Gilles DELEUZE

GREAT THINKERS

CHRISTOPHER WATKIN
Foreword by Peter J. Leithart

"A dear friend of mine in France seriously questioned his faith by reading Gilles Deleuze. He did return to the gospel, but might have done so sooner had he been able to read Watkin's excellent volume. The author carefully and masterfully introduces us to Deleuze. One of the philosopher's great appeals is his creative alternatives to typical atheism. Some of it *sounds* Christian: his celebration of difference; his critique of the chain of being; his appeal to dynamic, rather than static, ways of living. But it all ends up a brilliant caricature, and Watkin helps us see where Deleuze misses the boat. To boot, his presentation of the Christian worldview is marvelous. Why should any of this matter? If you think you have not been influenced by French poststructuralism, you need to think again. It's in the cultural air we breathe. Watkin helps us clear away the smog. As someone I sat next to during a rather technical speech told me: 'I don't understand a lot of this, but I'm glad the speaker is on our side!' Watkin does understand it, and he is on our side."

—**William Edgar**, Professor of Apologetics, Westminster Theological Seminary

"Cutting through the often-impenetrable language of French poststructuralism, Chris Watkin has done us all a service. Few philosophers of the past fifty years have carried forward Nietzsche's 'inverted Platonism' (i.e., nihilism) more compellingly than Deleuze. Besides letting Deleuze's own views come through clearly, Watkin supplies an astute critique and hopeful alternative in Christian eschatology."

—**Michael Horton**, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California

"Watkin affords the Christian believer another fine entrée to participate in the philosophical life to which all humans are born:

to understand both how Gilles Deleuze profoundly voiced our time, and also how very cool (adding to Peter Leithart's designation of 'weird'!) is the philosophizing that Christianity engenders. Christianity's welcoming approach of the gospel breaks in and breaks open human thought and culture, as David Kettle describes it, winsomely rendering it more itself than it could otherwise be. And that's true of Deleuze just as it was of Plato."

—**Esther Lightcap Meek**, Professor of Philosophy, Geneva College; author, *Loving to Know: Introducing Covenant Epistemology*

"As with his previous books on Derrida and Foucault, Christopher Watkin once more demonstrates what an immense blessing he is to the Christian community as he holds our hands and guides us expertly through the complex world of Gilles Deleuze—a world that has shaped, and continues to shape in profound ways, our contemporary Western society. It is the model of Watkin's engagement that is so important, and at times so discomforting. He will not let us get away with superficial and simplistic descriptions, analyses, and critiques. Rather, he demonstrates the Christian virtue of careful and sympathetic listening so necessary in the process of cultural apologetics and biblical refutation. Finally, as with his other works in this series, one finishes Watkin's analysis with wonderment, praising God for the depth, the breadth, and the radical nature of the Christian worldview and the person and work of Jesus Christ."

—**Dan Strange**, Director, Oak Hill College, London

"The hurricane that was postmodernity may have blown itself out, yet many left to deal with the wreckage still want to know what happened. What, after the 'death' of God in the 1960s, was still holding up the edifice of traditional Western philosophy that required further dismantling? One of the best answers I've

come across yet is in Christopher Watkin's little gem of a book, on the most important twentieth-century French philosopher you've never heard of: Gilles Deleuze. This deep dive into the concept of *difference* explains why postmodern philosophy is less a footnote to Plato than a crushing of his heel. Getting a better grasp on Deleuze even yields insights into the forces shaping the outlooks and experience of those who belong to Gen X, Y, or Z. Not only that: Watkin's book comes with a bonus, namely, a comparison and contrast of Deleuze's way of thinking with that of the Bible. This is must reading for thinking Christians."

—**Kevin J. Vanhoozer**, Research Professor of Systematic Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Gilles

DELEUZE

GREAT THINKERS

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Gilles
DELEUZE

Christopher Watkin

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For little Emma

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SERIES INTRODUCTION

Amid the rise and fall of nations and civilizations, the influence of a few great minds has been profound. Some of these remain relatively obscure even as their thought shapes our world; others have become household names. As we engage our cultural and social contexts as ambassadors and witnesses for Christ, we must identify and test against the Word those thinkers who have so singularly formed the present age.

The Great Thinkers series is designed to meet the need for critically assessing the seminal thoughts of these thinkers. Great Thinkers hosts a colorful roster of authors analyzing primary source material against a background of historical contextual issues, and providing rich theological assessment and response from a Reformed perspective.

Each author was invited to meet a threefold goal, so that each Great Thinkers volume is, first, *academically informed*. The brevity of Great Thinkers volumes sets a premium on each author's command of the subject matter and on the secondary discussions that have shaped each thinker's influence. Our authors identify the most influential features of their thinkers'

work and address them with precision and insight. Second, the series maintains a high standard of *biblical and theological faithfulness*. Each volume stands on an epistemic commitment to "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), and is thereby equipped for fruitful critical engagement. Finally, Great Thinkers texts are *accessible*, not burdened with jargon or unnecessarily difficult vocabulary. The goal is to inform and equip the reader as effectively as possible through clear writing, relevant analysis, and incisive, constructive critique. My hope is that this series will distinguish itself by striking with biblical faithfulness and the riches of the Reformed tradition at the central nerves of culture, cultural history, and intellectual heritage.

Bryce Craig, president of P&R Publishing, deserves hearty thanks for his initiative and encouragement in setting the series in motion and seeing it through. Many thanks as well to P&R's director of academic development, John Hughes, who has assumed, with cool efficiency, nearly every role on the production side of each volume. The Rev. Mark Moser carried much of the burden in the initial design of the series, acquisitions, and editing of the first several volumes. And the expert participation of Amanda Martin, P&R's editorial director, was essential at every turn. I have long admired P&R Publishing's commitment, steadfast now for over eighty-five years, to publishing excellent books promoting biblical understanding and cultural awareness, especially in the area of Christian apologetics. Sincere thanks to P&R, to these fine brothers and sisters, and to several others not mentioned here for the opportunity to serve as editor of the Great Thinkers series.

Nathan D. Shannon
Seoul, Korea

FOREWORD

Christians are likely to recoil at the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (1925–95), the subject of this book. He seems to be hostile to everything Christians love and to approve what Christians hate.

For Deleuze, the bogeyman of the history of philosophy is the concept of transcendence, the belief in two worlds—heaven and earth, this world and the next. Good Nietzschean that he is, Deleuze views transcendence as an enemy to life, requiring self-renunciation, demanding restraint of "lower" bodily desires, seducing humans to seek fulfillment elsewhere, grinding the masses down to mousy conformity. Platonism and Christianity are variant forms of the ontology and politics of transcendence, and both are targets of Deleuze's effort to confine philosophy to a plane of immanence. He aims to flatten the transcendent, hierarchical intellectual "tree" into a complex, nonhierarchical "stem system," to replace the arboreal with the rhizomic.

Philosophy, Deleuze says, is always political. Philosophers work back to front, not from observation and reflection on the way things are to ethical and political conclusions, but from a desired polity down to an ontology to justify it. First imagine

utopia; then rough in its foundations. Transcendence invents static essences to fix the differences that teem across the plane of immanence. Plato's dogmatic image of thought preserves political order and stability by turning philosophy itself into a "policing action" that judges between true and false. Deleuze advocates an ontology of liberation to break the chains and permit an infinite proliferation of styles of life.

