

Research Article

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Becoming Child of the Moment through Deleuzian Philosophy and Sufism

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Abstract: My goal here is to make use of Deleuzian philosophy as a springboard for cultivating “being a child of the moment,” which is a phrase stemming from Sufism. Being fully present and aware in each moment is associated with surrendering oneself to the divine will and accepting whatever comes in the present moment without resistance. Unlike approaches that translate Deleuzian insights into theological concepts, the way of proceeding here involves traversing his philosophy, similar to traversing the phantasy in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Consequently, it neither fully adopts nor rejects Deleuzian philosophy but offers a parallax view that aims at deepening one’s connection with transcendence. The underlying premise is that strengthening this connection can be enhanced by engaging with an immanent philosophy that acknowledges non-representable singularities, provided its limitations are clearly delineated to prevent absorption into the depths and intricacies of that philosophy. To this end, the contrasting perspectives of eternity as a realm of potentialities and eternity as a timeless dimension detached from worldly connections are emphasized. During the writing process, the publication of MM Knight’s book “Sufi Deleuze” added a tangible ally and opponent, thereby lending further justification to the article’s title in retrospective. At the end, I will also delve into the relationship between Deleuzian philosophy and Derridean ontology, the realms of mysticism, and the existential aspect of death, and elucidate why Deleuzian philosophy can serve as a pivot for character development.

Keywords: Deleuze, death, immanence, Sufism, Ibn Arabi

1 Introduction

As members of the scientific community, it is crucial to ensure connectability and visibility of our ideas by publishing articles in journals. However, what about experiences that defy adequate description? In certain philosophical circles, the concept of the “event” is recognized as something inherently elusive and indescribable, requiring a decision or commitment.¹ Scholars such as Whitehead,² Deleuze,³ and Badiou⁴ advocate for this notion, highlighting the need to transcend fixed patterns of factual thinking in order to remain open to the novelty that accompanies an event. This tension between the need for connectivity and the inherent ungraspability of certain phenomena seems even more pronounced in theological literature, as it not only alludes to the complete otherness but also suggests the presence of the unknown sacred within the event.⁵ Two strategies

¹ Adkins, “Deleuze and Badiou on the Nature of Events.”

² Whitehead, *Process and Reality*.

³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

⁴ Badiou, *Being and Event*.

⁵ Bryden, *Deleuze and Religion*.

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to alleviate this tension include (i) exploring the impact of the ungraspable on individuals, examining its effects on knowledge and ethics, and (ii) developing an ontology of the ungraspable, recognizing the paradoxical nature of attempting to describe it while acknowledging that any representation falls inherently short.

From a theological point of view, the first option is not very promising because it can lead often right way to psychologism and a Jamesian type of pragmatism, which values truth according to its usefulness for the person who held it.⁶ The second approach, commonly adopted by the aforementioned philosophers of the event, was especially prevalent in the twentieth century. Unlike proponents of negative theology, they tackle the involved paradox not via negative descriptions as such “Deum nequaquam concipi debere habere esse,”⁷ but through constructive conceptual work in order to carve reality at its dark joints. For this task, one has to find means to avoid the limitations of representations to approach the unrepresentable. This kind of constructive labor can produce ideas that have a high connectability with teleological as well as non-theological perspectives. This explains why thinkers like Whitehead have led to process theology⁸ and why Deleuze, despite his atheistic immanence stance, is embraced in theology as a source of inspiration for reevaluating the self-understanding of religions.⁹ One problem in the theories of these philosophers is related to the fact that they either overlook the distinction of the pre-rational from the trans-rational or intentionally favor the former due to their worldview. While they appear to allude to some form of transcendence, they merely describe the ineffable structure of the world as comprised of immanent dynamic entities (which might be referred to as “monads” in the spirit of Whitehead¹⁰) and their relationships.

On the one hand, this makes these theories highly connectible to many different scientific domains; on the other hand, there is a high risk of inadvertently subscribing to a metaphysical ideology that might impose itself regardless of one’s intentions. Especially in the work of Žižek, it becomes evident that ideology is particularly potent precisely when it is no longer consciously acknowledged due to a presumed full understanding of it.¹¹ For example, Whitehead and Badiou use the notion “eternal,” which suggests a connection to theology. However, for Whitehead, it merely signifies ideas or potentials, or the form of the objects under consideration, while for Badiou, it denotes the “true event,” an irruptive rupture in reality or a discourse that resists classification within a given situation. Although one could attempt to redefine the semantics, the interrelations among concepts are so intricate that mere redefinitions cannot fully address the challenge. In addition to that, sophisticated philosophies often carry an implicit or explicitly acknowledged telos within their theories, which might subtly influence even those who attempt to remain impartial.

My goal here is to utilize Deleuzian philosophy as a springboard for cultivating “being a child of the moment,” a concept derived from Sufism.¹² Being fully present and aware in each moment is associated with surrendering oneself to the divine will and accepting whatever comes in the present moment without resistance. This stems from the Sufi belief that the present moment is the essential reality, and by embracing it completely, one can draw closer to the experience of the divine presence.¹³ Unlike approaches that translate Deleuzian insights into theological concepts, the way of proceeding here involves traversing his philosophy, similar to traversing the phantasy in Lacanian psychoanalysis.¹⁴ Consequently, it neither fully adopts nor rejects Deleuzian philosophy but offers a parallax view that deepens one’s connection with transcendence. The underlying assumption is that this connection can be enhanced by engaging with an immanent philosophy that acknowledges non-representable singularities. While Deleuze emphasizes creativity and the virtual as means of manifesting novel ways of living and experiencing, Sufism recognizes singularities as unmediated encounters brimming with profound meaning pointing to the divine.

⁶ Stawski, “Definitions and Hypotheses.”

⁷ Luhmann, “Die Weisung Gottes als Form der Freiheit.”

⁸ Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology*.

⁹ Justaert, *Theology After Deleuze*.

¹⁰ Basile, “Learning from Leibniz.”

¹¹ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.

¹² Thibon, “Sufi Views on Time and History.”

¹³ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*.

¹⁴ Valentini and Tourage, *Esoteric Lacan*.

In the following section, I will provide an overview of the key concepts in Deleuzian philosophy that are relevant to understanding moment-awareness from an immanent point of view. The central concepts are event, difference, and virtual. In the second part of Section 2, I will then illustrate the connection between Deleuzian thought and mysticism. Section 3 first introduces Sufism and Ibn Arabi's essential ideas, and then demonstrates implications for religious practices embodying "being a child of the moment," integrating the insights of Deleuze. The resulting trans-Deleuzian approach will in addition be exemplified by referring to knowledge and its formation. In Section 4, I will touch upon the connection of Deleuzian philosophy with Derridean ontology, mysticism, and death as an existential issue. Ultimately, these considerations point to the alternatives of discontinuing the worldly pursuit at a certain point or opting to remain in a state of non-enlightenment in terms of craving for more justice, or even worse, for recognition and connectability.

