

the way in which it reads Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty together on the theme of sensible ideas, two figures that are often situated antagonistically in light of Deleuze's strong criticisms of phenomenology. Yet, beyond the originality of this cooperative reading, Carbone seems hesitant to move beyond Merleau-Ponty or Deleuze, at least in the scope of the present project. *An Unprecedented Deformation* is an excellent integration of a series of essays that Carbone has dedicated to the theme of sensible ideas in recent years, leaving one with the hope for a fuller work to come.

François Raffoul, *The Origins of Responsibility*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010; 341 pages. ISBN: 978-0253221735.

Review by Yasemin Sari, University of Alberta

Raffoul's work is the culmination of a kind of questioning that poses as philosophy's task the task of rethinking the ethicality of ethics itself. Formulated in this way, the work falls far from the tradition that understands ethics in terms of the freedom of the will and the problematic of subjectivity itself. As the title of his work suggests, Raffoul attempts to lay out the "origins" of responsibility, setting out his question in opposition to finding "the origin" of responsibility in the *idea* of "the accountability of a free autonomous subject." (1) While these terms have informed the tradition of thinking about "responsibility," understood either, as in the Aristotelian account, in terms of the agent's responsibility for her voluntary acts or, as in the Kantian account, in terms of the autonomy of the subject, Raffoul suggests that from Nietzsche onwards, the "continental" tradition has posed the question of responsibility differently, that is, apart from the accountability of a subject that is enclosed upon itself. Accordingly, Raffoul's investigation aims at uncovering the phenomenological origins of responsibility upon which the accounts of Nietzsche, Sartre, Levinas, Heidegger, and Derrida rest. Raffoul lays out his project as a response to the following four "fundamental concepts" (8–9) that are central to the traditional account of responsibility: 1) the belief that the human being is an agent or a subject, 2) the notion that the subject is a voluntary agent, 3) the reliance on causality, 4) the assumption that the responsible being is a rational subject.

The first two chapters consist of an explication of the accounts of responsibility in Aristotle and Kant. For the former, the notion of the “will” does not play a central role in responsibility because freedom is a matter of the public realm where one can manifest oneself, and not a private matter of one’s individual solitary self. Yet, Aristotle’s account utilises the distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions in order to understand the agent’s responsibility: the agent is responsible for her voluntary acts, the ones based on a deliberation that results in a choice. Raffoul explains how this decision comes about because of a principle that belongs to the agent. For Kant, however, responsibility is grounded in the free will of a subjectivity who governs and is governed by a priori rules of both cognition and morality. The Kantian categorical imperative in this sense becomes the centre of an “autonomous” individual. Whereas in ancient Greece *nomos* was conceived to be the result of societal customs and practices, Kant is trying to show the significance of thinking for oneself and determining oneself in a rational and reflective manner. Kantian subjectivity, Raffoul points out, is about self-governance and self-ownership. However, as Raffoul suggests, this account of subjectivity is not without problems, because it renders the freedom of the will a matter of subjection to duty. This autonomous self-determination entails a subject that can be understood in and of itself, that is, a subject that is a transcendental ground. Although the subject can act, or begin from itself, that is, spontaneously, this subjectivity operates within the calculability of actions and their outcomes. This is true even if responsibility is linked to the motives behind, rather than the consequences of, actions. As such, autonomy is connected to moral responsibility and to the praise- or blameworthiness that can only be attached to an action that we could have done for different reasons.

In order to deconstruct the articulation of an autonomous and freely willing subject, Raffoul moves on to Nietzsche’s account of the self in Chapter 3, where the “rational autonomous self” is shown to be only a construction of the human being itself. Nietzsche suggests that this freely willing self is itself a creation that accompanies the creation of values. Raffoul lays out Nietzsche’s revaluation of values and the significance of his critique in offering a genealogy of values. Although Nietzsche is a pivotal figure in Raffoul’s work, his analysis of the philosopher is not meant to be a comprehensive introduction to Nietzsche since many of the discontinuousness/differences in his own account are

omitted. The reason is probably that Raffoul's project is not only to lay out the post-Nietzschean tradition in detail, but to follow a certain route in rethinking of responsibility. This is why in a sense the central figure in Raffoul's work is not Nietzsche but Heidegger and the work unfolds from Heidegger's "fundamental ontology" to Derrida's "possibility of impossibility as an aporia." (293)

In Chapter 4, Raffoul explicates Sartre's account of freedom and responsibility, which rests on the groundlessness of existence that leads to a boundlessness of responsibility in which activism and hope are found. Raffoul's explication is quite plausible as it reveals the "subjectivist bias" found in Sartre's absolute responsibility. This responsibility is understood in action, and in this sense, as Raffoul says, "existentialism is a philosophy of action, and to that extent, of hope." (128) Still, Raffoul finds Sartre's account deficient in explaining what is at stake in this activism and hope and how one can achieve these states. In this regard, Raffoul's usage of the notion of "praxis"—which he does not sufficiently distinguish from "practice" when he asserts, for example, that "ethics thus becomes the praxis of one's very freedom, and its justification ultimately lies in such a praxis" (124)—becomes problematic. Ultimately, Raffoul suggests that Sartre promotes a freedom for responsibility through his emphasis on the (subjective) making or invention of ethics.

