for any organism can is intrinsic in the sense that energy tends to appear in ways which are never *physically* completely alike. Organism can develop organs, which are sensitive to different ranges of their environment's physical diversity. They are "'avenues' into the organism for information about the physical state of the external world" (Keely 2002: 11), adding that only those discriminations of the physical energy type constitute a given modality for an organism which have a particular function in the organism's behavior. Thus, human sense organs are "dedicated" to particular energy types which influence man's actions.

In surveying the operation of our senses we have already noted the difference between the detection of great many of the 1400 frequencies as colors and the number of available concepts for them. The fine-grained structure of visual discrimination may be seen as a simple by-product of human vision, while those which are conceptualized play a proper function.[2] But if consider another modality like tasting, the difference between sensory experience and conceptual power becomes even more significant. While the language of tasting allows for identification of the four basic tastes, which can be correlated with adaptive behaviour,[3] they are not blendable. "To claim that the four basic taste types mix to make all the tastable flavours is to commit a category mistake." In tasting the given qualities are not represented, but presented as such. This presence is, however, perceivable only if proper attention is paid to it: "attention to exemplified properties is attention to directed to the object of perception via the taste sensations that it is capable of delivering." (Korsmeyer 1999: 128) That is, any re-conceptualization of the (new) object of perception is inseparable from the felt qualities or the sensory experience. And this applies not specifically to taste sensations, but to any kind of experience. However, taste can provide us a neat example of the intrinsic relation of physical substances and sensuous qualities. For instance, salt as a substance is different from salt as a category of taste, for it „usually enhances sweetness, but may decrease it, depending on the *substance* in question; sugars reduce the sourness of acids, but acids do not reduce sugar tastes. Caffeine, rather than blending its bitterness with sour substances, increases their sourness. *The alchemy of the mouth is unpredictable.*" (Kosmeyer 1999: 77 - italics ours) The lesson taught by tasting is pure qualities are internally related to, or dependent on, supporting physical substance. if there is any aesthetics to it, it is due to the fact that particular chemical substances produce flavors specific to them; to categorize their flavors is to do away with their singularity, which is to "violate" them. In the art of the

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[2] As Keely emphasizes, there are many modality-like discriminations, like the ones made by the vestibular or the vomeronasal system, which are not cognitively penetrable, hence non-conceptualisable, and yet have a proper function.
[3] See. the distribution of taste buds in KORSMEYER [1999] forming a gradual defensive line.

kitchen different substances interact with each other in qualitatively different ways. Salt as a substance is different from salt as a category of taste, for it "usually enhances sweetness, but may decrease it, depending on the *substance* in question; sugars reduce the sourness of acids, but acids do not reduce sugar tastes. Caffeine, rather than blending its bitterness with sour substances, increases their sourness. *The alchemy of the mouth is unpredictable.*" (Kosmeyer 1999: 77 - italics ours) This unpredictable alchemy applies to all kinds of sensation as long as they are understood in terms of exemplification. It also points to two important facts which anticipate our ideas concerning the perception as an experience of the sublime. Firstly, "unpredictable" indicates that it brings real challenge to the experiencer, since it cannot be categorized. Secondly, "alchemy" refers to the ineliminability of „felt quality" or sensuousness: the "free play" of the imagination is intrinsically linked to the sensory experience as such. Thus the perception of physical qualities and/or substance is both richer and structurally different from language (categories).