2 Deleuze's Philosophy of Immanence

This section has two goals: presenting those concepts of the Deleuzian philosophy that are central to discussing Sufi moment-awareness and discussing the mystical dimension of Deleuze's thinking. The main original resources will be the monographs "Difference and Repetition,"¹⁵ "Logic of Sense,"¹⁶ and "What is Philosophy?"¹⁷ Before tackling the two goals, I will start with a few words on transcendental empiricism as a way of introducing the general outline of Deleuze's immanence philosophy (that's actually the third goal in this section). Immanence describes reality in terms of a permanent real-world process of becoming (difference-engendering series of events).¹⁸ At this fundamental ontological level, there is just the autopoietic force of becoming, which Deleuze also calls difference in itself. It is responsible for the actual beings that we can identify, and Deleuze borrows the notion "transcendental" from Kant to describe it as a condition of possibility. What Kant missed, according to Deleuze, is to understand these conditions in terms of the sub-representational (the sensible that can only be sensed) instead of representational thinking, including its negation via the thing-it-itself.¹⁹ Approaching an understanding of this sub-representable sphere is what Deleuze is after. He emphasizes our embeddedness into reality (empiricism) with its differences or intensities or intense differences, from which our cognitive and sensory apparatus is not separated.²⁰ Transcendentalism is then not achieved through the investigation of our own categories, but through the creation of concepts to carve reality at its joints.²¹ In other words, whereas Kant maps *a priori* cognitive structures to experiences, Deleuze maps *a posteriori* concepts to the reality that lies behind or actualizes our experiences (the virtual).

Crucial for understanding Deleuze is his realism, despite the acknowledgement of an unrepresentable reality and the requirement to invent concepts to grasp reality. The reason is that difference in itself is operative as imperceptible forces that drive the actualization of the powers to both exist and think (univocity of being). This viewpoint offers a glimpse into why theoretical mathematics, devoid of the intention to represent reality, often reflects it.²² Drawing from Spinoza's philosophy, the increase of these powers within an existing entity corresponds to an increase in its capacity to be affected and, in turn, affect others.²³ Another description of such changes is given by considering intensities as pure differences that engender qualitative

¹⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

¹⁶ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*.

¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*

¹⁸ Massumi, "Becoming-Deleuzian."

¹⁹ Willatt and Lee, *Thinking Between Deleuze and Kant*.

²⁰ Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*.

²¹ Sider, *Writing the Book of the World*.

²² Mader, "Philosophical and Scientific Intensity in the Thought of Gilles Deleuze;" Rölli, "Deleuze on Intensity Differentials and the Being of the Sensible."

²³ Deleuze, *Spinoza*.

diversity, e.g., a change of temperature that is responsible for different states of matter.²⁴ Deleuze utilized the term “problem” to describe the diverse constellations or multiplicities of intensity.²⁵ Specifically, unexpected encounters are recognized as such problems, triggering the divergence of thinking, imagination, emotions, and perception faculties. This divergence subsequently initiates the formation of ideas focused on delineating the virtual content of the encountered problem.

The network of the pre-conceptual differences in intensities is also named “plane of immanence” by Deleuze.²⁶ Unlike Lewis’s concept of naturalness,²⁷ this structure is not defined in terms of fundamental grounding relations, but as a shifting and dynamic virtual plane that underlies every form of actualizations. A metaphor for this structure is the idea of rhizomes, depicting a non-hierarchical network structure facilitating multiple connections.²⁸ We are still at the level of ontology and not dealing with epistemology because this network subsists before humans inquire how knowledge is related to it. Again, reason is able to gain insights into the ontological structure because it is determined by the same problem structures on the plane of immanence. As Deleuze puts it “We call the determination of the virtual content of an idea differen(t)iation, we call the actualization of that virtuality into species and distinguished parts differen(c)iation. It is always in relation to a differen(t)iated problem or to a differen(t)iated condition of a problem that a differen(c)iation of species and parts is carried out as though it corresponded to ... a solution of the problem.”²⁹ To summarize, immanence signifies that everything exists within the world of experience itself, while the plane of immanence serves as the conceptual framework enabling our understanding and exploration of this immanent reality.

2.1 Central Notions of Deleuzian Philosophy for Moment-Awareness

All of Deleuze’s concepts aim to enhance our comprehension of the dynamic emergence of reality. Those specifically employed in transitioning between the virtual and the actual are particularly pertinent in discussing moment-awareness, as they encapsulate the occurrence of singularities demanding our complete attention.

2.1.1 Event

Events within Deleuze’s framework are the epiphenomena of physical causal interactions.³⁰ They can be represented as incorporeal attributes of bodies and states of affairs, operating through what Deleuze termed “quasi-causality,” as they do not directly impact the physical sphere but influence other events.³¹ Events that happen earlier set the stage for subsequent ones without outright determining them. For instance, being dead is not a real cause for not being able to talk, but a virtual condition implying quasi-causally that the death event leads to certain other events involving the lack of intentional acts of the deceased person. Using another example: “being diagnosed” by a physician is not an inherent property of either the patient or the physician; rather, it manifests as an incorporeal attribute of the patient. An event is best expressed through infinitives-involving phrases, which Deleuze also calls sense or sense-event, and which represents how individuals incorporate something as an actualization from the virtual sphere.³² Joe Bousquet formulated this as “my

²⁴ DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*.

²⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

²⁶ Duvernoy, “‘Pure Experience’ and ‘Planes of Immanence.’”

²⁷ Sider, “Naturalness and Arbitrariness.”

²⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Rhizom*.

²⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

³⁰ Beck and Gleyzon, “Deleuze and the Event(s).”

³¹ Roffe, “Deleuze’s Concept of Quasi-Cause.”

³² Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*.

wound existed before me; I was born to embody it.”³³ That is one justification for the fact that Deleuze derives many insights from a reading of Stoic fatalism with respect to *confatalia*: fate and denial of necessity are compatible.³⁴ For instance, astrology might exhibit a chain of quasi-causal events that constitute fate without determining the specific physical outcome.

To distinguish between events as expressed and those as actualized by real incarnation in bodies and states of affairs, Deleuze used the characterization “pure events” or “ideal events” for the former and “real events” for the latter.³⁵ Now, an understanding of events is realized by new concepts allowing pure events and real events to converge and to be unified by reference to a common ground, the virtual dynamic of differences connecting all events (the Event). In other words, the adequate concept of the event is that which discloses the productive dynamic of being. The result is *sense* that defines the minimum common to the real (designation), the possible (signification), and the virtual event.³⁶ According to P Hallward, this kind of elucidation requires an alteration in the traditional notion of the self – an evaporation of one’s identity – to reach a state of anonymity.³⁷ Such a dissolution of selfhood engenders a heightened consciousness and a profound attentiveness to the present moment of the event. An event is an encounter, a problem, that is not an isolated occurrence but quasi-causally interconnected with other events. Moment-awareness, therefore, isn’t merely the observation of discrete instances but also an immersion into the interconnectedness of events, fostering an enriched understanding of the intricate tapestry of existence. Deleuze emphasized the encounter with events in seclusion, as it increases the intensity of thinking, which is similar to the requirement in Sufism for temporarily isolating oneself from society.³⁸

2.1.2 Difference

Difference is an ineffable force, operating as a transcendental principle, transcending mere empirical relations. Drawing a parallel with Aristotelian distinctions between genus and species, Deleuze underscores the role of differences in generating heterogeneity, beyond what can be accounted for through correspondingly defined species.³⁹ These differences, in their sub-representational essence, serve as the bedrock for ontological becoming and epistemological experiencing of diverse elements within existence.⁴⁰ The actualization of differentiated entities hinges on the differentiation within the virtual realm.⁴¹ In this realm, difference is operative via repetitions that encompass the transformative movement towards actualization, which is wholly non-repeatable – a perspective that echoes the uniqueness inherent in each encounter.⁴² Sufi teachings emphasizing the perpetual novelty of everything concur with that perspective.⁴³ Similar to Deleuze, Ibn Arabi underscores the dynamic essence of interpretations, encouraging individuals to engage with the text repeatedly to reveal novel perspectives and profound truths with each encounter.⁴⁴ Conventional interpretations often veil the radical inconceivability of God, presenting simplified notions to shield our ordinary lives from the profound challenge posed by holy scriptures.