Here is a philosopher who dashes off casual blasphemies such as "God is a lobster," who longs to dismantle the male/female binary to make room for a "thousand tiny sexes," who dissolves God even though (or because) the dissolution of the "self" necessarily follows, who blurs the relationship between humanity and the world, who wishes, once and for all, to erase from philosophy the last faint trace of theology.

Christians are likely to recoil, *and* to retreat, perhaps to the haven of a semi-Platonized Christianity, an unreflective realism, a worldview that gives priority to the static, the timeless, the safe. In this astonishingly patient and lucid introduction, Christopher Watkin neither recoils nor retreats. He does not play safe but dares to pay sympathetic attention. *Audi alteram partem*—"listen to the other part"—is his motto and method.

It pays off. By comparing Deleuze with the Bible, Watkin shows that Christian truth is far weirder than we realize. At times, the weirdness flames out when Deleuze unknowingly brushes up against biblical truth. To overturn Plato, Deleuze insists that there's no identity beyond or beneath difference and denies the primacy of the original over the copy, the priority of the model to the image. He thinks the same critique applies to Christianity, but he is late to the party. Following out the logic of the New Testament, Trinitarian theologians of the fourth century had already overturned Plato in just these ways. Within the Trinity there is no undifferentiated One above or beneath the Three, and within the Trinity the "image of the invisible God" is coeternal, even consubstantial, with the

Father whom he images. In the triune God, image and copy are as transcendent and primordial as the original and model.

At other times, Deleuzean insights call attention to underdeveloped possibilities of biblical thought. Essence, he says, is not being, but the power to become, a definition that may dovetail with the Bible's eschatological ontology: "what we will be has not yet appeared" (1 John 3:2). Borrowing from Henri Bergson, Deleuze recognizes that our perceptions in the present are indwelt by memories of past experience. We perceive a mug *as* a mug only because we have encountered other mugs and know their form and purpose. This mutual enfoldment of times might be taken as a vestige of the perichoretic relations of the persons of the Trinity.

Scripture "diagonalizes" Plato and Deleuze, cutting across radical critique and dogmatic transcendence to expose their hidden agreement. Deleuze turns Plato on his head without shattering the Platonic apparatus itself. Plato's ideas cannot become incarnate, nor does Deleuze's virtual, the transcendental condition of possibility of the actual. For both, the key to reality never makes itself known as sensible, visible, tangible. Scripture has more explosive strength. As John proclaims, the Word that is from the beginning, the Word in whom all things cohere, the Word that is the condition of possibility for all that is—*that* Word of life has been seen, touched, handled, heard. The Bible is more radical than Deleuze, its teaching on creation and incarnation *more* affirmative of immanence, particularity, matter, time, and even difference.

Watkin's volume is more than an introduction to Deleuze, more even than a model of bold Christian engagement with modern atheism. It is a remarkable piece of Christian philosophy in its own right, and will edify even those whose instinct is to recoil and retreat.

Peter J. Leithart
Beth-Elim
Gardendale, Alabama

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I am particularly grateful to Sean Bowden for commenting on a draft of Part 1 and providing valuable feedback on my reading of Deleuze, and to Daniel Strange, Charlie Butler, Graham Shearer, and Timothy Keller for providing encouragement for my writing when I might otherwise have laid down my pen. This is the third of my contributions to the P&R Great Thinkers series, discussing three giants who have helped shape much in our culture over the past half-century and more: Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze. I am grateful to series editor Nathan Shannon and P&R Director of Academic Development John Hughes for encouraging my vision to complete this trilogy of studies. The exercise has immeasurably enriched my own understanding of how Reformed theology and modern and contemporary thought can be brought into constructive conversation, and I hope and pray that something in these books might provide a similar service to others. Convention and enthusiasm join forces in directing me to extend my deepest, heartfelt thanks to my wife, Alison, whose sharpness of mind and tireless love are a source not only of many of the thoughts in these pages but also of the strength

and vision without which they would never have been written down at all. More than patience, more than inspiration, you have provided, once again, this book's sine qua non. *Soli deo gloria*.

ABBREVIATIONS

AO	*Anti-Oedipus*
ATP	*A Thousand Plateaus*
B	*Bergsonism*
C2	*Cinema 2: The Time-Image*
D	*Dialogues*
DI	*Desert Islands*
DR	*Difference and Repetition*
ECC	*Essays Critical and Clinical*
EPS	*Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*
ES	*Empiricism and Subjectivity*
F	*Foucault*
FBLS	*Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*
FLB	*The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*
LS	*The Logic of Sense*
NaP	*Nietzsche and Philosophy*
Ne	*Negotiations, 1972–1990*
PI	*Pure Immanence*
PS	*Proust and Signs*
SPP	*Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*

2RM	*Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*
WIP	*What Is Philosophy?*

INTRODUCTION

One of the ugly and besetting sins of academics is our tendency to complain about our students. They are lazy; they are intellectually incurious; they seek to cut corners and do the least work possible; they will complete no work unless they are awarded a mark for it; and so on. When we peel back the layers of this self-righteous litany, however, it often amounts to little more than saying, "My students are not like me"—or, more accurately, "My jaundiced view of my students is not like the sparkling image I have of myself." This, if we stop to think about it, is probably a very good thing both for ourselves and for our students.

Once in a while, however, a colleague will offer a judgment of a student that, far from being high-handedly dismissive, perfectly captures something that you always knew but couldn't put words to. I vividly remember hearing one such incisive comment, in the course of a telephone conversation in which a colleague was inviting me to examine a doctoral candidate in contemporary French thought. At one point in the conversation, she threw in a remark to the effect that "the candidate is good, but she's a member of the church of Deleuze." It wasn't a condemnation—more

an observation. For this candidate, it was Gilles Deleuze or bust: her intellectual Bible was Deleuze-only; she was an orthodox Deleuzian and did not suffer heretics gladly.

Deleuze can do that to you. He is one of those French thinkers—Foucault is another, Derrida perhaps a little less so—who continue to gather passionate disciples ready to dedicate the best years of their intellectual lives to becoming more Deleuzian than thou. This is no more meant as a condemnation than was my colleague's comment on the phone. Deleuze, as we will see, offers a comprehensive and in many ways a compelling account of reality, humanity, and politics that has fascinated and continues to fascinate many. But that is not why I have written this book on him for a Christian publisher. Deleuze is less cited than Foucault and often as difficult to read as Derrida, so why should Christians in particular and curious readers in general bother to expend their precious energy on understanding and engaging with his thought? Let me offer four reasons up front.

My first reason to read Deleuze is not the most exciting of the bunch, but it serves as a foundation for the following three: Deleuze is indispensable if we want to come to terms with the period in mid- to late-twentieth-century thinking that has—for better or, mostly, for worse—often carried the label *postmodern*.[1] In my own institution as well as in many others, a steady stream of PhD theses engage with Deleuze's thought. The journal *Deleuze Studies*, published by Edinburgh University Press, now runs to twelve volumes, and the book series Plateaus—New Directions in Deleuze Studies (also with EUP) boasts over thirty

1. The term *postmodern* appears in Deleuze's works very infrequently. It occurs in brief references to Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, and in a critical reading of Frederic Jameson's distinction between "modernism" and "postmodernism" (*F*, xxiii–xxv). Deleuze and Guattari were, as Philip Goodchild rightly notes, "scornful of the notion of 'postmodernity,'" in *Deleuze and Guattari: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire* (London: Sage, 1996), 2.

titles. For what it's worth, at the time of writing, Google Books records 1.1 million references to Deleuze.

