Need itself is therefore very imperfectly understood in terms of negative structures which relate it to activity. It is not even enough to invoke activity in the process of occurring or taking place, so long as the contemplative base on which it occurs has not been determined. Here again, with regard to this base, we cannot avoid seeing in the negative (need as lack) the shadow of a higher instance. Need expresses the openness of a question before it expresses the non-being or the absence of a response. To contemplate is to question. Is it not the peculiarity of questions to 'draw' a response? Questions present at once both the stubbornness or obstinacy and the lassitude or fatigue which correspond to need. 'What difference is there...?' This is the question the contemplative soul puts to repetition, and to which it draws a response from repetition. Contemplations are questions, while the contractions which occur in them and complete them are so many finite affirmations produced in the same way as presents are produced out of the perpetual present by means of the passive synthesis of time. Conceptions of the negative come from our haste to understand need in relation to active syntheses, which in fact are elaborated only on this basis. Moreover, if we reconsider the active syntheses themselves in the light of this basis which they presuppose, we see that they signify rather the constitution of problematic fields in relation to questions. The whole domain of behaviour, the intertwining of artificial and natural signs, the intervention of instinct and learning, memory and intelligence, shows how the questions involved in contemplation are developed in the form of active problematic fields. To the first synthesis of time there corresponds a first question–problem complex as this appears in the living present (the urgency of life). This living present, and with it the whole of organic and psychic life, rests upon habit. Following Condillac, we must regard habit as the foundation from which all other psychic phenomena derive. All these other phenomena either rest upon contemplations or are themselves contemplations: even need, even questions, even 'irony'.

These thousands of habits of which we are composed – these contractions, contemplations, pretensions, presumptions, satisfactions, fatigues; these variable presents – thus form the basic domain of passive syntheses. The passive self is not defined simply by receptivity – that is, by means of the capacity to experience sensations – but by virtue of the contractile contemplation which constitutes the organism itself before it constitutes the sensations. This self, therefore, is by no means simple: it is not enough to relativise or pluralise the self, all the while retaining for it a simple attenuated form. Selves are larval subjects; the world of passive syntheses constitutes the system of the self, under conditions yet to be determined, but it is the system of a dissolved self. There is a self wherever a furtive contemplation has been established, whenever a contracting machine capable of drawing a difference from repetition functions

somewhere. The self does not undergo modifications, it is itself a modification – this term designating precisely the difference drawn. Finally, one is only what one *has*: here, being is formed or the passive self *is*, by having. Every contraction is a presumption, a claim – that is to say, it gives rise to an expectation or a right in regard to that which it contracts, and comes undone once its object escapes. In all his novels, Samuel Beckett has traced the inventory of peculiarities pursued with fatigue and passion by larval subjects: Molloy's series of stones, Murphy's biscuits, Malone's possessions – it is always a question of drawing a small difference, a weak generality, from the repetition of elements or the organisation of cases. It is undoubtedly one of the more profound intentions of the 'new novel' to rediscover, below the level of active syntheses, the domain of passive syntheses which constitute us, the domain of modifications, tropisms and little peculiarities. In all its component fatigues, in all its mediocre auto-satisfactions, in all its derisory presumptions, in its misery and its poverty, the dissolved self still sings the glory of God – that is, of that which it contemplates, contracts and possesses.

Although it is originary, the first synthesis of time is no less intratemporal. It constitutes time as a present, but a present which passes. Time does not escape the present, but the present does not stop moving by leaps and bounds which encroach upon one another. This is the paradox of the present: to constitute time while passing in the time constituted. We cannot avoid the necessary conclusion – *that there must be another time in which the first synthesis of time can occur*. This refers us to a second synthesis. By insisting upon the finitude of contraction, we have shown the effect; we have by no means shown why the present passes, or what prevents it from being coextensive with time. The first synthesis, that of habit, is truly the foundation of time; but we must distinguish the foundation from the ground. The foundation concerns the soil: it shows how something is established upon this soil, how it occupies and possesses it; whereas the ground comes rather from the sky, it goes from the summit to the foundations, and measures the possessor and the soil against one another according to a title of ownership. Habit is the foundation of time, the moving soil occupied by the passing present. The claim of the present is precisely that it passes. However, it is what causes the present to pass, that to which the present and habit belong, which must be considered the ground of time. It is memory that grounds time. We have seen how memory, as a derived active synthesis, depended upon habit: in effect, everything depends upon a foundation. But this does not tell us what constitutes memory. At the moment when it grounds itself upon habit, memory must be grounded by another passive synthesis distinct from that of habit. The passive synthesis of habit in turn refers to this more profound passive synthesis of memory:

Habitus and Mnemosyne, the alliance of the sky and the ground. Habit is the originary synthesis of time, which constitutes the life of the passing present; Memory is the fundamental synthesis of time which constitutes the being of the past (that which causes the present to pass).

