

Lecture Four: Incongruent Counterparts and Internal Difference

Introduction

Today I want to talk about Deleuze's use of an argument by Kant, the argument from incongruent counterparts, which he uses to show the existence of what he calls and 'internal difference' within things. This is a notion of difference which is not a part of our concept of the object. It is also not a form of difference which exists between entities. Rather, it is a non-conceptual determination of the object in itself. In the process, Deleuze draws out an important distinction between the concept and the idea, and provides an incisive account of his relationship to both the Kantian and Leibnizian projects. I want to focus on three areas in this lecture. First, I want to look at the concepts of extension and comprehension. Deleuze introduces these terms, which date back to the Port-Royal logic, in order to try and show how a conceptual understanding of objects is ultimately unable to refer to a singular object, but only to classes of objects. Second, I want to look at Kant's incongruent counterparts argument, and the way Kant uses it to develop one of the central distinctions in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, between understanding, which is essentially conceptual, and intuition, which is a receptive and non-conceptual way of presenting the object. Finally, I want to look at what Deleuze sees as the limitations in Kant's understanding of this concept, and Deleuze's attempt to overcome these limitations through the introduction of the notion of the Idea, which will provide a genetic and non-conceptual account of the object.

Extension and Comprehension

Extension and comprehension are introduced by Deleuze in order to give an account of the third difference between repetition and generality. They are opposed in terms of (natural) law, and in terms of conduct (moral law). The third opposition is in terms of representation. Representing an object is key to two processes which Deleuze has criticised: memory and recognition. Remembering and recognising both rely on the existence of some kind of representation within the subject. In the case of memory, this is because the object to be remembered isn't present. In the case of recognition, we need, in some sense to compare our internal representation of the object with the object itself. How do we structure such a representation? We normally see objects of composed of substances and properties, and we describe these objects using the parallel terms of subjects and predicates. Depending on how many predicates we ascribe to an object, we can determine which objects fall under that concept. For example, we can restrict the application of a concept by stipulating that it only applies to objects which have a certain property. So the concept of an animal applies to only those entities with the property of animality. The concept of rationality only applies to rational entities. So predicates act as rules allowing us to determine which entities fall under a concept, and which do not. By combining these predicates, we can further narrow down the group of entities which fall under the concept. Thus the concept of a rational animal covers a subset of both of the two concepts. It thus circumscribes a smaller collection of entities. This brings us to the comprehension and extension of an idea. These two features of a concept were introduced in the Port Royal logic, the textbook on logic written in 1662 and widely considered to be the definitive reference until the mid nineteenth century. It defines the two terms as follows:

I call the COMPREHENSION of an idea, those attributes which it involves in itself, and which cannot be taken away from it without destroying it; as the comprehension of the idea triangle includes extension, figure, three lines, three angles, and the equality of these three angles to two rigid Angles, &c.

I call the EXTENSION of an idea those subjects to which that idea applies, which are also called the inferiors of a general term, which, in relation to them, is called superior, as the idea of triangle in general extends to all the different sorts of triangles. (Port Royal Logic, 49)

So the class of objects that a concept ranges over is governed by its comprehension and extension. An object only falls under a concept if that concept comprehends the object, i.e. if it has all of the properties of the concept. The extension determines how many objects fall under the concept. Now, it should be obvious that the extension and the comprehension of a concept are inversely proportional. That is, the more we specify a concept, the fewer objects will be subsumed by it. If we are to remember a particular event, or recognise a particular object, then the extension of that object must be 1 – it must only refer to the particular experience or object under consideration. But this implies, as extension and comprehension are inversely proportionate, that the comprehension of the concept must be infinite. So the question is, is it possible to develop a concept with infinite comprehension that allows us to remember or recognise in the way that representation claims that we can?

Before looking at the incongruent counterparts argument, which presents an *a priori* argument against representation's formulation of such a concept, I want to look at Deleuze's two criticisms of the attempt to formulate such a concept on a practical level.

First, while it seems that predicates operate as universals, the properties that they refer to in the objects are not identical. So while we might be able to delimit a class of entities that all have the property of animality, it is not obvious that a horse and a man are animals in the same way. Similarly, the smooth red of an apple has a different quality to the textured red of a carpet. It is only by a process of abstraction that we can therefore show that the same predicate applies in both cases. So while it appears that predicates are repeated throughout a class of entities, this is on the basis of a prior moment of abstraction from a resemblance.

