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Transcriticism. A reconsideration of Foucault's notion of the limit-attitude Sybrandt van Keulen

In the past decades the prefix 'trans' has been added to a variety of nouns, in different contexts, by different authors, and if this paper would aim at even a concise survey of the applications of this particular morpheme, there wouldn't be any space left to go into the proposed subject matter, which is, as already indicated by the title, a certain connection between 'trans' and 'criticism'. Hence, I will leave aside the authors that are involved in the deconstructive perplexities of 'translation', although one aspect of the practice of translation, the so called 'task' of the translator (*Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, Walter Benjamin), must somehow be taken into account to get a view on the perhaps even transcendental force that seems inherent to the practice of transcriticism.¹ Issues labeled as 'transcultural' and 'transnational', though maybe less aporetic, also have generated relevant elaborations of such a considerable length and width, that I regard it sensible to leave them aside for the moment. Not to mention the problems Baudrillard once brought in circulation with his inventions of transaesthetics, transpolitics, etc.

Arguably the most effective use of 'trans' in the twentieth century is the way in which the later Michel Foucault circumscribed his notion of 'practical critique', by which he not only clarified this practice as an ethos, but also demonstrated without saying the specific performative value of the signifier 'trans'. Foucault does not reflect or comment on it specifically, he just uses it in one phrasing in two distinctively different combinations. The sentence reads as follows:

The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression (Foucault 1984, 45; my italics, the French for transgression is *franchissement*).

The effect of 'trans' Foucault likely wants to articulate in this elliptical sentence can be rephrased in the following way. In the first part of the sentence it is said that a limitative or restrictive critique – obviously the Kantian style of critique – should be transformed, that is, this restrictive power of critique, or better: this negative power of restrictive critique, must be regarded as the object of a further unspecified transformative force. It goes without saying that it is Foucault's intention to retain the urgency of the 'way out' that the Kantian notion of critique entails – in Foucault's words: 'we must free ourselves' ... 'we must escape' (45) – but he does want to transform the categorical restrictiveness that is associated with it. In connection to this, the very opening of the sentence requires attention. Foucault doesn't say by whom or what the Kantian critique should be transformed, he just says that 'the point, in brief, is to transform' (*Il s'agit en somme de transformer*). It is not all the way clear where Foucault thinks this transformative power comes from. Must the desired

¹ If we take 'critique' and 'criticism' as derived from the philosophical practice Kant initiated with his *Critique of Pure Reason* any critical practice worthwhile naming should be regarded as motivated by a categorical 'task' or 'imperative' force instead of a hypothetical one. In this respect the words 'transcendental' and 'critical' mean the same thing (see also Kant's use of the expressions 'transcendental investigation' and 'critical investigation' in *Critique of Pure Reason*, B296–297).

'transformation' be understood as the result of 'a practical critique' or, and that seems to be unlikely but not impossible, should that 'practical critique' be regarded solely as effect of the transformation of the Kantian critique? If Foucault did not only have the latter status of practical critique in mind, that is, merely as effect, then still this question seems rightly posed: if not by means of practical criticism, by what other cause or force could the restrictive critique be transformed? What does it take to cross the limits of restrictive critique? Shouldn't some sort of state of transgression be regarded as a condition to make practical, transformative critique possible? The transformation of the necessary limitation must be regarded as somehow linked to an other practice, but how to understand where that transforming practice comes from? Let us pass over to the second part of the sentence: When does practical critique take the form of a possible transgression? Is this even the proper way to formulate the matter, and shouldn't it better go like this: are transgression and practical critique two sides of the same coin? If so, how should we regard the moment, that is, the timing of practical (transgressive) critique? Before what? Obviously Foucault wants to leave, with Kant, the notion of a historically fixed 'point of transition' (34, un point de transition) and prefers to focus on an actual moment of difference: 'What difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?' (idem). This limit-moment not only happens, and is not only felt as such by a subject, he or she should also bring about some different attitude, and a different event, in one way or another. Accordingly Foucault wants to rephrase the philosophical 'task' (35) and the desired effect of practical critique. The problem is, however: Does transformation of categorical restrictions take place due to a timely performed critical attitude and, if that is the case, is it even thinkable that transgression takes place as a result of such a transformance? I don't think so. At least, the relation should be read the other way around. So, is this indeed the point Foucault wants to make: some kind of transgressive act makes practical critique possible, which is able to transform restrictive critique? Then again: How is transgression related to practical critique? Is practical critique the possible effect of a certain trans-performative practice, or is this latter practice already critical 'in itself'. The additional problem here is the implied effective dynamics or conditionality: how does this 'taking the form of possible transgression' actually come into being? Shouldn't we simply conclude that transgression and practical critique are one and the same?