1.3 Narrativity and Specificity

The second part of the argument drawn from science is a basic in ecological psychology propounded first by J.J. Gibson and adapted to filmic experience in details by Joseph D. Anderson as the ecological theory of film. The core of the argument is that the perception of filmic movement is analogous to the perception of real movement; i.e. both are processed by the same visual system, which is called the dorsal system and is opposed to the ventral. The functional differentiation of the two visual systems has quite a history, but their working, if interrelated, and if yes, to what degree, is extensively discussed these days.[4] The dorsal system is *egocentric*: it processes movement in the first place. It can make very fine temporal discriminations, and it operates very fast. It processes absolute size and distance by comparing them to the body of the actual subject. (Note that it is generally said to process moving 'blobs', rather than objects in the ordinary sense.) The ventral system is *allocentric*: it processes relative size, depth, colors, shapes, etc. It can also make very fine spatial discriminations so that the perception and categorization of objects belong here. It is however relatively slow in operation. This is one of the major reasons why certain scientists and philosophers associate consciousness or reflexivity with ventral processing.

   Now, clearly, the dorsal system operates on a sensorimotor basis. We assume that the ventral system introduces a temporal gap within the sensorimotor scheme (between action and reaction) and leaves room for deliberation. Although it may imply detailed observation of target action, it is only for the sake of a better reaction. It is in this purpose-centered sense that we associate narrativity with the joint operation of the two systems. It is important to note narrativity is dependent on categorial perception and classification (sequential ordering included, see narrative structure) for which the ventral system is responsible. The capacity to categorize and narrative understanding is in fact the same capacity: they both make use of the sensorimotor scheme (Thomas 1999) and subserve the same function.

   This idea of narrativity accords well with one of Deleuze's key concepts: the center of indeterminacy which he takes over, albeit in a reinterpreted form, from Bergson. It can be defined as „a range of responses available for selection as the appropriate response or

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action with respect to an analyzed stimulus or perception". (Rodowick, 1997: 87) Since, however,

not any stimulus can be related to any action, the crucial question (for Deleuze, as well) is what determines reaction. The traditional answer is that with the ventral system operating there opens up the way to construct an allocentric system in which relevant distinctions (in the perceived scene) are assessed relative to each other, rather than relative to the ego. This seems to presuppose the wielding of concepts, hence a linguistic (propositional) ability. For a long time it was this aspect that raised human knowledge above animal understanding which operate according to inbuilt programs. We have seen, however, that how perception distinguishes is different from language. The best example is what is known as the sorites-paradox. If it is applied to linguistic categories induction generates a paradox (cf. how many grains make a heap); if it is applied, however, to perceived distinctions, it generates a glide. The question of boundary simply does not arise.

Now, we contend there is a tension in Deleuzian philosophy when he tries to move from pure perception to perception of movement, both sensorimotor and aberrant (as a figure for time). For when he talks about micro-movements as the result of micro-perceptions, he remains within the sensible or perceptible; but when he argues for what he calls the center of indeterminacy or the rhyzome (erratic movement, irrational interval, etc.), he only generalizes the sensorimotor relation to apply it to the creation of new categories. That is he not only remains within the intelligible, but he uses the so-called active perception as a figure for what can be made intelligible. In fact, there is no "movement" from one plane (sensible) to another (intelligible), but there is rather one plane, a plane of immanence. Thus, Deleuze eliminates intuition in the Kantian sense, or dissolves its function in the plane of immanence. With this move, however, the sensible as perceived quality loses its independence: it is only a model for thought, even if it is non-classical. The Deleuzian project for philosophy can be seen as a questioning of its power or conceptual boundaries, but it does not carry a radical questioning in the sense of focusing on the gap between the sensible and the intelligible.