Because Deleuze describes the fundamental ontological level as difference and non-repeatable repetitions, he indicates that moment-awareness of each nuance is much more important than representing the resulting

³³ Berressem, “Body – Wound – Writing.”

³⁴ Bowden, “Deleuze et Les Stoïciens.”

³⁵ Garoian, “In the Event That Art and Teaching Encounter.”

³⁶ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*.

³⁷ Hallward, *Out of This World*.

³⁸ Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism*.

³⁹ Williams, *Gilles Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition*.

⁴⁰ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

⁴¹ Mader, “Philosophical and Scientific Intensity in the Thought of Gilles Deleuze.”

⁴² Smith, “The Deleuzian Revolution.”

⁴³ Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi*.

⁴⁴ Almond, *Sufism and Deconstruction*.

problems via theories or corresponding solutions. Passing from the virtual to the actual is mirrored by different concepts of time as a differential structure. From the point of view of actualized intensities, the past and the future are absorbed within an infinite present (Chronos), whereas the present is infinitely subdivided by past and future in the case of the virtual becoming (Aion).⁴⁵ In both cases, a continuous state of engagement with the ever-unfolding, dynamic nature of existence is required. However, singularities of the virtual sphere escape the present and indicate the momentum of difference in the structure of time that can only be captured is an instant. In Sura 2:20, the Quran speaks of a lightning (barqu) that almost snatches away the sight of those who ignore the light and its reason and just use it to light the way ahead of them. Ignoring the instant again and again is detrimental to becoming insightful and submissive to the divine will. In Deleuzian terms, this translates to the self-inflicted suffocation of creativity and the stabilization of a limited subject position. It is important to notice that Chronos and Aion are just different perspectives on the structure of time and that without Chronos no basis for counter-effectuation into Aion would be possible. Hence, moment-awareness requires a back-and-forth between experiencing the actual and a non-theoretical understanding of the virtual.

2.1.3 Virtuality

We have already used the concept of virtuality without detailing it.⁴⁶ Virtuality denotes an ineffable realm beneath experience, which consists of pre-individuated zones (multiplicities) that make this realm heterogeneous.⁴⁷ The virtual multiplicities exist alongside actuality and represent an immanent reality that is not yet actualized. It is important for the empiricist Deleuze that virtuality is not a realm of mental constructs, but a concrete and dynamic realm of potentiality that is capable of producing actual events. With this characteristic, it should be differentiated from possibility, which refers to what could happen or what could be the case in the future in terms of mental constructs (a pre-determination, to which just existence must be added). One can say that virtuality is at the bottom of the transcendental genetic principles responsible for determining individuals and differences. Identity and thereby understanding are downstream results and cannot be used in a common-sense manner to cover these non-representable dynamics. In real-world experiences, the “virtual often manifests itself as a differential excess rendering the actual both unfulfilled and reminiscent.”⁴⁸

Key elements in the virtual realm are singularities, which are tendencies that have crossed a threshold in producing an attracting pre-individual zone that might lead to observable effects (turning points).⁴⁹ Such attractors are known in mathematics as a set of states toward which a system tends to evolve. They are used for describing the dynamics of physical entities. For instance, instead of describing a sphere by physical properties, it could be characterized by its tendency to minimize energy and its corresponding responses to events within a certain environment. Focusing on processes and events is much closer to the virtual dynamics than sticking to substance thinking. Deleuze says “the problem of thought is not tied to essences but to the evaluation of what is important and what is not, to the distribution of singular and regular, distinctive and ordinary points.”⁵⁰ This continuous evaluation of the relevant aspect of a problem requires moment-awareness due to the fact that the adequacy of the result is measured by the productive dynamic itself, and not by external criteria. For instance, the Quran states in 2:106 that verses (surahs or signs) can only be replaced by other better or similar verses, implying that verses represent a dynamic becoming with an immanent evaluation mechanism (regardless of whether this refers to the same holy scripture [unified network of signs] or successive ones).

⁴⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

⁴⁶ Hammer, “Difference and Creativity.”

⁴⁷ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*.

⁴⁸ Reinhardt, “A Christian Plane of Immanence?”

⁴⁹ DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*.

⁵⁰ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

2.2 Deleuze and Mysticism

After already providing the first hints about the similarities between Deleuzian philosophy and aspects of Islamic thinking, I will focus here on two books concerning Deleuzian mysticism: first on P Hallward “Out of the world,”⁵¹ and then on MM Knight’s “Sufi Deleuze.”⁵² The significance of these books lies in their nuanced examination of the ontological, epistemological, and spiritual facets of Deleuzian philosophy, as well as their complementary views on the relation between immanence and transcendence. Whereas Hallward sees in Deleuze an introvert God-oriented mystic disguised as an atheist, Knight uses Deleuze’s affinity with mystical experiences to secrete a Sufi atheism, which displaces transcendence in favor of an immersion into Islam-inspired assemblages of corporeal entities that open up new kind of experiences. Both perspectives foster a deeper understanding of the parallels, implications, and potential synergies arising from the encounter between Deleuzian philosophy and mysticism. However, the concept of transcendence in mysticism/Sufism is not merely about the dissolution of the self or a total immersion into experience. The ego-loss through alignment with sacred transcendence has no telos, but is guided by divine signs, which is contrasted to the Deleuzian emphasize on processes to increase creativity for the sake of enriching experiences that are not limited by static subject positions. This is precisely the aspect I will criticize in terms of the requirement for a trans-Deleuzian approach.

Hallward’s well-structured book astutely delves into the mystical aspects of Deleuze’s philosophy, largely avoiding the complexity of his terminology. Within this exploration, Deleuze’s philosophy is portrayed as a spirituality centered on creation, transcending worldly limitations in terms of extra-worldliness, which is notably distinct from the focus on otherworldliness in monotheistic religions. Associating being with creativity, Deleuze is depicted as aspiring toward the ultimate expression of creativity by dismantling any restrictions that might impede it, including other organisms, objects, representations, identities, and associated relationships formed along its path. This inclination contributes to the little consideration Deleuze seems to give to processes of social or historical transformation, and even less to political conflicts or alliances; a view on Deleuze, which I definitely endorse, but says nothing about the potentials of using Deleuzian insights for political purposes. According to Deleuze, truth isn’t something to be achieved, merely shaped, or reproduced; it demands creation in its most disembodied and dematerialized form. Such a purely creative process can only manifest in the virtual realm and must operate at an almost infinite pace; otherwise, the inhibitory effects of habitual tendencies and other obstacles curb creativity. Deleuze proposes that achieving the fullest connection to the virtual creative force necessitates shedding one’s own identity. All actual beings are viewed as facets of this singular productive energy or force, thereby rendering being univocal, accessible through intuition, continuous, intensive, and residing within the virtual realm, which defies any form of representation (only creativity can truly resonate within this realm, thereby attaining truth).

Hallward suggests that Deleuze annuls the distinction between God and the world, favoring God in this dissolution rather than the world itself. This preference stems from the notion that pure creativity is extra-worldly immaterial by definition. Within such a context of spirituality as an ongoing process of continual creation, life itself is perceived as an embodiment of a purely spiritual force. Consequently, this perspective aligns with the idea of surrendering oneself to Creation as a whole, akin to the Sufi concept of “Fana Fillah” (Dissolution of the Self in God), which is here identical to “Fana Fil-Khalq” (Dissolution of the Self in Creation) if the distinction between God and world is abolished.⁵³ In the end, Hallward reverses Deleuze’s interpretation of Spinoza’s univocity of being as a purely immanent concept within an atheistic worldview. Instead, we regain a concept of God that is equal to the process of becoming. This depiction associates God with manifestations in the ongoing creative processes, akin to the Hegelian notion of God, devoid of direct implications for one’s spiritual perspective.⁵⁴ While Hallward’s portrayal of Deleuze remains highly accurate, his use of the

⁵¹ Hallward, *Out of This World*.