Certainly, Foucault's sentence expresses the desire to retain 'critique' and at the same time to change the 'limitative' into the 'practical'. But how does the 'trans' or the transition function in this process, or what precisely makes the 'trans' happen? There appear to be two sources of transition, namely the one that is the cause at stake in the transformation of the limitative critique, and the one that is the assumed result of this transformation, which can be nothing else than practical critique. How to choose between these two possibilities: practical critique makes transgression possible; transgression makes critique possible? To make as clear as possible the implied point on which the notions of 'trans', transition and change of attitude seem to hinge: Obviously practical critique and transgression are not the same thing. Moreover, to understand 'critique' or 'criticism' not merely as an operation executed by the power of judgment, but also as practical power (which seems to require a certain affectivity and performativity other than judgmental) inherent to another way of life, this force of 'trans' - perhaps particularly the doubleness of it - seems decisive. To return to the question Foucault posed with regard to Kant: 'The question then arises of knowing what this change is' (35).

A rash conclusion would be that a 'practical critique' should be understood as cause as well as effect of the transformation of restrictive critique. The key issue of this apparent circularity seems to be the assumed power of transgression: when transformative power is attributed to a certain practice, this practice should per definition be executed by some agency situated somewhere outside restrictive limitations – 'outside' in the meaning of sub-, meta-, before, etc., though not necessarily transcendent or a priori – that is, some still autonomous being which however has 'already' crossed those limitations; someone who is not – at least not anymore thoroughly – determined or restricted. The desired limit-attitude indeed requires something extra in itself, 'something eternal that is not beyond the present instant, nor behind it, but within it' (39). Transgression is a movement that makes transformation possible; it is a force 'to transform it not by destroying it' (41). The 'subject' of this attitude is at the same time within and without the restrictive power that has been regarded as 'indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects' (43). Let us cast this matter in the form of a question: if transgression and practical critique do not mean the same thing, and if transgression has to be understood as a consequential act 'in itself' that effectuates the possibility of practical critique, would it then not be plausible that the moment or the event of transgression could already, not necessarily, have been taken place, before the practice of critique? Transgression and practical critique are indeed not one and the same thing. Foucault's point seems to be triple then: Transgression is a certain practice, but it is different from practicing critique (which probably implies the demonstration of critique publicly); transgression is a not yet determined practice prerequisite to practical critique. It is quite possible that these aspects and their relationships actually hide again other unresolved issues. To clarify for the moment the notion of a practice that is primarily powered by 'possible transgression', which has, almost as secondary trait, a public critical effect, is the main subject of this paper: a practice which could be called transcritical.

Self-inventiveness

In this respect Judith Butler's analysis of Foucault's text is helpful: the specific practice 'has to do with a self-transformation prompted by a form of knowledge that is foreign to one's own' (Butler 2002, 216). This is not the right moment to go into the question where that 'knowledge foreign to one's own' should come from, and I also leave aside what could make the 'self' become aware of it. Important to notice though, is Butler's emphasis, with regard to Foucault, that he is talking about experiences 'that are not primarily or fundamentally structured by prohibition or interdiction' (idem). Guided by Butler's statements it will probably suffice to frame the subject of this paper from now on within the confines of just three questions: How is such a self-transformation related to the specific kind of practical transgression I already indicated? Which modes of the self could be called determinative, or even constitutive, for that self-transformative process or act? How can the alleged self-transgression – instead of or 'before' transformation – more determinatively be thought?

