

Research Article

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Rivalry and Philosophy after Deleuze's Reversal of Platonic Participation

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Abstract: Deleuze's reversal of Platonism shifted the traditional emphasis on thinking that which participates in a concept to that in which a claim to participation occurs. The first part of this article presents a reading of this reversal that highlights the implications of Deleuze's ontology for his non-ontological account of participation, highlighting how this ontology (1) builds on aspects of Plato's philosophy recovered from beneath the later Platonic tradition of philosophy and (2) supports Deleuze's account of the rival claims of philosophy and opinion to participate in thought. The second part outlines the difficulties presented by philosophy's constitutive participation in friendship, love, and rivalry for it to be able to achieve its distinctive task of creating concepts that defeat opinion's rival claims to address the problems that present themselves to thought.

Keywords: conceptual personae, ontology, Deleuze, creation of concepts, philosophy, participation, Platonism

1 Introduction

Deleuze's reversal of Platonism involves a reversal of emphasis with regard to conceptualizing the dynamics of participation. Whereas the Platonic tradition emphasized the status of the participant in its claim to participate in a set of transcendent Ideas, Deleuze focuses on *the participable*, but without providing a straightforward "in which" that would correspond to it. On a cursory reading of Deleuze's works, one could come up with a number of candidates for the "in which" of participation: it could refer to a milieu, an earth, a territory, a plane of immanence, a rhythm, a plane of consistency or dialectical Idea, or "a life."¹ However, thought's determination of the "in which" of participation is not the goal of Deleuze's reversal of the Platonic conception of participation. Rather, its goal is to supplement the ontology of his systematic philosophy such that it can finally account for thought's achievement of philosophy's distinctive task, which is to "extract from opinions a "knowledge" that transforms them" into elements for the creation of concepts.²

The aim of this article is to clarify the status of the rivalry between philosophy and opinion after Deleuze's reversal of Platonic participation. I begin with an interpretation of this reversal, focusing on Deleuze's account of the formation of the social conditions that generated philosophy as a response to the problem of judging rival claims to participation. I then provide a reading of Deleuze's account of the

¹ Scholarship seems to indicate that it is the plane of consistency that can in most cases be identified with the dialectical Idea in Deleuze's thought. For example, see Bell, "Postulates of Linguistics," 80.

² Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?*, 79.

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Platonic conception of participation and its reliance on the Idea of the One to draw out the persistence of the conditions of philosophy's birth in the Athenian milieu for subsequent philosophical activity in the Western tradition. I find that while there are certain aspects of the Platonic conception of participation that Deleuze provides good reason for reversing, Deleuze also chooses to actively affirm certain aspects of it in his own conception of participation – and not simply because the historical inertia of Platonism may be such that it would be impossible to abandon all its aspects to philosophy's history.

Section 3 discusses the consequences of Deleuze's reversal of Platonic participation for his account of how philosophy ought to assess rival claims to participate in its plane of immanence, and the relation of these claims to the dynamics specific to the philosophical plane of immanence. Since Deleuze traces the birth of philosophy's first plane of immanence to the new forms of human sociality that characterized the Greek *agon*, I focus on the dynamics of participation that relate to the complications presented by the phenomena related to friendship, love, and rivalry. In the course of this discussion, certain of the possible candidates for *that which can be participated in* within the system of Deleuze's thought are ruled out. With the readings provided in each of the main sections of this article, I demonstrate that Deleuze's reversal of Platonism presents new complications for the rivalries within and around philosophy's plane of immanence left unthought by Plato's concept of the Idea as arbiter of rival claims to participation.

2 Deleuze's new ontology for thinking participation

Deleuze situates the Platonic concept of the Idea and its ontology of participation as resulting from the novel social conditions presented by the formation of the Greek city. In the “new society of friends and rivals” competing to make arguments about the Good, the True, and the Beautiful in Athens, Plato's concern was to determine independent criteria for judging rival claims to participate in these Ideas.³ According to Deleuze, Plato invented the concept of the Idea of the One in response to this problem, against which rival claims “will be justified only through a neighborhood, a greater or lesser proximity it ‘has had’ in relation to the Idea” of the One.⁴ The result of this invention was that the way in which beings appeared could now be judged as participating in the more specific ideas to which they make claim to participate according to the degree of their participation in the One, since the One is itself participated in by the other Ideas. For Deleuze, this concept of the Idea and its reference to the One provided a “notion of the model” that allowed thought to select beings that appeared as good approximations and eliminate ingenuine copies of the model.⁵

