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Critique in the Age of Indifference

Iain MacKenzie

AUTHOR ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Abstract

In *After Finitude*, Meillassoux asks an epoch defining question: how can we criticise both ideological dogmatism and sceptical fanaticism if the rise of sceptical fanaticism is an effect of the Kantian critical philosophy one must employ against ideological dogmatism? Meillassoux's answer is to argue in favour of thought's ability to access the absolute necessity of contingency. Agamben and Laruelle give an alternative answer. Although very different in style and argument, both aim to disqualify fanatical positions by showing how 'the belief that belief is all there is' is not all there is because of the contingent nature of thought about the real. It will be argued that while pursuing logics of disqualification all three thinkers nonetheless employ arguments that render positive claims that sit uncomfortably within their respective systems. The upshot is that the transcendental gesture of critical philosophy – what are the conditions of our positive claims about thought and the world – is halted by an uncritical appeal to the condition of all conditions; intellectual intuition in Meillassoux and an indifferent thought/real in Agamben and Laruelle. But what options remain given that the problem of critique in an age of indifference is a problem that critical philosophy itself has created? The task, it will be argued, is to express the transcendental conditions of what we know about the world and how we know what we know about the world in a manner that retains the contingency of both. But are there variants of contemporary thought that can express the contingency of the real and of thought while remaining within the transcendental apparatus that provides the necessary criteria for the challenge of both ideological dogmatism and sceptical fanaticism? I shall bring the argument to a close by suggesting that two such variants are available – transcendental naturalism and transcendental aestheticism – and that the latter provides a secure but non-dogmatic ground for critique in an age of indifference.

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It has become increasingly clear that many of the contemporary philosophers for whom we might be tempted to use the epithet 'radical' have given up on critique, in any form. Broadly speaking, we can characterise these thinkers as belonging to two camps: the camps of concern and commitment. The former challenge the standard gestures of critical theory – what Bruno Latour has referred to as the fact and fairy positions¹ and Graham Harman has called undermining and overmining² – in order to revive Heidegger's strongly anti-critical interest in matters of concern. The latter challenge the standard gestures of critical theory – which both Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek have (like Latour's good fairies) implicated in the sordid game of opinions they call parliamentarianism – in order to revive the pre-critical, Christian, interest in bare or resolute commitment.³ Both those who invite concern and those who invoke commitment have given up on critique; the 'Latour/Harman-ites' in the name of a new empiricism of the object, the 'Badiou/ Žižek-ites' in the name of a new rationalism of the idea. Putting it like this brings an air of philosophical familiarity – when new empiricisms and rationalisms bed down in stalemate it is also time for critique to renew itself. But, what I want to explore below is why it must be a new critique and not simply the resuscitation of the mortified original. To understand why, we must turn to the work of Quentin Meillassoux.⁴

In *After Finitude*, Meillassoux claims that 'the more thought arms itself against dogmatism, the more defenceless it becomes before fanaticism'.⁵ It is a claim that strikes right at the heart of all modern philosophies in the critical tradition. According to Meillassoux, 'contemporary fanaticism cannot...simply be attributed to the resurgence of an archaism that is violently opposed to the achievements of Western critical reason; on the contrary, it is the effect of critical rationality'.⁶ What is the nature of critical rationality such that it has this effect? On Meillassoux's account, the modern critical project sought to rid philosophy of its

tendency toward dogmatism, in both its rationalist and empiricist formulations, by treating correlationism as unimpeachable. Correlationism is ‘the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other’.⁷ However, to the extent that critical philosophy succeeded in de-legitimizing classical forms of dogmatism by invoking the correlation of thought and being, it did so at the cost of binding every claim to the absolute to the codicil ‘for us’. It is this unimpeachable ‘for us’ within correlationism that has created the conditions for the emergence of new, fanatical, forms of religiosity. Religiosity returns – not just religion but all forms of fanatical defences of ‘the absolute, for us’, which includes some of the fanatical defences of science in the modern world and agnosticism – with a new found basis in ‘blind faith’.⁸ The name he gives this state of affairs is ‘sceptico-fideism’ or more simply ‘fideism’. Fideism is the ‘belief that belief is all there is’ and in the wake of the critical undermining of dogmatism it ‘reinforces religious obscurantism’ to the extent that critical philosophy is unable to distinguish itself from fanatically held beliefs.⁹ In response to this problem, Meillassoux urges that while it is important to retain the critical gesture against dogmatism, with a view to undermining the ideologies that it fosters, it is nonetheless ‘important that we re-discover in thought a modicum of absoluteness’ in order to break through the correlationist circle and challenge the fideism to which it gives rise. In a deliberate echo of Kant, we must, he says, succeed in ‘criticising both ideological dogmatism and sceptical fanaticism’.¹⁰ But how is this to be achieved if the rise of sceptical fanaticism is an effect of the Kantian critical philosophy one must employ against ideological dogmatism?

This is the question that animates the following discussion into what I will call the problem of critique in the age of indifference. Whilst in broad agreement with Meillassoux

that critical philosophy's inability to differentiate itself from various forms of fanaticism is *the* problem of contemporary approaches to critique, I propose recasting his account of fideism in terms of indifference for two reasons. First, it reminds us of the opening to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which he points out that 'after all paths (as we persuade ourselves) have been tried in vain, what rules is tedium and complete indifferentism'.¹¹ Indifference, as Kant understood it, was not the result of apathetic disengagement but of a relentless engagement with 'self-knowledge' that nonetheless fails to find a secure footing in anything other than one's own beliefs. When such is the state of philosophy, he declared, it is ripe for a 'popular style' that creates the conditions which enable and encourage people to turn belief into fanaticism. In recalling this context, we can see that Kant's 'age' is our own 'age'; we too live in an age of indifference, a time when critique must be mobilised, only now the indifference of our age is shaped by the legacy of critical philosophy itself. In recognition of both the spirit and the fate of critical philosophy, and as we frame our guiding problem it is crucial that the indifference that haunts modernity is brought into the spotlight, so that critique does not inadvertently fall prey to the machinations of the very forces it was devised to overcome. Secondly, reminding ourselves of this Kantian context allows for a broader series of reflections on the alternatives available for overcoming the problematic legacy of Kant's own response to the problem of indifferentism. After briefly recapping and then challenging Meillassoux's answer to his own version of the problem, this reformulation in terms of indifference foregrounds two contemporary thinkers who have proposed a novel response to contemporary indifferentism: Giorgio Agamben and François Laruelle. Albeit in different ways, utilising different philosophical tools, they both invoke a radical reformulation of indifference itself, in a manner that they propose will undermine the various forms of fideist fanaticism. Perhaps there is a form of radical indifference that can overcome indifferentism?