Butler seems to answer my first question quite straightforwardly where she states that 'a critical practice' (...) has self-transformation at its core' (218). Does this also mean that a certain self-conscious act is prerequisite to practical critique? Let us assume that it is. With the help of Foucault's expressions Butler continues to pinpoint the essential features and qualities of this self-transgressive core as 'perpetual mobility' and 'essential fragility' (222). That is an answer to my second question. And in addition, according to

Butler, a kind of audacity seems to be needed, significantly different from the Kantian version of 'sapere aude': 'to risk one's very formation as a subject' (225). Elsewhere Butler uses words like 'fiction' and 'inventive' as a kind of effect of critique, that is, it seems that she regards the risk of 'a certain exercise of disobedience' to be 'necessary', as a 'first (negative) function' to open up a space for 'self-invention' (Butler 2012, 21). Does this mean that the risky condition of 'refusal of subordination' is prerequisite to the desired self-inventiveness (ibidem, 21)? If so, where do we situate then those experiences 'that are not primarily or fundamentally structured by prohibition or interdiction'? To summarize, the two sides of practical critique, or say the effective moments of the limit-attitude, would be, first, refusal of subordination prerequisite to self-inventiveness, and secondly, self-inventiveness prerequisite to practical critique. Is refusal a sufficient condition for inventiveness? Wouldn't it be at least thinkable that a transgressive state – let's call it a state of inventiveness, without being predetermined by the refusal or 'disexperiences' of a self – can become critical, that is, due to its (self)creative abundance, the sheer inventive experience of transgression? This comes down to the provisional conclusion that if a critical practice should have two components 'at its core' – say the power of a negative critique (risk, refusal, 'dis') and a positive transgressive force of inventiveness –, these 'a priori' components are not necessarily connected, and their chronological order is not necessarily fixed. Foucault indeed already hinted at the open duality or elliptic reversibility of critical and creative aspects in the movement of self-transgression when he, in the first place, stated that for 'the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present is indissociable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is' (41). And secondly, when he characterizes the two moments of his concept of 'limit-attitude': 'the principle of a critique and a permanent creation of ourselves' (44, my emphasis). Obviously, just as two types of critique (the restrictive and the practical) are inherently connected, 'within' the act of transgression the aspects of 'imagining it otherwise' and the 'permanent creation of ourselves' also seem closely linked.

The point then will be, how to understand the event, or the moment, in which the 'very formation' of something becomes something foreign, that is, a permanent creation of not exactly 'one's very' own. What does it take to transgress (self)restriction?

Transgressing natural limits

When Foucault refers to the artistic practice of Constantin Guys (Baudelaire's hero) he anticipates his own notion of the limit-attitude: 'His transfiguration does not entail an annulling of reality, but a difficult interplay between the truth of what is real and the exercise of freedom' (41). Later on Foucault calls this 'difficult interplay' a 'historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond' (47). These limits should not be annulled, because they belong (partly) to ourselves, but they should be tested 'as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves' (idem). Transcriticism has something to do with this desire or the inventive eagerness to work upon our real or natural self. Regardless whether this limited 'natural self' is understood in a Kantian aprioristic or a Foucauldian historico-practical way, especially the dynamics of the 'work carried out by ourselves' need further investigation. Let me clarify therefore these dynamics for the moment with a short analysis of the title 'Critique of pure Reason'. Reason can be regarded as the subject or agency of critique, that is, the reasonable self as the grammatical subject, hence: Critique executed by reason, from reason, towards anything else – even reason itself. But it is also

