

## **Gilles Deleuze's Oral Philosophy – Introduction to the subject**

### **An initiation to (the) oral (practice of) philosophy: Gilles Deleuze's Alphabet Book (Abécédaire)**

#### **1-**

In this mini-course, I will focus on Gilles Deleuze's *Alphabet Book* (*Abécédaire*, in French) which is available on dvd with English subtitles. But before we pass to this strange, fascinating and unique object - I mean as a philosophical device or means of expression -, I would like to make a few remarks on the oral practice of philosophy by Gilles Deleuze which is something very special as well and, to some extent, without equal.

Gilles Deleuze is a French philosopher, born in 1925, he committed suicide in 1995, suffering from an incurable and very painful illness (breathing problems). He first devoted himself, as he began to teach philosophy at the university, in Lyon, to classical authors, that is to the history of philosophy – Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Bergson, among others. This until the late 1960'. Then he began to develop his own philosophy, after the publication of *Différence et répétition* (*Difference and Repetition*) in 1968. From 1972 on, he began to work and publish in tandem with Félix Guattari, a psychoanalyst and militant from the French far left intellectual scene. The first book they published together, *Anti-Oedipus* was a hit and also vehemently discussed, both in psychoanalytical and philosophical circles. Later, they published many essays together, from *Kafka* (1975) to *Mille Plateaux* (*Thousand Plateaus*, 1980). But at the same time, Deleuze continued to publish books under his own and only signature, notably his two famous books on cinema – *Movement-Image* and *Time-Image* (1983 and 1985) or, as well, short essays on art, literature and politics that have been collected in two books *L'île déserte* (*The Desert Island*) and *Deux régimes de fous* (English translation?).

I will also refer to the very useful *Dialog book* (*Dialogues*) which was set up by Claire Parnet, a student of Deleuze who also convinced him to “play the game” of the *Alphabet book*. She is his partner and support in both works, the *Dialog Book* and the *Alphabet Book* and both of them (the book and the dvd) have much in common and complement each other. I will not comment these books which don't belong to my corpus (oral philosophy) but it would help you a much to have a look at them... I have not checked that all of these books have been translated into English, but I'm almost sure that they have – you'll tell me if any of them is not available at the library, on this campus.

One more thing I have to mention in the preliminaries to this course is that Deleuze has always promoted a very personal, original definition of what philosophy actually is: not a set of knowledge, or theories, not an all-encompassing wisdom, not an academic discipline but a *practice* that consists in creating, inventing, experimenting and putting into circulation concepts, notions which all of them also are, to some extent, images. This notion of the correlation of concepts (ideas) and images is something which Deleuze has borrowed from Henri Bergson. The principle of it is simple: a concept always relies on an intuition – you can refer to a concept when you

utter a statement, in a sentence, but if you don't have the intuition of it, you don't really "get it", that is understand what this concept aims at – it frequently happens in academic discussions – people using concepts they don't really have a grip on, an intuition of. Consequently, if one says that the intuition always is the underlying condition for the concept to be really appropriated, it means that imagination has a key role to play in this process – for intuition has much in common with imagination, with the creation of images.

It derives from this definition of philosophy that its main goal is not the transmission of intellectual or theoretical contents - what the history of philosophy is made of, from Plato to Heidegger - , but the creation of new concepts and their circulation in the public debate, beyond the borders of the Academy. Very obviously, by sticking to this definition of philosophy as a practice and maybe an art, Deleuze makes a decisive step aside, as a professor, a teacher, a member of the academic system. And it is where *the stake of orality*, oral (spoken) philosophy comes to light.

What I mean is that we cannot only focus on the *Alphabet Book* as a strange, exciting object related to oral philosophy – we have to replace it in a broader context, or to give its place at the end of a long experimental process – that of what I would like to call the *deconstruction* of the art and way of teaching philosophy by Deleuze.

The *Alphabet Book*, as some sort of a testament, some kind of a manifesto, too, a final experimentation, is an integral part of the invention by Deleuze of an original way of sharing – rather than teaching or conveying philosophy. For *upstream* this experimental testament, you have to take into consideration 400 hours courses, that is exactly 177 "lessons" that have been recorded, taped and for many of them filmed, this for eight years, from 1979 to 1987, as Deleuze was teaching at the so-called "experimental University (of) Vincennes" which was transferred, at the beginning of the 1980' to Saint-Denis, a (then) worker's area to the North of Paris. This is where it all began, as Deleuze decided to test a fully new way of teaching – in the first part of his career, he had been a brilliant professor, a specialist for the history of philosophy, presenting, analysing, deciphering his favorite author's doctrines by resorting to the usual classical (that is didactic) way.

It all began with the teaching conditions which were very poor. Both universities, Vincennes after May 1968 and as a consequence, then a decade later, Saint-Denis had been set up very hastily, they consisted mostly, at the beginning, in prefabs where the acoustics were deplorable, the furnitures very quickly stolen or half destroyed, the heating system often failing in winter, the atmosphere becoming, by contrast, stifling in May-June, as the outside temperature would raise. I know what I'm talking about – I taught at these different places for more than twenty years... In Saint-Denis, where Deleuze taught for most of the time, there were two additional plagues: the constant din from the traffic on the two "boulevards" the university had been built along, very close to them, and the roar of the planes that passed right above us, as they were about to land at the (very close) international Charles de Gaulle airport. For this reason, depending of the direction of the wind, we very often had to stop talking for a minute or two, till the uproar had diminished a bit – this till next aircraft...

These were some of the drawbacks and nuisances we had to face as we took possession of these successive brand new (not for long) premises – the institution was christened “Paris 8”, the high number designing some sort of exile far from the civilized center of the capital – Paris 1 is, of course, La Sorbonne, the temple of classical academic life in France. But there were many additional factors that made that teaching there, in this quite *heterotopian* place according to the usual, classical patterns of academic life would have been impossible – the student milieu or micro-climate at Paris 8 was very radical, politicized to the left, the far left, very much inclined to take action on any occasion, local, domestic or international, the consequence of this being that the courses were very often perturbed or disturbed by unexpected and endless speeches by activists, calls for demonstrations, actions of all kinds, strikes, sit-downs, etc. Let's add to that that the University was open to everybody, regular students as irregular ones, people who came just to have a look, eccentric idle persons, borderline or openly lunatic ones, etc. - all these people haunting freely the university and preferably the courses delivered by famous professors and making their show on such occasions...

In short, Deleuze took advantage of the very special and precarious conditions at this new university, Vincennes-Saint-Denis, to transform what was, for many of his colleagues, a plague, a big amount of disorders into a heaven-sent occasion for inventing *a new way of “making” philosophy*. A limit-experience of “teaching” philosophy where the very fact or act of teaching was in dispute.

