

What is a Question?

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I feel very strongly about putting questions; it partakes too much of the style of the day of judgment. You start a question, and it's like starting a stone. You sit quietly on the top of a hill; and away the stone goes, starting others.

--Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

I like rivers

Better than oceans for we see both sides.

An ocean is forever asking questions

And writing them aloud along the shore.

--Edwin Arlington Robinson, *Roman Bartholow Part III*

To pose the question of the question is also to plot its course, its processional development throughout the history of thought. It is here that we trace the history of the question taken in itself as a term through figures such as Freud, Heidegger, Lacan, and Derrida, in order to build a critical lens capable of refining the notion of the question and bringing it into some clearer semblance of focus. It is my contention that the question taken in itself has been given short shrift in critical discourse, perhaps owing to its resistance to being examined. Though questions are the common currency of theorists, the question of the question has yet to truly emerge into common view. Moreover, we cannot ignore the important metaphoricity of the question itself, how it functions in language, and the etymological nuances it possesses. The linguistic standpoint will not become the definitive aperture of this question of the question, but will function as another point of contiguity that the question shares with both language and theory.

1. What is a question?

This subtitle presupposes the validity of the notion of question itself, somewhat unavoidably. Questioning as process does not necessarily have a secure origin from which to trace this rather recalcitrant word, so we begin almost arbitrarily, yet still within the bounds of an hermeneutic exercise, with the etymology of the word itself.

Etymologically, “question” derives from the Latin *quaerere*, taking on the meaning of to seek, ask, acquire, inquire. But for all its semantic usage, it is inextricably bound up in

the notion of acquisition, a taking, or a planned taking. Even questions that have no predetermined solution invoke the idea of taking. The riddle and the paradox are forms of question that take non-solution as their solution. Questioning in this manner leads us to the abrogation of the expected solution in favour of an ironic response: a restating of the question for the purposes of illustration. Questions with non-solution as solution still cordon off and frame discourse, directing us to this non-solution response. The fundamental aspect of the question, as it functions in language, appears to be a fidelity to solution out of an incommensurable debt to tradition and Reason itself. In sum, there is no *grace* in the question as it is utilized. This is what we “get out of” the act of questioning, almost literally *ex-quiring* as opposed to *ex-quisiting*. The question presupposes a means of getting out of itself, or for us, the inquisitors, to get out of this questioning state by way of the alleviation that a solution brings. It is indeed difficult for philosophy to ask a question of the question, for it cannot avoid using the tools that are traditional (read as requisite) to understanding the tool itself. In hermeneutics, the “right” questions are suspended over the alleged answer (the deeper meaning of the subject inquired about), whereas in deconstruction the question is merely suspended. But it is possible that the deconstructive question is suspended over its double: the restatement of the question, and that iteration, in turn, being suspended over another, *ad infinitum*. But how to escape the strange economy of the question, to pose that which has no answer or double? For too long, the idea of the question has been taken for granted, perhaps solely due to its reliable propinquity.

What remains is to think of the question apart from the other semantic affiliates of acquisition (*acquirere*) and conquering (*con-quaerere*), which in themselves entail the connotations of property. In considering the distinction between an inside and outside, the question appears to fulfill two promises: to seek into (*disquisitio*) and to seek out (*exquirere*). Is this merely an Ancient Greek binary between active and passive, where the one who questions takes from the passive one who answers? However stated, the word question is in question, if not precisely for replaying a very old distinction between inside and outside. To seek *out* is to seek *for*. To seek into is to examine (*exigere*: to “drive out,” perhaps recalling a search for essences in the object). To answer is to send away the question (*rogare*) in an act of abrogation (the Latin prefix *ab* modifying the

verb as “away” or “to send off”). Inferred here are many of the metaphysical assumptions on the nature of subject-object relations that are too broad and diffuse to cover here, but how to proceed to question the question without utilizing both *disquisitio* and *exquirere*?