Cinema's task is conceived by Deleuze as "to make time and thought perceptible… visible and acoustical", that is it showcases the role of intuition. (Rodowick 1997: 17-18) Yet, we have stated that he privileges memory at the expense of perception. Should he have not done so, he could not have so easily justified neglecting, or downright negating, the phenomenology of perception We suggest that we take another route from pure perception. Instead of constructing an allocentric (conceptual) system *à la* Deleuze, we follow Merleau-Ponty in foregrounding egocentric operation. In Merleau-Ponty it means first and foremost orientation in physical space. Although in many respects it implicates dorsal processing (cf. depth cues like motion parallax, apparent size, occlusion), egocentric in Merleau-Ponty highlights the perceiving subject as constantly moving (cf. the concept of horizon), rather than the perception of movement as canvassed in Gibsonian ecological psychology. The application of Merleau-Ponty's ideas to cinema has been subject to severe criticism. Because the Deleuzian project is aimed at lower than basic level of categorization, viz. attention is turned to the perception of pure qualities, the loss of objecthood, etc., the end-orientation inherent in a phenomenological enterprise *à la* Merleau-Ponty and related to basic level is to be superseded. Yet, we would like to emphasize only one aspect of his phenomenology here, namely the fact that the viewer is always positioned by the filmic images, which is often called orientation in fictional space. Such an orientation requires the overcoming of the well-known

scene/surface ambiguity in favor of the first. In this, and only this, respect, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is akin to ecology. But while ecological film theory has no concern at all for surface texture, Merleau-Ponty was first and foremost concerned with fine arts, especially painting, viz. the surface. We cannot elaborate a whole new phenomenological approach to the filmic image here (indeed we are more concerned with Deleuze), we cannot without further ado get around the problem of seeing a scene in a surface. The moving image and painting have often been opposed in the sense that we seen the scene *through* the surface in film, while we see the scene in the surface in painting. (Wolheim 1980, Walton 1990) To our knowledge it has never been proposed that there are cases when we see the surface *in* the scene. What we are going to say in the immediately following part can be understood in this manner. So, let us clarify

We have stated that narrativity is made possible by our capacity to categorize. To that we now add that most often, if not always, narrativity is achieved at a *basic* level of categorization. By basic level we mean what E. Rosch and her colleagues have made popular in cognitive science. (See its application to film theory in Landau 1998) It has also been claimed that the so-called American plan can be equated with basic level categories, while close-ups and panoramic views are to be located respectively at subordinate and super-ordinate level. That narrativity is understood at basic level does not imply, of course, that the other two kinds of shot are entirely missing. (Note that according to Deleuze the time-image is already contained in the movement-image, and vice versa.) It means only what David Bordwell theorized once as the subordination of style to the understanding of the plot (the *sujet*). Our argument runs exactly in the opposite direction. We have asked: What is the function of non-conceptualizable perceptual content? Now we claim that the pure perception of visual and other qualities activate another capacity that is orthogonal to narrative understanding. Thus, it may even inhibit narrative understanding. We have dubbed this capacity as the capacity to recognize specificity. By specificity we that an individual is individuated *as* an individual, and not as member of a class, or as a co-specific of some species. In brief, the individual cannot be reduced to categories. That such a capacity has been playing an essential role in establishing and maintaining communities was stated by many scientists (first probably by Konrad Lorenz); but that this capacity is parasitic on perceiving the unique and singular properties of physical substances like food, sound and visual texture, (voice, color, face) movement (gait), and pheromones (vomeronasal „smell"). has received less attention. So, when both Deleuze and Lévinas choose pure perception or sensory experience as their starting point to deconstruct transitivity: the rigidity of concepts or intentional consciousness, they highlight the operation of a very important human capacity, which runs counter to narrative understanding.

The crucial point is however this: even if we allow for specificity recognition in real life, how can we project this experience to objects of art especially like the moving image, which is most often classified as an essentially narrative genre? Certainly, many theorists have pointed at non-narrative elements in films. Even whole films are classified as non-narrative. But this is a far cry from saying that the non-narrative cannot be, in principle, integrated into the narrative *because* they trigger off in the viewer the capacity to recognize specificity, which *eo ipso* the perceiving of physical qualities, a capacity orthogonal to narrative understanding. (Note this still does not imply that viewers cannot by force integrate specificity into the narrative; but they can do that only at the expense of reducing it to categoriality. Still the question lingers on: what is the *object* of such

aesthetic experience, for it cannot be the Other (individual or object) as in a real life situation?