⁵² Knight, *Sufi Deleuze*.

⁵³ Nizamie et al., “Sufism and Mental Health.”

⁵⁴ Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*.

terms “spiritual” and “God” seems to be a strategic move, reminiscent of Žižek’s method of leveraging Chesterton’s theology to fortify his materialistic worldview.⁵⁵ Therefore, I do not subscribe to the critique of Hallward for misrepresenting Deleuze but recognize potential ambiguities in his usage of certain theological concepts, neglecting the subversive use of those images and notions in the Deleuzian universe.

In contrast to Hallward, Knight replaces theological concepts with Deleuzian ones, establishing an Islamic atheism. Because of this move, he is much more into the opaque jargon, especially Deleuze in “A thousand plateaus.”⁵⁶ Knight depicts a materialistic mysticism that engages less with the virtual realm and focuses more on corporeal interactions. His portrayal of Deleuze embodies a rebellious nature that disrupts arborescent systems and accentuates rhizomatic tendencies. This destabilization, or deterritorialization, is akin to a “line of flight,” creating space for novel opportunities. In religious terms, this translates to a reevaluation of established spiritual norms or interpretations of religious texts. For instance, does direct knowledge of God necessitate an ascetic spirituality that disregards the body? Or does a spiritual outlook consistently involve love for God and humanity, embracing a sense of union with the divine that transcends religious divisions and prejudices? Acknowledging the role of the body in spiritual practices might unveil new dimensions of spirituality. Through shared rituals, relationships between masters and disciples, and physical locations like shrines, bodies interconnect and transform one another, creating a machinic assemblage that contrasts with enunciative assemblages – statements and incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Sufism’s medieval success came through its crystallization into structures that considered such machinic assemblages in order to stabilize the enunciative assemblages.

One interesting mapping between an Islamic and a Deleuzian term is between *baraka* and affect. As a technical term, *baraka* means a beneficent force of divine origin, which causes superabundance in the physical sphere and happiness in the psychic order. It exists as a force that can be accessed through things of this world, and visiting a local shrine can bring about the transmission of *baraka*, which might lead to less need for the prescriptive guidance of scholars and their canonical citations. An effect is a variation that affection causes with respect to the power to act, where affection is the body’s condition in relation to the changes imposed by bodies around it. Once such a mapping is accomplished, *baraka* gains concreteness in terms of vitality or high body intensity that can be sensed. In that case, even a session in holotropic breathwork can lead to *baraka* without any religious intentions.⁵⁷ The potential downside from a religious point of view may be profanation, but exactly this is what Knight seems to intend. He favors machinic assemblages and affect over theology and provides an example of a prayer that is just a movement of the body that has a memory without a content. For Knight, Deleuze’s atheism is not a disguise of the unseen God, but an authentic example of upholding rebellion against transcendence as a universal and all-encompassing authority. Spirituality then is exactly the creation-orientation that Hallward emphasized.

Both of these descriptions contribute to the image of Deleuze as an immanent mystic for whom intensity or creativity leads to fulfillment. A possible criticism of such an image would be the accusation that everything could then be intended to increase one’s own intensity, without any substantive or ethical considerations. However, such a critique would be an overstatement, as Deleuze does not subscribe to an “anything goes” approach, evident in his distinction between chaos and line of development.⁵⁸ He requires a minimum level of consistency. Without this, there would be too many possibilities to stifle creativity. In this sense, there is indeed a shaping of character by Deleuze, and the remarkable consistency of his ideas over the decades of his work demonstrates that this is deeply embedded in his conceptual universe. However, a valid critique can argue that the concept of spirituality is hollowed out. Deleuze intends to dissolve the subject without content, rather than the subject becoming a vessel for a sacred yet obscure content that guides it along paths orthogonal to the

⁵⁵ Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*.

⁵⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*.

⁵⁷ Miller and Nielsen, “Measure of Significance of Holotropic Breathwork in the Development of Self-Awareness.”

⁵⁸ Miranda, “Is A New Life Possible?”

mechanisms in the immanent sphere. Deleuzian statements like “an effect cannot contain more reality than its cause” are simply invalid for the spiritual dimension.⁵⁹

Despite these concerns, engaging with an immanent philosophy that acknowledges non-representable singularities can enhance the connection with transcendence if its limitations in turn are clear enough to avoid being absorbed by the depth and intricacies of the immanent philosophy. My goal here was not to be faithful to Deleuze but to traverse his philosophy by scratching on the surface of these central notions. It is especially the desire to endlessly clarify relations and connections – and getting lost in a vortex – that is detrimental to one’s spiritual way. An elevating feeling arises by piercing more and more into the unrepresentable depths, and after reaching a certain threshold one’s thoughts mature in such a way that one increasingly surprises oneself, particularly in the writing process related to the ever-changing and unrepresentable. Deleuze’s is a pertinent case for this kind of intellectual journey. Even though he has a highly valid point in warning against the chase for absolute truth as a stabilized ego, this should not mean that we just should submit to creative immanence. Both spiritual practices and Deleuzian philosophy deviate from the inherent structure of the contemporary secular world but immersing oneself in the sacred requires a different way of living that Deleuze is hinting at. In the next section, details of this deviation will be presented from a Sufistic perspective that transcends Deleuze’s thinking.

3 Trans-Deleuzian Sufism

3.1 Sufism and Ibn Arabi

Sufism (or “Tasawwuf”) encompasses a diversity of spiritual concepts and practices that vary across different Islamic traditions and regions.⁶⁰ Its multifaceted nature includes various approaches toward spiritual realization, emphasizing distinct paths to inner enlightenment. Sufism points to a transformation such that the world is seen in a new light through an ego-less gaze.⁶¹ Contra Deleuzian immanence professes frequently a univocity of being the *qua* divine source and not *qua* immanent becoming or difference. Not being content with a conformist religious subject position with its metaphorical descriptions of transcendence (*Ilm-al-a’yn*) and the desire to achieve experiential knowledge (*Ilm-al-yaqin*) of the divine source as a step to immerse into that source (*haqq-al-yaqin*) is a traditional way of describing Sufism.⁶² Al Bushanji (d. 960) coined the phrase “Sufism is a name without a reality but used to be a reality without a name,”⁶³ which suggests that assigning a name to spirituality and providing linguistic descriptions for associated experiences has always been viewed critically. There is a significant risk of saturation leading to a reduction in the motivation for experiencing the spiritual realm. This aligns with Deleuze’s position to avoid representation, advocating instead an unlimited openness to reality in its becoming, allowing it to express itself more profoundly (how many clues are necessary is often the crucial question).

As the Quran speaks of Islam as a form of devotion even including Abraham and Moses as Muslims, there has been a historical tendency within Islam to perceive devotion as the true essence of revelation rather than the establishment of an organized religion.⁶⁴ Alongside Sufi figures like Rumi (d. 1273)⁶⁵ and Ibn Arabi

⁵⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

⁶⁰ Nasr, *The Garden of Truth*.

⁶¹ Lings, *What Is Sufism?*

⁶² Schuon and Nasr, *Sufism*.

⁶³ Milani, *The Nature of Sufism*.