It begins, in Deleuze's mind, with the reorganization of the space where the “professor” as a professional philosopher and the students or, more precisely, “the audience” meet – the classroom, or hall. In spite of the big success of his “teaching”, that is the crowd that rushes to his courses, Deleuze refused stubbornly to move to a lecture hall where the students sit in/on rows, at distance from the podium or platform where the teacher sits enthroned. More than that: he demanded that all the tables, except a small one he needed for his papers and books, be removed from the classroom. It was for him a matter of principle: the speaker, the “teacher”, the alleged “master” had for him to sit *amidst, in the middle* of the audience. There should be no distance between him and his public, they all should be at the same level. I will show you a few clips from the beginning of a course where he endlessly argued with the students about the tables that had been brought back surreptitiously into the classroom and said that he wouldn't begin his course before they had been removed. Consequently, you will see how the configuration of the course looks like: dozens of students squeezed in an exiguous classroom, devoid of any equipment, some sitting on chairs, some on the floor and some standing, the first circle of the faithful pressed around the master who himself seemed to be pressed against the blackboard he needed for his well-known and often enigmatic sketching related to a concept, an “arrangement” (*agencement*) or whatever – in these years, we still used blackboards and wrote on them with a piece of chalk.

Since there was no selection, everybody could come, listen, stay or go, the audience was, as I already mentioned, very heterogeneous, the “amateur” philosophers being

hegemonic. The audience was, besides, very cosmopolitan, students came from the four corners of the earth, which meant language problems, not only related to the difficulty of understanding Deleuze's philosophy. An, of course, almost everybody would smoke, just like the teacher himself, so that the atmosphere would soon become unbreathable, each course lasting from two to three hours... Let me remind you by passing that Deleuze suffered for years of respiratory insufficiency and, directly or indirectly died of it... What we have to remember here is that the political, spiritual, moral... atmosphere was, in these times, after 1968, very much opposed to forbidding, prohibiting et prescribing anything (*"Il est interdit d'interdire!"*) - so, no "smoking forbidden" signs and doors of the course open for everybody...

The same way, but at this place things begin to become more complicated, Deleuze's speech was frequently interrupted by someone in the audience, just an interjection, sometimes, but questions, as well or, worse, endless objections or even "lessons" taught to the professor by convinced militants or supporters of other orientations in thought – the "Deleuze, you haven't understood a word of Lacan's (Marx's...) thought" kind... In such cases, Deleuze would always "let do", that is wait patiently for the interrupter to finish his/her speech and then try to go back to his argument. That is, he would never make an authoritarian gesture like "let me finish what I began to expose or explain!", "speak on your turn!" or whatever of that kind, never put forward his position as a professor, the master of the game. He would just shut up, smile, nod, very often ironically, and wait for the end of the interruption. He wouldn't engage in a dialog or a controversial discussion, a dispute about what was at issue in his speech, this for the good reason he mentioned many times: *he didn't believe at all in the virtues of "discussion"* - in the context of the course as he saw it; he didn't think that the audience was "equipped" for arguing about the concepts he was testing, the paths he was exploring, he didn't believe in Socratic maieutics – not in this context, at least. This is an interesting and key point, because in these years, "discussion", that is oral exchanges about all kinds of issues, political, ideological, philosophical, etc, were held in high regard, May 68 was before all some sort of a permanent forum or *an endless palaver*, people who didn't know each other engaged in heated discussions about the present, the past and the future on the occasion of demonstrations and meetings, in the street, within the universities (campuses in the American sense or like here in Taiwan hardly existed in France at that time), at the gates of plants or other industrial sites where students went in order to meet the workers, in theaters, bars, etc. For this reason, in the years that followed May 68, this taste for a very animated and often conflictive style of discussion was kept alive and it very often happened that a course transformed itself in some sort of a meeting where people exchanged arguments about all kinds of issues and stakes loosely related to the object of the course...

Deleuze had to take this state of mind of his public into consideration, but he never thought that these rambling discussions might be profitable to the students or be the right way for him to convey what he had to say in relation to the topic of the course. So, he would just tolerate it, with an extreme patience, as some sort of an inevitable evil and because it would have been worse for him to restrain it by using his authority

as a professor. His maxim on such issues was: “There is nothing to discuss, take [from what I'm saying] what you want”. Or, this variation: “Take what you want, what suits you, it's up to you”.

What he meant was that his course was not made of informations or data the students had to make their own, to write down and remember, but that it would rather be something that might be - or not - liable to “inspire” them, something intensive rather than extensive they should listen to as if it were a piece of music or a tale, or maybe a poem, a *flux* made of words, phrases, concepts, images and statements and that would imprint on their mind, this to very diverse extent and in different forms, according to the availability of each of the listeners for what the philosopher was saying, according to their training, position in society and culture, relation to philosophy, etc. What Deleuze meant by that was that his course was open to any kind of listener – initiates as well as amateurs or onlookers, “passers-by” each of them could take advantage of it, according to his/her interest, experience and training, maybe not immediately, but later, afterwards.

This is very egalitarian: it means that the course was open to everyone not only because the door remained open during it, but before all because the speaker didn't select his audience, he didn't address specialists in particular, well-trained students but just people, all kinds of people who were curious about the subject he was dealing with and curious about the way he was dealing with it. It's a very distinct way of making a step aside from the field of academic philosophy – a way of saying that philosophy isn't an academic discipline but rather *an art*, a way of dealing with things, of making statements, speaking, which can be everyone's or anyone's concern. From this angle, the course isn't a task or something the professor has to perform, his job, it's rather an experimentation, very different, in this regard from writing a book or an article or, even, presenting a paper on the occasion of a conference or a seminar. “Discussion” is not an issue for Deleuze, but this doesn't mean at all that he didn't care about interactions with his audience, as he talked, he scanned the people around him in order to see if some sort of a small light or glare came on or would light up in their eyes, showing that their attention was kept, that they “followed” him. He hated being interrupted by a long monologue, but he liked to be “boosted” by a brief remark or interjection, ironical or knowing, thrown by a witty member of the audience, most of the time an “initiate”, a “member of the tribe”. This kind of brief and discrete interaction was “part of the game”, “part of the show”, if you want, that is it helped to convey a relaxed and nonconformist tone in the course. You will see that on the videos.