Now to answer that we have to turn how Deleuze and Lévinas treat art in general, and how they conceive of the relationship between immanence and transcendence in particular.

2. From Sequencing or Narrativity: Time as Figural

Let us continue with a few examples which attest how micro-movement or slow movement can inhibit narrative understanding. Remember that sensorimotor responses are based on categorial perception and thinking, whereas non basic-level processing may interrupt the unfolding of the narrative scheme. While a few close-ups or panoramas need not inhibit narration, the cases where the two systems (the dorsal and the ventral) are made to rival for dominance (Mishkin et alii 2001) may well produce that effect.

The actual and the virtual

The contrast or orthogonality between sensorimotor scheme-based processing (narrativity) and specificity recognition is recurrent in several distinctions Deleuze makes throughout his cinema books. Despite his emphasis on multiplicity as the Open Whole, Deleuze makes ample use of binary oppositions. Here are a few pairs. Firstly, he distinguishes between two kinds of recollection: a habitual kind, which is ends-directed or purpose-centered, and thus it can be assigned to basic level, sensorimotor processing; and another kind, which is turned inward, non-narrative, and thus it occurs at a lower than basic level; it is here where opsigns and sonsigns belong. Secondly, he keeps talking about two kinds of description: an organic (again akin to sensorimotor scheme) and a crystalline one when the object is created anew. In the latter case it is an associative kind of description, a recollection of forms, the object can no longer be said to be same. (Deleuze 1985: 46) Since the object (like the subject) is never given, but it is rather in the making, this case is close to what, after Lévinas, we have called intransitivity. Now, maybe the most important binary terms are the actual *vis à vis* the virtual image. Although the actual image is rooted in perception, while the virtual is correlated with recollection, *viz.* memory, we also learn that the two may well become indiscernible. At other places, however, Deleuze talks about the „movement" to-and-fro between the actual and the virtual image. This movement in turn obliterates the simultaneity of the two images, and it points to a sequence or series of images instead. In fact the cut as *the interval* is introduced as a transition between the two kinds of image. But we can give two interpretations of the cut as a form of transition.

To begin with, although we see first the one, and then the other kind of image, it is only *after* this, *ex post facto,* by means of a totalizing gesture that we fail to distinguish them. But we might not always have to. It is an equally open possibility. For instance, in *Citizen Kane* An image is virtual for Leland, while actual for Bernstein. (Deleuze 1985: 70, Rodowick 1997: 94) For what makes an image actual? Is it that the distinction applies only *for someone*? Or is it rather that it appears only in a retrospective glance. But if so, the "movement" inscribed in the images must be represented in the head; it can at most represent processing. That is it figures the temporality of understanding, rather than being objective, "a physical point, an atom"

Well, this idea of movement as figural temporality runs counter to what virtual and actual mean in physics, which Deleuze himself often refers to. Yet, for Deleuze, as Rodowick put is it "the crystalline image is not actual, then virtual [...] There is genuine

chiasmus." (XXX) Understood in this way, however, time becomes logical paradox: logic is a figure of temporality. Thus, the irrational intervals constitute a "spatial complexity whose discontinuity is the measure of time passing in the form of fragmented and incompossible presents". (Rodowick 1997: 104) The term "measure" indicates well the figural character of time. Time is figured as "the incompossible versions of the same present wherein the *récit* is repeated". (Rodowick 1997: 107) Moreover, if it is admitted that "time in itself, as *ratio essendi* cannot be known" (Rodowick 1997: 103), it cannot be presented *en direct*. But neither can we maintain the identity of image as matter and image as memory. Rather, images represent memory only in different - sensorimotor and rhyzomatic - ways. That is, by applying different types of logic.