This reading finds ambiguous but plausible support in the *Parmenides*, the dialogue which most extensively addresses the problem of the existence of the One. Here, Plato has Parmenides consider how the parts of the one could contribute to its oneness without obliterating it, and ultimately has him conclude that this proposition is untenable on multiple grounds. However, though the young Socrates seldom speaks in this dialogue, when he does, he seems to support a view compatible with the view Deleuze attributes to Platonism. Socrates argues against Parmenides' claim that a form (Idea) is separate from itself when something outside of it participates in it – a claim that would obliterate the existence of the one – by comparing the participation of beings in the forms to the participation of beings in the day. He claims that the day is “in many places at the same time and nevertheless is not separate from itself,” providing the *in which* for the participation of beings that themselves participate in the forms.⁶ The day does not become fragmented by the multivalent participation of beings in forms, nor by the participation of either beings or forms in the overall context of that participation. If we read Socrates' claim about the day as an analogy

³ Ibid., 5.

⁴ Ibid., 30

⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 127.

⁶ Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, 925.

defending the existence of the One as the ultimate context of participation, Deleuze's reading of Platonism as generating and defending philosophy's "model concept" becomes plausible.⁷

Deleuze uses the present perfect tense to describe Platonic participation in the Idea. This indicates a retroactive character for Plato's "model concept." That is, the Idea seems as if it has already been pre-supposed as that in which rival claims participate to greater and lesser degrees, even before the invention of the specific Idea as a concept.

Deleuze's account of thought's creation of philosophical concepts in general can explain this reading of the Platonic concept of the Idea as having a retroactive character. According to this account, philosophy "casts planes over the chaos" of objectivity's "continuous variability" in response to the problems presented to thought by its historical milieu.⁸ The "prephilosophical" sectioning-off of thought from the chaos afforded by the plane of immanence provides thought with the reprieve from the chaos necessary for it to select and combine elements relevant to solving the problems specific to its milieu, without the concept created being deducible from the plane of immanence.⁹ The creation of concepts, then, is the process through which thought selects and combines elements from its historical milieu. Concepts relate to their historical milieu in the temporality of the present perfect tense because they come to occupy the plane of immanence, providing them with a degree of separation from their historical milieu. Thus, Deleuze and Guattari argue that

the concept is always both absolute and relative: it is relative to its own components, to other concepts, to the plane on which it is defined, and to the problems it is supposed to resolve; but it is absolute through the condensation it carries out, the site it occupies on the plane, and the conditions it assigns to the problem.¹⁰

Interestingly, we see here that Deleuze and Guattari stake a position on the participation of concepts in the context of their creation that is spiritually similar to Socrates' defense of the existence of the One above, affirming both unity with and fragmentation from that context. Where their conception differs is that the absoluteness of the concept is not a matter of degrees of participation in another concept, but rather is local to thought's historical milieu.

The Platonic Idea is a concept with a particularly absolute character not only because of its reliance on the existence of the One for its determination of degrees of participation, but also because of the enduring relevance of the specificities of the context of its invention. Deleuze argues that it emerged because the Greek city set up the friend and the rival as social relations within the competitive and contested space of the *agon*, and this contributed to the formation of the first philosophical plane of immanence.¹¹ The conditions this context generated for the problem of judging the validity of rival claims have proved to be absolute because the problem of the participation of beings in a philosophical concept has been relevant to philosophy through much of the Western tradition's persistent struggle with the idea of democracy in a world in which claims are transcendently determined by the competitive elements of human sociality: friendship, love, and rivalry, specifically.¹² That this struggle tends to be understood as beginning in the very historical milieu in which the Platonic Idea was invented contributes to the nearly absolute and ever-enduring relevance of the conception of participation instituted by this concept across the conditions to which philosophy has cast its planes of immanence. Deleuze declares philosophy itself to be Greek, or as "coinciding with the formation of cities," because the problem of "contests between claimants in every sphere" began with cities as societies of friends, "friendship" involving the "competitive distrust of the rival" that transcendently determines relations and the amorous striving toward objects of desire by

⁷ Ibid., 924.