At first sight, it is as if the past were trapped between two presents: the one which it has been and the one in relation to which it is past. The past is not the former present itself but the element in which we focus upon the latter. Particularity, therefore, now belongs to that on which we focus – in other words, to that which 'has been'; whereas the past itself, the 'was', is by nature general. The past in general is the element in which each former present is focused upon in particular and as a particular. In accordance with Husserlian terminology, we must distinguish between retention and reproduction. However, what we earlier called the retention of habit was the state of successive instants contracted in a present present of a certain duration. These instants formed a particularity – in other words, an immediate past naturally belonging to the present present, while the present itself, which remains open to the future in the form of expectation, constitutes the general. By contrast, from the point of view of the reproduction involved in memory, it is the past (understood as the mediation of presents) which becomes general while the (present as well as former) present becomes particular. To the degree to which the past in general is the element in which each former present preserves itself and may be focused upon, the former present finds itself 'represented' in the present one. The limits of this representation or reproduction are in fact determined by the variable relations of resemblance and contiguity known as forms of association. In order to be represented the former present must resemble the present one, and must be broken up into partially simultaneous presents with very different durations which are then contiguous with one another and, even at the limit, contiguous with the present present. The great strength of associationism lies in having founded a whole theory of artificial signs on these relations of association.

Now the former present cannot be represented in the present one without the present one itself being represented in that representation. It is of the essence of representation not only to represent something but to represent its own representativity. The present and former presents are not, therefore, like two successive instants on the line of time; rather, the present one necessarily contains an extra dimension in which it represents the former and also represents itself. The present present is treated not as the future object of a memory but as that which reflects itself at the same time as it forms the memory of the former present. Active synthesis, therefore, has two correlative – albeit non-symmetrical – aspects: reproduction and reflection, remembrance and recognition, memory and understanding. It has often been pointed out that reflection implies something more than reproduction: this something more is only this

supplementary dimension in which every present reflects itself as present while at the same time representing the former. 'Every conscious state requires a dimension in addition to the one of which it implies the memory.'[4] As a result, the active synthesis of memory may be regarded as the principle of representation under this double aspect: reproduction of the former present *and* reflection of the present present. This active synthesis of memory is founded upon the passive synthesis of habit, since the latter constitutes the general possibility of any present. But the two syntheses are profoundly different: the asymmetry here follows from the constant augmentation of dimensions, their infinite proliferation. The passive synthesis of habit constituted time as a *contraction* of instants with respect to a present, but the active synthesis of memory constitutes it as the *embedding* of presents themselves. The whole problem is: with respect to what? It is with respect to the pure element of the past, understood as the past in general, as an *a priori* past, that a given former present is reproducible and the present present is able to reflect itself. Far from being derived from the present or from representation, the past is presupposed by every representation. In this sense, the active synthesis of memory may well be founded upon the (empirical) passive synthesis of habit, but on the other hand it can be grounded only by another (transcendental) passive synthesis which is peculiar to memory itself. Whereas the passive synthesis of habit constitutes the living present in time and makes the past and the future two asymmetrical elements of that present, the passive synthesis of memory constitutes the pure past in time, and makes the former and the present present (thus the present in reproduction and the future in reflection) two asymmetrical elements of this past as such. However, what do we mean in speaking of the pure, *a priori* past, the past in general or as such? If *Matter and Memory* is a great book, it is perhaps because Bergson profoundly explored the domain of this transcendental synthesis of a pure past and discovered all its constitutive paradoxes.

