

Disrupting Exchange: *Thinking and understanding unicity in light of overcoming of the particular/universalism dualism as proposed in Deleuze's Difference and Repetition*

Thesis for obtaining a “Master of arts” degree in philosophy
Radboud University Nijmegen

Frank Kruijsbeek

s4373227

Supervisors: Prof. dr. Gert-Jan van der Heiden and Dr. Arjen Kleinherenbrink

08-06-2020

Abstract

In this paper I engage the problem of thinking individual things insofar as they are unique, uncommon, and unlike others. Specifically, I explore the theme of unicity by analyzing the implications of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's call to overcome the particular/universal distinction. I highlight how a concern for unicity qua discontinuous non-commonality presents a fundamentally different problem for thought than the particular/universal dualism can respond to. In that light, I show how Deleuze's call against this dualism can be read as providing an alternative model for thinking unicity. By opposing a focus on non-exchangeability of individuals in this model to a focus on exchangeability in the particular/universal dualism, I show that Deleuze's main contribution to addressing the problem of unicity does not require intensive engagement with his entire philosophical framework. Rather, its strength lies in a minimal interpretation wherein non-exchangeability of individuals demands that they be thought in their singular uniqueness and non-commonality.

KEY WORDS: UNICITY, SINGULARITY, DELEUZE, PARTICULARS, UNIVERSALS

Disrupting Exchange: Thinking and understanding unicity in light of overcoming of the particular/universalism dualism as proposed in Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*

What does it entail to think and understand that an individual entity is unique? Does it mean that we grasp how it is an individual within a type, class, or group? For instance, when we say that each human is unique while still part of the human kind. Or is the focus on overarching categories counter-productive when we try to think unicity?

In what follows, I examine this question by relating it to the notions of singularity and what can be called discontinuous unicity. The problematic rapport between thought, singularity and discontinuous unicity is of decisive relevance today. For instance, various researchers in the technological sciences and philosophy entertain the idea that technological advances are heading toward developing a technological superintelligence,¹ so singularly different from any we presently

¹ Their various, and often divergent, views are only roughly collected in the *Singularity Hypothesis*. Cf. Gregory S. Paul & Earl D. Cox *Beyond humanity: cyberrevolution and future minds* (Rockland MA: Charles River Media, 1996);

know that it will mean “a *discontinuity* or a turning-point in human history.”² Some researchers focus on whether there remains a chance of predictability, and therefore adaptability, in light of this fundamental discontinuity, or uniqueness.³ In other words, this *Singularity Hypothesis* poses the fundamental question of whether we can meaningfully think and understand people, objects and events that are truly unique. We can at least tentatively distinguish such ‘discontinuous unicity’ from the ‘unicity’ of new iterations of already known things like the yearly return of a flu.

In philosophy, singularity has a long history as the principle which accounts for unicity.⁴ More recently, it has been suggested that singularity, as “that which refuses any commonality,” has become a central theme in our times because of the supposed death of grand narratives.⁵ The decline of such overarching and generalizing worldviews can be said to have fostered in many people the idea that they themselves, their experiences, as well as the things and people around them are not merely exchangeable members of some larger abstract group or category. With it, the general certainties these systems claimed to provide are also questioned as the focus shifts to analyzing how supposedly *unique* positions, identities, events, and so on challenge generalizing systematization. All these trends can be understood to express a growing sensibility to singularity and discontinuous unicity as limits to certain knowledge.

The challenge expressed therein relates to a problem as old as Western philosophy itself: How do we think and understand unique individual things, people, events, which, by their singular nature, fundamentally defy, rather than conform to, the general categories by which we make sense of reality? Worth noting is that, through the “renewed interest in first philosophy or ontology” this

Ray Kurzweil *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (New York: Viking, 2005); David Chalmers, “The singularity: a philosophical analysis”, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17 (2010): 7-65; Marcus Hutter, “Can intelligence explode?”, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 19 (1-2) (2012): 143-166;

² Amnon H. Eden, Eric Steinhart, David Pearce, and James H. Moor, “Singularity Hypotheses: An Overview,” in *Singularity Hypotheses: A Scientific and Philosophical Assessment* ed. Amnon H. Eden, James H. Moor, Johnny H. Søraker, and Eric Steinhart (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin, 2012), 5.

³ Luke Muehlhauser and Anna Salamon, “Intelligence Explosion: Evidence and Import,” in *Singularity Hypotheses: A Scientific and Philosophical Assessment* ed. Amnon H. Eden, James H. Moor, Johnny H. Søraker, and Eric Steinhart (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin, 2012), 15; Stuart Armstrong, “Introduction to the Technological Singularity,” in *The Technological Singularity: Managing the Journey* ed. Victor Callaghan, et al. (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin, 2019), 5.

⁴ Andrew LaZella, for instance, has recently drawn this connection all the way back to the medieval scholastic Duns Scotus and his use of the notion *haecceitas*, or *thisness*. Cf. Andrew LaZella, *The Singular Voice of Being: John Duns Scotus and Ultimate Difference* (Fordham University, 2019), 150.

⁵ Adina Bozga, *The Exasperating Gift of Singularity: Husserl, Levinas, Henry* (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2009), 15.

type of question is once again central to various debates in contemporary (continental) philosophy.⁶⁷

I approach the problem of discontinuous unicity by confronting the conceptual distinction between particulars and universals with French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's claim that the task of modern philosophy is to "overcome" this very distinction (among other things).⁸ The particular/universal dualism articulates a relation between different individuals whereby universals are understood to have instances.⁹ The two individual trees I encounter in the yard are, despite individual differences and particularities, both instantiations of the universal *Tree*, understood as a (conceptual) kind. Traditionally, this dualism marks a wide range of metaphysical and epistemological debates on the relation between individual entities and the way we define and know them. For this reason, the question of unicity is rephrased: how and why would properly understanding unique individuals require Deleuze's proposed overcoming of the particular/universal dualism?

Deleuze's alternatives to this conceptual pair have received attention elsewhere; for example in Manuel De Landa's work on the relationship between realist metaphysics and so-called *individual* and *universal singularities* in Deleuze.¹⁰ Taking a realist metaphysical commitment in Deleuze for granted, however, De Landa's treatment does not focus on the practical epistemological problem in the question of unicity that prompts Deleuze to develop an alternative to the particular/universal dualism. In turn, I suggest that for the sake of a wider consideration of individuality and unicity it is just as necessary to understand why Deleuze aims to move beyond the dualism in the first place as it is to know how he does it. This not in the least because the precise nature and ontological status of his alternatives remain open to debate.¹¹

⁶ Gert-Jan van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology: Plurality, Event, and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2014), 1.

⁷ Graham Harman, for instance, insightfully highlights the power in questions on individuality to differentiate in contemporary philosophical views, even among generally sympathetic positions. Cf. Graham Harman, "On the Undermining of Objects: Grant, Bruno, and Radical Philosophy," in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 22-24; Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: Pelican Books, 2018), 257.

⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xxi. All further references by way of in-text citations (DR).

⁹ Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics 3rd edition* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 30.