## 2-

Deleuze was not interested in giving a “beautiful course”, a masterpiece that would show how perfect his command of his subject (Spinoza, Nietzsche, Hume, Kafka, the theory of film, etc.) was, he hated the idea that the course, his speech should be a rhetorical exercise. What he wanted was transforming the course into a workshop where he presented the state of his current research, reflection in progress. The courses were the drafts for future chapters of future books. From this angle, there is a

very strong link between the oral part and the written part of his work. A course is always a work in progress, not a portion of piece of knowledge the teacher has in stock and delivers to the students year after year (as so many teachers and professors do). But, on the other hand, for him, speaking and writing are two different things, there is a gap between them. When you teach, Deleuze said, you always have to restart from zero, you have to set up the concepts patiently to teach them, you have to problematize them or make understandable what the “situation” of the concept is, why this concept matters, how it can be arranged with other concepts, where it comes from, what is the use of it, its place in the “toolbox” of the philosopher. A course is a flux, a matter and maybe a material “in movement” - in progress, moving forward – and the teacher has to be attentive to the affects of his public – is the audience listening or slumbering, are the eyes shining or dull, do people look passionate or distracted, or, would I add for now, but Deleuze was spared this calamity – do the students check their smartphone instead of being gripped by the new concept I'm presenting them... The course, in this regard, is a capture, the seizure of an audience. It means that the teacher always has to “repeat himself”, to “rehash”, to chew over or “ruminate” on what he is saying – this in order not to loose the attention of the audience.

In that sense, the course is a work, like a work or a piece of art, a spoken work, very different from a written one, a work that needs a lot of preparation, all the more since it should be read from a paper, but uttered as if it would be improvised, as if the philosopher would be just following the thread of his ideas... Deleuze spoke of a poetics of the course, which has much in common with the affects that support it or accompany it. There was some sort of an affective framework of the course, that is the milieu where the concepts can emerge and come to light. A course, it's a “state of research”, but it's an atmosphere too which has to be propitious to the emergence – popping up and circulation of concepts.

Deleuze said: philosophy as an activity, as a practice, doesn't consist in the confrontation of opinions. If we have to discuss, he told the audience, it's not for expressing or exchanging opinions but for opposing a concept to another or saying what the speech, the statement made by the professor *awakens* or *arouses* in (for) the listener(s). As I said, May 68, as an event or a sequence, is inseparable from the notion of “*prise de parole*” - not easy to translate into English – speaking out, taking the floor – the anthropologist and psychoanalyst Michel de Certeau wrote a beautiful book on this dimension of May 68 – a continuous collective process of *capture of speech*, based on the request, the appeal to anybody that he/she should say what he/she has to say, and to say it publicly, on front or others (this book exists in English – *The Capture of Speech and other Political writings*, University of Minnesota) . This is in line with the politicization of the public speech in these years – everybody should speak out, without any consideration of social status or position in the intellectual field – everybody has something to say, it's a process of opening and leveling of the public speech.

But, of course, for Deleuze, the perverse effect of this process is that a new *doxa* was established, that of the value in itself of opinion, any kind of opinion, or if you prefer,

the simple fact of speaking out, a cult of the public speech, even if and when people have “nothing special to say” or, worse, “nothing to say”. We should do our best, said Deleuze, to resist these forces (trends?) that force us to speak when we (any of us) have nothing to say”. By making this statement, he drew a dividing line between two heterogeneous regimes of speech: public speech which has become, in these years, some sort of and endless and unstoppable chattering and oral philosophy whose ambition is the creation of concepts.

Meanwhile, for Deleuze, this opposition between two regimes of speech couldn't be subsumed under the opposition of the *democratic* (public speech, doxa, endless chattering...) and the *aristocratic* (oral philosophy for the happy few who have an access to conceptual thought). On the opposite, as I already mentioned it, he insisted on this: the course has to be deconstructed in its academic, institutionalized form; no microphone, no platform, no separation, no crawl space between the teacher and the audience, no learned tone of a mandarin; all the protagonists of the course on the same boat, sharing the inconvenience of an overcrowded, overheated or icy classroom, etc. - that is the course as an exercise and an example of radical democracy. It's “material” is a speech whose vocation is to be spread out, to circulate freely – no copyright, no restrictions in the sharing of it. This is why the many tape-recorders that the students put on the small table in front of Deleuze were an integral part of the general arrangement or device which made the course – they were like loudspeakers that are intended for spreading out the philosophers oral teaching all around the world (and, in addition to that, they are the traces, the “footprints” of the course that make it possible for us to listen to it a few decades after Deleuze's death...).

But on the other hand, there is something distinctly charismatic and, in spite of all, aristocratic, in this practice of oral philosophy as an art. Deleuze deconstructed vehemently, stubbornly, ostensibly the figure of the master, he dethroned the master for his own sake – but all the same – he *was* a master, and this is the reason why his course was such a hit. This can be very easily observed when you watch some videos: it takes time till the course can begin, too many people, not enough chairs, some students arguing on this and that, some of the participants who had a very urgent message to deliver to the audience, problems with the tape-recorders, etc. it's all very laborious and Deleuze sat, impassible, waiting for the excitement to cool down, his hat still on his head... And all of a sudden, without any preamble, he would remove his hat of and begin to speak: silence followed immediately and you can see and hear on the videos how he captured the audience's attention, how authoritative his speech was, even if the teacher's tone was all you want but authoritarian or solemn...

How can we deal with this blatant tension between the outwardly democratic style and tone of Deleuze's teaching and its charismatic dimension that surfaced immediately as he began to speak not in front by *amidst* his audience and as all the gazes converged on him, all the participants concentrated in order to get the best they can of his talk, of what has to be called a lesson, in spite of all his (Deleuze's) efforts to deconstruct the “spirit” of the lesson...?

We'll come across this problem again, as we'll listen to some of the items of the

*Alphabet Book*... This conflict between democratic and charismatic or maybe aristocratic intersects with the opposition Deleuze insisted on between the course devoted to the production (working out) of concepts and the “forum” where political and cultural opinions were at issue or, if you prefer, in the terms that were used at that time, “Leftism” as a multifaceted scene. It is, I think one of the main issues concerning Deleuze's oral philosophy, both one of the most difficult and one of the most interesting...

What makes this question difficult, among other things, is that Deleuze, as he spoke in the course or in the *Alphabet Book*, didn't speak as an author, in the classical sense of the term, as an individual subject – a philosopher, distinctly distinguished from other authors, philosophers. His speech acts or statements were not individual in the ordinary sense – this not only or not mainly because he wrote some of his book with his alter ego Felix Guattari. The main reason why Deleuze didn't speak as an author, that is the master, the sovereign, the owner of the speech he uttered, the messages he emitted is massive and simple: his style was constantly *dialogic*, what he said was not just what he thought as an individual, as a isolated subject, for it was constantly related with other thoughts, immersed in other discourses. The regime of his speech was fully inter-textual. It's not a problem of references to authors, texts, concepts that would be *hidden behind* his own statements, it's a matter of regime of the speech that is inter-textual, that is made of a medley, a combination rather than a mixture, of “things” that come from all sorts of authors, theories, statements, discourses that are summoned by Deleuze, that permeate his speech and become inseparable from what he said “in person”.