It is futile to try to reconstitute the past from the presents between which it is trapped, either the present which it was or the one in relation to which it is now past. In effect, we are unable to believe that the past is constituted after it has been present, or because a new present appears. If a new present were required for the past to be constituted as past, then the former present would never pass and the new one would never arrive. No present would ever pass were it not past 'at the same time' as it is present; no past would ever be constituted unless it were first constituted 'at the same time' as it was present. This is the first paradox: the contemporaneity of the past with the present that it *was*. It gives us the reason for the passing of the present. Every present passes, in favour of a new present, because the past is contemporaneous with itself as present. A second paradox emerges: the paradox of coexistence. If each past is contemporaneous with the present that it was, then *all* of the past coexists with the new present in relation to

which it is now past. The past is no more 'in' this second present than it is 'after' the first – whence the Bergsonian idea that each present present is only the entire past in its most contracted state. The past does not cause one present to pass without calling forth another, but itself neither passes nor comes forth. For this reason the past, far from being a dimension of time, is the synthesis of all time of which the present and the future are only dimensions. We cannot say that it was. It no longer exists, it does not exist, but it insists, it consists, it *is*. It insists with the former present, it consists with the new or present present. It is the in-itself of time as the final ground of the passage of time. In this sense it forms a pure, general, *a priori* element of all time. In effect, when we say that it is contemporaneous with the present that it *was*, we necessarily speak of a past which never *was* present, since it was not formed 'after'. Its manner of being contemporaneous with itself as present is that of being posed as already-there, presupposed by the passing present and causing it to pass. Its manner of coexisting with the new present is one of being posed in itself, conserving itself in itself and being presupposed by the new present which comes forth only by contracting this past. The paradox of pre-existence thus completes the other two: each past is contemporaneous with the present it was, the whole past coexists with the present in relation to which it is past, but the pure element of the past in general pre-exists the passing present.[5] There is thus a substantial temporal element (the Past which was never present) playing the role of ground. This is not itself represented. It is always the former or present present which is represented. The transcendental passive synthesis bears upon this pure past from the triple point of view of contemporaneity, coexistence and pre-existence. By contrast, the active synthesis is the representation of the present under the dual aspect of the reproduction of the former and the reflection of the new. The latter synthesis is founded upon the former, and if the new present is always endowed with a supplementary dimension, this is because it is reflected *in* the element of the pure past in general, whereas it is only *through* this element that we focus upon the former present as a particular.

If we compare the passive synthesis of habit and the passive synthesis of memory, we see how much the distribution of repetition and contraction changes from one to the other. No doubt, in either case, the present appears to be the result of a contraction, but this relates to quite different dimensions. In one case, the present is the most contracted state of successive elements or instants which are in themselves independent of one another. In the other case, the present designates the most contracted degree of an entire past, which is itself like a coexisting totality. Let us suppose, in effect, in accordance with the conditions of the second paradox, that the past is not conserved in the present in relation to which it is past, but is conserved in itself, the present present being only the maximal contraction of all this past which coexists with *it*. It must first be

the case that this whole past coexists with *itself*, in varying degrees of relaxation ... and of contraction. The present can be the most contracted degree of the past which coexists with it only if the past first coexists with itself in an infinity of diverse degrees of relaxation and contraction at an infinity of levels (this is the meaning of the famous Bergsonian metaphor of the cone, the fourth paradox in relation to the past).[6] Consider what we call repetition within a life – more precisely, within a spiritual life. Presents succeed, encroaching upon one another. Nevertheless, however strong the incoherence or possible opposition between successive presents, we have the impression that each of them plays out 'the same life' at different levels. This is what we call destiny. Destiny never consists in step-by-step deterministic relations between presents which succeed one another according to the order of a represented time. Rather, it implies between successive presents non-localisable connections, actions at a distance, systems of replay, resonance and echoes, objective chances, signs, signals and roles which transcend spatial locations and temporal successions. We say of successive presents which express a destiny that they always play out the same thing, the same story, but at different levels: here more or less relaxed, there more or less contracted. This is why destiny accords so badly with determinism but so well with freedom: freedom lies in choosing the levels. The succession of present presents is only the manifestation of something more profound – namely, the manner in which each continues the whole life, but at a different level or degree to the preceding, since all levels and degrees coexist and present themselves for our choice on the basis of a past which was never present. What we call the empirical character of the presents which make us up is constituted by the relations of succession and simultaneity between them, their relations of contiguity, causality, resemblance and even opposition. What we call their noumenal character is constituted by the relations of virtual coexistence between the levels of a pure past, each present being no more than the actualisation or represention of one of these levels. In short, what we live empirically as a succession of different presents from the point of view of active synthesis is also *the ever-increasing coexistence of levels of the past within passive synthesis*. Each present contracts a level of the whole, but this level is already one of relaxation or contraction. In other words, the sign of the present is a *passage* to the limit, a maximal contraction which comes to sanction the choice of a particular level as such, which is in itself contracted or relaxed among an infinity of other possible levels. Moreover, what we say of a life may be said of several lives. Since each is a passing present, one life may replay another at a different level, as if the philosopher and the pig, the criminal and the saint, played out the same past at different levels of a gigantic cone. This is what we call metempsychosis. Each chooses his pitch or his tone, perhaps even his lyrics,