⁸ Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?*, 202; Toscano, "Chaos," 48. "Continuous variation" is associated with heterogenesis, which is Deleuze's term for the reciprocal and simultaneous determination of conditions and conditioned. Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, 130 and Smith, "The Deleuzian Revolution," 47.

⁹ Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?*, 40, 58. The milieu is the set of spatial arrangements and the constitution of the components of a particular historical moment (Kleinherenbrink, "Territory and Ritornello: Deleuze and Guattari on Thinking Living Being," 215).

¹⁰ Ibid., 21.

¹¹ Ibid., 79.

¹² Ibid., 4.

equals.¹³ The Platonic Idea contends with the transcendental determinations that were and continue to condition the problems philosophy addresses with its invention of new concepts.

Deleuze is motivated to reverse Platonism in part because, as he argues, the conception of participation instituted by the concept of the Idea leads the Platonist tradition to work against the accomplishment of one of the tasks of philosophy, which is to protect our thinking from falling into the chaos it thinks in such a way as to defeat its rival's claim to do the same – its rival, for both the Greeks and for Deleuze and Guattari, being *doxa* or opinion. The Idea prompts thought to assess the beings and claims which present themselves as participating in the Idea according to the degree of their participation. This focus on *that which claims to participate* necessitates that thought of participation requires *judgment* to assess the degree of the participation of claimants.

The Deleuzian view would take a nuanced approach to assessing the problems that this reliance on judgment causes for the adequacy of the concept of the Idea as solution to the problem of rival claimants. As Marco Altamirano convincingly argues, included among the problems with the Idea is not that it institutes a two-world theory; Deleuze follows Nietzsche in attributing this to “the later history of Platonism” rather than to Plato's Idea itself.¹⁴ Yet even when considered as an *immanent* “model concept,” the Idea's reliance on judgment causes two problems for its ability to solve the problem of rival claimants in a way that reckons with their non-conceptual internal differences and continuous variabilities. The first is that judgment will be conditioned unavoidably by transcendental determinations, rather than being conditioned by the concept philosophy immanently invented in order to solve the problem of adjudicating among rival claimants to participation. The second is that judgment requires multiple perspectives to weigh in and confirm it. The multiplication of perspectives forms a “single centre” that mediates what is judged through a unified representation.¹⁵ This is a false solution to the problem of judging the participation of differences in their immediacy: when points of view remain disparate while adhering to a single organizing principle, those points of view are trapped in the “false depth” of representative thought.¹⁶ It is only through its supplementation by the concept of the *simulacrum* that the Idea can avoid this consequence, and this is part of why Deleuze begins his reversal of Platonism by uncovering the role of this concept in the dialogues from beneath its overshadowing by the Idea – thought of as transcendent – through the later history of philosophy.

The consequences of the Idea's reliance on judgment lead Deleuze to argue that the occupation of philosophy's plane of immanence by the Platonic Idea allows “free *doxa*” to prevail as the ultimate authority over the organization of the chaos for thought within and beyond the Greek *agon*.¹⁷ This failure of the concept to defeat opinion's rivaling claim to “ward off” the chaos can be traced to two of the most significant aspects of Platonism Deleuze attempts to reverse.¹⁸ First, it understands participants according to some transcendence, and second, it focuses on *the being that participates over the participable* for adjudicating claims to participation by rival claimants. Under the conception of the later Platonic tradition, participants are understood as an image of the Idea and are defined by the degree of distance that separates them from the Idea as their remote cause and superior term.¹⁹ Claimants are judged according to a “model” that is imposed onto them from a privileged point of view, arranging them into a hierarchy of similitude on the basis of this judgment of comparison against a transcendent ideal.²⁰ Deleuze objects to this imposition

¹³ Ibid. Miguel de Beistegui also reads these conditions as essential to philosophy and to Deleuze's reversal of Platonism. “The Deleuzian Reversal of Platonism,” 55.

¹⁴ Altamirano reads Deleuze as interpreting the Idea of the dialogues as immanent, and not transcendent, arbiter between two images. Its immanence for Deleuze is confirmed by its “emerging from myth.” “Deleuze's Reversal of Platonism, Revisited,” 515.

¹⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 55.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?*, 146, 79.

¹⁸ Ibid., 51.

¹⁹ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 172, 184.

