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Craig Lundy, *Deleuze's Bergsonism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018. x + 182 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. £90.00 (hb). ISBN 978-1-4744-1430-2. £19.95 (pb). ISBN 978-1-4744-1431-9.

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Craig Lundy has written a wonderfully helpful and lucid guide to *Le Bergsonisme* (1966)^[1] by Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), in keeping with his earlier books, *History and Becoming: Deleuze's Philosophy of Creativity* (2012) and *At the Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian Philosophy* (2015).^[2] It provides much needed context for the uninitiated on both Deleuze and Henri Bergson (1859-1941), while at the same time giving useful insights and formulations to those already familiar with Deleuze and Bergson. Lundy's guide follows Deleuze's *Bergsonism* chapter by chapter and carefully unpacks what is at stake in Deleuze's argument and his appropriation of Bergson.

Bergsonism is one of Deleuze's early monographs, among those he wrote between 1953-1968 on individual thinkers that also include Hume, Nietzsche, Kant, Proust, Spinoza, and Sacher-Masoch. These monographs precede and inform Deleuze's major works, *Différence et Répétition* (1968) and *Logique du sens* (1969), and his collaborations with Félix Guattari.^[3] It might be tempting to assume that, since *Bergsonism* comes later in the series, it had less impact on Deleuze's work. As Lundy shows, however, Deleuze's relation with Bergson goes back much further than 1966. In 1940-1941 Bergson was on the curriculum for the *agrégation* exam at the *École Normale Supérieure*, which meant that both faculty and students were forced to reengage with Bergson. Among the faculty reengaging with Bergson were Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean Hyppolite, and Jean Wahl. In 1948 Deleuze had to study the third chapter of Bergson's *Matière et mémoire* for his *agrégation* (pp. 5-6). Deleuze's second major publication (after his book on Hume) is "La Conception de la différence chez Bergson" published in *Études bergsoniennes* in 1956.^[4]

The key insight that Lundy brings in terms of overall structure of *Le Bergsonisme* is to show how dependent Deleuze's reading is on Bergson's late work, *La Pensée et le Mouvant* (1934) [*The Creative Mind*].^[5] Here, Deleuze takes Bergson's reflections on method and posits intuition as the crucial methodological thread, even though Bergson's own appreciation of intuition as a method was late in coming. Lundy continually connects *Bergsonism* with *The Creative Mind*, and shows that the latter forms the interpretive framework that Deleuze brings to Bergson's other major works, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889) [*Time and Free Will*], *Matière et mémoire* (1896) [*Matter and Memory*], *L'Évolution créatrice* (1907) [*Creative Evolution*], and *Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion* (1932) [*The Two Sources of Religion and Morality*].^[6]

The problem with most philosophical methods (according to Bergson) is that they begin with a composite experience and attempt to show that the composite is constituted of underlying and unchanging forms. The obvious exemplar of this method is Plato. Bergson agrees that composite experience is the proper starting point, but argues that what one discovers as constituting the composite is not discrete forms but continuous tendencies. Indeed, it is this relentless search for the continuous that characterizes not only Bergson's method but his major concepts of duration, memory, and *élan vital*. Bergson's contention is that the traditional method of philosophical analysis always and only finds the discrete. Therefore, a new method is needed to pursue the continuous, namely, intuition. As Lundy notes, Bergson's method of intuition requires us to get behind experience to its conditions. Whereas experience consists of differences in degree, the tendencies uncovered by intuition differ in kind. This move from the conditioned to the conditions is reminiscent of a similar move in Kant, who begins with experience (the conditioned) and then proceeds to seek the necessary structures that underlie it (the conditions). However, where Kant discovers the conditions for *possible* experience, Bergson discovers the conditions for *real* experience.

