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What's the Difference? Kant and Lacan

Deleuze liked to emphasise Kant's breathtaking ability to produce concepts. In his lectures on Kant, he mentions the "excessive atmosphere" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, comparing Kant to a "thinking machine" that possesses a capacity of theoretical production that is "absolutely frightening" (cf. Deleuze 1978). With regard to this, he makes a concise point by adding that this "excessive atmosphere" of an "absolutely frightening" production of new concepts, or new "knowledge," is not a matter of understanding. Quite the contrary: understanding functions as a barrier to knowledge, as a phantasmatic veil, that effectively shelters the reader from the "excessiveness" of Kant's project. And this rejection of understanding, this fending off of presupposed knowledge, in fact mirrors Kant's own philosophical procedure. The production of concepts does not necessarily amount to producing new words, or new signifiers, but also involves a radical transformation of the old ones. And in his uses and definitions of notions pertaining to the vocabulary of traditional philosophy, Kant effectively acts as if he understands nothing. Were he to understand, he would risk getting caught in the cobweb of phantasmatic commonplaces that would deprive him of the knowledge he is after (and "knowledge" is another one of those words which Kant fails to understand and in turn is able to grant a completely new and far-reaching conceptual meaning).

Be that as it may, Kant's ability mentioned by Deleuze does not hang in thin air. It is possible to more closely determine the conditions of its appearance. And at least when it comes to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the conditions for the onset of this "excessive atmosphere" of the production of conceptual novelties are planted in its very beginning, in its basic *dispositif*. Predictably, Kant begins the *Critique of Pure Reason* with the introduction of sensibility. However, this predictable and familiar beginning is immediately redoubled with a political gesture *par excellence* of introducing a certain distinction, a certain polarity, depriving the reader of his familiar views regarding the role and the structure of sensibility. Sensibility is no longer understood as a mere *a posteriori* append-

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age to the Understanding, but is rather conceived of as an autonomous producer of representations (of space and time) as irreducible to the categorical, i.e. intellectual, synthesis of experience. Sensibility enters the stage as a formative principle, as pure sensibility, delivered of its empirical character and of its formlessness, and thus also of its reduction to the mere receptivity of the senses. But sensibility did not succeed in this heroic exploit by simply clinging to the mere materiality of some sensual content, by sticking to some mysterious knowledge beyond the formal structure of the concepts of the Understanding. Its assault on the Understanding was subtler; sensibility did not limit and restrain the Understanding within a realm of some absolute otherness, or some self-sufficient content, forever eluding the grasp of its form. Rather, it found its distinctiveness in the very framework of conceptuality, of its form, which in turn ceased to be the exclusive possession of the intellectual capacity. Only in this way was sensibility able to acquire its own realm within the genesis of cognition, and transform itself from a producer of representations of the senses into a producer of sensible representations.¹

But such a notion of sensibility ran into insurmountable difficulties. And it was in fact Kant himself who dealt it the first and the most convincing blows. Contrary to his own opinion, he was unable to retain the initial division, and in the course of the *Critique*, especially with the line of argument presented in the Transcendental Analytic, sensibility was once again transformed from an autonomous producer of representational unity into mere receptivity, which remained the sole irreducibly sensible characteristic.² But this development achieved by Kant went unacknowledged by Kant, who to the very end insisted on the incontestability of the Transcendental Aesthetic (which, to add insult to injury, was but a copy of his Dissertation). It is safe to say that at his insistence Kant tried in vain to escape “castration,” the “theft of enjoyment,” of that par-

¹ Consider Zdravko Kobe’s precise formulation: “*Representation of the senses and sensible representation are not the same.* Regardless of how strange this may sound, this implies that a representation of the senses that would contain no sensible form would not necessarily be sensible. And inversely, only if a representation is sensible with regard to its form, the representations that contain no matter of the senses (mainly those of space and time) nevertheless remain sensible. It is precisely the notion of the sensible form that accounts for the difference between sensibility and the Understanding [...]. First and foremost, sensibility is a form; it is sensibility as the form of representation of the senses.” (Kobe 2001, pp. 27–28)

² This point is convincingly demonstrated in Kobe’s book.

ticular piece of the Real that supposedly pertained to sensibility but was always already snatched away by the Other of the categorical synthesis of experience.

This schematic account is not intended to be exhaustive; it merely attempts to define the specific conceptual framework and deadlock that present the most fruitful ground for the conceptual “excessiveness” mentioned by Deleuze. Kant reaches the high of his conceptual extravagance precisely at points where he attempts to defend the premises of the Transcendental Aesthetic; it is precisely at these points that we witness his most radical descent into the “excessive atmosphere” of the most illuminating conceptual monsters. The list of conceptual monstrosities is long and includes concepts such as imagination (as the instance of intellectual capacity within the realm of sensibility that shakes the fundamental division of the Aesthetic, namely the division between the formative principle of the Understanding, on the one hand, and the formative principle of sensibility, on the other), the transcendental schema (as the rule of application of intellectual notions to appearances that supposedly enables their determination, when in fact the Second Edition of the *Critique* convincingly demonstrates that experience is primordially schematised so that in principle any additional mediating step is by definition redundant), or the transcendental object (which is situated halfway between Phenomena and Noumena, and which appears in the First Edition of the *Critique*, only to completely vanish from the Second), etc.