For example, when Deleuze made a course on what he called, with Guattari, “minor literature”, he wouldn't speak *of* Kafka or Melville, that is *about* them, he spoke *with* them. It means that they, or rather their writings, were an integral part of his speech, they were intertwined in his own statements to such an extent that no difference could be made between what, in this speech, would be, properly speaking “Deleuze” and what would “come from” Melville, Cervantes or D.H. Lawrence... This situation or regime of the speech is based on what Deleuze calls “collective arrangement of enunciation”. The oral philosophy of Deleuze is constantly placed under this sign, and, as a consequence, the question of “who speaks” becomes more complicated than the question of who “makes the course”, who is teaching. Deleuze was teaching, no doubt about it, but what was his speech made of, what is carried by his speech, what was drifting through it – this is a more complicated story, for it is about the combination of collective forces, intellectual forces, that come together and coagulate in or through Deleuze's enunciation at this place, in the course.

Deleuze spoke his way, as if improvising, following the course of his own inspiration. And without any transition, he took a book from the table and read a long excerpt from it, adding here and there a few comments, laughing when he found it funny, stressing this or that sentence or expression, “acting” as he read a passage from Kafka's *Metamorphosis*... And then, Guattari who was present, would add something, and then a student made a brief objection or asked for further information on what Gilles or Félix had said and then Gilles got the course moving forward by catching

the ball on the bounce, etc – this is what he and Félix called a “collective arrangement of enunciation”, something related to a decisive theoretical stake: the destruction or deconstruction of what Foucault has called, in a text names “What is an author?”, the author's *monarchy*.

Deleuze never spoke for another (thinker, author...), dead or alive, that is instead of him. He spoke *with him*, by intermixing or crossbreeding his own thoughts with other author's, philosopher's, writer's, artist's statements, writings, images, concepts. His speech was made of a sort of silent or implicit dialog between his own philosophy in progress, through oral expression and theses various stratas of discourses that had been issued ahead of his own performance – the course. There is an artistic dimension in this process of hybridization, of, let's say, montage, “editing” which consists in combining and setting together “materials” from very various origins – literature, theater, cinema philosophy, medicine, biology, etc. In Deleuze's oral philosophy, the figure or the image of the philosopher-artist or philosopher as an artist pops up again. Deleuze said: “What I would like to do is to make a course the same way Bob Dylan manufactures [*organise*] a song”.

For you see how different is the way he invoked authors from the past or appeals to them from the way a professor usually *teaches* such or such classical author. In the 1970', Deleuze has cast off his old skin as a professor teaching the history of European philosophy, he reinvented himself as a teacher and became “himself”, not only by teaching his own philosophy, but by inventing, promoting a new gesture – oral philosophy as a direct action, a performance – the conditions of the *making of philosophy* changed – if you read the books Deleuze has written before he experienced these new conditions in Vincennes-Saint-Denis, and after – you will immediately feel the difference: it's not only a matter of style, his style becoming less academic and conventional, it's about *the affect of philosophy itself*, about the rhythm of thought, the way it moves forward, the rhythm of thought in progress, the way concepts emerge and are “unfolded” - in sum the distinct traces of oral philosophy in written philosophy itself – the books Deleuze published in the 1970' and 1980', with or without Guattari. Oral philosophy and written (published) philosophy are both very different and intertwined, interconnected, they interact constantly in Deleuze's work.

From the 1970' on, Deleuze's original philosophy developed itself and “expanded” *between* these two spheres or levels – the oral and the written form. Spoken philosophy (the courses mainly) and written philosophy.

Each course has its own unity in style and thought, it's like a “scene” in a theater play. Each course, naturally, restarted, relaunched the previous one. But what we have to understand is that the courses were not used to present Deleuze's philosophy “in slices” - one course, one “slice” of, let's say, his theory of the affect-image (cinema). Deleuze didn't set out or displayed his philosophy in its logics, or as a program, he made it indirectly by staging a “conceptual character” - the professor as a teacher, a thinker and a story-teller – who travels through authors, books, theories, concepts, readings, and conveys that to the audience.

Deleuze's oral teaching makes the outlines, the contours of philosophy *fuzzy*. As you know, teaching philosophy as a discipline has, as a presupposition, that one knows what belongs to its field and what doesn't. From an academic view, philosophy is a field that has distinct borders – it should not be mixed up with literature and with neighboring disciplines like sociology and psychology. According to these rules and definitions, Sartre's work has to be cut into slices – *Being an Nothingness* has to be taught in philosophy departments, his novels in Literature departments and his theater plays in Theater or Visual art departments...

Deleuze's oral teaching disrupts and turns upside down these rules and academic habits – it is radically anti-disciplinary. What Deleuze completely puts into question or simply rejects is the idea that concepts only emerge and “dwell” in the space of philosophy, that is in relation to authors, theories, discourses that distinctly bear the label of philosophy. His idea is that there is no special or reserved *milieu* where concepts can come to light and prosper, this for the good reason that a concept is *an image* that takes shape in a discourse. The sudden or slow, progressive appearance of a concept as an image, an “image-concept” (concept-image) goes through vision, seeing. This “operation”, as you can easily imagine it, can take place in any sort or genre of discourse, provided something *happens*, something new that is akin to an act or creation in the realm (the domain) of thought or the life of the mind. This is the way Deleuze flattens the path that leads from philosophy to literature, cinema and other arts or discourses. In Kafka's short story *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*), the insect (the bug) becomes, in this regard, according to this approach, a concept, an image-concept. Or maybe the Indian, in western films. What we have to take carefully into consideration here is that the “concept-image” *is not a representation*, like, let's say, the American Indian as a representation or an incarnation of notions like dispossession, destitution, exile etc. or the wounded insect in Kafka's story as a symbol or an allegory for desolation and solitude. This is not what Deleuze has in mind when he deals with the “concept-image”. The “concept-image” is before all *a matter of intensity and expressiveness*. It is what nourishes and boosts our approach of things (social life, nature in time and space) by developing our intuition. It gives us a grip on reality. We think through images, “we ourselves are an image, our brain is already an image”, Deleuze says.

We'll come again on this issue which is crucial in Deleuze's philosophy, oral as well as written – what is a concept? And philosophy as the act(ivity) of creating concepts. This is how the course becomes some sort of a collective performance: Deleuze invites the audience to take (its) part in what he calls “l'acte du concept”, that is literally, “the act of the concept”, the act of creating a concept, making it emerge and take shape. At this place, we can understand why Deleuze is ready to address his course to “anybody”, not only to people who have a solid training in philosophy: since the milieu where the concept emerges can be any sort of discourse or knowledge, the only thing to do is to wander through various types of discourses and knowledge like a detective, an explorer, a butterfly hunter, looking for occasions, places where concepts are at issue. This is what Deleuze calls “nomadization” through discourses and knowledge, that is traveling through various stratas and

genres of knowledge and discourse. “Transversal”, “transversality” is the motto that is here at issue.