We may be able to at the very least retrace the steps of the corruption of the question, this essay being a most recent example, unavoidably, for we cannot dismiss the operation of questioning and providing some semblance of solution without fear of not achieving the aims commensurate to the demands of this particular milieu of discourse. Consider the question as question; this question to be considered not only entails an attention to the question posed, but to the notion of question itself. We might say that it merely portrays something fundamental to the human condition and the operation of language, but this in itself is common to many other features that do not bring us to a closer proximity with the question qua question. Perhaps the old adage of not needing to know what the hammer is to know how to use it applies here, but we will suspend even that as another question. Perhaps even more profoundly problematic is the operation in which we attempt to disclose the notion of question as itself being indicative of what deconstruction warns us against: that of privileging the notion of question as another object of presence. There is ample evidence already for this essay to sustain such a charge: the use of etymology for the purpose of assisting us in this inquiry, for example. The temptation to spiral into these pre-deconstructive situations is yet another of the many risks we undertake in attempting to understand the question.

The question is often regarded by common sense as simply an unfinished process of knowledge, where the solution is considered the finitude of knowledge. When we engage the solution with what we feel to be unanswered questions, we re-ignite the claim that it is unfinished knowledge that we seek to bring into contact with solutions of our own. In writing, we represent the question with the use of the orthographic mark “?”. This representation appears to function as a repetition of the question, as one folded within the question initially posed. We will return to the mark of the question itself, but first we owe something to the tradition from which this question of the question derives.

Questions operate as a desire to see, the prevalent metaphor of “seeing” or “grasping” ideas. For Heidegger, it is this curiosity, this care (*Sorge*) for seeing, that is essentially bound up in Being.¹ Does this unite care (*Sorge*) with acquisition (*acquisitio*)?

Does this reveal or disclose the hidden sun that is the eye, unveiling it at the moment of disclosure and acquisition? Is the question the blind eye that strains to see again, to overcome blindness precisely by focusing its blindness upon the object it wants to see fully in the form of a question (perhaps even its essence, as phenomenologically real or by the hermeneutic standard of “deeper meaning”)? This “seeing” is for Heidegger making the fundamental question “transparent.”² Seeing is seeking, especially for that which the *Suchen* is already modified by that which is being sought, and that this see(k)ing is an intrinsic characteristic behaviour of the being of the questioner.³ But this seeking is only possible because the meaning is available, put forth somehow by the thing being sought.⁴

Curiously enough, “curiosity is everywhere and nowhere” constantly uprooting Dasein.⁵ So if the questioning impulse resides in Being (prompted in a strange way by the sought thing that has meaning available to the seeker), constantly being subverted by the question, compelling an overcoming of blindness through a movement toward the *lumen fidae* or even a *lumen naturale*, where is the question? When is the question? Is it merely an effect of this primordial impulse? The impulse causes us to perform this deviation. In the orthographic mark, Being that “does not know,” yet desires to see (*savoir*), traces along an arcing trail, slicing or perhaps sliding down to the point of the full stop: the period-object of knowing, as if the seeker is magnetized to the sought. This is the static moment at the threshold where the solution supervenes as revelation and negates the question – or places it under conditional erasure – to abrogate the act of questioning (*rogare*).⁶ The question, in its being posed, decenters itself and subverts the questioner (*percontator*). But it is at the very strange moment when the question ceases to exist: at the moment of the solution. The solution is depicted as light, questions (or ignorance) as darkness. Just as evil is defined in the metaphysical tradition as a *privatio bonum*, the question is seen as a *privatio enodatum*: the absence of the solution that suggests that the questioning state itself is something to be “cured.” Defined in terms of privation or absence, the question has no substantive existence of its own in this formulation. Granting existence to the question to the same degree as it is granted to the solution would threaten the existence of the solution itself, precisely through rendering some degree of completeness to the question. It would appear that this would be untenable on

at least two grounds: 1) a fully existent question would undermine the positive character of the solution, and 2) it would give positivity to absence, for questions operate in such a way as to have absence as their constituent mechanism in relation to the presence that represents the object/solution. In these two ways, *question* is fundamentally a problem in language.