In line with the aim of this issue of *Filozofski vestnik*, which proposes to rethink the importance of Kantian philosophy for contemporary debates on the concepts of the subject and the object, I will attempt to develop the consequences of yet another Kantian conceptual monster, namely that of *transcendental reflection*. Initially, I will follow Kant’s line of thought, which –however – will immanently lead to a certain theoretical deadlock, or “contradiction,” which in turn will open up the possibility of a passage from (Kantian) reflection to (Hegelian-Lacanian) speculation, and thus also to a notion of *the subject* that is at odds with Kant’s argument but comes to light the moment we push the argument to the extreme of its consequences.

From the Transcendental Aesthetic ...

Kant defines transcendental reflection as follows:

The action through which I make the comparison of representations in general with the cognitive power in which they are situated, and through which I distinguish whether they are to be compared to one another as belonging to the pure understanding or to pure intuition, I call *transcendental reflection*. (Kant 1998, p. 367)

Transcendental reflection is the condition of objectivity, and without this determination, without this criterion, no cognition is possible. Kant adds that there are in fact judgments that require no “*investigation*, i.e., attention to the grounds of truth,” since they are self-evident, “immediately certain, e.g., between two points there can be only one straight line.” These are *analytic judgments*, characterised by an inclusion of the predicate in the subject regardless of any reference to the realm of experience, however even these judgments require an investigation as to which cognitive source they belong to (*ibid.*, p. 366). For transcendental reflection does not concern the subject–predicate relation, and hence the question of whether their relation is analytic or synthetic. It rather concerns the relation of given representations to the cognitive power, which is the precondition of this determination. This is clear from the concepts of comparison enumerated by Kant. With regard to the cognitive power that produces them, representations can appear in the relations of *identity or difference, agreement or opposition, the inner or the outer, and the determinable or the determination* (or, matter and form).

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The first pair of concepts of comparison is introduced as follows:

If an object is presented to us several times, but always with the same inner determinations (*qualitas et quantitas*), then it is always exactly the same if it counts as an object of pure understanding, not many but only one thing (*numerica identitas*); but if it is appearance, then the issue is not the comparison of concepts, but rather, however identical everything may be in regard to that, the difference of the places of these appearances at the same time is still an adequate ground for the *numerical difference* of the object (of the senses) itself. Thus, in the case of two drops of water one can completely abstract from all inner difference (of

quality and quantity), and it is enough that they be intuited in different places at the same time in order for them to be held to be numerically different. [...] For a part of space, even though it might be completely similar and equal to another, is nevertheless outside of it, and is on that account a different part from that which is added to it [...]. (*Ibid.*, p. 366)

Objects as appearances are numerically distinct despite having the same conceptual determinations simply by virtue of being intuited, i.e. simply by virtue of being objects in space and/or time. If with regard to the concept, two things with the same inner determinations (extensive and intensive magnitude) are but one and the same thing, their *sensible nature alone makes them essentially different*. The difference that is introduced into the realm of appearances by way of their sensible form is irreducible to the identity of the concept and formally different from it: The numerical difference as such is only cognisable in conditions of sensible experience; from the point of view of the Understanding, these objects are but one and the same thing. If the two forms of intuition did not *a priori* determine objects of experience, numerically different things would remain indistinguishable; all the drops of water would collapse into one.

With regard to their cognitive source, space and time are analogous concepts, despite the fact that space is the form of external objects, while time is the form of objects of outer as well as of inner experience. But aside from that, they share the same structural characteristics; both representations – as pure forms of sensibility – belong to the same cognitive source and therefore also display the same form of apriority. The representations of things that are sensible, i.e. determined by the form of time, but that only exist in my mind and hence have no spatial consistency, are subject to the same type of determination as the representations of things that are also subject to the condition of space. But for this to be true, a mere temporal placement of conceptually identical objects, insofar as they essentially lack spatial consistency, should also lead us to affirm their numerical difference. So, can we claim that the intuiting of appearances *at different times* leads to asserting their numerical difference?

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In the argument quoted above, Kant in fact adds an additional condition for asserting the numerical difference of sensible objects. A mere difference of places does not suffice; what needs to be added to it is the condition of temporality, meaning that objects have to occupy their different places in space *at the same*

time. It is only then that we can assert with certainty that the object is not one, but multiple. As soon as we assume that the objects occupy their *different* places not at the *same* but at *different* times, we can no longer assert their distinctness, for we might simply be intuiting a single object occupying different places at different times; and we also cannot assert the numerical identity of an object if the object is said to occupy the same place at different times.

The same time is the condition of the numerical difference of appearances with the same inner determinations occupying different places in space; *the difference of time* undermines this distinction, or at least essentially hinders its assertion. Differently put: The simultaneous *sameness* of time and *difference* of place implies the numerical distinctness of appearances, while the *sameness* (or *difference*) of place at *different* times implies *neither* the numerical identity *nor* the numerical difference of the object.

