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# Difference And Repetition



## Synopsis

This brilliant exposition of the critique of identity is a classic in contemporary philosophy and one of Deleuze's most important works. Of fundamental importance to literary critics and philosophers, *Difference and Repetition* develops two central concepts—pure difference and complex repetition—and shows how the two concepts are related. While difference implies divergence and decentering, repetition is associated with displacement and disguising. Central in initiating the shift in French thought away from Hegel and Marx toward Nietzsche and Freud, *Difference and Repetition* moves deftly to establish a fundamental critique of Western metaphysics.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It has been said that Deleuze stands in a class all his own. Moving freely between the movements of structuralism, psychoanalysis, logical analysis, phenomenology, Kantian critique, and on, Deleuze proves unlocalizable in any one tradition (with the possible exception of a certain form of Bergsonism). Unlike other French philosophers from the school of sixty eight, Deleuze does not seem to fall into the so-called linguistic turn, but instead formulates a highly complex process philosophy capable of simultaneously accomodating these views and going beyond them. *Difference and Repetition* is perhaps the single most important text in Deleuze's corpus for understanding the nature of his project. It is likely that fans of *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* will disagree with this assesment, but these latter texts only take on their full critical force

when understood in light of this text. The aims of *Difference and Repetition* are two-fold: On the one hand, Deleuze presents his critique of what he calls "the image of thought" which, he contends, is a way of thinking that tends to dogmatically reinforce dominant ways of thinking. Here we are given Deleuze's critique of representation and identity and the grounds under which they become possible and come to totalize the field of thinking. On the other hand, *Difference and Repetition* strives to formulate a new ontology and aesthetics capable of explaining the conditions under which it is possible for something new to be created. The result is that Deleuze is able to avoid substance metaphysics based on the matter/form distinction in order to formulate a metaphysics of morphogenesis capable of explaining how forms themselves are generated. Thus Deleuze brings about a reversal of Platonism, such that beings are no longer seen as the realization of forms, but instead as the actualization of processes in becoming. Putting Deleuze's project in Kantian terms, difference becomes the cipher for a transcendental aesthetic that no longer shackles the different to the identical (Deleuze claims that the philosophical tradition is without a concept of difference, but has always subsumed difference under identity), repetition describes the modes of synthesis taking place in relating differences to differences through differences (Deleuze argues that repetition is not the repetition of the same but of a difference and is thus productive). The final two chapters of *Difference and Repetition* then give a complex account of the process of individuation that takes place through difference and its synthesis by repetition in generating new forms out of problems, questions, and the intensities they produce. Where Kant had only been able to approach aesthetics from the perspective of the spectator and the subject, Deleuze produces an aesthetics of creation itself, where the aesthetic process becomes unbound from the subject and is the affirmative and productive power of being producing itself in and through itself. This book is as difficult as it is rich, but will deeply reward the diligent reader with both a new perspective on the world and how we relate to it, and an increased understanding of what it means to do philosophy.

*Difference and repetition* struck me as nothing I've ever read before has struck me. The fun thing about "reading" it, is that, when you think about it, the act of reading itself makes understanding parts of this work more clear. Reading this becomes a "machinic" activity as it were: immediate, affective, with its own unpredictability, with many gaps, moments of insight, despair, and so on. It seems contradictory, because I think it is the most rigorous and analytic of all of Deleuze's works. But it is immensely dense, as other reviewers also say. It is certainly the crucial work in his oeuvre. Really if you have tried it a few times, you will notice that many ideas of his later work are based on the crucial notions of this grand exploration. *Anti-Oedipe* is such a delight to read and easy to

understand after this one. And I think it is good for those who want to approach Deleuze's thought, to start with the *Anti-Oedipus* and *Mille Plateaux*, then read some of the smaller and intensive works (*What is philosophy*, *Leibniz et le Baroque*). Then try this book. You will get many references and want to read all others once again. It is clearly in this work that you will find the first monstrous and frontal attack against Hegel's dialectic. The fun thing is that this is a complete "anti-work". Every conceivable concept of modern philosophy (from the concept of "common sense", "history", or "being") gets an "anti", with which Deleuze consistently builds his grand idea of the immediate, the pre- or non-representational and the virtual--against any metaphysics. It is moreover his first, and I think also his last work where he builds his philosophy in a consistent manner. After this one, I think he started exploring fragments of his thought more deeply, in his other works, which are derivatives so to speak. This is his goodbye to classic French philosophy (strong tradition of exploring the "history of philosophy") and his entrance into his own experimentation with the concepts he just developed. To conclude, just some practical notes. The problem with the book is that, unlike his other works, you have to read all of it (because it is so consistent). This makes it a project for months, or even years. Good luck.

It took me reading Deleuze's books on Kant, Bergson, Nietzsche, Foucault and his collaborations with Guattari in *Thousand Plateaus* and *Anti-Oedipus* to finally get through this book. *Difference and Repetition* explains all the others, but is incredibly dense and in no way an introduction to his thinking. If you're familiar with his project, however, then this brings the rest of his readings into focus. It's in this book that Deleuze gets as close as he ever comes to replying to Hegel, and in that sense it's here that he contends with the master and the dialectic--a battle or contest characteristic of his French compatriots (see Vincent Descombes' fantastic book: *Modern French Philosophy*; and Michael Hardt's summary of the early Deleuzian projects: *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*). *Difference and repetition* are such an alternative to the dialectic that they're difficult to grasp without a serious grounding in metaphysics (see his books on Kant and Hume especially), Spinoza, and Bergson. Deleuze wants to show that there is a materiality of expression that is also a movement within time, an unfolding that is also a becoming (and in this sense in contrast to Being). This movement image (which founds his analysis in the *Cinema* books) grounds for Deleuze a transcendental empiricism, which is to say a non-conceptual and material, positive and affirmative idea of thought. Read his books on Kant and Hume first for an overview of his critique of representation. I think this book is stunning, and I hope to read it over and over. The first three chapters are incredible, and amount to nothing short of a complete undoing of representational

thought, or what he characterizes as a logic of the same.

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