

University of Tartu
Department of Semiotics

Ziyi Ye

The Duality of Difference: Traumatic Gap and/or Productive Flux?


Master's Thesis

Supervisor: PhD Ott Puumeister
PhD Silvi Salupere

Tartu
2024

I have written the Master's Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

Author: Ziyi Ye

Signature: 

Date: 20.05.2024

Introduction	4
1. Difference: A Brief History	9
1.1. Difference as Illusion	10
1.2. Towards Difference-as-itself and Back.....	13
1.3. Difference-as-itself and Its Duality	18
2. Lacanian difference-as-gap.....	24
2.1. Lacanian subject and the Unsymbolisable	24
2.1.1. Two Cases of the Unsymbolisable and Difference-as-gap	24
2.1.2. The Encounter and the Re-encounters with Difference-as-gap	26
2.1.3. The Neurotic Illusion and Fantasy	28
2.2. The Traumatic Nature of Difference-as-gap.....	30
2.2.1. The Inevitability of Difference-as-gap.....	30
2.2.2. The Vortex of Repetitive Failures.....	33
3. Deleuzian Difference-as-flux.....	35
3.1. Deleuzian Subject and the Unsymbolisable	36
3.1.1. Pure Difference as the Unsymbolisable and Difference-as-flux.....	36
3.1.2. The Encounter with Death	39
3.2. The Productive Nature of Difference-as-flux	43
3.2.1. Necessity of Difference-as-flux	43
3.2.2. Ethics of Act.....	45
4. Two Desires and Two logics.....	47
4.1. The Arrow of Desire	47
4.1.1. Lacan: Death and the Arrowed Desire	47
4.1.2. Deleuze: Death and Arrowless Desire	51
4.2. The Logics of Squeeze and Superposition.....	55
4.2.1. Lacan: Squeeze	55
4.2.2. Deleuze: Superposition	58
5. What Is Illusory and What Is Real?	61
5.1. The Model of Klein Bottle	61
5.2. Two Repetitions and (Beyond) Impossibility	67
5.3. Semiotic Relevance.....	71
Conclusion	73
References.....	76
Kokkuvõte	81

Introduction

One of the characteristics of 20th century Continental thought is the more subversive ways of thinking about difference, particularly in relation to identity (Donkel 2001: 1), which eventually leads to a shift of the research emphasis from identity to difference whether from an ontological or epistemological perspective. In this paradigm shift, one of the crucial influences comes from the linguistic turn inspired by Saussurean structural linguistics (*Ibid*, 4). As Saussure (1959[1916]: 120) highlights, “a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms.” When difference is set up between positive terms, difference is a mere derivative of identity; however, by revealing the linguistic system as “a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas” (*Ibid*, 120), Saussure bases his approach to language on difference which subsequently influences beyond general linguistics in structuralism and post-structuralism. Among the significant works that contribute to our refreshed understanding of difference, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Deleuzian philosophy of difference are particularly unique in their shared position of seeing difference as ontological existence that is *irreducibly unymbolisable*. Moreover, the subtle intertwining of their distinct interpretations — Lacanian difference as a traumatic gap and Deleuzian difference as a productive flux — forms a *duality* of difference which is the core thesis of my research.

Saussurean structural linguistics is also widely considered as one of the origins of semiotics. There is no doubt that the problem of difference has been a fundamental core in semiotics, and the way difference is studied is not limited to the Saussurean approach. For example, in Lotman (1990) we observe his critique of Saussure’s essentialist tendency in taking “linguistic structure as the norm” (*Ibid*, 11) over speech and text and how this essentialist tendency overlooks the creative meaning-generation mechanism of the text. Instead of “a symmetrical transformation” (*Ibid*, 14) between text T_1 to text T_2 based on a shared code as Saussure would propose, Lotman emphasises an asymmetrical transformation between text T_1 and the space that is filled with texts $t_1, t_2, t_3 \dots t_n$ which are all possible interpretations of T_1 . This is because instead of a shared code, there is “a

plural space of codes $c_1, c_2, c_3 \dots c_n$, and each of them is a complex hierarchical construction capable of generating a set of texts in equal degree corresponding to it” (*Ibid*, 14). For Lotman (*Ibid*, 15; italic added), therefore, this phenomenon implies “not simply difference which exists between codes, but *mutual untranslatability*”. However, it should be stressed that while for Lotman “a certain degree of untranslatability and tension between the different systems” (Monticelli 2022: 327) is precisely what renders communication possible and meaningful, “Total untranslatability makes communication impossible” (*Ibid*, 327). In other words, Lotman’s untranslatability may ultimately be understood as “complicated translatability” (Pilshchikov, Sütiste 2022: 68), which is not complete untranslatability in itself but rather a space of translatability complicated and heterogeneous enough to generate new and creative outcomes. Moreover, “even what is ‘individual’ and new inevitably derives from some tradition, the memory of which is actualized in the text” (Lotman 1990: 16). From this, we can infer that total untranslatability, or rather, the ontological difference as irreducibly unsymbolisable that renders codification itself impossible, is overlooked by Lotman.

In Salupere’s (2011) *Semiotics as Science*, we can find that the indifference towards ontological difference is not uncommon in semiotics. When semiotics is posited as an epistemological science of “modelling and criticism” (*Ibid*, 281) of reality, “it strives to become a discourse that would be capable of ‘shifting the metaphysical speech of the philosopher with the rigour of its scientific language [...]’” (*Ibid*, 282). As such, semiotics serves as “the ideology of the sciences” (*Ibid*, 282) that is able to resist the ideological biases that the ontological discourses have often held at least in tradition. And when semiotics attempts to be “foundational or meta-science” (*Ibid*, 283), the tendency to overlook ontological difference becomes even more pronounced. For example, Hjelmslev insists that there is “no non-semiotics that are not components of semiotics, and in the final instance, no object that is not illuminated from the key position of linguistic theory” (*Ibid*, 283), which demonstrates a reductionist view of ontological difference. Indeed, this indifferent attitude towards ontology is in fact arguably the unique strength of semiotics that, as Kristeva points out, “Being a theory of itself, semiotics [...] is capable, without turning into a system, of modelling itself” (*Ibid*, 282). Such capability of self-modelling allows semiotics to maintain its polyglotism and vitality that are often missing in traditional ontology, enabling semiotics to continually criticise and renew itself.

However, we might ask: could the indifference about ontological difference potentially lead to a blind spot? Monticelli (2008) argues “this model-producing activity of semiotics has often resulted in theoretical procedures of totalization” which firstly “consists in the delimitation of a field of knowledge (an epistēme) and the consequent separation of an internal (the known or knowable)” (*Ibid*, 6). Such procedures of totalisation makes each totality “consequently based on exclusion” and “has some remainder” (*Ibid*, 6). This remainder is exactly the irreducibly unsymbolisable, the ontological difference that resists any codifying attempts. If we agree with Deely’s proposal that “a semiotic standpoint is able to reveal *when too much has been excluded*, as is always the case to the extent that an ideological stance is being concealed in the guise of ‘method’” (Deely 2005: 16) and that semiotics “provides a perspective on the *whole* of experience in what is proper to it as experience” (*Ibid*, 102; italic added), then we would acknowledge that while semiotics may retain its epistemological approach, it should not simply overlook or reduce ontological difference either because ontological difference is considered to make communication impossible or it could incur ideological biases. Ontological difference, no matter how it is constructed, irreducibly presents in “the whole of our experience”, if we do not reduce our experience to merely sensible, empirical or symbolisable experience; more importantly, since ontological difference is considered as the very condition to disrupt or diversify the whole of our experience, it should be of sufficient interest for semiotic research. Acknowledging ontological difference, or rather, the very impossibility of totalisation can serve as an important criticism that helps semiotics renew itself. Retaining the irreducibility of ontological difference is not to question the epistemological approach of semiotics, but instead, to propose an ontological perspective with which one can and perhaps has long been interpreting the world, which aligns with the concept of model or modelling that the Tartu-Moscow school (TMS) proposes as “means to organize cognition and knowledge about the world” (Pärn 2022: 175). For these reasons, studying ontological difference should be an interesting and inspiring task for semiotics.

In this thesis, my research aim is to conduct an analysis of ontological difference, or *difference-as-itself* as I term it, and its duality as interpreted by Lacanian psychoanalysis and Deleuzian philosophy of difference, based on a close reading of primary sources by Lacan and Deleuze and secondary sources that introduce and interpret their works. It is important not to take the research as a strict comparative study of Lacan and Deleuze and their theories per se. I only take their interpretations where relevant as the materials to examine the duality of difference,

since I consider them looking at the very difference-as-itself only through different perspectives and scales. And the insights gained from an understanding of the duality of difference can, as will be revealed, benefit semiotics. My research problems are therefore:

1. What is the duality of difference, and where do Lacanian *difference-as-gap* and Deleuzian *difference-as-flux* converge and diverge?
2. How do the two views of difference function in constructing the relationship between the subject and the unsymbolisable?
3. How can a dialogue (mutual agreement and criticism) and a potential integration between the two views be proposed?
4. How can this duality inspire semiotics?

This thesis consists of four main chapters, in addition to this introduction and a short conclusion. Chapter 1 will present a historical overview that traces the understandings of difference, from before it was ontologically affirmed, with particular emphasis on the evolving approaches towards difference. The approaches to difference adopted by Parmenides, Plato, Kant, Hegel, and Lacan and Deleuze are inseparably reflected in their constructions of the relationship between the subject and the unsymbolisable, which is also the main thread I will focus on throughout this thesis.

In Chapters 2 and 3, Lacanian difference-as-gap and Deleuzian difference-as-flux will be examined closely through its role within the encounter of the subject with the unsymbolisable, which are *tyche* and *automaton* (which relates to the death drive) in the case of Lacan and Death or the third synthesis of time in the case of Deleuze. The traumatic nature of difference-as-gap and the productive nature of difference-as-flux will be explored respectively in relation to the process of subjectification (Lacan) and the process of desubjectification (Deleuze).

Chapter 4 will demonstrate a further analysis and comparison of the duality of difference based on the discussions in Chapters 2 and 3, in terms of Lacan's and Deleuze's interpretations of desire regarding its directedness and the underlying logics that are consistent behind how Lacan and Deleuze view reality: the logic of squeeze (Lacan) and the logic of superposition (Deleuze).

Finally, in Chapter 5, a mutual criticism between the two views of difference will be proposed and explained with my visualised model based on a modification of the Klein bottle. The insights for semiotic relevance will be summarised at the end of Chapter 5.

1. Difference: A Brief History

The duality of difference to be discussed in this thesis refers to the two divergent perspectives on difference: whether difference is a traumatic gap, as interpreted negatively in Lacanian psychoanalysis, or difference is a productive flux, as explained positively in Deleuzian philosophy of difference. Such duality arises only when difference is first of all understood to be *difference-as-itself*, that is, the kind of difference that ontologically exists within desubjectified reality, which is by definition irreducibly unsymbolisable. To define difference-as-itself more clearly, I will start this thesis with a chapter of historical overview.

In the historical overview, difference is initially regarded as a mere epistemological illusion caused by our sensory experience and thus should be expelled for Parmenides and Plato, until Kant re-interprets our sensible cognition as a necessary component to sustain reality, so that difference is no longer mere illusion but sensory material that would be organised by our reason. However, when defending the inevitable limitation of our reason, Kant postulates another kind of difference, the thing-in-itself, which is unsymbolisable and arguably aligns with difference-as-itself as defined in this thesis. Hegel disputes the necessity of the thing-in-itself and proposes that through the dialectical development of thought, the unsymbolisable will eventually be symbolised. Following this historical overview, a further explanation for the definition of difference-as-itself will be provided in Section 1.3 and I will then define Lacanian *difference-as-gap* and Deleuzian *difference-as-flux* as two different interpretations of difference-as-itself.

The concept of difference-as-itself and the idea of the historical overview were initially inspired by Deleuze. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze (1994[1968]: 28-69) provides a history of how difference is traditionally often defined as secondary to identity in terms of representation in the works of Aristotle, Hegel, Leibniz, and Plato. As another option, Deleuze proposes to understand difference “in itself independently of the forms of representation which reduce it to the Same, and the relation of different to different independently of those forms which make them pass through the negative” (*Ibid*, xix). While what I refer to as difference-as-itself is close to Deleuzian

difference-in-itself or pure difference, there is a need to distinguish the two. As long as difference is acknowledged as something ontologically existing within desubjectified reality, it can be considered as difference-as-itself. In this sense, Deleuzian difference-in-itself that completely transcends representation reflects one attribute of difference-as-itself and Lacanian difference-as-gap reflects the other attribute of difference-as-itself, which is entangled with the symbolic, involving the impossibility within/of representation. Based on this definition, Deleuzian difference-as-flux and Lacanian difference-as-gap are two attributes of difference-as-itself, forming the duality of difference. My historical overview therefore differs from Deleuze's in that, instead of elaborating the historical changes of primacy from a focus on identity to difference, it emphasises the changing attitudes and approaches towards difference, transitioning from distancing to embracing. Specifically, I select the arguments from Parmenides, Plato, Kant, and Hegel to present a brief history of how difference is understood as something to be expelled, organised, suspended or overcome, and finally something that is attempted to be repeated, in both Lacanian and Deleuzian sense, which I will elaborate further in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, respectively.

1.1. Difference as Illusion

Difference is often opposed to logos or truth in Greek philosophy, if we take the literal meaning of difference as a contradiction. Whether logos refers to “the reasoning powers of human individuals, or to some more exalted cosmic principle of order and beauty” (Kenny 2004: 14), it should remain something universal that resists any contradiction, which means that logos often excludes difference. Given the central status of logos in Greek philosophy, it is not a coincidence that difference is often overlooked as the contingent secondary to the necessary or even degraded as an illusion residing in the sensory experience of the subject that should be discarded. Parmenides' Two Ways and Plato's Two Worlds and the theory of Forms express such an understanding of difference.

In his second fragment called *Truth*, Parmenides makes two groups of absolute distinctions: (1) the way of persuasion and the way of unlearnable; and (2) what-is and what-is-not (Gallop 1984: 55). Parmenides assigns what-is to the way of persuasion, and asserts that this is the *only*

way that the subject should take if they are to “attend upon truth” (*Ibid*, 55). We may call what-is the symbolisable, since for Parmenides “the same thing is there for thinking and for being” (*Ibid*, 57). In this vein, the other way becomes completely unlearnable or unsymbolisable because it concerns what-is-not, and it is impossible to think about what is *not*. In fact, Parmenides would say what-is-not does not *really* exist. Parmenides continues to describe what-is as “ungenerated and imperishable; whole, single-limbed, steadfast, and complete” (*Ibid*, 65). Therefore, what-is must be the self-contained and unchanging One, because once what-is changes, according to Parmenides’ logic of either/or, it becomes what-is-not and it is contradictory for what-is and what-is-not to be the same thing. By a monist interpretation, the Parmenidean One, the symbolisable in line with the truth without any contradiction, is the only true existence. By contrast, the plural, contingent and different are strictly what-is-not, the mere illusions (*Ibid*, 10), that are dispelled from Parmenides’ motionless conception of reality. Therefore, whatever the thinking subject thinks must be the necessary what-is, leaving no place for difference.

Compared to Parmenides’ monist tendency, Plato’s dualist view provides a more comprehensive description of the relations between two worlds. At a fundamental level, reality is divided into the world of being and the world of becoming, and the subject is split into the soul and the body. The former is the realm of reason and order, and the latter is the realm of sense filled with change and difference. For Plato, Forms, residing in the world of being, are perfect models while the objects that we sense in the world of becoming are merely inferior copies of Forms, or even copies of copies, in the case of art (Plato 1997: 359-397, *Parmenides*). Unlike Parmenides’ absolute distinction between what-is and what-is-not, Plato makes a relative distinction between what-is and what-*appears-to-be*. The perfect Form is what-is, while the plural copies partaking in the Form are what-appear-to-be, and we only “apply the same name” to “a single form in connection with each of the many things” (Plato 1997: 1200, *Republic* 596a). By imitating the Form of Youth, a young face appears to us as young and makes us recollect the Form of Youth to name the young face “young”. When the young face stops the imitation, the connection between the copy and the Form is cut down, and the face will no longer appear to us as young and we should not call it young. However, the Form of Youth is always intact.

For Plato, Forms are really the intelligible or the symbolisable, and the sensible particulars are the unintelligible or the unsymbolisable, which only makes the soul “confused and dizzy, as if it were drunk” (Plato 1997: 70, *Phaedo* 79c). In this sense, we may say the Platonic subject is self-

contradictory and they have a vital choice to make. The soul and the body become “woven together” in the subject when they are born, with the soul still sharing “in reason and harmony” (Plato 1997: 1239-1240, *Timaeus* 36c-37c) and the body brings forth difference and illusion. Therefore, Plato claims that in order to be akin to the Forms, the subject should choose to let the soul “investigates by itself” through reason, the special interface in our soul that (re-)connects us with “the realm of what is pure, ever existing, immortal and unchanging” (Plato 1997: 70, *Phaedo* 79d). Only in this way can the subject expel falsehood and touch truth.

	Definition of difference	Approaches to difference	
Parmenides	Unsymbolisable illusion	The subject expels difference	Away from the unsymbolisable
Plato			

Table 1. The understandings and approaches to difference based on Parmenides’ and Plato’s theories

Now we have Parmenides’ and Plato’s understandings of difference (see Table 1). There are common presuppositions behind their understandings: (1) There is a presumed opposition between the subject and the object or the objective world; (2) this objective world is a raw, or *desubjectified* reality that exists independent of the subject and it should be perfectly ordered without difference; (3) if difference exists, it is a problem with the subject, particularly with the senses of the subject. Submitted to the superiority of truth and order, the subject has to transcend themselves to reach perfection. And by “transcend”, Parmenides and Plato both refer to a movement from the unsymbolisable towards the symbolisable. However, despite both placing the subject in a relatively inferior and passive position to the ordered desubjectified reality, Parmenides’ and Plato’s views of the subject still differ. By conceptualising a motionless One, Parmenides in effect transforms the subject into a necessarily thinking subject who is essentially immune to illusion. And for Plato, he does not simply dissolve illusion; rather, the Platonic subject unfortunately has a body after birth that would cause illusion, only that they ultimately bear an ethical responsibility to choose the

former between the soul and the body, between perfection and deficiency, between symbolisable reality and unsymbolisable illusion. In this regard, Plato's dualist view affirms the existence of difference as illusion within reality, and as will be discussed, Kant will transform this illusion into perception, and further identify another kind of difference that Parmenides and Plato both overlook as difference-as-itself.

1.2. Towards Difference-as-itself and Back

To transform illusion into perception, Kant firstly disputes the second presupposition above, that is, to conceptualise that reality must necessarily be a *subjectified* reality (the phenomena), where the senses of the subject are actually the condition for reality to sustain. We can find such an argument in Kant's (1998[1781]: 168) defence of the nature of our sensible cognition:

[...] all our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearance; [...] if we remove our own subject or even only the subjective constitution of senses in general, then all the constitution, all relations of objects in space and time, indeed space and time themselves would disappear, and as appearances they cannot exist in themselves, but only in us. [...] We are acquainted with nothing except our way of perceiving them, which is peculiar to us, [...] We are concerned solely with this. Space and time are its pure forms, sensation in general its matter.

From this passage, we can infer that our sensory experience which produces difference is much less a site of illusion to dismiss, as Parmenides and Plato argue, than the very condition that renders reality as intelligible and symbolisable. According to Plato, it is Forms that sustain reality, and senses only add an unnecessary layer of illusion to reality; while for Kant, without the subjective constitution of our senses, reality itself would collapse, and what Plato sees as illusion is in fact the necessary component of reality. In this regard, to distinguish from the accounts of Parmenides and Plato who see difference caused by the senses as the unsymbolisable illusion, I see Kant accounts for this difference as symbolisable sensory materials (see Table 2) that are exploited by reason. We should not be too quick to simply oppose Kant to Plato only because they seem to have opposite interpretations of the role of senses. Instead of swapping the positions of senses and reason and assuming the primacy of senses over reason, for Kant, senses are still subordinated to reason as they are passive empirical material waiting for reason to organise. The Kantian subject is thus a stratified being that passively receives sensory data and actively reasons about those data.

If the Platonic subject is rational through a recollection of the transcendent Forms, then the Kantian subject is arguably making sense of reality in a transcendental manner on their own.