¹⁰ Cf. Manuel De Landa, "Materialist Metaphysics," chap. 6 in *Deleuze: History and Science* (Dresden, New York: Atropos Press, 2010).

¹¹ In fact, they are simply part of a much more general discussion within the Deleuze scholarship on what Deleuze's ontology is, and even whether it actually exists in his work. This is a debate far beyond the scope of our present

I therefore focus on this first task. I begin by reconstructing how, dating back to Aristotle, a logic of exchangeability of particulars as instances within universal, general categories fails to respond to a key problem of thinking individuals in their unicity. I then show how the charge against this dualism in Deleuze's 1968 work *Difference and Repetition* can be understood as a pragmatic recognition of this failure. I do so by placing the problem of unicity in relation to Deleuze's wider criticism of generality and exchangeability in the so-called dogmatic image of thought in western philosophy.¹² A recurring notion in his work,¹³ this image of thought is described as a "more or less implicit, tacit or presupposed" conception of what thought and thinking are and can do in relation to reality and the things within it (DR, xvi).¹⁴ Finally, I question how Deleuze's critique, and subsequent turn to singularity aids in understanding unicity in individuals beyond the categories of particularity and universality. In doing this, I show that Deleuze's primary contribution to thinking unicity lies in a model for thought that disrupts exchangeability, rather than depend on it, whereby the individual unicity of any element in a given situation is necessarily considered insofar as it is (still) uncommon, unlike, and different from any other.

Particulars and Universals, and unique Individuals

Deleuze's suggestion to overcome the particular/universal dualism puts its use as an epistemological tool into question. Yet, what is this use in the first place? To find an answer, a more prior question must be posed. The ways in which tools of any kind are shaped, formed or

purposes, which is why I chose to focus on the epistemological problem I believe Deleuze is responding to in relation to the particular/universal dualism, rather than on the ontological implications of his alternatives. For an insightful overview of the types of clashing interpretations on ontology in Deleuze: Cf. Arjen Kleinherenbrink, *Against Continuity: Gilles Deleuze's Speculative Realism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 8, 23-30.

¹² I focus on *Difference and Repetition* because the present purposes are relatively limited to Deleuze's attitude toward the overcoming of the universal/particular dualism with which modern philosophy is tasked in this particular work. It is, again, not my intention here to pose a systematic assertion on the whole of Deleuze's thought.

¹³ Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 1983), 103; Gilles Deleuze, *Proust & Signs* trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 94; Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 376; Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 37.

¹⁴ Often citing Deleuze's own comments on the necessity of his treatment of the dogmatic image of thought to his subsequent work, scholars recognize this notion as a cornerstone of his philosophy. Especially concise and elucidating examples include: Jonathan Dronsfield, "Deleuze and the Image of Thought," *Philosophy Today* 56, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 404; Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 17; Gregg Lambert, *In Search of A New Image of Thought: Gilles Deleuze and Philosophical Expressionism* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), x.

designed reflect, to some degree at least, certain practical realities of the intended use. The shape of a shovel is supposed to aid me in digging a hole in the ground. As such, it aims to solve several practical problems one usually runs into when digging in the ground; one being, for instance, that doing it by hand can simply be too much work or inefficient. Therefore, when Deleuze questions the use of the particular/universal dualism, we must also ask to what practical problem this usage responds. It is impossible to collect the entire history of answers, but it is crucial to gain at least some general sense of it.

As said, the alternatives articulate a relation between individual entities and the way we conceptualize, define, and know them. We may correctly speak of the two individual particularly-branched objects in the yard as trees if we hold that trees universally have branches, and universals deal with what, as Aristotle puts it, “belongs to all or none” of things.¹⁵ As such, the distinction between universality and particularity is made precisely to explain that different individuals still instantiate some (conceptual) identity.¹⁶ Given that there are things which differ, and given that we want to know them and how they differ, the particular/universal dualism thus answers to one precise question. Namely: how can one thing be related to other things by way of a commonality? For instance, let us take *Parmenides*, *Socrates*, and *Plato*. Despite their differences, they all also carry a shared universal name like *Human*, or *Classical Greek Philosopher*, in addition to their particular names. How can Parmenides, Socrates, and Plato as actual individuals be justifiably subsumed into some overarching (conceptual) identity, like *Human*?

Ultimately, whatever is unique stands in some relation to what it differs from. Thinking unicity must account for this relation of difference. If the particular/universal distinction is a way of doing so, it thus reaches an account by placing individuals in a relationship of particularity to a universal. Parmenides, Plato, and Socrates can be counted as “unique” individuals because, while they have their being human in common, they are particular in how they differ. Conversely, although their ages, their places of birth, and their biographies all differ, a commonality between them also allows for the establishment of general rules. In general, we can say that humans have an age, a place of birth, and a biography, though these facts may differ between particular

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, I.1 24^a15-20. All English translations of Aristotle’s texts are from *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

¹⁶ Cynthia Macdonald, *Variety of Things: Foundations of Contemporary Metaphysics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 219.

instantiations, or members, of the universal kind *Human*. In this way, commonality and generality become the regulative factor in those relations of difference between individuals.

There is a commonality between Parmenides, Plato, and Socrates, or between different apples in the fruit aisle, or between various technological innovations over the course of centuries; such commonality allows us to think of one case as different from the other. I relate Parmenides with all his distinct characteristics or properties to Plato and discover, for instance, that, while their particular ages may differ, both share in having an age. In other words: both substantiate the same general rule, or general characteristic of the kind they belong to, despite differences between them. This helps me recognize individual A as enough like individual B in relation to a shared kind C that, in many or the most important respects, I might as well be dealing with B when I am, in fact, dealing with A in all its “unique” particularity. The formal relationship between particulars and universals articulate this gesture epistemologically. It is in this sense that Deleuze writes that “exchange or substitution of particulars defines our conduct in relation to generality” (DR, 1).

Particulars, Universals and Essential Knowledge: a fundamental problem in Aristotle

This formal relationship of exchange and substitution, however, brings us to a difficulty already reflected in Aristotle’s ideas on the relation between knowledge, particulars, and universals, which are said to constitute a “fundamental problem” in his metaphysics.¹⁷ The degree to which this relationship limits what might be called the modality of unicity shows that this problem is actually more fundamental than usually assumed. As such, reconstructing the way Aristotle deals with it can be instructive, especially to contrast him with Deleuze later on.¹⁸

At its core, this problem involves the intrinsic linkage between explanatory knowledge and universality, articulated in the *Posterior Analytics* and *Metaphysics*.¹⁹ In Aristotle’s realist philosophy, the world consists only of concrete, individual objects (substances, or *ousia*). Yet,

¹⁷ Robert Heinaman, “Knowledge of Substance in Aristotle,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 101 (1981): 63.