But before we continue along the lines of this difference that seems to present an obstacle to transcendental reflection, let us return very briefly to the conditions of Kant's argument seeking to account for an irreducibly sensible difference. First, we have to address the obvious, namely that difference as such does not pertain exclusively to the domain of sensibility. Difference as such is not necessarily intuited; it can also be thought regardless of the sensible form of the appearances. To be able to assert the difference between a representation of a "monkey" and that of a "human," I require no sensible determination; a concept, or knowledge, of the determinations that pertain to each of the two distinct notions is sufficient to account for the difference between them. However, the difference (beyond intuition) can only be cognised if the inner determinations of the representations subject to the comparison differ, i.e. only if the difference in question is *not* (merely) numerical.

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This is why Kant begins his argument with the emphasis that the object under consideration is always presented to us "with the same inner determinations" (*ibid.*, p. 386). In this way, Kant excludes from his analysis appearances with differing inner determinations that in themselves suffice to affirm a difference, but do not pertain to the specific difference in question, namely to numerical difference. The first condition of the argument therefore amounts to a *conceptual identity* of the object. And if the (numerical) difference of conceptually identical objects cannot result from their conceptual nature, then it can only result

from their sensible determination. The sensible determination is of a dual character (in accordance with the nature of sensibility that produces representations of space *and* time) and this allows us – in principle – to formulate the following four logical possibilities resulting from four possible combinations of the opposition of *time and space*, on the one hand, and *sameness and difference*, on the other:

- the object is presented in the same place at the same time;
- the object is presented in different places at the same time;
- the object is presented in the same place at different times;
- the object is presented in different places at different times.

Let me begin with the first possibility, which for obvious reasons is not the one discussed by Kant. This possibility does not concern the assertion of a numerical difference, but rather the conditions of *numerical identity*. If we quickly read through Kant's argument quoted above, it might seem that the assertion of numerical identity requires no special sensible contribution; if it does so, then this contribution amounts to a mere recapitulation of the knowledge that was already produced by the Understanding alone. Yet this recapitulation that contributes nothing irreducibly new to the cognisance of numerical identity nevertheless provides the necessary empirical certainty that is the condition of all true knowledge. Given an object with identical inner determinations, we can only assert its numerical identity if this conceptually identical object occupies *the same place at the same time*. To what exactly does this "same time" refer? Since this is an object that occupies one and the same place, the "same time" amounts to the "instance of the glance" that is necessary for me to instantly, i.e. without giving it further thought, immediately know that before me lies a numerically identical object.

Let me now move on to the second option, i.e. the one provided by Kant: The object is presented at different places at the same time. Just like in the first case, an "instance of the glance" was sufficient to conclude that the object is one (i.e. numerically identical), here too an "instance of the glance" suffices to assert that the object is not one but multiple. Were it only one, it would not occupy different places in space, but instead only one; the remaining places would leave behind an empty space. In both cases, the "instance of the glance" functions as a necessary condition for asserting numerical identity and difference. But

again, what does it refer to? In the first case of a numerically identical object occupying the same place at the same time, the “instance of the glance” refers to the instant of time that is necessary to apprehend the object, i.e. it refers to the “subjective” or “mathematical” time of the synthesis of experience. As such, it is the necessary condition for determining the numerical identity of the object, regardless of the fact that it merely reasserts the identity that was already achieved at the level of the Understanding. Without this verification the Understanding would not be able to reach true certainty. However, the problem is that this “same time”, as the condition for asserting numerical identity, does not pertain to the domain of sensibility. This is not time as the non-conceptual principle of sensibility, but rather the time of the Understanding, the time of the act of the synthesis of the manifold, in the course of which the Understanding “instantly” determines the object as one. Hence, this time is not the time of the manifold in its non-conceptuality, but the time that is required for the intellectual synthesis of the manifold, and hence, essentially, a time of the concept.

However, this “subjective” reading breeds difficulties, the most important of them being that ultimately it is all too empirical in reducing the condition of the “same time” to a mere “mathematical” synthesis of apprehension. So let us take a step back. If the “same time” does not refer merely to the time of apprehension, the temporality of which is reducible to the “instance of the glance,” another possible reading is at hand, one that interprets the condition of the “same time” in terms of a *temporal relation*, namely, precisely as a relation of *simultaneity*. And if we read it along these lines, the first two possibilities translate into the following claims: 1) An object that occupies the same place at the same time can only be numerically identical, since two objects, regardless of whether their inner determinations are identical or not, cannot occupy the same place *simultaneously* (that is: at the same time). And the analogous second possibility: 2) An object that occupies different places at the same time can only be numerically different, since one single object cannot simultaneously occupy two different places in space.

This reading once again subverts the basic aim of Kant’s argument, for Kant attempts to demonstrate the existence of a (numerical) difference that is not a difference in concepts (what is numerically different is by definition conceptually identical) but rather a difference in the sensible form of the given object. However identical everything may be with regard to concepts, Kant writes, the mere

existence of appearance in space and time brings along with it a difference that is irreducibly sensible. The reading of the “same time” in terms of a temporal relation of simultaneity sublates this sensible nature of the numerical difference because the temporal relation of simultaneity is essentially conceptual: Appearances are *simultaneous* if they are structured by the *category of reciprocity or community*, which means that the experience of the numerical distinction of objects that share identical inner determinations can in principle only be attained by way of the Understanding. To put it yet another way: Two objects with identical inner determinations are not numerically distinct *because* they occupy different places at the same time, but simply *because* they are simultaneous, i.e. because they are in a (categorical) relation of reciprocal causality.