The real experience that Bergson discovers is duration. According to Deleuze, Bergson's concept of duration allows him to make several moves that distinguish him from traditional conceptions of duration. The first move is that Bergson takes duration to be substantive rather than a property of things. That is, philosophy has tended to think of enduring as something that objects do, or duration as a component of things. Bergson seeks to think duration in its own right, such that experience itself is a property of duration rather than the other way around. This brings us to Bergson's second move. Duration is to be thought as a continuous multiplicity. We saw above the importance that Bergson places on continuity, but the notion of multiplicity is new. As Lundy notes, the term "multiplicity" is drawn from the work of mathematician Bernhard Riemann (1826-1866), where it is also given substantive form (pp. 52-53). In Bergson (and Deleuze) substantivizing multiplicity allows one to avoid the foundational dialectic of the one and the many. Multiplicity is not simply another name for the many, which can then be set in opposition to the one. Such a dialectic Bergson likens to "baggy clothes" that fit over everything and consequently do not fit at all.[7] Rather, multiplicity describes the self-differentiating and continuous nature of things without forcing anything into a pre-existing concept or formal dialectic that oscillates between concepts.

Lundy uses this as an opportunity (following Deleuze) to call Bergson's philosophy a "superior" (p. 37) or "transcendental empiricism" (p. 39). Transcendental empiricism is enormously important for Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, and it is clear that Deleuze is drawing heavily in that work on his reading of Bergson. As Deleuze was well aware, however, Kant is guilty of precisely the same kind of false problems and badly analyzed composites for which Bergson criticized other philosophers. What is at stake in this effort to bring Bergson and Kant into such close proximity with one another?

In answering this question, we can see how helpful Lundy has been in highlighting Deleuze's dependence on *The Creative Mind* for framing his approach to Bergson. Bergson mentions empiricism very little throughout his works, but his longest sustained discussion of it is in *The Creative Mind*. Surprisingly, though, Bergson is mostly critical of empiricism in this work. He reproduces Kant's opposition between dogmatism and skepticism and argues that both assume that experience is discontinuous. It is only after settling accounts with dogmatism, empiricism, and even Kant, that Bergson suggests that his work might be seen as a kind of empiricism.

Bergson, however, does not call his empiricism “superior” or “transcendental” but “true.” “But a true empiricism is the one which purposes to keep as close to the original itself as possible, to probe more deeply into its life, and by a kind of spiritual *auscultation*, to feel its soul palpitate; and this true empiricism is the real metaphysics.”[8] The previous quotation marks the only two instances that I am aware of where Bergson uses the phrase “true empiricism.” In this marvelously dense passage, Bergson redefines empiricism as hewing to that continuous life that flows beneath all things.

What characterizes true empiricism, then, is that it takes intuition as its method, it begins with the continuous, and it creates new concepts for every object of experience. Bergson writes, “But an empiricism worthy of the name...sees itself obliged to make an absolutely new effort for each new object it studies. It cuts for the object a concept appropriate to the object alone, a concept one can barely say is still a concept, since it applies only to that one thing.”[9] Lundy rightly highlights the importance of these components of Bergson’s true empiricism for Deleuze’s interpretation in *Bergsonism* and his later work in *Difference and Repetition*. Furthermore, the idea that the task of philosophy is the creation of concepts is one that runs through Deleuze’s entire career.

At this crucial point, though, Deleuze does not follow Bergson in calling his empiricism “true” (a phrase Deleuze never uses). Rather, Deleuze oscillates between “superior” and “transcendental.” In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze uses “superior empiricism” twice and “transcendental empiricism” five times (pp. 9, 56-57, 143-144, 147). This subtle shift in vocabulary highlights Lundy’s contention that Deleuze is not content to produce a commentary on Bergson’s work but to use it in order to create something new, hence *Bergsonism*.

Deleuze’s use of the Kantian terminology, “transcendental,” in his *Bergsonism* has two clear advantages. First, it clearly separates conditions and conditioned. Ultimately, this separation makes the distinction between the virtual and the actual possible. Second, and this leads to Deleuze’s criticism of Kant, the relation between conditions and conditioned (virtual/actual) is not one of resemblance or representation. In essence, then, Deleuze uses Bergson to turn Kant’s transcendental into a criticism. In Deleuze’s view the difference between conditions and conditioned must be a difference in kind, but difference in kind must not be bridged by representation or the difference collapses into one of degree.