Next, Raffoul turns to Levinas, and the focus shifts away from a responsibility that stems from individual freedom to a responsibility that comes "before one's freedom" and before oneself. Here, Raffoul explains Levinas' attempt to "overcome the very horizon of egology" (163) by founding responsibility in the self becoming a "respondent" to the other, that is, responsible-for-the-other. As Raffoul states clearly, Levinas not only turns away from a Sartrean ontology of the subject, but he also offers a "break with ontology" that becomes a "break with Heidegger." (166) Raffoul explains how responsibility "is not the consequence of the faculty of free will, and is not even based on a pre-given self," for "responsibility does not suppose a self-given identity" (196) insofar as it rests on the encounter with the other's face in the Levinasian sense.

At this point, we understand that the key figure of Raffoul's project is Heidegger, whose "fundamental ontology" is discussed in Chapter Five. And this chapter becomes a turning point in Raffoul's own project since it is here that he tries to integrate a Heideggerian "originary ethics" with a Derridean understanding of impossibility as possibility. For Hei-

degger, ethics is originary, as Raffoul suggests, insofar as it is connected with factual existence—or, related to the thinking of being that becomes a call for a responsible engagement. (222) This human existence, understood as Dasein's unsurpassable factual existence, brings about an understanding of ethics that is necessarily worldly and that belongs to the human being's resoluteness. This paves the way for an ethics that is essentially linked to the singularity of existence itself. From here, Raffoul can move on to the Derridian understanding of singularity not as belonging to existence alone, but to the "event" of the inappropriability of calculation. In this sense, "responsibility is an openness to the incalculable through the aporia of its lack of foundation." (295) In the end, this is how we should understand the origins of responsibility, the origination of which belongs to the impossible, that is the impossibility of rules and calculation: only such an impossibility can bring about a truly inventive ethics of the event that is always unpredictable and futural.

Raffoul's attempt to explain the origins of responsibility divorced from a metaphysical account of "subjectivity" is an important task. However, condensing the discussion into eight chapters and some three hundred pages proves to be challenging. It is not just a question of the number of figures to be discussed. Each of these figures utilises certain distinctions that are significant for Raffoul's project and that need to be carefully laid out if the project is going to be successful. For example, the terms "praxis" or "being" are frequently used by Raffoul, but their meanings are more often taken for granted than explicitly worked out in the book, especially with regard to their respective distinction from "practice" or "becoming." Moreover, the distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* that springs forth from Aristotelian philosophy becomes crucial in the tradition of continental thought on freedom, but Raffoul—although he mentions both notions in passing—does not attempt to clarify it. Lastly, Raffoul's book relies on description rather than argumentation. The descriptive style is suitable for a work titled *The Origins of Responsibility*, insofar as it points to a plurality of accounts. At the same time, it is a limited approach, presenting controversial parts of the account straightforwardly rather than being supported by arguments and defended against challenges.

Throughout his work, Raffoul explains the prominent views of the continental tradition on responsibility in accordance with his own project. However, it should be noted that this book would best serve an

audience with prior knowledge of this tradition. Raffoul's unreserved attitude and his use of continental terminology may be a setback for the reader who is not already acquainted with the tradition, although readers seeking a coherent account of the ethicality of ethics will find in this work a wonderful resource.

Félix Guattari, *Soft Subversions: Texts and Interviews 1977-1985* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009; 341 pages. ISBN: 978-1584350736.

Review by Maxwell Kennel, University of Waterloo

The release of a second edition of Félix Guattari's *Soft Subversions* might serve to indicate a rising interest in the work of the French psychoanalyst and philosopher. To confirm this indication we need only look to Talyor Adkins' excellent translation of Guattari's *The Machinic Unconscious* published by Semiotext(e) last year. Late in the coming year we can also expect a translation of his 1989 work, *Cartographies Schizoanalytiques (Schizoanalytic Cartographies)* from Continuum Press. The publication of *The Guattari Effect*, an anthology edited by Andrew Goffey and Éric Alliez, further confirms that there is a considerable increase in curiosity about Guattari's work.

The new edition of *Soft Subversions* joins the new Semiotext(e) edition of *Chaosophy* (both edited by Sylvère Lotringer), as a reorganisation, systematisation, and supplement to the original editions of the two works. Whereas the new edition of *Chaosophy* contains texts from 1972 to 1977, the new edition of *Soft Subversions* contains texts from the years that follow, 1977 to 1985 (years which are described by Guattari as *les années d'hiver*). Seen in the light of other works like *The Machinic Unconscious* or *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, *Soft Subversions* stands out as a more suitable entry point for those coming to Guattari for the first time (if one can even speak of a Guattari without Deleuze). *Soft Subversions* has all of the qualities of a good introduction: accessibility relative to his other works, short installments covering a period of several years, broad thematic content and a helpful introduction (courtesy of Charles J. Stivale).