This is a question that would have been inconceivable to Kant, but in the wake of critical philosophy's own lurch into fideism and fanaticism it is one that must be asked today. That said, and as will be argued, the radical reformulations of indifference are, in the end, inadequate. As with Meillassoux, to the extent that they invoke claims that are ultimately unsustainable from within their own philosophical perspectives they remain unable to sustain positive critiques of fideism and, in the manner of Kant, risk reinstating the grounds of the indifference they seek to overcome.

While we may be tempted to think that it is not the business of philosophy to intervene in the stalemate of fanatical positions that characterises today's world, or even if we think that it should that it is ill-equipped to do so, this is not the line followed below. Adopting Kant's own invective against indifferentism reminds us that we 'cannot be indifferent' to indifference by simply dismissing it as the 'thoughtlessness of our age'.¹² Rather, the task of 'self-knowledge' must be taken up anew, even if it is to be taken up outside the 'court of justice, by which reason may secure its rightful claims...according to its own eternal and unchangeable laws';¹³ a court that we now know, with Meillassoux, has engendered our current age of indifference. With that in mind, the discussion turns to two versions of a renewed Kantianism; 'renewed' because they share the spirit while understanding the fate of critique, today. These will be called transcendental naturalism and transcendental aestheticism. Both are motivated by the desire to overcome the indifference that results from fideism, fully and without return, and thereby ward off fanaticism. It will be concluded, however, that transcendental aestheticism offers the most convincing account of how this can be achieved and, to this extent, it is the best prospect for renewing the radical component of critical philosophy in the current age of indifference.

Through the Circle of Correlationism

Let us begin, then, with a brief sketch of Meillassoux's answer to his own question. In a now widely discussed series of arguments,¹⁴ Meillassoux seeks to demonstrate that the strong variant of the correlationist circle that dominates contemporary critical philosophy (that although thought and being are correlated there is no necessary reason why they are so correlated) posits a claim that it simultaneously denies; namely, the absolute necessity of contingency. Accepting this implication of the strong correlationist argument, according to Meillassoux, engenders just that 'modicum of the absolute' that is necessary to ward off fideism. This is the case because it disqualifies all variants of contemporary fanaticism that rest upon the 'belief that belief is all there is'. Borrowing a turn of phrase from Badiou, who borrows it from Mallarmé, we can say that for Meillassoux 'the belief that belief is all there is' should be qualified with the codicil 'except that there is also the absolute necessity of contingency'.¹⁵ With this argument through the correlationist circle, Meillassoux seeks to reclaim philosophy's ability to differentiate itself from fideism and, thereby, to 'wake us from our correlationist slumber, by enjoining us to reconcile thought and the absolute'.¹⁶

The deliberate echo of Kant is, once again, telling. Meillassoux identifies his project as one that is Kantian in motivation but he does so in a way that demolishes the critical injunction against absolutising claims. Indeed, this tension has been the concern of many of the critical responses to Meillassoux's journey into speculation. As several commentators have noted, Meillassoux's project of overcoming the fanaticism that results from critical rationality seems hamstrung by its debt to Kantian critical philosophy.¹⁷ Ray Brassier has best articulated this position. As Brassier has noted, 'the central question raised by Meillassoux's speculative

materialism becomes: does the principle of factuality, which states that ‘everything that exists is necessarily contingent’, include itself in its designation of ‘everything’?.¹⁸ Invoking the paradox of self-reference, Brassier calls into question the intellectual intuition that enables Meillassoux’s piercing of the correlationist circle. At stake is the simple existential contingency of thought itself; if our capacity for thought is as contingent a feature of the real as everything else then it seems impossible to accord thought the ideal quality of an intellectual intuition into the absolute necessity of contingency. Or as Brassier puts it, ‘the distinction between the real and the ideal is part of the correlationist legacy which cannot be mobilized against it without first undergoing decontamination’.¹⁹ What Brassier pinpoints here is that the speculative gesture generates the problem of self-reference because Meillassoux’s project is insufficiently decontaminated of the Kantian terms of the problem. Putting it this way suggests the first of our alternative solutions to Meillassoux’s problem of critique in the age of indifference.

The question is now this: is it possible to decontaminate the terms of Meillassoux’s problem in order to reformulate the potential of philosophy (here we must be wary of limiting it to critical philosophy) in the face of contemporary indifference? Where Meillassoux presents fideism as a problem that must be overcome, might it be the case that this gesture rests too heavily on one of the fundamental dichotomies of all Western thought, not just its critical version; namely, that of identity and difference? Perhaps *identifying* fideism as the problem of our age and then claiming that philosophy can and must *differentiate* itself from fideism, is the gesture that contaminates Meillassoux’s account of the powers of philosophy? Might the logic of identity and difference itself be the source of the viral replication of the correlationist circle he is trying to pierce? Perhaps the way to overcome indifference is to

radicalise indifference itself rather than seek to identify it and then differentiate philosophy from it? These, and related, questions can be said to bring together two unlikely contemporary philosophical bedfellows: Agamben and Laruelle.²⁰ It is worth briefly and schematically outlining their shared concerns in order to offer up a particularly striking alternative to the critique of critique.

Suspending the Circle of Correlationism

The guiding assumption of both Agamben and Laruelle can be stated in a manner that relates directly to Brassier's critique of Meillassoux: all thought is radically contingent. The striking possibility that follows is that perhaps the most intractable and therefore foundational philosophical dyad of the Western tradition, the dyad of identity and difference, is itself historically contingent. It is a possibility that animates, albeit in different ways, the philosophies of both of these contemporary thinkers. We can see the similarity of their projects in their respective responses to Derrida's philosophy of difference; in particular, their shared suspicion of the positive conclusions that Derrida draws from deconstruction.