⁶⁴ Schuon and Smith, *Transcendent Unity of Religions*.

⁶⁵ O’Dell, *Gift of Rumi, The*.

(d. 1240),⁶⁶ contemporary figures such as Ali Shariati (d. 1977)⁶⁷ or Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938)⁶⁸ have echoed this sentiment. Like all creatures, humans should live in harmony with their inherent purpose, which is a striving to enter the divine sphere by sincere worship of God. According to Quran 72:14, those who devote themselves are among those seeking reality and truth (condition) and ultimately finding it (result). In such a state, one's character automatically becomes a manifestation of spiritual maturity and moral values. In other words, the ultimate goal is the complete alignment of cognitive faculties and will with the divine. The sequence of approaching God involves Sincerity (Ihsan), Vigilance (Muraqaba), and immediate Witnessing (Mushahada) of the divine presence.⁶⁹ Thus, it begins with morality and ends with meditative unity. The former is the state of the soul that enables a person to perform valuable actions without any prior thought or preference, which can be required by taking heed to the feelings of shame and embarrassment (without counterbalancing them or rushing to an immediate response) as well as by consciously avoiding undesirable traits such as stinginess, cowardice, greed, and self-justification. Reading holy texts, performing prayers, seeking forgiveness, feeling observed, and obeying religious instructions are aids for that.⁷⁰

Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) identified three endeavors that correspond to the sequence mentioned above: (i) Mujahadetul-Taqlaw (effort for adherence to God's commands and prohibitions: focusing on will), (ii) Mujahadetul-Istiqamat (self-denial through enduring hardships to attain perfection), and (iii) Mujahadetul-Kashf (effort to retain inspirations and enlightenment).⁷¹ He distinguishes these efforts based on the triad of Motive-Incentive-Judgment: (i) fearing God – Paradise – individual religious obligation; (ii) being perfect – attaining high spiritual stages (being with the Prophet in Paradise) – permitted (religious duty for the Prophets); (iii) receiving divine inspirations – beholding God's countenance – permitted by religion, but risky; for instance, according to verse 57:27 of the Quran, one can choose monkhood, but it is not recommended. There are two types of masters aiding in attaining these states: (a) Muallim, the religious teacher and trainer; and (b) Murebbi, the shaper of individuals and guide, possessing transcendent knowledge according to verse 18:66. However, verse 6:29 may imply that one does not need a master. One of the most effective proofs of transcendence is lucid dreams, which are used to justify the irrelevance of a master for certain individuals.

Resulting spiritual insights condense from unmediated experience and are further processed as spiritual principles in metaphysics. In theology, they become doctrines. An instruction from the Quran known as Dhikr (ritual litany or remembrance) has been expanded within Sufism to become a central vehicle for purifying the soul and approaching God. By rhythmically repeating divine names, the adept identifies with the divine light. These names represent what God uses to create the universe. The central assumption is that through divine names, the Divine itself is present, taking possession of humans and leading to Union (Al-Wasl). One should engage in spiritual practice only after purifying oneself spiritually (Tazkiya an-nafs). The exoteric mandates this purification, for instance through calls for donations (Yuzakkikum): "O you who have believed, spend from that which We have provided for you before there comes a Day in which there is no exchange and no friendship and no intercession" (2:254). The necessity of purification is also mentioned in verse 29:45, where prayer is described as keeping away from sins and Dhikr is ranked higher. The transformation of Dhikr from an active act to being passively taken over is expressed in verse 2:152 by the words "So remember Me; I will remember you" (Fadhkuruni Adhkurkum). The orthodox religious path also praises the citing of divine names (7:180) as a deepening of humility (Tadarru), fear (Khawf), and abstention from desires (Tama). The believer finds solace in remembering God (13:28) and should do so often (33:41).

Ibn Arabi (d. 1240) is one of the most important representatives of Sufism, who was highly debated due to his non-conformist interpretations of the Quran and the concepts he either coined himself or motivated.⁷²

⁶⁶ Yesiltash, *Ibn Arabi, The Enlightened Are Not Bound by Religion*.

⁶⁷ Shariati, *Religion vs Religion*.

⁶⁸ Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.

⁶⁹ Ad-Din, *The Book of Certainty*.

⁷⁰ Yusuf, *Purification of the Heart*.

⁷¹ Khaldun, *The Requirements of the Sufi Path*.

⁷² Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn Arabi*.

Even though he never used it, he is the main figure associated with the phrase “wahdat al-wujud”⁷³ or the univocity of being, which has a different connotation for Spinoza and Deleuze, as pointed out earlier. He regarded the Islamic Hermes (Al-Khizr) as his true master, considering him the manifestation of divine hidden knowledge. Unlike another influential Sufi al-Jilani (d. 1166),⁷⁴ Ibn Arabi openly shared the outcomes of his spiritual journey.⁷⁵ He emphasized that Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), legal schools, and theology are transient and relevant only for renouncing worldly desires, claiming he no longer had them.⁷⁶ The spiritual journey in the material world (second abode) starts by being awakened to the marvels of Being (hayrah). In this Risalat al-Anwar, he articulated six abodes (mawatin), the first one being in the divine abode before manifestation, and the last one an end of the journey that transcends the hereafter (kathib: the Sand Dune beyond the Garden).⁷⁷ There is no secure path in the journey and the spiritual traveler (saalik) will get lost if does not what is appropriate for each abode, which means to be anchored with one’s own being the present state (being Ibn al-Waqt: the son of the present).

Ibn Arabi’s monumental work, “Fusus al Hikam” (Bezels of Wisdom), stands as a cornerstone of Islamic mystical philosophy, revered for its depth and insights into the nature of existence and divine wisdom.⁷⁸ It is considered a compendium of his mystical visions and spiritual revelations. Ibn al-‘Arabi claimed to have received the text from Muhammed himself in a vision. It discusses various controversial interpretations and commentaries that critique specific aspects of Islamic teachings, particularly questioning the interpretations found in traditional texts like hadiths and their perceived relevance. For instance, the Prophet Noah was chastised for adhering excessively to the unfathomable nature of God (Tanzih) instead of embracing the essential truth behind the analogies of his polytheistic contemporaries (Tashbih), potentially hindering the salvation of their souls. This interpretation challenges the literal reading of the Noah narrative in the Quran. In addition to that, the book also touches upon the contentious issue of why certain practices or beliefs deemed “innovations” (bi’da) in Islamic jurisprudence are justified in view of the divine ordinance that transcends the confined of orthodox religion.⁷⁹ The advocacy for innovations conflicting with orthodoxy resulted in Ibn Arabi being labeled an apostate in certain circles. This risk is inherent for those who discuss experiences and their implications that the masses fail to comprehend. He did not use apophatic language that refers to nothing and merely evokes a semantic event between readers and texts.⁸⁰ Instead, it is an affirmative stance that, in some instances, approaches the explicitness of Rumi’s bold metaphors.⁸¹

According to Ibn Arabi, the omnipresent God, known as Az-Zahir (the manifested), allows individuals’ union with divinity, which finds an exemplification in the story of Prophet Moses approaching the burning bush, spiritually uniting with God after removing his shoes – an act symbolizing his detachment from worldly wandering. Although there is no form or self in the experience of unity, Ibn Arabi believed that a trace remains in the heart. Encouraging the quest for divine vision and the embrace of potential shattering, Ibn Arabi recognized diverse personal imagery in the experience of God. To embody the state of “Ibn al-Waqt” entails complete awareness that everything is an integral aspect of divine consciousness, allowing one to transcend the sense of separation. This kind of consciousness also allows the comprehension of what is time in its essence: pure duration and movement without successive. For Ibn Arabi, the trans-rational understanding in the moment means entering a state that should be called “Sahib al Waqt,” being the possessor of the moment in terms of a divine understanding.⁸² Because such a state cannot be achieved without acting in an appropriate manner (courtesy or Adab⁸³), a hierarchy of spiritual stages is indispensable, which Deleuze would describe as

⁷³ Dobie, “The Phenomenology of Wujud in the Thought of Ibn Arabi.”