As such, this account of difference that is still subordinated to reason and remains in the subjectified reality (the phenomena), is not yet difference-as-itself. We should find Kant's recognition of difference-as-itself beyond our sensible cognition, in the hypothetically desubjectified reality, a realm of *noumena* or the thing-in-itself, which Kant (1998[1781]: 117) postulates "to make room for faith". Unlike Parmenides' and Plato's models of the superior world which is symbolisable, Kant's thing-in-itself remains absolutely unsymbolisable to the subject. We can reconstruct Kant's interpretation of difference-as-itself through his examination of antinomy of reason (*Ibid*, 467). Antinomy refers to a pair of theses that are logically valid in themselves but irreconcilably contradict each other when taken together. For Kant, antinomy puts reason into question and may further make the phenomena no longer an intelligible and symbolisable one. Kant argues that such an impasse is only caused by the misuse of reason, when "we apply our reason not merely to objects of experience [...] but instead venture also to extend these principles beyond the boundaries of experience" (*Ibid*, 467). Indeed, as previously mentioned, Kant wants to limit the subject solely to objects of possible experience. There is an absolute distance between the subject and the noumena which even reason cannot bridge. In this vein, Kant advises the subject to maintain a kind of humility towards the unsymbolisable by not attempting to cross the boundary between the phenomena and the noumena. If the subject insists to transgress, however, they would be entwined in irreconcilable contradictions which they "can never escape yet also never bring to an end" (*Ibid*, 338).

It should be highlighted that these contradictions are only the errors of our judgement (Kant 1998[1781]: 384) and they are not in the noumena, for Kant believes it is impossible for us to know anything about the noumena. In other words, it is not that the noumena is erroneous, but that errors arise around it when we attempt to reason beyond our scope of cognition. The postulation of the noumena thus in turn explains why antinomy of reason appears, which protects reason from inherent contradiction. And we can deduce that this could be why, for Kant, the postulation of the noumena is necessary: the unsymbolisable is a necessary postulation for the subjectified reality to remain reasonable and symbolisable, and it therefore becomes a transcendent ground. In this regard, I connect the noumena with the second aspect of Kantian account of difference, which is difference-as-itself, since despite being unsymbolisable to the subject, it must exist within the

hypothetical desubjectified reality. It is a sealed and unknown realm of divinity, and for Kant, the subject must suspend it in humility and detour around it to avoid errors.

	Definition of difference	Approaches to difference	
Parmenides	Unsymbolisable illusion	The subject expels difference	Away from the unsymbolisable
Plato			
Kant	Symbolisable sensory materials	The subject organises difference	
	Unsymbolisable difference-as-itself	The subject suspends difference	
Hegel	Symbolisable negativity	The subject overcomes difference	

Table 2. The understandings and approaches to difference based on the theories of Parmenides, Plato, Kant and Hegel

While Kant’s understanding of difference appears to vary from Parmenides’ and Plato’s (see Table 2), there is still a shared presupposition behind their approaches that the symbolisable is or should be more desirable than the unsymbolisable to the subject. Next, we will find a similar attitude in Hegel’s dialectics, except for Hegel, the unsymbolisable can be said as the force that moves the subject towards the symbolisable, and the unsymbolisable will eventually be fully symbolised (Maybee 2020: Section 1).

Hegel would first of all disagree with Kant in the necessity of postulating the noumena. As previously discussed, Kant postulates the noumena to guarantee the unity of the phenomena: as long as reason remains to be applied to the phenomena, there should be no inherent contradictions in reason or the phenomena. However, in Hegel’s view, as pointed out by Žižek (2012[2004]: 54), “the gap between phenomena and their transcendent Ground is a secondary effect of the *absolutely*

immanent gap of/in the phenomena themselves”. In other words, for Hegel, reason inherently produces contradictions, or rather, the symbolisable is never strictly distinct from the unsymbolisable, but that there is always something yet to be symbolised intimately residing in the symbolisable, and so the phenomena cannot escape from its immanent negativity: the split within reason is the split within the phenomena. Therefore, for Hegel, the noumena as Kant constructs it is merely a secondary effect of such negativity and cannot be transcendent or necessary. We can further consider how Hegel (2018[1807]: 23) defines difference through such negativity:

The disparity occurring in consciousness between that is its object is the distinction between them, the *negative* in general. The negative can be regarded as the *defect* of both, but it is their soul, or that which moves them; [...] Now if this negative appears initially as a disparity between the I and the object, it is just as much the disparity between the substance and itself. What seems to proceed outside substance [...] is its own doing, and substance shows itself to be essentially subject.

To put it in another way, for Hegel, on the one hand, difference is the negative disparity between the subject and the object; on the other hand, such disparity is rather a manifestation of the disparity between the object and *itself*. In Parmenides’ and Plato’s accounts, when the disparity between the subject and the object appears, it is explained as the defect of the subject only. However, for Hegel, such negativity is “the defect of both”, or rather, it is the immanent defect within the object. Such immanent defect exists even in the case of “the alienation of God from himself” (Žižek 2012[2004]: X), as God manifests itself to be a conscious being that is actively thinking to know itself: thinking is alienation because by thinking, the subject makes itself the object of its own thinking. For Hegel, this negativity is the very force that moves the dialectical development of thought. In Hegel’s dialectics, the inherent contradiction within thought is what moves the thought into its opposite, forming a logical disparity within the thought itself, and there will follow a final moment when thought grasps the logical disparity to reach a unity: thought overcomes the inherent contradiction and becomes more comprehensive (Maybee 2020: Section 1). And this is precisely why I think Hegel’s difference is ultimately not difference-as-itself (see Table 2) — since Hegel’s difference, starting as immanent negativity within thought which arguably resembles difference-as-itself, will finally be grasped and overcome by thought, he in effect revives the movement from the unsymbolisable to the symbolisable, as Parmenides and Plato advocate.

Drawing upon the understandings of difference from Parmenides, Plato and Hegel, we may conclude that they all regard difference as the *cause* of the distance between the thinking subject and the object of thought, and the object is fundamentally symbolisable and intelligible if the thinking subject overcomes the unsymbolisable elements within themselves. They indeed hold different interpretations of the necessity of this distance, but in the end they all argue that such distance is *reducible*. In Parmenides' motionless monistic reality, the distance essentially does not exist. Or in a more radical reading, there exists only *one* thing: thinking and being is the same thing (Gallop 1984: 40). In other words, the subject has always really been in this only reality. In Plato's (1997: 523-525, *Phaedrus* 245c-246e) myth, the subject was once united with the object in that our souls were once flying high in heaven until they fell onto our earthly body (*Ibid*, 524). The gravity of bodily senses drags the subject away from the world of Forms, but the fall is an accident, and while being the mortals we can still reunite with the Forms by recollection through the soul. In Hegel's dialectics, the existence of distance is inevitable due to the immanent split of the phenomena or reason. However, it is the same force that causes the opposition and also bridges it eventually through dialectics. As such, we can conclude that for Parmenides, Plato and Hegel, difference, understood as the distance between the subject and the object, is not irreducible. And this is why difference-as-itself, as the unsymbolisable itself, does not have an ontological status in their final theoretical landscapes.

We might ask: why does Kant, despite affirming difference-as-itself, still maintain a similar approach that is away from the unsymbolisable, as Parmenides, Plato and Hegel do? I think it is because Kant, like Parmenides, Plato and Hegel, still assumes the ontological superiority of reason and defends an ontological affinity between the subject and the symbolisable, and such affinity renders the subject a being of reason in a transcendental sense. As Nedoh and Zevnik (2017: 3) point out, "[...] they all share the presupposition of the transcendental subject as the condition that makes the thought possible. [...] if the object ought to be thought, the thought itself must be located in the domain of reason." In the same vein, Kant's strategy may be seen as "retreat to advance", that by keeping the subject away from the unsymbolisable, the unity of reason is assured — it is an advance of the unity of reason, but a retreat from the unsymbolisable, which manifests difference-as-itself.

1.3. Difference-as-itself and Its Duality

It is not until Lacan and Deleuze that we find a reversal of the approach to difference as difference-as-itself. As Hallward (2010: 34-35) summarises, Lacan and Deleuze both

[...] emphasise the primacy of differentiation and displacement, and they share a determination to dismantle the traditional, ‘molar’ or ego-centred subject. [...] They pursue a comparably subtractive project of unbinding, deliaison, evacuation, disruption, defamiliarisation or de-territorialisation - the hollowing out of every form of imaginary solidity and depth, in favour of the austere intensity of desire or drive.

For Lacan and Deleuze, not only must difference ontologically exist within desubjectified reality and *is* the irreducible unsymbolisable itself as Kant proposes, but also, each in a singular manner — the Lacanian subject and the Deleuzian subject — actually seek and attempt to repeat difference-as-itself and move towards the unsymbolisable. In other words, while the traditional view of subjectivity stresses reason and activity, both Lacan and Deleuze emphasise the aspect of desire or drive and a dimension of passivity in the subject. And such desire is *irreducible* as difference-as-itself.

To explore Lacan’s interpretation of difference-as-itself, it is useful to introduce Lacanian three orders and give a definition of the Lacanian subject in this thesis. Lacan’s approach combines and reformulates Freudian psychoanalysis and structural-linguistic approach of Saussure. He posits that reality is inextricably knotted by three orders: the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. The imaginary order is where the subject forms their ego through illusions and identifications. The symbolic order, consisting of a set of differentiated signifiers, is the realm of language, law and social norms that the subject is subjected to. The real is the “point at which the symbolic fails” (Belau 2001: 16), undifferentiated as “absolutely without fissure” (Lacan 1991[1988]: 97), and is therefore beyond symbolisation¹. It is by definition unsymbolisable, consisting of the desubjectified reality. Moreover, the real as the desubjectified reality plays an important role in structuring the subjectified reality, which indicates a reference to Hegel and Kant. The real is an immanent gap within the subjectified reality that serves as an indeterminate cause of movements similar to what Hegel (2018[1807]: 23) proposes, except that such a gap is irreducibly unsymbolisable like Kantian thing-in-itself. In other words, it is not only a desubjectified reality that resides within the subjectified reality but also is able to shape, or rather, disrupt the latter, as if

¹ While the real is beyond the symbolisation, it is not beyond the symbolic (Belau 2001: 16).

a present absence. And this is never a one-way influence but an entangled tension between the symbolic and the real. Both the symbolic and the real try to engulf the other — while the real resists symbolisation as “[...] the impossible kernel of the symbolic around which it circles”, it is also “what the symbolic attempts to cover over as its very industry” (Belau 2001: 16). I maintain that Lacanian difference-as-gap is caught in such tension between the symbolic and the real.

Lacan considers reality as never an “unproblematic given in which there is a single objectively correct way of perceiving”, but rather “discursively constructed” (Evans 2006[1996]: 60). The traditional subjectivity of consistency and centrality is thus criticised by Lacan as “an illusion that cannot survive [...] the cut (*coupure*) of the signifier” (Greenshields 2017: 40). Belau (2001: 2) describes how the cut registers the lack, or gap both within language and upon the subject:

First, the signifier cuts the subject, leaving a gap or lack. This lack splits the subject. The subject also registers the signifier's inadequacy insofar as it is the signifier that is inadequate to fill in or make a complete restitution for the traumatic loss the subject suffers as its split. The signifier, that is, cannot make good the loss the subject suffers, a loss inaugurated by the advent of the signifier and the entry into the symbolic. This is the constitutive failure that Freud named castration. What is lost in castration is a certain guarantee that satisfaction can be attained through the signifier. One always has a failed relation to a primary experience of satisfaction. And this failure, this cut on the body, marks the birth of knowledge and its counterpart, desire. It marks the birth of the human as desiring subject.

From this passage, we can summarise four points that define difference-as-gap. Firstly, the gap implies “an alienation between the word and the thing²” because by naming things, or the pre-oedipal yet-to-be subject, language “murders them as full pres-ences” (Ragland-Sullivan 2014[1991]: 4). In this light, we should note that the gap is not a distance between fixed two endpoints such as between word and thing, but an effect of their discordance and the result of their tension. Instead of being the gap *between* the real and the symbolic, it is the register of the real that “suffers from the signifier” (Lacan 1997[1986]: 125), or more precisely, a real gap split *within* the symbolic. This reflects the logic of squeeze which will be discussed in Section 4.2.1. Secondly, based on the first point, the gap can be considered as the (symbolic) “death [...] constitutive of the symbolic order” (Evans 2006[1996]: 32; capitalisation removed) given that the symbol is the

² For Lacan (1997[1986]: 125), the Thing (*das Ding*) is “that which in the real suffers from the signifier”. As such, I also use it to refer to the pre-oedipal yet-to-be subject before entering the symbolic. We should also note the affinity between the Thing and object a — “After the seminar of 1959–60, the term *das Ding* disappears almost entirely from Lacan’s work. However, the ideas associated with it provide the essential features of the new developments in the concept of the *objet petit a* as Lacan develops it from 1963 onwards.” (Evans 2006[1996]: 208)

“murder of the thing” (Lacan 2001[1966]: 77). Thirdly, as will be further discussed in Section 2.2.1, the gap left by the signifier, for Lacan, is necessary to subjectification as a “constitutive failure” (Belau 2001: 2). To sum up, fourthly, it is the inadequacy both within language and upon the subject, given that signifiers cannot suture the very split they bring upon the subject. This turns a speaking subject into a fundamentally split subject of desire for closure.

The relationship between signifier and subject is further pointed out by Lacan’s maxim that “a signifier is that which represents a subject for another signifier” (Lacan 1998[1973]: 207). Or to put it in Lacanian algebra, S1, called the master signifier, “represents the subject (S) for another signifier or, more precisely, for all other signifiers (S2)” (Evans 2006[1996]: 46). As such, by representing the subject, signifier (S1) “murders” and thus subjectifies the pre-oedipal yet-to-be subject to a barred subject (S̄). In this process, the subject is signified by no single signifier, but the effect of the differential network of S2s. And given that S2s cannot make good the loss the subject suffers, “there is always a surplus” or remainder “in this signifying operation” (*Ibid*, 46). This remainder, as the lack of the Other³ as shown in the barred Other (Ā), refers to a missing signifier “from the treasury of signifiers constituted by the Other” (Evans 2006[1996]: 136). In this sense, we may say difference-as-gap, as the real that “suffers from the signifier”, is both the bar in S̄ and Ā. It is both the split of the subject left by the signifier, and the missing, or lacking of signifier that split the Other.

This predetermines the Lacanian subject of desire to be fundamentally passive and of jouissance. By the Lacanian subject, I refer mainly to the neurotic subject that has undergone symbolic castration but still with a remainder. Lacan redefines neurosis as “a structure that cannot be altered”, rather than as a mental illness (Evans 2006[1996]: 126). It is the so-called “normal” structure in the sense that it is prevalent among most people (*Ibid*, 126). As such, the Lacanian subject is necessarily a speaking subject that is squeezed in the dynamics between the symbolic and the real. That is, on the one hand, the subject subjectifies through registering the gap as “the self’s radical ex-centricity” (Lacan 2001[1966]: 130). On the other hand, the ex-centric subject keeps attempting to re-experience the pre-symbolic state before the castration by re-encountering

³ The Other should be understood as both the language and law of radical alterity, the symbolic order, and another subject of radical alterity “insofar as it [the symbolic] is particularised for each subject” (Evans [1996]2006: 136, edited).

the difference-as-gap, which leads to a forever movement towards the unsymbolisable as the “repetition of an impossibility” (Belau 2001: 1) in automaton (see Table 3).

	Definition of difference		Approaches to difference	
Parmenides	Unsymbolisable illusion		The subject expels difference	Away from the unsymbolisable
Plato				
Kant	Symbolisable sensory materials		The subject organises difference	
	Unsymbolisable difference-as-itself		The subject suspends difference	
Hegel	Symbolisable negativity		The subject overcomes difference	
Lacan	Unsymbolisable difference-as-itself	Difference-as-gap	The subject seeks to repeat difference	
Deleuze		Difference-as-flux		
				Towards the unsymbolisable

Table 3. The understandings and approaches to difference based on the theories of Parmenides, Plato, Kant, Hegel, Lacan and Deleuze

Now, we can turn to Deleuze’s construction of difference-as-itself. Instead of taking difference-as-itself as a traumatic gap in Lacanian psychoanalysis, Deleuze thinks it is a productive flux (see Table 3). Deleuze’s philosophical project is often labelled as a philosophy of difference (Stagoll 2010[2005]: 74; Williams 2005[2003]: 26), where difference, rather than identity, becomes the “first step” to account for reality. In the view of Deleuze, reality is more like a chaotic “chaosmos” rather than an ordered “cosmos” (Deleuze 1997[1968]: 199) as Greek philosophy generally assumes. This chaosmos contains both the subjectified dimension and the desubjectified dimension. Moreover, this chaosmos is essentially defined “by its infinite speed [...] leaving behind

no consistency, reference or any determinate consequences” (Toscano 2010[2005]: 48). In other words, chaosmos is defined by its fugacity rather than its disorder (*Ibid*, 48), which indicates that not only does Deleuze break with the traditional view of an ordered cosmos — he does so in a manner that is more of a flight out of the presupposition between order and disorder.

We can also find traces of this kind of flight out of the traditional presupposition in Deleuze’s interpretation of difference. As previously mentioned, Deleuze advocates a project for understanding difference without appealing to representation, therefore, he aims to respond to the question “*how is difference experienced*” rather than “*what is difference*”, since the latter question can easily lead to the trap of representation again. To avoid the trap, Deleuze (1994[1968]: 144) constructs a view of pure difference as

[...] free or untamed states of difference in itself; not qualitative opposition within the sensible, but an element which is in itself difference, and creates at once both the quality in the sensible and the transcendent exercise within sensibility. This element is intensity, understood as pure difference in itself, as that which is at once both imperceptible for empirical sensibility which grasps intensity only already covered or mediated by the quality to which it gives rise, and at the same time that which can be perceived only from the point of view of a transcendental sensibility which apprehends it immediately in the encounter.

Traditionally, the transcendental realm is often exclusively associated with reason, while the empirical realm is associated with sensibility. In this passage, however, Deleuze divides sensibility into the empirical one and the transcendental one. Through this distinction, we can infer that Deleuze attempts to undertake a new conceptualisation of sensibility that positions this new type of sensibility within the transcendental realm, which in turn provides the potential way for the subject to experience difference-as-itself without representation. At the same time, such difference-as-itself is not merely the empirical given, but transcendental, as Deleuze (1994[1968]: 226) remarks, “difference remains not the given itself but that by which the given is given”. This is the reason why, for Deleuze (*Ibid*, 226-227), while difference “cannot be thought”, “Thought must think difference”, since difference is “absolutely different from thought which nevertheless gives it thought, gives to be thought”. In another passage, Deleuze (*Ibid*, 222) stresses that difference is “by which the given is given as diverse”. We can now summarise the characteristics of Deleuze’s definition of difference: it is not only irreducibly unsymbolisable but also the very generator of diversity and novelty for us to experience in a transcendental manner. Therefore, I call Deleuze’s understanding of difference-as-itself as a productive flux.

In the same vein, we can also discern a novel relationship between the subject and the unsymbolisable in Deleuze's theory. Unlike the philosophers that we discussed in Sections 1.1 and 1.2, there is no opposition between the subject and the object, and difference is not the object of thought. If difference is treated as a cause of distance between the subject and the object, two endpoints are presupposed and the only task left would be to shorten or even close the distance. This indicates a tendency to take the subject and the object as fixed identities. Deleuze (1994[1968]: 145) accurately criticises such a tendency of representation as subordinating difference and making it "something represented". By contrast, the Deleuzian subject is not an active thinking subject looking *to think* difference, instead, it is difference-as-flux that constantly appears unexpectedly to the subject as the absolute new and unknown, and the subject has to *repeat* it rather than *represent* it in order to really get closer towards the unsymbolisable. I will further elaborate Deleuze's difference-as-flux mainly based on his arguments in *Difference and Repetition* in Chapter 3.

In Deleuze, just as in Lacan, we find a rejection of the traditional concept of reason and the rational subject and a shift towards the much more complex and ever-changing realm of desire. However, just as we observe varying modifications of reason in Parmenides, Plato, Kant and Hegel, we will see very different interpretations of desire in Lacan and Deleuze. In Chapter 4, I will explore and compare how Lacan and Deleuze differently interpret desire and their varying logics, from which we will better understand why their constructions are divergent while seeing the very same difference-as-itself.

2. Lacanian difference-as-gap

In Section 1.3, I have coined the term Lacanian difference-as-gap and defined it in four interrelated senses: (1) it is the real that “suffers from the signifier” as a real gap split within the symbolic as well as the effect of the discordance between word and thing; (2) it is the (symbolic) “death [...] constitutive of the symbolic order” (Evans 2006[1996]: 32, capitalisation removed); (3) it is necessary to subjectification as a “constitutive failure” (Belau 2001: 2); and to sum up, (4) it exists isomorphically in the form of a bar or split, as in \mathfrak{S} , a split left by the signifier, and in \mathfrak{A} , a split left by the missing signifier. For Lacan, there are two cases of the unsymbolisable — one is hypothetically constructed and the other irreducible. Difference-as-itself is the unsymbolisable of the latter case, which is intricately connected with the former one. The two cases of the unsymbolisable consist of the liminal duality in the logic of squeeze, which will be discussed in Section 4.2.1. In this chapter, I will further elaborate Lacanian difference-as-gap by examining its role within the dynamic relationship of the Lacanian subject with the two unsymbolisables, which helps reveal the traumatic nature of the gap that sets the subject of death drive in the repetition automaton.