Yet, since the image-crystal unfolds in filmic images, movement becomes a figure of temporality or simultaneity. Time is the event, or "movement" through regions, which means that movement either totalizes or figures temporality: it is said to be the "same event" (Rodowick 1997: 94) liberated from the subjugation of the present.[5] To say that "the direct image gives access to a dimension in which people and things occupy a place in time which is incommensurable with the one they have in space", or to speak of the "same present" presupposes that we identify that "one" place both in space and time. Appealing to contingency instead of historical necessity would not help. The paradox of the naval battle turns on taking the future as accomplished: for Deleuze wants, *pace* Leibniz, that "incompossibles can belong to the same world". (Rodowick 1997: 98) This again points to the fact that the film's compositional logic models the workings of memory. (Cf. Dennett's film/mind metaphor) It recalls the romantic conception of the mind: the narrative is no longer a story told, but rather a representation of the mental. Or as Rodowick (1997, 108) puts it, "the visualization of mental functions."

But there is another way to understand the cut as the interval: an indiscernible transition between images, if we treat images, like tastes, as the exemplification of physical states or qualities. Then we may be able to avoid that movement become a figure for temporality. But to achieve this, we have to turn our eyes once again to how processing of qualities is accomplished at levels lower than basic. That is, we restore the autonomy of perception *vis à vis* memory. The idea that a series of small movements results in metamorphosis, a change in kind, or in Deleuzian terms, a becoming other need not carry us over to conceptual understanding. The smooth glide from one sensation into another may lead to a disruption of all identity or consciousness. It is however a most controversial issue if becoming other can be treated at a purely phenomenological level. No wonder then that Deleuze decided for "merging" the sensible and the intelligible into a plane of immanence. It is our main contention here that the phenomenological can only be bought at the expense of making room for the transcendental. This is in fact Lévinas' "solution" when he proposes to radicalize phenomenology in the sense of emptying out intentionality, or making consciousness intransitive. One of his key expressions in this respect is the idea that the Other "pierces the form", in which it appears. It is thus that the invisible becomes visible, or rather the visible gives way for the invisible. When Lévinas defines the Other who pierces his form as the Face, he emphasizes that the invisible or the transcendental is not something behind or beyond the visible: it is kept within the domain of the visible or sensible. It is at this point that the most important difference between Deleuze and Lévinas looms large. Curiously enough, it still hides a lot of commonality between the two projects. The gap opening up between (Lévinasian)

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[5] Confront this with the idea that an image is always already past (Pasolini).

radical phenomenology and (Deleuze's) radical immanence may turn out not to be that deep. To see this, we have to turn to what we call the paradox of expression and its ethical consequences.

3. The Diacritics of Expression: Mask vs Face
3.1 The Paradox of Expression

The paradox of expression is nothing but the phenomenology of the invisible. It is to be found in both philosophers, albeit in different terminology. In many respects, however, even the terminologies are similar. Plastiticity, surface, mask, face — these are three most common terms, through which the paradox of expression announces itself.

Deleuze in his book on Nietzsche and Kant criticizes all kinds of thought (fundationalism, transcendentalism, representationalism) that aspires to elevate the conditioning force (principle) above the conditioned. He coins the term subrepresentational concepts in that the conditions that they formulate are not larger than what they condition. Interestingly enough, he singles out the plastic element as what determines or qualifies itself every time it determines or qualifies (Rodowick 1997: 210). Lévinas in turn goes as far as saying that the conditioning and the conditioned coincides. And the place where this coincidence happens is nothing but the Face in its plastic manifestation (form). While Deleuze in his cinema books specifies the plastic as the image on which he then models thought as the geneology of concepts, Lévinas identifies the way the Face presents - i.e. self-determines - itself as Expression. He clarifies the way how the Face expresses as follows: "Expression renders present what is communicated and who is communicating" (Lévinas 1987: 34) The Face has an expression of its own (out of context): it means *kath'auto.* He also distinguish the meaning of the Face (*signifiance*) from semiotic meaning when the expressing and the expressed does not coincide: he privileges meaning over sign. More particularly, sign and meaning coincide in what we would call the physiognomical, which plays very similar role to the surface in Deleuze. Let us mark out this principle of coincidence as a first premise of the Paradox Expression:

(T1) The (act of) expressing coincides with the expressed (with what is meant).