Second, in practice, it is impossible to specify a concept through attributing to it an infinite number of properties. This leads to various difficulties of misrecognition, such as in the case of twins.

Despite these drawbacks, there is a further limitation which emerges from the *a priori* impossibility of providing a complete determination of the object. The reason why this is a real problem for representation is that it implies that a purely conceptual understanding of the object will fail to properly characterise it. If this claim is justified, then Deleuze's argument for a radically non-representation approach to philosophy becomes significantly strengthened.

Newton, Leibniz and Spatiality

Kant's argument on incongruent counterparts is first introduced into a debate between Newton (and Clarke) and Leibniz on the nature of space. One of the central points of contention between Newton

and Leibniz was the question of whether space was absolute, or relative to the objects which were contained within it. For Newton, we can make a distinction between absolute and relative space:

Absolute space, in its own nature, without relation to anything external, remains always similar and immovable. Relative space is some moveable dimension or measure of the absolute spaces; which our senses determine by its position to bodies; and which is commonly taken for an immovable space; such is the dimension of a subterraneous, an aerial, or celestial space, determined by its position in respect of the Earth. (Newton, taken from *Space and Incongruence*, 8)

So for Newton, in practice, we determine the positions of objects in space by their relations to one another, as, for Newton, a frame of reference is defined by inertia, that is, by the fact that all objects within a frame of reference are moving at constant velocity. On this basis, it is very difficult to even differentiate between a relative and absolute frame of reference. In spite of this, he claims that in order for these relations between objects to be possible, there must be an absolute frame of reference which is logically prior to the existence of objects themselves. Absolute space is therefore essentially a metaphysical posit within Newton's physics, which grounds the possibility of relations between objects. This frame of reference is essentially a homogenous, flat medium where, each point is essentially identical to every other, and which does not causally interact with the objects within it.

In contrast to Newton's analysis of space as absolute, Leibniz claims (at least on a first reading) that space is a secondary, derivative concept that emerges from the relations which exist between objects. He presents several arguments which seem to show the problematic nature of absolute space. First, for Newton, space is supposed to have existence, but it clearly isn't a physical substance, as Newton's theory relies on it being causally inert, but being able to enter into causal relations appears to be an essential part of what makes a physical substance. Secondly, it obviously cannot be a property, as it is supposed to precede objects, and properties are logically dependent on them. The ontological status of Newton's concept of space is thus problematic.

Second, the notion of absolute space is problematic when we take into account Leibniz's view that every event must have a reason or cause. The reason why this presents a problem is because it is impossible to explain, on Newton's model, why the universe occupies the position in space that it does, given that space itself is absolutely homogeneous. The ground for the position of any object, whilst it may be explained by reason in relation to its relative position, is inexplicable in terms of the absolute position of the system as a whole.

Third, the notion of space contravenes Leibniz's notion of the identity of indiscernibles. That is, if there is no way to distinguish one point of space from any other, then we can say that each point in space is identical to every other one, and so, as they are identical, space is just one point.

Leibniz presents his alternative view as follows:

I have more than once stated that I held *space* to be something purely relative, like *time*; space being an order of co-existences as time is an order of successions. For space denotes in terms of possibility an order of things which exist at the same time, insofar as they exist together, and is not concerned with their particular way of existing: and when we see

several things together we perceive this order of things among themselves. (*Correspondence with Clarke*, from *LPW*, 211)

Space in this sense is therefore secondary to the 'order of things', and exists only insofar as it allows us to see the relations which obtain between these entities. But this raises the obvious question, given that these cannot be spatial relations between things (as this would be to presuppose the notion of space), what relations manifest themselves within the spatial *milieu*?

In fact, the primary ontological entities for Leibniz are simple, non-extended, non-spatial substances called monads. Each of these monads contains, in its concept, a series of properties that amount to a complete description of the world. Each monad, however, 'perceives' (and Leibniz is using the term perceive by analogy to spatial perception) the world from a particular position. This perception can be divided into three possible levels: bare entelechies perceive the world without any awareness, animal souls perceive the world primarily in terms of spatial perception, and minds (such as that of man) in terms of reason. Just as some aspects of the world as we perceive it are distinct and well defined (those aspects that are near to us), and some are confused (those that are at a distance from us), each monad's perception of the world is partly distinct and partly confused. The concept of each monad thus contains the complete specification of the world, as a series of properties, although not all of these properties are clearly perceived by the monad.