Deleuze, after Lautman, examines the being of the question, placing it without much reservation under the notion of an imperative. Rather than stressing the question's negativity as absence, Deleuze asserts that questioning "is a part of knowledge allowing its positivity and its specificity to be grasped in the act of *learning*."⁷ There is a much larger epistemic and conceptual apparatus involved in this operation, all of which can only be summarily treated here. What Deleuze indicates for us is the ?-Being, or the (non)being of the question as positive. Questions emerge due to recourse to the very habitual nature or imperative force within being itself, thereby setting up an entirely new ontology of the question.⁸ This ontology opens the question up to positivity, thereby freeing the question up from a tradition of western epistemology that has imbricated the notion of the question as a linear movement towards an answer. In Descartes, this is the move from doubt to certainty; in Kant it is from the hypothetical to the apodictic. But ostensibly, questions in the Deleuzian manner do not need to automatically surrender to their opposite, and in fact questions can remain open precisely by their intrinsic transcendental character: "It may be that there is necessarily something mad in every question and every problem, as there is in their transcendence in relation to answers, in their insistence through solutions and the manner in which they maintain their openness."⁹ But what of this positivity? The question is still non-being, but it is not non-being in the negative, but rather that questions are the eternal displacement of possible solutions, a displacement of their own negation.¹⁰ Questions, in this sense, *resist* solutions that will make questions the scene of a negation.¹¹ Moreover, Deleuze wants to make very clear that questions are creatures of the unthought, and that the unthought possesses a positive perception.¹² But, in remaining somewhat critical of this stance, Deleuze must also maintain the existence of the fractured I. He points to the natural incompleteness of thinking that perpetually endeavours to complete itself, much in the way Derrida speaks of the unfecund operation of the hermeneut in attempting to uncover the essential

meaning of things. But Deleuze perhaps wants to make this fractured I the product of the questioning impulse itself, that questions themselves are the reason for this fractured I.¹³ Questions exist as the displacement of a virtual object it cannot “see” in the Heideggerian sense, and whatever questions are qua questions, they are not part of a speculative genus that has ignorance of some empirical subject as its provisional stage in thought, but rather are “the living acts of the unconscious, investing special objectivities and destined to survive in the provisional and partial state characteristic of answers and solutions.”¹⁴ It should be noted that there is a very strong alliance here with Spinoza’s *conatus*, or striving; this parallel ought help flesh out the second part of a Deleuzian reading of the question.

If the question resides as an unconscious act as an imperative, Deleuze has seemingly flipped the tradition on its head, making solutions a mere fiat response to the (non)being of the question itself. This operation of resistance is much more complex than first imagined, for we must now consider questions and answers in terms of an economy of exchange; that is, Necessity (which drives toward completion, Truth, the Good) demands the cancellation of the question in order to further its own economy of the acquisition of property. Through the violence of cancellation, the question acquiesces its sovereign aspect of positivity and lapses into negation. But this is only a fiat exchange, for the actual question has only surrendered one of its masks while retaining its positivity in the unconscious, and will always remain so as long as Necessity fails to achieve its teleological ideals. And, in fact, Necessity cannot achieve these ideals because the question will always be present to subvert whatever solutions are derived from itself, and will in fact subvert its own presence. The questions persist in their (non)being in the answers.¹⁵ Questions will always retain their element of chance, and chance (the aleatory point) is affirmation.¹⁶ In a simple typology, the operator of the idea is the gambler, the singularities of a problem are points on the die, the cast of the die is the act of questioning, and the fallen die with its chance result is the non-solution of possibility. The implication of Chance and Necessity is played out upon the sky and earth, from casting to falling to fallen. This motif is extremely apparent in many of Deleuze’s works. Chance creates the chaosmos, is a part of it.¹⁷ Imperatives exist in the Cogito whereas

questions resonate elsewhere, outside of the Cogito, deep within the unconscious act, distributing a 'that which is' among problems.¹⁸

If questions are not an intrinsic property belonging to the Cogito, are the scene of a fissure, and reside as unconscious acts, then there is a strong case for equating questioning with the impossibility of thought. Questioning presents to the questioner the powerlessness that "is transmuted into power, that point which develops in the work in the form of a problem. Far from referring back to the Cogito as a proposition of consciousness, imperatives are addressed to the fractured I as though to the unconscious of thought."¹⁹ This powerlessness, itself a power raised to the *n*th degree, is present in the act of not locating meaning in an object that is perpetually displaced, the very anxiety of non-solution, or what Bataille calls "non-savoir." In fact, there is a very powerful connection between Bataille's notion of the impossible and non-savoir with the idea of the question, a provocative connection that we will leave suspended here.

