

JOHN MULLARKEY  
UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE  
50 SHARDELOES ROAD, LONDON, SE14 6SL  
UK  
Tel. 00447737355483  
j.mullarkey@dundee.ac.uk

### **Performative Metaphysics**

In the conjoined work of Deleuze and Bergson we have instances of what might best be described as 'performative metaphysics'. When we ask the question, for example, 'what is Deleuze's metaphysics?' the answer usually comes back that it is a 'doing', a 'creating', or a 'practice' rather than a 'theory'. But what does this 'doing' actually mean? If Deleuze's philosophy is theatrical (as Foucault famously said), its theatrics and dramatisation rest, I'll argue, on its performativity, on what it embodies through performance. This performance is indeed creation, the constant creation of new concepts, new vocabularies, and even new images (diagrams in particular) that strive to subtend and subvert the old dichotomies of subject and object or, indeed, of theory and practice itself. This is also particularly evident in Bergson's concept of the *élan vital* when, in *Creative Evolution*, he speaks of the 'living act' that is able to 'break the circle' engendered between metaphysics and science, as well as his characterisation of the object of metaphysics in 'An Introduction to Metaphysics' as what must 'perform qualitative differentiations and integrations'. The metaphysical knowledge Bergson speaks of here is clearly performative. In this paper I show a number of other examples of the performative element immanent within the expression of Bergson's and Deleuze's philosophy, especially with regards to their constant renewal of metaphysical terms and images in order to resist – by movement – any conceptual hypostatisation. This effort, we'll see, is not in order that their thought might better re-present reality as its content, but rather because it performs reality as metaphysical creation.