Space emerges because the purely intellectual nature of the universe is only perceived confusedly by the monad. When the monad has only an incomplete perception of a substance, its imagination has a tendency to create false unities, much as we perceive the colour green, but not the colours blue and yellow of which it is composed. The result of this is that our understanding of the world as spatial only emerges as a confused and incomplete perception of an essentially conceptual reality. On this view, therefore, things, the monads, precede space, which is in no way a real feature of the world. If this is the case, then Newton's absolute theory of space must be false. A corollary of this is that monads do not have any spatial properties. This does not mean that spatial properties are entirely arbitrary, however. They are what Leibniz calls, 'well-founded phenomena'. That is, they are analogous with the conceptual properties of monads.

The main point to take from the Leibniz discussion, in terms of representation, is that for Leibniz, all of the properties which we encounter in space can be understood purely in conceptual terms. There is nothing that exceeds our intellectual understanding of the world. Now such an understanding will presuppose the notions of the particular and the universal which are the foundation of representation. Thus, if Leibniz is right, there is nothing that is outside of representation, and projects such as those of Deleuze and Kierkegaard are impossible.

Incongruent Counterparts

Kant first introduces the incongruent counterparts arguments in his pre-critical work, *Concerning the Ultimate Foundation for the Differentiation of Regions in Space* (1768). Here, his aim is to show that the Newtonian view of space is correct. The argument is presented as follows:

Let it be imagined that the first created thing were a human hand, then it must necessarily be either a right hand or a left hand. In order to produce on a different action of the creative cause is necessary from that, by means of which its counterpart could be produced.

If one accepts the concept of modern, in particular, German philosophers, that space only consists of the external relations of the parts of matter, which exist alongside one another, then all real space would be, in the example used, *that which this hand takes up*. However, since there is no difference in the relations of the parts to each other, whether right hand or left, the hand would be completely indeterminate with respect to such a quality, that is, it would fit on either side of the human body. But this is impossible. (Kant, *Regions in Space*, in *Selected Precritical Writings*, 42-3)

So Kant's point is that the conceptual determination of the, the hand, in this case, as a set of relations between parts, is not sufficient to determine whether the hand is a left hand or a right hand. In both cases, the relations are identical, and so, conceptually, the hands are also identical. The fact that hands are left or right handed therefore means that there must be an 'internal difference' that falls outside of the representational paradigm. They are, in mathematical terms, enantiomorphic.

We can make this point clearer by noting that the property of handedness is intimately related to the nature of the space in which the object is placed. If, instead of a hand, we took the example of a scalene triangle on a two dimensional plane, it should be clear that it cannot be rotated so as to cover its mirror image. If we consider the same triangle in a three dimensional space, however, it should be clear that we could 'flip the triangle over', thus making it congruous with its mirror image. The dimensionality of space therefore determines whether the counterparts are congruous or incongruent, meaning that handedness is a property of space, and not purely conceptual relations. For this reason, Kant rejected his earlier Leibnizian interpretation of space in favour of a Newtonian conception.



A Scalene Triangle: all sides and angles are unequal (taken from Wikimedia)

Kant's Later Use of this Argument

In Kant's later critical philosophy, space is seen as transcendently ideal, but empirically real. That is, while statements we may make about space may be valid, their validity stems from the fact that we condition experience, rather than because space itself is absolute. Kant's system, and its claims to be able to give us *a priori* knowledge of the world, relies on distinguishing two faculties which operate on the world: the understanding, which is representational, and intuition, which is passive, and presentational. The incongruent counterparts argument lays the groundwork for this distinction

by showing that space cannot be understood in representational terms. Space is an intuition, or a mode of sensibility, by which we apprehend the world. In the transcendental aesthetic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant makes two claims about intuition: that it is *a priori*, and that it is non-conceptual. We can see how these two claims fit in with Kant's argument. In this sense, space is *a priori* to the extent that presupposed by our knowledge of spatial objects, rather than emerging as a result of them. Furthermore, space is an intuition to the extent that it differs in kind from conceptual knowledge. The incongruent counterparts argument shows this clearly, and Kant reiterates the point by noting that whereas spaces with a smaller extension exist within larger spaces, concepts with a smaller extension fall under concepts of which they are a specification in the form of a hierarchy. So while the conclusion Kant draws from the incongruent counterparts argument changes between the pre-critical and the critical period, the argument itself, and the claim for a mode of difference which is not a part of representation, remains.