I think, however, there is a price to be paid for reintroducing Kantian vocabulary at this point. What danger is Deleuze trying to avoid? He wants to avoid turning the difference between conditions and conditioned into a difference in degree. That is, he wants (along with Bergson) to be able to talk about a clear difference in tendencies (not form) as a difference in kind. A Humean empiricism fails to do this because it can only recognize differences in degree. Kant, at least, offers the possibility of a difference in kind with the transcendental. However, the transcendental is both formal and a priori in Kant. Despite these precautions, insofar as the transcendental resembles the empirical, the difference in kind collapses into a difference in degree. What, then, is left of the transcendental on Deleuze’s view? It is neither formal nor a priori. It is not the conditions for the possible but the conditions for the real. It seems that at every crucial point Deleuze has evacuated Kant’s understanding of the transcendental and replaced it with something else. Why take this term, which can only have resonances with unintended meanings, and use it to explain another philosophy that never uses it?

The question becomes even more vexing if we look at Deleuze's own account of transcendental empiricism in *Difference and Repetition*. When Deleuze formulates "transcendental empiricism's profession of faith," he does not cite Bergson, he cites the American poet Benjamin Paul Blood (1822-1919). This citation is further complicated by the fact that Deleuze is citing Jean Wahl, citing William James, citing Blood.[10] The thrust of Blood's "profession of faith" is the wildness of nature, which distributes difference throughout the whole. What follows the Blood quotation tracks very closely with *Bergsonism*, but Bergson is not mentioned.[11]

We see a similar elision at another crucial point where it is not Bergson but Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) who "proposes the principle of transcendental empiricism." [12] What characterizes Artaud's articulation of this principle is the opposition between genitility and innateness. While Deleuze is keen to take up Artaud's preference for genitility over innateness, and connects this to the abolition of the "dogmatic image of thought," he does not pursue the ways in which genitility and the transcendental are also opposed.[13] Indeed, there seems to be an equation of genitility and the transcendental here. When Artaud says, "thought is a matron who has not always existed," Deleuze's key conclusion is that thought is not innate but always the result of a process.[14] Thought is a creative process. It is engendered. It is precisely for this reason that Deleuze can imagine something other than the dogmatic image of thought. All of this seems in keeping with Deleuze's reading of Bergson, except for the insistence on the transcendental. A philosophy that invents concepts that are cut exactly to fit their object certainly seems "genital." Nothing like an innate idea could be supple enough to fit richness of experience. By the same token, a priori, formal categories seem to suffer the same poverty. In short, all of the texts that Deleuze marshals to support transcendental empiricism, whether Bergson, Blood, or Artaud, seem to be actively arguing against anything like the transcendental.

It is true that in *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze expresses his preference for the Sartrean conception of the transcendental field as superior to both Kantian and Husserlian conceptions of the transcendental.[15] Deleuze even returns to this notion of the transcendental field in his last published essay, "L'immanence: une vie..." (1995), but there he argues that the transcendental field can best be thought as "a life," an immanent plane of singularities.[16] Here again we run into the same problem that we have seen throughout. At precisely the moment that Deleuze invokes the transcendental he relies on authors and illustrations that run counter to the transcendental.

This counter-tendency in Deleuze's work that undercuts the transcendental is perhaps seen most clearly when he distinguishes between empirical and transcendental principles in *Difference and Repetition*. It also perhaps here that he departs from Bergson to the greatest degree. "It is the transcendental principle which maintains itself in itself, beyond the reach of the empirical principle. Moreover, while the laws of nature govern the surface of the world, the eternal return ceaselessly rumbles in this other dimension of the transcendental or the volcanic *spatium*." [17] The identity of the transcendental and "the volcanic spatium" is surprising to say the least. What is ultimately more surprising, though, is the way in which Deleuze relegates the empirical and the transcendental to separate dimensions.