⁷⁴ al-Jilani, *The Secret of Secrets*.

⁷⁵ Ibn Arabi and Burckhardt, *The Bezels of Wisdom*.

⁷⁶ Ibn Arabi, *Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom*.

⁷⁷ Ibn Arabi, *The Mystic Journey (Risalat al-Anwar)*.

⁷⁸ Ibn Arabi and Burckhardt, *The Bezels of Wisdom*.

⁷⁹ Khalil, “All Paths Lead to God.”

⁸⁰ Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*.

⁸¹ Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi*.

⁸² Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*.

⁸³ Coates, *Ibn’Arabi and Modern Thought*.

a lack of realizing the non-hierarchical structure of intensity-laden reality. This is precisely the point at which we will leave Deleuze behind: it is not about the Dionysian frenzy with an emphasis on creativity, but about a conscious overcoming of the limitation of ego-driven life through a trans-rational perspective, which requires the acknowledgement of levels of (ineffable) spiritual qualities.

3.2 Ibn al-Waqt in the Light of Deleuzian Immanence

“Ibn al-Waqt” or “Abdul al-Waqt” is a concept that condenses Ibn Arabi’s teachings, emphasizing the necessity of mindfulness and presence. It stands for the son, child, or servant of the moment, which means the awareness of the preciousness of each moment by intentionally submitting to the grace of it.⁸⁴ By suspending imagination, worries, indulgences, and the like, the bliss of realizing a pre-linguistic awareness emerges. It is like an event or a singularity that is generated out of condensing intensities guided by an alignment with the divine, and not by creativity emerging out of itself. All the little forces (intensities) in the virtual realm provide the energy to remain in such a state, and at the same time, their independent monadic nature is responsible for the instability of the blissful presence. To cultivate the state (*hal* in Arabic) of “Ibn al-Waqt” it is necessary to be oriented toward the truth through thoughts of finitude and through divine signs. Thereby, a habit or a Maqamat (the stable state in which one is at any time) is developed.⁸⁵ For developing a habit and reaching a maqamat, it is necessary to perform spiritual duties and develop courtesy (Adab). In several instances below, I will illustrate the resulting trans-Deleuzian approach by referring to knowledge and its formation.

To make the distinction between courtesy and Deleuzian’s emphasis on difference and creativity more plastic, a simplified contrast between Deleuze and thinking in terms of transcendence is provided with respect to the layers of a person is depicted in Figure 1. For Deleuze, the kernel of a person is a qualitative multiplicity, intensities that provide the tendencies for a person. For instance, beneath the simple binary of male and female a plurality of potential sexes flow. The self is a kind of folding mechanism, which is responsible for generating images and stories about a coherent unity of myself. Such a coherent story of myself is always a simulacrum that in itself has no original and is permanently changing due to the multiplicity at the bottom. If I realize this fragile nature (in an attitude conducive to be creative) and the singularity that is associated with it an openness to new forms of life might follow. From a transcendent point of view, an ungraspable kernel is at the bottom, which is neither (quantitative or qualitative) multiplicity nor unity. The self is again the medium in which the basis structure is operative, responsible for tendencies and their actualizations. But an important contrast to the Deleuzian characterization is given by courtesy (adab) as a vehicle for an alignment with the sacred. It is not the goal to dissolve this self into a new form of differences (desiring machines), but to align it with the sacred that detaches the self from all concerns with identity and difference. Here, openness is not achieved via abundant connections with the world but through a contraction that opens up a different world including this one.

3.2.1 Beyond Transcendental Empiricism

Sensing something that cannot be represented is the starting point for developing new thoughts in order to find means to understand it according to Deleuze. He described this realm as responsible for provoking thinking by inventing and using new concepts, a few of which were presented in Section 2. Deleuze also pinpointed the fourfold dogmatic mechanisms of thought (identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgment, resemblance in perception⁸⁶) that fail to comprehend the central roots of thinking and

⁸⁴ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*.

⁸⁵ Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore*.

⁸⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

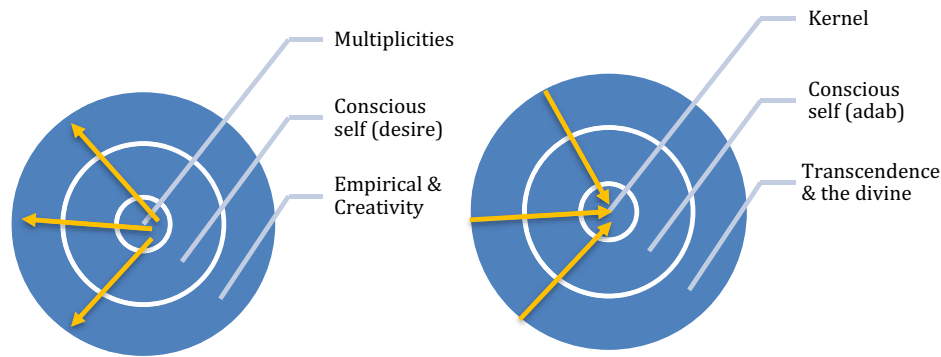


Figure 1: On the left side, the layers of a person from a Deleuzian point of view with a tendency towards new and creative connections with the world. On the right side is a view of the layers from a transcendent point of view. Here, the concealed ineffable kernel and the world are disclosed and affected by the transcendent sphere, which pushes the self to self-knowledge beyond identity and difference.

reality. Together with his emphasis on difference, depersonalization, and the opening up to the intensities or multiplicities in us, we have a very powerful theory to overcome the conventional requirements of connectability. However, instead of considering the ineffable conditions of real experiences, I will provide two conditions for realizing the state of “Ibn al-Waqt,” thereby also reminding myself of my finitude and the worthlessness of activities that are not tied back to the sacred. This is especially important in non-theological contexts, where one is judged critically if spiritual topics are dealt with openly.

One important condition for allowing the sacred in life is to investigate the non-representable grounds of beings and their emergent properties, leading to astonishment (*hayrah*). Interestingly, such an attitude frequently gives birth to new insights, especially in the immanent sphere, which peripatetic philosophy had known already. For instance, when the reasons and nature of disease are investigated, considering ineffable tendencies in addition to genetic and environmental conditions might lead to a holistic view of patients. Such tendencies may arise from the intricacies of personal constitution or result from a combination of environmental factors that resist clear association with specifically identified causes. These tendencies often elude scientific investigation seeking quantifiable factors. Husserl uses eidetic variations for essence determinations that point to those attributes and corresponding quantities that cannot be changed without changing the underlying entity.⁸⁷ One is fully present in such an exercise and attendant to the sensed differences that come with the variations. Husserl is required to bracket all worldly concerns and not to take usefulness into account, which leads to a detached flow of thoughts.⁸⁸ In such a state the miracle of existence and its conditions (genetic analysis) can come to light and with it an appreciation of the sacred. Certainly, the depth of this state hinges upon the broader spiritual orientation, diverging from Deleuze’s emphasis on the quantity or degree of intensity as the sole relevant determinant for assessing a development, wherein quality emerges merely as a consequence of these intensities, disregarding the significance of the spiritual content.