2.1. Lacanian subject and the Unsymbolisable

2.1.1. Two Cases of the Unsymbolisable and Difference-as-gap

The unsymbolisable by definition resists any attempts to symbolise it. In Lacanian theories, we can discern the aspect of the unsymbolisable in various concepts, such as the real, the Thing, object *a* (*objet petit a*), remainder, symptom, jouissance, the death drive, and so on. I classify the unsymbolisable with the following two cases in terms of the position of the subject (or one as a yet-to-be-subject) in relation to the unsymbolisable.

In the first case, one and the unsymbolisable are non-differentiable as “primordial oneness” (Ragland 1995: 89). It is the primordial real, or where the Thing locates (Lacan 1997[1986]: 118). Metaphorically, it is a pre-born moment when one experiences completeness and bliss in the unity with the mother’s uterus. There is no signifier, gap or lack in this unity, and therefore no subject. It is where one has full immediacy with the reality so that the two are taken as one indistinguishable. For Lacan, such a pre-symbolic unity *never* truly exists; it is only an illusory ideal that is retroactively constructed (Chiesa 2007: 122).

Alternatively, in the second case, the unsymbolisable is non-internalisable and thus traumatic to the speaking subject. The unsymbolisable as such serves as the real splinters that are reminiscent of the primordial real, given that it is the remainder left by the symbolic registration. As Lacan put it, it is the “contour”, or the “*caput mortuum* of the signifier” (Lacan 2006[2002]: 38) in the real. “Contour” and “*caput mortuum*” (worthless remainder) do not seem to be closely related, but they are used here to designate the very same unsymbolisable in relation to the signifier. The “contour” of a signifier implies the exact “outer” edge of the signifier, beyond which there is some kind of external void. On the other hand, the *caput mortuum* implies an internal void, for in its original sense in alchemy, it refers to a worthless part of the substance that is left out after extraction and sublimation. Both the contour and *caput mortuum* refer to *what is not* the signifier and thus what is unsymbolisable. And we may summarise the occurrence of the internal void and the external void as the result of the gap.

As such, difference-as-gap is the unsymbolisable of the second case, since it is both (1) the contour, the outer negative that the signifier is constructed on — precisely as that difference or void between S2s that consists of the networks of signifiers as the lack in the barred Other \mathbb{A} ; and (2) the remainder, the wisp of the that real remains after the murder of the real by the symbolic — just as that bar in the barred subject \mathbb{S} like a hollow wound left by the “signifying cut” (Lacan 2006[2002]: 709). And it is worth reiterating that, there is only one irreducible unsymbolisable, which is precisely the second case. In other words, ultimately, there is only one real as the real gap *within* the symbolic rather than a blissful unity *pre*-symbolic:

“the reminder actually reminds us of something which ultimately *never* existed. Indeed, there is/was/will be no possibility of having the whole Real since, strictly speaking, there is no Real beyond the symbolic order. Lacan invites us to acknowledge that not only is it possible to posit the primordial Real solely from the standpoint of the Symbolic, in a retroactive way, but that it is precisely because this homeostatic 0, this no-

Thing, was holed that the Real (as lack of the Symbolic) was created. Thus *all of the Real is nothing but the Real-of-the-Symbolic.*" (Chiesa 2007: 122)

In the following section, I will discuss further on how encounters with difference-as-gap bring trauma and perpetuate repetition for the subject. This will involve exploring the relationship of the Lacanian subject with difference-as-gap in two settings: *tyche* and *automaton*.

2.1.2. The Encounter and the Re-encounters with Difference-as-gap

Based on Aristotle's discussion about causality and chance in *Physics*, Lacan (1998[1973]: 42-64) redefines the two terms to highlight the position of the subject against a deterministic backdrop.

Tyche, the goddess of chance in Greek mythology, refers to "the encounter with the real" by Lacan (1998[1973]: 53). It is therefore "the incursion of the real into the symbolic order" and is "purely arbitrary" (Evans 2006[1996]: 25). The occurrence of *tyche* reveals that the real has never been away from the subject, as it appears to be. The real has only been masked under the surface consistency of the symbolic order, always being ready to emerge out of pure randomness and strike the subject in silence. In its original usage by Aristotle, *tyche* "designates chance insofar as it affects agents who are capable of moral action" (*Ibid*, 25). However, in Lacan's redefinition, we cannot seem to expect full agency in the Lacanian subject in such an encounter, since they are essentially impotent.

Wildfire can be a good example of *tyche*. To the subject, wildfire acts like the incursion of the real as it occurs with no plan nor predictable indication. When the subject notices a wildfire, they often see it already burning fiercely out of control, threatening the regular operation of their symbolic life and revealing to them an "outside": somewhere "outside" of the symbolic order, there is some kind of grand, destructive and nihilistic chaos that is meaninglessly producing itself. It is an overwhelmingly shocking moment for the subject that makes them lose their bearings. Lacan would see such an exteriority intimate to the subject — an *extimacy* indeed (Lacan 1997[1986]: 139), as in "the real is just as much inside as outside" (Evans 2006[1996]: 59).

Precisely what the subject experiences in the face of *tyche* is difference-as-gap, which comes at the speaking subject unexpectedly. This gap, as the missing signifier in the barred Other \bar{A} ,

leaves the subject speechless. The speaking subject, always unprepared in such encounters, falls into the gap between the words.

Automaton, on the other hand, is “repetition automaton” as a Lacanian reformulation of Freudian “repetition compulsion” (Fink 1995: 31). It refers to the puzzling phenomenon that Freud (1961[1920]) discovers in his clinical experience: the compulsive tendency to expose oneself in situations where one may re-experience the events that were distressing and traumatic to them, leading to repetitive traumatic symptoms, which ostensibly goes against the pleasure principle. And this repetition automaton, in Lacanian reformulation, is a necessary effect of the automatic functioning of “the network of signifiers” (Lacan 1998[1973]: 52). It is “the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs” that determines the subject (*Ibid*, 53-54).

Why is the insistence of the signifier so powerful that it “seduces” the subject step by step, again and again, to the brink of self-destruction? To answer this, we would need to understand the death drive. According to Freud’s (1961[1920]: 1) physiologically-based interpretation of human mentality, the pleasure principle aims for “a lowering of [...] tension” which is produced invariably in life. And the death drive is ultimately compatible with the pleasure principle defined as such: it is not a pleasure to live since there is always an excess of tension; rather, it would be a pleasure to return to the inanimate state. This understanding of the death drive does not necessarily hold true for socially and culturally constructed humans. Disagreeing with Freud’s interpretation of the death drive, Lacan points out that “humans are not driven *toward* death as entropy” but rather “driven *by* ‘death’ in the form of excesses in jouissance⁴” (Ragland 1995: 88, emphasis added). In this sense, the death drive is the “inertia of jouissance” that makes one love their symptoms more than the cure of them (*Ibid*, 85). The repetition automaton is therefore “the return of jouissance, an excess of enjoyment which returns again and again to transgress the limits of the pleasure principle and seek death” (Evans 2006[1996]: 167). Hence, it is never the biological death or the pain itself that the subject seeks, and the subject in automaton repetition is not a masochistic subject as it appears.

⁴ For better comparability of the duality of difference and to centre around difference-as-gap and the neurotic subject, jouissance in this thesis mainly refer to the phallic jouissance ($J\phi$) instead of feminine jouissance (JA) “beyond the phallus” (Evans 2006[1996]: 94) and transcends the symbolic order.

It is the jouissance produced through re-encountering the death⁵, the difference-as-gap, that the subject is seeking.

In this sense, I use “re-encounter” instead of “return” here to emphasise a secretly bidirectional relation between the subject and the unsymbolisable in comparison to the unidirectional one shown in situations of *tyche* when the speaking subject is unpreparedly struck by the real. In other words, the subject unconsciously expects the return of the death or jouissance without being aware of it since jouissance is “a constituted meaning system that wants no knowledge of itself” (Ragland 1995: 88). This is due to jouissance being produced precisely through its prohibition in the symbolic order (Lacan 2001[1966]: 243). Indeed this inertia of jouissance corresponds to the insistence of the signifier. In Seminar XVII, Lacan points out that the relation between signifier and jouissance is not simply oppositional but rather closely related and paradoxical because “the signifier is both the cause of the impossibility of reaching jouissance and, simultaneously, the path to its attainment” (Verhaeghe 2006: 30-31). We may better understand this paradoxical relation by recalling the two cases of the unsymbolisable. The signifier causes “the impossibility of reaching jouissance” by murdering the primordial real, the unsymbolisable in the first case; and it is also “a path to the attainment of jouissance” because it is what makes possible the contour or *caput mortuum* of it (and vice versa), producing the unsymbolisable in the second case, difference-as-gap, as the splinters of the real within the symbolic. Lacan (1998[1973]: 54) remarks that “the real is that which always lies behind the automaton”. In this light, we can see that the symbolic death or difference-as-gap is what the Lacanian subject keeps re-encountering in the repetition automaton.

2.1.3. The Neurotic Illusion and Fantasy

If *tyche* is the unexpected encounter that causes a possible inception of the yet-to-be-trauma to be retroactively⁶ established afterwards, metaphorically speaking, as if an encounter with an enigmatic

⁵ Difference-as-gap as the symbolic death should be distinguished from the Lacanian death drive. While the former refers to the very impossible “destination” that drives the subject of jouissance, the latter refers to the drive itself as the transgressive repetitions towards the former.

⁶ According to Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* (afterwardsness), there is an existence of a time gap between the initial stressor event and the traumatic response. Following that, Lacan highlights the retroactive temporality in the formation

sound of the real that exceeds the ear's audible frequency, then repetition automaton are the endless quests for the traces of its traumatic echoes which may bring back the memory of the inceptive encounter. How are echoes of the impossible sound possible? Given the discussion in Section 2.1.2, they are made possible by the automatic function of the networks of signifiers with remainder, which determines the subject of death drive. There is yet another question unanswered: if the echoes, or difference-as-gap, are traumatic, why is the subject seeking them in repetition? In other words, why is *jouissance* necessarily a kind of pleasure in pain and “suffering” (Lacan 1997[1986]: 184)?

The transgressive nature of *jouissance* (Lacan 1997[1986]: 195) lies at the core of the paradox. As mentioned earlier, *jouissance* is expressly forbidden by the symbolic order: “Castration means that *jouissance* has to be refused in order to be attained on the inverse scale of the Law of desire” (Lacan 2006[2002]: 700). Whether it is *tyche* or automaton, they essentially show a dynamic tension between the real and the symbolic. To understand the “inverse scale” here, it is useful to also consider the functions of the imaginary in this tension. That is, there is a “neurotic illusion” (Evans 2006[1996]: 94) behind the transgression — since symbolic castration itself is a prohibition of *jouissance*, then the transgression of the symbolic castration must imply a regaining of *jouissance*! As such, the injunction of the already impossible in turn supports this fantasmatic supposition that illusorily turns the impossibility possible — turning the Law of desire into the “inverse scale”.

Lacan (2020[1994]: 147) describes fantasy as functioning like a veil:

One can even say that with the presence of the curtain, what lies beyond as a lack tends to be actualised as an image. The absence is painted onto the veil. This is nothing less than a curtain's function per se, whichever it may be. The curtain assumes its value, its being and its consistence from being precisely that onto which absence is projected and imagined. The curtain is, so to speak, the idol of absence.

To cover up the lack, the re-encounter with the primordial oneness is made possible in the fantasy — one believes that as long as the prohibition is transgressed, the bar is crossed. By constructing reality through fantasy, the fact that the blissful unity is never possible even before the castration of symbolic order (Evans 2006[1996]: 94) is veiled. For the speaking subject, the

of trauma (Evans 2006[1996]: 209). It indicates that trauma is not immediately formed right after the occurrence of the traumatic event (the impossible encounter with the real in *tyche*); rather, it is often delayed until a realisation of it through symbolic integration.

transgression of symbolic law is also a transgression of the pleasure principle, this explains why jouissance is a pleasure in pain and “suffering”.

We should note that fantasy as such involves the objectification of difference-as-gap into object a, which therefore can be taken as the object form of difference-as-gap. Similar to the gap, it is also “the remnant left behind by the introduction of the symbolic in the real” (Evans 2006[1996]: 129). Nevertheless, as the “object-cause of desire” (Evans 2006[1996]: 12), object a “never loses its imaginary status” (*Ibid*, 128). It is the very impossible object lying at the boundary of the symbolic order that one fantasises to attain so that the gap can be illusorily sutured.

Fantasy, as a defence to symbolic castration, therefore in a sense stabilises the neurotic structure (*Ibid*, 61), setting the “permanent modes according to which” the subject constitutes their objects (Lacan 2006[2002]: 184). This stagnated fantasmatic mode reflects the dilemma of the subject entangled in the tension between the symbolic and the real which is reinforced by the veiling function of the imaginary. As such, on the one hand, the neurotic subject is motivated from time to time to transgress to re-encounter with difference-as-gap, and on the other hand, the relation between the subject and the unsymbolisable is stabilised in repetition automaton. Struggling in the paradox between the signifier and jouissance, “humans are forever after ‘thrown’ by the experience of trying to recuperate forbidden jouissance” (Ragland 1995: 86).

2.2. The Traumatic Nature of Difference-as-gap

Up to this point, we might ask: is difference-as-gap necessarily inevitable and traumatic to the Lacanian subject? The short answer is yes, and I will break Lacan’s arguments into two parts: the inevitability of difference-as-gap to appear upon the subject which paradoxically cannot be established without such a gap, and the vortex of repetitive failures of the subject to fill it.

2.2.1. The Inevitability of Difference-as-gap

That humans are biologically premature at birth is a defining fact for Lacan that the newborn baby has to be dependent on their primordial Other, which, in most cases, is the mother (Evans

2006[1996]: 79). The mother starts out as a caregiver that fulfils the baby's biological needs and becomes an omnipotent presence to the baby because between the baby and the mother it is a radically asymmetrical relationship: the baby has not yet learned how to articulate well their need, so the mother alone gets to interpret "the baby's cries as hunger, tiredness, loneliness, etc. and retroactively determines their meaning" and then "decide whether or not to satisfy the child's needs" (*Ibid*, 79). We can already see the indication of difference-as-gap as "primal repression" as the gap between *need* and *demand* (Lacan 2006[2002]: 579) here: need turns into demand once the baby's cries have been interpreted as meaningful articulation which brings the mother to the side. Cries, once an immediate presentation of the baby's primordial body, are now alienated from them as an expression. And the baby, at some point, would also start to symbolise the presence of their mother as the Other's love, which constitutes the very remainder in symbolisation, difference-as-gap, within that demand that cannot be fulfilled by the satisfaction of need (Evans 2006[1996], 38). The baby ends up in such a situation of necessity to fill in the gap in the mother-child unity: they start to desire to be the object of their (m)Other's desire by desiring what (m)Other desires.

This radically asymmetrical relationship between the baby and the mother generates a deep anxiety in the baby: they do not always know how to please the mother to become the mother's desire, the imaginary phallus⁷, and they do not have any reliable way to validate it in their attempts. Lacan (2007[1991]: 112) uses the crocodile and the trap to illustrate such an anxiety:

The mother's role is the mother's desire. That's fundamental. The mother's desire is not something that is bearable just like that, that you are indifferent to. It will always wreak havoc. A huge crocodile in whose jaws you are — that's the mother. One never knows what might suddenly come over her and make her shut her trap. That's what the mother's desire is.

The tragic nature of the Lacanian subject is that they are impotent subject that is always pushed step by step into situations where they virtually have no other choice. This helpless baby of anxiety in the crocodile's jaw has to seek help from the *outside*, that is, from something that does not natively inhabit them, something alien to them. And this something is the Name-of-the-Father that conducts a "paternal metaphor" that "involves the substitution of one signifier (the Name-of-the-Father) for another (the desire of the mother)" (Evans 2006[1996]: 140). At a cost of

⁷ "The imaginary phallus is perceived by the child in the preoedipal phase as the object of the mother's desire, as that which she desires beyond the child; the child thus seeks to identify with this object." (Evans 2006[1996]: 144)

symbolic castration, one resort to (symbolic) phallus (Lacan 2007[1991]: 112) that “appears in the place of the lack of the signifier in the Other” (Evans 2006[1996]: 145):

There is a roller, made out of stone of course, which is there, potentially, at the level of her trap, and it acts as a restraint, as a wedge. It's what is called the phallus. It's the roller that shelters you, if, all of a sudden, she closes it.

The symbolic phallus comes in as a third the dual relationship between the baby and the mother with a double effect. On the one hand, it provides the baby a breathing space against the mother's mysterious desire. When the baby starts to *name* the mother's desire, they have in a way fixed the elusive desire and found it a position in the signifying chain. It marks the “unconscious realization that the mother is not All” (Ragland 1995: 103) when one renounces to identify with the imaginary phallus. On the other hand, however, it also blocks the nostalgic intimacy between the baby and the mother, as Fink (1996: 83) states, “The symbolic order serves to cancel out the real, to transform it into a social, if not socially acceptable, reality.” The castration of the symbolic order marks the establishment of the Lacanian subject — a neurotic one, particularly — who has thus been thrown into a symbolic world constituted by the death (Evans 2006[1996]: 32) with luring difference-as-gap inside and outside of themselves. And the speaking subject would forever remain ambivalent about the castration because they unconsciously see it taking away the primordial oneness with the mother, which, of course, is but an illusion. This illusion shares the same dialectic logic as the relation between *jouissance* and the signifier discussed in Section 2.1.3. The subject retroactively fantasises a non-differentiable wholeness with the mother before the castration, which is precisely *allowed to stand* and sustained by castration — the neurotic illusion that if only the symbolic order is transgressed, the wholeness is regainable — while that unreadable image is actually a crocodile's mouth.

I maintain that the inevitability of difference-as-gap is the inevitability of getting castrated by the symbolic order, or the inevitability of the primary repression that bars the subject, which, together with the inevitability of secondary repression, defines the traumatic nature of difference-as-gap. The baby does not have a choice but to become the speaking subject, the barred subject \mathcal{S} . It is a rather forced decision to be made, or, as Lacan (1998[1973]: 212) cites Hegel's example of the primary alienation, it is an alienating *vel*: “*Your freedom or your life!* If he chooses freedom, he loses both immediately — if he chooses life, he has life deprived of freedom.” Similarly, the subject has to choose to be an individual subject deprived of the immediate wholeness. It is not so

much that the castration helps the subject to become a subject; it is rather that one has to go through the castration to be a subject. As Fink (1995: 51) puts it, it is as if “choosing ‘one's own’ disappearance”.

2.2.2. The Vortex of Repetitive Failures

Difference-as-gap is traumatic also because it induces a vortex of repetitive failures to fill the gap in. This is due to the inextricable relation between the primary repression and secondary repression. In Section 2.2.1, the inevitability of primal repression for one to become the speaking subject has been discussed. I will now turn to an analysis of secondary repression before diving into the repetitive vortex.

Secondary repression refers to “a specific psychical act by which a signifier is elided from the signifying chain”. The “repressed signifier reappears under the guise of the various formations of the unconscious”, such as in the form of neurotic symptoms (Evans 2006[1996]: 168). *Tyche*, as the incursion of the real into the symbolic order, explains the elision of the signifier, if we think of the moment of “suspended impasses in language” (Ragland 1995: 88) when the subject stands, stunned, before the unexpected wildfire.

This moment beyond the symbolic, for Lacan, is necessarily a traumatic one because, as a speaking subject that affirms “the symbolic as an internal space for the inscription of subjective reality” (Brenner 2020: 59), the incursion of the real would mean a collapse of such reality. The meaningless nothingness drills a hole in the subject’s sense of being. And such affirmation of the symbolic order is precisely established in the primary repression. This means that secondary repression is also inevitable for the speaking subject — the speaking subject could run into the hole of the real within the net of the symbolic at any given moment. Moreover, as discussed in Section 2.1.3, it is also primary repression, the acceptance of the injunction in castration, that brings the neurotic illusion that paradoxically turns the impossible wholeness as attainable, which helps sustain the subject of jouissance in repetition automaton. Secondary repression is, to some degree, alleviated through practices of expressions such as free association and accumulations of experience that help reshape the understanding of trauma by re-establishing a network of signifiers around the gap. Nevertheless, primary repression is simply irrevocable as we can never return to

the presymbolic state, which makes it impossible to prevent the occurrence of this vortex. In this sense, the vortex of repetitive failures to fill in the gap is, in a sense, doomed. For Lacan, it is actually doomed as early as preceding one's birth. The alienation is deterministically prepared for the yet-to-be-subject, whose advent itself is already "caused by the Other's desire" (Fink 1996: 78), and their position within the symbolic order is held already, such as, by their proper name (*Ibid*, 80).