We have to take seriously into consideration this image – wandering through various spaces, thinking and creating concepts by traveling. For the presupposition of it is that for thinking, what you need is not only an abstract space, but what Deleuze calls a “surface of inscription”. Thought is inseparable from topology. Thinking is inseparable from displacement. Different styles of thought are comparable to different ways of traveling through various topographies – the desert, the steppe, through mountains, on sea, etc. See on that Deleuze's analysis of T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in *Critic and Clinic*.

There is no doubt that the university of Vincennes-Saint-Denis, as an institution, is an heritage of May 68, but in a rather ambiguous way: it didn't result directly from the movement itself, but from a calculation of the political authority, in the immediate aftermath of the event 68: the creation of this “experimental university” was a way of directing, canalizing the subversive energy and spirit of the movement by institutionalizing it, that is shutting it up within the space of this new university, and this in a topography that was very much remote, far from the center of Paris, far from the Quartier latin that had been the “heart” of the student's movement – first in the middle of the “Bois de Vincennes”, a forest, East of Paris, on a ground lent to the Ministry of Education by the French Army; and then Saint-Denis, in the outskirts of the capital, far from the center, an area peopled by workers and other people from former French colonies, with no metro station till the end of the 1980' – a real no man's land...

From this angle, Vincennes-St Denis, as an institutional device or arrangement, was intended for exiling subversion, the critical spirit of May 1968, for confining and shutting it away in some sort of a ready-made academic slum, if not purely and simply shanty town...

But this is only one aspect, one dimension of this strange and multifaceted “object” - Paris 8 as a deferred effect or, in Deleuzian terms, as (a) “becoming” of May 1968. From another angle, it actually became a very vivid and luxuriant site for all kinds of experimentation and experiences in thought, theory, pedagogy, a place where many pioneering researches were presented, in all the fields of social sciences and humanities, a place where so many young scholars who, later, would become famous earned their spurs, the first French university where psychoanalysis made its entrance, with famous lectures by Jacques Lacan, etc. From the very beginning, Vincennes became the pole, the source or seat of “all the forms of radical thought” (“l'université de toutes les radicalités”), as a French newspaper wrote on the occasion of the commemoration of May 68, fifty years later. Vincennes became an incubator for new forms of academic life, new ways of working at the university, new gestures that went much beyond the limits of the *normalization* of critical thought and subversive energies the strategists from above aimed at.

Deleuze's teaching was an integral part of this collective experimentation. But he had to clear for himself a path between two obstacles, and this path was very narrow. The first obstacle was normalization, of course, the expected progressive return of/to

traditional ways of teaching, based on the divide between those who know and are, for this reason, entitled to teach and those who don't know or know less and whose vocation is to learn. As I already mentioned, Deleuze's teaching was based, from the very beginning, on the rejection of these premises, that is the categorical refusal of that sort of distribution of places – the teacher, the student, the master, the disciple, etc. His teaching made things “more complicated”. But, on the other hand, Deleuze was not ready to accept without any reservation the idea that was very popular among many students, young teachers and less young one, the idea that Vincennes, as an heritage and a legacy of May 68 had to be a “red University”, that is a place where political and ideological guidelines should orient the form and the content of the teaching - the notion of the “red base”, borrowed from Mao's writings and the Cultural Revolution. The idea of Vincennes as a “liberated zone” by contrast with the rest of the academic topography, other universities still placed under the rule of bourgeois ideology and academic power...

For Deleuze was, of course very reluctant to comply with the requisites of such a *politicization* or *ideologization* of his teaching. He didn't think that the oral practice of philosophy, the creation of concepts could keep pace with or coincide with “the revolutionary struggle”, “the fight against the capital”, etc. Two completely heterogeneous horizons, in terms of discourse, communication device, “arrangements”. This is why Deleuze's teaching very often collided with conflicting projects – the transformation of the course into a political forum or ideological training session. As you can see from the videos, the course is the milieu where skirmishes recurrently take place, the requisites or oral philosophy clashing with those of, let's say, political, that is revolutionary rhetorics. This conflict frequently looks like *a duel* between Deleuze and the audience – or at least a part of it.

To sum up, he had to face two obstacles: *normalization* on the one hand and *over-politicization* on the other. Deleuze had to find his way, a narrow path between them. For this reason, his course, on the long term, from year to year was all you want but a “long and quiet river”, or, as Chairman Mao would say, a “gala dinner”. It required patience, endurance, resistance. The oral philosopher has to repeat himself, to resume, take up again the same demonstration or argument, this less in order to convince the audience than to disturb its certitudes and, beyond, to give rise to this special affect that is for him inseparable from philosophy – enthusiasm – “enthusiasm for philosophy”. There is a big difference between trying to convince, convert or hold sway over the audience and giving rise to the wish to practice philosophy, to be involved in a collective process of creation of concepts. Deleuze never tried to convince, he didn't stage his own work on the occasion of the courses, he gave rise to the affect that is connected to the collective practice of philosophy – enthusiasm that is supposed to be contagious and permeate the atmosphere of the course – some sort of a collective “good mood”, the pleasure to be together in some sort of a world apart – a space-time “bubble” or capsule. Such a course always resembles a collective travel, with its lot of not only change of scene(s), but *disorientation*.

This is something that only a professor who has displaced himself from the position of a “civil servant” of philosophy to that of an “artist philosopher” can achieve. In the

context of a country like France, this displacement is related to decisive stakes. Philosophy has become in France an academic discipline around 1830, this under the aegis of a philosopher and statesman, Victor Cousin, the founder of the so-called “eclectic” school of philosophy. The result of this is that academic philosophy, within the borders of modern university, always was in France, from the very beginning, *a matter of state*, a political and ideological stake for the political authority. It had to be politically, ideologically correct, patriotic, spiritualist, but distinct from the teaching of the Catholic Church. It had to be civic and secular, but at the same time free from any contamination by materialist or radical theories. For this reason, the professor of philosophy, in secondary schools and in colleges, was (supposed to be) some sort of a secular priest at the service of the Republican state. He was supposed to be a loyal ideological servant of the interests of the state. The teaching of philosophy was supposed to be the crowning of the general and civic education of the elites, the synthesis of humanities as taught in primary and secondary schools, and, for the happy few, at the University. This is why this teaching was supposed to consist in overlooking the history of philosophy as a continuous and homogeneous process and milieu where illustrious philosophers from the ancient Greek civilization are supposed to hold a dialog with the humanists of the Renaissance, where Heidegger echoes to Parmenides over the centuries and more thousands years, where theories, doctrines, systems communicate without meeting any spatial-temporal or cultural obstacle, where concepts circulate as freely as common goods under the present regime of global market.

On this basis, the philosopher was (and still is to a large extent) a teacher, a professor before all (by contrast with the “oriental” figure of the sage or wise man) and the promoter of a form of life of the spirit that is narrowly related to the state. He is the *state servant of the concept*, as Victor Cousin, the founding father of this system is supposed to have said.