The knowledge (of this difference) can be acquired without any reference to *a priori* sensibility. The category of reciprocity alone can determine – in an “instance of the glance” – whether the object is one (and it is one, *because simultaneously there is no other*) or multiple (and it is multiple, *because simultaneously there is also an other*), hence enabling me to assert the object’s numerical identity or difference. The key point of this analysis concerns Kant’s argument, which precisely does *not* lead to the conclusion that sensibility is the bearer of numerical difference, the latter being the product of the pure Understanding. Hence, Kant’s rather complicated sentence with which we began amounts to these two simple principles: 1) If objects with identical inner determinations *are given simultaneously* (and since they are given simultaneously, they are given in different places), they are *numerically different*, because *they are in a relation of reciprocity*. 2) If no relation of reciprocity can be demonstrated, the object is necessarily *numerically identical*.

Let me review the key points. Due to the reasons we discussed above, Kant’s inference had to be inverted, and this inversion was correlative with a categorisation of sensibility. Kant’s inference: “Because the object is in different places at the same time, it is multiple,” had to be replaced by the following – inverse – statement: *Because the object is simultaneous* (i.e. in a relation of reciprocity), *it is multiple – and therefore in different places in space*. And by analogy with this: Instead of the Kantian inference: “Because the object is in the same place at the same time, it is one,” we formulated the inverse principle: *Because the object is not simultaneous* (i.e. it is not in a relation of reciprocity), *it is one –*

and therefore in the same place in space. Hence, space is not the bearer of a sensible difference beyond conceptuality. Quite the opposite: *Space is a concept*.

Let us proceed with the remaining two possibilities, which will complicate our previous analysis:

- the object is presented in the same place at the same time;
- the object is presented in different places at the same time;
- the object is presented in the same place at different times;
- the object is presented in different places at different times.

The first two instances concern the determination of numerical identity or difference of objects in the same or in different places *at the same time*, while in the remaining two instances we are dealing with the numerical identity or numerical difference of objects that occupy either the same or different places *at different times*. For obvious reasons, the notion of a “different time” cannot be linked to the category of reciprocity and hence to the temporal relation of simultaneity, but instead has to be interpreted in terms of the temporal relation of *succession*. The implications of this difference are far-reaching and require the introduction of a new concept that hitherto was absent from our analysis of the problem. This concept is *the concept of change*.

An “instance of the glance” is obviously not sufficient for determining whether an object that is presented to us at the same place in space but at different times is one or multiple. Such a decision requires a “time for comprehending.”³ The fact that I have before me one single object that has remained in the same place over the course of time – this conclusion cannot be reached in an “instance of the glance.” There is no guarantee that this is not in fact a numerically different object that in the course of time has replaced the first one and hence took its place. In order to be able to decide whether this object is numerically identical or different, I have to ask myself whether in the course of time a change took place and whether perhaps a different object with the same inner determinations has taken the place of the first one. In order to acquire knowledge of this change (of place) I require *a law of change*, which is nothing but *the law of*

³ In my use of these terms I follow Lacan’s distinction between three “evidential moments” of “the instance of the glance,” “the time for comprehending,” and “the moment of concluding,” introduced and developed in his “Logical Time” (cf. Lacan 2006).

causality.⁴ And the same also holds for the last of the four enumerated possibilities. Also regarding such, I can only determine that the object is numerically identical or numerically different on the basis of the category of causality that grounds the temporal relation of succession, and even there also the decision cannot be made in an “instance of the glance,” but instead requires a “time for comprehending.”

If simultaneity, as the “sameness of time,” refers to the category of reciprocity, then succession, as the “difference of time,” refers to the category of causality, or to a lawful connection of cause and effect. And before we continue with the analysis of the last two possibilities, we have to once again repeat the aforementioned conclusion: The difference between “the same time” and “different time” amounts to a categorical distinction, which means that in the case of each of the four logical possibilities, sensibility ceases to account for the (numerical) difference; the latter pertains solely to the Understanding.

At this point, we have to add another preliminary observation. The introduction of the remaining two possibilities has a retroactive effect on the first two. It turns out that in an “instance of the glance” the numerical identity or difference can only be asserted in the second out of the four existing options, i.e. only on condition that the object occupies different places at the same time. In an “instance of the glance” only the numerical difference of an object can be asserted, but not its identity. Why? Precisely because “this” object I “now” intuit in space is not necessarily one. Here, the numerical identity can only be asserted for each discrete “now,” for each separate instant at a time. I can say that the object I “now” intuit is one, however it is not possible to claim that there exists only one such object. Differently put: One can claim that “now” there is no other object occupying the space simultaneously with the intuited one, however it is impossible to say that *no such object exists*.

⁴ “All alterations [Veränderungen; changes] occur in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect.” Or, in the First Edition of the *Critique*: “Everything that happens (begins to be) presupposes something which it follows in accordance with a rule.” (Kant 1998, p. 304) In what follows, I translate *Veränderung* as “change” (instead of “alteration”); I use “alteration” for Kant’s *Wechsel*. For a brief discussion of the difference between these two concepts, cf. Hajdini 2012.