possible, at the same time, to read the entire title as ‘critique executed upon reason’, that is, carried out by another part of the self, at least by something that is not necessarily the same as reason itself. A full ‘translation’ of the title would then be: Critique from and of pure Reason. The question with regard to this ‘difficult interplay’ would be: What else should the ‘self’ have to do, or have to have ‘at its core’ to be able to criticize reason, not excluding reason, not being irrational, yet not being the same, just being something else apart from being reasonable? It should transgress or, less immediate, do something else that makes transgression possible. How should we imagine this transgressive practice, carried out by whom, not purely by reason itself? The exploration of this say linguistic transitivity results with regard to the third Critique in the following. Critique of the Power of Judgment is according to Kant’s devise a transformation of the power of ‘subsumption’.² The effective twist of a transcritical reading would then result in a specific practice, namely of the power of reflective judgment: critique from the power of reflective judgment, which would again imply a force of critique, exercised upon the subsuming power of reason, from a power other than reason alone. In the third Critique Kant mainly uses two words for it, ‘taste’ and ‘genius’. Clearly these notions fall short in understanding the genesis of the taste for otherness, the force of ingenious otherness or just another origin than ourselves.

For a more extensive transcritical inquiry I will turn to two texts; the third chapter of ‘the Transcendental Doctrine of the Power of Judgement’ of the Critique of pure Reason, entitled ‘Of the Ground of the Distinction of All Objects in General into Phenomena and Noumena’, and an article of Gilles Deleuze, ‘Desert Islands’.³ The aim is to get a further insight into the transcendental strategies that can possibly be involved in what Foucault referred to as ‘carried out by ourselves upon ourselves’. The strategy of Deleuze should convince us of the possibility of transgression practiced by a power other than reason alone. I propose to read the texts with this question in mind: How do Kant and Deleuze use and define their concepts of the ‘island’, the limits of the island, and in particular the transgression of their limits?

Almost halfway his Critique Kant starts with a characterization of the main result of his analysis by labeling it a ‘domain’ or ‘country of truth’.⁴ This land, he says, is an ‘island, enclosed by nature itself within limits that can never be altered’ (B294). It is the only ‘solid ground’ surrounded by a ‘stormy ocean’ upon which deceiving fogbanks and icebergs tempt us to believe in new lands’ (B295). Obviously two firm convictions make us stay here safely: if nature herself has given us this island, this ‘very source of all truth’, with its unchangeable limits, it would clearly be irrational to think that she would destroy them (at once); and if it is clear from the start that there is not even one other island out there, as solid as ours, and that the only thing this ocean has to offer us is ‘vain hopes’, only a fool would embark for new lands. A few years later, overlooking the immense ocean, Kant would say that the only good thing that can happen to us at these shores is a feeling of sublimity.⁵

² For Kant’s use of the expressions ‘subsume’ and ‘subsumption’ see Critique of Pure Reason B178, and B304–305. As counterpart of subsumption Kant uses ‘reflection’, particularly in the sections IV and V of his second introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgment.

³ For references to Kant the page numbers of the second version of the Critique of Pure Reason are used (B294–B315); for Deleuze I use the page numbers of the English translation (9–14).

⁴ Note, where the translation uses the words ‘domain’ and ‘country’ Kant uses only one word: Land.

⁵ §28 of the Critique of the Power of Judgment mentions, among several other sources of fear, ‘the boundless ocean set into rage’.

Nevertheless, Kant seems not to be completely content: even he 'desires to know a great deal more'. Tempted to believe in what? Obviously he is not driven by the illusion of finding new lands, but surely looking for a way to become even more certain of its own limits, so that we can consider ourselves 'safe against all hostile claims' (B295). The only advantage of crossing the natural limits would be then that by this activity 'understanding' will be able to 'determine for itself the limits of its use and know what is inside or outside its own sphere' (B297, my emphasis). Kant continues trying to convince us of the urgency of this search for extra certainty:

If understanding cannot decide whether certain questions lie within its horizon or not, then it can never feel certain with regard to its claims and possessions, but must be prepared for many humiliating corrections, when constantly transgressing, as it certainly will, the limits of its own domain, and losing itself in follies and delusions (B297).⁶