but the tune remains the same, and underneath all the lyrics the same tra-la-la, in all possible tones and all pitches.

Between the two repetitions, the material and the spiritual, there is a vast difference. The former is a repetition of successive independent elements or instants; the latter is a repetition of the Whole on diverse coexisting levels (as Leibniz said, 'everything can be said to be the same at all times and places except in degrees of perfection'[7]). As a result, the two repetitions stand in very different relations to 'difference' itself. Difference is drawn from one in so far as the elements or instants are contracted within a living present. It is included in the other in so far as the Whole includes the difference between its levels. One is bare, the other clothed; one is repetition of parts, the other of the whole; one involves succession, the other coexistence; one is actual, the other virtual; one is horizontal, the other vertical. The present is always contracted difference, but in one case it contracts indifferent instants; in the other case, by passing to the limit, it contracts a differential level of the whole which is itself a matter of relaxation and contraction. In consequence, the difference between presents themselves is that between the two repetitions: that of the elementary instants from which difference is subtracted, and that of the levels of the whole in which difference is included. And following the Bergsonian hypothesis, the bare repetition must be understood as the external envelope of the clothed: that is, the repetition of successive instants must be understood as the most relaxed of the coexistent levels, matter as a dream or as mind's most relaxed past. Neither of these two repetitions is, strictly speaking, representable. Material repetition comes undone even as it occurs, and can be represented only by the active synthesis which projects its elements into a space of conservation and calculation. At the same time, however, once it has become an object of representation, this repetition is subordinated to the identity of the elements or to the resemblance of the conserved and added cases. Spiritual repetition unfolds in the being in itself of the past, whereas representation concerns and reaches only those presents which result from active synthesis, thereby subordinating all repetition, to the identity of the present present in reflection, or to the resemblance of the former present in reproduction.

The passive syntheses are obviously sub-representative. The question for us, however, is whether or not we can penetrate the passive synthesis of memory; whether we can in some sense live the being in itself of the past in the same way that we live the passive synthesis of habit. The entire past is conserved in itself, but how can we save it for ourselves, how can we penetrate that in-itself without reducing it to the former present that it was, or to the present present in relation to which it is past? How can we save it *for ourselves*? It is more or less at this point that Proust intervenes, taking up the baton from Bergson. Moreover, it seems that the response has long

been known: reminiscence. In effect, this designates a passive synthesis, an involuntary memory which differs in kind from any active synthesis associated with voluntary memory. Combray reappears, not as it was or as it could be, but in a splendour which was never lived, like a pure past which finally reveals its double irreducibility to the two presents which it telescopes together: the present that it was, but also the present present which it could be. Former presents may be represented beyond forgetting by active synthesis, in so far as forgetting is empirically overcome. Here, however, it is *within* Forgetting, as though immemorial, that Combray reappears in the form of a past which was never present: the in-itself of Combray. If there is an in-itself of the past, then reminiscence is its noumenon or the thought with which it is invested. Reminiscence does not simply refer us back from a present present to former ones, from recent loves to infantile ones, from our lovers to our mothers. Here again, the relation between passing presents does not account for the pure past which, with their assistance, takes advantage of their passing in order to reappear underneath representation: beyond the lover and beyond the mother, coexistent with the one and contemporary with the other, lies the never-lived reality of the Virgin. The present exists, but the past alone insists and provides the element in which the present passes and successive presents are telescoped. The echo of the two presents forms only a persistent question, which unfolds within representation like a field of problems, with the rigorous imperative to search, to respond, to resolve. However, the response always comes from elsewhere: every reminiscence, whether of a town or a woman, is erotic. It is always Eros, the noumenon, who allows us to penetrate this pure past in itself, this virginal repetition which is Mnemosyne. He is the companion, the fiancé, of Mnemosyne. Where does he get this power? Why is the exploration of the pure past erotic? Why is it that Eros holds both the secret of questions and answers, and the secret of an insistence in all our existence? Unless we have not yet found the last word, unless there is a third synthesis of time ... .