If Deleuze rivals Foucault in the volume of academic activity that his writing generates these days, he rivals Derrida in its breadth. He has made defining contributions well beyond philosophy to disciplines as diverse as psychoanalysis, feminism, cinema, literature, ecology, queer theory, and politics, and this is reflected in the breadth of books on his thought. The list of titles beginning *Deleuze and . . .* runs to eighty volumes, including *Deleuze and Education*, *Deleuze and Sex*, *Deleuze and Art*, *Deleuze and Race*, and not forgetting *Deleuze and Theology* and *Deleuze and Religion*.

Deleuze's writing is not of purely academic interest, however, and this brings me to my second reason why Christians would do well to understand and engage with his thought. The extent to which Deleuze has both predicted and helped shape contemporary Western society is rivaled among recent French thinkers only perhaps by Foucault, and it was Foucault himself who famously predicted in 1970 that "perhaps one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian" ("*Un jour peut-être, le siècle sera Deleuzien*").[2] If Derrida and Foucault help us to understand how our society got where it is today, then perhaps Deleuze best of all can help us to understand where it may be headed tomorrow.

Moving now to the substance of Deleuze's thought, my third reason to commend him to your readerly attention is that he questions the self-evident with an uncanny and unusual tenacity. He takes some of the most prized shibboleths of our contemporary society, such as the truism that "we are all human deep down" and the value of multiculturalism, and reveals in them

2. Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philosophicum," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. R. Hurley et al., *Essential Works of Foucault 1954–84*, 2 (New York: New Press, 1998), 343. For a discussion of the complex and ambiguous meanings of the remark, see *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, xxi–xxii.

surprising and dangerous currents of oppression.[3] We may or may not agree with his analysis, but it certainly fulfills one of the characteristics of all good philosophy: it makes us think again about things we thought we knew, and it invites us to see things differently.

Spread throughout Deleuze's work, from the 1968/1994 *Difference and Repetition* to the 1993/1998 *Essays Critical and Clinical*, are references to the so-called "underground man" in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*. What intrigues Deleuze about Dostoyevsky's nameless antihero is his refusal to fall into line with accepted commonplaces. He "cannot keep two and two from making four" but "will not RESIGN himself to it either (*he prefers that two and two not make four*)" (*ECC*, 81–82, emphasis original). The underground man exemplifies the trait that, according to Deleuze, Dostoyevsky shares with other great novelists, namely, that "things remain enigmatic yet nonarbitrary," yielding "a new logic, definitely a logic, but one that grasps the innermost depths of life and death without leading us back to reason" (*ECC*, 82).

Always to question the self-evident soon becomes tiresome and predictable, but never to do so can quickly reveal itself to be naive and dangerous. What Deleuze commends in Dostoyevsky's underground man is finding the right level of questioning, the level that reveals the enigmatic nature of our commonsense assumptions without shrugging them off as completely arbitrary. This idea of finding the "enigmatic yet nonarbitrary" sweet spot of questioning also serves as a good first introduction to

3. This move of revealing society's sacred cows to be cruel and oppressive resembles Michel Foucault's unmasking of the supposed humanitarianism of the care of those with mental illness in the nineteenth century, and the "disciplinary power" that characterizes modern penitentiary systems that no longer practice torture or execution. See my *Michel Foucault*, Great Thinkers (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018).

Deleuze's own approach to problems in philosophy and society. The common caricature of postmodernism is that it holds meanings and values to be, precisely, arbitrary. Let it be said very clearly at the outset of this book that Deleuze unambiguously rejects this view. But the no less common reaction to this idea that meanings and values are arbitrary for postmodernism is that meanings and values are matters of common sense, a position that Deleuze rejects just as emphatically. He is neither a postmodernist nor an enemy of postmodernism here; his thought inhabits an enigmatic region that can be reduced neither to arbitrariness nor to merely regurgitating what "everyone knows."

Many philosophers have a tendency to begin by assuming that we all already agree on the rules of analysis and logic, and then proceed to squabble over who is applying those rules most consistently or most effectively. Rather than denouncing those who are not acting according to the accepted laws of the game, as we will see below, Deleuze raises the question whether we are playing by the right rules to begin with.[4] Who cares who scores the most touchdowns if the game that we are supposed to be playing is baseball? Whether we end up agreeing with Deleuze or not, one effect of this questioning of commonplace assumptions is that he shows us that we all think and see the world and ourselves in a particular way, and that we could very well see them in a different way. Furthermore, if we accept—as surely we must—that new ways of seeing the world make possible new ways of being and acting in it, then we begin to see some of the transformative potential of Deleuzian thought. Deleuze wants to make us see the world differently, in order that we may act differently in it.

The fourth and final reason I will offer for engaging with

4. This point is made by Claire Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2003), 4.

Deleuze's thought is perhaps of special interest to Christian readers: Deleuze challenges common Christian and new atheistic attitudes to the consequences of the death of God. Two equally egregious misunderstandings haunt the reception of the death of God. On the one hand, Christians are often far too hasty to say that, without God, all we are left with is the absence of all truth, moral anarchy, and meaninglessness.[5] On the other hand, a view common among the new atheists asserts that when we take God out of the picture, pretty much everything else can stay just as it was, including our understanding of existence, truth, meaning, and ethics.[6] There is, to be sure, a grain of truth in both these positions. The new atheists are correct that when we attempt to think without God, we do not necessarily have to abandon notions of truth or ethics altogether. The hasty Christians are correct that when we attempt to think without God, we cannot persist with the very same notions of truth and ethics that prevailed when God was in the picture. But both positions move too quickly, and go too far, in prosecuting their respective arguments.

What Deleuze gives us, against the background of this simplifying dichotomy, is a very sophisticated account of what happens to truth and ethics in a system of thought that does not rely on God as traditionally understood, a system that will necessarily be radically different from one that does rely on God. Of course it will: to paraphrase Deleuze in the words of a now-classic meme, "one does not simply" take God out of the picture. Getting rid of

5. The logic of this sort of position is that if there is no moral law such as the Bible offers—transcendent, underwritten by God, absolute, and universal—then there can be no morality at all. It is telling that Nietzsche is frequently framed as the poster boy for this moral vacuum, whereas Deleuze takes from Nietzsche an ethics that, while it is very far from the Christian position and not without its own problems, is not an ethical nihilism.

6. I discuss some of the problems with this position under the banner of *imitative atheism* in *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillassoux* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

God changes everything, including what we mean by existence, truth, and ethics, and Christian critics of nonreligious thought would do well to move beyond the mantra of "no God = no truth = no ethics."

