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TEMPS PERDU? ON TRANSIENCE¹

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Abstract: *It seems as if duration were still a “first-rate value on earth” (Nietzsche), whereas its eternal supplement – transience – tends to be negated. Eluding its re-presentation(ability), ephemera are only thought in relation to and/or as being-opposed to permanence. Yet, it is precisely transience that renders duration possible: Transitions being the only state(s) existing, duration is a mere instant of transience.*

Thus, the aim here is to (de)void transience of duration, that is, to liberate it from any reductionist relationality imposing a consistency external to it. To think it as such: to think it as transiencences, to think them as and for themselves; neither as derived from, nor as pro-genitor of (duration). To think transiencences as such rather than as such is to relate them to their becoming-different, for they are relating difference to differences– every transience is different, each time different; already –always– dis-placed, they are always somewhere else, never (t)here. Given this pre-supposed distance, they are (only) when they are not. Transiencences are always – already – untimely, already – always– beyond (themselves).

To de-scribe transiencences without a-scribing them to permanence is to weakly transcribe it: TRANSiencence ; par transiAnce ; pour transiEncences

O. Ephemera

This will be about ephemera: this will be about the trans/iencence.

It commences, therefore, with impossible possibilities, or, to say it with Derrida (2003), with a certain impossible possibility of saying these events. The event *is* not, and this is why it is to be *invented*. Once it is made (up), it is no longer. The speaking of the event misses the (singularity of the) event (ibidem, 21); the event, when thus named, [is] always named after-, it cannot be fore-told (ibidem, 47²).

It is too late to say these events, always already too late.

For these intangible events cannot be recognized, for these transient events elude their re-presentation(ability), they are only thought in relation to and/or as negation of permanence, are eternal supplements of this “first-rate value on earth” (Nietzsche 1974, 302/§356).

Negation here means: The sub-ordination of the transient to the enduring.

As they cannot be re-presented, they have to be tamed and subjected to the Deleuzian *four iron collars of representation* (Deleuze 2004, 330)³, to the “fourfold root of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance” (ibidem, 38) that is. They are given (and, at the same time, withdrawn) an identity by relating them to their supposed opponent, are always thought in relation to– (duration), are never thought *as such*.

Thus, the aim here is to (de)void transience of (the concept of) duration, that is, to liberate it from any reductionist relationality and conceptual infractions imposing a consistency external to it. To think it as such: to think it as transiencences, to think them as and for themselves; neither as derived from, nor as pro-genitor of (duration). How, then, to re-pli-cate these replications, how to free transiencences from those mediations? How to think them as themselves, to think them as the immediate?

To begin with, it is transience that renders duration possible: Transitions being the only state(s) existing, duration is a mere instant of transience.

¹ This article builds upon parts of my dissertation and forthcoming book *Transience. A poiesis, of dis/appearance*, (Dresden/New York: Atropos Press 2010).

² For the event [is] only when not predicted as such.

³ Namely “identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgement and resemblance in perception.”

For being an instant of transience, durations are only to be apprehended through transiencies – only with, in transience they [are]. Durations do not endure (their be-coming transient); rather, they are snapshots of mo/ve/ments, ephemeral exceptions – event-ual they are, as it is one possible trait of the event to be except-ional (see also Derrida 2003, 50).

Durations are transient, durations are [actualized] transiencies, and this is why there *is* no duration (or everything is duration). There is neither a before nor is there an after; for – as Bergson states – “duration properly so called has no moments which are identical or external to one another, being essentially heterogeneous, continuous, and with no analogy to number.” (2005a, 68).

All there [is] is transience, and this *transience* [is] always already a *passage*, a passage in transit – this passing, according to Bergson, “not presupposing states through which we pass; the *thing* and the *state* are only artificially taken snapshots of the transition; and this transition, all that is naturally experienced, is duration itself.” (2005b, 205).

And (this) duration is transience, or it is nothing; this transitive duration can only be experienced by a constant ex-posure towards the transient. Yet, as both transience/s and duration/s are ephemera/l, there are no op-positions either. The trans is the tertium (datur!), the trans is the beyond, pre-supposing both duration and transience. The and *and* the or.

Being fugitive singularities, transiencies do present themselves *only once*, do not re-present themselves, never. And it is precisely this *only once* (= *only one time*: Derrida 2005, 1) that has led to the invention of duration, of permanence, of the coordinates B(efore) and A(fter).

Trans()ire: to cross over; a Heideggerian *Überstieg* which nominates a relation, a crossing over *from* something *to* something (1995, 17)⁴. Yet there is neither a *from* nor is there a *to*. All that there is [is], all that there is *is* a halfway; the only state that there [is] are processes, between.