But we must treat the Deleuzian question with more care than this. The question does not emerge because of some lack, as it does for Freud and Lacan: it is an intrinsic property of being-as-striving. That is, the infinite series of questions are only broken up by the surface tensions of a tendency toward solutions, the cutting-connecting-flowing aspect of desiring machines. Rather than rely on the classic *homo duplex* of the unconscious and the Cogito, Deleuze and Guattari posit three criteria of the being of the questioner that are unified: being is one, being is process, being is will to power.²⁰ The divisions that psychoanalysis is so accustomed to make, according to this formulation, are artificial. Yet another ramification of this view that opens up the question in terms of its (non)being is the Spinozist inflection that makes questioning a part of the will, and if the will is infinite then it has infinite causes (in the same way that desiring-machines are in an infinite series of their own production).²¹ Mutually supporting this idea that the question can owe no allegiance to solutions can be derived if we twist Ockham's intuitive cognition of non-existent things insofar as we may state: if the question is a non-relative quality distinct from the solution, questioning can occur without leading to solution.²²

Whereas Deleuze posits an ontology of the question that is transcendently inherent within the desiring-machine that is being (giving fuel to his theory of transcendental empiricism) which opens up the question itself, Derrida wants to open the

question precisely against the established grounds of ontology. Deleuze is more lenient on the issue of ontology—despite his violent resistance of negation, which still is perhaps reflexively an admission of the ontological rules in tradition, illustrating some very belated and unacknowledged Hegelianism in Deleuze—whereas Derrida is more ready to critique ontology as ontotheology.²³ For Derrida, the object is “haunted” by the logos, determined by presencing. The trick is to witness the question in itself without weaving webs of interpretation, without attempting to reach an essence that is most likely not there. But just as memorization is the death of living memory, the question that is posed for the reception of an immediate solution is the death of the faculty of questioning itself, and in this way Derrida and Deleuze both appear to agree on the idea that answers are an attempt to negate questions. They also both know that the questions cannot be suppressed by answers, even if they come to this conclusion through different means.

However affirmative this operation is, the question qua question is still bound up in the notion of acquisition. How can Derrida succeed in “de-haunting” the question, freeing it up absolutely so that it remains open and with no relation to some deferred moment when property is acquired? The posing of the question itself is inextricably bound up in an operation of seeking in and for *something*. For Derrida to maintain that we should merely regard the question itself may only render the question an object, a representation, another mark. Does he ever ask a question of the question? Can we ask this without the fear that a solution will quickly follow? Deleuze, too, may not be able to escape this paradox: the question as the regulative “object” of the unconscious—or “desiring-machine” in keeping with his parlance. Questioning is desiring, and a question without desire does not seem possible, but according to the very impossible “powerlessness” of the questioning faculty itself it should exist as yet another possibility in chance. If the non-solution, non-acquisition question is possible, this possibility is a possible solution, thereby contradicting the very process of deriving this possibility, for *no question can have a solution that does not presuppose desiring and acquisition*. Suppose, out of all the possibilities I create in the question of the question, that one of them states, “it is possible that there is a question that entails no desire and acquisition on some level.” Now, if that is a possible solution, then I have illustrated my desire to locate

this possibility, and I have acquired a provisional response, thereby contradicting the possible solution itself.

As we mentioned above, paradoxes have as their solution the repetition of the question. It is when the question is repeated that we are given the (non) solution. But already the question is a representation, for to invoke the Deleuzian model, to speak or write the question is a representation of the striving act of questioning. Even if we only think the question, it is still a representation for it must be represented from the unconscious to the Cogito in order to be articulated, organized. It is for this reason that we can state that every question is a folded question within another question. The paradox or riddle is a particular case where the question is repeated one more time as its solution. Moreover, even the solution to a question is the repetition of the question by a reflection of that question in the answer. This is the triple-fold of the question: the unconscious act folded into the Cogito, the Cogito question folded into the articulated question, and the articulated question folded into the response which may take the form of a solution or a restating of the question.