²⁰ As Flaxman rightly puts it, what Deleuze finds in Platonism “is that the Idea, which reigns over images, also participates in the immanent differentiation of images.” *Gilles Deleuze and the Fabulation of Philosophy*, 133.

of hierarchy on numerous grounds, but the one most relevant to our purposes is that it grounds the participation of real beings in similarity rather than difference. If judgment is based in similarity or the “convergence of all points of view” into representations, opinion’s rival claim to cohere with participants will always win over that of philosophy, since an opinion is “a proposition whose arguments are perceptions and affections,” and so its claim to be able to recognize that which participates based on a judgment of similarity will always be more concrete than that of philosophy, since philosophy – at least on a Platonic conception – restricts the basis of its own claims about similarity to their relation to an abstract Idea.²¹

Deleuze criticizes both of these aspects as characterizing the *emanative ontology* which he finds to be inferior to what he calls the “expressive ontology” that finally finds its most independent plane of immanence through Spinoza’s thought.²² According to Deleuze’s reading of the two ontological schemas of the history of philosophy, emanative ontologies such as that of the Platonic tradition conceive the participable as being “above” or “beyond” the claimants it purports to think directly. The determination of the participant is thought as only fully self-determining once it receives the gift of participation from the transcendent participable.²³ Deleuze notes that this always involves a triadic conception of participation in which the participable is the giver of determination, determination is its gift in the form of participation, and the participant is the receiver of the gift of participation. To illustrate this relation, the participable would be the One of all beautiful things, determination would be the form of the Beautiful, and the beautiful person would be the participant. In various ways, Deleuze’s reversal of Platonism contests emanative ontology’s claim to think the *double genesis* of both the participant and the participable in such a way as to account for the fact of the latter’s being participated. The task for his own expressive conception will be to account for the fact of the participable’s *being participated in* in such a way as to not allow the participable to overdetermine the genesis of the participant. Deleuze’s reversal of Platonism thus includes the prioritization of the assessment of claimants over and against that in which they participate.²⁴

Deleuze finds that the overdetermination of the participant by the participable in the Platonic conception to be inevitable on at least two grounds. First, the participant’s reception of the gift of determination is received by the participant only “when it fully possess what is given to it; but it does not fully possess it except by turning toward the giver.”²⁵ Second, the participable is “above” and superior to both its gifts of determination and the participant.²⁶ Both of these objections support Deleuze’s diagnosis that emanative ontology hierarchically separates the participant from the participable in a way that overdetermines it, such that the very meaning of participation becomes asymmetrical. Applying this insight to the illustration of participation in beauty above, the real appearance of beauty in the person is conceived as possessing beauty to the extent that it receives a portion of Beauty from the form, and the value or degree of this beauty is dependent on the proximity of the participation of that form to the absolute Oneness of all beauty.

However, and importantly for the status of Deleuze’s contribution to the history of philosophy, this critique of emanative participation does not lead Deleuze to abandon all of the insights it provides to thought of what it means to lay claim to participation. Aside from losing elements of planes of immanence from the later Platonic history of philosophy that could be repurposed to create new concepts, to abandon it would be to ignore the conditions of the historical becoming of philosophy’s different planes of immanence, which have been influenced overwhelmingly by the Platonic conception of participation and continue to face problems similar to those with which the Greeks were concerned – especially when it comes to contestations between rivals. In his acknowledgement of the historical conditions of philosophy, Deleuze’s ontology thus retains at least two key insights about participation from his own reading of the Platonic dialogues, in particular the dialogues featuring the figure of the sophist. In his early work, he argues that a

21 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 56; Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?*, 144.

22 Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 170.

23 Ibid., 171.

24 Ibid., 170.

25 Ibid., 171.

26 Ibid.

concept of the simulacrum can be extracted from the dialogues and associated with all participants in order to think the differences characterizing their ways of participating against the imposition of similitude by a transcendent version of the Idea. Deleuze characterizes this concept as “those systems in which the different relates to the different by means of difference itself.”²⁷ The sophist is the one who lays claim to participate in anything and everything, regardless of its distance from any such participation. This aberrant claimant calls into question the very notions of model and copy by revealing that all participants participate to some degree, or not at all, in that in which they nonetheless are able to claim to participate, indicating the “indiscernibility of things and their simulacra.”²⁸ This indiscernibility causes the functional dissolution of the difference between the thing, which previously was thought to be the participant, and the simulacrum, which previously was considered to differ from the realm of participation entirely as mere copy of the true participant. The concept of the simulacrum reveals that a narrow focus on the side of the participant obscures the fact that even judgments of similitude require “a simulated identity and resemblance” – or that which harbors an internal difference from the participable – in order to *be* at all.²⁹ Even in the most absurd expressions of simulacral being, in which a being claims to be everything or fundamentally contradicts itself, it is revealed that participation itself requires the existence of other claimants to participation; the operator of participation is difference, not similarity. Deleuze thinks that the way that the simulacrum “scrambles selection and perverts judgment” points the way toward a broader focus on the participable as such, and that this will open the way toward the thinking of differential participation that a reading of the Idea without it forecloses.³⁰