Deleuze in Historical and Intellectual Context

To situate Deleuze in his historical and intellectual context, as Claire Colebrook rightly notes, is a spectacularly un-Deleuzian thing to do because it goes against Deleuze's own way of challenging the idea of a neatly unfolding succession of intellectual influences and oppositions.[7] Nevertheless, we may begin to understand Deleuze's thought—as does Colebrook herself—in the context of two important mid-twentieth-century intellectual currents. The first of these is structuralism, according to which we experience the world only through the structures of representation that our thought and language have imposed on it, much in the same way as the meaning of the pieces on a chessboard is given by the overall structure and rules of the game: it is the rules and the board that make a bishop a "bishop" and a knight a "knight," not the individual plastic or metal objects sitting on the board. If I lose one of my "bishops," I can substitute any old object of the right size, and the game can continue unhampered.

Deleuze, as we will see, rejects as hopelessly anthropocentric the structuralist position that human language and human structures give the world its meaning. Whereas structuralism reserves a privileged place for human language in imposing differences and distinctions on a fundamentally undifferentiated reality, Deleuze understands the world to be already proliferating with differences, and human language in fact reduces difference rather

7. Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, Routledge Critical Thinkers (London: Routledge, 2001), 8.

than creates it. Furthermore, for Deleuze, human language offers only one system of differences among many others, including genetic, chromatic, and chemical.[8]

The second intellectual current from which Deleuze's thought distances itself is phenomenology, with its principle that all knowledge begins with phenomena, with how things appear to me, regardless of what those things may or not be in themselves. As with structuralism, this position betrays for Deleuze an unwarranted anthropocentric bias: why should the first-person perception of the human subject be the privileged locus of all meaning? For Deleuze, human meanings and structures are merely one small part of a much larger picture, and neither language nor meaning is a primarily human affair. Furthermore, both structuralism and phenomenology subordinate change and becoming to stasis and identity, assuming that what exists is individual fixed entities that only subsequently change or become something else. Structuralism can account for change only on the basis of static structures, and phenomenology can account for change only on the basis of a static first-person perspective. As we will shortly see, this is one of Deleuze's main problems with the Western tradition as a whole.

True to the outlook of the underground man, Deleuze sets out to show not that structuralism's language or phenomenology's first-person perspective is arbitrary, but that they are more enigmatic than we usually allow: they are not the firm and unshakable bedrock of knowledge that they are assumed to be, for there is indeed a "new logic" to be found, one that "grasps the innermost depths of life and death without leading us back" (*ECC*, 82) to fixed structures and a static, unitary first-person perspective. This new logic is that our structures of meaning and

8. This sketch of Deleuze's difference from structuralism is indebted to Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, 28.

our sense of ourselves as stable points of view are effects of more fundamental forces and flows of desire that precede the human.

If Deleuze distances himself from the structuralism and phenomenology prevalent during his intellectually formative years, his thought also stands apart from others of his own generation (such as Derrida and Foucault) in important ways. Whereas Foucault the historian cares little for the ontology underlying the historical shifts he describes, and Derrida works studiously to avoid, as best he can, falling afoul of the violence of metaphysics, Deleuze unashamedly and enthusiastically embraces metaphysical themes and concepts. In a 1986 interview, he admits that "I've never been worried about going beyond metaphysics or any death of philosophy" (*Ne*, 88), which is just one of the ways in which Deleuze does not fit the caricature of a postmodern thinker. He rejects the characteristically postmodern determination to resist metaphysics with the dismissal that "the death of metaphysics or the overcoming of philosophy has never been a problem for us: it is just tiresome, idle chatter" (*WIP*, 9). Deleuze offers us an ontology, an account of being, and he does so unapologetically and without qualification.

One further factor to take into account when it comes to appreciating Deleuze's thought is that many of his best-known and most influential works written from 1972 to 1991 were coauthored with the psychotherapist Félix Guattari. It would be fruitless to seek to carve up books such as *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What Is Philosophy?* into Deleuzian and Guattarian influences, and we will engage in no such fool's errand in these pages.[9]

9. The working relationship between Deleuze and Guattari has frequently been described in terms of the complex interaction of the wasp and the orchid that they both discuss:

> Nothing would be gained by reducing a symbiosis like that of the wasp and the orchid to a simple "attachment" between two heterogeneous worlds. . . . The new symbiotic assemblage actually functions like a mutant wasp-orchid

Where appropriate, I will refer to "Deleuze and Guattari" rather than "Deleuze," but I will resist any further attempt to distinguish the sole-authored from the coauthored Deleuzian texts.

The Approach of This Book

In keeping with the pattern of the Great Thinkers series, the first half of this book will seek to give a faithful account of the main aspects of Deleuze's thought in his own terms. We cannot hope to bring Deleuze into conversation with Christian theology if we do not first seek to understand what he is saying. The three sections of this first half will deal with Deleuze's work in a roughly chronological sweep. First we address Deleuze's account of the *dogmatic image of thought* and his *reversal of Platonism*, a theme prominent in his earlier works, most notably *Difference and Repetition* (1968/1994) and *The Logic of Sense* (1969/1990).[10] We then turn to his rejection of the modern Cartesian subject in favor of the *body without organs* in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972/1977) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980/1987). Finally, we address political themes in Deleuze's later writing.

Each of these three sections looks first at how Deleuze understands the dominant way of thinking with which he disagrees (which he calls the *dogmatic image of thought*), before looking at

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species evolving on its own account and redistributing the genetic and semiotic components selected from both original species according to its own standards. (Félix Guattari, *Lines of Flight: For Another World of Possibilities* [London: Bloomsbury, 2015], 202)

The Deleuze/Guattari relationship is treated in detail in François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), and Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (London: Routledge, 1989).

10. Where two dates are given, the first refers to the date of publication of the original French edition, and the second to the date of publication of the English translation.

his own position. This sequence is important for two reasons: first, because it helps us to understand why Deleuze says what he does, and why for him it is a very good thing to say what he does; second, because addressing the positions against which Deleuze argues makes strange some of the habits and practices that most of us take for granted most of the time, forcing us to consider why we think and act as we do.

There are, of course, great swaths of Deleuze's thought that I will leave relatively untouched in a volume of this length: his work on literature and the arts (Kafka, Proust, Bacon, cinema), his critique of capitalism, schizoanalysis, his book on Leibniz, and the argument of *What Is Philosophy?* I leave some areas of Deleuze's thought undiscussed in order that others can be explained and explored at greater length. This is a strategic decision with both benefits and costs. Readers seeking further explanation of areas about which I remain silent are encouraged to consult the bibliography at the end of this book, and some terms not discussed in the main text are also given brief definitions in the glossary.

In the second part of the book, I will attempt to bring Deleuze's thought into conversation with a range of biblical motifs that will, I hope, help us to understand both where Deleuze's thought and the Bible are at odds and where they make similar moves. This is a risky business. We can, of course, rest content to explain Deleuze to Deleuzians and the Bible to Christians, and there is indeed value in both those projects. But how much greater the challenge, how much more tantalizing and, perhaps, worthwhile it is to seek to explain Deleuze to a readership largely unfamiliar with, and in large part suspicious of, his thought, and to seek to explain aspects of the Bible in terms of a philosopher who in the main is predisposed to reject it and impute to it all manner of hypocritical motivations and evil implications.