As he joined the small “unit” or team that sets up the department of philosophy of Paris 8-Vincennes, at the beginning of the 1970', Deleuze completely rejected this role, and gave birth to a new character in the history of modern philosophy: he severed the bond that tied him to the state, he settled down as a “minority” thinker, he stopped implementing the classical rhetorics and didactics, he was in search for a new figure – *the artist-philosopher*. But, at the same time, he *still was* a professor and a state employee, he still got his salary from the Ministry of Education, he still was supposed to respect rules that are in vigor for all teachers – political neutrality, loyalty to the state, making the students pass exams, be a member of various caucuses, commissions and assemblies, being the member of juries for PhDs, etc. Some sort of a subtle double game then took shape: Deleuze (and many of his colleagues in the department of philosophy and in other institutes of the “experimental” university of Vincennes) did things exactly as it pleased them and those who were supposed to control him or take responsibility for what they were doing look in the other direction. Deleuze avoided direct, open provocations, he gave scores and records, but he never made the student pass an exam. In Deleuzian terms, he “nomadized” on the fringes of the academic institution, without breaking off with it – not only because it was his

livelihood, but also because the “experimental” university certainly was the place where he had a chance, his best chance, to meet people who were liable to be interested in his oral philosophy and “play the game” that made this form of teaching possible. Here again, we come across the notion of a “narrow path” - the narrow path Deleuze has to follow between “defection” (from the position of a classical philosophy teacher) and open secession (that would have led him to resign this position). It's some sort of a poker game he played with the state or the academic authority: he “double-crossed” the institution, he “cheated”, he was not a loyal civil servant, but, on the other hand the Academy and the rulers were not fooled by his double-game: they knew perfectly that playing hardball in such a case would be politically inopportune – Deleuze's (and other's) experimentation with philosophy was not such a but disturbance, such a big challenge to the authority, such a political danger – so they let it be, they let him follow his poetic path – and they are right to do so, of course – as what comes next shows... “Never send Voltaire to jail!”, General de Gaulle said, as some of his ministers advised him to sue Sartre for his commitments to the French radical “maos” - supporters of the Chinese Revolution and far left activists... For these people, statesmen, politicians, rulers know that, in the long term, such eccentric, dissident and uncompromising thinkers like Deleuze or Sartre and Foucault are liable to become part and parcel of the national intellectual and cultural patrimony...

#### 4-

Books, writings, in particular in the realm of philosophy, are supposed to be serious, authoritative, for they result from the long, solitary and in-depth meditation of the thinker. The seriousness of the writing is associated with the loneliness of the philosopher who works hard on his thick books. There is for Deleuze something solemn and dull about all this. This is why he inaugurates and experiments another way of “making philosophy”, more collective, more vibrant, less stiff and formal – with and through oral philosophy.

Written philosophy relies upon the activity of one actor or subject – the writer, the scribe – other actors take the baton from his hands only later – the critics, the commentators, the readers... Oral philosophy brings together, from the very beginning many actors – the “storyteller”, that is the artist philosopher, of course, but, as well, all those who interact with him, the first circle, those who put their tape-recorders on his table, sit close to him, chatter and joke with him before he starts the course, the amateur onlooker who comes and goes, the activist who enters the classroom to hand out his leaflet, the colleague who peeps through the door just to say hello, the pet (a little black dog) inseparable from one of the students and who begins to bark as the orator raises his voice and becomes eloquent about Spinoza or Carl-Gustav Dreyer, the great Danish filmmaker, etc. Oral philosophy makes the dimension or the horizon of the community appear, that is a more or less enigmatic, vague but insistent “we”, “us” - busying ourselves together at the service or on the account of philosophy...

The operation that consists in *sharing philosophy* is very different in the context of an

oral practice of it from what it is in the configuration of written philosophy: in the latter, is based on a divide – between the scribe, the thinker, the writer who is the *origin* of the operation, who sits on the throne of the creator, at the place of the founding father – the sovereign. His action, as a writer, is an absolute beginning. The sharing of his creation is delayed, it comes later, when the book or the article is published. In the context of oral philosophy, the operation of sharing is immediate – and for this reason so risky: if the “storyteller” is not in good form, in great form, if his speech is obscure, woolly and dull, it's not only that the audience is disappointed and distracted, it's that the community of thinking doesn't take shape, no “we”, no collective philosophical subject appears... But if the storyteller is in a good shape and mood, if the spark of his speech sets the classroom in fire, as, again, Chairman Mao would say, a collective enunciation arrangement based on various forms of cheerful and witty interactions develops, a collective affect arises, inseparable from the circulation of concepts and the “construction of problems”. The collective practice of philosophy or maybe philosophy in the dimension of collective agency is a matter of intensity, speed, rhythm, color, images – a collective travel and adventure. The practice of oral philosophy has, as a presupposition, the *deterritorialization* of philosophy – implementing new gestures in the realm of philosophy, but before all, displacing it, taking it to new spaces or disrupting, shattering the “geography” of philosophy.

Promoting oral philosophy, it's like an exodus out of the well marked topography of academic philosophy, it's an exploration of unfamiliar grounds. Nobody can say in advance what will result from it, what its gains and losses will be.

Deleuze insisted on that: the one and only stake, element, horizon of the course was (the) *research* – he was not interested at all in checking and evaluating what the capacities and competence of the students were, in relation to the subject he is dealing with in the course, he didn't want to be an *appraiser*, a *valuer*, that is, basically, a *judge*. He didn't give a mark a score, he just signs a list of names, meaning: pass – everyone passed the exam. Pure fiction, everybody knew about it, nobody objects... There is a famous remark by Deleuze, it's maybe from the *Alphabet Book*, saying: “Never be a judge! Rather be a sweeper, a road sweeper than a judge!”. A remark we can associate with what he said in a famous exchange he has with Foucault on the issue “The intellectuals and power”. Deleuze says: “Never fall in love with power!” and Foucault later took over this statement that became very popular among young radical intellectuals.

In other terms, what Deleuze did put down is the disciplinary dimension of the course, and of his own position as a teacher. The course was dismissed or relieved as a disciplinary space and redeployed as some sort of a laboratory where the participants became creative. Deleuze said in a very elliptical style: one becomes a philosopher when one finds what his-her problem is. This statement is not at all related to the psyche of the individual, it means that you have to do what you need for your own sake out of what he (Deleuze) says. You have to “problematize” by yourself the question that matters for you, he will not do it for you. Actually, as he talks, he hardly addresses the audience, he speaks for himself, he speaks, Deleuze says, “into his own ear”, for himself, maybe, as he talks, he already is writing his next book – but, he

speaks for himself in a loud voice “on the market-place”, in the middle of the crowd... Then, the people who listen to him have to do the job by themselves, they can “catch” snatches from what he said that impress them, that fires their imagination, they connect to what he said in very different ways, they take the baton (of the concept) from his hands and pass it to someone else, they reorient his discourse in another direction, according to their own preoccupations and inclinations, etc.