(T1) introduces a kind of plane of immanence or a non-semiotic level of discourse. It must be admitted, however, that many authors perceive a radical dissimilarity between Deleuze and Lévinas in the way they use the respective terms face, surface, mask, plastic form. They stress that Lévinas severely criticizes anything that could be a mask or pure surface in that it presupposes a meaning lying *behind* or *beyond* it. Meaning is the immanent but only in the sense of (T1), which foregrounds sensuousness. We will see it is also transcendent in another sense. Moreover, Lévinas' aversion to plastic art is grounded precisely in this criticism. In contrast, we find in Deleuze not only a preference for surface (possibly because its commonality with plane), as well as an aversion toward face (Cf. Deleuze & Guttari 1980). There are certain critics, however, who try to span the gap between mask and face. Jill Robbins for instance writes that „the mask is structured as a necessary possibility of face." (Robbins 1997: 68)

We agree wholeheartedly with her adding that the real difference lies not in the phenomenology of the face but in its interpretation. That is the distance Lévinas seems to take with art is due to his strong anti-representationalism: his concern is with the face-to-face aspect, or the directness (*droiture*) of human relation, and he is against anything, be

it art, that could mediate between the I and the You. But it is precisely at this point, the interpretation of directness that the commonality between Deleuze and Lévinas shines through. For how is it that the Other that presents itself in the Face is indeed the human (*autrui*)? How can it be that the Other does not need any mediator, or using a Deleuzian term, an interceptor? Or again, in our terminology, how can we recognize the Other as absolutely Other, if we can at all?

It is at this point that the phenomenology of the visible or sensible becomes a phenomenology of the invisible. For the visible is structured as the possibility of the invisible: the Other "pierces though its plastic form". (Marion 1984) The transcendental is not behind or beyond, but it is kept within the immanent. Yet, by calling it forth, by locating the transcendental within immanence, both Deleuze and Lévinas moves beyond pure sensory experience. Thus the invisible is inscribed in the visible in the sense that the finite, the visible, the immanent, the interior *contain* the infinite, the invisible, the transcendental and the exterior. The container-metaphor is in fact a common figure throughout Lévinas (1961). Interestingly enough it is the last pair of terms, the interior/the exterior, in which the Deleuzian and the Lévinasian projects most converge. While in Lévinas the exterior *becomes* interior by the face-to-face relation, in Deleuze the mind is nothing but the co-presence of an interior deeper than any interiority and an exterior farther than any exteriority. (Deleuze 1985: 275) The convergence is thus accomplished in the event of *becoming other*. Note also that in both philosophers the becoming is non-willed.

Naturally, this event can no longer be described in purely phenomenological terms. In the light of the previous discussion, however, the overcoming of the sensuous or sensible always brings the risk of conceptualization, and thus, violence. Note also the warning Merlau-Ponty makes when he says: „In a cultural object, I feel the close presence of the other behind the veil of anonymity." And not only that. It mean that the transcendental becomes figural, just like time does with the intuition of the Whole. So, what we propose is still the same: not to privilege memory to perception (Deleuze) or the general Other to specificity (Lévinas).

4. The Ethics of the Face: Putting Oneself in Question
Our starting point is a reaffirmation of pure perception but this time with the surplus condition that pure perception is something that cannot be imagined, or into which the subject cannot project himself/herself. The idea is close to the Lévinasian idea of being exposed to exteriority, the Face of the Other, and is diagonally opposed to a basic condition of the Kantian sublime: viz. sublime experience presupposes that the experiencer is sheltered or is not exposed to imminent danger. We contend that radical phenomenology, viz. the perception of pure qualities is possible only with total exposure to incoming stimuli. This is a logical consequence of the fact that the "feeling" of shelteredness is nothing but the conceptual understanding of our position. It is not a bona fide feeling. If such an understanding goes offline or is being blocked, we are overcome by the sensuousness of felt qualities: all attention is given, by default, to them.