The second insight Deleuze extracts from Platonism through his attempt to reverse it is that “[l]aying claim is not one phenomenon among others, but the nature of every phenomenon.”³¹ He argues that this insight is an unexamined foundation for all of the planes of immanence of philosophy's history, and its own founding moment coincided with the invention of Plato's model concept. By instituting the thought of a transcendent realm of Ideas, Plato's philosophy made it so that all phenomena appears as claiming to participate in a relevant Idea. Deleuze notices that Platonism's understanding of the fundamental nature of laying claim centers its focus on the participant's claim in such a way as to render participation itself in a paradoxical way. There is no perfect participation in an Idea in the sensible realm of claimants; the Idea as grounding principle of participation is itself “imparticipable but nevertheless provides something to be participated in.”³² This insight is missed if we read the moment in which a claimant contradicts the Idea to which it lays claim to participate as a *failure to claim participation*, since in fact every claim is a failure in this sense. Claims which most obviously fail to participate – for example, the claim of the sophist to participate in wisdom or truth – most acutely reveal that the foundation of all appearing is the moment of laying claim, irrespective of the degree of the claim's success. Therefore, the Platonic prioritization of the claim to participation inadvertently reveals the real priority of the participable, since the insight that laying claim is the nature of all phenomena presupposes some participable as the condition of possibility of all phenomena. The motivation for Deleuze's reversal of Platonism is that the history of philosophy perverted this paradoxical insight by doubling down on the competition of claimants, rather than acknowledging that everything is equal and equally different to every other thing in that it lays claim at all.

Deleuze attempts to accommodate these aspects of his reversal of Platonism within his own ontology, first, by asserting that being is univocal, and second, by borrowing aspects of Spinoza's expressionist ontology to ground this univocity in the very conditions for the emergence of philosophy's planes of immanence. In these two ways, he takes the insights of Platonism but reverses Platonism's emphasis on the participant. Deleuze asserts that the ontological foundation of the phenomena whose nature is to lay

²⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 299.

²⁸ Ibid., 128; Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, 14.

²⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 57.

³⁰ Deleuze, “Plato, the Greeks,” 136.

³¹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 62.

³² Ibid.

claim is the univocity thesis, the thesis which for him grounds all phenomena.³³ This thesis states that being is “said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said.”³⁴ The univocity thesis provides the vaguest possible ontological participable: just as all phenomena are equal in that they lay claim to participate, all beings are equal in that they are expressed in their being in the same sense.³⁵ Platonic ontology focused on the differences between particular beings as relevant to their claims to participate, but unity was only found at the transcendent level of Ideas. If we are to begin to think immanent differences according to their immanence, Deleuze argues, unity too must be thought as immanent. The reversal of Platonism in Deleuze’s ontology, then, lies in the assertion implicit to the univocity thesis that unity is to be found at the level of participation as such, since univocity simply is “the universal fact of participation.”³⁶

Deleuze thus reads the univocity thesis into Spinoza’s ontology in order to supplement his own ontology with a robust account of how thinking the dynamics of participation can contribute to the philosophy of difference. Deleuze finds that Spinoza’s notion of universal Substance or God as *the participable* avoids many of the pitfalls of emanative ontology outlined above. On Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza’s expressionism, the relation between thought and object is conditioned by the expression of God’s self-constitution, and then of God’s expression of infinite attributes and their modes.³⁷ The order of conditioning here is crucial to Deleuze’s reversal of Platonism: whereas emanative ontology took participants singly and deduced their participation on the basis of the quality of their claim to participate, the self-expression of Substance provides the condition for that which comes to be thinkable as participant. The expression of differences that are ontologically immanent – differences between God and His expressions, between expressions themselves, and between the modes of different expressions – constitutes the character of Substance-as-participable as a differential and differentiating *production* of differences expressed non-hierarchically and as univocally participating in equal fashion. In this formulation, all aspects of participation are immanent to the very expression of the claim to participation as the participable “expresses itself to itself” through participation in itself and its expressions, and any claim to participation *a priori* participates in the participable.³⁸ This version of expressionism thus supports Deleuze’s claim that the univocity thesis “also signifies equality of being” as such.³⁹