This leads to the second condition for being the child of the moment: cultivating a Stoic awareness of one’s own finitude and the futility of (wordly) knowledge seen from a higher vantage point.⁸⁹ By reflecting on my imminent death on a regular basis, most of my activities will be aligned with something beyond all of this.⁹⁰ However, it is impossible to always fulfill one or both of these conditions because there are too many forces requiring us to accept the necessity of engaging with society from a mundane point of view. That is one reason why Ibn Arabi’s concept of courtesy as a means for translating “Ibn al-Waqt” states into daily life is so important. For instance, it is important not to react when someone degrades you, but to take this as an occasion to become aware of the relativity of your achievements. To enhance the likelihood of being in a

⁸⁷ Ströker, *Husserl’s Transcendental Phenomenology*.

⁸⁸ Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*.

⁸⁹ Andrew, “Approaches to Finitude.”

⁹⁰ Sariyar, “Death from the Perspective of Luhmann’s System Theory.”

state of “Ibn al-Waqt,” one should immerse oneself in daily contemplation or reflection instead of constantly seeking external stimulation. In life’s journey toward spiritual growth, acts of kindness, self-reflection, and inner peace serve as protective shields for one’s spiritual essence. In the *philosophia perennis*, courtesy and similar inwardly detached actions are protecting garments for the spiritual kernel and are on the same plane as the exoteric aspects of religions.⁹¹

3.2.2 Event as an Encounter with the Unexpected

Exploring the nature of events can offer fresh perspectives across various situations, similar to how examining peculiar incidents in everyday routines can spark unexpected realizations. Quasi-causality in Deleuzian terms encourages focusing on the connections among events without being confined to rigid causal reasoning, thereby enabling us to be receptive to novel experiences. In the philosophy of science, there is a distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification.⁹² One can describe the discovery process as a pure relation (a difference in itself) that is effective even before the relating terms are present, which usually happens in connection with “aha moments” when an understanding emerges out of the many vague intuitions we have; e.g., the insight that trauma is only existing because of the symbolic space that can absorb it as such.⁹³ Once more, the concepts offered by Deleuze vividly articulate this context of discovery, enabling us to transcend the confines of conventional reasoning and delve into a broader understanding. During the discovery process, there are instances characterized by deep unconsciousness, where we experience doubt, hesitation, and wavering in an almost ecstatic manner, detached from our usual state of being. For the “Ibn al-Waqt” state, again a preparation in terms of spiritual courtesy is required. The context of justification is the retrospective embedding of our astonishing encounters into known structures of explanations, which cannot but reduce the intensity of the possible impacts. Hence, while experiences may sometimes hint at something profound, it’s rare to seamlessly integrate the rational approach with an openness to the spiritual side, as the context of explanation often limits the richness of these encounters.

In everyday life, consistency serves as a vital benchmark for the credibility of certain actions, events, or knowledge components. It often entails experiencing the same outcome or situation under comparable circumstances, for which a notion is to be developed and distilled in order to increase an understanding of the repeated phenomena. As described above, something is only repeated to the extent that it is non-repeatable. For instance, in mathematics, nothing is repeated at the universal but only at the psychological level, as universals are not part of an empirical context (nominalists even doubt they exist at all). Hence, a new understanding with respect to empirical phenomena is the consequence of synthesizing a set of repeated differences into an idealized notion. Such a synthesis is the more accurate the more it reflects the process responsible for the differences, which is in contrast to identifying the notion through essential properties alone. Appreciating that this goes beyond conventional thinking, nevertheless, should not lead to the neglect of the fact that such a difference-oriented thinking is still highly coupled with the desire to achieve connectability and resonance within society. One step further in the direction of *adab* is to search for an encounter that changes me radically, makes me more mature, and aligns me even more with the sacred: no longer repeating differences and enriched experiences are aimed at, but repeatedly submitting oneself entirely to the moment for the sake of being effaced in the divine, whatever the consequences might be (even stupor is welcome). This attitude radiates to everything in life and leads me away from repeating and intensifying my desires, which reduces the pleasures that are associated with being recognized as an important or knowledgeable person.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*.

⁹² Chalmers and Author, *What Is This Thing Called Science?*

⁹³ Alain-Miller and Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*.

⁹⁴ Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition*.

3.2.3 Neither Identity nor Difference

Difference-oriented thinking pertains to viewing problems as active forces that require us to take charge. For Deleuze, problems became palpable by solutions destined to address them, which reflects the fact that problems are not obstacles to be overcome but creative forces that propel the process of actualization. Problems arise from the tensions and contradictions within the actual, and they serve as triggers for the exploration and creation of solutions. Solutions are part of a virtual multiplicity, and their actualization involves the transformation and differentiation of the existing actual states. Hence, problems act as catalysts for actualization, while the virtual provides a realm of potential solutions that can be realized to transform the existing actuality. There is a back-and-forth between problems and solutions in terms of actualizing and counter-actualizing solutions with respect to the problems characterizing the actual tensions. In this sense, identities and differences are highly fluid and interdependent, constantly unfolding and evolving within the ongoing process of problematization and solution-finding.

Deleuze's description is highly illuminating for tackling the problem–solution interplay from even a higher perspective that relativizes the whole territory of the problem. Instead of transforming the tensions in the problem context into solutions, they are used as a catalyst for relativizing the problem context itself. One therefore overcomes differences and identities because the problems are viewed from a completely new perspective and are therefore associated with solutions that have only an indirect connection to the original context. In the academic universe, transdisciplinary research functions in this way (e.g., using the autopoiesis concept in biology to understand how society functions⁹⁵), which focuses on adapting solutions from other scientific areas in a synthesizing new form. The additional step for the “Ibn al-Waqt” state is to reduce the pressure for a solution and to delve into the transformative effects of the involved tensions. By staying with the problem for a long time without the urge for a solution, one can deepen both the inner dimension and the maturity of the solution. From that perspective, one can speak of a stepwise dissolution of differentiations until only the momentary content of the conscious is focused on in a detached form: First, identity-based thinking that concentrates on actual entities and their connections; second, difference-oriented thinking in terms of the problem-solution interplay and related difference-identity fluctuations; third, deterritorialization as the process by which the whole problem context is altered; finally, the detachment from all such movements and processes by observing what is present in the moment without self-interest. Within the last step, eternity is the notion of a timeless dimension cut off from the world in its connectability requirements. In many religious texts, this meditative state is required to be touched again and again by the miracle of existence and the sacred behind it.⁹⁶

Deleuze emphasized the affirmative nature of difference-oriented thinking and criticized efforts to say something about reality via negations. In doing so, he also implicitly criticized efforts to use doubt as an essential driver for knowledge. An argument in favor of this assessment is the limited reach of doubts in gaining new kinds of knowledge. Within a system, negations are already anticipated by the fact that developments and adjustments are considered necessary, for instance, by way of new ad-hoc hypotheses. For doubts to be truly profound, the entire system must be set aside, and this more radical move can be facilitated by allowing oneself again and again to dwell in the “Ibn al-Waqt” state within the context of discovery. Although doubts may have been the start, the real impetus and driver of knowledge is the search for explanations of the unclear intuitions one has. The quality of solutions benefits from surrendering more and more to the moment once one has been exposed to what is already known. But to emphasize it again: from a spiritual point of view, it is essential not to think in terms of usefulness and to replace the growth orientation of knowledge and society in general by immersing oneself in the sacred.

⁹⁵ Luhmann, “Autopoiesis, Action, and Communicative Understanding.”

⁹⁶ Shah-Kazemi, *Paths to Transcendence*.