In this process, we see the dynamics between the real and the symbolic, which is reinforced by the veilling function of the imaginary. While primary repression demonstrates the subject's advent through the inscription of the symbolic order and "exteriorization of the real" (Brenner 2020: 60), secondary repression demonstrates the exclusion of the symbolic and, to some degree, interiorisation of the real (*Ibid*, 60) in the encounter and re-encounter with difference-as-gap, based on a illusory promise in the fantasies. Entangled in these dynamics, the subject falls into traumatic repetitions. When the Lacanian barred subject attempts to (re)unite with the barred Other's desire through (the failure of) the barred Other as language, all that awaits them is failure, and the subject does not even know why they want to fail again, and again.

3. Deleuzian Difference-as-flux

In this chapter, I will use Deleuze's philosophy of difference to shed light on the understanding of difference-as-flux and its productive nature which is distinguished from Lacanian difference-as-gap as discussed in Chapter 2. In addition to pure difference, the Deleuzian Death which befalls the subject as an unexpected encounter will also be a vital concept to focus on since it provides the singular condition for the subject to potentially express pure difference. Such an encounter is simultaneously related to *the* difference that breaks in the surface structural stability and *the* continual flux that produces new relations.

The main arguments explored in this chapter are largely sourced from *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994[1968]), rather than *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze, Guattari 2000[1972]) where Deleuze and Guattari explicitly target Lacan and psychoanalysis as their theoretical adversary. This choice is made for two reasons: firstly, as mentioned earlier in Introduction, my thesis is in principle about the duality of difference, not a strict comparative study of Lacan and Deleuze, therefore, I only focus on the texts most relevant to the duality of difference; secondly, the different positions of Lacan and Deleuze are demonstrated already at the most fundamental level, and *Difference and Repetition* is the best source where Deleuze introduces and explains his notion of pure difference (or difference-as-flux as termed in this thesis) which lays the foundation for the rest of his theories. As Deleuze (1994[1968]: xv) states in the preface to the English edition of *Difference and Repetition*, this book is "the first book in which I tried to 'do philosophy'. All that I have done since is connected to this book, including what I wrote with Guattari." Speaking in a Deleuzian tone, we may say that *Difference and Repetition* provides the necessary conditions for *Anti-Oedipus* and that the latter is an expression of the former.

3.1. Deleuzian Subject and the Unsymbolisable

3.1.1. Pure Difference as the Unsymbolisable and Difference-as-flux

As we have seen in Section 1.3, pure difference is the kind of difference that “can be perceived only from the point of view of a transcendental sensibility which apprehends it immediately in the encounter” (Deleuze 1997[1968]: 144). In other words, we are unable to perceive pure difference either through representation or with common empirical sensibility. It requires a singular condition for the subject to potentially experience pure difference. To understand what such a condition is and how it emerges, we will firstly examine Deleuze’s distinction between the virtual and the actual.

For Deleuze, pure difference is more of a virtual “differential field of intensity” (Somers-Hall 2013: 23) than an actual thing (whether material or conceptual) or a relation between actual things. This virtual differential field of intensity differentiates “intensities and heterogeneous qualities” and constantly changes like “open wholes that continually produce new directions and connections” (Parr 2010[2005]a: 78). Indeed, it is “the condition for changes in actual things” (Williams 2005[2003]: 56).

How does this virtual field interact with the actual? We can turn to how Deleuze (1994[1968]: 209) distinguishes *differentiation* (the virtual) and *differenciación* (the actual), “Whereas *differentiation* determines the virtual content of the Idea⁸ as problem, *differenciación* expresses the actualisation of this virtual and the constitution of solutions”. From this description, we can infer that the dynamic relations between the virtual and the actual are reciprocal and asymmetrical “*differentiation-differenciación*”. The virtual is the Idea, and the actual expresses it; the virtual poses the problem, and the actual responds through variant solutions. In this sense, the virtual is as if “the other face of all actual things” (Williams 2005[2003]: 13), a virtual machine that generates novelty in the actual. Yet it is also where we cannot directly access. Since this virtual field is in constant flux, we would find ourselves unable to grasp it, much like trying to catch hold of

⁸ The Idea is a concept that Deleuze adapts from Kant, “a structure that governs the constitution of the actual” (Somers-Hall 2013: 192). For Deleuze, the Idea has three *intrinsic* moments: undetermined, determinable, and determined, which accounts for how the virtual is expressed in the actual while remaining virtual: “The Idea as undetermined provides a moment which differs in kind from the actual, [...] As determinability, it is a moment whereby the object of the Idea becomes capable of sustaining predicates, [...] and as determined, it provides a moment whereby it takes on the actual properties the object has.” (*Ibid*, 131)

perpetually changing water waves. Therefore, we can only “perceive the work of pure differences in actual things [...] through signals or observable differences” (Williams 2005[2003]: 52), which means that without the actual, the virtual would be unable to maintain determinacy. If this would make the virtual or pure difference sound like a transcendental field, then we need to note that for Deleuze, the sense of “transcendental” differs significantly from the Kantian one. If, for Kant, “transcendental” implies a set of presupposed principles that necessarily organise the forms of experience, then for Deleuze, pure difference, taken as a transcendental field, is rather an open plane where experience always exceed any transcendental principles imposed in the Kantian sense⁹.

At this point, we also need to consider the other keyword in *Difference and Repetition*, that is, repetition. Deleuze calls it “a complex repetition” (1994[1968]: xx), or “repetition for itself” (*Ibid*, 70). This “for itself” suggests a distinction from the common concept of repetition “of something” as repeating the one and same thing again and again. As Williams (2005[2003]: 92) points out, “the ‘for itself’ of repetition is difference”. That is to say, in Deleuzian repetition, what is really being repeated is pure difference. Given that pure difference cannot be simply represented or experienced through empirical sensibility, repetition for itself is what Deleuze proposes as the “passage” through which the subject moves towards difference in itself, that is, pure difference. That is also how repetition remains complex since it is necessarily inhabited by difference (*Ibid*, 76). There is no “simple” repetition of the same thing. We may understand the structural relation between difference and repetition in a similar manner as the one between the virtual and the actual. As Parr (2010[2005]b: 226) writes, “What repeats [...] is not models, styles or identities but the full force of difference in and of itself, those pre-individual singularities that radically maximise difference on a plane of immanence.” For Deleuze, it is true repetition that expresses the intensities to the greatest extent, through which pure difference is apprehended in a singular manner.

We can now summarise two important points on pure difference, which provides a preliminary idea of the unsymbolisable and difference-as-flux in the Deleuzian sense. Firstly, pure difference is itself the unsymbolisable. It is “the condition for the genesis of actual things in repetition” (Williams 2005[2003]: 134), thus we cannot truly capture it with actual concepts,

⁹ Or more precisely, as Deleuze (2002[1995]: 25) puts it, it is “transcendental empiricism”. We should not confuse it with simple empiricism that is concerned with empirical sensation. We will return to this in Section 4.2.2.

words, or gestures, etc. Secondly, as argued earlier, pure difference is the condition of constant flux. It conditions “a changing mass of relations [...] structures of pure becomings” (Williams 2005[2003]: 14). Such a flux (the virtual) moves on to the actual, that is to say, pure difference is also what accounts for each actualisation to be a productive and creative act that affirms something new.

Therefore, we have good reasons for this thesis to call Deleuzian pure difference the unsymbolisable, from a formal view, and difference-as-flux, from a functional view. We may use Deleuze’s (1994[1968]: 251) “model for the order of reasons” to outline this flux: “differentiation-individuation-dramatisation-differenciation”¹⁰. Here, we can find two new processes added by unfolding differentiation-differenciation. These two processes are of importance as the “methodology” to the novelty and productivity of difference-as-flux, since Deleuze conceives that without individuation and dramatisation as experimental acts, the actualisation of the virtual will appear to be a mundane expression that fails to completely express the intensity of the Idea. To touch upon the texture of the cascading flux, we will look into the encounter of the Deleuzian subject¹¹ with the unsymbolisable. In *Difference and Repetition*, Death or the noumenal time, may be seen as the unsymbolisable that necessarily befalls the subject, which is the best example of such an encounter that provides the singular condition for the Deleuzian subject to potentially experience difference-as-flux. It is an event that concerns the unconscious¹² of the subject, liberates its individuating factors and to be dramatised for the individuated subject to express the full differential intensity. In the following section, I will explore the encounter with Death with the dynamics of three syntheses of time, and the processes of individuation-dramatisation in detail, which illustrates how the difference-as-flux manifests itself.

¹⁰ We should note that given the reciprocity between the virtual and the actual, differenciation will still return to differentiation and this flux will keep moving on.

¹¹ By “Deleuzian subject”, I refer to the assemblage of three dimensions that Deleuze uses for articulating the subject: the self, the I and the individual, which will be explained in the next section. Here, to illustrate the manifestation of difference-as-flux in the encounter, I give emphasis to the role played by the individual particularly. We should also note that for Deleuze, the subject is not necessarily a human.

¹² Contrary to the Lacanian unconscious that is located in the symbolic as the “the effects of the [signifier]” (Evans 2006[1996]: 220, edited), the Deleuzian unconscious contains the power that could break out the linguistic structure.

3.1.2. The Encounter with Death

Deleuze's interpretation of Death in *Difference and Repetition* also starts with a critical reading of Freud's death drive, which was mentioned in Section 2.1.2. Unlike Freud's physiologically-based interpretation and Lacan's language-centred perspective, Deleuze (1994[1968]: 259) sees Death¹³ as "an internal power which frees the individuating elements from the form of the I or the matter of the self in which they are imprisoned." Here we recognise three dimensions that Deleuze uses for articulating the subject: the self, the I and the individual, which emerge in three syntheses of time. We should note that, like Lacan, Deleuze does not hold a view of the unified subject. To provide a clearer picture of it, I will briefly discuss the first two syntheses of time that are necessary parts for the development of the Deleuzian subject, and then turn to the third time, Death, when the subject is smashed into individuating fragments, which also concerns the process of individuation-dramatisation in difference-as-flux.

According to Deleuze, the self [*moi*] emerges in the first synthesis of time, the present. The living presents are the given, and its repetition will change that which contemplates it. The self is precisely established through *passively* contemplating and contracting the given presents into *habit*. Such passive synthesis constitutes the self, rather than the self executes active synthesis. Therefore, the self should in fact be the plural form as "selves are larval subjects" (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 78) because each contemplation and contraction of the present moment would form a little self, and there are "thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us" (*Ibid*, 75). Yet, since only the living present actually exists in the first synthesis of time and each successive present is discrete "this moment", "this moment", "this moment" that is isolated from each other, contemplation and contraction has a limit and the self inevitably reaches to a state of *fatigue* and then becomes *dissolved*. This implies a second synthesis of time, as Deleuze (*Ibid*, 79) points out "the paradox of the present: to constitute time while passing in the time constituted [...] there must be another time in which the first synthesis of time can occur."

¹³ Based on the interpretation of Stevenson (2021: 46), Death and the death drive are synonymous for Deleuze in that both refer to a state of desexualisation and impersonality. In this thesis, I will only use Death since I prefer to refer to this state from the aspect of an event (as in the encounter with Death) than the drive.

The I [*Je*] emerges in the second synthesis of time, the past, and *memory* is that which provides the condition for the living present in the first synthesis of time to actually pass and grounds the identity of I. If the self refers to the material, instinctual aspect of the subject, then we may say the I refers to the conceptual, cultural aspect. For Deleuze, memory has two dimensions: an active one and a passive one. The active dimension of memory is established through active synthesis of the passing presents and it functions like an “archive” (Williams 2005[2003]: 93), from which I can find and represent a certain thing from the past and form a sense of identity: to stay identical to myself, I repeat my past. However, there is also a passive dimension of memory connected to the *pure* past, which is rather “a pure, general [...] element of all time” (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 82) including those that are never actually present but equally real. The pure past is the involuntary memory occurring to the subject independent of active synthesis. In other words, it can invade the I without active remembrance. On the one hand, the pure past brings a certain degree of difference into the repetition of the same I in active memory; on the other hand, such a passive invasion of memory could share a similarity to the situation of the trauma of repetition compulsion of Freud and Lacan discussed in Chapter 2, where “the repressed” returns and “imprisons” the subject in the past. As demonstrated, the present and the future become two dimensions of the past in the second synthesis of time. However, there is a potential risk for the subject to be submerged in the past and take the past as the original model after which the present and the past repeat, as Deleuze remarks the “inaction” (Somers-Hall 2013: 80) of Hamlet and Oedipus when they totally live in the past which renders moving forward even into the present inactionable.

How can one get out of the trap of the past? Paradoxically, Deleuze’s answer lies in the passivity of the I. The passivity of the I was already evident in the case of the pure past. However, such passivity is still subjected to a past which is constructed upon all faces of the actual time. That is to say, even the pure past is bound to empirical experience. To break the trap, we need something absolutely new, something that exceeds the empirical experience. And that is the third time: the future. The future always comes in the most unpredictable manner, which makes the I become aware of the fracture within itself. According to Deleuze (1994[1968]: 86), “*I* is an other¹⁴, or the paradox of inner sense” in that while the I appears to be an active subject, it is in fact a receptive being that only *represents* the activity of thought rather than *initiates* it to itself *within* time. In the

¹⁴ “*Je est un autre*” by Arthur Rimbaud.

face of the future, the I realises that besides the phenomenal time, it also exists in another time that it can never truly grasp. It is in this sense that the I in the phenomenal time is fractured by a noumenal time, “the pure and empty form of time” (*Ibid*, 86). This pure and empty form of time is “necessarily *static*, since time is no longer subordinated to movement; time is the most radical form of change, but the form of change does not change” (*Ibid*, 89, *italic added*). And this pure and empty form of time is Death “having renounced all matter” (*Ibid*, 112). This ultimate time comes in the form of the *caesura*¹⁵, a break or cut that constitutes the fractured I. While the Lacanian gap is the remainder of language, the non-being as the product of primary repression, the caesura of the Deleuze subject exists because of a pure and empty form of time which is of absolutely desubjectified reality. This is the time when I find myself faced with the most unpredictably striking event; this is the encounter of the unsymbolisable, or Death itself.

How would the Deleuzian subject act in response to the unsymbolisable? For Deleuze, the subject is not driven *towards* death or *by* death, as Freud and Lacan argue respectively. Rather, Death just abruptly befalls the subject. As Somers-Hall (2013: 96) points out, Death “does not operate according to a principle, but simply is the manifestation of intensive difference into the realm of the unconscious.” Such fortuitous encounters always provide opportunities for the liberation of individuating elements, beyond consciousness. This can be seen as the process of individuation, “a protest by the individual which has never recognised itself within the limits of the Self and the I, even where these are universal” (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 259). Here, the past and the present are not merely two dimensions of the future. Rather, the present is the agent to act which is also “destined to be effaced”, while the past is “a condition operating by default” (*Ibid*, 94) — that is to say, the individual has a chance to incorporate “the past into the present in order to relate to the future” (Somers-Hall 2013: 81). Death is what propels the Deleuzian subject into the process of individuation, the act of intensity where the individual emerges, responding in return to Death in the process of dramatisation. Dramatisation is rather a way for “*counteractualisation*” (Deleuze 1990[1969]: 150) to actualise, a bridge that bridges by breaking. Apparently we cannot do anything *to* Death because it is the unsymbolisable beyond our reach, but as individuals we can dance *with* it, dramatise it with the most intense experiment:

¹⁵ There is an important comparison between the caesura proposed by Deleuze and the gap proposed by Lacan. For Lacan, what splits the subject is the signifier, while for Deleuze, what fractures the subject is the pure form of time.

There is a crucial experience of difference and a corresponding experiment: every time we find ourselves confronted or bound by a limitation or an opposition, we should ask what such a situation presupposes. It presupposes a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences; a properly differential and original space and time; all of which persist alongside the simplifications of limitation and opposition. (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 50)

We may return to the example of wildfire. The opposition should have been cancelled between the I, as the experiencer, and the wildfire, as the object of experience. As individuals, we are detached from any simple representational relationship and are thrown into a centrifuge of virtuality: all the concepts are displaced with the sensations. There are no more clear-cut edges of “objects”: the differential relations of intensities fluctuate across different areas, whether they are in the eyes, the sweaty arms, or the thick smoke. And the whole situation turns into a drama: now the eyelashes are wilting with the weeds. They imagine in the negative number a farewell devoured by the glare. A violent texture is writing the noisy labyrinth with an evaporating restlessness. Wings are swimming downward, giving birth to a muffled bang as soft as the upper-slotted teeth spaced by the marching ants. It’s time to turn off the lights as the spasms grow on the joints of legs. After the echoes of ringing had been cut infinitely, everything had been coalescing coldly, sweetly, as sweetly as a nightmare that could bring no relief...

We can go on and on dancing with difference-as-flux. In this sense, Deleuze overturns the traditional notion of subjectivity by proposing the passive individual that has been reduced to “a not particularly significant local point in this landscape” (Zupančič 2017: 119). It is rather the desubjectification of the subject, a leap out of the confrontational logic of the subject and the object, of life and death. The subject is not the opposite of the object; the subject *is* the object, without an illusionary centrality of the I. Such is a typical differential logic that Deleuze seems to enjoy: x is not the opposite of y ; x is y , without z . The vital step is to discover the very element z that makes x and y oppositional and remove it to reveal the real relation of x and y . Similarly, death is not the opposite of life as Deleuze proposes the “two faces of death” (1994[1968]: 112):

One is personal, concerning the I or the ego, something which I can confront in a struggle or meet at a limit, or in any case encounter in a present which causes everything to pass. The other is strangely impersonal, with no relation to ‘me’, neither present nor past but always coming, the source of an incessant multiple adventure in a persistent question.

In other words, the first aspect of death is the negative death in the commonsense. “I” die, and this is the end of my personal life. All the activity that “I” represents is irreversibly gone, and there is no more existence that thinks or speaks in the form of “I ...”. And the second aspect of

death, or Death, is a power that affirms the impersonal aspect of an immanent life, a life that flows from the future, providing us a valuable opportunity to carry out experiments and create new ways to express the Idea. From the second perspective of death, upon the death of the I, “impersonal dying makes death lose itself in itself, as the decomposition of one living body is simultaneously the composition of a new singular life” (Baugh 2010[2005]: 64). Such is how death is life: death is life, without the first aspect of death. This adds to more complete views of reality. In the next section, I will further discuss how the impersonal aspect of reality independent of subjectivity provides the condition for the subject to dramatise and create, which assures the productive nature of difference-as-flux.

3.2. The Productive Nature of Difference-as-flux

3.2.1. Necessity of Difference-as-flux

To discuss the productive nature of difference-as-flux is to argue for the justification of the term. In other words, to answer: what ensures that difference can bring about the flux? We should note that difference-as-flux, as pure difference, is in its pure form impersonal, or beyond the subject. It is such an impersonal immanence that ensures its productive nature. This is also one of the fundamental divergences between Deleuze’s perspective on difference and Lacan’s. Lacanian difference-as-gap is the *not*-subject that is nevertheless dependent on the subject, or more precisely, the human. Difference-as-gap is the necessary remainder of subjectification, which is also what enables subjectification. Also as the unsymbolisable, difference-as-gap is a hole *in* the human subject that does not belong to the subject but outlines the contour of the subject, just like a not-subject that constructs the subject. In contrast, difference-as-flux is like an independent engine, the *beyond*-subject, that perpetually works on its own, only transmitting energy to the subject for the latter to actualise the Idea. For Deleuze, the scope of subjectivity is indeed beyond human, as in the case of contemplation, even a leaf or stone can contemplate and contract; additionally, the subject is in general a passive, insignificant point, against a more complete picture of reality that is itself in flux. When a tree falls in the forest and no human beings are there, Deleuze would insist that it absolutely makes a sound.

In comparison to the extimacy indicated by difference-as-gap, reality, as Deleuze argues, should be understood as “a generalised exteriority” (Roffe 2010[2005]: 97-98), which guarantees a beyond-subject dimension. This view indicates an even more radical rejection than Lacan’s¹⁶ to the traditional notion of the subject that bases human subjectivity on a presupposed, closed interiority. The traditional notion of subjectivity holds an illusory view of natural interiority could lead to rendering the subject as a transcendental being that has an essence that resists real change. Moreover, the closed interiority makes the subject disconnected from the exterior, seeing the latter as contingent and mediated by the subject’s determination. In this scene, reality is fully dependent on the subject and there’s no dimension of reality that could escape the subject. Therefore, the subject is in fact trapped within an impasse constituted by its own limits.