This fear of 'losing itself' is apparently very strong. Kant therefore emphasizes in length the importance of his notion of solid knowledge based on the empirical use of the a priori categories, coming to the conclusion 'that the understanding can never go beyond the limits of sensibility within which alone objects are given to us' (B303). This 'can never' implies for Kant a 'should never'. In accordance with Foucault's reading, Kant repeats in extenso that the categories should be used in a restricted way, that is, applied to the objects of the senses (phenomena), otherwise humiliation looms. The question begins to rise by now: what would be the source of uncertainty, really? It appears that if we apply the categories to other possible beings beyond the things of our sensory perception, we run the risk that we take them – those supersensible beings – as objects of knowledge. In other words, we run the risk to cross the limits between knowledge and imagination. This will put the limits of the island of truth in jeopardy, according to Kant. However, the certainty given by nature, that those 'limits that can never be altered', are not even certain enough, because 'we are met here by an illusion that is difficult to avoid' (B305). In order to overcome this difficulty, that is, the difficulty to avoid this illusion, nature falls short in Kant's view. That is the reason why Kant feels, in Foucault's words, the 'desperate eagerness' to invent something extra, something beyond the sole source of truth, that is, the notion of the noumenon: 'a thing (ein Ding) insofar as it is not an object of our sensible intuition' (B307). The point is, that apart from the island of understanding Kant needs a second 'thing' to be able to save it, which should not be an illusive thing, that is, 'an object of a non-sensible intuition', but certainly a thing, moreover, a thing distinctively different from the island of truth. This 'thing' (=x) has the one and only function in Kant's security operation as a guard who/which ensures that objects constituted by other sources than sensory perception – say non-sensible intuitions produced by imagination, fantasy, fancy, etc. – will be disregarded. The main reason for Kant to start his critical investigation and his transgression of the 'natural limits' is not to transform these limits, but to add an extra source of restriction, the 'negative extension' of the concept of the noumenon. On top of that, this noumenon, as 'a limiting concept' (B310), has a double limitative function towards sensibility and understanding itself, as a knife that cuts both ways:

⁶ The translation has 'follies and fancies' for 'Wahn und Blendwerke'. I changed 'fancies' into 'delusions'. See next note.

Our understanding thus acquires a kind of negative extension, that is, it is not limited by sensibility, but, on the contrary, it limits sensibility, by calling things in themselves noumena. In doing so, it immediately proceeds to prescribe limits to itself; it admits that it cannot know these noumena by means of the categories, but can only think them under the name of an unknown something (B312, my italics).

In the same act with which understanding limits the power of sensibility, Kant claims that 'it' is able to prescribe limits to itself. The point of this practice is, that in the phrasing of the modesty of understanding itself – the abstinence of knowing these noumena – Kant returns to understanding a distinctive power, namely the thinking of at least something: 'under the name of an unknown something'. Kant does not conceive this 'thing' as an illusion, nor as a sheer nothingness. Why does Kant need these noumena, these things in themselves (Dinge an sich selbst)? The invention of this 'unknown something' seems nor his final aim neither a goal in itself. Kant apparently needs the practice of installing restrictions, this repetition of the power of limitation. To overcome the humiliation of being corrected by a foreign power? That is probably part of it. But another aspect seems more important by now: only by the invention of that negative extension, the limitations of the first island can be secured more profoundly. The task of the higher intellectual faculties (understanding, with reason as its supervisor) is to appropriate the foreign and too uncertain power from 'nature' and transform this force into a tool for their own purpose: they turn thus the 'ground', the power 'given' from a foreign source (nature), into their own autonomous power that is able to limit 'itself' – short: in itself a split source of power. Thus the intellect re-invents and re-appropriates not an extra island or this or that, but a thing of thought, Gedankending (B348)⁷, itself limited and the source of limiting power.