¹⁸ This itself is interesting from a scholarly point of view because of the curious fact that Aristotle is only rarely treated as a substantial conversation partner for Deleuze in ways that go beyond merely reiterating what Deleuze says on Aristotle. Abraham Jacob Greenstine’s comparison of Aristotle and Deleuze (and Parmenides) on the meaning of ontology is a rare example of where this does happen, in addition to De Landa’s aforementioned work. Cf. Abraham Jacob Greenstine, “Diverging Ways: On the Trajectories of Ontology in Parmenides, Aristotle, and Deleuze,” in *Contemporary Encounters with Ancient Metaphysics* ed. Abraham Jacob Greenstine and Ryan J. Johnson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); De Landa, *Deleuze: History and Science*, 82.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I.8 75^b20-30; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.1 981^a28-30, 981^b9.

knowledge, for Aristotle, deals with universals, which are not substances.²⁰ Why does he maintain this? In his *Metaphysics*, he writes:

We think that *knowledge* and *understanding* belong to art rather than to experience, and we suppose artists to be wiser than men of experience [...] and this because the former know the cause, but the latter do not. For men of experience know that the thing is so, but do not know why, while the others know the ‘why’ and the cause (*Met* I.1. 981^a23-29).

Aristotle is claiming that philosophical understanding comes only “when from many notions gained by experience one universal judgment about similar objects is produced.”²¹ Merely sensing that this particular fire is hot or knowing from experience that fire is generally hot is not enough; we must be able to judge why it is so and that it is always so because of this reason. Required is inquiry into the universal, or essential,²² characteristics of fire by which all individual fires (which are substances) are necessarily as they are, despite particular and concrete differences between them at a given time or place.

Knowledge of these so-called first principles which explain why things are as they are, therefore, depends on necessary propositions, i.e. on that which cannot be otherwise.²³ Now, such propositions, then, can only be universal on Aristotle’s view. As such, as Peter Adamson puts it, Aristotle is seeking “explanations designed to deal with questions that are, in the first instance, about particulars” which actually depend only on “essential features of what is explained: those features, in other words, that make the particular fall under the relevant universal.”²⁴ Though a cornerstone of what Aristotle seems to be doing, it is also problematic in at least two ways, of which I hold the latter to be decisive for the possibilities of thinking unicity in individuals.

Firstly, it is a matter of philosophical coherence. Since Aristotle claims both that only (particular) individuals are substances *and* that only universals (which are not substances) provide knowledge, the risk arises that this discrepancy means that real, actual individuals must remain

²⁰ Aristotle, *Met.* VII. 13. 1038^b1-15,

²¹ *Ibid.*, I.1 980^b25-981^a10.

²² *Ibid.*, VII. 4. 1029^b14; VII. 8. 1034^a6-8

²³ Aristotle, *Post. An.* I. 2 71^b9-15.

²⁴ Peter Adamson, “On Knowledge of Particulars,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series* 105. (2005): 260.

unknowable.²⁵ Aristotle himself is aware of this problem. In the *Metaphysics*, he begins to write of the principles necessary for knowledge:

If, then, the principles are universals, these results follow; if they are not universals but of the nature of individuals, they will not be knowable; for the knowledge of anything is universal. Therefore if there is to be knowledge of the principles there must be other principles prior to them, which are predicated of them (*Met.* III. 6. 1003^a13-17).

Subsequently, he problematizes this later when he writes:

[S]ubstance does not belong to universals, but is rather a ‘this’ and separable, so that if there is knowledge about the first principles, the question arises, how are we to suppose the first principle to be substance? (*Met.* XI. 2. 1060^b20-23).

Because universals are not substances, and because only universals can be the principles by which to explain how and why substances are what they are, substantial knowledge seems unattainable. Notoriously, Aristotle seeks to solve this problem by distinguishing by potential and actual knowledge. In book XIII, he writes:

The statement that all knowledge is universal, so that the principles of things must also be universal and not separate substances, presents indeed [...] the greatest difficulty, but yet the statement is in a sense true, although in a sense it is not. For knowledge, like knowing, is spoke of in two ways – as potential and as actual. The potentiality, being, as matter, universal and indefinite, deals with the universal and indefinite; but the actuality, being definite, deals with a definite object, - being a ‘this’, it deals with a ‘this’ (*Met.* XIII. 10. 1087^a10-20).

At the very least, this argument implies some basic interaction between potential and actual knowledge, and between universals and particular individuals, by extension. If I have X, which happens to be an instantiation of universal Y, and I know that all Y’s are Z, I do not need actual knowledge of X to know potentially that it is Z. If I know something about *Apples* as a kind, I have an indefinite knowledge that includes all potential apples. Conversely, I have actual knowledge on

²⁵ This argument is made, for instance, in: H.F Cherniss, *Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato and the Academy Volume I* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1944), 338-341; Witney J. Oates, *Aristotle and the Problem of Value* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 181.

X's being Z when, *based on potential, universal knowledge*, I recognize Z in the encountered definite object X. As such, knowledge of actual, individual substances would be possible.

Without going into more detail, we can say that views widely differ on how successful this solution is.²⁶ Our question of discontinuing unicity, however, can show that Aristotle's problem is more fundamental anyhow. The problem of unicity upsets the very balance between particulars, universals, and how they can provide in essential knowledge, regardless of whether Aristotle successfully attempts to save it.

In what sense? It lies in unicity taken as non-commonality. For Aristotle, as Deleuze also writes (DR, 30), difference is a crucial notion in understanding variety (and by extension unicity) in individuals in the sense we described before. It can only exist when individuals differ within a commonality. In Aristotle, this shared "something else" is either the genus, species, or analogy.²⁷ That is, it is a kind of universal by which we can explain that, because any given individual is a particular instantiation of that universal kind, all particulars necessarily have the characteristics of the universal in common. For instance: differences between genera (like animal and stone) exist when these genera partake in being (*ousia*) in an analogous way. In turn, differences within the conceptual identity of a genus are differentiae, and of a formal nature. These differentiae in the genus (animal) are knowable as different species through predication (animals with wings, animals with feet), and so on.

What is below the species? Here, things get complicated. For Aristotle, that which differentiates one individual from another ontologically is matter (as opposed to form, for instance).²⁸ Yet, his *hylomorphic* theory of individuation famously connects matter and form. The material elements of a chair (which is a substance) may only be recognized (or known) as such by way of the universal Chair if these elements actually take the form of a chair. As Alberto Toscano correctly notes, however, for Aristotle "[m]atter itself is unknowable; unless, of course, it is already conceived as individuated (into atoms, particles, properties, and so on)."²⁹ A pile of wood by itself

²⁶ Heinaman, "Knowledge of Substance in Aristotle", 63.

²⁷ Aristotle, *Met.* V.9 1018^a10-15.

²⁸ At least, there is a wide consensus that matter is the principle of individuation in Aristotle, though some disagree. Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* V. 6 1016^b30-31; Edward Regis, Jr. "Aristotle's 'Principle of Individuation'," *Phronesis* 21, no. 2 (1976): 157; Jennifer E. Withing, "Form and Individuation in Aristotle," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (Oct., 1986): 359; Theodore Scaltsas, *Substance and Universals in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 122.

²⁹ Alberto Toscano, *The Theater of Production: Philosophy and Individuation between Kant and Deleuze* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 4-6.

cannot reasonably be defined as a chair, again, unless it takes the form of a chair. Before that, matter as such cannot be defined as a pile of wood unless it takes the form of wood. As such, knowledge of individual substances always depends on the hylomorphic composition of matter *and* form. The form of things brings us to universals, however, so that, per Toscano, any question of individuality in Aristotle is “almost immediately assimilated by the question of specification.”

