

Fold

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According to Deleuze, “the outside is not a fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside” (1988, pp. 96-7). In a remarkable few pages, Deleuze, through Leibniz, puts Descartes on his head and simultaneously defines interiority (subjectivity) and exteriority (the world) in relation to folds. Descartes’ concept of the cogito, which introduced a version of subjectivity, claims that the existence of the

objective world relies on the acknowledgment of the subject of itself. Descartes argued that “I think” is actually two simultaneous acts. The first, represented by the I, is the already (mysteriously a priori) acknowledgment of subjectivity before the act of thinking itself. This is reversed in Leibniz and Deleuze:

I must have a body; it's a moral necessity, a 'requirement.' And in the first place, I must have a body because an obscure object lives in me. But, right from this first argument, Leibniz's originality is tremendous. He is not saying that only the body explains what is obscure in the mind. To the contrary, the mind is obscure, the depths of the mind are dark, and this dark nature is what explains and requires a body. [...] But this first argument gives way to another, which seems to contradict it, and which is even more original. This time, we must have a body because our mind possesses a favored - clear and distinct - zone of expression. (Deleuze, 2006, p. 97)

The fold is fundamental to the entire project of the subject (which began before Deleuze and Descartes) and not separable from it. In Foucault's discussion of the Greeks, the subject emerges from the “relation which force has with itself, a power to affect itself, an affect of self on self” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 101). The subject emerged in Greek thought as a folding of force onto themselves (to dominate others you first must dominate yourself).

The fold is subjectification, but it is also the making of any space. The fold is the act of constructing an interior space in a way that is

an extension of the outer, not different from it. Deleuze is able to extend his discussion of becoming, and articulate it in a way that illustrates the mechanics of becoming-subject, becoming-space. The act of becoming has four components (four folds): the material body, relation between forces, knowledge, and the outside world (Deleuze, 1988). One has to be careful here not to fall back to an understanding of being as an expression of an inside-outside binary that brings us back, circuitously, to the Descartes subject-object. The process of folding “comprehends physical, psychological, and cultural phenomena at all levels” (Mullarkey, 1999, p. 101), allowing us to get beyond Descartes to something more like a “wave theory” of the subject and object, which, being as folds, are inter-related and interconnected in the becoming of the world.

References

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