3 Competitions of participation in philosophy’s plane of immanence

How does this account of participation clarify our understanding of how philosophical planes of immanence might adjudicate the claims of elements to participate in thought? Philosophy creates concepts as thought-events that maintain their instituting plane of immanence as immanent to nothing other than itself.⁴⁰ As we saw in the previous section, the expressionist conception of participation centers its focus on ontological univocity over the attributes and modes that express and are expressed by univocal being – it prioritizes the participable and participation, thought together, over the participant and any claim to participation. Nevertheless, because philosophy formed around the Greek city, the issue of participation remains essential to our conception of the philosophical plane of immanence: philosophy’s role is to be

³³ Ibid., 306.

³⁴ Ibid., 41.

³⁵ Ibid., 37.

³⁶ Roffe, *Badiou’s Deleuze*, 21. It should be noted that some scholars contest Deleuze’s use of Spinoza to support the univocity thesis, arguing that this thesis fundamentally contradicts Spinoza’s conception of Substance. For one such argument, see Frim and Fluss, “Substance Abuse.”

³⁷ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 16.

³⁸ Ibid., 185.

³⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 37.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 47.

perpetually concerned with participation, though now this participation is reconceived as being of a non-ontological kind, even as this non-ontological participation must be compatible with ontological univocity and expressionism.

To Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy's plane of immanence is positioned between two threats or sources of "inconsistency for thought": the chaos as "an excess of speed" and opinion as "a surfeit of redundancy."⁴¹ As Alberto Toscano points out, the former in fact supports the latter, since chaotic thought often prompts our "recourse to the safety and identity of opinions."⁴² Toscano also notes that Deleuze and Guattari are careful not to identify the chaos with ontological univocity; rather, chaos is a "a *sui generis*... non-philosophical dimension demanded by philosophical thought."⁴³ Philosophy itself, then, can be understood as a *ritornello*, which is a concept Deleuze and Guattari develop to describe "any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory" by organizing space and time against "chaos and cliché."⁴⁴ A consequence of identifying philosophy as an example of a *ritornello* is that its plane of immanence cannot be thought to be a territory, since the plane of immanence precedes concept creation.⁴⁵ And neither the plane of immanence nor territory can be the participable in Deleuze's expressionist account of participation, since Deleuze and Guattari are careful to point out that conceptual personae, as expressers of concepts, can precede the institution of both.⁴⁶

Deleuze's reversal of Platonism reverses the order of conditions of participation such that claims to participation do not need to be deduced from the participable, since "the universal fact of participation" is now assumed from the outset. This allows us to understand the ontological basis for the order of participation of the plane of immanence of philosophy and the concepts that come to occupy it. Concepts require the plane of immanence as the condition of the reality of the emergence, in a particular historical milieu, of the specific combination of elements that they become. The totality of the mutual participation of the plane of immanence and its concepts in being itself is characterized by an internal difference, in which the same elements may appear in both a plane of immanence and its concepts, but they nonetheless appear in different guises as different ways of expressing univocal being.⁴⁷

One of the implicit aims of this reversal for the fate of philosophy is that its removal of the need for judgment will finally allow philosophy to prevail over the exercise of free *doxa* as the authority that in fact organizes the chaos for human thought. Deleuze and Guattari state that "the nonpropositional form of the concept" that philosophy creates is that in which opinion vanishes entirely, opinion being wholly propositional.⁴⁸ However, they also point out that even the plane of immanence most occupied by concepts that rightly claim to provide solutions to the problems that the plane of immanence was instituted in order to address is nonetheless surrounded by *illusions*, and that these illusions "arise from the plane itself."⁴⁹ I now turn to consider some of the obstacles that remain before Deleuze's reversal of Platonism can be said to solve the problem of rival claimants that is distinctly relevant to philosophy's task.