Deleuze revises this scene by refusing the fixed interiority and understanding reality as an open, impersonal, generalised exteriority. All things are the emergence within such an interconnected exteriority, affecting each other. In this way, human subjectivity is first and foremost a “produced interiority” (Roffe 2010[2005]: 98). Constituted by the generalised exteriority, the subject is necessarily opened-up for all dynamics of multiplicities, including all the unsymbolisable, to be a site of creativity, “an expression of the whole of Ideas” (Williams 2005[2003]: 185). This generalised exteriority is how the impersonal singularity of difference-as-flux can guarantee a possibility for the subject to change: the reality where the subject inhabits *always* has an obscure dimension beyond the limits of the subject itself. And Death is such a condition. This is also why we should not take Deleuze’s perspective of desubjectification as merely demeaning the subject — for Deleuze, only when we dispel the illusion of freedom of full control can we better act with our given freedom: a real freedom.

¹⁶ The Lacanian view on subjectivity dissolves the natural and closed interiority by introducing the dimension of language. However, this leads to a porous interiority that causes the tension between interiority and exteriority. In this sense, the Lacanian porous subjectivity entangled with the dialectics between subject and not-subject (difference-as-gap) is prone to be stagnated in the repetition automaton. Please see Section 4.2.1 for a more detailed comparison.

3.2.2. Ethics of Act

What does “a real freedom” possibly mean for Deleuze? Deleuze’s arguments are primarily concerned with reality or illusion, rather than truth or falsehood (Williams 2005[2003]: 185). A real freedom is thus not a freedom that must exclude any passivity, but a freedom that breaks out of the illusion of representational truth. It can be taken as the only guiding ethical principle Deleuze suggests for the subject because for him, “Either ethics makes no sense at all, or this is what it means and has nothing else to say: not to be unworthy of what happens to us” (Deleuze 1990[1969]: 149). It is never an ethics that specifies the particular actions to be or not to be performed; rather, it simply illustrates the reality where the unsymbolisable necessarily appears to the subject as problematic, and the subject has to respond with an individual creative act through experimentation. More importantly, the subject cannot really escape from such a reality. In Section 3.2.1, we have seen how a generalised exteriority guarantees the connection between the subject and the unsymbolisable, therefore by “escaping”, the subject in fact only lowers the intensity of its expression (Williams 2005[2003]: 185).

To express the intensity to the greatest possible extent, the subject has to perform a great amnesia (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 111). Any fixed identity of “I am x ” has to be overthrown because the reality is “difference with more difference” (*Ibid*, 145). There is no x that can withstand a storm of differences at this level. There is something deeper than the identity of “I am x ”, even deeper than “I am”, and that is a seemingly paradoxical *univocal* understanding of “being”. Deleuze (*Ibid*, 36) claims, “Being [...] is said, in a single and same sense, *of* all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities.” From the univocal perspective, there is no essential distinction between the being of an ant and the being of a straight line, they are equal in terms of being but only differ in terms of their individual styles of expression of the singularity of being. In the same vein, the x in “I am x ” can be replaceable by any other terms because no thing has a higher ontological status than others. And being is becoming since there is no fixed identity in all the expressions of it.

How does the subject perform amnesia? To put it in another way, how does the subject de-fixate the “I” and “ x ”? Such is a state when the subject becomes desubjectified, forgets about the directedness of its desire towards the pure past (Stevenson 2021: 9), and is ready to plunge into the future. Eternal return is therefore the eternal return of the future or Death, and it is also an invitation of action since

Repetition in the eternal return [...] consists in conceiving the same on the basis of the different. [...] it carries out a practical *selection* among differences according to their capacity to produce - that is, to return or to pass the test of the eternal return [...] Only the extreme, the excessive, returns; (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 115, italic added)

In this sense, the subject has to respond with the strongest affirmation of will in order to actualise the future instead of staying in the illusion. And for Deleuze, such actions are the true repetition. As discussed earlier in Section 3.1.1, through true repetition, the subject expresses the greatest intensities so that difference-as-flux manifests itself in such expressions — only the difference is affirmed. Deleuze (1994[1968]: 18) therefore overturns the psychoanalytic formula of compulsive repetition “I repeat because I repress” to “I repress because I repeat” because for Deleuze, the psychoanalytic repetition is still a repetition of the past, at least directed towards the past, while the true repetition that Deleuze advocate is a repetition for itself, a repetition of intensity, demanding no specific object of the past but only a pure future. I repeat because “I can live certain things or certain experiences only in the mode of repetition. I am determined to repress whatever would prevent me from living them” (*Ibid*, 18). Expressing such intensities, the subject plunges into the future or Death. And it is also precisely at this moment, the subject is no longer thinking “I desire x ” or “I desire” but there is only desire alone, or as Deleuze and Guattari (2000[1972]: 329, capitalisation added) put it, “Death is not desired, there is only Death that desires”.

4. Two Desires and Two logics

Through Chapter 2 and 3, the traumatic nature of Lacanian difference-as-gap and the productive nature of Deleuzian difference-as-flux have become clear. We see the two interpretations to difference-as-itself reflected in the divergent conceptualisations of the subject in repetition in relation to the unsymbolisable. As implied by the preceding elaboration, the problem of desire, or both drive and desire for Lacan, is the key closely related to the two forms of repetitions as the trajectory of repetition, arguably, is the trajectory of desire. In this chapter, I will firstly describe how Lacan and Deleuze perceive and explain the arrow of desire, that is, the direction towards which desire moves. Although both recognise that desire is irreducible, Lacan suggests the subject to keep to the arrow of desire so that one may arrive at the subjectification of the trauma, while Deleuze urges a complete removal of any fixed arrow of desire to liberate desire. Next, I will analyse and compare the underlying logic behind their varying constructions of desire which shapes the interpretations of difference-as-itself: while Lacan holds the logic of “squeeze”, Deleuze holds the logic of “superposition”.

4.1. The Arrow of Desire

4.1.1. Lacan: Death and the Arrowed Desire

Before explaining the intricate dynamics of the arrow of desire, it would be useful to distinguish drive and desire first. In Chapter 2, I have shown how both the dynamics of drive and desire is closely tied to difference-as-gap, or its object form in fantasy, object a. Specifically, I discussed the effect of difference-as-gap in Section 2.1, which triggers the drive to enact repetitive movement in the form of excesses in jouissance. And in Section 2.2.1, I argued the inevitability of difference-as-gap through discussing the inevitability of primal repression, which enables subjectification at the cost of the subject becoming a subject of desire. While drive and desire are closely related

concepts, the drive are “the partial aspects in which desire is realised”, the “partial manifestations” of the “one and undivided” desire (Evans 2006[1996]: 49). In Seminar XI, Lacan (1998[1973]: 243) describes desire as “agitated in the drive”¹⁷:

[...] the object of desire is the cause of the desire, and this object that is the cause of desire is the object of the drive — that is to say, the object around which the drive turns. [...] It is not that desire clings to the object of the drive — desire moves around it, in so far as it is agitated in the drive.

To understand how desire is agitated in the drive, we should get a grasp of their nuanced relation to object a. From this passage, we can infer that whereas object a is the *object-cause* of the desire, it is the *object* of the drive. That is to say, in terms of desire, object a is what sets it into the chasings after the misrecognitions of the object a through constant fantasies, which results in repetitive failures. In terms of drive, object a, as the impossible or the failure itself, is the exact object that the drive attempts at. In other words, while the desire goes for misrecognitions of object a to fill in the gap, the drive wants to face the gap. Given that this very object is the unsymbolisable and unattainable, the path of drive is a repetitive “outwards-and-back movement” (Lacan 1998[1973]: 178) that keeps missing its *goal* (*Ibid*, 179). The missing of the goal is just the *aim* of the drive, as the aim is precisely “the way taken” (*Ibid*, 179). Lacan (*Ibid*, 180) argues, it is always a way circumventing the object a:

[...] we confuse all too often with that upon which the drive closes — this object, which is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object, and whose agency we know only in the form of the lost object, the petit a. The objet petit a is not the origin of the oral drive. It is not introduced as the original food, it is introduced from the fact that no food will ever satisfy the oral drive, except by circumventing the eternally lacking object.

In this manner, we may describe drive in both ways: the drive is never to be satisfied, and that it is indeed the failure of satisfaction that satisfies the drive. This paradoxical satisfaction is precisely the *jouissance* as an enjoyment gained in “the path toward death” (Lacan 2007[1991]: 18), which aligns with the argument that the death drive is the inertia of *jouissance*. Žižek (2013: 151, edited) likens this repetitive outwards-and-back movement of drive to that of a boomerang, where “‘hitting the animal [goal]’ changes over into ‘making oneself hit’” in its flying back “upon

¹⁷ We should also note that, for Lacan (1998[1973]: 243), “[...] all desire is not necessarily agitated in the drive. There are empty desires or mad desires that are based on nothing more than the fact that the thing in question has been forbidden you. By virtue of the very fact that it has been forbidden you, you cannot do otherwise, for a time, than think about it. That, too, is desire.” For clarity and to center on the ethical implications of the drive, the empty desire that is not agitated in the drive is not discussed in this thesis.

[...] missing the goal”. Therefore, the way it repeats the failures is the way drive agitates desire. Every time the drive attempts to reach but only ends up circumventing the object a, the unattainable object a remains intact while those that illusorily occupy its place withers. These are those moments of realising “not this” when the bubble of desire breaks, that is, when the misrecognition collapses and the mythical veneer of the object a is removed and reveals the mediocrity of its copy. And the movement of drive continues with yet another outward quest for the impossibility, agitating desire into metonymic slidings. In this sense, we find fantasy and drive as opposite functions. While fantasy sustains desire (Lacan 1998[1973]: 185) that veils the lack, drive agitates desire by unveiling the failure, disrupting the illusion and traversing the fantasies, which facilitates its circling around yet another object.

Lacan (2001[1966]: 133) claims that “desire is a metonymy” as the object of desire is perpetually deferred. In metonymy, “the resistance of signification is maintained, the bar is not crossed, no new signified is produced” (Evans 2006[1996]: 117). This aligns with how the unending movement of desire is but a futile journey after illusions. This tragedy lies in the “intersubjective nature of desire” (Evans 2006[1996]: 109), just as Lacan’s maxim goes, “man’s desire is the desire of the Other” (Lacan 2001[1966]: 201). As such, the fantasy that stages one’s desire is ultimately their way to answer^[F]to^[F]the^[F]enigma of the Other’s^[F]desire, that is, to the question “*Che vuoi?*” or “What do you want from me?” (*Ibid*, 238) We may recall the helpless baby in Section 2.2.1 placed in an environment where need is to be interpreted as demand. Lacan (2017[1998]: 255) stresses that, the point is “not merely frustration” about whether or not the real need is satisfied, what is important is:

[...] in what way the subject has looked for and located this desire of the Other that is the mother's desire. And what matters is to get him to recognize, in relation to this x of desire in the mother, in what way he has been brought to become, or not brought to become, the one who corresponds to it, to become, or not, the desired being.

In other words, the intent of communication alone is sufficient to place the pre-linguistic baby in the face of the problem — to identify the (m)Other’s desire to take a stand in response, whether they choose to become the enigmatic *x* or not and whether they respond or not. And such an intersubjective nature constrains one’s desire to the realm of the Other.

In the section titled *The Paradoxes of Ethics or Have You Acted in Conformity with Your Desire?* in Seminar VII, Lacan (1997[1986]: 319) states an ethical claim that “the only thing of

which one can be guilty is of having given ground relative to one's desire". If the subject of desire is doomed to be caught up in a ceaseless pursuit of the question unanswerable as that limits and bounds the subject (Lacan 1998[1973]: 276) — since the Other is also a barred Other that does not know what they want — why should we hold on to desire? Let us not forget the drive that agitates desire. It is “loss as a force or the force loss exerts on the field of desire” (Dean 2009: 4). It further thrusts the already de-centred desire towards the non-being, the void or the difference-as-gap itself, instead of settling for the temporary illusion of having acquired it. In this manner, the trajectory of the drive, as previously mentioned, is an outwards-and-back boomerang that circumvents the object a for J2. And the trajectory of the desire agitated by the drive will involve circling around one and another fillers of object a and at the same time moving *towards* object a. It is because that a shift from desire towards the drive-agitated desire implies a “pass from the lost object to loss itself as an object”, from “driven by the ‘impossible’ quest for the lost object” to “directly enact the ‘loss’ — the gap, cut, distance — itself” (Žižek 2008: 328). Or rather, this marks a shift from the subject of desire to the subject of jouissance. In the metonymic movement of desire, the drive shouts loudly “Die again, die better” (Zupančič 2017: 106)!

This is how jouissance is gained as a transgression of the symbolic order, underlying which is the neurotic illusion discussed in Section 2.1.3. That is, the supposition that a transgression of the prohibition of jouissance would imply a regaining of the Thing if only debarred. Such a fantasmatic supposition is made possible precisely by the introduction of the symbolic. It supposes that there existed some primordial jouissance *before* the symbolic order, as the “lost” mother-child unity within the primordial real. In light of this, Fink (1996: 87) categorises jouissance into two kinds based on the logical sequence: the primordial jouissance *before* the symbolic castration (J1) and jouissance *after* the symbolic castration (J2), which is the jouissance that we have discussed in Chapter 2. J2 is the remainder of J1, as the “modicum or portion of that real connection” of the mother-child unity that is “refound in fantasy” (*Ibid*, 87), corresponding to the two cases of the unsymbolisable discussed in Section 2.1.1.

Precisely, it is the fantasmatic arrow from J2 to J1 that constructs the underlying logic of the arrow of desire, which maintains the reminiscent link between the object a and the primordial real. However, as discussed, the existence of J1 is also a retroactive construct as a defence mechanism of castration. We might further ask then, why would J2, built on a fantasmatic relationship with the hypothetical J1, be real and irreducible? Indeed, it appears that the true existence of J1 is necessary

for one to enjoy the sufferings in J2 — a suffering becomes sweet when it implies a promise of the return to blissful wholeness. But on second thought we will realise that the merely hypothetical existence of J1 will suffice, as the death drive is established upon and directed towards the very non-being. And there is nothing more indestructible than non-being itself. For Lacan, long live the death.

Based on this, we may say Lacanian psychoanalysis is a monism of the gap that “prevents substance from being-one” (Zupančič 2017: 101). This points out the traumatic nature of the gap as well as its dynamics with the detotalising function, which provides an ethical insight into the radical result of one’s entanglement in the dynamics — to become the subject of jouissance that traverses fantasies by subjectifying the trauma and thus identifying with one’s own symptom of repetitions as one’s own fate. This indicates “a shift in the subject’s position toward the Other such that the subject of speech can claim that fate as its own, can assume the Other’s desire as its own, and thereby ‘choose’ to be what it is by fate” (Hurst 2014: 38). In this sense, while for Lacan, there is no end to this traumatic repetition as discussed in Section 2.2.1, our relationship with trauma is alterable. “‘Godot’ can never arrive because he is just a name for nothingness, for a central absence” (Žižek 1991: 145), but the very impossibility of waiting has become the purpose. This is what the ethical dimension of jouissance reminds us: there is yet still freedom we can gain *after* symbolic castration, which is, again, a traumatic one. As Žižek (2003: 129) remarks,

There is no freedom outside the traumatic encounter with the opacity of the Other’s desire: freedom does not mean that I simply get rid of the Other’s desire — I am, as it were, thrown into my freedom when I confront this opacity as such, deprived of the fantasmatic cover that tells me what the Other wants from me. In this difficult predicament, full of anxiety, when I know that the Other wants something from me, without knowing what this desire is, I am thrown back into myself, compelled to assume the risk of freely determining the coordinates of my desire.

4.1.2. Deleuze: Death and Arrowless Desire

In Section 3.2.2, I have shown how Deleuze advocates repetition in the third synthesis of time that repeats only for *itself*, not any object that is from or related to the past or the other. In the third synthesis of time, there is no subject that desires nor object that is desired, but only the flow of desire. As Stevenson (2021: 9) emphasises, “Death is not an end to life, but an end to the directedness of desire”. For Deleuze, there should ultimately not be any arrow of desire as Lacan

arguably suggests, since beneath the ostensibly structured relationship of the subject and the Other in terms of desire, there lies an always chaotic, excessive and arrowless production of desubjectified desire (Colebrook 2003: 100), just as how difference-as-flux is a differential field of intensity that generates novelty. The subject, to a certain extent, is but a *desire-vehicle* for such production. In other words, rather than explaining the origin of desire based on the *lack* of the subject as Lacan does, Deleuze insists that desire is a for-itself production.

Traces of the “arrowlessness” of desire can already be found in Deleuze’s development of three syntheses of time, as explored in Section 3.1.2. Along with the active syntheses that provide the structure of the subject, there are always passive syntheses that function at a deeper level for Deleuze that can disrupt such structure. We will now focus more on exactly how the three syntheses account for a Deleuzian model of desire.

We know that in the first synthesis of time, only the living present actually exists. Without memory, each present moment becomes exhausted when it reaches its own limit and refreshes. The larval subjects, those little selves, are thus living in “primary vital sensibility” (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 73) and affirming multiple local satisfactions. For Deleuze, at such “urgency of life” (*Ibid*, 78), *need* cannot be the basic element to account for the precondition of the genesis of desire because need is conceptualised by active syntheses, that is, “the passage from spontaneous imagination to the active faculties of reflective representation, memory and intelligence” (*Ibid*, 77). The way Deleuze sees it, before the subject conceptualises the need of milk, for example, there are already “all the little powers that make up appetite, sensation, perception, nutrition [...] a whole expansive network of contracted elements” (Schuster 2016: 55) that lurk around the body of the subject.

In light of this, if the Lacanian baby is captured in the inevitable development of desire as “demand minus need”, as discussed in Section 2.2.1, the Deleuzian baby is rather oscillating between “contraction and fatigue” (Schuster 2016: 55). For Deleuze, when the baby is thirsty, they do not immediately think “I *need* milk” and connect such thirst to a *lack* of milk or even a *lack* of being taken care of, which can inevitably relate to “a demand for love” (Evans 2006[1996]: 38). In the immediacy between desire and reality, there are only chapped lips, dry tongue, and sore throat to be sensed, and the contraction of these free-flowing senses constitutes the little selves. This is why Deleuze argues that need should not be the starting point to develop a model of desire — not

only that desire is not derived from need, but rather the needs are representation derived from desire (Holland 2005: 54).

In the second synthesis of time, the past or memory allows the subject to form an ostensible unity of the I. The “I” looks to establish “objectal relations” (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 99), that is, it attempts to find the object of desire. For example, a real mother is such a *real* object of desire which has global and totalisable character conceptualised upon active syntheses (*Ibid*, 101). However, Deleuze (*Ibid*, 101) again constructs a corresponding type of passive synthesis that always “points beyond itself towards the contemplation of partial objects which remain non-totalisable”, and these partial objects are what Deleuze calls *virtual* objects. The fingers that the baby puts into their mouth for sucking are virtual objects as such (*Ibid*, 99).

The key point is that, while real objects and virtual objects are two correlative series, the two essentially differ in kind. Real objects are the product of active syntheses of the I based on the self-preservative principle. I *must* recognise *who* is the real mother of mine, otherwise I could die of hunger. This intention identifies a totalisable character who feeds me. And virtual objects are the product of passive syntheses of the I based on Eros, which is the sexual drive as well as “the seeker after memories” (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 274) that asks: *what* are the objects that give me pleasure and *how* do they make me feel? Deducted from the real mother, the object of desire becomes the virtual object, the breast, the fingers, and then perhaps some distinct taste when the baby sucks the fingers. Indeed, virtual objects are “shreds of pure past” (*Ibid*, 101) that Eros “tears [...] out of the pure past and gives them to us in order that they may be lived” (*Ibid*, 103), and so each virtual object is an Erotic repetition of difference that does not have an inherent connection with each other. As Deleuze (*Ibid*, 106) remarks, “desire finds the principle of its difference from need in the virtual object, so it appears neither as a power of negation nor as an element of an opposition”. Based on this, it is not merely a lack of milk (negation); and the objectal relation is not merely the feeder and the fed (opposition). Before such oppositions are established, desire is rather “a questioning, problematising and searching force which operates in a different domain” (*Ibid*, 106), and each object is a provisional node in this flow of search, just as the dynamic relations between the virtual and the actual as discussed in Section 3.1.1. Such a flow of desire has no end, because for Deleuze (*Ibid*, 105) there is never an original object to satisfy desire: Eros symbolises the process of the constant displacements of x in that search for object = x .

It should be noted that Deleuze (1994[1968]: 101) actually credits the affinity of the virtual object to Lacan's object a, particularly in that they both concern a lack, with the virtual object lacking "something in itself [...] always half of itself, the other half being different as well as absent" (*Ibid*, 102). And the flow of desire through virtual objects also shares certain similarities with Lacan's metonymy of desire. However, despite recognising the lacking character, Deleuze resists to see this lack as negative, or as Schuster (2016: 60, *italic added*) writes, "this lack equally manifests itself in the form of *surplus*". We may say that this surplus is an expression of difference-as-flux, in that although the virtual object lacks something, it is equally a "fragment protrudes from the totality" (*Ibid*, 60) and affirmed as itself, not just a copy of the same. Based on this, "constitutive lack and excessive presence [...] are the traits that give the object its singular charge, making it a motor of displacement and drift" (*Ibid*, 60).