There is no solution to the question. To ask the question of the question only inflames the paradox we have here illustrated. Noble and sensible attempts have been made to define the question qua question, but they prove their own limitation at the very moment they pose the question. To reach resolution on this matter violates the openness of the question we seek to maintain, and even this seeking is in itself a corrupt operation of our own desires. But it may demonstrate on another level why rationality cannot confidently claim its separation from desire itself, for desire operates as the substratum to every question, and reflexively in every solution.

2. The Pharmakon(ics) of the Question

Question: *quaestionem, quarere, quasere.*

The word *qua* will function, at least temporarily for our purposes, as “where/what” whereas the suffix *sere* will be placed in conjunction with the Latin term *serenus*, meaning “bright, clear,” close to the German *lichten*, meaning to brighten, lighten, alleviate. This timely conjunction brings us to *qua-serenus*, or, “where to clear or brighten up,” calling to mind the reliable notions of elucidation and illumination. And in fact, this is generally why we ask questions: to disclose, illuminate, or discover its

answer. But the term *serenus* has weather as part of its metaphorical makeup, a metaphor we cannot simply ignore, but must brandish. Meteophilosophy opens up for us here, the pharmakon of weather itself. Like Derrida's examination of the pharmakon that illustrates the quality of it being both poison and cure, the *meteo* in *serenus* also confers this dual aspect of benefit and disadvantage. The weather is produced, in the classical Greek conception, as a reflection of the moods of the gods. Rainfall is essential to crops, but too much can be disastrous, just as droughts can also decimate crop yields. We will later return to the metaphor of weather.

The "paternity" of the answer is the question, even if it is absent or under erasure. But do we reconstruct the original question or construct a new one from the answer? In answer to what? To question why God created the world instead of leaving everything as nothing in void is to pose a question beyond the bounds of questioning, a question that is inadmissible to the very nature of the question that seeks to acquire or seek into some matter. Hume's "how do you know?" also appears to violate the established answers, for these questions would have preferably been left buried in the rationalist enterprise. But how are some questions acts of heresy? What are the criteria for categorizing questions as valid or heretical? In the game of questions that we observe in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, for example, the purpose is not to produce answers or statements (for that would lead to a loss), but to absurdly add more questions that do not have answers as their purpose.

How can we have a question that does not have its open hand hovering over that which it seeks to acquire or positioned for an expedition (inquisition) within that which it desires to subdue? Would a question without acquisition as its *raison d'être* have any purpose or value? But perhaps it is the case that purpose and value are corrupt, subverting the notion of the question itself. There is a traditionally acceptable method for asking questions, and this is repeatedly addressed in classical rhetoric. For example, in the Platonic dialogue, *Laches*, the art (techne) of "fighting" (which we will here assume as a convenient metaphorical stand-in for argumentation, an interesting relation between question-asking and combative gestures) pales in comparison to its *science*, which entails knowledge of its surrounding structures, and must have virtue as its fount. Socrates concludes that without virtue, (which determines both purpose and value) fighting has no

place. In substituting questioning for fighting, we discover yet another poorly veiled critique of art and sophism.²⁴ As *Laches* teaches, it is never considered appropriate to ask questions without recourse to the virtue upon which they ought to be grounded. To seize upon an answer is a question's purpose. The telos is acquisition, entailing a property relation: something gains and something loses (this gain is also supported by *acquirere* which means not only to take out of, but to receive something extra). In this formulation, the question is that which loses, for its existence is negated. Returning to the Deleuzian model above, the question can only lose its mask while retaining its (non) being, thereby doing away with the classical conception that makes actualization of the answer the necessary death of the question.

For Heidegger, to question is building, and building is dwelling.²⁵ But building is still a form of acquisition, for one needs materials with which to build, and these materials do not emerge *ex nihilo*. What are these materials? A general desire for answers, purposive intention, and the anticipation of answers provide the material that informs this process of questioning-as-building. One must struggle to build, adding another shade to the "questioning-as-fighting" metaphor we find in *Laches*, the ever-present commitment questioning has with combat and challenge.