Forms of Difference

There are (at least) three different conceptions of difference that we have dealt with today, and it might be worth recapping them briefly.

First, there is conceptual difference. This is the kind of difference that can be represented. There is a conceptual difference between a man and a horse in that their concepts have different comprehensions. While rationality may be a key attribute to man, it is clearly not a key attribute of horses. They also have different extensions, in that the classes of entities to which they refer do not overlap. This will be the principal topic that we will be addressing in the next few weeks in relation to Aristotle and Porphyry.

Second, we can see that in actual fact there are differences in the world that cannot be captured by our conceptual understanding: 'no two grains of dust are absolutely identical, no two hands have the same distinctive points, no two revolvers score their bullets in the same manner.' (DR 29) It is the difference of the incongruent counterparts themselves. As such it is a difference which is essentially relational: we tell the difference between the left hand and the right by comparison.

There is a third kind of difference, however, which Kant hints at which is not relational, and that is the difference which gives rise to the incongruent counterpart. Kant hints at this difference in the early *Regions in Space* essay:

It is already clear from the everyday example of the two hands that the figure of a body can be completely similar to that of another, and that the size of the extension can be, in both, exactly the same; and that yet, an internal difference remains: namely, that the surface that includes the one could not possibly include the other...this difference must, therefore, be such as rests on an inner principle. (*Regions in Space*, 42)

The inner principle which allows internal difference to emerge in the case of Kant's thought is the nature of space itself, and this remains the same whether space is taken to be absolute, as in Kant's early writings, or transcendental, as we find in his critical writings. Deleuze's claim will be that this is the fundamental limitation of the Kantian project:

In the case of enantiomorphic bodies, Kant recognised precisely an *internal difference*. However, since it was not a conceptual difference, on his view it could refer only to an *external relation* with extensity as a whole in the form of extensive magnitude. In fact, the paradox of symmetrical objects, like everything concerning right and left, high and low, figure and ground, has an intensive source. (DR 290-1)

Kant takes the source of non-conceptual difference to be space itself. As his fundamental project is to show how synthetic *a priori* propositions are possible, he doesn't need to go any further and analyse the reason why space has this property, but merely need to note that space is non-conceptual. This allows him to claim that such propositions are possible due to the understanding's operations on intuition. Deleuze will instead want to provide a transcendental account of the operation of this principle of difference which explains why cases such as left and right handedness appear in the first place. It will in other words be an account of the genesis of the kind of spatiality which Kant takes as his starting point.

Concept and Idea

This brings us to the final distinction. As we saw, Leibniz provided an account of the origins of space. This account took spatiality to be generated by certain confusions present in the monad's perception of the world. Whilst the concept of each monad contained a complete account of the world. The monad could only perceive this account confusedly, and so it was forced to present the order of things in spatial terms. Space was thus a 'well-founded phenomenon', in that it represented the concept, albeit in an inadequate way. We can therefore see Leibniz as providing a genetic account of the actual world of phenomena, showing how the concept expresses itself in spatial terms. Kant rejected such an account on the basis of the fact that the object exceeded representation, or in other words was not fully determined by the concept. In other words, Leibniz attempts to provide an account of the genesis of the well founded phenomenon of space, but this account finally fails, as it is unable to account for certain spatial properties such as handedness. Kant's solution is therefore to reject both the notion that space is conceptual, and the notion that one can provide a genetic account of the origin of spatiality.

Deleuze's approach will essentially be to take the middle course between these two possibilities. On the one hand, he will with Kant reject the notion that space emerges as the result of the unfolding of conceptual determinations. He will accept with Leibniz that we need an account of the genesis of space. Rather than space unfolding from a representational principle or concept, therefore, Deleuze will argue that it unfolds from a radically non-conceptual principle, which he calls an Idea. As we shall see next week, while a concept is grounded in representation and identity, the Idea will be a principle of difference.

Conclusion

The relationship between Leibniz and Kant sets out the project of *Difference and Repetition* well. Normally when we look at difference, we have two choices. Either we see it as conceptual difference, as in the case of Leibniz, in which case we have not really understood what difference is. Or we take Kant's path, and recognise difference as non-conceptual, but that then leads to the end of our enquiry as we lack the (conceptual) tools to do justice to it. Deleuze's project is therefore going to be to introduce an account of difference which neither sees it as conceptual, nor sees its

non-conceptuality as the end of our enquiry. Deleuze aims to go beyond these two approaches by developing a whole new conceptual framework within which to explore the nature of difference.