For Laruelle, the affirmative conclusions of deconstruction belie the spirit of the deconstructive method itself.²¹ He says, there is 'no principle of choice between a classical type of ontology and the deconstruction of that ontology', a position he treats as a radicalisation of deconstruction itself.²² Rather, for Laruelle, the principle of choice should itself be understood as an inflexion of a more fundamental philosophical operation. For Laruelle, it is not a matter of philosophically laden choice but of a transhistorical operation that has set thinking on a dead-end path; the decision to do philosophy *about* the real.

According to Laruelle, this philosophical decision is one that must be suspended. Instead of beginning with the divide between the intelligible and the sensible, the ideal and the real, that the philosophical decision to embark on thinking *about* the real implies and then retroactively positing the givenness of the real, Laruelle argues that we must begin with the assumption that the real is already undivided. He gives this notion of the Real various names such as the One.²³ As a consequence, the real is therefore entirely indifferent to any thought about it, such that all thought is simply contingent in relation to the One.

Although Agamben's fundamentally genealogical approach steers him well away from Laruelle's grand axiomatic gestures, they share a suspicion regarding the allegedly positive aspects of deconstruction. Watkin gives Agamben's relation to Derrida its most incisive account.²⁴ After carefully reconstructing Agamben's 'bouyant invective' against Derrida's early writings on the sign and the voice and his challenges to Derrida's later work on the law, he concludes that 'the basis of deconstruction' is 'always another yes. In contrast...Agamben favours the possibility of a mode of occupying indifference'.²⁵ He goes on: 'Derrida always says yes to yes, while Agamben believes before one can say yes, one has to say no. Derrida remains in a paradise of affirmation, while Agamben has to leave nirvana and wend his weary way down the grey defiles of a purgatorial indifference'.²⁶

In a note, Watkin summarises the following areas of overlap and distinction between Agamben and Laruelle: 'the syntax of difference as he [Laruelle] calls it is the economic articulation of difference according to Agamben, while his definition of the One as indivision is naturally directly related to our own formulation of indifference, although in our case not yet directed to any wider conception of a radically immanent real of some order...the two central voices presenting a critique of philosophical decision in the form of differential

dyads'.²⁷ For both Agamben and Laruelle, therefore, the contingency of thought must be exposed and the standard philosophical forms of thinking *suspended* in the name of asking whether or not it is possible to think in a manner that isn't framed by the promise of a paradise of affirmation, or by the grounding philosophical decision to think about the real. We are invited to consider the possibility that the circle of correlationism is based on a 'for us' that is ultimately just an expression of Western philosophy's basis in division? If we can suspend thinking on the basis of division then perhaps we can articulate a form of thought that is not circumscribed by the 'for us' and which will, therefore, undermine all forms of sceptico-fideism. For all that they are operating in different registers, as Watkin's points out, it is equally clear that these two unlikely contemporaries present complimentary projects for addressing the legacy of critique in the current age of indifference.

Particularly through the books of his *Homo Sacer* series, Agamben has explored the disastrous effects of the political and economic articulation of difference on human life and he continues to work through the potential for forms of life that can survive once this logic is suspended.²⁸ Laruelle has taken an alternative approach to the same problem. In a series of books, he has developed successive versions of what he calls, non-philosophy (or, more recently, non-standard philosophy).²⁹ Non-(standard)-philosophy is a practically oriented form of thinking that accepts the unthinkable (because indivisible) nature of the One, with a view to exploring the possibilities that might follow from suspending the logic of identity and difference that founds the philosophical gesture of thinking about the real. In the context of this discussion, we can say, with a deliberate air of the paradoxical, that Agamben and Laruelle offer two complimentary options for a non-critical critique of critique. With Laruelle, scepticism is taken to a point where fanaticism is undercut by reducing the indifference it

feeds off to a radical stillness or void that therefore offers no comfort to the fanatics. Equally, with Agamben, indifference is elevated to a philosophical problem that makes 'the belief that belief is all there is' itself a contingent gesture that is unsustainable by virtue of being caught within the dyad of identity and difference. In effect, these are two sides of a 'postdifferential' philosophical coin that suspend the circle of correlationism. But to what end?

At best, Agamben and Laruelle present a form of philosophy that disqualifies certain fanatical positions, in a manner akin to Meillassoux. But where Meillassoux makes his case for disqualifying all forms of fideism by invoking a modicum of absoluteness, Agamben and Laruelle, in different ways, disqualify all forms of fideism *and* Meillassoux's gesture of intellectual intuition by calling forth the utterly indifferent, because utterly contingent, nature of thought. That said, such radical gestures remain problematic precisely because of the manner in which the act of philosophical suspension is called forth in thought. Their respective efforts to move from thought to 'forms of life' or 'performative philosophy' simply evidence the extent to which they remain trapped by beginning their radical deconstructions of the identity-difference dyad in thought. Just as Kant's injunction against knowledge of things in themselves requires a series of positive claims about the noumenal realm that must be intelligible if the injunction is to make sense, so too Agamben's and Laruelle's respective injunctions against thinking in terms of the identity-difference dyad result in a series of positive claims about the *difference* that can be made by excavating *indifference* within thought. Once again, Brassier provides a telling insight into the underlying issue. Referring to Laruelle, Brassier claims that there is a 'positive negativity' that is both necessary for Laruelle's account of the utterly indifferent conception of the real and yet also disavowed by Laruelle on account of the threat it poses in terms of reinstating a philosophical decision.³⁰ The same

claim can be mobilised against Agamben. In Agamben this 'positive negativity' is named, amongst other things, 'destituent power' and it remains equally unclear how this can be accounted for within a philosophical method aimed at the suspension of all identity and difference claims; 'destituent potential' appears to be the name that identifies the difference that results from suspending the logic of identity and difference.³¹ The problem of 'positive negativity' in both is that it becomes impossible to *know* whether or not the indifference they seek within thought is the basis of a philosophical method (Agamben) or new practice of thought (Laruelle) that can provide the means to counter fanaticism, or whether it is merely an uncritical expression of fanaticism itself. Without a critical qualifier to the non-correlationist appeal to indifference their respective projects risk becoming sophisticated but ultimately ideological defences of withdrawal. Polemically, we may say that, in a world where fanatical expressions of fideism abound, Agamben's forms of life and Laruelle's non-philosophical performative texts constitute equally fanatical forms of insistence that we do nothing to positively overcome indifference! To the extent that this is the case, both Agamben and Laruelle are prey to Meillassoux's argument that agnosticism is not a route out of fideism and fanaticism, merely a version of it.³² To the extent that doing nothing is still a doing, and they both seem to want it to be, they are unable to account for why we should do nothing and what effect it will have, if not just leave everything as it is.