In the act of inventing the noumenon as an unknown something – at the same time inventing it and dividing it, but not destroying it: as in finding a raw diamond and cutting it to create value – Kant makes us believe not so much in the existence a meta-being, but surely in a meta-practice, a transgressive act, which is not anymore dependent on 'nature' as a foreign source of its own limiting power. This is presumably the main reason why Kant desired to explore that sublime ocean of illusion: to invent and determine next to such a thing as an 'island' something else, something more than just a second thing, namely 'a way out', a strategy to transgress that worldly thing: a problematic ground of autonomous power, that is, reason split in itself by itself. Kant thus invented the desire of reason as the imperial power that is able to – rephrasing the quote above (B297) – constantly transgressing itself. This might be called the supreme source or meta-truth of reason, that it is able to invent itself as the sole source of limitation: reason not being divided and restricted by anything else but itself.

Transgressing differently

There is one basic element Kant and Deleuze seem to share: Kant's island was 'surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean', and even the noumena were born out of that ocean. Deleuze says about the island: 'It is separate, separated by the massive expanse of the flood. Ocean and water embody a principle of

⁷ Kant's translation of the latin ens rationis in 'Gedankending', is in this place ignored by the translators, just like his translation of nihil negativum, 'Unding'. But later 'ein bloßes Gedankending' is translated as 'a mere creation of thoughts' (B594). With regard to this imaginative aspect Kant typically remarks that 'imagination is not simply to indulge in fancies (schwärmen) but to invent under the strict surveillance of reason' (B798).

segregation' (13–14). But Deleuze's island can be inhabited by 'exclusively female communities (...) such as the island of Circe or Calypso' (14), and that would be certainly for Kant to much of a 'noumenon in a positive sense of the term' (B307).

'Desert Islands' can obviously be read without the previous inquiry, but it seems to me that it sheds some light on the Kantian enterprise, and also on the point Foucault wanted to make. Just take for instance a look at the similarity between these two lines, in both phrasings: Foucault: 'The point, in brief, is to transform' (Il s'agit en somme de transformer); Deleuze: 'What must be recovered is the mythological life of the deserted island' (Il s'agit de retrouver la vie mythologique de l'île déserte). Deleuze's 'recovering' not only adds something to Foucault's point of transformation, it hints at a different source, also different from the Kantian. Deleuze allows us to take some more distance from the vocabulary of the subject and the self. This is also of ultimate relevance for the aspect of the transgressive force Butler hinted at: after all this movement is related to a stage before or after 'one's very formation as a subject'. Transgression is a desire, an action and a condition of action, before it is a concept of (self)reflection. As a movement before critique – perhaps, say in Deleuzian terms, of 'becoming critical' – it is possible that it also is, at the same time, a movement towards redefining 'critique', that is, according to Foucault, beyond a specific, restrictive definition of critique. To use the term 'inventiveness' freely connected to the 'self' does not only make the quite obvious association possible between transition and the power of imagination Foucault emphasized more than once. It also connects 'critique' to the Nietzschean focus on a mythological lifestyle in which 'man has become a work of art', which at the same time helps to disconnect the too humanistic interpretation of the notion of 'limit-attitude', because after all 'permanent critique of ourselves has to avoid the always too facile confusions between humanism and Enlightenment' (Foucault, 43).⁸

But there is one thing that should be distinctively clear in order to understand that Deleuze has something essentially in common with Kant's investigation of the 'Ground of the Distinction of All Objects'. His 'recovery of mythological life' can be understood as a movement at the same time different from the Kantian invention of the noumenon and a repetition of it. The particular transgressive dynamics in Deleuze's text can already be perceived in the French title: 'Causes of and reasons for desert islands' (Causes et raisons des îles désertes), a distinction immediately applied in the first two sentences: 'Geographers say there are two kinds of islands. This is valuable information for the imagination because it confirms what the imagination already knew'. This distinction between geography and imagination – to leave aside the subordinate geographic distinction between oceanic and continental islands – makes clear that there are from the start two possible approaches of the notion of the deserted island, and that 'geography' functions here equivalently to the Kantian starting point of the solid ground of understanding. A limitative source of truth, which must be transgressed. What follows is an investigation of the difference 'imagination knew already on its own and in another way' (10). This is about an attitude – though Deleuze uses the Bergsonian word *élan* – before the modern desire of self-containment and certainty. To gain insight in 'the *élan* that produces the island (...) we need only extrapolate in imagination the movement (...) which prolongs and takes up the *élan* that produced the island' (10). There is no extra certainty to strive for, it is just the 'double movement' in 'a human being who precedes itself (...) insofar as it imagines and reflects