PART 1

DELEUZE'S THOUGHT

In 1917 Marcel Duchamp purchased a "Bedfordshire" model porcelain urinal from a Manhattan ironworks, signed it "R. Mutt," dated it "1917," called it *Fountain*, and submitted it to the first exhibition of the American Society of Independent Artists as one of his now-famous "readymades." The piece has attracted ridicule and adulation ever since, and in one 2004 BBC survey, *Fountain* was voted the most influential work of modern art.[1]

Fig. P1.1. Marcel Duchamp, Fountain (1917), replica 1964, Tate Gallery, London.[2]

If *Fountain* is not to your artistic taste, then how

1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4059997.stm.

2. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marcel_Duchamp,_1917,_Fountain,_photograph_by_Alfred_Stieglitz.jpg . Public domain.

about Maxime Maufra's *Marée basse à la plage de Port Blanc, presqu'Île de Quiberon* (*Low Tide at the Beach at Port Blanc, Peninsula of Quiberon*), painted in the same year as Duchamp's urinal:

Fig. P1.2. Maxime Maufra, Marée basse à la plage de Port Blanc, presqu'Île de Quiberon (1917) private collection.[3]

Now let me ask you a question about these two works of art. Which is a better reflection of its time? Lest we need to be reminded, in 1917 Europe is plunged deep in one of the bloodiest wars in its history, with the mechanized slaughter of shells, gas, and machine guns tearing through the flesh of hundreds of thousands of the continent's youth. The first day of the battle of the Somme alone (July 1, 1916) saw 57,470 casualties and 19,240 dead. Which of these two works of art resonates more with the senseless, barbaric horror engulfing Europe—and, by 1917, the United States as well—at this time? Which resonates more with the crisis of traditional culture that it precipitated?

3. Source: https://www.the-athenaeum.org/art/list.php?s=tu&m=a&aid=392&p=2. Public domain.

Maufra's canvas is as relevant to its geopolitical moment as organizing a poetry reading on the deck of the sinking *Titanic*: it may be a fine pursuit at another time and place, but it is not what the present circumstances call for. Duchamp's *Fountain*, by contrast, was created only three days after the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, and screams, as David Lubin has argued, an "'obscene' comment on the obscene nature of the war."[4] Context dictates what is relevant and required: We don't crack corny jokes at a funeral, any more than we expect a stand-up comic to sing funereal dirges. There is a time and place for Duchamp's *Fountain*, and 1917 in the bubble of the stuffy, self-congratulatory Manhattan art world was just that time and just that place.

The principle does not hold only for artworks. New wine needs to be poured into new wineskins: each historical moment has its own way of writing literature, its own way of dressing, of speaking. So why not its own way of philosophizing? What would a philosophy that reflected the Western world of the mid- to late twentieth century look like? What would its concerns and its concepts be? This is the very question that Gilles Deleuze addresses in a 1968 interview with Jean-Noel Vuarnet:

> Philosophy, too, must create worlds of thought, a whole new conception of thought, of "what it means to think," and it must be adequate to what is happening around us. It must adopt as its own those revolutions going on elsewhere, in other domains, or those that are being prepared. (*DI*, 138)

For Deleuze, the age of student uprisings, of sexual and social revolutions, needs its own way of thinking, just as 1917 needed its *Fountain*:

4. https://blog.oup.com/2017/05/marcel-duchamps-political-work-art/.

> We get the feeling that we can't go on writing philosophy books in the old style much longer; they no longer interest the students, they don't even interest their authors. So, I think everyone is on the look-out for something new. (*DI*, 141)

This is by no means a claim that philosophy should merely mirror its historical moment; in fact, for Deleuze, it is very important indeed that philosophy "is always against its time" and a "critique of the present world" (*NaP*, 107). To be a critique of the present world, however, is not the same as to be a critique of the world of a century ago. It is with this idea, then, that we begin our exploration of Deleuze's thought: He is seeking to fashion a way of thinking that is appropriate to his time. And our opening question is this: What might be the contours of a way of thinking appropriate to late-twentieth-century Western society?

1

PLATO AND THE DOGMATIC IMAGE OF THOUGHT

What our historical moment demands, Deleuze argues, is not a handful of new ideas, but a new *image of thought*. This notion of an image of thought will be central for our engagement with Deleuze in this book. An image of thought is not *what* we think about; it is *how* we think about everything. It has distant affinities with what we call a *worldview*, but it is less about what we believe than how we believe everything we believe. It is not a list of doctrines but a set of assumptions about how knowledge works and what counts as *truth*. It is our image of thought that "determines our goals when we try to think" (*DR*, xvi), and that gives us a reason to think in the first place. Our image of thought is "implicit, subjective, and preconceptual" (*WIP*, 61); it encompasses our commitments that are so basic, we do not even consider them commitments but simply "the way things are" or "common sense." We might think of an image of thought as a computer operating system: not a particular app that allows the user to do this or that, but the software on which all such

apps rely and that provides a platform for the user to do anything at all, all the while within the particular constraints of this or that operating system. An image of thought therefore precedes and grounds thought as the "prolegomena to philosophy" (*Ne*, 149).[1]

In order to better appreciate just what such an image of thought can look like, let us turn our attention to a particular example: the *dogmatic image of thought*, which, Deleuze argues, has controlled much of Western thinking for centuries and undergirds philosophical tendencies as diverse as empiricism and rationalism, and thinkers as varied as Plato, Descartes, Kant, and Heidegger (*DR*, 132). This "dogmatic," "orthodox," or "moral" image of thought (*DR*, 131) is addressed in a number of places in Deleuze's writings, though at greatest length in the third chapter of *Difference and Repetition* (*DR*, 129–67) and the second and third chapters of *What Is Philosophy?* (*WIP*, 35–84). Deleuze offers us both a threefold account of the dogmatic image (in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*) and an eightfold understanding (in *Difference and Repetition*). I will follow here the division into "three essential theses" (*NaP*, 103) of truth, error, and method. I will use Plato as a privileged example, for Deleuze understands him to be the originator and chief exponent of the dogmatic image (*DR*, 142).

Truth

Deleuze summarizes the place of truth in the dogmatic image of thought in terms of three principles (*NaP*, 103): (1) it is assumed that the thinker transparently and straightforwardly desires truth, (2) it is assumed that truth is straightforwardly

1. At one point, Deleuze uses the term *image of thought* to describe Foucault's historical epistemes: extended periods of time during which knowledge was constructed according to particular rules (*DI*, 92–93). For a more detailed explanation of Foucauldian epistemes, see chapter 1, "History and Truth," in my *Michel Foucault*, Great Thinkers (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018).

what you reach if you think correctly, and (3) it is assumed that everyone can find truth by thinking if they follow their own will to truth. Yet this truth is to be found, according to the dogmatic image of thought, not within our immediate experience, but in a transcendent, abstract, and universal realm (*NaP*, 103–4) that needs to be interpreted by me, or disclosed or revealed to me.

This way of thinking about truth can be traced back to Plato, for "the poisoned gift of Platonism is to have introduced transcendence into philosophy, to have given transcendence a plausible philosophical meaning" (*ECC*, 137). For Plato, truth is to be found not in the world of our immediate sense experience (represented by the lower circle in the diagram below), but in another world, the world of what he calls the "Forms," eternal, unchanging archetypes of everything that exists in this world. These Forms can be apprehended only through our rational intellect, not through our senses (the upper circle). For example, we can express a perfect circle in a mathematical formula and understand it rationally, but we have never seen an absolutely perfect circle with our eyes.