We cannot go into the possible neurobiology of such a perceptual state, but we surmise that if lower than basic level processing is mostly connected with dorsal processing (as consciousness is with the ventral), its possibility cannot be a priori excluded. The crucial question, however, is not the partial independence of „pure" perception, but the difference that the sensuousness of felt qualities make with respect to

concept-driven perception. It is with this difference that we arrive at the second premise of the Paradox of Expression.

Remember that in the first premise a plane of immanence is delineated: a coincidence of interiority and exteriority. It was also mentioned that this coincidence cannot be willed, in fact, it is accomplished despite one's will (*malgré moi*). It is in the same vein that Art is said both to enrapture (music *is* the image) us and to deprive of selfhood, initiative, etc. But if we are deprived of all (conceptual) initiative, we are *eo ipso* deprived of the possibility to compare new stimuli to previous experience. Intransitivity is at the door: the coincidence of interiority and exteriority does not mean that the act of perceiving and what is perceived coincides. On the contrary. here is the second premise.

(T2) There is a gap (*écart*) between perceiving and the perceived.

The ethical turn of the perceiving subject is nothing but the opening up of this gap within the plane of immanence. In other words, the gap can be put down to the fact that "exteriority can ... not result from the interiority of the *I*, but rather destabilize it, precede it instead of following from it". (Marion 1984: 234) But the scission intervening in the plane of immanence has a temporal dimension:

(T3) The gap temporalizes consciousness: it introduces a lapse or delay (*dia-chronie*) the act of perceiving and the perceived.

It is this diachrony that evokes moral consciousness by rendering the transcendental accessible in the immanent (the sensible, the Face, etc.) by making the invisible Other visible precisely at the place (the target of the regard) which has been emptied out of all possible objects (thus rendered intransitive) making room for the crossing of regards. This is how J.-L- Marion defines love. It is the paradox of love that two regards which are otherwise invisible intercross, and thereby they renounce being seen. Or: "to see the invisible targeted object of my definitively invisible regard which is otherwise exposed to another's invisible regard; the two regards forever invisible are exposed to each other in the intercrossing of their mutually targeted objects." (Marion 1985: 236)

(T4) To love consists not in seeing, or being seen, neither to desire, or to instigate desire, but in experiencing the crossing of regards in their targeted objects (*visées*).

The paradox of love is a case of the paradox of expression. In our opinion it opens up a way to deconstruct the distinction between Art as surface (Deleuze) and Face as human relationship (Lévinas) in that we can „give a face to things" (*visifier les choses*). By assigning a partial autonomy to pure perception, we can also reinstall art as an authentic interceptor between the 'I' and the 'Other': by experiencing art as a case of pure perception (viz. by exposing ourselves to sublime experience), we also open up our Self to exteriority irreducible to previous experience or a priori given concepts.

Conclusion
The ethical situation is born with the widening of the range of indeterminacy (alternatives) in Deleuze, and with the becoming other of the Self in Lévinas. There is no conflict, however, if we understand the laws of thought as *machinic* (in their own right): the interval measures our freedom only in the sense that it renders our Self other than,

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strange to, itself; viz. it effects an internal cleavage. Freedom is in how this cleavage is accomplished (in its own right, or we only suffer it: passivity in Lévinas, creativity in Deleuze). But freedom disappears as soon as we turn to exteriority; viz. to action. For we are not "free to act" in that it is the Self become other than itself that prescribes action; we are deprived of making a choice (initiative), while choices there are internally, in the virtual thought-machine.[6]

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[6] Confront the Deleuzian analysis of meta-choice in Bresson.)