Two kinds of combinations of elements rightfully occupy philosophy's plane of immanence: concepts and conceptual personae. Thought invents these combinations on the basis of the plane of immanence's selection of appropriate elements and repression of rival ones:

When the plane selects what is by right due to thought, in order to make its features, intuitions, directions, or diagrammatic movements, it relegates other determinations to the status of mere facts, characteristics of states of affairs, or lived

⁴¹ Toscano, "Chaos," 49.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ingala, "Of the Refrain (The Ritornello)." I am interpreting cliché as closely related to opinion here.

⁴⁵ Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?*, 58.

⁴⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 75. A main contention of my argument is that the shift in emphasis within Deleuze's thinking about participation from ontology to the set of relations involved in thought's reckoning with the chaos makes it impossible to identify a single referent for "the participable" in his ontology.

⁴⁷ Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?*, 39.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 49.

contents. And, of course, philosophy will be able to draw out concepts from these states of affairs inasmuch as it extracts the event from them. That which belongs to thought by right, that which is retained as diagrammatic feature in itself, represses other rival determinations (even if these latter are called upon to receive a concept).⁵⁰

That which is relegated to the status of mere fact is not eligible to *become* within the plane of immanence because facts are always *majoritarian*, whereas for Deleuze and Guattari all becoming is *minoritarian*.⁵¹ The majoritarian fact is “the *stasis* made possible by the territorializing tendency of an assemblage,” in this case an assemblage of rivaling claimants on the plane. The revelation of an element’s illegitimate claim to participate in solving the problem to which the plane of immanence is addressed occurs through the process of the plane’s institution: this is where the competition of claimants begins, as elements are problematized by the plane and combined according to the plane’s transcendental conditions. In the case of the plane of immanence of philosophy, the conditions of the competition of *laying claim as phenomena* are friendship, love, and rivalry, as determined by the novel social conditions to which the first of philosophy’s planes of immanence responded in the Greek *agon*. Since these transcendental conditions are social conditions, concepts are often expressed by what Deleuze and Guattari call *conceptual personae*, the human or human-like figures that express the condensation of elements that is philosophy’s conceptual activity on a specific plane of immanence. The revelation of an element’s illegitimate claim to participate in solving the problem to which the plane of immanence is addressed occurs in part through the institution of the philosophical plane of immanence itself: in its formation, the plane comes to be determined by the transcendental conditions of friendship, love, and rivalry, each of which provide conditions for competitors to lay claim to participate in thought’s reckoning with the problems presented by the historical milieu.

Any proposition of opinion that lays claim to participate in the organization of the chaos will present itself as a conceptual expression that is a friend to concepts – it will disguise itself as the conceptual persona of the friend. This puts the philosophical plane of immanence in danger of accepting opinion as a legitimate participant, since the conceptual personae of the friend is essential to the institution of the specifically philosophical plane: “[o]nly friends can set a plane of immanence as a ground from which idols have been cleared.”⁵² The friend plays this role because its friendship to thought territorializes a milieu in which idols are identified and determined to be enemies to thought by virtue of their contrast to the character of the milieu created by the conceptual persona’s commitment to friendship with philosophical thought-events. In this territorialization, the conceptual personae proves to be “a presence intrinsic to thought, a condition of possibility of thought itself,” providing grounds for the plane’s disqualification of its most obviously illegitimate claimants.

The friendship of the conceptual personae is itself a complicated affair. There are two possible roles for the conceptual persona’s friendship: it can be a friend to philosophy’s creations insofar as it participates in creation potentially, and/or it can bring concepts themselves together in friendship.⁵³ One complication of the role of friendship in philosophy’s rivalry with opinion is that concepts themselves can be involved in rivalries with each other: “philosophical thought does not bring its concepts together in friendship without again being traversed by a fissure that leads them back to hatred or disperses them in a coexisting chaos where it is necessary to take them up again, to seek them out, to make a leap.”⁵⁴ The conceptual persona can only contribute to philosophy’s struggle against chaos if it avoids being swept away in to the “fray” of the rivalries of that with which it is joined in friendship.⁵⁵ This will prove difficult because the struggle against chaos in which philosophy is engaged will at times require an “affinity with the enemy” of chaos, precisely because it is flanked on its other side by the attempt by opinion to flatten the speed and

⁵⁰ Ibid., 52.

⁵¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 117.

⁵² Ibid., 43.

⁵³ Ibid., 5; Ibid., 203.