Therefore, Aristotle claims that the differences at the low level of individuals bring us to such a particular level of predication that they are too singular to be metaphysically interesting or knowable because they are outside the essences of entities.³⁰ There is, then, a line beyond which certain attributes of individual entities fall outside the realm of the metaphysically relevant because these attributes are accidental rather than essential. What is accidental in this manner cannot provide in universal knowledge that deals with what belongs to “all or none” of things.

This demands that entities are thought within the commonality of a universal like the genus or, more precisely, the species.³¹ In turn, those properties or characteristics that set them apart, the ways in which they express something like private unicity, can only be accidental. After all, knowledge deals with necessary propositions and it lies within the nature of accidental properties that they could have been otherwise. This does not mean that we cannot know or ascertain these properties in entities. After all, we can know and judge that the colors of people’s skins differ. In fact, different people can share in having this same accidental property. The point is that the accidental on the singular level is not in the same relation to generic or specific predicates as are essential features. Essential knowledge of entities, therefore, remains limited to group-predicates. The great tension in Aristotle’s views on individuals, or particulars, therefore, lies not so much in whether they are knowable, but in what such knowledge may possibly entail in the first place.

In short, a knowledge which depends on necessary propositions in universals in this way cannot but limit itself to generalizing propositions. That is, in those which, as said before, help me recognize individual A as being enough like individual B in relation to a shared kind C that I might as well be dealing with B when I am, in fact, dealing with A in all its “unique” particularity.

Yet, a concern for discontinuous unicity fundamentally problematizes such a limit on what unicity can be. In cases like that of a technological singularity, for instance, what would set it apart and how it would be different from all other attempts at developing artificial intelligence thus far

³⁰ Aristotle, *Met.* III.3 998^b1-10; IV.2 1003^b30-1004^a5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, VII.4. 1030a11–12.

is precisely what is “essential” to know. In fact, focusing on how any such individual attempt is like all other attempts that have hitherto failed to create a singular superintelligence may actually be counterproductive in understanding how any hypothetical machine that be might be built now presents a unique breakthrough. This certainly seems to be the suggestion of some researchers.³²

The Demands of Unicity

The example of a technological singularity is an extreme one that helps to illustrate a principal difficulty in a wide array of scenarios wherein unicity is a crucial interest for determining the best course of action. Aristotle himself explicitly touches upon it at that very point in the *Metaphysics* where he sets apart universal, explanatory knowledge. Doctors, he admits, never treat universal kinds but always individual patients. Therefore, when a doctor can know general facts about a medical condition “but does not know the individual included in this, he will often fail to cure; for it is the individual that is to be cured.”³³ The individual patient may bring a unique set of conditions, symptoms, and ailments to the table, the interactions between which may caution against the application of any given general rule for treatment for any one of those separate symptoms.

There is almost a banality to this fact. For example, no doctor will (want to) advise someone who has lost their legs to walk more to counter endurance and stamina issues, even though walking is generally beneficial to humans in this regard. More fundamentally, imagine a patient with two possibly fatal conditions where the usual cure for the one increases the risk of complications for the other. In both cases, it is the individual and how she is *unlike* the general groups she belongs to that must determine the doctor’s conduct. It will be a matter of determining to what degree a treatment must and can deviate from general rules and practice.

There is another typically contemporary example of how concerns for unicity can demand a knowledge with every bit as much of an explanatory potential as Aristotle seeks in the first principles, without insisting on commonality. Theorists of intersectionality by and large argue that the lives and experiences of individuals are (often) shaped by how the characteristics that separate

³² Richard Loosemore and Ben Goertzel, “Why an Intelligence Explosion is Probable,” in *Singularity Hypotheses: A Scientific and Philosophical Assessment* ed. Amnon H. Eden, James H. Moor, Johnny H. Søraker, and Eric Steinhart (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin, 2012), 85; Muehlhauser and Anna Salamon, “Intelligence Explosion: Evidence and Import,” 18.

³³ Aristotle, *Met.* I.1. 981^a15-23.

them from any given (social and political) norm intersect.³⁴ While women in general might face sexism, and people of color in general might face racism, the unique experiences of someone on the intersections of these categories is not reducible to either category. On such a view, something like skin color, which in Aristotle's schema is only marginally interesting, constitutes a unique experience for a black woman. Accidental in every way Aristotle insists, the blackness of a female body, in intersectional theory, is an "essential" element in explaining what it means for a black woman to exist in a society with racial and gender inequalities. In Aristotelian terms, the accidental property of blackness in this woman's skin color differentiates her from other particulars within the kind *Woman (with a skin that has the capacity to be of different colors)*. Yet, it is precisely this characteristic and how it shapes her life which we would be interested in.

Unicity thematizes a different demand of explanatory knowledge than that in which the particular/universal dualism, with all the above implications, seemingly aims to provide. This is not to say that commonality and generality are never valid concerns, of course. What is at stake, rather, is the question whether the distinction between particulars and universals can do justice epistemologically to those problems and contemporary sensibilities wherein non-commonality and deviation are front and center.

Deleuze and The Image of Thought

I hold that Deleuze's claim that philosophy must overcome the particular/universal dualism must be understood in this regard, and as a resoundingly negative answer to the question just posed. This is to say that we can now read it from within our context of discontinuous unicity as a concern from which a specific demand follows. To understand how, we need not go into the full detail of Deleuze's elaborate metaphysics in *Difference and Repetition*. Rather, we can suffice in treating his claim as a challenge to rethink the relation between knowledge, thought, and unicity.

What exactly is the nature of the challenge Deleuze poses, given the above? What is it, according to Deleuze, that we simply must consider in undertaking this rethinking of that relationship? Simply put: what misstep will we have to avoid in understanding unicity and unique

³⁴ Nina Lykke, *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing* (New York & London: Routledge, 2010), 50-51; Andrea Griesebner and Susanne Hehenberger, "Intersektionalität. Ein brauchbares Konzept für die Geschichtswissenschaften?" in *Intersectionality und Kritik: Neue Perspektiven für alte Fragen* ed. Vera Kallenberg, Jennifer Meyer and Johanna M. Müller (Wiesbaden, Springer, 2013), 105; Patrica Hill Collins & Sirma Bilge *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 17; Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 56, 122, 135.

people, things, and events to prevent ourselves from falling for a problematic epistemological way of dealing with it, like in Aristotle? To understand and engage this challenge, I want to briefly reconstruct how particularity, universality, and commonality are connected in what Deleuze says on a problematic understanding of thought itself, which supposedly underlies much of the history of western philosophy.

This understanding is analyzed and critiqued as a so-called “image of thought,” which Deleuze sees as having been assumed and cultivated over time.³⁵ An image of thought is a specific web of often implicit presuppositions on how thought works, and expresses an understanding of thinking which philosophy projects onto its defining activity of (conceptual) thinking, yet neglects to question thoroughly enough (DR, 131). From a Deleuzian perspective, the problem in Aristotle’s thinking on different and unique individuals cannot be separated from such a lurking understanding – or from this *mis*understanding, rather, as we will come to appreciate it. Moreover, it is this shared tradition, this dogmatic image of thought of thought, which conjoins Aristotle and the limits of the universal/particular dualism to countless other thinkers and problems.