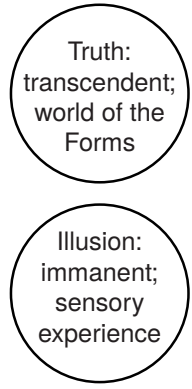

Fig. 1.1. For Plato, truth is not found in this world but in the world of Forms, which can be apprehended only intellectually, not through the senses.

Something in this world is true if it faithfully (though never perfectly) copies one of the Forms and thereby—as Plato puts it—"participates" in it. So, for example, my wife's dear old childhood Labrador, Tammy, would, for Plato, participate in the perfect, eternal Form of the dog, and that relationship would constitute it as a "true" dog. If something participates in a Form in this way, for Plato it is an "icon" or good copy of that Form. Tammy the (imperfect) dog is an image of the eternal Form of the perfect dog. This is Plato's account of the relationship between Form (F) and true copy (c):

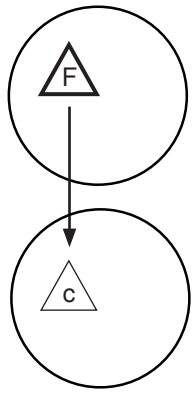

Fig. 1.2. An icon or good copy (c) is a faithful though imperfect reproduction of the eternal Form (F).

How do we come to know the truth of something? According to the dogmatic image of thought, we recognize that it is an icon of a Form. In other words, we relate it to a preestablished category; we say, "This (four-legged animal with a long, lolling tongue and eyes pleading for a treat) is that (a dog)." Recognition, then, does not create new ideas; it matches things in this world to preexisting—indeed, eternal—Forms. We might think of it, therefore, as a grand epistemological game of bingo:

I have to match the things I encounter in the world to the pre-existing categories I am given, and in this game there are only two options: either an object matches a Form or it does not. For Deleuze, this sort of recognition is central to the dogmatic image of thought from Plato through Descartes to Kant and beyond (*DR*, 134): to know the truth of something is to recognize its correspondence to a Form. What is recognized, however, is not only this correspondence of objects to Forms but also "the values attached to an object," such as the idea that a dog is a good companion and a faithful friend. This is because the language of our social and linguistic group signifies concepts that carve up the world in socially and practically valued ways. So when we say, "This is that," we are not so much recognizing the object as employing the valued way of categorizing things. This seems, perhaps, innocuous enough, but for Deleuze it "bears witness to a disturbing complacency" (*DR*, 135) because there is no room for me to question or challenge either the identity of the object or the values that attach to it.

Alongside this principle of recognition, the account of truth in the dogmatic image of thought relies on the idea of representation. According to the paradigm of representation, my thought is a mirror of the world. I am thinking truly when what is present out there in the world is accurately represented in my thoughts. Just like recognition, once more this makes truth-finding into a bingo game: either my thoughts accurately represent the stable reality with which I am presented or they do not.

In the paradigm of representation and recognition, sameness and identity are king. I begin with something stable and unchanging, whether the Platonic Form or a stable external reality. When there is difference, it is always a difference between two or more such stable Forms, with the consequence, as Deleuze dramatically puts it, that any radical difference that does not rely on such stable identities "is crucified" (*DR*, 138). This

subordination of difference to identity is epitomized for Deleuze in what is known as *Porphyry's tree*, a way of classifying all living things on a hierarchical scale in terms of what they have in common. The two diagrams below show a pictorial representation of the tree, followed by a schema of its categories and relations:

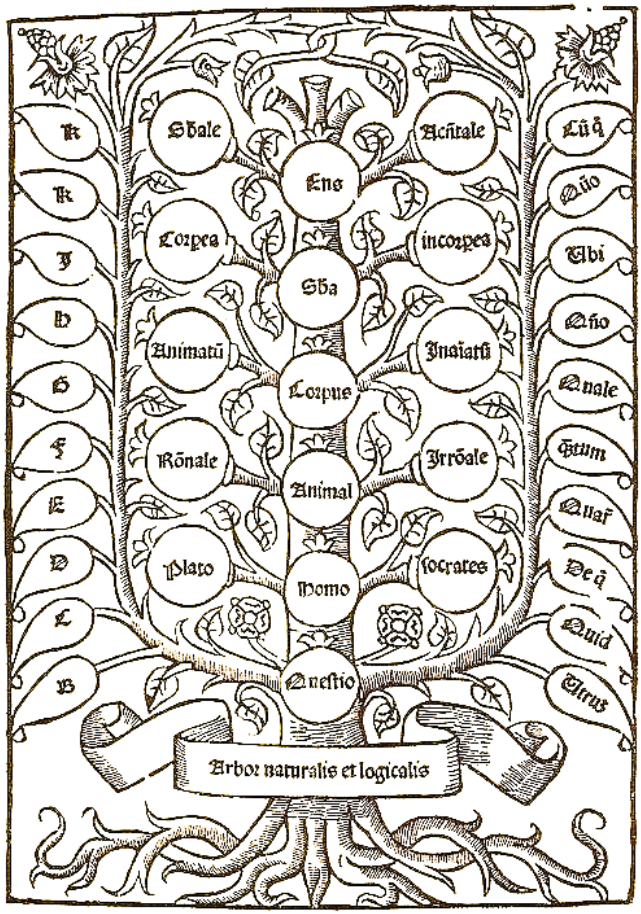

Fig. 1.3. Porphyry's Tree[2]

2. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porphyrian_tree#/media/File:Porphyrian_Trees_Gallery_small.png . Public domain.

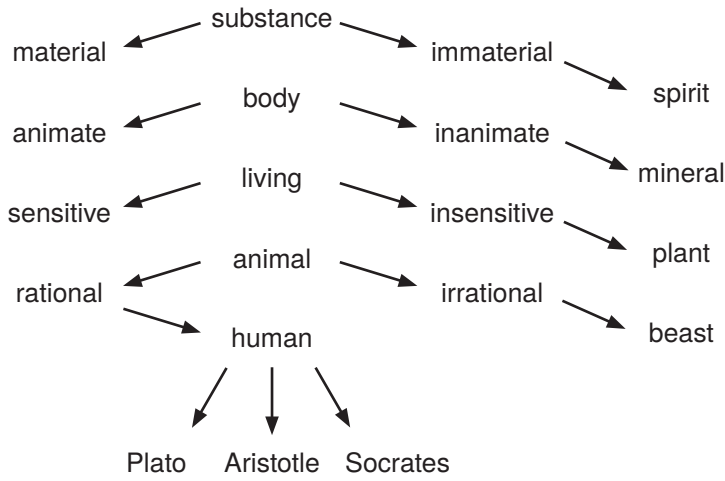

Fig. 1.4. Schematization of Porphyry's Tree

For the dogmatic image of thought and the Aristotle-inspired Porphyry's tree, identity precedes difference such that "only that which resembles differs" (*LS*, 261).