With recourse to the psychoanalytic tradition, which we cannot under these circumstances ignore, questions may be seen as an instance of *apraxia*: the recognition of something by its use alone, or psychic blindness.²⁶ We question without questioning the question itself, without freeing the question of the content of words and marks. This adding of words, the articulation of the question, is a representation of the questioning imperative to the Cogito. But on a theory of *apraxia*, what we are given is the first loosening of the question from the bounds of language, rendering it a habitual subconscious action. Psychoanalysis can then make its own movements to trace the reasons for such behaviour, what exactly makes the question appear in the mind. The question, in this manner, arises when there is a rift between knowing and not-knowing, or when knowing reaches its terminus at the foot of something it does not yet know. The reaction response is to throw a question at the unknown thing, much akin to the game of *fort/da*, hoping to reel in the "solution." When the idea does not correspond with reality, or in the case of absence, the resolution (as untying, or unwinding the spool) is to throw a

question at the transgression. In fact, questions in the psychoanalytic formulation indicate a fundamental absence, even if it is merely a change of place of the object. We cannot ignore the deep relationship questioning has with time, time that makes possible the eruption of the question in regards to the purloined object. The *da* response to the question presents us with the erotic fulfillment as a “cure” of our self-alienation... yet the *fort/da* game does not end, precisely because the erotic fulfillment is illusory and the desiring impulse or the questioning imperative is not satisfied with either the articulation of the question or the resulting response. It is the role of the Cogito to convince itself that it is somewhat satisfied, despite deep-seated feelings of anxiety and continued alienation. The pharmakon of the question is, for the Cogito, a double meaning: the question (prolonged questioning, indicating insatiable desire) is a possible poison, but if used sparingly to lead us toward an answer it becomes a kind of “cure.” And so the trauma of separation is conveniently deferred (rather than truly cured) by the all-too quick response to the ill-formed question, a question that is ill-formed precisely because it was formulated at all with the use of a language that is already limited and confined by rules that the questioning imperative does not place stock in.

This is the recalcitrance of the question, precisely called if it resists being coerced toward its own negation in the solution. The question is here treated as the illness with the solution as the cure, and the questioner as the afflicted patient who—by recourse to solution—will convalesce back to health (and presupposing in the Heideggerian sense that there is something intrinsic in the sought thing that emits health-giving properties at the moment it is sought; we may call this medicinal property the production of meaning). But it must be said here that the question is indissociable with the questioner, for if the division is made, the questioner ceases to be culpable unless there is a resistance to the solution-cure. It is useful to evoke Derrida’s reading of the Freudian-Lacanian *omphalos*, where the solution (as untying) cannot take place because the connection has been cut.²⁷ So it is for every solution to a question: the solution does not return to the scene of the question, to readdress or restate that which put the process of solution into motion (hereby invoking themes of the son who refuses to pay homage to the dead father—or in this case, the son who denies that the father is alive). Rather, in a rebellious fashion, solutions cut themselves off from the body of the question, the solution has built itself a

new body. The solution cannot return to the scene of the question, the “origin” or “genesis” of its existence (while the question itself has no such origin point; it is the solution that insists on having origin). The solution performs an abrogation, but it cannot perform an *anabrogation* (if this compound neologism may be permitted). The solution becomes completely severed from the *mater viventium* and has only this reflective knot as proof of there ever having been a connection.

However, beyond the yo-yoing of the question/answer paradigm, the open question expects no return, accepting separation as a risk, and also accepts anxiety as part of this questioning state. This is a communication-as-risk even if this plateau of communication is with the self and the alienated self (the unconscious and the Cogito in communicative exchange).

When we peel back the layers, to question is a manifestation of desire, and a desire without an object (pure desire) emerges from the unconscious. It is the Cogito (acting as *potentia ordinata*) that attempts to solicit some external object in order to suppress the immense force of desire. But the unfulfillment of desire—true desire unmediated by the Cogito—is what inevitably results of the Cogito’s interference; its investment is already doomed to failure.