Every trans.iency is different, each time different; already –always– dis-placed, they are always somewhere else, never (t)here. Given this pre-supposed distance, they are (only) when they are not. Transiencies are always – already – untimely, already – always– deferred: always already beyond time. An always-absent present, (a) being out of time: we are always already too late to say these events.

I. Transience

Transience, transience seen as such and only as such, [is] always already *beyond* (itself). The beyond *is* trans, the beyond *is* trans.ire, constant de-formations, twistings; (in-)betweens. The transient *trans*: an *and* which allows for (its) un.trans.latability, for a *be/tween*.

To think transiencies as such and only as *such* is to think them as open-ly (auto)poietic, as impermanent dis/appearances, as non-relational *transits*; their poiesis consists both of a disclosure and an opening. The trans is the *and*, the trans_ire al-locates the passage without end, and without beginning, with,in a between, always; the only third is (the) beyond. The linear *novum* gives way to its de-formation and, therefore, eludes its re-territorialization, every time a-new. The *trans*: not to be thought as the beyond *of* something, but *as* beyond. Unlike the *post*-, it does not de.sign.ate a temporal hierarchy, it does neither de-sign an *after* nor does it de-fine a *before*, but [is] a transient and always-moving beyond; the third as the ephemeral resists its di/vision, [is] different, always already.

How, then, to handle the once, the only once?

It is to be *circum-scribed* (see Derrida 2005, 1, and also Nancy 2000, 78⁵) –

⁴ “Transzend[en]t[...] ist, was den Überstieg vollzieht, im Übersteigen verweilt[...]Formal läßt sich der Überstieg als eine ‘Beziehung’ fassen, sie sich ‘von’ etwas ‘zu’ etwas hinzieht. Zum Überstieg gehört dann solches, woraufzu der Überstieg erfolgt, was unzutreffend meist das ‘Transzendente’ genannt ist.”

⁵ “Within the discourse about alterity, a general mode of *trans*– (transport, transaction, transcription, transfer, transmission, transformation, transparency, transubstantiation, transcendence) continually runs alongside the mode of *cum*–, but it will never be able to to eclipse it or replace it.”

To *de-scribe* the trans without
a-scribing it to its
pre-scription is to weakly
 transcribe it.

1.1 Transport

Evidently, this weak transcription refers to Rovatti's and Vattimo's *pensiero debole*, a weak thinking – as a *between*, a transition (Rovatti 75), a weak slogan (Rovatti/Vattimo 16) rather than a(nother) violent and emblematic seal of a(nother) new philosophy.

Thus, what is performed by means of this weak thinking is a *Verwindung* (in accordance with Vattimo's re-appropriation of this Heideggerian term; see, for example, Vattimo 233-246): a term introduced by Heidegger, who coined the same as a concept somewhat similar to the term “overcoming” (*Überwindung*), but which does not have this meaning of a dialectical sublation. Rather, it designates both a convalescence and a distortion, a twisting (ibidem, 240).

Transiences [are] *transits*; consequently, the radical *Überstieg* (*Überwindung*) is to be replaced by a weak, *transient transport*, an *Übergang*⁶, a *transitive Verwindung*.

After all, we are facing a *contradictio in adiecto* here – without any evidence, it seems evident that *any* attempt to develop a theory of transience/s is condemned to fail: To think (about) transiences is an always already impossible *translation*, for they cannot be thought (of).

How, then, to think the unthinkable, how to de-scribe ephemera without ascribing them to permanence, without detaining them? How to handle the how? How to deal with the *only once*, with the – each time – *unique*?

Evidently, any *move* towards the transient has to move beyond (itself). As both the monadic and Cartesian Gods have been buried⁷, there is neither a *to* we could yield to nor is there an *or*. What remains are finite beyonds, non-synthetical *ands*. It is the mo(ve)ment that counts, the inter-state, the *tertium*. Any “theory” of transience/s has to be transient itself; a theory which no longer seeks to preserve, but that has the courage to abandon itself. Without a final destination, without a foundation, they are nothing but weak de-formations. The only adequate de-scription of transience/s, then, might be that of a circum-cisive transcription. *Circum* (lat. around) and *caedere* (lat. to cut); a cutting around. Or, as Derrida (2005, 63) puts it: “There must be circumcision, circumcision of the word, writing, and it must take place once, precisely, each time one time, the unique time.”

Each narration, each inscription is a cut, a wound; by a-scribing it to an assumed generality it violates the *only once*. To think, to write, to name transience/s is always already a violation. For it cannot be thought, written, named.