This explains, among other things, why Kant mentions precisely this (second) possibility and not any of the remaining three. In an immediate “instance of the glance” one can only assert that an object with identical inner determinations that is presented simultaneously, i.e. in different places in space, and at the same time, is not one, but multiple.

... to the Aesthetic of the Signifier

Transcendental reflection determines representations in relation to two distinctive cognitive sources (of sensibility and the Understanding) by way of applying concepts of comparison to them, such as identity and difference (or the one and the many). The assertion of numerical difference supposedly results from the irreducible domain of sensibility; and where the Understanding merely sees the identical, sensibility is supposedly capable of intuiting a difference that remains irreducible to the realm of conceptual thinking. I have endeavoured to demonstrate that the difference in question can in fact be accounted for in terms of categoriality (either in the “instance of the glance” via the category of reciprocity, or in the “time for comprehending” via the category of causality). In both cases, time ceases to be a sensible representation and becomes *the concept of time* as the paradoxical bearer of the difference of conceptually identical entities. The external otherness of sensibility in relation to the Understanding, or the external difference of intuitions in relation to concepts, is hereby transposed into an inner heterogeneous *self-difference of the concept itself*.

We have seen that Kant defines transcendental reflection as the “action through which I make the comparison of representations in general with the cognitive power in which they are situated, and through which I distinguish whether they are to be compared to one another as belonging to the pure understanding or to pure intuition” (Kant 1998, p. 367). The position that is assigned to the representation by transcendental reflection is called its *transcendental place*, while “the estimation of this position” and “the rule” of its determination is called *the transcendental topic* (*ibid.*, p. 371). A consistent analysis of the first pair of concepts of reflection (identity and difference) transposed the external difference between them (and their corresponding cognitive powers) into a self-difference of the concept itself. By transposing this difference the analysis has at the same time subverted the grounds (and the function) of transcendental reflection that has become completely redundant.

However, the analysis of the remaining three logical possibilities supplementing Kant's example led us to another important conclusion; in this analysis we stumbled upon an obstacle to the immediate certainty of the "instance of the glance" and hence also upon a place that eludes the initial opposition between identity and difference, thus standing for a *transcendental non-place or atopos*. By analogy with Kant's transcendental place and topic, a further "estimation of this position," of this place of non-place, or of this Other Scene (*ein anderer Schauplatz*), to use Freud's term, will be termed the *transcendental atopic*.

Before we continue with our discussion of this place that functions as an obstacle to reflection, let us once again return to Kant's example. We have read the difference between the "same time" and "different times" as the difference between the temporal relations of simultaneity and succession, and therefore along the lines of two different categories of relation. To these two categories of relation Kant adds a third one, namely *the category of substance*. And if the temporal relations of simultaneity and succession correspond to categories of reciprocity and causality, then the category of substance is determined by *the temporal relation of persistence*. And Kant insists on its logical and experiential priority, claiming that simultaneity and succession can only be determined against the backdrop of the persisting substratum of the real of appearances, which is the condition of any temporal relation.⁵ A change can only be determined against the background of something unchangeable that persists in time, and this persistently unchangeable real substratum of the world of appearances is precisely its substance.

Herewith we effectively arrive at another possible reading of the "same time." When Kant makes an inference regarding the numerical identity or difference of objects presented in different places in space *at the same time*, he effectively *equates the substance with time*. The "same time" is hence the substance of time as the unchanging and unchangeable condition of determination of the causality of change and hence of the temporal relation. Kant holds that a numerical difference between objects occupying different places in space could only be asserted against the backdrop of the substance of the "same time," i.e. only against the background of the persisting substratum of the real of appearances. However, we have seen that the spatial difference, or the difference of place, is

⁵ "Without that which persists," writes Kant, "there is therefore no temporal relation." (*Ibid.*, p. 301)

sufficiently explained by the use of the category of reciprocity that only takes note of *the relations* between given objects and hence requires no “external” referent, no irreducibly sensible substance of time; the only thing required here is the subject of the “instance of the glance.” *The Other of the Other (i.e. of the Understanding) is not sensibility, but the subject.*

It should be clear at this point that the analysis of the consequences of Kant’s argument has led us onto Hegel’s conceptual terrain. This should already be obvious from our assertion of the conceptual nature of time with which Hegel counters Kant’s notion of its substantiality.⁶ The passage from the substantiality of time to the proposition “Time is the Concept” relies on the mediation of the subject (of the “instance of the glance”). As such, this passage is correlative with the passage implied in Hegel’s programmatic statement “Substance is Subject”⁷ that became the motto of speculative philosophy, relying on the *passage from the logic of reflection to speculation.*⁸ And if reflection has placed conceptuality on the side of the identity of the concept that supposedly was unable to account for the (numerical) difference, and if the attempts to ground this difference in intuition have failed, then by introducing the self-difference of the concept we have effectively passed from the regime of reflection to the regime of speculative thinking pertaining to the domain of the Spirit.