⁸ The Nietzsche quote is from the first section of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

itself in its first movement' (11). Distinctively different from the reflective power and aim Kant undertook to transgress the limits of understanding, imagination seems however for Deleuze the constituent power to practice an analogous transgressive movement of the imagination, the invention of 'an Idea of humanity' (11). From this point on Deleuze's investigation operates on a level that appears to be nothing else than transcendental (for lack of a better word): apparently the task is to investigate the ground of difference called 'the essence', that is, 'the essence of the deserted island' which is 'imaginary' (12).⁹ This is not a pastiche of Kant's investigation, neither is it about a thing in the proper sense of the word: with a repetitive 're' Deleuze urges us to 'recover' (il s'agit de retrouver), to 'restore' (il faut restituer), 'to get back' (revenir), and finally to join him in what should be called a noumenal movement that precedes, so to speak, the thing in itself, the model or prototype. The desire to transgress the limits of a first island brought Kant to a second source, and now Deleuze shows that the repetition of transgression can lead us to yet another source. Deleuze recovers something Kant claimed as the sole property of reason: 'We have to get back to the movement of the imagination that makes the deserted island a model, a prototype of the collective soul' (13). And precisely this movement repeats the Kantian re-creation of the source of limitation: Where Kant started from the island as the source of truth given by nature, Deleuze starts with 'the birth' of the 'world', and where Kant ended up with the invention of the noumenon as the source of limitation in itself, Deleuze defines what is actually the whole purpose of this noumenal movement, namely the 'rebirth' of the world. In different ways Kant and Deleuze make explicitly clear that the 'limit-attitude' indeed requires an élan or desire to invent almost everything as long as it is 'something eternal that is not beyond the present instant, nor behind it, but within it' (Foucault, 39). As if Deleuze summarizes the results of the transcendental investigation: 'the formation of the world happens in two stages, in two periods of time, birth and rebirth, and the second is just as necessary and essential as the first' (13). Both, the desire to know something extra and the eagerness to imagine otherwise than it is, collapse precisely in this process of inventing a second world or Ding. Repetition – the desire to repeat – is obviously the force that brings into existence a certain process of mimesis in which imagination is also able to transform or transvest itself. Transgression requires both reason and imagination, and their relation should stay undefined. That is probably why Deleuze keeps on going to reconsider interruptively the weight or modality (necessity, possibility) of the 're' in re-creation, re-beginning and re-production. The island starts to be 'the necessary minimum' for the re-beginning, but the next moment the re-birth appears to be 'just as necessary and essential' as the birth, and what follows is probably the essence of the movement, namely that 'the second moment does not succeed the first' and is therefore even 'more essential than the first' because within itself as movement 'it gives us the law of repetition' (13). This transcendental mimesis ends up in something just as unknown as Kant's noumenon, 'something immemorial (...) something most profound' (14). Indeed, both transcendental investigations, either of reason or imagination, show that 'it is not enough for everything to begin, everything should repeat itself' (Il ne suffit pas que tout commence, il faut que tout se répète. 13; translation slightly changed). Reason and imagination are both able to carry out transgressive practices. The most important result of this investigation would be than a distinctive answer

⁹ Kant's 'ground of distinction' is pure reason, Deleuze's ground of difference would be imagination.

to Foucault: the transformation of limitative critique is possible by repeating its transgressive strategies while imagining a different origin of power. It is this particular transgressive movement of either reason or imagination, which probably also opens up the possibility of a 'difficult interplay' or, in Butler's formulation, a 'perpetual mobility'.

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