Temporally speaking – in other words, from the point of view of the theory of time – nothing is more instructive than the difference between the Kantian and the Cartesian Cogito. It is as though Descartes's Cogito operated with two logical values: determination and undetermined existence. The determination (I think) implies an undetermined existence (I am, because 'in order to think one must exist') – and determines it precisely as the existence of a thinking subject: I think therefore I am, I am a thing which thinks. The entire Kantian critique amounts to objecting against Descartes that it is impossible for determination to bear directly upon the undetermined. The determination ('I think') obviously implies something undetermined ('I am'), but nothing so far tells us how it is that this undetermined

is determinable by the '*I think*': 'in the consciousness of myself in mere thought I am the *being itself*, although nothing in myself is thereby given for thought.'[8] Kant therefore adds a third logical value: the determinable, or rather the form in which the undetermined is determinable (by the determination). This third value suffices to make logic a transcendental instance. It amounts to the discovery of Difference – no longer in the form of an empirical difference between two determinations, but in the form of a transcendental Difference between the Determination as such and what it determines; no longer in the form of an external difference which separates, but in the form of an internal Difference which establishes an *a priori* relation between thought and being. Kant's answer is well known: the form under which undetermined existence is determinable by the 'I think' is that of time ...[9] The consequences of this are extreme: my undetermined existence can be determined only *within time* as the existence of a phenomenon, of a passive, receptive phenomenal subject *appearing within time*. As a result, the spontaneity of which I am conscious in the 'I think' cannot be understood as the attribute of a substantial and spontaneous being, but only as the affection of a passive self which experiences its own thought – its own intelligence, that by virtue of which it can say *I* – being exercised in it and upon it but not by it. Here begins a long and inexhaustible story: *I* is an other, or the paradox of inner sense. The activity of thought applies to a receptive being, to a passive subject which represents that activity to itself rather than enacts it, which experiences its effect rather than initiates it, and which lives it like an Other within itself. To 'I think' and 'I am' must be added the self – that is, the passive position (what Kant calls the receptivity of intuition); to the determination and the undetermined must be added the form of the determinable, namely time. Nor is 'add' entirely the right word here, since it is rather a matter of establishing the difference and interiorising it within being and thought. It is as though the *I* were fractured from one end to the other: fractured by the pure and empty form of time. In this form it is the correlate of the passive self which appears in time. Time signifies a fault or a fracture in the *I* and a passivity in the self, and the correlation between the passive self and the fractured I constitutes the discovery of the transcendental, the element of the Copernican Revolution.

Descartes could draw his conclusion only by expelling time, by reducing the Cogito to an instant and entrusting time to the operation of continuous creation carried out by God. More generally, the supposed identity of the I has no other guarantee than the unity of God himself. For this reason, the substitution of the point of view of the 'I' for the point of view of 'God' has much less importance than is commonly supposed, so long as the former retains an identity that it owes precisely to the latter. God survives as long as the I enjoys a subsistence, a simplicity and an identity which express the entirety of its resemblance to the divine. Conversely, the death of God does