The Return of the Circle of Correlationism

Where does this leave the problem of critique in the age of indifference? If we return to Meillassoux's question having now worked through his own, Agamben's and Laruelle's answers to it, we can refine the problem. The question was this: how can we criticise both

ideological dogmatism and sceptical fanaticism if the rise of sceptical fanaticism is an effect of the Kantian critical philosophy one must employ against ideological dogmatism? Meillassoux's answer was to argue in favour of thought's access to the absolute necessity of contingency. The answer suggested by Agamben and Laruelle is to argue in favour of thought's utter contingency in respect of the indivisible real with a view to suspending all difference in the name of a radical indifference. Both aim to disqualify fanatical positions by showing how 'the belief that belief is all there is' is not all there is because of the contingent nature of the real or the contingent nature of thought. Yet pursuing logics of disqualification they all employ arguments that render positive claims that sit uncomfortably within their respective systems: either Meillassoux retains the privileges of intellectual intuition without considering the possibility that 'intellectual intuition' itself may be changed by the radically contingent hyper-chaos it is deemed to access, or Agamben and Laruelle retain the utterly indifferent real without considering how this might denature all positivity, not just those associated with the identity-difference dyad. In each of these cases, the transcendental gesture of critical philosophy – what are the conditions of our positive claims about thought and the world? – is halted by an uncritical appeal to the condition of all conditions; intellectual intuition in Meillassoux and an indifferent thought/real in Agamben and Laruelle. The problem of critique in the age of indifference cannot, therefore, be resolved by either 'a modicum of the absolute' or insistence upon indifference in the face of logics of identity and difference. Neither finding a route to the outside of correlationism, nor suspending the movement of 'the correlationist two-step' (as Meillassoux calls it) will ultimately challenge fanatical fideism in that both options rest upon the 'blind faith' they seek to critique. But what options remain given that the problem of critique in an age of indifference is a problem that critical philosophy itself has created?

The task, it would appear, is to express the transcendental conditions of what we know about the world and how we know what we know about the world in a manner that retains the contingency of both. Schematically, this means that the task is neither to get outside the correlationist circle nor suspend it; rather, the task is to occupy its centre and embrace the dynamism of the correlationist two-step without reproducing dogmatism or scepticism. But are there variants of contemporary thought that can express the contingency of the real and of thought while remaining within the transcendental apparatus that provides the necessary criteria for positive claims that challenge both ideological dogmatism and sceptical fanaticism? Is it possible to identify positively that which might make a difference in a world where indifference reigns so as to overcome sceptico-fideism, without instituting a new form of pre-critical dogmatism?

It is useful to return to Kant in order to express what is at stake in both remaining Kantian and in renegotiating the terms of the Kantian correlation. Consider (once again) this passage from the first *Critique*:

Now after all paths (as we persuade ourselves) have been tried in vain, what rules is tedium and complete indifferentism, the mother of chaos and night in the sciences, but at the same time also the origin, or at least the prelude, of their incipient transformation and enlightenment, when through ill-applied effort they have become obscure, confused and useless.³³

There are several interesting features of this quote, not least that it expresses Kant's concern with overcoming the indifference that results from 'trying all paths in vain', where these paths are, of course, those scored out by the debate between rationalists and empiricists. In general terms, this articulates both the motivation and the task of critique. Critique is motivated by

the surplus of indifference created by endless criticism and the task is to expose the deficit of thought within the debate itself. But in what sense is indifferentism overcome by the critique of criticism? In this telling extract we get two possible avenues of critique in the equivocation it contains and the connection it makes to enlightenment. Considering the equivocation, indifferentism is either an origin of, or prelude to overcoming indifference. Considering the connection it establishes, the motivating ground of indifference will lead to the transformation of the sciences and, therefore, to enlightenment. This equivocation and connection can serve to distil the two versions of the critique of critique that may enable us to think the contingency of the real and of thought from *within* the dynamic of the correlationist circle: transcendental naturalism and transcendental aestheticism.

The View from Within the Circle of Correlationism

The transcendental naturalist claims that what we know about the world must inform our understanding of how we come to know the world but equally that how we know the world is not a mere reflection of what we know about our place in it. The first criterion disqualifies the sceptical deflation of the sciences as just one form of thought amongst others, and embraces the broadly progressive quality of our understanding of nature, including our place in it. The second criterion disqualifies accounts of the subject that presume we are in some sense beings whose cognitive faculties simply reflect fundamental categories of nature. For all the Kantian language, therefore, it is a significant development of the apparatus of Kantian critical philosophy in that there are no a priori categories of the understanding that reside within the subject. In fact, on this account, all knowledge of the world is social and discursive

rather than subjective and reflective. Establishing that these two criteria can be consistently maintained is not an easy task; but, perhaps, it is the right task.

It is a project currently being developed by Brassier through his reading of Wilfrid Sellars's anti-foundationalist but naturalist treatment of Kant's defence of scientific realism.³⁴ In the context of this discussion there are two elements of this project that are fundamental. First, there is an account of the relationship between thought and being that, at least, complicates Meillassoux's characterisation of Kant as the founding father of correlationism. In Sellars's version of Kant, sensation and conceptualisation *intermingle* in processes of *conceptual intuition* even though they remain distinct.³⁵ The intermingling yet distinct qualities of these processes are indicated by Sellars's reformulation of the intuition/concept distinction as representings/represented. This is the transcendental naturalist version of orienting oneself *within* the correlationist circle. Secondly, the relationship between the representings and represented is deemed to be one that has a teleological dimension. It is worth quoting Brassier on Sellars at length:

Sellars's claims that logical powers have a 'point' and that conceptual activity is endowed with an 'epistemic orientation' need to be taken seriously. What we know about the world is always accompanied by what we know about our knowing about the world. Empirical science is not just the accumulation of facts about the world but also (and increasingly) the accumulation of facts about how we know the world. These facts help us orientate ourselves: they contribute to a narrative of our cognitive evolution that develops as part of our ongoing understanding of our biological and social history. Cognitive progress is not only charted in terms of knowledge of facts, but also through facts about knowing. And knowledge does

not only develop in the dimension of cumulating facts about the world but also in the dimension of integrating facts about knowing into our knowledge of the world. The veritable *telos* of cognitive enquiry is not exhaustive description but practical transformation: the integration of knowing and doing such that what we know about the world and our place in it allows us to transform both it and ourselves in order to realize our various purposes; purposes which are not fixed but perpetually redefined in light of what we come to know.³⁶

Recalling the quote from Kant, transcendental naturalism takes the indifference that results from competing claims as the originary moment in a discursive account of knowledge that itself can give momentum to the idea of enlightenment, where that is now understood as the harmony that results when a science of natural contingency is incarnated within a philosophy of thought's contingency that expresses how we know the world through science.