In other terms, Deleuze's oral practice of philosophy brings about a complete change in the relation between the teacher and his public. We pass from a relation, the classical relation between the teacher and his audience that is dual, to something that is more complex – *rhizomatic* – a notion that is central in Deleuze's and Guattari's vocabulary. A rhizome is what they oppose to a root. A root is compact and massive, a rhizome is dispersive and it proliferates in all directions. For Deleuze and Guattari, the connotation of “root” or “roots” is static, it's associated with strong identities, roots have to go deep into the ground, roots are exclusive – autochtony is related to “roots”, the image of roots. On the opposite, rhizomes develop and expand in all directions, they are related to multiplicity and movement, dissemination, dispersion: this gives its impulse to the effect Deleuze is expecting from his teaching – a rhizomatic “effect”, this far beyond the dual (and uneven) relation between the teacher and the student. This is why the tape-recorders, the tapes are so important: they are one of the devices through which the course expands in a rhizomatic way (and can reach us today, at this place, Hsinchu, Taiwan, at the other end of the planet...).

It's an Utopian displacement of philosophy as a praxis. For us, who came after Deleuze and were supposed to follow in his footsteps, it still is an Utopia for we would not be able to take up the challenge he was for us. If you look at some of the videos of the courses, you will see that there is something unique, none of us can be equal to, in his way of teaching by deconstructing the classical way of doing it. Deleuze has many heirs in terms of doctrine and theory, there are plenty of “Deleuzians” all around the world - but there is no “school” of “oral philosophy” that derives from what he experimented, it remains without equal. Any imitation or mimetic effort make those who try it ridiculous. After the “golden years” at the department of philosophy in the University Vincennes-Saint Denis, the years as Foucault, Deleuze, Lyotard and some others put their mark on the teaching there, making of it some sort of an enchanted heterotopia, a process of “natural” normalization took place, classical forms of teaching, exams, scores and marks – all this came back in a rather soft and relaxed way, of course - but not much in common with the radical breach in the teaching device Deleuze had tried to promote.

This is why this experience, inseparable from his name and his work, appears in retrospect as a shooting star much more than a landmark for those who came after. This is why it bears the mark of “Utopia”, an experience that was unprecedented and “intestate”, that is without legacy, a glittering splinter of Utopia, lost in the night of the past or maybe an awaken dream that just slips away.

In the last decades of the XXth century, the notion of alternatives to academic philosophy was popular in France, so that various attempts to reach a broader public,

to make philosophy more “popular” developed at the same time. Let me mention two of them that exerted a lasting effect on the reception of philosophy in public spaces, in France. On the one hand, the creation of the “Collège International de Philosophie”, in the 1980', initiated, among others by Jacques Derrida which was supposed to be a soft institution where young scholars from everywhere, not only France, would have the possibility to present their research, to hold seminars, this without having to make exams pass, to give marks and scores, seminars anybody could attend; in short an institution that would be completely independent from the university that was, during these years, involved in a process of constant “normalization”. The Ciph (the abbreviated name of it) was supposed to be a place where scholars from all continents, all countries, including China for example, which was rather new at that time, would have a chance to meet with French young researchers and teachers, develop common projects, seminars, conferences, networks, etc. But, as time passed, this soft and independent institution that was supposed to be devoted to research and international exchange, in philosophy, became the spare wheel of the academic philosophy, providing provisional positions to students who had graduated and were unemployed, being used by well established people at the scale of global philosophy. As time passed, it appeared that there was absolutely no difference between a seminar at the Ciph, at the Ecole Normale Supérieure or at La Sorbonne, no difference in the way of teaching, no difference in cronyism and buddy-buddy regime, etc... The Ciph has been normalized as an institution whose survival relies on the good will of the political authority and this is where Derrida's innovative project was entrapped. In a vivid contrast to that, Deleuze's oral philosophy remains what it always was, an Utopia, for it cannot be institutionalized and normalized by the same token.

Another interesting innovation in the spreading of philosophy, from the 1980's on, was the promotion in various cities of France, Caen, Lyon and others, of the so-called “Universités populaires” - “People's universities”. The inventor of this new device was a young man who, at that time taught philosophy in a secondary school, Michel Onfray who set on foot, with the support of local authorities the first “université populaire” on the campus of the University of Caen, in Normandy. This initiative was very successful, the courses intended for the general public attracted many people from all conditions, Onfray himself promoting a teaching of philosophy aimed at its “popularization”. The success of the “université populaire” in Caen encouraged people to develop the same kind of device in other cities, and it worked. But what was innovative here was the idea of addressing erudite, specialized knowledge to a non-student public, to anybody who was interested and, in that sense of “pulling down” the walls around the university – the notion of a “university for everybody”, university for the average citizen. Meanwhile, in terms of transmission of knowledge, it didn't change anything: lectures, lecturing delivered by good specialists, university professors who would do their best to “popularize” their teaching, that is adapt it to a broader and heterogeneous public by lowering the level of erudition and technicity of their courses in the face of this kind of audience. In line with this new arrangement, a new “concept” was promoted by the Academy itself, the so called “University de tous les savoirs”, literally “University for all knowledges”, that is some sort of open

university that would have its seat at La Sorbonne and that would consist in lectures given by well-known specialists and professors during the week-ends, intended for the general public, broadcast – an arrangement intended for the promotion of one of the mantras of contemporary democracy - “the democratization of culture and knowledge” - that is nothing in common with the kind of experimentation and gesture Deleuze was inclined to implement...

Then, a very equivocal development of Michel Onfray's “invention” was its media success, Onfray became progressively a media star, developing successfully radio programs dealing with the history of philosophy, giving interviews to big size TV channels, publishing best sellers and, of course, becoming, as success went to his head, the useful idiotic philosopher of the medias, the guy who has convinced himself that, having become a star, he has to be a genius and, as a consequence, writes in a few months a books intended for demonstrating that Sigmund Freud is a moron and an ignorant who has no idea of what the human soul and mind is...

I mention all this which is somehow anecdotal about French cultural life during the last decades for it enhances, by contrast, the uniqueness and the “beauty” of Deleuze's Utopian perspective, as he took steps to completely extract the sharing or dissemination of philosophy out of the orbit disciplinary practices and devices. The idea he then “played with” and the aim he assigned himself still overhang us, we are not equal to it, not “artists” enough and too much “scholars”, academic, scholastic, bookish, etc.

Just think of the “cafés philo” that have become trendy in all big cities of Taiwan these last years, a phenomenon that appeared in France in the 1980' – interesting, sympathetic, convivial – but certainly not places where the creation of concepts is at issue - 99% coffee, 1% philosophy...