At this point we have to introduce another distinction that will shed new light on the four enumerated logical possibilities. Does the notion of the subject implied in the motto “Substance is Subject” really amount to the subject of the “instance of the glance”? And is this notion sufficient to account for the passage from reflection to speculation, or does this passage perhaps require another concept of subjectivity that is irreducible to the subject of the “instance of the glance”? The subject of the “instance of the glance” is essentially a subject of knowledge, of self-transparent evidentiality of thought, ultimately a subject of cognition that “instantly” takes cognisance of the discursive, i.e. conceptual,

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⁶ Suffice it to take only these two quotes from *The Phenomenology of Spirit*: “As for time, [...] it is the existent Notion itself.” And: “Time is the Notion itself that is *there* [...]” (Hegel 1977, pp. 27, p. 487)

⁷ Consider Mladen Dolar’s classical formulation: “Time is nothing but the pure passing into otherness – and in this regard the statement ‘Time is the Concept’ is but a variant of the proposition ‘Substance is Subject’.” (Dolar 1990, p. 77)

⁸ For a concise account of this passage, cf. Kobe 2015, pp. 154–155.

difference of appearances – all that it requires is the concept of simultaneity. The subject's assertion of certainty is instantaneous and it implies no uncertainty, no anticipation, no decision or hesitance. All it requires is an explication or *subjectivisation of knowledge* that is always already at hand (or in the Other).

In his analysis of evidential moments in “Logical Time,” Lacan provides a very precise description of the subject of the “instance of the glance” as the subject of “impersonal subjectivisation” that merely recapitulates some “one-knows-that,” some immediate knowledge that demands no proper effort of thought.⁹ At no point is the Being of this subject at stake, it is never hit by uncertainty or confronted with its own disappearance. As self-transparent, this subjectivity is reducible to a pure co-incident of Thought and Being, and as such it is precisely asubjective (or “impersonal”), excluding subjectivity proper. Thus, we are justified in defining this subject that enters Kant's argument in the form of the subject of the “instance of the glance,” and that (against Kant's own intentions) enacts the reduction of a supposedly sensible difference to the concept without enacting the passage from the logic of reflection to the logic of speculation – we are hence justified in defining this subject in terms of a *subjectivisation without the subject*. The subject of the “instance of the glance” is a subject only at first glance. A second glance shows that this subject is effectively a subject (of subjectivisation) without that particular subject that we encounter in the proposition “Substance is Subject.”

The subject proper, the subject of the motto “Substance is Subject,” as the lever of the transposition of the sensible difference into the self-difference of the concept, only enters the scene with the “time for comprehending.” This time is necessary wherever certainty can only be achieved by presupposing the possibility of a change. And it is only in the case of one out of the four logical possibilities that certainty can be asserted regardless of this presupposition. It has to be presupposed already when asserting the numerical identity of an object in the same place in space at the same time, albeit here it is presupposed only negatively in the sense of excluding the possibility of change. However, its necessity becomes truly palpable in the case of the last two logical possibilities, which introduce the condition of a “different time” and hence the category of succession:

⁹ “[...] the subjectivization, albeit impersonal, which takes form here in the ‘one knows that...,’ [...]” (Lacan 2006, p. 167)

- the object is presented in the same place at different times;
- the object is presented in different places at different times.

If the objects are simultaneous and hence “at the same time,” I can conclude – in an “instance of the glance” – that they are multiple. But as soon as I introduce the notion of a “different time” I require the “time for comprehending” as the time for a conceptual reconstruction of the causality of change. And the precondition of deciding whether an object is *one or multiple* is a decision whether an object is *the same or other*. In the first of the two options provided above I have to ask the following question: *Did the place change its object?* In the case discussed by Kant, this question was, of course, nonsensical. To be able to determine the numerical difference of an object at different places at the same time I can abstract from the possibility of a change because a change can only take place in a “different” and never at the “same time.” So, I have to ask whether the place replaced the object. There are two possible answers to this question, either affirmative or negative. If the answer is “yes,” then the object is multiple; and if the answer is “no,” the object is one. More precisely (and here the opposition between *the same and other* which is irreducible to the couplet of *the one and the many* enters the argument): If the place replaced the object, the object is *multiple because it is other*. And if the place did not replace the object, the object is *one because it is the same*. To be able to assert that the object is one, I first have to assert that it is the same; and to be able to assert that the object is multiple, I first have to assert that it is other. But to be able to determine whether the object is the same or other and assert that it is either one or many, I have to decide whether in the course of time a change took place (in accordance with the category of causality). The placed object was only replaced if a change took place.

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The same precondition also applies to the (second) case, where an object is given in different places at different times. However, here the question is not whether the place replaced the object (for here we are not dealing with the same space and hence with only one place) but instead: *Did the object change its place?* The question once again allows for two answers and the inference goes as follows: If the object changed its place, it is *one because it is the same*. And if the object did not change its place, it is *multiple because it is other*. And here too the answer can only stem from our knowledge of the causality of change. Unlike in Kant’s example, which implied a subject of the “instance of the glance,” or a subjectivisation without a subject, here we are confronted with a problem, or a deadlock, for the

numerical identity or difference of the object can only be determined on condition that we know whether a change took place, i.e. only if we know whether the object is the same or other. Here, the inference is marked with a gap of undecidability, or uncertainty. And the subject as correlative to the lack in the Other emerges precisely at the point of this inherent lack of knowledge; despite the fact that this knowledge “exists” (since a change can only take place in accordance with the law of change), the subject is cut off from it, unable to fully grasp it.