We might further ask: does such a description not imply that desire has an arrow pointing to that object = x ? Deleuze (1994[1968]: 109) indeed warns us about the risk to turn the pure past to assume "the status of a former present" and forms the illusion that such status of a former present is an original that is now lost, which inevitably establishes a haunting arrow towards that original former present. Therefore, as we have seen in Section 3.1.2, Deleuze introduces the pure and empty form of time, the future or Death, to overturn this second synthesis of time. If in the first synthesis of time, fatigue marks the point where the self cannot contract anymore (*Ibid*, 77), then in the second synthesis of time, amnesia is what destroy the correlation between Eros and the pure past (*Ibid*, 111): Eros, once seeking after memories to repeat, becomes desexualised and without memories in the face of Death. It is precisely in such encounters, difference-as-flux manifests itself and completely removes the arrow of desire. In this sense, we may summarise that for Deleuze, desiring upon lack is "a relation between terms — the desire of the subject and the absent object, which they lack" (Colebrook 2003: 99). Such desiring upon lack is essentially a *re*-production that strives for an *other* thing, such as Lacanian object a, while Deleuzian desire is an arrowless¹⁸ production for *itself*, with the subject being one of the desire-vehicles, themselves and their act are actualised responses to the Idea of desire and constitute parts of the play of desire itself. As summarised succinctly by Stevenson (2021: 9), "Desire is not interrupted or cut off by death, nor

¹⁸ It should be highlighted, however, that "arrowless" refers to a state without any given directions. Deleuze does not deny the actuality of arrowed desire generated by the activity of Eros.

is production arrested by death — rather, the desiring and producing in the model of death is one in which there is no singular or structured aim for desire.”

4.2. The Logics of Squeeze and Superposition

Section 4.1 has described and explained Lacan’s and Deleuze’s respective views on the arrow of desire which are closely related to their divergent interpretations of difference. For Lacan, the arrow of desire is inevitable, and the subject should insist on the arrowed desire so that they may alter their relation with trauma by identifying with their own symptom of repetition; for Deleuze, however, the directedness of desire can be removed to liberate desire when Eros is desexualised in the face of Death. In this following section, we will further explore the divergence between difference-as-gap and difference-as-flux in terms of two logics: squeeze and superposition.

4.2.1. Lacan: Squeeze

I propose that Lacan’s approach as a monism of the gap reveals a logic of *squeeze*, where the gap appears as an effect of a squeeze. Squeeze is not simple opposition. Just like difference-as-gap is not simply the gap standing *between* the symbolic and real, but the real that “suffers from the signifier” as the real gap *within* the symbolic. The nuance between these two interpretations lies in that, the latter interpretation considers each element, though distinct from the other, as fundamentally intimately shaped by the other so that one (the squeezed) is conditioned by the other (the squeezing) and thus embodying structural affinity to the other’s. Just like by squeezing the left hand with the right hand, we see the two share the gap in between as their structural intimacy, so that the contour of the left hand is conditioned by the contour of the right hand, which structures the left hand with certain right-handness and vice versa. In this light, the neurotic subjectivity is thus based on radical ex-centricity and extimacy in the squeezing relation between the subject and signifier, between the subject and the Other, which is not a simple opposition between interiority and exteriority. As such, “the unconscious is structured like a language” (Lacan 1999[1975]: 15), “man’s desire is the desire of the Others” (Lacan 2001[1966]: 201), and that “The unconscious is

the discourse of the Other” (*Ibid*, 130). However, this does not ensure a total dissolution of the boundary between the subject and signifier or between the subject and the Other like what Deleuze may intend by generalised exteriority as discussed in Section 3.2.1. Rather, this makes Lacanian subjectivity of porosity and extimacy bear both interiority and exteriority and therefore entangled in their tension.

A squeeze is a liminal status with both the features of a split and a knot, absence and excess, which predestines the complex relation between the Lacanian subject and the unsymbolisable gap that is prone to fall into repetition automaton. When the squeeze marks a knot and excess, one thirsts for the gap as a breathing space; when it implies a split and absence, one desires the bridging of the gap. Corresponding to such liminal duality of the squeezing relation, the Other is always either “too much or too little” (Johnston 2023: Section 2.1.3), too close or too far for the porous subject. In Section 2.2.1, we have seen the subject that is always in the squeezing relation from even before their subjectification. At first, it was a suffocating excess of anxiety when the yet-to-be subject cannot figure out what the (m)Other desires, just like being in a crocodile’s open maw that could close at any moment. One cannot but yearn for a gap opened up by the roller, the symbolic phallus, which prevents the sudden closing of the mouth by substituting and pinning down the mysterious desire of the (m)Other with signifiers. This in turn marks the gap as a traumatic split and vexing absence that is never to be truly filled, but only to be masked by fantasmatic bubbles. As such, the liminal status of squeeze accounts for the paradoxical coexistence of the inevitable resort to gap and the desire of bridging the gap in repetition automaton.

It is precisely because of the liminal duality of squeeze as both a split and a knot that the gap can appear so close to its own disappearance. In other words, the gap can appear to oscillate between its presence and ostensible disappearance. It ostensibly disappears precisely when the gap is turned into its fantasmatic object form as object a, as discussed in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.3. This is how the intimate link to its own disappearance invites fantasmatic bridgings of the gap. It is under this flickering guidance that the subject goes on its impossible journey for object a. The “oscillating” effect of the gap demonstrates how the real gap is linked to the “lost” primordial real as its splinter, and J2 linked to J1. Nevertheless, as emphasised, the gap is rather the ontological non-being that ultimately frustrates any attempts of fantasmatic bridgings. In this sense, such liminal duality of squeeze holds true only in terms of its effect, as the gap only *appears* to oscillate in fantasy.

It takes three in play in the squeezing relation. The gap as the effect of squeeze implies the third element in play, that is, the symbolic order as a shared “symbolic pact” that structures “the social laws of exchange” (Evans 2006[1996]: 99). In this light, the symbolic order is the operating mechanism that runs the squeeze. A squeezing relation that consists of the squeezed and the squeezing may confuse us with the oppositional relation in the traditional master-slave dialectic, but the squeeze is much more complex than that. Lacan draws on the master-slave dialectic in the sense of the intersubjective nature of desire as discussed in Section 4.1.1, given that man’s “first object(ive) is to be recognized by the other” (Lacan 2006[2002]: 222). However, the logic of squeeze transcends the oppositional dialectic by introducing the symbolic dimension which involves the issue of symbolic identification. That is, for Lacan, the recognition that is desired is ultimately a symbolic recognition based on the shared symbolic pact, which produces subjectivity by positioning the subject “in the circuit of exchange” (Frosh 1997: 236-237). Indeed, the squeezed forms an identity of themselves in the squeeze. The relation between the two mediated by the third therefore cannot be reduced to simply oppositional. As such, intersubjectivity and the symbolic foundation of identification together explains why the squeezed, as the porous Lacanian subject, is shaped by the squeezing so that the squeezed embodies structural affinity to the other’s.

Like Deleuze, Lacan (2006[2002]: 96) also cited Rimbaud’s “I is an other”. However, while the Deleuzian subject gains a desubjectified perspective when becoming an other, the Lacanian subject becomes an other in subjectification. This is due to a difference of scope between the two, which will be discussed in Section 5.3. In this sense, arguably, the logic of squeeze applies to the neurotic subjects, that is, those that have undergone symbolic castration but still with a remainder. We should therefore distinguish the logic of squeeze from that of the desubjectified perspective of the master who, to some degree, has transcended the symbolic order. Ultimately, psychoanalysis is of clinical significance that helps one to better deal with their symptoms, in a way, to situate the extraordinary in the ordinary. Therefore it is important for psychoanalysis to explore the logic of squeeze and the traumatic difference-as-gap that is inherent in repetition automaton. It is not the aim of Lacanian psychoanalysis to resolve or remove the logic of squeeze¹⁹, as it is also what underlies subjectification and identification. The end of analysis, for Lacan, is “identification with

¹⁹ “The aim of Lacanian psychoanalysis is not the removal of neurotic symptoms, since when one neurotic symptom disappears it is often simply replaced by another.” (Evans 2006[1996]: 205)

the *sinthome*” (Evans 2006[1996]: 54), since symptom is one’s true identity, as Žižek (2008: 81) remarks,

[...] symptom, conceived as *sinthome*, is literally our only substance, the only positive support of our being, the only point that gives consistency to the subject. In other words, symptom is the way we — the subjects — ‘avoid madness’, the way we ‘choose something (the symptom-formation) instead of nothing (radical psychotic autism, the destruction of the symbolic universe)’ through the binding of our enjoyment to a certain signifying, symbolic formation which assures a minimum of consistency to our being-in-the-world. [...] The analysis achieves its end when the patient is able to recognize, in the Real of his symptom, the only support of his being.

4.2.2. Deleuze: Superposition

The linear narration of the three syntheses of time may confuse us that each synthesis takes place one by one, with the previous one determining the latter one or the latter one overcoming the previous one, particularly the future or Death can easily be understood as the climax that ends the past and the present. However, the three syntheses of time actually “occur simultaneously” (Stevenson 2021: 11) with no end goals. In other words, the three times coexist without competing to cancel each other out. Such an image of coexistence is very common in Deleuze’s interpretations of reality in terms of different topics, as we have seen in the cases of difference and desire. As such, I propose that when Deleuze models reality, he holds a logic of *superposition*, that is, reality is able to be in multiple states simultaneously, and each state is affirmed positively. The existence of any state does not encroach on the “territory” of any other states, and there is no state that is superior and overrides other states.

How is this logic of superposition established? We can recall the univocity of being as discussed in Section 3.2.2 that everything exists in a single and same sense. In the same vein, all things come into being for their own sakes, rather than through negation and opposition: white exists firstly as white itself, not as the opposite to black. To better understand this, we may look at how Deleuze adopts Nietzsche’s argument of the points of view of the slave and the master in, “the point of view of the slave [...] draws from ‘No’ the phantom of an affirmation, and the point of view of the ‘master’ [...] draws from ‘Yes’ a consequence of negation and destruction”, and so the former is “the point of view of the conservers of old values” while the latter is “that of the creators of new values” (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 54).

The essential distinction between the point of view of the master and that of the slave lies in whether they initiate in an *active* or *reactive* manner. The slave reacts to the action of the master and labels himself as the acted-upon of the evil act by the master, which is a point of view that is based on an illusory relation of opposition. However, from the point of view of the master, they are only exercising their natural power. As Somers-Hall (2013: 40) writes, “there is no hidden subject behind the act”, which means that the master is not an agent that performs an act, rather, it is the power itself that manifests in the master through the act. We can therefore discern an affinity between this point of view of the master and the act of the Deleuzian subject in the face of Death: the master does not react to the power but *act* it; similarly, as discussed in Section 3.1.2, the Deleuzian subject does not react to Death but lets it happen and experiments with it. In order not to confuse the active/reactive comparison with the active/passive aspects of the subject in Deleuze’s three syntheses of time, we may understand it in this way: for Deleuze, when the subject *actively* synthesises the given, they are actually doing it in a *reactive* manner, that is, reacting to the given. Only when the subject loses oneself through *passive* synthesis, they just let the power of life be, and that is an *act* of life. In this vein, we have the best definition of positive affirmation: a thing, an event, or a power is affirmed for itself, not through any oppositional relation.

And if we apply this point of view of the master to the logic of superposition, it should make more sense now. Positivity can sustain itself by affirming, rather than by negation of the negation; and when everything is affirmed positively, there is no need to maintain the master-slave structure — at the very least there is no dominated structure. From this perspective, it is viable that everyone can be the master, affirming their own existence and happenings and exercising their own power in *encounters*. As Deleuze puts it, “[Becomings] is not one term which becomes the other, but each encounters the other, a single becoming which is not common to the two, since they have nothing to do with one another” (Deleuze, Parnet 1987[1977]: 6; edited). The logic of superposition cultivates the coexistence of multiplicity, the being-as-becoming, in that “the conjunction AND is, neither a union, nor a juxtaposition, but the birth of a stammering, the outline of a broken line which always sets off at right angles, a sort of active and creative line of flight” (*Ibid*, 9-10).

In light of this, we can see that the logic of superposition differs sharply from the logic of opposition in that opposition always leads to a pair of positivity and negativity, of primary and secondary, of the actor and the acted-upon. As Deleuze (1994[1968]: 168) points out, opposition would induce the “illusory choice” that “either being is full positivity, pure affirmation, but

undifferentiated being, without difference; or being includes differences, it is Difference and there is non-being, a being of the negative”. This remark on opposition can be taken as a potential criticism Deleuze has towards psychoanalysis, which arguably oscillates between the full positivity of the primordial real and the non-being of difference-as-gap. However, as argued in Section 4.2.1, Lacan’s logic of squeeze has a very nuanced yet decisive difference from that of general opposition between two. It is more of a liminal duality of squeezing relation that makes the gap appear oscillating between statuses of wholeness and non-being, but only the latter is real. Therefore, Deleuze’s critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis may not be accurate enough. Moreover, Deleuze’s critique may instead be complementary to their shared discontent towards general opposition. I will further discuss this complementarity in Section 5.2.

At this stage, we also need to ask why Deleuze insists on a logic of superposition. On the one hand, superposition is fully compatible with Deleuze’s metaphysical construction, namely his philosophy of immanence. On the other hand, superposition reflects Deleuze’s ethical attitude towards life. Deleuze (2002[1995]: 27) defines immanence as “only when immanence is no longer immanence to anything other than itself that we can speak of a plane of immanence”, and precisely this pure immanence is “A LIFE [...] the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence [...] complete power, complete bliss” (*Ibid*, 27). Immanence is what Deleuze uses to refute any traditional transcendental principles that are posited higher than life. For Deleuze, Life is all there is and that which provides the condition for everything else, including transcendence. Life is One, but it is also “the index of a multiplicity” (*Ibid*, 30), which corresponds to univocity of being. Life repeats itself indefinitely, bringing forth difference-in-flux. Stevenson (2021: 212) stresses a neglect of Life in the master-slave dialectic, “When two self-conscious consciousnesses try to consume one another, that is, try to negate one another, each holds its life as worth less than the need for self-certainty.” Indeed, Deleuze might have acknowledged the inevitability of certain images of thought (*Ibid*, 198), including the master-slave dialectic, but he would nevertheless advocate that it is an illusion that emerges within life, just as negation is “an epiphenomenon [...] the ripples in a pond, [...] the effect of an affirmation which is too strong or too different” (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 54). If, as mentioned in Section 4.1.1, for Lacan, long live the death (non-being); then for Deleuze, long live Life (being-as-becoming).

5. What Is Illusory and What Is Real?

In Chapter 4 we have seen a much deeper divergence behind the duality of difference, and now we will proceed to mutual criticism which will be unfolded with my visualised model based on a modification of the Klein bottle. From the perspective of the repetition of difference, the mutual criticism will centre around the controversy between the two views over the question: what is illusory and what is real?

5.1. The Model of Klein Bottle

Based on what has been explored so far in the thesis, I modify the Klein bottle to model the gap-flux duality of difference as revealed by Lacan's and Deleuze's theories. The idea of constructing a visualised model was initially inspired by Shixima's (2016)²⁰ mention of using the model of a circular cone to represent Lacan's and Deleuze's respective views of subjectivity. In Shixima's conception, the Lacanian subject and the Deleuzian subject are placed at the same location (the middle) as the starting point in a circular cone which represents the symbolic order, and they both attempt to break out of it. However, "The Lacanian subject has a hole at the apex of [the] circular cone", while "the Deleuzian subject has only the bottom of [the] circular cone" which is "an anarchy of drives and sensations" (*Ibid*, 12; edited). Therefore, "Lacan tries to breakout the structure by going upward, whereas Deleuze tries to breakout the structure simply by going downward from the bottom, [...] biological or organic real existence" (*Ibid*, 12).

²⁰ Shixima's (2016) article was originally published in Japanese, therefore, in the list of references please see 志紀島啓 (2016). However, the quoted passages are retrieved from the English version which can be found in Shixima's Academia page at https://www.academia.edu/36027252/Deleuze_the_most_virtual_autism_Review_of_the_schizo_concept.

I do not fully agree with Shixima's model for two main reasons. Firstly, although the Lacanian subject attempts to break out the symbolic structure, it is precisely these attempts of impossibility that consist of the repetitions of the death drive. For Lacan, simply leaving the symbolic is neither possible nor the ethical aim of the Lacanian subject. Secondly, as we have discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, what Deleuze refers to as "sensibility" is not merely the biological ones but the transcendental ones that can be experienced only through a singular condition, namely Death. Therefore, it is not necessarily that the Deleuzian subject moves in an obviously opposite direction from the Lacanian subject — what if they actually move towards the same direction, but due to different conceptions of reality, the Deleuzian subject is somehow able to move "further" than the Lacanian subject, or rather, the Lacanian subject is aiming precisely at the very impossibility of reaching the gap as the death itself? In light of this, I construct a model using the Klein bottle to visually demonstrate the trajectories of the movement of the Lacanian subject and the Deleuzian subject in terms of their respective manners of repetition. It should be noted that the model is not a final resolution to attempt to merge the two views, since, as will be discussed shortly, the duality itself is also irreducible. It is firstly a visual aid to help us summarise important points that have been explored and allows us to compare the two views so that the fundamental convergence and divergence can be revealed; moreover, it arguably presents the different scopes of the two views which illustrates the complementarity and the irreducibility of the duality.

Before we proceed to mutual criticism, it would be useful to get familiar with the structure of the Klein bottle. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Klein bottle itself has four main locations: inside-inside, inside-outside, outside-inside, and outside-outside, as well as two entries: the neck of the bottle as the entry of inside-outside and the bottom of the bottle as the entry of outside-outside. That is, the neck of the bottle is that through which the subject is potentially able to enter the inside-outside, and the bottom of the bottle is open to the outside-outside.

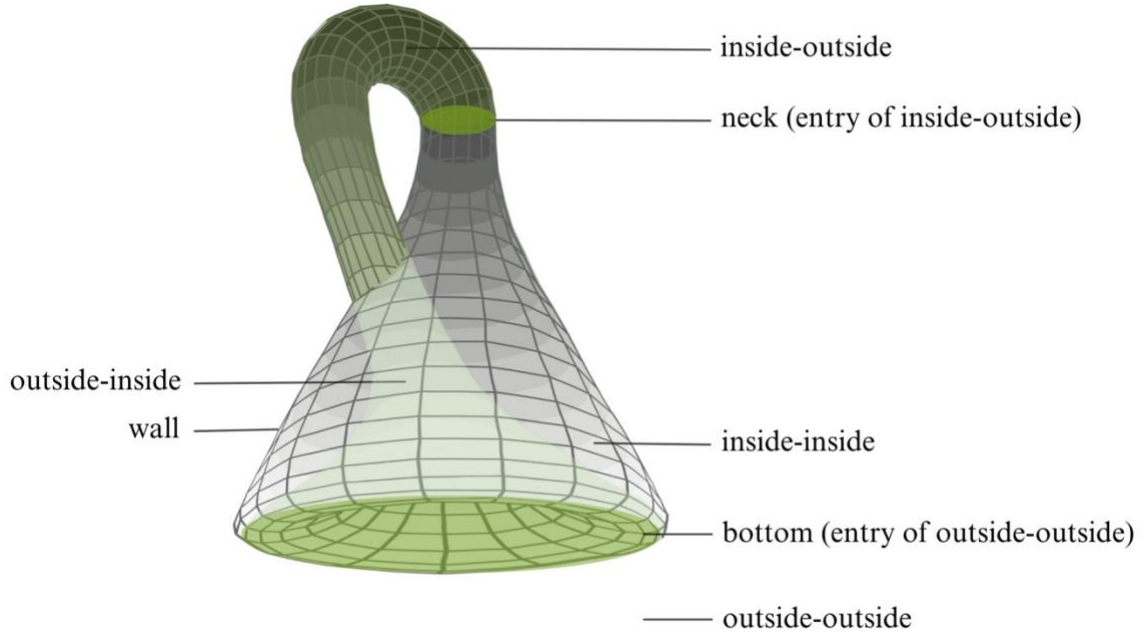


Figure 1. The structure and important locations of the Klein bottle model

We will firstly look at the case of the Lacanian subject's repetition from the front view (see Figure 2), where the Lacanian subject, located in the inside-inside, is approaching the neck of the bottle in a spiral ascent. For the Lacanian subject, the neck is difference-as-gap, the re-encounters with which the subject gains jouissance (J2); the bottom is the hypothetical primordial real or where the primordial jouissance (J1) is located; and there is a fantasmatic passage between the two as elaborated in Chapter 2. The wall of the bottle is the network of signifiers which makes it possible for the subject to climb upwards but also constrains the subject firmly to the wall. The fantasies are the constructions of reality through the symbolic order, which also appear as the projections of object a; they provide (temporary) coordinates of desire for the subject by stabilising the subject in a movement around it. Nevertheless, the drive agitates the desire stabilised by its outwards-and-back boomerang momentum, which results in the spiral ascent that traverses the fantasies. If we look at the Lacan's bottle from the top view (see Figure 3), we will see the centripetal spiral movements arrowed towards difference-as-gap, but stops just short of touching it for, as it is an impossibility quest.