Transcendental aestheticism can be said to take a different inspiration from Kant; indifference is the prelude to the transformation of knowledge but not necessarily a moment in a process toward enlightenment. Nonetheless, it remains importantly Kantian because it embraces the conditionality of knowledge claims *and* the power of critical philosophy to construct positive claims about the world that can call dogmatism and scepticism to account. The main presumption of this approach is that we can know the world by transforming it and this process of transformation is best understood as an artistic process that enables the learning that conditions knowledge. Put this way, it is clear that the main proponent of this position is Gilles Deleuze.³⁷ There are two fundamental Deleuzian claims animating this position, both of which can be drawn from his chapter on 'The Image of Thought' in *Difference and Repetition*.³⁸ First, cognition is the result of a process called learning such that 'learning

is the condition of true critique'.³⁹ Secondly, the process of learning itself is not engendered by either a subject endowed with universal categories of the understanding or by the unruly imposition of objects in the world upon the subject, but by encounters with signs. Signs, in this sense, are incorporeal expressions of corporeal interactions, the result of encounters between bodies that Deleuze calls learning.⁴⁰ The first claim establishes that learning is a critical practice that challenges what we think we know, introducing contingency at the level of what is known. The second makes it clear that how we know what we know is not the result of a discursive framework of conceptualisation but of a shock to the system of conceptualisation engendered by an 'encounter' when 'something in the world forces us to think'.⁴¹ The artistry involved is that of being worthy of the encounter in order to challenge what we think we know (a claim about the contingency of thought) whilst remaining open to the possibility of new sensations in the world (a claim about the contingency of the world).

The difference between these two options has, in one sense, a familiar ring to it. Transcendental naturalism occupies the middle of the correlationist circle but on the side of the concept, whereas transcendental aestheticism does the same but on the side of sensation. Both positions are equally concerned with expressing the dynamic and mutually transformative relation between concept and sensation that occurs when one gets into the middle of the circle. However, in both cases what has changed is that there is an attempt to think through the utter contingency of what we know and how we know it, thereby digging more deeply into the conditionality of all claims to knowledge that orient Kantian critical philosophy.⁴² Which version of this renewed understanding of critique provides the more compelling challenge both to ideological dogmatism and sceptical fanaticism?

The Critical Mix

The criterion for making this decision is not obvious. Nonetheless, the problem of which critical philosophy has the most radical potential can, initially at least, be refined by clarifying the dispute between them. The first step in this process is to consider each of the renewed critical projects from the perspective of ends. As Brassier's account of Sellars (quoted above) makes clear, there is an important sense in which the transcendental naturalist invokes a *telos* in order to motivate the critical work – the presumed harmony of what we know about the world and how we know what we know about the world – even though it is also noted that this teleological dimension must remain as open-ended as possible.⁴³ In the terms of our earlier quote from Kant, the transcendental naturalist invites a view of Enlightenment harmony and yet characterises this as a continuous process of transformation (what we know about the world transforming how we know and vice-versa). This tension gives critical bite against dogmatists in good radical fashion, but it also enacts a critique of the fanatical sceptics who, ultimately, eschew positive knowledge claims and lurch back to 'the belief that belief is all there is'. But is it sustainable? From the perspective of transcendental aestheticism, it is not. The question that the transcendental aestheticist poses is this: what criterion could be invoked to sustain the critique of fanaticism without lapsing into a dogmatism of the criterion itself? To the extent that Brassier is correct in maintaining that Meillassoux falls prey to the paradox of self-reference, are there any ways of avoiding this if one is motivated by the intellectual intuition (can it be anything else?) that there is a world of nature that we natural beings can know. The problem is that this intuition cannot be accounted for within the transcendentalist naturalist position it shores up. If this is indeed the

case then it might seem that the critique of critique required to meet the challenge of an age of indifference must be that of the transcendental aestheticist.

However, comparing these two positions from the perspective grounds, rather than ends, casts a different light. The aestheticist seeks to maintain a fine line between concept and sensation that captures the ultimately contingent nature of both. According to this version of a renewed critical philosophy this is the only way of ensuring that we can give due regard to the potential for new forms of experience and thought. As such, the idea of the new serves to dispel the fixed notions about the world sustaining dogmatists and the fixed notions of the irrefutable category of belief that sustains the fanatics.⁴⁴ It is a compelling vision; but is it defensible? For the transcendental naturalist a problem remains. The question that the naturalist poses is this: how can one assess what counts as new without criterion? For the transcendental naturalist, it is only once one has presumed that there is a naturalist but non-reductive ground to our discursively constituted conceptual schemes that one can know new ways of experiencing the world and new ways of thinking about it. Without such a presumption, and therefore without criterion, transcendental aestheticism drifts into claims about a groundless world of experienced but unknowable intuitions about the chaos of the cosmos.⁴⁵ The result, for the transcendental naturalist, is a position that is unable to differentiate itself from fanaticism because all claims to the new are equally legitimate. From the perspective of grounds, therefore, it might seem that the transcendental naturalist has more critical armoury and therefore more radical clout in fighting against both fanatics and dogmatists.

Do we choose conceptual telos and risk dogmatism or experiential chaos and risk fanaticism? Having clarified that the debates between our two versions of critical philosophy

push each position toward its respective side of the circle of correlation, so to speak, we appear to be right back at the beginning of our problem and no further on with establishing a renewed version of critique appropriate for the age of indifference. However, in drawing the discussion to a close I will argue that this is not the right way of framing the issue. We must recall that both new forms of critical philosophy collapse the traditional picture of the Kantian distinction between sensation and intelligibility, stressing instead the intrinsically *mixed* nature of cognition. It is more correct to say, therefore, that the transcendental naturalist recognises that with every criterion comes the possibility for new experiences, just as the transcendental aestheticist recognises that with every encounter several new criteria emerge that are immanent to that encounter. But, if the issue is the intermingled and mixed nature of concept and sensation in both accounts then perhaps we can progress a little further by asking what kind of mixture each envisages?