It rests on the implicit presupposition that thought, in general, represents the exercise by which humans accurately reach the truth of things. Thought is supposed to “formally possess the true,” it “materially wants the true,” and it is ultimately able to achieve the true because it formally has this truth already and can thereby distinguish and judge the true as opposed from the false in any situation where it is required to think and know (DR, 131). Whenever thought finds some X to think, and maintains this supposition of its own inclination toward the truth, it can rest assured in the “fact” that what it now aims at is the truth of X.

Of course, philosophers have always realized that actually reaching this truth is not at all evident. Deleuze cannot seriously deny this. What matters, however, is the degree to which the inability to reach the truth of things is included in the very understanding of what thought is in the first place. So, as he writes, “even if the philosopher specifies that truth is not, after all, ‘an easy thing to achieve and within reach of all’,” they may very well continue to believe that thinking, though difficult in actual practice, “may still be the easiest in principle” (DR, 132-133). If, however,

³⁵ I speak of *an* image of thought here, because Deleuze himself is not unequivocally clear on whether there is only *the* image of thought he analyses. Between *Difference and Repetition*’s main text and its later 1994 English edition pre-face, Deleuze shifts from seeking a “thought without image” (DR, 148, 167) to a “new image,” or rather “a liberation of thought from those images which imprison it” (DR, xvii). Cf. Dronsfield, “Deleuze and the Image of Thought,” 408.

we believe that thought naturally aims at the truth of things, but also realize that truth is not always reached, a method or model is implied by to avoid being diverted from the truth. According to Deleuze, “[t]here is indeed a model, in effect: that of recognition” (DR 133).

We have already seen how an idea of recognition is expressed in the interactions between particulars and universals. Universals allow me to recognize what is common in different individuals, which affirmatively identifies them as particular instantiations of this universal. It is this recognition of a commonality which allows me to discern what properties or characteristics of these individuals are necessary, essential, and could not have been otherwise. Now, if, in turn, knowledge must deal with what is universal, essential, and could not have been otherwise as it does in Aristotle, recognition is implied in what knowledge must entail. As a quest for such knowledge, therefore, thinking cannot but be understood as dependent on recognition, and on what facilitates recognition, i.e. an epistemological tool that makes individual things recognizable as particular instances of a general kind.

In this sense, the particular/universal dualism is an epistemological and conceptual substantiation of a most minimal assumption about the nature of thought. Creating a separation between particulars and universals is a way of doing justice to this ‘truth’ which tells us that thought and knowledge by nature, and essentially, deal with recognition. It is a supposedly moderate gesture of the type by which, in Deleuze’s words, one merely “proposes as universally recognized [...] what is meant by thinking” (DR, 131). Different, “particular” problems are now exchangeable as thought itself is inscribed into a general, universal understanding of thought that allows us to recognize different acts of thought, and the problems thought deals with, as ultimately having to do with nothing more than problems of recognition. We return to this point soon.

As Deleuze’s analysis shows, the principle of recognition in the dogmatic image of thought depends on another assumed principle. This is expressed by what Deleuze classifies as the ideas of *Common sense* and *Good sense*, which are “taken to be determinations of pure thought” (DR, 132-134). The first signifies how recognition is possible by the identification of commonalities; in our case, the identification of an essence in any formal kind (species) that is shared between all the different manifestations or instantiations of that kind.³⁶ I can recognize the different smartphones produced by Apple and Huawei as all being smartphones because something about them remains

³⁶ Because thought, itself taken in generality, is taken as a quest for truth, the commonality of sense also implies that it is the same for all thinkers, all instances of the *animal rationale*. “It is because everybody naturally thinks that everybody is supposed to know implicitly what it means to think” (DR, 131).

common despite different designs, hardware and software. Good sense, in turn, determines and regulates that, and how, we recognize and identify these commonalities. It is a “norm of distribution” which allows us to ascertain, for instance, which qualities or characteristics are merely particular and accidental, and which ones are universal and essential. So, in determining that this Apple product and this Huawei product are both smartphones, we discern that, for instance, the apple logo on the one is not essential to smartphones.

The idea of good, common sense as such implies itself in this idea of what recognition is. Recognition itself, as such, serves only as a “first step” toward the idea of representation, Deleuze argues (DR, 138). In the most general terms, representation implies a specific relation between a certain object and a limited, and determined constellation of intellectual elements, or predicates; i.e. a concept. Specific predicates are then understood as, in Deleuze’s words, “moments of concepts,” which may be attributed to the objects (DR, 11). Representation is the comprehension, through a concept or idea, of the relation between these different instances and depends on recognition. Therefore, the idea of good, common sense also implies itself in this idea of what a representation is. By extension, it fundamentally characterizes thought and knowledge as a making-recognizable and a making exchangeable – *by way of* concepts, ideas and general laws – of different individual things, people, forces, events, and so on.

The Problem of Recognition

As such, we must understand the very gesture by which things are immediately turned into particular instantiations of some overarching, universal kind as at the heart of what thinking in general is *assumed* to be or do. It is here that Deleuze raises his most fundamental objection against the dominance of the dogmatic image of thought in philosophy. It is also exactly here that our concern for the demands of unicity converges with Deleuze’s critique of the image. In light of the above, he writes that the result of this model is nothing but the constitution of an “ideal orthodoxy,” (DR, 134) whereby the entity as object of thought, “in itself or in relation to other objects, [...] relies upon resemblance as a requirement of perceptual continuity” (DR, 138). The notions of commonality, representation, and *especially* recognition that this model depends upon, Deleuze calls “a hindrance to philosophy” (DR, 134).

The problem of unicity allows us to understand at least one way in which this model would be a hindrance. In short, we can say that Deleuze is describing the core of the dogmatic image of

thought as deriving its practical legitimacy from the following progression of arguments: 1. The truth of things lies in commonality; 2. Knowledge of the truth of things depends on recognition of such commonality; 3. All of this is itself then taken as a recognizable, necessary truth about what thought and knowledge are. The strength of this logic is that recognition kills two birds with one stone; it gives us a principle on which to model our acts of thought (the particular/universal dualism is a sculpting tool), and it gives us a principle by which to discern when proper thinking occurs. Whenever a concept, an idea, or epistemological tool does not make something recognizable in this (supposedly necessary) manner, it leads thought and understanding away from the truth of things.

Yet, herein also lies its damning weakness, which is equally double. Deleuze writes that “[t]he form of recognition has never sanctioned anything but the recognisable and the recognised; form will never inspire anything but conformities” (DR, 134). A dependence on recognition of commonality, as we have seen, poses a fundamental problem for thought whenever facing questions of discontinuous, radical unicity. In those cases, we want to somehow account for, *while also doing justice to*, what must remain unrecognizable. A doctor will want to understand how this patient poses a new problem, a new challenge for thinking up a required potential treatment. Moreover, because recognition also makes itself the point of access even to *the* truth of thought as such, it fails to account for how and when it can become necessary to realize that one is faced with a new problem or challenge, that requires creative solutions, or thinking outside of the box. After all, so long as it is assumed that nothing but the recognizable *needs* to be sanctioned, it never becomes necessary to imagine or think something as unrecognizably different from anything we already know.