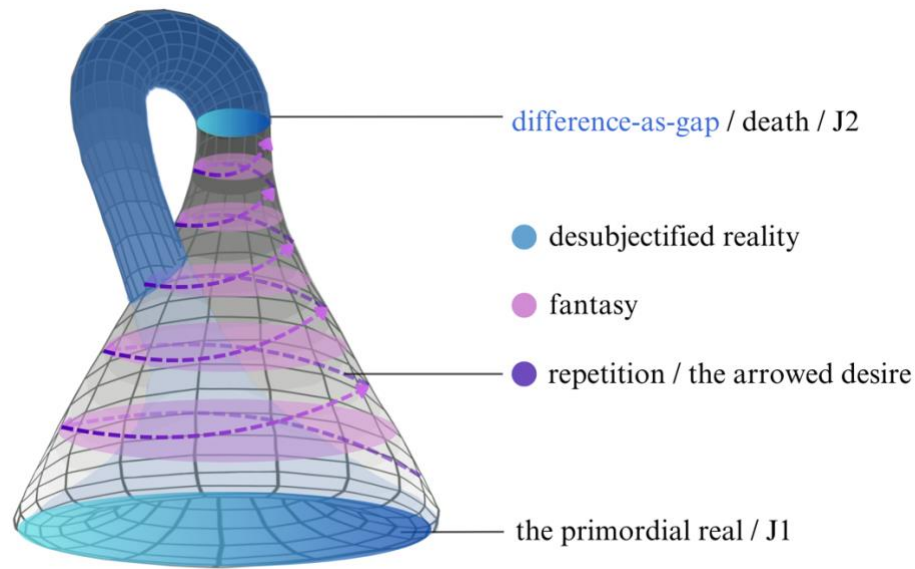


Figure 2. The repetition of the Lacanian subject in the Klein bottle model (Front view)

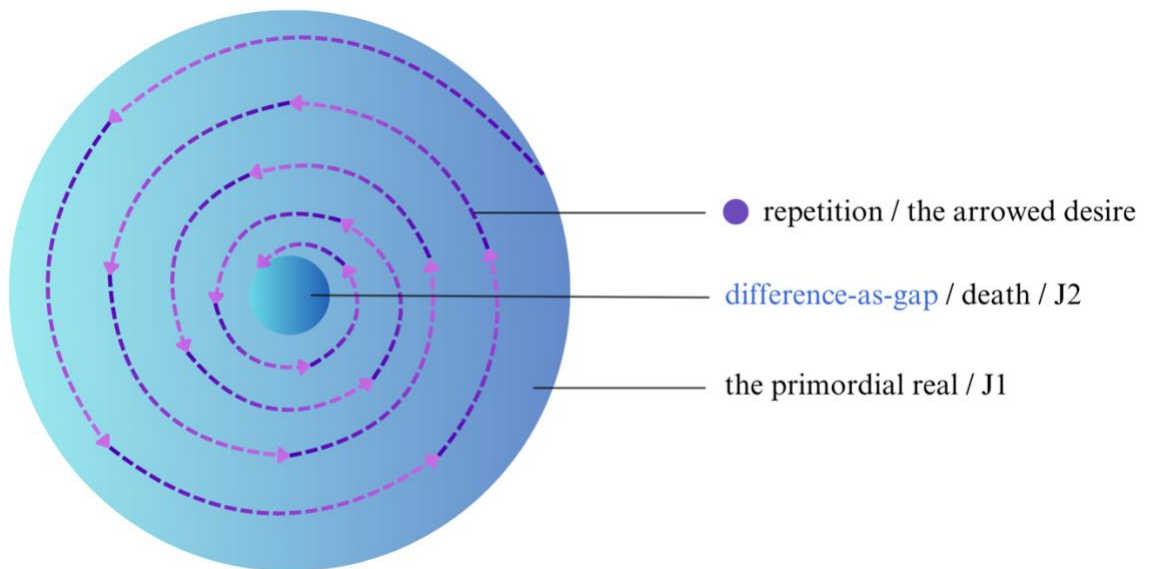


Figure 3. The repetition of the Lacanian subject in the Klein bottle model (Top view)

Next, let us turn to the case of the Deleuzian subject's repetition from the front view (see Figure 4). The inside-inside of the bottle refers to the register of the past or memory, corresponding to the symbolic order in Lacan's bottle. Upon the awareness of the caesura within the I, the Deleuzian subject repeats *beyond* the neck of the bottle, that is, in the outside-inside of the bottle.

Unlike the Lacanian subject, for Deleuze “Beyond the limit of the self [the I] is not nothingness, but a place in which thinking must be forced into action to reconfigure the relations that compose the subject or object” (Stevenson 2021: 218; edited). In other words, beyond Death is precisely where the subject is desubjectified and individuation-dramatisation takes place for desire to become an arrowless flow towards the immanence of Life. And the bottom of the bottle is rather *groundless* “where the ground was abolished” (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 292). If we look at the Deleuze’s bottle from the top view (see Figure 5), it would be more clear how Death plays a role of destabiliser of the subject and the subjectified reality — not a murderer of life, “not in opposition to anything, rather it is as necessary as life in providing a means of creativity and growth” (Stevenson 2021: 41).

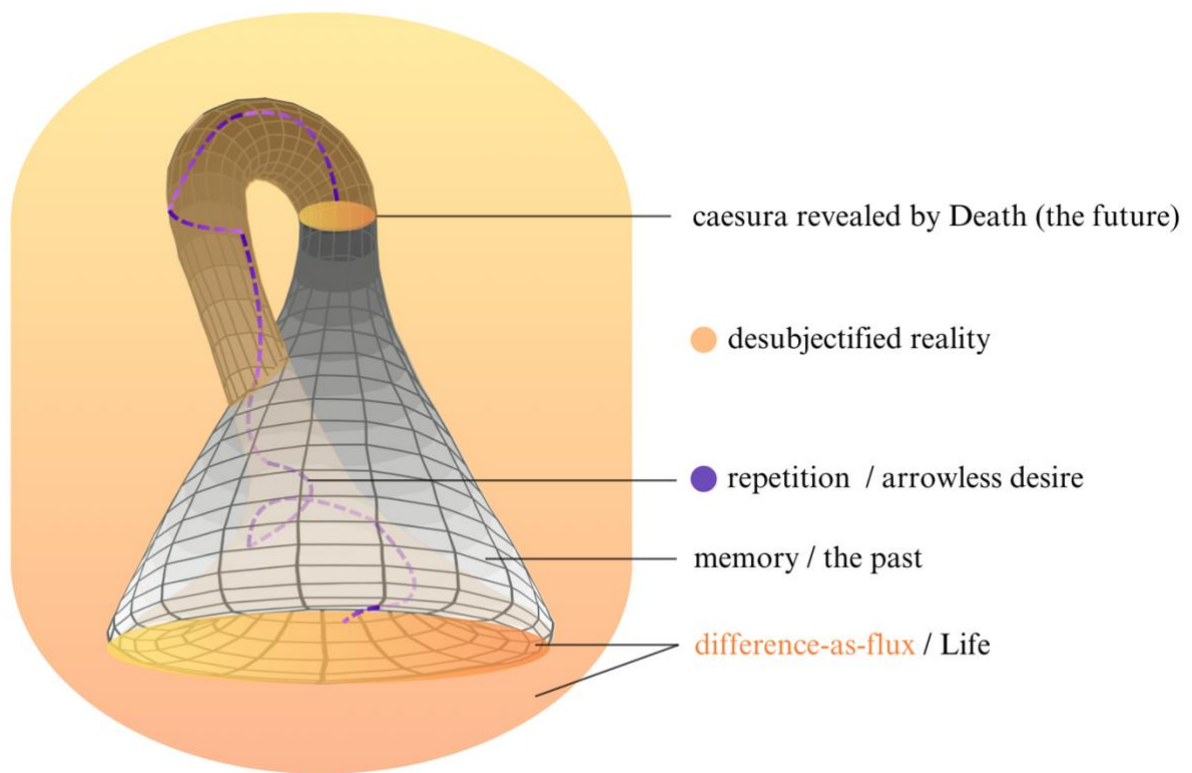


Figure 4. The repetition of the Deleuzian subject in the Klein bottle model (Front view)

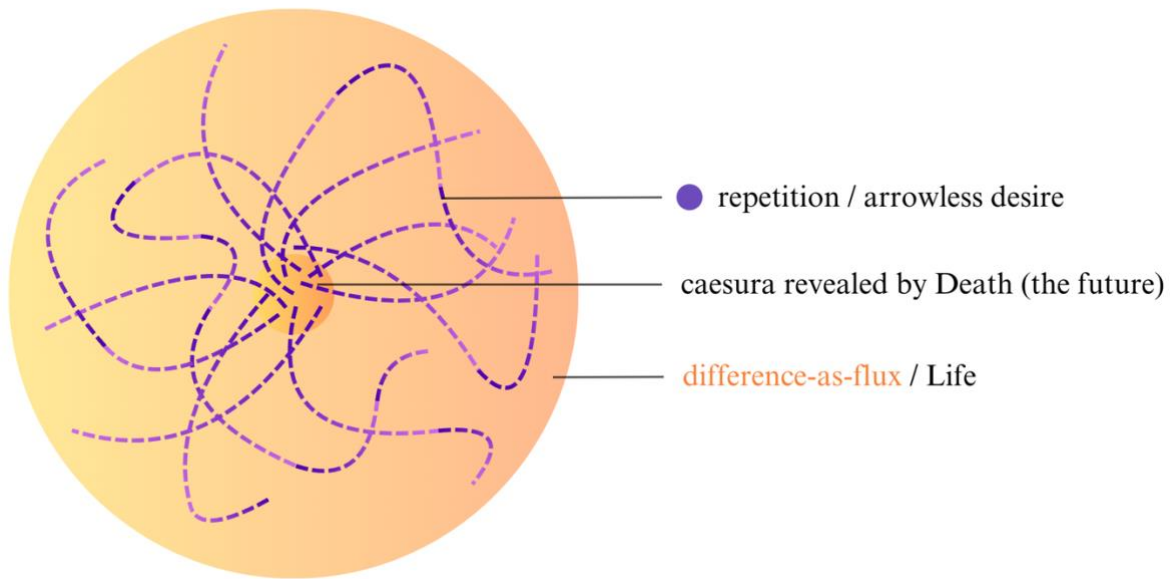


Figure 5. The repetition of the Deleuzian subject in the Klein bottle model (Top view)

Now if we compare Figures 2 and 4, we can see the correspondence of the two bottles in terms of their necks and bottoms. The two bottles are comparable in that: for both bottles, the neck is the *condition* for the unity of the subject and the object, and the bottom is the *state* of such a unity. For Lacan, the primordial real as the primordial oneness is such a state of unity between the subject and the object, and difference-as-gap is arguably the condition for such unity, since it functions as the real splinter of the primordial real. For Deleuze, Death is the singular condition for the subject to plunge into when difference-as-flux, or more precisely, the immanence of Life is where unity between the subject and the object is actualised.

In this regard, the fundamental divergence between Lacan and Deleuze is revealed by their different views on what is real and what is illusory. For Lacan, the primordial real at the bottom is but a hypothetical unity that is retroactively constructed by neurotic illusion. Nevertheless, the gap is real in an ontological sense, that is, only the neck as negative non-being is real. In Lacan's view, the immediacy between desire and reality that is realised in the bottom of the Deleuze's bottle would be illusory. By contrast, for Deleuze, the murder of the thing by signifier as proposed by Lacan would be illusory, which is to say that the neck interpreted by Lacan as difference-as-gap or negative non-being would be illusory. If, for Lacan, anything beyond the neck interpreted as difference-as-gap is impossible, then Deleuze not only proposes that the neck interpreted as caesura

is an *actual* entry leading to the bottom but also declares the bottom and beyond interpreted as difference-as-flux or positive being-as-becoming is real in an ontological sense. In short, for Deleuze, the Lacanian death is illusory, while the Deleuzian Life is the ultimate reality.

5.2. Two Repetitions and (Beyond) Impossibility

As already stated in Chapter 1, the Lacanian subject and the Deleuzian subject seek and attempt to repeat difference each in a singular manner — what exactly is *this* difference to be repeated? Through the thesis we have come to understand that Lacan and Deleuze posit this difference as gap or flux, but before this divergence there was a convergence that they both reject the possibility of the repetition of the same. As Zupančič (2008: 171) summarises, both Lacan and Deleuze realise “the difference between the fact that we *can* tell something in hundred different ways, and the fact that we *cannot*, absolutely not (not even by literally repeating it) tell something in only one way”, and this “persistent failure of repetition” (*Ibid*, 172) of the same provokes Lacan and Deleuze to focus on “the only thing that repeats without fail is difference itself” (*Ibid*, 172).

For Deleuze, the failure of repetition of the same implies the “pure affirmation” (Zupančič 2008: 172) of difference-as-flux, which is to say that it is the bottom of the bottle to be repeated. Deleuze reminds us that we should not regard repetition as an once-and-for-all “*historical fact*” (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 90; *italic added*) since this would presuppose the totalisation and identification of difference-as-flux which debases its virtuality and reduces its irreducibility. Each repetition is an actualised expression of difference-as-flux; furthermore, as Deleuze (*Ibid*, 90; *italic added*) asserts, it is “rather the historical *condition* under which something new is effectively produced”.

However, for Lacan, it is the neck of the bottle, namely difference-as-gap that is to be repeated, and *this* repetition of difference has been overlooked by Deleuze. While Lacan (1998[1973]: 61) recognises “Repetition demands the new”, he nevertheless argues for “a diversity that belongs to a different order than variety and novelty” (Zupančič 2008: 173) that Deleuze proposes. That is to say, for Lacan, the failure of repetition of the same is due to the fact that “the same” never existed in the very first place, just like the primordial real. And therefore what truly exists, instead, is the non-being of it. The liminal duality of squeeze discussed in Section 4.2.1

indicates, instead of difference-as-flux, it is difference-as-gap with “oscillating” effect that “disturb[s] the pure failure of repetition” (*Ibid*, 172; edited) of the same as something “fleeting, elusive, something perceptible at one moment and gone the next” (*Ibid*, 172). For the Lacanian subject, such fleeting *impossibility* is precisely what is aimed at in repetition due to its relation to the hypothetical primordial real and, paradoxically, it is also the very limit of the Lacanian subject beyond which there is nothingness. In this sense, the repetition of difference-as-gap becomes a stabilised movement endlessly going for and halted by the impossibility where the subject may eventually arrive at an identification of that impossibility.

This leads us to another question to which Deleuze’s answer diverges from Lacan: is there still ontological reality beyond this impossibility? Deleuze would be absolutely positive about it, or rather, he would warn us that this question can conceal a misconception arising from a perspective of transcendence. That “ontological reality *beyond* this impossibility” would indicate an *outside*, “outside thought or outside perception” (Colebrook 2003: xxiv) if we assume a perspective of transcendence, and this would evoke obvious difficulties of substantiating the possibility of existence outside thought and perception as a *human*. However, if we adopt a perspective of Deleuzian immanence which was discussed in Section 4.2.2, then just as Colebrook (*Ibid*, xxiv) explains,

Immanence [...] has no outside and nothing other than itself. [...] The power of creation does not lie outside the world like some separate and judging God; life itself is a process of creative power. Thought is not set over against the world such that it represents the world; thought is a part of the flux of the world. To think is not to represent life but to transform and act upon life.

With Deleuze’s philosophy of immanence, we are able to transcend our own limitations without going *outside* Life. Life is immanently “a luminous and sonorous multiplicity” (Berressem 2020: 187), not illuminated by any transcendence outside of it. Williams (2005[2003]: 56) reminds us that for Deleuze, “Difference is not a limit that stands as the origin or the end of a process of identification” — otherwise, it would be difficult to distinguish it from the construction of the tradition of transcendental philosophy or Lacanian impossibility. Rather, Williams (*Ibid*, 56) proceeds, “difference is that which turns all representations into illusions — identity is only a cloak thrown over deeper pure differences”. In Section 4.2.2, we have seen that Deleuze criticises the choice oscillating between being as undifferentiated full positivity and non-being as the negative. In order not to get caught on this dilemma caused by negation and opposition, Deleuze advances

we should instead “say both that being is full positivity and pure affirmation, and that there is (non)-being which is the being of the problematic, the being of problems and questions, not the being of the negative” (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 269). By bracketing the negation, (non)-being is no longer considered as the impossibility of being or the negation of being as Lacan proposes, but only the being in its problematic form, the being-as-becoming, which constantly releases the differential power and generates novelty. In this manner, Lacanian negative non-being is excluded by Deleuze as “an illusion [...] a shadow of problems” (*Ibid*, 202).

Furthermore, identification and recognition are found inadequate to account for difference-as-flux and the multiplicity of being-as-becoming. We can recall the logic of superposition discussed in Section 4.2.2 where the existents in all their multiplicity exist in relations of encounter and form new compositions of “AND” rather than consumption of each other, namely “OR”. If we ask: is there not also an identification of difference-as-flux in the case of the Deleuzian subject? Such an identification is unable to be established within Deleuze’s differential ontology. Firstly, identification presupposes something *definite* to be identified with, whether it is an actual object or an attribute that object possesses. However, difference-as-flux remains undetermined indefinitely in its full virtuality and can only be “determined as an actual object” (Somers-Hall 2013: 131) which differs in kind from difference-as-flux. That is to say, one can at most identify with an actual object, not difference-as-flux itself. And more importantly, as explained in Section 3.2.1, Deleuze’s difference-as-flux is in its pure form impersonal and desubjectified — it is not the subject that actively attempts to identify with difference-as-flux, but the emergence of difference-as-flux repeatedly challenge the attempt of identification or stabilisation of the subject.

Why does Lacan insist on the impossibility of and beyond difference-as-gap, that is, why is there no real beyond the symbolic order? It is because that while Deleuze places primacy on (transcendental) sensibility, Lacan places primacy on signification. For Lacan (2001[1966]: 49), the murder of the Thing is also how things come into being: it is “the world of words that creates the world of things — things originally confused in the *hic et nunc* of the all in the process of coming-into-being — by giving its concrete being to their essence, and its ubiquity to what has always been”. We can recall the signifying cut upon one discussed in Section 1.3 that shares the very similar logic to this, as the constitutive failure necessary to their subjectification. Since it is the signifying cut that murders and thus creates the subject, we may be confused that there is a transcendental field beyond the symbolic, such as Deleuzian difference-as-flux, that gives rise to

the symbolic. To answer this, we should note the retroactive temporality revealed in the signifying cut. As Belau (2001: 4) remarks:

The signifier marks the subject twice. It marks the subject as the primordial cut where the signifier carves the subject out of the body, and it also marks the subject in its failure to cover the void opened by that very cut. The paradox lies in the temporality of these marks: that is, the first mark, the primordial cutting up of the body, can only be produced by the signifier. However, this signifier doesn't actually "exist" (or function) until the symbolic space opened up by the second marking — the failure of the signifier — can produce the functioning signifier. In the logic of this chiasmic metalepsis, the signifier appears at the impossible intersection of the chiasmus; its effect stands in as its cause.

In this process, we find the logic of squeeze functioning. Through the squeeze/cut, the two are able to form their identity embodying structural affinity to the other's: the yet-to-be subject *becomes* the speaking subject and the yet-to-be signifiers *become* (functioning) signifiers when subjectification opens up the symbolic space, and they share the gap or lack as an effect of the squeeze/cut. In this light, "the fashioning of the signifier and the introduction of a gap or a hole in the real is identical" (Lacan 1997[1986]: 121). Lacan (*Ibid*, 121) describes this process as a creation *ex nihilo* and likens it to creating the vase:

Now if you consider the vase [...] as an object made to represent the existence of the emptiness at the center of the real that is called the Thing, this emptiness as represented in the representation presents itself as a *nihil*, as nothing. And that is why the potter creates the vase with his hand around this emptiness, creates it, just like the mythical creator, *ex nihilo*, starting with a hole.