There are numerous ways in which this question could be answered. Philosophically, there is clearly merit in reviewing the variety of interpretations of Kant's account of human cognition in both the analytical and continental traditions. Brassier, and those influenced by his turn to Sellars, are making significant headway with project. There is notably less interest in this approach within the philosophical work inspired by Deleuze. However, while embracing the centrality of these 'returns' to Kant, it does appear that they are, at present, simply reinforcing the divide between the naturalist and aestheticist positions; witness the debate outlined above. With that in mind, I will conclude by providing an argument by analogy that may help provoke further clarification of what is at stake in the two mixed versions of Kantian cognition, even though it will hardly decide the matter. Given that this debate is framed in terms of naturalism and aestheticism one might look for analogies profitably within both the

sciences and the arts for an account of mixture. In this particular instance, though, I will turn to the sciences for pragmatic reasons; namely, one finds in science an account of mixture that provides insight into the naturalist grounds of, what will be shown to be, a defence of aestheticism. For this reason, the argument has more pragmatic purchase even though it shouldn't be taken to exclude arguments that could be provided that rely on more straightforwardly aesthetic understandings of what constitutes a mixture (in sound, paint, dance or so on).

On these pragmatic grounds, we will turn to chemistry for an analogous account of how we should understand the mixture of concept and sensation proffered by each of our renewed versions of critique. In chemistry, there are two kinds of mixture: homogeneous and heterogeneous. A homogeneous mixture (for example, air) is one in which the elements remain distinct but the composition is uniform such that any part of it will have the same properties. A heterogeneous mixture (for example, oil and water) is one in which the elements of the composition remain distinct such that different parts will have different properties. But which version of a renewed critical project presumes which mixture of sensation and conceptualisation?

We can make this assessment by considering two quotes, one from each new version of the critical venture. First, a quote from Brassier talking about the role of art in relation to cognition: 'the point is a dialectic between the phenomenal and the noumenal such that the possibilities of experience, of perceptual experience, are enlarged through conceptual, through cognitive revolution'.⁴⁶ Secondly, we have this quote from Deleuze: 'art, science and philosophy seemed to us to be caught up in mobile relations in which each is obliged to respond to the other, but by its own means'.⁴⁷ According to Brassier, the role of art is as an

aid to breaking out of the conceptual schemes that risk being overdetermined by, what he calls, bourgeois structures: a role that is nonetheless fundamentally cognitive in the conceptual sense. In Deleuze, art, philosophy and science are defined less by their role in a preordained project than through their relationality; a form of relationality that is mobile and perspectival. For Brassier, we may say that the oil and water of sensation and intelligibility can be shaken up by art, even to the extent that it breaks free of its limits to find new form. But it will, for example, always be the water of conceptuality that gives form and function to the slippery oil of art.⁴⁸ For Deleuze, philosophy, art and science are distinct elements of our atmosphere yet always in relation to each other: such that, for example, changes in intensity (pressure, heat etc) will change the overall composition even if it remains homogeneous.⁴⁹

But does this focus on the different ways in which sensation and concept are mixed by the two critical projects help us determine which is more likely to provide a response to Meillassoux's guiding question? It might be tempting to construct a rationale for one version over the other – perhaps, one kind of mixture is simply a better account of our intermingled cognitive process than the other – but this would be to miss the point of focusing on the idea of mixture itself. While there are two types of mixture, the difference between them is not absolute but relative. Indeed, it is relative to the scale of the sample used to assess its properties. For a homogeneous mixture, such as air, if the sample taken is from a certain portion of the atmosphere rather than another we might find that it is mostly (or, in principle, all) oxygen or nitrogen (or, in principle, a trace element such as argon or carbon dioxide). If this is the result of the sample taken then it is clear that it will have different chemical properties from a sample that follows the average distribution (78% Nitrogen, 21% Oxygen, traces of argon, carbon dioxide etc). Two samples of air would give two different sets of

properties and the mixture would appear to be heterogeneous. Similarly, a heterogeneous mixture like oil and water can be sampled at a scale at which it appears homogeneous. At a certain molecular level at the interface of the oil and water there are (disputable but scientifically tested) molecular combinations of oil and water that would give it a homogeneous nature. In summary, scale of sample determines type of mixture. But, does this help us choose between our competing versions of the new critique required for the age of indifference?

That the distinction is relative to scale of sample should indicate to us that there is no need to choose between these two accounts of the mixed nature of thought and being.⁵⁰ But is it not precisely such equivocation that feeds the fideism that supports the indifference that characterises the contemporary world? Do we not hear the advocates of concern and commitment rally again behind the flags of a new empiricism and new rationalism, when the renewed critical philosophies may appear to rest upon the slippery slopes of relativism? Can this scalar equivocation be taken any further to assess the radical impact of thinking about the mixed nature of cognition?

Conclusion

Rather than treating the intrinsically mixed and relative nature of cognition as a disabling feature of these new versions of the critical project, a progressive conclusion can be drawn. When tackling the basis of indifference, the fideist 'belief that belief is all that there is', it is a matter of detailing how critical philosophy can ground *both* positive scientific knowledge *and* molecular moments of creativity in a manner that demonstrates that they are equally

powerful ways of establishing that there is more to our knowledge of the world than the belief in belief. Both science and art must be mobilised by radical philosophers if they are to shatter the indifference that results from fanatically held beliefs. This conclusion depends upon a thoroughly philosophical account of the mixed nature of sensation and conceptualisation, where these are deemed to be irreducible aspects of the same process of cognition.