And this is why it has to be named. For, and here Deleuze (2004, 145) is right, there must be an “agent” that ensures communication between these different transiences, there must be a “differentiator of these differences” (ibidem, 146). This first, always already differentiated unity is, of course, difference/s; to think transiences as *such* rather than *as such* is to relate them to their becoming, to the(ir being) different, for they are relating difference to differences, [are] differentiating themselves, always already – following Derrida, this different differentiator will be named *transiAnce*:

TRANSience
par transiAnce
pour transiEnces, as Heidegger's (2000, 5) „*l'engagement par l'Être pour l'Être*“.

And vice versa. They are different and, therefore, irreplaceable.

⁶ *Übergang*: passage, transition.

⁷ And with them, all Cartesian coordinates (including the „from“ and the „to“)

II. transiAnce

And so differences will be related to (their) differences: transience is différent is transiAnt. This transiAnce [is] to de-sign.ate those singular and eventual transiencences with/in the transient, as it [is] to de-sign.ate these very singularities and eventualities that [are] always already (transient).

In this beginning (and there [are] only beginnings) there [is], then, an *A*, a Derridean *A*: an *Autre*. In order to think transiencences, in order to write them, an Other is to be imagined, and this Other has to be Other to itself. Other than that, the Other – that which cannot be spoken of – must remain silent. To speak transience is to speak it differently. And this difference is to be in-scribed in, to its very name, for transience “is a signifier without a signified, hence the difficulty in naming it.” (Barthes 61)⁸

Yet, and as Derrida (2004, 146) affirms, the idea of the letter *a* is neither a “first definition” nor a “prophetic announcement” of a forth-coming and yet unheard naming. Transiencences cannot be seen nor can they be heard; invisible, inaudible, intangible, they [are] only when they are not. For they do not only *make* a difference, but [*are*] themselves such difference. These differences, as the one between *a* and *e*, remain purely graphic (see *ibidem*, 111); they are not to be apprehended. We need, therefore, a different difference, a mode of speaking without being heard.

For transiAnce must not be confirmed, never, must not be proven in order to exist.

The only way to think transiencences is to think them differently, always from scratch, for they are never the same, for they cannot be co-llated with each Other. They are *A* and they are *E*, always already relating their own differences to each Other: *their* Other. Situated beyond the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible (*ibidem*, 114) and – above all – beyond the opposition duration: transience, transiAnce [is] both (its) fracture and (its) co-relation; it [is] its own *trans*, its own *Übergang*. It cannot be spoken (of), it can only be read. It is its own dissolution, disseminating its namings, appropriating them and disposing of them. It must not be named; it must be named. One cannot name transiencences without naming them, naming them as such: (as be/com/ing) transiAnt.

TransiAnce, [being] the trans.port from one different transience to an_Other, different transience, [is] itself a transient transiAnce of itself, just as transiencences are themselves transiAnt transiencences to, of each other. And it is only through transient differences, through always-different transiencences that they can be communicated and, therefore, conceived. It is only with/in their becoming-different, within their becoming-transient that they can be named. TransiAnce, [being] difference (in) itself, differs in its difference, and it differs from its difference. [Being] itself such transient transiAnce, relating differents to anOther, transiAnce might be the only way to conceive of transiencences. TransiAnce [is] itself: transiAnce is transient is transiAnt.

TransiAnce hence differs from itself differs from within differs from an outside is always an outside. Is an outside with,in.

An *Autre*: An Else(where) –

TransiAnce is neither original nor copy; its origin is always already re-pli-cated, and these re-pli-cations are always already origin-al.

Transiencences, then, *require* transiAnce in order to [be] perceived; transiAnce allows for their communicability, at least in the sense that they cannot be communicated. But transiAnce is not *before* them (*ibidem*, 123); it is part of these very transiencences, traces [itself] back to them, always.

TransiAnce does not origin/ate transience/s; rather, transience/s are its “raison” d’être.

TransiAnce is nothing (but a simulacrum; see Deleuze 156⁹). If perceived as such, the binary logics of model:copy is dissolved; the transient relates to transiencences through transiAnce, just as the “different relates to

⁸ As Barthes states for the *obtuse* meaning.

⁹ For him, simulacra may “provide the means of challenging *both* the notion of the copy and that of the model[...] Simulacra function by themselves, passing and repassing the decentred centres of the eternal return. [...] However, in the infinite movement of degraded likeness from copy to copy, we reach a point at which everything changes nature, at which

different through difference itself” (ibidem, 347). None is privileged over the other, “none possesses the identity of a model, none the resemblance of a copy. None is either opposed or analogous to another. Each is constituted by differences, and communicates with the others through differences of differences.” (ibidem, 348)

[Being] beyond, always beyond, becoming each time singular (plural) (Nancy 2000, 3), each time passing, transiencies cannot be re-presented, but only *differentiated* by means of (their) transiAence. [Being] both condition and sublation of transiencies, transiAence does not origin/ate them but subverts them. In order to be [present], it has to pass, the very *concept* of being *being* distorted by it.