Deleuze: a voice, an actor's voice, a voice that is constantly changing, as he performs various roles in what he calls an “improvised tragicomedy” - or maybe several characters speak through his voice – a young man and an old woman all together. This changing or multifaceted *voice* is just the opposite of the magisterial, authoritative, monotonous discourse of the classical professor who thinks that he has a full command of his subject. Deleuze is an actor, a performer. He has to prepare his course so carefully, in details that he will then be able to give the impression that he improvises, that he just follows the thread of the idea under the impulse of his inspiration or affect. This is why the delivery, in his speech, is irregular, he suddenly stutters, as if he would be fighting hard to find the right word, the proper image or expression, he gestures, all of a sudden he becomes vehement, the tone of his voice sometimes becomes almost violent, he stresses the point he wants to make, becomes eloquent, lyrical or, on the opposite, ironical, sardonic, burlesque, etc – he likes doing his little act, it's a way of discouraging and keeping at bay fans, disciples, courtesans, flatterers. It's a way of undermining the professor's, the master's authority by replacing him with “the artist”, the comedian. It's a way of suggesting: take what you want from what I'm saying, but don't take me too seriously, I'm not an idol, a spiritual leader, a big chief in the realm of philosophy. For this reason, don't trust me, don't

stick to me but rather care about the spoken “flux”, that is the “units of meaning” that are conveyed and carried by my voice. The horizon of this talk is “the impersonal”. Deleuze's philosophy placed not under the sign of Deleuze as an individual, an author, a star in the sky of contemporary philosophy but as a voice, an oral flux that happens to carry this name but that is, basically placed under the aegis of the “impersonal”. What matters is not the author as a label, it is not, as well the “message” (there is no message) but what the tone and the affect of the voice conveys. On this issue – the philosopher (Deleuze) as an actor, a comedian, see the two essays of Denis Diderot: *Rameau's Nephew* and *Paradox of the Actor*.

### ***On the genesis of the Alphabet book***

Pierre-André Boutang, a TV producer, notably on the German-French channel Arte, the initiator of high level programs like *Océaniques*, *Métropolis*, asked Claire Parnet, who was a student and friend of Gilles Deleuze if she would be available to prepare something on Deleuze with him – with the participation of Deleuze himself, of course. Parnet asked Deleuze and he first was evasive, saying neither yes or no. Deleuze was reluctant to participate in any program that would be either mostly biographical or pedagogical, that is something “educational” and simplified on his work, some sort of a best of of his books... This is how the idea of the Alphabet book arose, as an “arrangement” or device that would break the rules of that kind of conventional exercise he had no inclination for. As a consequence, the first thing that must be stressed is that the *A. B.* doesn't result from *an order* from a TV channel but from the initiative of people who, having good connection with this “cultural” channel, Arte, thought that Deleuze's work is something that *matters* and was worthy to be introduced not, properly speaking, to the “general public” (Arte is or was some sort of an “elite” channel) but, for the least to the educated and enlightened people who look at it...

As he accepted to “play the game”, Deleuze put a few conditions, notably, that the broadcasting of the *A.B.* Should be posthumous. Second, that Claire Parnet and only her should be his discussion partner (no journalist!).

As Boutang began to shoot the *A. B.*, he didn't know if the film, in its full length, would be broadcasted. It was his personal initiative, he took the risk, it was a challenge, a bet. He borrowed money from his bank, was helped by a friend, a producer, called Seligman and, this is of some importance, by the then ruling Minister for Culture, Jack Lang, President Mitterrand's friend, but rather on the basis of a personal affinity with the project than within the scope of a vast project on the promotion of philosophy as a cultural good or anything of that kind...

Now if we focus on the staging of the *A. B.*, the aesthetic concept and technical arrangement of it, we see that it was resolutely *minimalist*: the shooting took place in Deleuze's apartment, in his study, a big mirror hanging behind him, in which Claire Parnet's face is reflected, her constant smoking, her febrility, her knowing smiles, interjections and laughs...

The *A. B.* was filmed by a light crew made of five persons, the director or producer, Boutang, the cameraman, the sound engineer, a lighting engineer and Parnet, the

interviewer. All these people packed in a rather small room, Boutang and the technical staff doing their best to be as discreet as possible and not to disturb Deleuze. Each reel lasts 11 mn and as it ends, they have to interrupt Deleuze in his speech. Boutang decided to make of this constraint a part of the work, that is what would give its particular and specific “rythm” to the conversation between Deleuze and Parnet, each interruption becoming some sort of a “breathing” (*respiration* in French) that would stress or scan the verbal exchange between Deleuze and Parnet. This is why the editing of the film is minimalist too and the interruptions have been kept in in, with the clapperboard that relauches the exchange every eleven minutes... Sometimes, the recording of Deleuze's voice continues for a few seconds as the picture fades away and Boutang also keeps these “imperfections” in the final version of the film. It's a way of suggesting, of course, that what matters is Deleuze's speech and statements, not the film as a piece of art of an aesthetic performance.

When the shooting was over, it appeared that Boutang didn't have the money for the processing of the film and the editing... All this took place before Deleuze became a celebrity, an intellectual star... For this reason, it took a long time before he was able to complete his film and deliver it to Arte.

If you listen carefully to the *A. B.*, you will notice that, like Deleuze's courses, what seems to be improvised” and spontaneous in the expression actually has been carefully prepared “upstream”. It's not only that Parnet is very familiar with Deleuze's philosophy, habits and personal life, it's also that the former, knowing in advance what the articles or items of the *A. B.* would be, he had time to prepare himself for this very extraordinary conversation.

This film is, for Deleuze, Parnet and Boutang, an archive, a message in a bottle for the next generations, all you want except a media-staged coup, and, for the former some sort of a will, a testament. At last, the *A. B.* was broadcasted before Deleuze's death, as he was already seriously ill, not long before he committed suicide. It was (the broadcasting) for all those who took part in this unique and exciting philosophical game, like a farewell ceremony.

Finally, one could argue, of course, that Parnet's choice of the items, or such or such of them, is quite disputable – why, for example, at the letter “P” “Professor” rather than, let's say “People” that would, to be sure, have been a very good clue for anybody who is interested in Deleuze's politics... Was it Parnet's personal choice or have Deleuze and Parnet selected the items together – this is something I don't know... Sometimes, I find that the list of the entry words is a bit too conventional or commonplace - but if it was Deleuze's himself choice, no objection can be raised...

\*\*\*

Deleuze et le roman RAI 9'

Deleuze sur le langage RAI 3'

Deleuze interprète l'homme aux loups 4'

Deleuze, Nietzsche, l'amour et les affects

Bibliography: Charles Soulié: “la pédagogie charismatique de Gilles Deleuze à Vincennes”, *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences sociales*, 2017, n° 216/217.

“Qu'est-ce que l'acte de création?” conférence à la Femis – ss-titres en anglais.

Problem: not many courses or lectures available on Youtube with English subtitles.

For this reason, we have to focus on the Alphabet Book.