Deleuze’s analysis thus expresses at least two crucial elements. To conclude this section, I want to focus on the first of them. The analysis as described thus far rejects the idea that thought and knowledge, in general, concern themselves only with recognition because it cuts thought and knowledge off from the demands of the unique and the new. The “practical finality of recognition,” Deleuze argues, lies in always merely rediscovering the already established categories, ideas, values, and so on. What is uncommon, however, what is unlike everything we already know, what brings something new to consider “calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition [...] but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable *terra incognita*” (DR 135-136).

Before moving on to the second element in the next section, which deals precisely with imagining this model of the unrecognized and unrecognizable, the very distinction between the recognized and the new demands attention. Regardless of how it is done substantially, by Deleuze or anyone else, if the unique is equated with the new and unrecognizable, the ways we think thought and understanding themselves must be differentiated. At the very least, we must affirm that thought and understanding can respond to conflicting concerns and demands in different situations. Aristotle's doctor will not want to simply disregard the insights from generalized practice when dealing with a unique individual patient. Concerns for commonality at least seem to persist just as the demands of unicity beckon our acts of thought beyond what is common and recognizable.

Is this not what Aristotle's distinction between the knowledge of particulars (knowledge gained from senses and experience), and the explanatory knowledge of universals already tried to acknowledge? Well, yes and no. Of course, this balance between particulars and universal is a way of appreciating that individuals can demand something different from us than generalized groups. After all, the particular/universal dualism *does* aim to account for the possibility of differences just as much as commonality. Yet, it explains these differences and the particular demands they engender as derivative of a deeper truth or reality, only really knowable as determining these demands whenever the former is recognized in the individual. The knowledge of particulars is always already merely on its way to recognize itself in universal knowledge.

The consequence of this logic, which becomes untenable on the Deleuzian view, is an inescapability of generalities. These may tell us a lot about groups and general ideas but abandon at least a crucial level of (practical) precision. It can tell us that, of course, we always must be careful in developing new technology. Yet, it needs to be supplemented when explaining why we must be careful of *this* individual development which presents a hitherto unexpected, unanticipated breakthrough on the way to A.I. superintelligence. This logic can tell us necessary facts about how certain gendered and racialized socio-economic mechanisms in society make it difficult on some groups and easier on others. It does not suffice in helping a social worker who has experience in empowering women in general understand how the blackness of *this* woman (and not a black woman in general) brings forward a new demand of what it means to be empowered that is irreducible to either her blackness or her womanhood.

This is to say that, obviously, commonalities and generalizing are still relevant and useful in those cases. After all, neither the fact that the A.I. super intelligence will still be a technological

entity, nor the blackness or womanhood of the woman are erased or irrelevant. Insofar, however, as knowledge (perhaps gained from experience) of these general categories aids our understanding, the demand of discontinuous unicity makes it clear that it cannot be the whole story. It may help us discover similarities that we can act upon between cases, but something else is needed when it comes to understanding and incorporating how *this* case adds determination to groups or categories.

The Alternative of the Encounter

Considering all this, I hold that the Deleuzian challenge lies in the claim that what defines the new and the unique is fundamentally and categorically different from the recognizable, and that all acts of thought dealing with them are different. This immediately brings us to the second element of Deleuze's critique of recognition, which is interwoven with the previous point: imagining the model of the unrecognized, the uncommon, the new, the different, the unlike – or, rather, the unique. What is the alternative model Deleuze proposes?

In recognition, Deleuze argues, “the destiny of thought” is never at stake (DR, 135). If what is uncommon, new, and unlike others calls forth other forces in thought than that of recognition, it is “an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter” (DR, 139). It is this encounter which serves as a model for thinking the new and the unique. Its objects are not the recognizable and exchangeable particular instantiations of generalizing universals. Rather, the objects of an encounter with that which “forces us to think” are “non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities” (DR, 1).

How do we begin to interpret this model? The answer is neither simple, nor straightforward. A considerable difficulty stems from the fact that is not conclusively clear what ontological determination the new, the unique, the unlike acquire precisely in this category of singularity. I refer to my brief note on this point in the introduction, but also want to add one remark here, in light of what we have discussed.

The choice seems to be between recognizing something or “abandoning” recognition because what is at stake is so unique and new that it defies that commonality. As epistemological models, they will be embedded in ontological frameworks, which need not necessarily correlate with how we experience things even though we usually may hope or demand they do. At that point, one may disagree over how experience can ever do justice to the ontological reality of our world. Levi Bryant, for instance, distinguishes his interpretation of Deleuze from so-called “Dionysian

and empiricist approaches to Deleuze.”³⁷ For them, Bryant argues, all things (all singularities) are always ever only unique, new, and constantly renewing that, in those interpretations, there is only a “never-ending becoming without being able to qualify anything in particular.” Conversely, Bryant himself concludes that in Deleuze “becoming is not a chaos, but the unfolding” of ultimately still very much “intelligible entities.” Disagreements of this nature, and ones even more fundamentally opposing, obviously translate into further disagreements on how to interpret the details of the models Deleuze works with.

I believe, however, that the way we have sectioned off the question of unicity throughout this text prevents us from necessarily engaging in these discussions. All we require from Deleuze presently is a minimal conception of an alternative model. We have been able to question the dynamics of the model of recognition and exchange as expressed in the particular/universal dualism without the need for substantial ontological claims. A similar engagement in this final section of the dynamics in Deleuze’s alternative seems possible.

So, minimally speaking, we can say that in Deleuze singularities mark “the relation of different to different” (DR, xix). As “non-exchangable” and “nonsubstitutable,” singularities can only be in relation of fundamental difference toward each other, and even themselves, Deleuze holds (DR, 1). First, it is crucial to understand a singularity as always being an absolutely unique point, which means that there is, by nature, only ever a single one of it. Different singularities are therefore categorically distinguished from different particulars, in the sense that a singularity is only a *this* while a particularity is a *this of some kind*.³⁸ A second, and just as crucial aspect of singularities, lies in how they are in a relation of *internal* difference. A singular object, individual or event expresses all kinds of different forces, affects, and relations while not being reducible to only a single one of them.

Imagine, again, a patient visiting a doctor. She exhibits a certain set of symptoms that made her decide to seek treatment. Obviously, the person *in toto* cannot be reduced to her symptoms. There is much more to her: she has a personal life, hobbies, a biographical history, certain qualities, and so on. Yet not even her patienthood can be reduced to these symptoms because the doctor will have to consider other pre-existing conditions in determining the required treatment. Furthermore, it will not even suffice for the doctor to reduce the patient to her medical condition in such a wider

³⁷ Levi R. Bryant *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze’s Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 63-64.