Two meanings can be given to this inaccessibility. In the first reading the “different time” would imply that the subject only witnesses the final state of the change; and because it has no experience of the previous time in which this potential change came to be (because it did not witness the object’s change of place or the place’s change of object), the subject does not know whether the given object that lays before it is one or multiple. This inaccessible knowledge is in no way mysterious or irrational. It is a purely rational knowledge of the causality of change – however, if the change was not experienced by the subject, the latter has no access to the knowledge of this change.

The problem with this reading is that it is once again too empirical and that it leads to certainty only in cases of numerically distinct objects. If during time A I continuously observe an object at a certain place in space and if during time B this object is replaced by another conceptually identical object (how this takes place is of no further significance), this immediate experience of the change will enable me to conclude that the object that occupies the place in space during time B is other than the object that occupied the same place during time A; and because it is other, the object is necessarily multiple. And analogously: If during time A I continuously observe an object at a certain place in space and if during time B this object leaves its place while another place in space is occupied by another object, this immediate experience of change will enable me to conclude that the object is multiple because it is other.

If by analogy with the assertion of the numerical difference we now make an attempt at asserting the numerical identity, we run into a problem that demonstrates the aforementioned empiricity of this interpretation. If an object remains in its place and is not replaced by another object, I can certainly claim that the object that occupied this place during time A is the same as the one that occupies it during time B, however on the basis of this sameness I cannot claim

that only one such object *exists*. And if an object merely changes its place during time B, I can certainly claim that this object is the same as the one during time A, however I cannot claim that it is but one. In order to be able to assert the numerical identity of this object I would – paradoxically – have to search not only a bigger or smaller interval between times A and B, but *the whole of time*. And this, for obvious reasons, is a positive impossibility. The same deadlock is at work in the first of the logical possibilities. There also the decision regarding numerical identity or difference presupposed a decision regarding the object's sameness and otherness; and there also we were only able to exclude otherness and assert the sameness and hence the oneness of the object during “this” time or during a given temporal interval, but not for the whole of time. The knowledge of the whole of time is inaccessible to the subject whose structural split remains irreducible. To be able to heal this split we would have to search the whole of time.

Let us return to the opposition of the same and the other that is the precondition of the one between the one and the many. The necessity of introducing this opposition marks the fact that the transcendental aesthetic essentially relies on *the aesthetic of the signifier* as the condition of its (im)possibility.¹⁰ The possibility of cognisance of the numerical difference, the possibility of asserting the oneness or multiplicity of the object, is conditioned by the signifying difference between an element and its place in which the subject is situated.

The question whether the entity is one or multiple relies on the signifying difference between the mark and its place. The same object coincides with the place of its inscription, while otherness implies their separation. Hence, the difference between the two and the decision regarding the place and the element occupying it conditions the possibility of asserting numerical difference or identity that takes the form of two homologous questions concerning the instance of the change: Did the place change its element; did the element change its place? This duality of an element and its place is precisely the aforementioned inner – heterogeneous – signifying difference that we introduced in terms of the self-difference of the speculative concept. And this self-difference, correlative with the subject of the signifier, is the “transcendental condition” of the (im)possibility of distinguishing identity from difference. Therefore, numerical difference is

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¹⁰ I borrow the term “aesthetic of the signifier” from Miller (*cf.* Miller 2000).

secondary; the signifying difference (between an element and its place) is the condition of numerical difference; the aesthetic of the signifier is the condition of transcendental aesthetic.¹¹

Difference as opposed to identity is not a difference of sensibility but rather the difference of the signifier, the signifying difference between the mark and the place, or between the signifier and the space of its absence as the place of its inscription. The decision regarding numerical difference hinges on a hair of the signifying difference, the opposition *one—multiple* relies on the opposition *same—other* within which the subject is situated. The subject of undecidability is the subject of the signifier that emerges in relation to the irreducible gap of experience, or in relation to the causal gap of the causality of change.¹² Since it is impossible for a finite being to search the whole of time, this gap is structural, and its structural character best comes to light in the guise of the impossibility of asserting the numerical identity of an object, i.e. in the guise of an object that cannot be “counted as one” because the signifying self-split between an entity and the place of its inscription subverts the possibility of ever reaching an objectal unity. To put it in Lacanian terms: Any assertion of the causality of change, any signifying determination (and therefore negation) of this lack, any S_1 as a mark of the self-difference of conceptuality that delivers the subject, S , of its uncertainty (thus abolishing it), is but a mere metonymy of the lack as the irreducible gap of the whole of time, $S(A)$. Since it is impossible to search the entirety of time, since time as a succession of changes in accordance with the category of causality is never whole, the split between an appearance and its place is irreducible, and the element split by the self-difference of conceptuality is contradictory, marked by the negative of itself.

Thus, the final decision regarding the oneness and multiplicity of the object is forever postponed, stretching out to bad, or spurious, infinity. The persistence of this causal gap of causality, of this atopic place of a lacking mark, or this non-place of the inner – heterogeneous – difference of appearances, is the

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¹¹ Miller comments in passing: “Numbers don’t yet exist at the unfolding of the series of (split, repeated) unary marks. It is only with the addition of the marks that number begins.” (*Ibid.*)

¹² For a more detailed account of the causality and temporality of the (subject of the) unconscious, cf. Hajdini 2012.