One final element of the account of truth in the dogmatic image of thought is its reliance on what Deleuze calls the "good will" of the truth-seeking thinker. This, too, is found in the Platonic dialogues, in which Socrates leads his interlocutors to the truth with nothing but his own questions and their good faith. A genuine desire to find truth, it is assumed, will always draw seekers nearer to their desired goal. This also requires, in addition to "a good will on the part of the thinker," that there be "an upright nature on the part of thought" (*DR*, 131). In other words, it requires the assumption that if we genuinely seek the true, it will not trick or deceive us. In fact, truth and goodness are inextricable for Plato: to find the truth, one must be of good will, and this good will must certainly be rewarded. This is part of what Deleuze means when he calls the dogmatic image of thought *moral*.

Error

The second of the three pillars of the dogmatic image of thought is its understanding of error:

> We are also told that we are "diverted" from the truth but by forces which are foreign to it (body, passions, sensuous interests). We fall into error, we take falsehood to be truth, because we are not merely thinking beings. Error: this would be merely the effect, in thought as such, of external forces which are opposed to thought. (*NaP*, 103)

The important point here is that for the dogmatic image of thought, error does not belong to thought itself or originate with the thinker; it is always ancillary forces that lead thinking astray. Every image of thought has something that it abominates, Deleuze argues (*WIP*, 54), and what the dogmatic image of thought abominates is error. Lots of things can go wrong for thought, including internal problems such as "stupidity, forgetfulness, aphasia, delirium, madness" (*WIP*, 52), and the "error" brought about by external causes.

When it comes to Plato's thought, error takes a particular name: *simulacrum*. In addition to the eternal, perfect Forms and the icons or faithful copies of those Forms, simulacra are false or unfaithful copies that, by contrast with icons, do not participate in the Forms. Plato's own example in his *Republic* is of a bed. First, there is the perfect, eternal Form of the bed (F). The carpenter's wooden bed, although not perfect, participates in the Form because it is, after all, a bed. It is a true copy (c)—a true image or a true imitation—of the Form of the bed, represented in the figure below by a line leading from Form to copy. An artist's painting of the carpenter's bed, by contrast, does not participate in the Form of a bed at all, because one cannot take

one's night's rest in it. It gives the impression of being a true bed, but it is not. It is a false image. The carpenter's bed is an icon, but the artist's bed is a simulacrum (s) that does not participate in the Form of a bed.

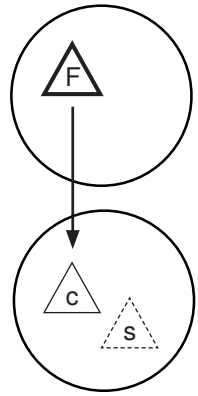

Fig. 1.5. In Plato's Republic, the carpenter's bed is a true copy (c) of the Form of the bed (F), but the artist's painting of a bed is a false copy, a simulacrum (s).

We might think that Plato begins with the Form, progresses to the icon, and finally identifies the simulacrum, rather as I have done in this explanation. For Deleuze, however, the order is exactly reversed. Plato begins with the problem of how to tell the true image from the false, how to tell the icon from the simulacrum, and invents the idea of the Form as a way to solve that problem. The problem of distinguishing true from false copies, furthermore, has political origins: icons are regular and predictable, and they conform to the Form in which they participate (see fig. 1.6), but simulacra represent an untamed potential for difference and instability that cannot be controlled and limited by any stable Form. The political equivalent to this is the sophist who, in Athenian democracy, could convince a crowd of anything through a persuasive use of rhetoric, regardless of whether he

considered it true. Such an anarchic difference is a threat, then, not only to the stability of the Forms, but also to the stability of morals and a well-ordered society. This is why Deleuze claims that "the will to eliminate simulacra or phantasms has no motivation apart from the moral" (*DR*, 265) and that the nature of this moral motivation is a desire to preserve stability and order.

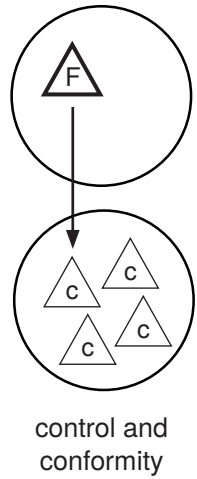

Fig. 1.6. Refusing simulacra ensures conformity, predictability, and order.

To protect the stability of the state and traditional moral codes from attack by the anarchy of the sophist's whim, Plato creates the concept of an eternal and stable Form as a way to justify the difference between good and bad images, between icons and simulacra. In fact, "there is no State which does not need an image of thought which will serve as its axiomatic system or abstract machine, and to which it gives in return the strength to function" (*D*, 88), and Plato obliges by providing the authoritarian police state with a very effective image of thought. What a spectacularly successful creation the Platonic Form has been, described by Miguel de Beistegui as "the most formidable and

arguably successful concept of the entire history of philosophy."[3] For Deleuze, then, Plato's ontology is political all the way down, and "with Platonism, philosophy becomes a police operation."[4]

Method

In addition to its particular understanding of truth and error, the dogmatic image of thought employs a particular method, as Deleuze explains:

> We are told, finally, that all we need to think well, to think truthfully, is a method. Method is an artifice but one through which we are brought back to the nature of thought, through which we adhere to this nature and ward off the effect of the alien forces which alter it and distract us. Through method we ward off error. Time and place matter little if we apply method: it enables us to enter the domain of "that which is valid for all times and places." (*NaP,* 103)

This idea of an infallible philosophical method that comes with a gold-plated guarantee to lead the thinker into the truth is most usually identified with René Descartes, who, in his *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences,* employs the famous method of doubting all that is possible to doubt. This method of hyperbolic doubt leaves untouched only the existence of the thinking self because, even if I doubt, then I am thinking, and if I am thinking, then I exist. It is Plato's method, however, on which I want to focus here. Deleuze characterizes Plato's method in terms of division: "the selection

3. Miguel de Beistegui, "The Deleuzian Reversal of Platonism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze,* ed. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 58.

4. De Beistegui, "Deleuzian Reversal of Platonism," 59.

among rivals, the testing of claimants" (*DR*, 60), with a view to dividing, both epistemologically and politically, the true from the false image, and then eliminating the simulacrum.

So in preparation for considering Deleuze's own philosophy, we can present the dogmatic image of thought in tabular form:

TRUTH	The true image: icon. Participation in the Form. Recognition and representation. Good will.
ERROR	The false image: simulacrum.
METHOD	Division.

Fig. 1.7. Summary of the Dogmatic Image of Thought

Ethics, Politics, and Theology of the Dogmatic Image of Thought

For Deleuze, the dogmatic image of thought has the philosophical consequences of obscuring the real role that difference plays in the genesis of thought and offering false conception of transcendence, but there are also grave ethical and political consequences that issue from our society's having lived under the dogmatic image of thought for so long. To begin with, recognition and representation crush creative thought. If our thinking amounts to matching what is in our head to what is in the world, and in matching objects to eternal categories, then how can we possibly think creatively and change society? Representation "mobilizes and moves nothing" (*DR*, 55–56), and the dogmatic image of thought is a recipe for perpetuating whatever injustices and inequalities currently exist. Such a privilege of identity over difference "profoundly betrays what it means to think" (*DR*,

167), and means that "philosophy is left without means to realize its project of breaking with doxa" (*DR*, 134), of breaking with commonsense notions that everyone "knows" and no one thinks to question.