4 Discussion

When dealing with the philosophy of difference in relation to the tension between immanence and transcendence, Derrida often emerges as a counterpart to Deleuze due to their distinct philosophical orientations despite their common emphasis on immanence.⁹⁷ While Deleuze's focus leaned toward empiricism, Derrida drew inspiration from Husserl's phenomenology.⁹⁸ An example of this contrast can be seen in the importance of "retention" in Derrida's conception of trace, which finds its roots in phenomenological analysis of the temporal structure of the present moment.⁹⁹ Retention exemplifies the presence of otherness within the self-contained now-point of experience, revealing that the presence is perpetually contaminated by its immediate past. Consequently, it raises the question of whether attaining the state of the pure present moment is truly attainable, leaning towards a negative conclusion. Another contrasting aspect of Derridean philosophy is its relativism, which is closely related to the concept of deconstruction.¹⁰⁰ Derrida's deconstructive approach challenges the notion of fixed and objective meanings, asserting that meaning is always contextually constructed and subject to interpretation. This relativistic perspective acknowledges the inherent multiplicity of interpretations and highlights the ways in which language and discourse shape our understanding of reality. This poses a contrast to Deleuzian realism, which emphasizes the existence of a pre-individual and impersonal realm of pure potentiality, independent of subjective interpretation. My assumption in this article is that this realism is much better suited as a springboard for cultivating "being a child of the moment" than the relativism of Derrida.

To provide a justification for the assumption above, one can argue that Deleuzian realism, with its focus on the objective reality of pure potentiality and the existence of an autonomous plane of immanence, provides a framework that allows individuals to engage with the present moment in a transformative and authentic manner. By acknowledging the pre-individual and impersonal realm of virtual multiplicities, Deleuzian realism invites us to tap into the forces of becoming and embrace the infinite potentials that exist within the present moment. The non-selfish openness Deleuze is arguing for is an important pre-condition for the transcendence sphere to be effective. In contrast, Derridean relativism, while valuable in its critique of fixed meanings and its recognition of the multiplicity of interpretations, may inadvertently hinder the cultivation of "being a child of the moment." The emphasis on the contingent and contextually constructed nature of meaning can potentially lead to a sense of relativistic paralysis, where every interpretation is equally valid, undermining the ability to fully engage with the present and make transformative spiritual choices.

One important distinction in the Sufistic tradition is between mysticism and initiation.¹⁰¹ Deleuze can be associated with the former, while "Ibn al-Waqt" and its courtesy condition is related to the latter. While Deleuze did engage with mysticism only from outside its sources, his ideas and philosophical framework can resonate with certain aspects of mystical thought and experiences, as described in the second section. First, Deleuze's emphasis on immanence aligns with mystical traditions that emphasize the immanent presence of the divine or spiritual within the world. Mystical experiences often involve a direct encounter with the immanent reality that transcends ordinary perception and opens up a connection to the divine. Second, his rejection of thinking in opposition and his exploration of multiplicities resonate with mystical traditions that seek to transcend dualistic thinking and embrace a unity of all things. Mysticism often seeks to dissolve the boundaries between self and other, subject and object, and tap into a sense of oneness or unity with the divine or the cosmos. Third, Deleuze's exploration of affect and intensity in his philosophy aligns with the intense and transformative states often associated with mystical experiences. Spiritual initiation has many things in common with mysticism in terms of experiences but emphasizes an intentional commitment and active pursuit by a series of rituals, practices, teachings, and experiences aimed at deepening their spiritual

⁹⁷ Bearn, "Differentiating Derrida and Deleuze."

⁹⁸ Smith, "Deleuze and Derrida, Immanence and Transcendence."

⁹⁹ Marrati, *Genesis and Trace*.

¹⁰⁰ Silverman, *Derrida and Deconstruction*.

¹⁰¹ Guénon, *Initiation and Spiritual Realization*.

understanding, expanding consciousness, and cultivating a closer connection to the divine or higher realms. Instead of a passive attitude of waiting for the sacred to exhibit itself, it requires an active and strong commitment. This distinction mirrors the difference in Figure 1 between desires being pulled by the empirical world and courtesy that actively contracts into the hidden kernel. While spiritual initiation often involves rituals, teachings, and a structured process guided by a spiritual teacher or tradition, Deleuzian mysticism is a more individualistic and open-ended exploration of concepts that encourages personal experimentation and the creation of new modes of thought and existence.

Another way to describe the difference between Deleuzian philosophy and the way of the “Ibn al-Waqt” is to compare Ibn Arabi and Spinoza with respect to the relevance of the present moment.¹⁰² For the former, “Ibn al-Waqt” represents a state of complete presence and surrender to the divine will. It entails a dissolution of the self in the divine presence, where the individual becomes a pure receptacle for the unfolding of divine revelation. This state is marked by the disappearance of the ego and a profound awareness of the eternal moment, transcending the constraints of time and individuality. Spinoza, on the other hand, approached the concept of the present moment from a rational and pantheistic perspective. His concept of “conatus” is the counterpart of the transcendence focus in Ibn al-Waqt and refers to the innate striving of all beings to persevere in their existence and realize their potential. This notion puts an emphasis on the present moment as the intersection between affection and production; i.e., our power to act is a momentum determining the intensity of our striving. Hence, Ibn Arabi emphasizes the transcendence of the self through divine union in the present moment, while Spinoza focuses on a rational understanding of existence and the inherent striving of all beings as manifestation of God’s will in every moment, thereby pointing to the plane of immanence in which developments are taking place.

Before finalizing my thoughts, let me clarify why Deleuzian philosophy is useful for a spiritual-oriented individual. Assuming that all individuals, as products of evolution and the existing *Zeitgeist*, possess at least some degree of both atheistic and religious perspectives within themselves, I perceive Deleuzian philosophy as offering very much to the atheistic aspect in a person. It elucidates that the subject is not important, but rather a vehicle for extra-wordly forces at work. Our task is to allow these unbridled forces to operate. Consequently, this diminishes the fear of death since the subject was never truly relevant, and creativity held precedence. This perspective benefits our spiritual aspects in the sense that we can translate many things effectively into sacred concepts and practices, thereby reducing the gap between these two aspects. This is conducive to the formation of a stable character. However, it’s crucial to recognize that precisely for this reason, Deleuze also poses a danger when one seeks to engage with the sacred under religious or transcendent terms, as it holds a strong allure for the atheistic part of the soul, which one inevitably encounters. In other words, both Deleuze and Sufism have relevance for becoming a child of the moment, but the latter makes it clear that this only matters if it is connected to the transcendent.

Lastly, I want to reiterate the significance of reflecting on mortality as a means to acknowledge life’s impermanence and our limited time to contribute to knowledge and understanding.¹⁰³ Such contemplation instills a sense of urgency, motivating us to maximize our current moments. Embracing the present moment as it is can enhance productivity by freeing one from dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. It allows complete immersion in the immediacy of the present, fostering heightened cognitive focus to comprehend the dynamic intensities, their evolution, and their circumstances. Nevertheless, while both philosophical knowledge and the state of Ibn al-Waqt offer valuable insights when facing mortality, there’s a fundamental distinction. Ibn al-Waqt is less preoccupied with the implications of mortality on one’s legacy; instead, it encourages transcending egoic concerns and forging a deeper connection with the present moment. Through this, we grasp the futility of pursuits disconnected from the divine.

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¹⁰² Coates, *Ibn’Arabi and Modern Thought*.

¹⁰³ Shariatinia, “Heidegger’s Ideas about Death.”

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