“transcendental” condition of the interstitial emergence of the subject.¹³ If we follow the enumerated pairs of concepts of reflection, what characteristics can we ascribe to this non-place as the (Other) scene of the transcendental atopic?

If we say that this irreducible gap is neither identical nor different, neither in agreement nor in opposition, and neither inner nor outer, this is all too approximate. In determining its logical status in relation to the couple of identity and difference we are led to rely on that particular concept of difference mentioned by Mladen Dolar in his reading of the beginning of Hegel’s *Science of Logic*. Hegel marks this difference with a double negation¹⁴ that takes the form of something *nicht ununterschieden*, or “not undistinguished” (Dolar 2013, pp. 228-229; cf. Hegel 1991, p. 83). The difference of the “not undistinguished” does not simply coincide with the “different;” the double negation remains in place and is irreducible to the negation of negation. This difference is situated at the intersection of identity and difference as the inner negativity of their opposition. The difference of the gap is neither distinguished nor undistinguished (and hence identical), but rather un-undistinguished in relation to the couple of the identical and the different.

The double negation of the un-un-different does not only prevent the reduction of the different to the identical (by way of adding to the negation of the different that would catapult the different into the identical an additional negation). First and foremost, it is situated in the gap of their tautology as the inner otherness of the logical equivalence of the distinguished and the un-undistinguished. If the difference of the un-un-different were to simply coincide with the negation of negation, the negation of negation of the different would coincide with the different, with its assertion, or affirmation. However, the wager of the double negation (as opposed to the negation of negation) is precisely to take hold of

¹³ The subject of the unconscious that finds itself faced with a decision regarding the actuality of a change and that is split by the gap in the causal chain is not a “subject of a decision,” a subject that would subjectivise itself through its decision-making. Quite the contrary: The subject is radically incommensurable with the decision as such, it is situated at the very verge of the decision, and once the decision is made, the subject is unmade, aborted, pushed into non-being.

¹⁴ As opposed to “the negation of negation”. For reasons we cannot get into at this point, the negation of negation corresponds to the phallic signifier that – in a secondary gesture – “negates” this atopic place of the causal gap of causality. For a more detailed analysis of the logical types of negativity and their dialectical movement, cf. Hajdini 2015.

both the signifying difference between the different and the un-different (or between the mark of the lack and the lack of the mark) that is the difference of the subject *and* of this *inner gap of tautology* of the different and un-un-different, of the constitutive gap of the Symbolic order as such. And it is precisely this difference of the un-un-different as opposed to the different opposed by the identical that hinders the count for “one,” or the assertion of numerical identity. Without this distinction between the different and the un-un-different (insofar as it is different from the different) we would lose the inner heterogeneous self-difference of the speculative conceptual regime that subverts transcendental reflection, and hence would slip right back into the Kantian dichotomy of Sensibility and the Understanding.

The difference of the un-undistinguished, the difference of the inner gap of tautology, thus provides a key to the remaining concepts of reflection. A further characteristic of this gap of experience is situated at the intersection of *agreement and opposition* that concerns the reality of the appearance, or sensation as the materiality of the representation of the object. For Kant, opposition – just like difference – is only conceivable in the realm of appearances as the relation between two realities that mutually cancel out their effects. However, a zero-degree sensation of two opposing appearances does not simply sublimate their reality; it is rather the result of a collision between two opposing intensities that remain real despite the fact that they mutually abolish one another. They retain reality despite mutual negation. A zero-degree opposition hence does not imply an agreement, just as from a situation in which we have two opposing and equally convincing arguments regarding one and the same thing we cannot infer that the two speakers are in agreement; we will rather infer that they are in absolute opposition. However, opposition – just like the difference in relation to identity – functions as the inner condition of agreement; only that which is in opposition with its other is in agreement with itself. To situate the split we have to once again introduce the inner gap of the tautology of the negation (or opposition) and its double negation that supplements the difference of the un-un-distinguished with the real of negativity of the un-un-opposite as essentially different from a mere reality of opposition, or of negation.

Both characteristics of the difference of the un-un-distinguished and the real of the un-un-opposite meet in the well-known Lacanian concept of *extimacy* that traverses Kant's final couple of concepts of reflection, namely the couple of

the inner and the outer. The extimate presents the gap of tautology of the outer and its double negation; it presents the self-difference of exteriority that is not simply an “exteriority of the interior,” or an “interior exteriority,” but – more radically – self-exteriority, or *the inner exteriority of exteriority itself*.

The difference of the un-un-distinguished, the real of the non-non-negative, the exteriority of the extimate, are hence the *categories* of the transcendental atopic that relies on relations between the three *elements* that we have marked with three Lacanian algebraic signs for the signifier (that is differential and hence assumes the minimal form of a signifying dyad), for the structural lack in the Other (or the primordially repressed binary signifier), and for the subject: S_1 - S_2 , $S(A)$, S . In order to be able to untie this schema into a process and present its dialectical movement, we have to introduce another – essential – element, namely object *a* as the undialectisable lever of the passage from reflection to speculation, and from the transcendental topic to the *a*-topic as the theory of *objet petit a*.

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