³⁸ Even if this kind remains undetermined for any given time. The difference is one of principal.

sense. Psychological factors (may) need to be considered as well, such as the level of stress or panic, or conversely the optimism and coolness which she exhibits. These may be related to her symptoms but might very well also be brought on by experiences in her personal life both recent and long ago. All these elements can, and perhaps will, be related to one another.

In this example, it is never simply a patient in general which is encountered by the doctor, but *this one, singularly unique patient as a meeting place of different elements, characteristics, conditions and so on*. It is also not only the patient nor merely the set of symptoms that elicits an action in the doctor. In each case, it is the whole of the constellation of these singular elements (of which the doctor is also one) as well as the interactions between each individual element that is considered. The patient and the symptoms that have triggered her to visit the doctor are unique singularities, themselves constituted by further interactions between other singular elements in unique constellations. All of them produce a unique, singular situation for the doctor to deal with wherein it cannot be merely a matter of categorizing the symptoms to determine in advance the best course of action to take.

What determines, in this sense, the unicity of the individual (*this patient, this symptom, this other symptom, this seemingly unrelated condition*) lies not in any one particular element of the constituted individual, but much rather in the interactions between singularities as they shape and form what De Landa refers to the individual's "associated possibility space."³⁹ Deleuze represents this relation of nonsubstitutable singularities and the pre-individual possibility space they constitute as an "intensive field." Intensity, for Deleuze, is that element which "creates at once both the quality in the sensible and the transcendent exercise within sensibility" (DR 144).

Intensity is, in a sense, the affecting and effecting force that is expressed whenever, and in the way, singularities interact with each other. Singularities exercise, to various degrees of intensity, forces unto one another that cause reactions of some kind. Within a frame of human subjectivity, for instance, this is to say that some object affects me, and effectuates possible reactions in me. Just like the cut of a knife triggers bleeding, pain, perhaps panic, and the intensity in the force with which the cut is made determines at least to some degree the intensity of the bleeding, it also determines the intensity of my pain, which may likewise (partially) determine my panic, and so on. The intensive relations between singularities determine how any given whole exists, feels, goes about its ways, and thus perhaps also effects other singularities.

³⁹ De Landa, *Deleuze: History and Science*, 91.

A singularity in its most minimal definition is thus an individual X that is always characterized in its intensive effective and affective relation to other singular elements.⁴⁰ It is a point in the most nominal sense, a “this,” but always a “this” as an engaging building block. In reaction, two questions remain, however. First, how must we interpret the status of these singularities in that fundamental encounter which Deleuze proposes as an alternative to the model of recognition? In turn, how does this status determine the way in which Deleuze’s model is practically different from recognition in terms of thinking and understanding unicity?

In a way, what Deleuze attempts to say with singularity seems much akin to what the terms separation (*chôriston; χωριστον*) and individuality as “some this” (*tode ti; τοδε τι*) designate in Aristotle’s understanding of substance.⁴¹ It is the primary substance as a distinct point, which can, of course, engage in relations and has the potentiality to be affected and affective, effected and effective; in a Deleuzian vocabulary, to express intensity. What Oates dubs the “dynamic approach” to *τοδε τι*, the substance’s particular individuality especially appears to fully affirm this potentiality for relationality in individuals.⁴²

The difference, however, lies not so much in what is put at stake, but by which model it is done. Deleuze’s characterization of singularities as outright non-exchangeable and nonsubstitutable marks a fundamentally different approach to what an individual unicity (in relationality) can entail. As a particular that is ultimately recognizable by way of a universal, any individual is fundamentally always exchangeable, as we have seen. I can exchange individual A for individual B while the universal, general picture remains the same and the same rules apply as before the exchange. This regardless of how separate and individual the individual in question is. All attempts at exchange, however, are disrupted if we understand any given individual whole, (a situation, person, and so on) as an expression of an intensive relational interplay of non-exchangeable singular elements. Any differing element (changed, lost, added) presents a new encounter that needs to be reckoned with.

Whence this radicality? Why does the non-exchangeability of a single element constitute a new encounter? Ontologically, Deleuze derives the necessity herein from a pluralistic, univocal

⁴⁰ Though they are not ontologically reducible to those relations, because then they would derive a form and signification from the relation, which would be the universal of which they are particular elements or moments. The singularities *engage* in the “reciprocal relations” by which there are determined. Cf. DR 183.

⁴¹ Although interpretations of *τοδε τι* are especially contentious. Cf. Jiyuan Yu, *The Structure of Being in Aristotle’s Metaphysics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 122.

⁴² Oates, *Aristotle and the Problem of Value*, 88.

understanding of Being (DR, 37). Again, however, we need not engage Deleuze ontologically on this point. The notion of an encounter itself expresses the relation between non-exchangeability and novelty in such a way that pragmatically explains Deleuze's claims that "equal being is immediately present in everything" and that univocity of being "signifies equality of being" (Ibid.). After all, an encounter only occurs between different things that take equal part in that encounter. Remove, change or replace one element of the equation and it unquestionably changes as a whole.

It is in this sense that Deleuze's model can be taken up as a way of doing justice to the demand of unicity. It does not present a doctor who determines the treatment for this unique patient by focusing on those commonalities that make the patient enough like another to be exchangeable elements within a general rule. Rather, it presents one who encounters a unique individual patient in the understanding that this patient herself expresses the meeting or encountering between equally singular elements, unique individual facts, conditions, and so on. This is the double gesture of the encounter as a model: I encounter a unique, singular individual, but this singular individual is also always fundamentally encountering. The womanhood of *this* black woman encounters the blackness of her body. The A.I. developer encounters a line of code combining two seemingly insignificant terms encountering each other.

Conclusion

In the above, we have focused on the challenge for understanding discontinuous unicity in individuals. We have seen that this challenge demands a detaching of thought from both generalizations and a focus on commonality as a making recognizable and exchangeable of individuals. We find in Deleuze an instruction to think in a way that affirms, rather than problematizes precisely this demand of unicity. In terms of doing justice to discontinuing unicity as non-commonality, the practical value in his alternative lies in a pluralistic worldview of non-exchangeable singularities. Their disruption of exchange means the posing of a challenge for thought which acknowledges how unicity, non-commonality, novelty, and difference are productive factors of essential necessity in thinking and understanding unicity and individuals.

Continuing to refrain from extensive ontological claims about the nature of singularities, at least three epistemological implications can be drawn from all this:

1. An Aristotelian(-like) model of generalizable knowledge finds a relatively clear limit in the phenomenon of discontinuous unicity in individuals. The way such a limit is overcome toward

a feasible understanding of both unicity and any individual “as a whole” requires an alternative. It takes a moldability of categories and individuals as its starting point, whereby what matters about any individual person, thing, event, development, or force in any given situation comes to the fore only in that singular situation in its entirety.

2. This means that understanding any individual in any such situation may principally require much more of any thinker than merely amassing and judging, or knowing, (theoretical) facts about said individual. Affectivity and effectivity are implied to be central to understanding in a reflexive sense as well, so that the thinker in question always be “moved” by the individual at least potentially, just as the individual may be affected or (more mechanically) determined by even the most insignificant singular elements.