However, the final sting in the tail is this: if this pragmatic argument by analogy is deemed to carry any weight, such that the intrinsically mixed nature of concept and sensation conditions both the forms of science and art that can and must be mobilised against fideism, then is it a conclusion that can be defended by both versions of the renewed critical philosophy? On the one hand, it is clear that this position can be defended by the transcendental aestheticist and much of the Kantian-inflected interpretations of Deleuze point in this direction, even if there is always more work to be done.⁵¹ On the other hand, the current development of transcendental naturalism does not appear to leave room for a thoroughly blended account of cognition on account of the priority afforded conceptual schemes, albeit discursively constituted ones. While the rhetoric of ‘intermingling’ and ‘conceptual revisability’ is clearly in evidence, the ways in which such notions are understood within transcendental naturalism suggests that the possibility of a homogeneous mixture of concept and sensation is always trumped by a heterogeneous account, mobilised in order to engender priority to conceptualisation over sensation.⁵² In which case, if the transcendental naturalist position is to become a version of critique worthy of the age of indifference it must seek to provide an account of why it is not just science on its own terms but also *art on its own terms* that must be included in the fight against various fideist fanaticisms. This may be

possible but the suspicion remains that were its proponents able to provide this account then it would become indistinguishable from transcendental aestheticism.

¹ Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern', *Critical Inquiry* 30, 2004, pp. 225-48. This text is dedicated to Graham Harman.

² See, for example, Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, Zero Books, Hants., 2011.

Harman discusses the 'merits and drawbacks of Latourian metaphysics' in *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, re.press, Melbourne, 2009, and the political connotations of this metaphysics in *Bruno Latour: Reassembling the Political*, Pluto Press, London, 2014.

³ See, for example, Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, *Philosophy in the Present*, Polity, Cambridge, 2009, and their respective contributions to *The Idea of Communism*, ed. Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek, *The Idea of Communism*, Verso, London, 2010. Their shared invocation of the idea of philosophical commitment should not be taken as an indication of complete agreement. For detailed analyses of the relationship between these two thinkers see Sean Homer, 'The Politics of Comradeship: Philosophical Commitment and Construction in Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek' in Marios Constantinou, ed., *Badiou and The Political Condition*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2014 and his book length study, *Slavoj Žižek and Radical Politics*, Routledge, London, 2016.

⁴ For example, Quentin Meillassoux, 'Potentiality and virtuality', in Robin Mackay ed., *Collapse II: Speculative Realism*, Urbanomic, Falmouth, 2007, pp. 51-81; *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier, Continuum, London, 2008; *The Number and the siren: A Decipherment of Mallarmé's Coup de dés*, trans. Robin Mackay,

Urbanomic and Sequence Press, Falmouth and New York, 2012; *Time without Becoming*, ed., Anna Longo, Mimesis International, 2014; *Science Fiction and Extro-Science Fiction*, trans. Alyosha Edlebi, Univocal Publishing, Minneapolis, 2015.

⁵ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 48.

⁶ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 49.

⁷ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 5.

⁸ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 49.

⁹ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 49.

¹⁰ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 49.

¹¹ Immanuel Kant, 'Preface (to the first edition)', *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. P. Guyer and A. Wood, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 100.

¹² Kant, 'Preface (to the first edition)', p. 100.

¹³ Kant, 'Preface (to the first edition)', p. 101.

¹⁴ For example; Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007; Peter Hallward, 'Review of After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency', *Radical Philosophy*, 152, 2008; Nathan Brown, 'Rationalist Empiricism/Dialectical Materialism: from Althusser to Meillassoux', paper delivered at the CRMEP Research Seminar series, Middlesex University, 8 October 2009, available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/155656930/Nathan-Brown-Rationalist-Empiricism>, last accessed 08/12/2016; Fabio Gironi, 'Meillassoux's Speculative Philosophy of Science: Contingency and Mathematics', *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, 22, 2011, pp. 26-61; Anna Cutler and Iain MacKenzie, 'Critique as a Practice of Learning: Beyond Indifference with Meillassoux, towards Deleuze', *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, 22, 2011, pp. 88-109; Graham Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making*, Edinburgh

University Press, Edinburgh, 2011; Peter Gratton, *Speculative Realism: Problems and Prospects*, Bloomsbury, London, 2014; Nathan Coombs, *History and Event: From Marxism to Contemporary French Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2015; Fabio Gironi ed., *The Legacy of Kant in Sellars and Meillassoux: Analytical and Continental Kantianism*, Routledge, London, 2018.

¹⁵ Alain Badiou, 'Preface', *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event 2*, trans. Alberto Toscano, Continuum, London, 2009; Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, for his discussion of Mallarmé.

¹⁶ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 128.

¹⁷ For example, Gratton, *Speculative Realism*, neatly summarises the different ways in which Meillassoux is working within and against the Kantian problematic. According to Golumbia, 'Correlationism: the dogma that never was', *boundary 2*, 43:2, 2016, pp. 1-25, Meillassoux's presentation of Kantian and post-Kantian critical philosophy as correlationist is a mischaracterisation that, amongst other things, misses the complex interpretative debates within the analytical tradition of Kant studies. It is interesting to note that Meillassoux can be read, on the one hand, as too Kantian and, on the other, as insufficiently Kantian.

¹⁸ Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, p. 90.

¹⁹ Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, pp. 93-4.

²⁰ In making this suggestion I am indebted to the work of William Watkin whose book *Agamben and Indifference: a critical overview*, Rowman and Littlefield International, London, 2014, contains some deeply suggestive remarks about the need for a 'postdifferential philosophy' and the shared concerns of Agamben and Laruelle in this respect.

²¹ François Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical introduction to Non-philosophy*, trans. Rocco Gangle, Continuum, London, 2010.

²² François Laruelle and Jacques Derrida, 'Controversy over the Possibility of a Science of Philosophy', *La Decision Philosophique*, 5, 1988, pp. 62-76, trans. Robin Mackay, available at <http://blog.urbanomic.com/dread>, last accessed 09.12.2016.

²³ Several commentaries on Laruelle's non-philosophical project, and the various stages of this project that he has developed, now exist in English. Perhaps the best text for an overview, both sympathetic and critical, is John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith eds, *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2012. See also Anthony Paul Smith, *Laruelle: A Stranger Thought*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2016.

²⁴ Watkin, *Agamben and Indifference*, Chapter Six: 'Derrida and Agamben: *Différance* Makes Indifference Communicable'.

²⁵ Watkin, *Agamben and Indifference*, p. 133.

²⁶ Watkin, *Agamben and Indifference*, p. 133.

²⁷ Watkin, *Agamben and Indifference*, p. xvii, n.4.

²⁸ Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans., Adam Kotsko, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 2015.

²⁹ The texts that form each period of Laruelle's work are usefully summarised by Gangle as an Appendix to Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference*, pp. 224-5.