not leave the identity of the I intact, but installs and interiorises within it an essential dissimilarity, a 'demarcation' in place of the mark or the seal of God. This is what Kant saw so profoundly in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, at least at one point: the manner in which the speculative death of God entails the fracture of the I, the simultaneous disappearance of rational theology and rational psychology. If the greatest initiative of transcendental philosophy was to introduce the form of time into thought as such, then this pure and empty form in turn signifies indissolubly the death of God, the fractured I and the passive self. It is true that Kant did not pursue this initiative: both God and the I underwent a practical resurrection. Even in the speculative domain, the fracture is quickly filled by a new form of identity – namely, active synthetic identity; whereas the passive self is defined only by receptivity and, as such, endowed with no power of synthesis. On the contrary, we have seen that receptivity, understood as a capacity for experiencing affections, was only a consequence, and that the passive self was more profoundly constituted by a synthesis which is itself passive (contemplation–contraction). The possibility of receiving sensations or impressions follows from this. It is impossible to maintain the Kantian distribution, which amounts to a supreme effort to save the world of representation: here, synthesis is understood as active and as giving rise to a new form of identity in the I, while passivity is understood as simple receptivity without synthesis. The Kantian initiative can be taken up, and the form of time can support both the death of God and the fractured I, but in the course of a quite different understanding of the passive self. In this sense, it is correct to claim that neither Fichte nor Hegel is the descendant of Kant – rather, it is Hölderlin, who discovers the emptiness of pure time and, in this emptiness, simultaneously the continued diversion of the divine, the prolonged fracture of the I and the constitutive passion of the self.[10] Hölderlin saw in this form of time both the essence of tragedy and the adventure of Oedipus, as though these were complementary figures of the same death instinct. Is it possible that Kantian philosophy should thus be the heir of Oedipus?

Nevertheless, is it really Kant's prestigious contribution to have introduced time into thought as such? Platonic reminiscence would seem already to have implied this. Innateness is a myth, no less so than reminiscence, but it is a myth of instantaneity, which is why it suited Descartes. When Plato expressly opposes reminiscence and innateness, he means that the latter represents only the abstract image of knowledge, whereas the real movement of learning implies a distinction within the soul between a 'before' and an 'after'; in other words, it implies the introduction of a first time, in which we forget what we knew, since there is a second time in which we recover what we have forgotten.[11] But the question is: In what form does reminiscence introduce time? Even for the

soul, it is a matter of physical time, of a periodic or circular time which is that of the *Physis* and is subordinate to events which occur within it, to movements which it measures or to events which punctuate it. This time undoubtedly finds its ground in an in-itself – that is, in the pure past of the Ideas which arranges the order of presents in a circle according to their decreasing or increasing resemblances to the ideal, but also removes from the circle those souls which have been able to preserve or recover the realm of the in-itself. The Ideas none the less remain the ground on which the successive presents are organised into the circle of time, so that the pure past which defines them is itself still necessarily expressed in terms of a present, as an ancient *mythical* present. This equivocation, all the ambiguity of Mnemosyne, was already implicit in the second synthesis of time. For the latter, from the height of its pure past, surpassed and dominated the world of representation: it is the ground, the in-itself, noumenon and Form. However, it still remains relative to the representation that it grounds. It elevates the principles of representation – namely, identity, which it treats as an immemorial model, and resemblance, which it treats as a present image: the Same and the Similar. It is irreducible to the present and superior to representation, yet it serves only to render the representation of presents circular or infinite (even with Leibniz or Hegel, it is still Mnemosyne which grounds the deployment of representation in the infinite). The shortcoming of the ground is to remain relative to what it grounds, to borrow the characteristics of what it grounds, and to be proved by these. It is in this sense that it creates a circle: it introduces movement into the soul rather than time into thought. Just as the ground is in a sense 'bent' and must lead us towards a beyond, so the second synthesis of time points beyond itself in the direction of a third which denounces the illusion of the in-itself as still a correlate of representation. The in-itself of the past and the repetition in reminiscence constitute a kind of 'effect', like an optical effect, or rather the erotic effect of memory itself.

What does this mean: the empty form of time or third synthesis? The Northern Prince says 'time is out of joint'. Can it be that the Northern philosopher says the same thing: that he should be Hamletian because he is Oedipal? The joint, *cardo*, is what ensures the subordination of time to those properly cardinal points through which pass the periodic movements which it measures (time, number of the movement, for the soul as much as for the world). By contrast, time out of joint means demented time or time outside the curve which gave it a god, liberated from its overly simple circular figure, freed from the events which made up its content, its relation to movement overturned; in short, time presenting itself as an empty and pure form. Time itself unfolds (that is, apparently ceases to be a circle) instead of things unfolding within it (following the overly simple circular figure). It ceases to be cardinal and becomes ordinal, a pure *order* of time.