As Lundy shows in his excellent chapter, "Dualism or Monism?," what is at stake in this distinction is an attempt to reconcile the apparent contradiction between differences in degree (empiricism) and differences in kind (tendencies). Deleuze's solution in *Bergsonism* is ultimately Spinozist. "But duration is like a naturing nature (*nature naturante*), and matter a natured nature

(*nature naturée*). Differences in degree are the lowest degree of Difference; differences in kind (*nature*) are the highest nature of Difference.” [18] Here, the Kantian language of transcendentals is replaced with the Spinozist language of perspective. For Spinoza, regardless of whether we are looking at nature from the perspective of the substance (naturing nature) or from the perspective of the modifications of substance (natured nature), we are still looking at the same (and singular) nature. There is no need to speak of separate dimensions.

Ultimately, the tension between Deleuze’s Kantian framework and Bergson’s vitalism comes to the fore in Lundy’s final chapter on the *élan vital*. Lundy summarizes Bergson’s position by saying, “life...is the tendency to diverge” (p. 124). This notion is crucial to Deleuze’s articulation of a metaphysics of primary difference. It is also precisely at this moment that Deleuze latches onto Bergson’s notion of the virtual. While Lundy painstakingly shows that Bergson does not distinguish the virtual from the possible in any rigorous way, rigorously distinguishing between these two is at the heart of Deleuze’s metaphysics. For Deleuze the problem with a metaphysics of the possible is that it depends on the unreality of the possible. In his version of a Bergsonism, however, both the virtual and the actual are equally real. This allows Deleuze to maintain a univocal conception of being, which he draws not so much from Bergson but from Duns Scotus and Spinoza. The difficulty with this reading, as I have suggested throughout, is that Deleuze continually redeploys the language of the transcendental to explain the relation between the virtual and the actual.

In closing I want to reiterate what a clear and helpful book Lundy has written. The criticisms outlined above are aimed squarely at Deleuze. Indeed, Lundy is to be credited with clarifying the source of many of Deleuze’s most important philosophical contributions. The above criticisms would not have been possible without them. Furthermore, while a generous interpreter of both Bergson and Deleuze, Lundy does not shy away from pointing out differences or Deleuze’s creative license.

NOTES

[1] Gilles Deleuze, *Le Bergsonisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1966). Citations throughout the review will refer to Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

[2] Craig Lundy, *History and Becoming: Deleuze’s Philosophy of Creativity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); Craig Lundy, *At the Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

[3] Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: Universitaire de France, 1968). Citations throughout the review will refer to Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, translated by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969). Citations throughout the review will refer to Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, translated by Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

[4] Gilles Deleuze, “La Conception de la différence chez Bergson,” *Études bergsoniennes* 4 (1956):77-112.

[5] Henri Bergson, *La Pensée et le Mouvant: Essais et conférences* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1934). Citations throughout the review will refer to Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Mabelle L. Andison (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1946).

[6] Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1889). Citations throughout the review will refer to Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, translated by F.L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1910); Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1896). Citations throughout the review will refer to Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, translated by N. M. Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1990); Henri Bergson, *L'Évolution créatrice* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907). Citations throughout the review will refer to Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1911); Henri Bergson, *Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1932). Citations throughout the review will refer to Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Religion and Morality*, translated by R. Ashley Audra and Cloudsley Brereton, with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977).

[7] Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 207.

[8] Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 206.

[9] Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 207.

[10] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 57; p. 311 n.18.

[11] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, cf. p. 46.

[12] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 147.

[13] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 143.

[14] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, cited by Lundy on p. 148.

[15] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 98-99.

[16] Gilles Deleuze, "L'immanence: une vie..." *Philosophie* 47 (1995):3-7; translated as "Immanence: a Life" in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews: 1975-1995*, ed. by David Lapoujade (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006).

[17] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 241.

[18] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 93.

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