³⁰ Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, p. 146-7.

³¹ See, Agamben 'Epilogue: Toward a Theory of Destituent Potential' in *The Use of Bodies*, pp. 263-79. Although written before *The Use of Bodies*, Claire Colebrook provides a careful yet critical reading of Agamben's thoughts on potential that are, in my view, still pertinent,

in her article, 'Agamben: Aesthetics, Potentiality, and Life', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 2008, 107, n.1, pp107-20.

³² Meillasoux, *After Finitude*, pp. 55-7.

³³ Kant, 'Preface (to the first edition)', p. 100.

³⁴ Brassier's engagement with the work of Wilfrid Sellars has emerged in several important chapters and papers: 'Nominalism, Naturalism, and Materialism: Sellars' Critical Ontology' in *Contemporary Philosophical Naturalism and its Implications*, B. Bashour and H. Muller eds, Routledge, London, 2013; 'Transcendental Logic and True Representings', *Glass Bead Journal*, Site 0: 'Castalia, The Game of Ends and Means', February 2016, available at <http://www.glass-bead.org/article/transcendental-logic-and-true-representings/?lang=enview>; 'The Metaphysics of Sensation: Psychological Nominalism and the Reality of Consciousness' in *Wilfrid Sellars, Idealism and Realism*, Patrick J. Reider ed., Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2016; 'Correlation, Speculation, and the modal Kant-Sellars Thesis' in *The Legacy of Kant in Sellars and Meillassoux*, Fabio Gironi ed., 2018.

³⁵ I am grateful to a reviewer of an earlier draft of this discussion for pointing out that this notion of 'conceptual intuition' may have an unhappy echo of Meillassoux's idea of an 'intellectual intuition' that can access the absolute. The difference is important: Meillassoux is committed to ascribing power to the intellect, the power to access the absolute. The idea of 'conceptual intuition' in Sellars is not an account of the power of concepts to access the nature of the world but an account of how concepts and intuitions are both conditions of thought: thought requires the content given by intuition and the form given by concepts. In other words, this is Sellars's way of accounting for the famous Kantian idea that 'thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind'; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 193. As an interpretation of Kant and as a claim that stands on its own terms, this

idea of concepts and intuitions bound together in cognition obviously raises a number of issues beyond the scope of this article but the key aspect that is tackled here is the relationship between concept and sensation in, what is called below, the critical mix. Good sources for Sellars' interpretation of Kant are, *In the Space of Reasons: Selected Essays of Wilfrid Sellars*, Kevin Scharp and Robert B. Brandom eds, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2007, and *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes*, New York, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968. Of fundamental importance in understanding Sellars's philosophical system is his *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1997 (the essay was originally published in 1956).

³⁶ Brassier, 'Transcendental Logic and True Representings', n. pag.

³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994. What follows is a very brief summary of Deleuze's philosophical project with a distinctly Kantian inflection, indebted to other work of this ilk: Christian Kerlake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy: From Kant to Deleuze*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009; Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality' and 'Deleuze, Kant, and the Theory of Immanent Ideas' both available in his *Essays on Deleuze*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2012. See also, Daniella Voss, *Conditions of Thought: Deleuze and Transcendental Ideas*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2013; Craig Lundy and Daniella Voss eds, *At the edges of thought: Deleuze and Post Kantian Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2015. I have chosen to label Deleuze's position a form of transcendental aestheticism, rather than use his own designation of transcendental empiricism, in order a) to emphasise the constructive, artistic, and dynamic dimension of this project with a view to emphasising the cartographical nature of conceptualisation in Deleuze (in contrast to the regulative function of concepts in Sellars

– a distinction that will be explored in future work) and b) to avoid confusion with the idea of empiricism invoked in Kantian philosophy. I will argue below why this latter point is especially important with respect to the roles of science and art in fighting fanaticism.

³⁸ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 129-67.

³⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 166.

⁴⁰ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 20, 73 and 164. On the relationship between events and signs, see Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, Columbia University press, New York, 1990, p. 63.

⁴¹ On the encounter see, Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 139.

⁴² I am grateful to a reviewer of an earlier draft of this article for pointing out that in many respects the dispute between Sellars and Deleuze, as constructed here, presupposes that Kant may already have understood the intrinsically mixed nature of cognition, with regard to concepts and intuitions. This may indeed be the case and yet the question of how the mix is to be understood, which is the topic of the next section, still remains open.

⁴³ See Brassier, 'Dialectics between Suspicion and Trust', *Stasis*, vol. 4, No. 2, 2016.

⁴⁴ For an excellent discussion of the place of 'the new' in Deleuze see, Daniel W. Smith, 'The Conditions of the New' in *Essays on Deleuze*, pp. 235-55.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Matija Jelača, 'Sellars Contra Deleuze on Intuitive Knowledge', *Speculations: A Journal of Speculative Realism*, V, 2014, pp. 92-126.

⁴⁶ See 'Session 3: Discussion' in R. Mackay, L. Pendrell, and J. Trafford eds, *Speculative Aesthetics*, Urbanomic, Falmouth, 2014, p. 117.

⁴⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, xvii.

⁴⁸ Or, vice-versa: it's not actually important whether art is the oil or whether art is the water.

⁴⁹ Intensity is a fundamental concept in Deleuzian metaphysics and, accordingly, it features throughout his work. A clear account in keeping with the image used in this analogy can be found in *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 230-46.

⁵⁰ One of the risks of arguing by analogy is that one introduces aspects on one side of the analogy that do not sit comfortably with other aspects that give the analogy its argumentative weight. 'Scale of sample' is one such aspect, in that it may imply a being that selects the scale of sample in a manner that reintroduces a reflective, transcendental subject into the discussion. While it is not possible to explore the full ramifications of this here, the link between scale of sample and a subject that selects the sample is by no means a necessary one.

⁵¹ An interesting route to explore in this regard would be one that delved deeply into Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?*, Verso, London, 1994, with a strongly Kantian bent to the interpretation. Signposts on this route include Jeffery A. Bell, *Deleuze and Guattari's What is Philosophy? A Critical introduction and Guide*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2016, and Rex Butler, *Deleuze and Guattari's What is Philosophy?*, Bloomsbury, London, 2016.

⁵² Jelača, 'Sellars Contra Deleuze' is a good case in point.