As such, "once we bring things into focus with words [...] that invoke concepts, categories, formulas, and images — we enter into the symbolic and imaginary registers through which reality is mediated for us" (Themí 2015: 12). The reality as an inevitably mediated one corresponds to Lacan's (1999[1975]: 15) rather radical view on the unconscious as structured like a language, which contrast to Deleuze (1994[1968]: 106) in depicting the unconscious as "a questioning, problematising and searching force" of desire that is free of the restriction of consciousness. Indeed, as Schuster (2016: 48) highlights, "'All begins with sensibility,' writes Deleuze; 'In the beginning was the Word, which is to say, the signifier,' states Lacan." Deleuze's breakout for the above-mentioned dilemma is to postulate that language is not the limit of humans, that something beyond the impossibility of the symbolic can have a determinate value for a moment without being represented but expressed with intensity.

Up to this point, we need to reiterate that the *duality* of difference is also irreducible and should be preserved, as the two views, arguably, are more complementary than contradictory. That

is, while Deleuze's perspective appears to provide a more comprehensive picture, it does not mean we can fully integrate the duality and in a way reduce Lacan's perspective from the point of view of the speaking subject to an illusion within Deleuze's desubjectified ontological project which ultimately transcends the subject. By bracketing the negation, Deleuze does not see ontological non-being. However, if we take Deleuzian logic of superposition with simultaneity of realities, then the logic of squeeze should not be reduced either. As Stevenson (2021: 19; edited) remarks:

Deleuze has taken affirmation too far, [...] and is left with a philosophy that only cultivates thought at the expense of the cultivation of the self [the subject]. Deleuze's concept of Death does affirm life. However, it does not affirm an individual's life, but a singular Life, that is to say an immanent life.

As such, it can be argued that the duality of difference itself should not be reduced to each other since Lacan and Deleuze respectively have different scopes. While Deleuze concerns a perspective of trans-human (Hallward 2010: 38), Lacan concerns "things of the human world [...] structured by words" where "language, symbolic processes, dominate and govern all" (Lacan 1997[1986]: 45). Accordingly, what fractures the Deleuzian subject is the pure form of time, yet what splits the Lacanian subject is the signifier. By comparing Figure 3 and Figure 5, we will find that the Deleuzian subject is an imperceptible point *in* the desubjectified reality, Life, in groundless production of desire; and the Lacanian subject is "a vanishing point" (Schuster 2016: 61) in the quest *for* the desubjectified reality, the (symbolic) death, the non-being, or the gap as the "only support of [...] being" (Žižek 2008[1989]: 81).

5.3. Semiotic Relevance

We have come thus far concentrating on the irreducibility of difference-as-itself, the duality of such difference, as well as the irreducibility of such duality. It is time to return to our last research problem: how can this duality inspire semiotics?

Lacanian difference-as-gap implies the irreducible traumatic aspect of language. Such traumaticity inherent in language may remind us of the complexity in the semiotic study of trauma. Semiotic approach to trauma often concerns the "systemic and structural features" (Violi 2017: 186) of the socio-cultural operation in which traumatic experiences are represented or even

transformed in memory and socio-cultural discourse. As Alexander's (2013) social theory of trauma reveals, the trauma process at the societal level often takes place in the "gap between event and representation" (*Ibid*, 15). However, it can be argued that such operation is actually *premised* on the existence of difference-as-gap as the constitutive failure of both language and the subject.

Deleuze's logic of superposition should echo in cultural semiotics and biosemiotics which stress creative meaning-generation and a coexistence of symbiosis. Particularly the argument of the third synthesis of time indicates that there can be complete and groundless novelty that does not emerge from the past or memory may be compared to Lotman (1990: 16) since he believes whatever new "inevitably derives from some tradition". While later Lotman (2004[1992]) emphasises the "unpredictability of explosive processes" in *Culture and Explosion*, he appears to insist that "the total destruction of any given order of the old system" is impossible even when there is "an explosion so powerful and catastrophic that its echo can be heard through all the levels of culture" (*Ibid*, 166). However, Deleuze takes a much more radical view on the possibility of discovering the complete destruction of the dogmatic image of thought, that which takes representation as "the entirety of thought" (Somers-Hall 2013: 97), "even at the cost of the greatest destructions and the greatest demoralisations, and a philosophical obstinacy with no ally but paradox" (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 131). Apart from the third synthesis of time, the passive synthesis of habit in the first synthesis of time may also be complementary for Kull's (2023) argument of an agent's *free choice* in terms of "[active] work, simultaneous availability (i.e. 'sensing' the existence) of alternative options, and indeterminacy" (*Ibid*, 86; edited). Kull (*Ibid*, 86) argues that for a choice to be truly free, there should not be any "force or pre-given algorithm or rule that has to be necessarily followed", one might further explore, for example, does Deleuze's passive synthesis of habit suffice a precondition for the active work of the agent's free choice *without* forcing any necessary rule?

The above-mentioned examples should be sufficient to substantiate that the duality of difference should not be overlooked even from a pragmatic point of view for semiotics. Given the space and scope of this thesis, the discovery of more problems in semiotic research that could potentially draw insights from this irreducible difference-as-itself and its duality will leave open for further research.

Conclusion

Through the thesis, it is argued that not only ontological difference-as-itself is *irreducible* (Chapter 1) but also the duality of such difference as revealed by Lacanian difference-as-gap (Chapters 2) and Deleuzian difference-as-flux (Chapters 3) cannot be simply reduced to each other (Chapters 4 and 5). And the irreducibility and the duality of difference-as-itself have, as revealed in Introduction and Section 5.2, significant semiotic relevance.

Chapter 1 begins with a historical overview that traces the evolving understandings of difference, from Parmenides, Plato, Kant to Hegel. While these philosophers have various interpretations of difference, they all share a similar approach to difference as moving away from the unsymbolisable. Except the Kantian noumena, they all insist that difference is reducible through reason. Against this, Lacanian difference-as-gap and Deleuzian difference-as-flux firstly converge in Section 1.3 in that both are recognised as difference-as-itself, namely the irreducible unsymbolisable that ontologically exists within desubjectified reality. Moreover, both Lacan and Deleuze emphasise the subject's disposition to repeat difference and therefore to move towards the unsymbolisable. However, their divergence is evident in their respective interpretations of difference-as-itself. For Lacan, it is the traumatic difference-as-gap within the symbolic which is reminiscent of the hypothetical wholeness of the primordial real; while for Deleuze (1994[1968]: 222), it is the productive difference-as-flux "by which the given is given as diverse".

In Chapter 2, Lacanian difference-as-gap is defined as the second case of the unsymbolisable, that is, the real remainder within the symbolic. It is examined through its role within the two scenarios related to the encounter of the Lacanian subject with the unsymbolisable: *tyche* and automaton. Particularly the dynamics of the second scenario, repetition automaton, is explained in relation to the death drive, behind which is the neurotic illusion and fantasy that the forbidden jouissance is possible to be regained through transgression. The traumatic nature of difference-as-gap as such is determined from the inevitability of the process of subjectification based on symbolic castration, which leads to the vortex of repetitive failures.

In Chapter 3, Deleuzian difference-as-flux is mainly examined through Deleuze's formula of difference, namely, "differentiation-individuation-dramatisation-differenciation" (Deleuze 1994[1968]: 251) and his three syntheses of time, the present, the past and the future which corresponds to Deleuze's conception of three dimensions of (de)subjectivity: the self, the I, and the individuated/desubjectified individual. Particularly, the third synthesis of time, "the pure and empty form of time" (*Ibid*, 86) which is equally Death for Deleuze, is the singular condition that befalls the Deleuzian subject so that they are potentially able to express the intensity of difference-as-flux with experimentation. Such experimentation is also the only, if there is any, ethical "principle" that Deleuze has for the subject. The productive nature of difference-as-flux is related to its inherent desubjectified character and Deleuze's differential ontology in terms of univocity of being and generalised exteriority.

Following Chapters 2 and 3, Chapter 4 focuses on Lacan's and Deleuze's varying interpretations of desire and the underlying logics that are consistently detected in their theories. Lacan insists that desire agitated by the death drive is arrowed towards the difference-as-gap, implying the radical result of repetition as an ethical insight of traversing the fantasies and identifying with the symptoms. Based on intersubjectivity and symbolic foundation of identification, Lacan's logic of squeeze indicates a liminal status of absence and excess, which aligns with the "oscillating" effect of difference-as-gap. For Deleuze, Death is rather desexualised which liberates desire to a mode of arrowless production. The logic of superposition underlies Deleuze's theories, which stresses simultaneity of multiplicity and a point of view of the master. Life, for Deleuze, is pure affirmation of all being-as-becoming.

Chapter 5 presents two Klein bottles, visualising respectively the two repetitions of the Lacanian subject and the Deleuzian subject based on the elaboration from the previous chapters. The correspondence of the two bottles in terms of their necks and bottoms leads us to the fundamental divergence between Lacan and Deleuze over what is real and what is illusory. For Lacan, the neck as difference-as-gap is real, while the bottom as the primordial real is illusory, which indicates the ultimate impossibility beyond the symbolic. For Deleuze, the Lacanian neck as difference-as-gap is illusory, while the bottom as difference-as-flux is the ultimate reality, which corresponds to his philosophy of immanence that advocates Life is immanently much more than the symbolic. However, it is argued that the duality of difference itself should not be reduced to each other since Lacan and Deleuze respectively have different scopes: while Lacan's primacy lies

on language and the very difference-as-gap brought by the impossibility of language, Deleuze's primary lies on the transcendental sensibility, which reveals pure immanence as Life.

The insights for semiotic relevance are exemplified at the end of Chapter 5. The semiotic study of trauma may draw insights from the inherent traumaticity of Lacanian difference-as-gap within language. Deleuze's first and third syntheses of time may provide complementary perspectives for Kull's concept of free choice and Lotman's concept of explosion.

References

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2013. *Trauma: A Social Theory*. Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press.
- Baugh, Bruce 2010[2005]. Death. In: Parr, Adrian (ed.), *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 63-65.
- Belau, Linda 2001. Trauma and the Material Signifier. *Postmodern Culture* 11(2): 1-22.
- Berressem, Hanjo 2020. *Gilles Deleuze's Luminous Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Brenner, Leon S. 2020. *The Autistic Subject: On the Threshold of Language*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chiesa, Lorenzo 2007. *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan*. Cambridge (Massachusetts), London: The MIT Press.
- Colebrook, Claire 2003. *Understanding Deleuze*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Dean, Jodi 2009. Drive as the Structure of Biopolitics. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1460759>
- Deely, John 2005. *Basics of Semiotics/ Semiootika alused*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli kirjastus.
- Donkel, Douglas L. 2001. Introduction. In: Donkel, Douglas L. (ed.), *The Theory of Difference: Readings in Contemporary Continental Thought*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1-14.
- Deleuze, Gilles 1994[1968]. *Difference and Repetition*. London, New York: Continuum.
- 1990[1969]. *The Logic of Sense*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- 2002[1995]. *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*. New York: Zone Books.
- Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Felix 2000[1972]. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles; Parnet, Claire 1987[1977]. *Dialogues*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Evans, Dylan 2006[1996]. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London,

- New York: Routledge.
- Fink, Bruce 1995. *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 1996. The Subject and the Other's Desire. In: Feldstein, Richard; Fink, Bruce; Jaanus, Maire (eds.), *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*. New York: State University of New York Press, 76-97.
- Freud, Sigmund 1961[1920]. *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Frosh, Stephen 1997. Psychoanalytic Challenges: A Contribution to the New Sexual Agenda. *Human Relations* 50(3): 229–239.
- Gallop, David 1984. *Parmenides of Elea: Fragments*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Greenshields, Will 2017. *Writing the Structures of the Subject: Lacan and Topology*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hallward, Peter 2010. You Can't Have it Both Ways: Deleuze or Lacan. In: Bolle, Leen de (ed.), *Deleuze and Psychoanalysis: Philosophical Essays on Deleuze's Debate with Psychoanalysis*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 33-50.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 2018[1807]. *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holland, Eugene W. 2005. Desire. In: Stivale, Charles J. (ed.), *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*. Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 53-62.
- Hurst, William. J. 2014. The Repetition Compulsion; the Repetition Automatism; the Insistence of the Signifying Chain. *Modern Psychoanalysis* 39(1), 38-55.
- Johnston, Adrian 2023. Jacques Lacan. In: Zalta, Edward N.; Nodelman, Uri (eds.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2023 Edition)*
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/lacan/>.
- Kant, Immanuel 1998[1781]. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kenny, Anthony 2004. *A New History of Western Philosophy: Ancient Philosophy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kull, Kalevi 2023. Freedom in Living Beings: Arbitrariness and the Forms of Semiotic Indeterminacy. In: Biglari, Amir (ed.), *Open Semiotics, Vol 4: Life and its Extensions*.

- Paris: L'Harmattan, 81-97.
- Lacan, Jacques 2001[1966]. *Écrits: A Selection*. London, New York: Routledge.
- 1998[1973]. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- 1999[1975]. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge. Encore 1972-1973*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- 1997[1986]. *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959–1960*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- 1991[1988]. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955*. New York, N.Y: W.W. Norton.
- 2007[1991]. *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- 2020[1994]. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book IV: The Object Relation*. Cambridge, Medford: Polity Press.
- 2017[1998]. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book V: Formations of the Unconscious: the Seminar of Jacques Lacan*. Malden, MA: Polity.
- 2006[2002]. *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Lotman, Yuri M. 1990. *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.
- 2004[1992]. *Culture and Explosion*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Maybee, Julie E. 2020. Hegel's Dialectics. In: Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition). Retrieved from: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/hegel-dialectics/>, 10.04.2024.
- Monticelli, Daniele 2008. *Wholeness and Its Reminders: Theoretical Procedures of Totalization and Detotalization in Semiotics, Philosophy and Politics*. PhD thesis, University of Tartu.
- 2022. Lotman and Deconstructionism. In: Tamm, Marek; Torop, Peeter (eds.), *The Companion to Juri Lotman: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 321-333.
- Nedoh, Boštjan; Zevnik, Andreja 2017. On a Disjunctive Synthesis between Lacan and

- Deleuze. In: Nedoh, Boštjan; Zevnik, Andreja (eds.). *Lacan and Deleuze: A Disjunctive Synthesis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1-12.
- Pärn, Katre 2022. Modelling. In: Tamm, Marek; Torop, Peeter (eds.), *The Companion to Juri Lotman: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 175-187.
- Parr, Adrian 2010[2005]a. Differentiation/Differenciación. In: Parr, Adrian (ed.), *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 78-79.
- 2010[2005]b. Repetition. In: Parr, Adrian (ed.), *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 225-226.
- Pilshchikov, Igor; Sütiste, Elin 2022. Lotman and Jakobson. In: Tamm, Marek; Torop, Peeter (eds.), *The Companion to Juri Lotman: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 62-77.
- Plato 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*. Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing.
- Ragland, Ellie 1995. *Essays on the Pleasures of Death: From Freud to Lacan*. New York, London: Routledge.
- Ragland-Sullivan, Ellie 2014[1991]. Introduction. In: Ragland-Sullivan, Ellie; Bracher, Mark (eds.), *Lacan and the Subject of Language*. London: Routledge, 1-20.
- Roffe, Jonathan 2010[2005]. Exteriority/Interiority. In: Parr, Adrian (ed.), *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 97-99.
- Salupere, Silvi 2011. Semiotics as Science. *Sign Systems Studies* 39(2/4): 271-289.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de 1959[1916]. *Course in General Linguistics*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Schuster, Aaron 2016. *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge (Massachusetts), London: The MIT Press
- Somers-Hall, Henry 2013. *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: An Edinburgh Philosophical Guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Stagoll, Cliff 2010[2005]. Difference. In: Parr, Adrian (ed.), *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 74-76.
- Stevenson, Shaun 2021. *Positively Dead: An Examination of the Concept of the Death Drive in Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition*. PhD thesis, University of Warwick.
- Them, Tim 2014. *Lacan's Ethics and Nietzsche's Critique of Platonism*. Albany (New York):

- State University of New York Press.
- Toscano, Alberto 2010[2005]. Chaos. In: Parr, Adrian (ed.), *The Deleuze Dictionary: Revised Edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 47-49.
- Verhaeghe, Paul 2006. Enjoyment and Impossibility: Lacan's Revision of the Oedipus Complex. In: Clemens, Justin; Grigg, Russell (eds.), *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII*. Durham, London: Duke University Press, 29-49.
- Violi, Patrizia 2017. Spaces of Memory and Trauma: A Cultural Semiotic Perspective. In: Bankov, Kristian; Copley, Paul (eds.), *Semiotics and its Masters: Volume 1*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 185-204.
- Williams, James 2005[2003]. *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: a Critical Introduction and Guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Zupančič, Alenka 2008. *The Odd One In: On Comedy*. Cambridge (Massachusetts), London: The MIT Press.
- 2017. *What Is Sex?* Cambridge (Massachusetts), London: The MIT Press.
- Žižek, Slavoj 2008[1989]. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London, New York: Verso.
- 1991. *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*. Cambridge (Massachusetts), London: The MIT Press.
- 2003. *The Puppet and the Dwarf: the Perverse Core of Christianity*. Cambridge (Massachusetts), London: The MIT Press.
- 2012[2004]. *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*. New York: Routledge.
- 2008. *In Defense of Lost Causes*. London: Verso.
- 2013. *Interrogating the Real*. London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury.
- 志紀島啓 2016. ドゥルーズ: 最も潜在的な自閉症: 「スキゾ」概念の再検討. *日本病跡学雑誌* 91: 31-45.

Kokkuvõte

Erinevuse duaalsus: Traumaatiline lõhe ja/või produktiivne vool?

Erinevuse duaalsus viitab kahele lahknevale vaatenurgale, mis saavad kokku millelgi sellisel, mida siin töös nimetatakse 'erinevuseks iseenesena' (difference-as-itself), mida ei ole ei filosoofia ega semiootika just väga palju käsitletud. Ajaloolise ülevaate kaudu positioneeritakse erinevus iseenesena järgmiselt: see eksisteerib ontoloogiliselt desubjektiveeritud reaalsuses, mis on olemuslikult ja taandamatult sümboliseerimatu. Sellist erinevust iseenesena tõlgendatakse lacanlikus psühhoanalüüsis negatiivselt traumaatilise lõhena ning deleuze'ilikus erinevusfilosoofias positiivselt kui produktiivset voolu. Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärk on uurida seda duaalsust, mille teostamiseks keskendutakse Jacques Lacani ja Gilles Deleuze'i teoste lähilugemisele ning samuti toetatakse sekundaarsetele allikatele, mis neid autoreid tõlgendavad. Uurimisprobleemid on järgmised:

1. Mis on erinevuse duaalsus ning kus lahknevad ja koonduvad lacanlik erinevus-kui-lõhe ning deleuze'ilik erinevus-kui-vool?
2. Kuidas need kaks vaatenurka konstrueerivad subjekti ja sümboliseerimatu suhet?
3. Kuidas tekitada nende kahe vaatenurga vahel dialoogi (vastastikust mõistmist ja kriitikat) ning potentsiaalset integratsiooni?
4. Kuidas inspireerib see duaalsus semiootikat?

Erinevuse duaalsusele vastavad Lacani ja Deleuze'i lahknevad vaated ihale ning kaks loogikat, mis neid vaateid põhistavad: Lacani kokkusurumine (squeeze) ja Deleuze'i kohakuti olek (superposition). Kaks Kleini pudelil põhinevat mudelit visualiseerivad kahte kordust, mille teostavad vastavalt lacanlik subjekt ja deleuze'ilik subjekt. Need mudelid selgitavad Lacani ja Deleuze'i põhimõttelist lahknevust selle üle, kuidas nad käsitlevad reaalsust ja illusoorset.

Magistritöö jõuab järeldusele, et taandamatu ei ole mitte ainult ontoloogiline erinevus iseendana, vaid ka selle erinevuse duaalsus lõhe ja voolu vahel – neid ei saa lihtsalt teineteisele taandada. 'Erinevus iseendana' oma taandamatuses ja duaalsuses on semiootikale äärmiselt oluline, sest viitab absoluutsele jäägile, mis jääb semiootika tervikustamiskatsetest väljapoole. Seetõttu annab 'erinevus iseendana' semiootikale perspektiivi, mille kaudu ennast pidevalt uuendada.

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce thesis and make thesis public

I, Ziyi Ye,

1. herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright,

“The Duality of Difference: Traumatic Gap and/or Productive Flux?”
supervised by PhD Ott Puumeister, PhD Silvi Salupere.

2. I grant the University of Tartu a permit to make the work specified in p. 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives, under the Creative Commons licence CC BY NC ND 3.0, which allows, by giving appropriate credit to the author, to reproduce, distribute the work and communicate it to the public, and prohibits the creation of derivative works and any commercial use of the work until the expiry of the term of copyright.

3. I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in p. 1 and 2.

4. I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.



20/05/2024