⁵⁴ Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?*, 203

⁵⁵ Ibid.

productivity of the chaos into easily digested propositions of cliché.⁵⁶ In addition, given that rivalry is a transcendental condition, friendship itself includes within itself a rivalry of “competitive distrust” with that which is supposed to be a friend, as exemplified by the mode of sociality in the Greek *agon*’s “society of friends.”⁵⁷

The last complication I present here is that there is in fact a threefold distinction of friendship in Deleuze’s work: added to friendship as a transcendental determination and the friendship of the conceptual personae, there is the *psychosocial type* of the friend.⁵⁸ The psychosocial type of the friend is a sort of fallen conceptual persona, having become deterritorialized from concepts and thus being more closely identifiable with opinion in its connection to a “category of common characteristics” than with philosophy.⁵⁹ This psychosocial type is difficult to discern from the conceptual personae of the friend because it holds to *the image of thought* which for Deleuze has successfully though illegitimately laid claim to participate in thinking through the institution of many philosophical planes of immanence.⁶⁰

These three ways of laying claim to friendship are each determined by the transcendental conditions of friendship and rivalry at the same time as they face claims to participation from rivaling opinions and the threat of chaos. Thus, while the reversal of Platonic participation avoids the threats posed by the inclusion of the perspectives of judges and the imposition of a hierarchy of abstract similitude, it nonetheless leaves the philosophical plane of immanence a highly contested milieu of friends and rivals to thought – one in which the univocity thesis provides little help in adjudicating, especially given that participation within Deleuze’s system is no longer considered as a primarily ontological determination.

4 Conclusion

By interpreting the aspects of Deleuze’s reversal of Platonic participation and elucidating their effects for thought, one finds that the space of thought’s contestation initiated by the enduring conditions of the formation of the Greek city has only become further complicated by Deleuze’s philosophy. Deleuze discovers solutions to the problems posed to thought by Platonism’s continued relevance within Platonism itself. Simulacral being reveals the mutual dependence of participants for the competition, necessary to the creation of philosophical concepts, among and between friends, lovers, and rivals, while thought of participation in the Idea leads to the insight that *laying claim* is the nature of every phenomenon. These two aspects open up possibilities for philosophy’s plane of immanence by indicating a path toward solutions to the problem of the overcoming of thought by the chaos on the one hand and the problem of opinion’s rival claim to organize the chaos on the other. Deleuze’s expressive ontology no longer thinks the participable as a separate and superior abstraction, but rather as an immanent generator of phenomena that is itself alterable by phenomena, shifting the emphasis from the participant and its claim to the participable and participation. This allows the thought of *immanent unity* necessary to the coherent thought of difference, as well as thought of the generation of differences that is in fact only possible through the relations between ontologically equal beings that maintain their relation to the chaos while at the same time becoming organized for and by thought according to philosophy’s transcendental conditions of friendship, love, and rivalry.

Philosophy’s plane of immanence is positioned between two enemies, chaos and opinion, and while these enemies are ontologically equal, their participation in rivalry with philosophical thinking is unequal. Philosophy’s distinctive task is to create concepts that organize the chaos in such a way as to reckon with

⁵⁶ Ibid.; Toscano, “Chaos,” 48.

⁵⁷ Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?*, 4; Ibid., 145.

⁵⁸ Lambert, *Philosophy After Friendship*, 11.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ For this argument and Deleuze’s characterization of the image of thought, see Chapter 3 of *Difference and Repetition*.

the unity of its differences and differentiations. Opinion, meanwhile, lays claim to participate in thought about the chaos while it in fact flattens its differences into clichéd propositions. In tracing this context for philosophy's activity, chaos, territory, and plane of immanence were ruled out as possible candidates for the participable. Thus it can be concluded that any attempt to determine the participable in Deleuze's thought beyond the vague notion of participation in ontological univocity is a fool's errand, since Deleuze's thinking of participation beyond the Platonic tradition's emphasis on ontological participation makes it so that participant and the participable are no longer in a mutually deducible relation. The plane of immanence of philosophy as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari more adequately reckons with the conditions of claims to participation in thought than the Platonic conception it reversed, but its necessary harboring of the transcendental conditions and features of human sociality reveals additional obstacles to overcome for philosophy's constitutive participation in rivalry with opinion. This new conception of the conditions of philosophy reveals these peculiar problems, opening the path to the generation of their immanent solutions both within and outside of thought that is explicitly concerned with being philosophical.

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