The question materializes in the Cogito by an act of condensation (*verdichtung*). The Cogito transmutes the question into a metaphor between subject and object; hence the subsidiary and regulative metaphors of possession and seizure of the object. On the level of the rational subject, the Cogito serves two functions. Firstly, it creates meaning by condensing and arranging the unconscious emanation of desire that is received in the Cogito, giving this emanation language and thereby creating a representation of this emanation that is in accord with rational principles. This is the stage when the Cogito assembles the bits of “unthought” and translates these into language, refining this to be capable of posing a proper question that can be directed at some object—be that object present or absent. Secondly, the Cogito must fix the articulate question to that which it will stick, thereby, in the same moment, creating a translatable representation of some external object to which the question can be appropriately applied. Then begins *fort* with the expectation that *da* will follow. Žižek’s reading of Lacan is perhaps appropriate to this scenario, for the metaphor function cannot assign meaning—only its lack.²⁸ In

Derridian parlance, the Cogito is “haunted” by the absence of meaning that it is forced to assign by way of metaphoricity and the articulate question. For Deleuze and Guattari, this lack is a fiction perpetrated by a psychoanalytic misunderstanding of desire itself.

It is here that we can re-address the weather metaphor in relation to the question. The weather as unpredictable force, itself an assemblage of meteorological interferences and instability, without purposive intentions. There is no design, only flows and interruptions. Clouds form and knit together into a moving tapestry, break apart into clusters, all according to the forces of the wind that either unite or disperse them. Just as by condensation the clouds accumulate information by way of the senses, in flows that are not interrupted by the attention of the Cogito (which is attentive to other things for the moment, unable to be more than a porous wall or a sieve; calling to mind the idea of the “suburbs of Hell” where the walls are insufficient to hold back the hordes). The clouds manifest their moisture by the release of precipitation just as the unconscious emanates its desiring without an object. The sky-chance opens, unleashing its non-purposive constituents, and it is the Cogito (the necessity of production) that attempts to make this gift into something useful, productive, catching the rain with irrigation channels (striated territory), absorbing the excess solar energy by way of panelling, using the wind to power machines. It is also in the same way that the unconscious questioning impulse becomes the articulate question, rendered into language and directed at some object. The questioning impulse is translated into a raw natural resource in the means-ends relationship of the production of meaning. It is when this impulse touches the earth that it is burdened with the externally ascribed function of seeking/possessing an answer. If this sounds remarkably Deleuzian, it is because he—through different yet related concepts and figures—fundamentally illustrates the same position, except that in his formulation everything is production. To make this relation more tenable to the Deleuzian program, we will here institute a division between two types of production: one vulgar and the other as the natural process of the will to power that is engendered by the *meteo*.

To re-activate the question is to resist the question as a means to an answer (answers that effectively de-activate questions through a premature retirement), to adhere to anti-production. It is a doubling back, an unfolding, and the smoothing of space. It is to follow an invisible trace to an absent origin—and above all to forget the question in the

way we have hitherto apprenticed to it or else our act of seeing the question is already marked with an articulated desire to compare and contrast. The movement toward solution is the tragic seduction with which the Cogito is afflicted.

The question without an answer, without hope or expectation of an answer, leads us to an abyss. It lends us to think of absence—or literally “ab-sense” as “away” from sense and meaning: the real question that does not belong to the logic of production that playfully disrupts and displaces meaning. We are thrust into dissolution rather than the Cogito’s illusory (dys)solution that is always thwarting the genuine openness of the question through a violent subjection of the question to the rules of the vulgar production of meaning. There is a good reason to appeal to the works of Bataille here; the notions of non-savoir, dissolution of the subject, the beyond the limits of the rational, communication-as-risk, all apply to the contours in this epistemic shift away from the solution and (back) toward the question, for the question expresses the limit, the impossible of thought. But perhaps it is there (where? but more a question of when) that we should (re)turn...if the very impossibility of such an operation does not prevent our in- or egress, if such a vulgar notion of inside/outside may be said to apply.