As transience/s, transiAence *is* not. Its presence opens in, to its absence; it [is] by its absence, and it is only through its absence that its existence [is] confirmed. And here to exist “is no longer ‘to be’ (for itself, in itself), to already-no-longer-be and to not-yet-be, or even to-be-in-debt-to-being. To exist is a matter of going into exile.” (ibidem, 78) Therefore, and as Derrida (2004, 138) states for *différance*, it is the thought of transiAence which questions the determination of being as presence. And as his *différance*, transiAence is not (a present being). Because it is not, it is the *condition* of and for being without being *a(s) such* – there is no transience “as such”. Neither presence nor sign, it cannot be re-presented and it cannot be as-sign-ed. There is of course no *esse-ence* of transiAence; as *différance* it [is] that which can not be appropriated in the *as such* of its name or its appearing, it [is] that which threatens the authority of the *as such*, of the presence of the thing itself in its essence (ibidem, 145).

TransiAence is with-in, and it is with-out. It de-sign-ates “originary” transiencies, but remains within the same, a same that is not identical, but that [is] a displaced and equivocal passage of one different transience to another (ibidem, 132f.). [Being] “older” than the transient, transiAence, as *différance*, has no name in our language, because there is no name for it at all, not even that of transiAence, which is no name, no entity (ibidem, 145).

Without being a word, without having a name and without becoming a concept, be(com)ing always already something *différant*, transiAence may be able to think the unthinkable, that is, to think the most *irreducible* of our era (ibidem, 116): transience/s.

III. On differences

As difference (see Deleuze 38) , transiencies are monsters: Transiencies are (the) uncanny. Alter-ities they [are].

[Being] (the) uncanny, they evade any familiarity whatsoever; they remain alien(ated) to themselves (see also Weber 273¹⁰). Different to themselves, different for themselves, these differences shall remain inexplicable, as explicating them is to negate them at the same time – that is, any endeavour to identify them *as such* is to negate their constitutive inequality (Deleuze 287), as “the law of explication remains the cancellation of productive difference and the erasure of the differentiation produced which is manifest in physical equilibrium as well as in biological death.” (ibidem, 318). Transience/s [are] different, always relate to difference, [are] their own differences, are made out of different instances, each of them different in itself, each of them eluding their sublation.

Becoming singular(ly) plural (Nancy), transiencies do not possess a pre-supposed identity, nor do they relate to their lower-cased other – duration, that is. As difference, transiencies are to be related differently.

It is not only difference/s that are internal to transiencies; these transiencies are internalized by differences all the *same*. With/in differences there [are] transiencies; differences [are] transient.

As transiencies, differences are finitudes. Therefore, they require a finite thinking, a thinking of finitude as such – an *absolute finitude*, “absolutely detached from all infinite and senseless completion or achievement.

copies themselves flip over into simulacra and at which, finally, resemblance or spiritual imitation gives way to repetition.”

¹⁰ For Weber, the uncanny “demonstrates how and why the space of a certain familiarity is permeated by the alterity from which it seeks to set itself off”.

Not a thinking of limitation, which implies the unlimitedness of a beyond, but a thinking of the limit as that on which, infinitely finite, existence arises, and to which it is exposed.” (Nancy 2003, 27).

An unlit limit, but a limit, and not a limit that opens into infinity:

Finitude [is] not in.finitude. It is with,in (the idea of) finitude that differences un- and re-fold: Transiencies are in_differences. As differences, transiencies introduce a new type of distinction between themselves; these transient differences, different transiencies “are in a sense separated: instead of coexisting, they enter states of simultaneity or succession.” (Deleuze 314)

They un- and re-fold simultaneously, but are absolutely divergent (ibidem, 150); they are successive only insofar, as one different transiency comes prior to another, but with,in their (co-)existent divergence the one before does not come *before* (the after). Neither can be privileged, for neither re-produces or serves as a model for the other. There are no resemblances.

And here we have come full circle, as it is always a coming-into-(a circle)– transiencies are monsters, for monsters do not resemble each other, for monsters are monsters because they turn up unexpectedly, *each time one time, the unique time* (Derrida 2005, 63). Never present, never here, they are only there with,in the out-there: and “[t]here is the possibility of there-is, in such out-there” (Groves 192).

And *only* in such out-there.

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