Deleuze also sees the dogmatic image of thought as nihilistic because it encourages us to put all our hope for truth and meaning in another, higher world, denying what truth and meaning may otherwise have been ours in this world. When the higher world proves inaccessible or we begin to lose faith in its existence, we are left with nothing, worse off than we were before we renounced earthly pleasures in the name of something higher. We are then condemned to live in the shadow of the world we have lost, always feeling the gaping chasm of its absence. Like the compulsion of the drug addict who can never hold on to a high and is perpetually condemned to seek—and never to find—the perfect trip, so also the addiction to transcendence condemns the truth-addict to seek interminably for the higher world of Forms even long after he knows that his cause is lost (*NaP*, 125).

Although Deleuze develops his account of the dogmatic image of thought primarily in relation to Plato, it also structures his understanding of Christianity. Christian theology, for Deleuze, places the "true" meaning of this world in an inaccessible transcendence, in this case the transcendence of God himself. This leads to an ascetic renunciation of this world's pleasures and ultimately issues in nihilism when we lose our confidence in the existence of a higher world. God is the God of order, of a hierarchical universe where everything should be in its proper place and where the main task of judgment is to distinguish the true from the false. God, for Deleuze, is "the master of the exclusions and restrictions" (*AO*, 77), and just as Plato judges images according to whether they participate in eternal Forms, so in Deleuze's understanding of Christianity individuals are judged on the basis of whether they are good copies (images)

or bad copies (simulacra) of Christ, the perfect image of God. The difference is that in the case of Christianity, failure to measure up to the divine image brings infinite debt and infinite guilt (see *ECC*, 126–35), a guilt and debt the feeling of which remains even after belief in the transcendent has been lost. Theologians, for their part, spend their time playing the Platonic game of distinguishing between "true" and "false" theological formulations. Deleuze approves of Nietzsche's famous quip that Christianity is "Platonism for the people."[5]

Deleuze's God is a judging God, and he often uses the phrase "the judgment of God" to summarize this emphasis. The reference is not primarily to the judgment of condemnation but to the judgment that imposes order, hierarchy, conformity, and stability: "the judgment of God is nothing other than the power to organize to infinity" (*ECC*, 130). Just like the Platonic method of division, the judgment of God "presupposes pre-existing criteria" and so "can neither apprehend what is new in an existing being nor even sense the creation of a mode of existence" (*ECC*, 134–35). Finally, the infinite judgment of God spawns a society of judgment in which individuals ape this divine characteristic by engaging in interminable ordering judgment of both themselves and others, thereby creating a regime of the strictest surveillance, order, and conformity.

Up until this point, I have been taking it for granted that Deleuze does not like the dogmatic image of thought. But there is a problem with the idea of condemning one image of thought from within another. Images of thought give us the criteria for deciding what is true and false, good and bad. How, then, can they themselves be better or worse than each other, any more

5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4. The meaning of Nietzsche's phrase has not gone uncontested.

than baseball is "worse" than soccer simply because baseball players cannot score goals? It is a question asked by Deleuze himself in *What Is Philosophy?*, in a passage where he is using the notion of *planes of immanence* as a near-synonym for *images of thought*:

> Can we say that one plane is "better" than another or, at least, that it does or does not answer to the requirements of the age? What does answering to the requirements of the age mean, and what relationship is there between the movements or diagrammatic features of an image of thought and the movements or sociohistorical features of an age? (*WIP*, 58)

What is clear in Deleuze's ultimately inconclusive discussion is that images of thought are not arbitrary. They do respond to the "requirements of the age," whatever precise form that response might take, and furthermore they "cannot arise in any order whatever" because a new image of thought will develop, change, break up, and conglomerate aspects of a previous image (*WIP*, 58).

These two principles will guide us through our treatment of Deleuze's alternative to the dogmatic image of thought below: its relationship to that dogmatic image is complex, and it responds to the requirements of its own age.

What does it mean, though, for an image of thought to respond to the requirements of its age? In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze characterizes the relationship in terms of a shock: "Something in the world forces us to think" (*DR*, 139). What we encounter in the world that forces us to think is not a proposition but a certain imperceptible something "that can only be sensed" (*DR*, 139), not recognized or represented. If the political question to which Plato's philosophy is an answer is "how can we ensure stability and order in the state?," for Deleuze, the greatest question for philosophy is "how the production of

something new in the world is possible" (*2RM*, 344; cf. *DI*, 93). If we remember that Deleuze is writing in the midst of, and then in the wake of, the historical moment of the 1960s social revolutions, this indeed does appear as a pressing question of the time, which the events of the late 1960s force us to consider.

For Deleuze, we cannot hope to erect a new image of thought until we have critiqued the dogmatic image (*DR*, xiv). This critique of our existing image of thought is, in fact, a precondition of all real philosophy, for every great thinker renews the image of thought in some way: "we cannot imagine a great philosopher of whom it could not be said that he has changed what it means to think; he has 'thought differently' (as Foucault put it)" (*WIP*, 51). Concomitantly, Deleuze has little time for those who do not seek to renew the image of thought, whom he dismisses as "not philosophers but functionaries who, enjoying a ready-made thought, are not even conscious of the problem and are unaware even of the efforts of those they claim to take as their models" (*WIP*, 51).

What is called for, Deleuze argues, is not a new image of thought to replace the old, but a liberation from the idea that thought should follow the scripted pathways of an image at all. What he is seeking is "a liberation of thought from those images which imprison it" (*DR*, xvii). He offers us a positive account of what it means to think that foregrounds the role of "free difference" in the genesis of thinking and begins with an encounter with reality, rather than avoiding thought altogether by merely categorizing and "matching" the world to preexisting categories. This is a revolution in thought parallel to the revolution that led from representation to abstraction in art (*DR*, 276).

No one is more important for the critique of the dogmatic image of thought, or for elaborating a thought without image, than Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche more than anyone else questions truths, "not because he wants to 'relativize' them like an

ordinary skeptic" (*DI*, 135–36), for that would simply resolve to the "arbitrary" pole of the underground man's dilemma. Nietzsche's approach is more radical than relativizing truth; what matters is not truth but the sense of what one says and one's evaluation of one's own words, and "the categories of thought are not truth and falsity but the noble and the base, the high and the low" (*NaP*, 104).

Whereas Plato invents the concept of the Form, Nietzsche invents a series of concepts that subtend his thought: "forces," "value," "becoming," and "life" (*WIP*, 65). Whereas Plato has a vertical image of thought populated with Forms, copies, and the will to truth, Nietzsche has (as we will discuss below) eternal return and the infinite movements of the will to power (*WIP*, 65). Deleuze identifies other thinkers whose work similarly seeks to overturn the dogmatic image of thought: Hume, Bergson, and Proust (*DI*, 139), Artaud (*DR*, 147), and Foucault (*DI*, 92). What they all have in common is that they disrupt the dogmatic image of thought's threefold reliance on truth, falsity, and method; for each of these thinkers, "there's something extraordinary in the way they tell us: thinking means something else than what you believe" (*DI*, 139).