It is very troublesome indeed, and yet fitting, that we pose the answer to the problem of the question as being *no answer at all*. The true question cannot be rendered into its opposite with “solution” as the answer. The question in itself cannot be known, less even practiced, without conscious mediation that strips the question of its originary status as having no answer...as not belonging to the realm of production. We can have a *sense* of the question as it acts through us, but it still retains itself and remains transcendental. However distracting our initial etymological and historical exercises may appear in concluding with this perhaps all too obvious conclusion, it serves us still to apprentice to the traditions that have inscribed themselves on the idea of the question, for there may still be something more to *not* know, and that this precipitating metaphilosophy may open up another way *away*.

Notes

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1962), p.215

² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.24

³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.24

⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.25

⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.217

⁶ This use of *supervene* is not to be taken lightly: we mean almost literally “over time,” rather than, say, convenience which is a “with time.” It is perhaps far too jarring for those of the more analytic persuasion to consider a convenience of the question and answer, for it logically appears more viable to consider the question in the past tense precisely at the moment that the answer emerges.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.64.

⁸ Deleuze, p.78

⁹ Deleuze, p.107

¹⁰ Deleuze, p.107

¹¹ Deleuze, p.195: “the question silences all empirical responses which purport to suppress it.” This silence is the scene of resistance itself, and the suppression it guards against is its own threatened negation. We will return to this notion of resistance when we speak of Derrida.

¹² Deleuze, p.108

¹³ Deleuze, p.195

¹⁴ Deleuze, p.106

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*. Trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p.56

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.198

¹⁷ Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.199

¹⁹ Deleuze, p.199

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 2-8.

²¹ Cp. Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Cambridge: Hackett, 1992), p.53, Prop. 32 proof 1.

²² William of Ockham, *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Philotheus Boehner (Cambridge: Hackett, 1990), p.25. The passage I modified was originally this: “*Visio est qualitas absoluta distincta ab obiecto; ergo potest sine contradictione fieri sine obiecto.*” This modification would, no doubt, violate Ockham’s entire epistemology, and so I do not impute this new meaning upon it but rather adopt its phrasing.

²³ But out of all fairness, Deleuze’s critique of ontology—remarkably Nietzschean—goes against the vulgar separation of subject and object, as is well illustrated as a leitmotif throughout *Anti-Oedipus*.

²⁴ Plato, “Laches” in *The Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), pp. 26-34, sections 178-194. This dialogue is worthy of our attention for more than just the reason of indicating the position of the question in classical rhetoric. Lysimachus makes much ado about the value of the name: “I am delighted to hear, Socrates, that you maintain the name of your father.” This is suspicious indeed, carried over into the Christian paradigm that places the son as the representative of the (absent) father’s name. In our reading of the dialogue of questioning as fighting, the discussion addresses the use value of questioning and if the youth should be taught such an art. Nicias points out its benefits, that it improves health, is useful in the event of war (which we will translate as an argument), and will lead to a broader knowledge on how such structures work. Nicias also points out that the questioner will know exactly when to question based on when it can produce the maximum amount of terror. There is a timeliness factor present in this formulation, outlining a general rule of questioning as it pertains to when it is appropriate to pose a question. Socrates will not dispute this last claim, but will focus on the “content rules” that ensure the validity of the question, i.e., determined by virtue. Laches’ response to Nicias warrants some unpacking as well. Laches provides us with the second general rule of the question, that it should not be an act performed merely for its own sake, but toward some end; hence, his comment that these exhibition fighters would rather please audiences with their craft than to do real battle against the foes of Athens. Laches then appeals to his own experience to illustrate two proofs of his claim: the first is that none of these exhibition fighters ever distinguished themselves in true combat, and the second concerning the issue of novelty where a fighter invented a fanciful weapon (better designed to please crowds) that resulted in his being ridiculed in battle. It is Laches who opens this discourse up for Socrates by stating that technical skill does not presuppose or substitute for true valour. It is Socrates who transmutes this valour into the foundational rule of virtue, a virtue that will regulate all forms of questioning.

²⁵ Cf. Martin Heidegger, “Questioning Builds a Way” and “Building Dwelling Thinking” in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), p.311 and 348.

²⁶ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York: Zone, 1991), p.93.

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (California : Stanford University press, 1996), p.13.

²⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (London: Verso, 1989), p.154.