3. What does indeed come to the fore in such an expanded activity of understanding may always remain unrecognizable and unknowable to some crucial degree. This is to say that not all intensive singularities and the productive relations between them in any one individual situation can be laid out and consciously acted upon.

A model responding to these implications acknowledges the need for thought, understanding, and knowledge to be principally expansive. It searches not for the many possible ways in which an individual conforms to previously established categories and rules. Instead, it hopes to discover how the individual adds determination to what is already known or expected. As such, it is also wholly creative in that it will always need to establish and interpret new connections between elements, facts, interpretations, theoretical and practical insights, affections, assumptions and convictions. These may very well be known and generalizable individually in a traditional sense but equally bring forth and express a new, changing, and *fundamentally unexpected* situation when brought together in each different singular point.

This may all seem abstract but can easily be illustrated by returning to the example of a doctor and patient again. Doctors must always understand that a given patient is unique, as Aristotle already argued. They must also be able to grasp how an instantiation of a condition X in patient Y presents a new case Z. Yet, a hypothetical “Aristotelian” doctor does so in a different way than does the “Deleuzian” colleague. The former may recognize many personal and psychological facts about the patient as a person, the perceptible symptoms, and perhaps even “hidden” underlying elements or causes for conditions or concerns that contribute to the “unicity” of this case. Yet as this doctor thusly analyses the case to act upon, it remains a matter of applying already knowable

and recognizable facts to analyze a new case, thereby missing the newness of the new so to speak. The “Deleuzian” counterpart, meanwhile, would rather distill from the unicity of the case its potential to suspend what is already known in general. This doctor would allow the individual patient to render unrecognizable what may seem recognizable and all too common at first, ironically coming closer to the very individual-oriented task of doctors as Aristotle himself already understood it to be but had to overcome on account of his theory of knowledge.

Deleuze’s problematization of recognition, and the disruption of exchange that follows from it, aid us in light of a problem that is itself unique. The demand of unicity simply is different from the question to which the act of recognition, as well as the models of exchange, and the particular/universal dualism respond. Because it is a naked given that we do recognize individuals by way of overarching categories, the demands of any discontinuing unicity we are interested in call just that much louder for a disrupting of exchange. As such, the ways in which we aim to deal with unique individuals in their discontinuing non-commonality must find their point of departure in a differentiated situation. As recognition occurs as a fact of daily life, it must be countered with a careful analysis and determination of what disrupts it. Therein lies the need for a creative interpretive decision that acts of thought cannot but be forced to make whenever unicity is concerned.

References:

- Armstrong, S. “Introduction to the Technological Singularity.” In *The Technological Singularity: Managing the Journey*. Edited by Victor Callaghan, James Miller, Roman Yampolskiy, Stuart Armstrong. Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin, 2019.
- Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Bozga, Adina. *The Exasperating Gift of Singularity: Husserl, Levinas, Henry*. Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2009.
- Chalmers, David. “The singularity: a philosophical analysis.” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17 (2010): 7-65.
- Cherniss, H.F. *Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato and the Academy Volume I*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1944.
- De Landa, Manuel “Materialist Metaphysics.” Chap. 6 in *Deleuze: History and Science* (Dresden, New York: Atropos Press, 2010).
- Deleuze, Gilles & Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

- . *What is Philosophy?* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- . *Différence et Répétition*, 3rd Edition. 1968; repr. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976.
- . *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson. London: Continuum, 1983.
- . *Proust & Signs*. Translated by Richard Howard. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Dronsfield, Jonathan. "Deleuze and the Image of Thought." *Philosophy Today* 56, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 404-414.
- Eden, Amnon H., Eric Steinhart, David Pearce, and James H. Moor. "Singularity Hypotheses: An Overview." In *Singularity Hypotheses: A Scientific and Philosophical Assessment*. Edited by Amnon H. Eden, James H. Moor, Johnny H. Søraker, and Eric Steinhart, 1-12. Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin, 2012.
- Greenstine, Jacob. "Diverging Ways: On the Trajectories of Ontology in Parmenides, Aristotle, and Deleuze." In *Contemporary Encounters with Ancient Metaphysics*. Edited by Abraham Jacob Greenstine and Ryan J. Johnson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.
- Griesebner, Andrea and Susanne Hehenberger. "Intersektionalität. Ein brauchbares Konzept für die Geschichtswissenschaften?" In *Intersectionality und Kritik: Neue Perspektiven für alte Fragen*. Edited by Vera Kallenberg, Jennifer Meyer and Johanna M. Müller. Wiesbaden, Springer, 2013.
- Hancock, Ange-Marie. *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Harman, Graham. "On the Undermining of Objects: Grant, Bruno, and Radical Philosophy." In *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*. Edited by Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman. Melbourne: re.press, 2011.
- . *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything*. London: Pelican Books, 2018.
- Heinaman, Robert. "Knowledge of Substance in Aristotle" *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 101 (1981): 63-77.
- Hill Collins, Patricia & Sirma Bilge. *Intersectionality*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016.
- Hutter, Marcus. "Can intelligence explode?" *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 19 (1-2) (2012): 143-166.
- Kleinherenbrink, Arjen. *Against Continuity: Gilles Deleuze's Speculative Realism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019.
- Kurzweil, Ray. *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. New York: Viking, 2005.
- Lambert, Gregg. *In Search of A New Image of Thought: Gilles Deleuze and Philosophical Expressionism*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- LaZella, Andrew. *The Singular Voice of Being: John Duns Scots and Ultimate Difference*. Fordham University, 2019.
- Levi R. Bryant. *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008.

- Loosemore, Richard and Ben Goertzel. "Why an Intelligence Explosion is Probable." In *Singularity Hypotheses: A Scientific and Philosophical Assessment*. Edited by Amnon H. Eden, James H. Moor, Johnny H. Søraker, and Eric Steinhart, 83-98. Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin, 2012.
- Lykke, Nina. *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing*. New York & London: Routledge, 2010.
- Macdonald, Cynthia. *Variety of Things: Foundations of Contemporary Metaphysics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- Muehlhauser, Luke and Anna Salamon, "Intelligence Explosion: Evidence and Import." In *Singularity Hypotheses: A Scientific and Philosophical Assessment*. Edited by Amnon H. Eden, James H. Moor, Johnny H. Søraker, and Eric Steinhart, 15-40. Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin, 2012.
- Oates, Witney J. *Aristotle and the Problem of Value*. Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Patton, Paul *Deleuze and the Political*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Paul, Gregory. S. & Earl. D. Cox. *Beyond humanity: cyberrevolution and future minds*. Rockland MA: Charles River Media, 1996.
- Regis, Jr., Edward. "Aristotle's 'Principle of Individuation'." *Phronesis* 21, no. 2 (1976): 157-166.
- Scaltsas, Theodore. *Substance and Universals in Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Toscano, Alberto. *The Theater of Production: Philosophy and Individuation between Kant and Deleuze*. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.
- Van der Heiden, Gert-Jan. *Ontology after Ontotheology: Plurality, Event, and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2014.
- Van Inwagen, Peter. *Metaphysics 3rd edition*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009.
- Withing, Jennifer E. "Form and Individuation in Aristotle." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (Oct., 1986): 359-377.