Hölderlin said that it no longer 'rhymed', because it was distributed unequally on both sides of a 'caesura', as a result of which beginning and end no longer coincided. We may define the order of time as this purely formal distribution of the unequal in the function of a caesura. We can then distinguish a more or less extensive past and a future in inverse proportion, but the future and the past here are not empirical and dynamic determinations of time: they are formal and fixed characteristics which follow *a priori* from the order of time, as though they comprised a static synthesis of time. The synthesis is necessarily static, since time is no longer subordinated to movement; time is the most radical form of change, but the form of change does not change. The caesura, along with the before and after which it ordains once and for all, constitutes the fracture in the I (the caesura is exactly the point at which the fracture appears).

Having abjured its empirical content, having overturned its own ground, time is defined not only by a formal and empty order but also by a totality and a series. In the first place, the idea of a totality of time must be understood as follows: the caesura, of whatever kind, must be determined in the image of a unique and tremendous event, an act which is adequate to time as a whole. This image itself is divided, torn into two unequal parts. Nevertheless, it thereby draws together the totality of time. It must be called a symbol by virtue of the unequal parts which it subsumes and draws together, but draws together as unequal parts. Such a symbol adequate to the totality of time may be expressed in many ways: to throw time out of joint, to make the sun explode, to throw oneself into the volcano, to kill God or the father. This symbolic image constitutes the totality of time to the extent that it draws together the caesura, the before and the after. However, in so far as it carries out their distribution within inequality, it creates the possibility of a temporal series. In effect, there is always a time at which the imagined act is supposed 'too big for me'. This defines *a priori* the past or the before. It matters little whether or not the event itself occurs, or whether the act has been performed or not: past, present and future are not distributed according to this empirical criterion. Oedipus has already carried out the act, Hamlet has not yet done so, but in either case the first part of the symbol is lived in the past, they are in the past and live themselves as such so long as they experience the image of the act as too big for them. The second time, which relates to the caesura itself, is thus the present of metamorphosis, a becoming-equal to the act and a doubling of the self, and the projection of an ideal self in the image of the act (this is marked by Hamlet's sea voyage and by the outcome of Oedipus's enquiry: the hero becomes 'capable' of the act). As for the third time in which the future appears, this signifies that the event and the act possess a secret coherence which excludes that of the self; that they turn back against the self which has become their equal and smash it to pieces, as though the bearer of the new world were carried away and dispersed by

the shock of the multiplicity to which it gives birth: what the self has become equal to is the unequal in itself. In this manner, the I which is fractured according to the order of time and the Self which is divided according to the temporal series correspond and find a common descendant in the man without name, without family, without qualities, without self or I, the 'plebeian' guardian of a secret, the already-Overman whose scattered members gravitate around the sublime image.

All is repetition in the temporal series, in relation to this symbolic image. The past itself is repetition by default, and it prepares this other repetition constituted by the metamorphosis in the present. Historians sometimes look for empirical correspondences between the present and the past, but however rich it may be, this network of historical correspondences involves repetition only by analogy or similitude. In truth, the past is in itself repetition, as is the present, but they are repetition in two different modes which repeat each other. Repetition is never a historical fact, but rather the historical condition under which something new is effectively produced. It is not the historian's reflection which demonstrates a resemblance between Luther and Paul, between the Revolution of 1789 and the Roman Republic, etc. Rather, it is in the first place for themselves that the revolutionaries are determined to lead their lives as 'resuscitated Romans', before becoming capable of the act which they have begun by repeating in the mode of a proper past, therefore under conditions such that they necessarily identify with a figure from the historical past. *Repetition is a condition of action before it is a concept of reflection.* We produce something new only on condition that we repeat – once in the mode which constitutes the past, and once more in the present of metamorphosis. Moreover, what is produced, the absolutely new itself, is in turn nothing but repetition: the third repetition, this time by excess, the repetition of the future as eternal return. For even though the doctrine of eternal return may be expounded as though it affected the whole series or the totality of time, the past and the present no less than the future, such an exposition remains purely introductory. It has no more than a problematic and indeterminate value, no function beyond that of posing the problem of eternal return. Eternal return, in its esoteric truth, concerns – and can concern – only the third time of the series. Only there is it determined. That is why it is properly called a belief of the future, a belief in the future. Eternal return affects only the new, what is produced under the condition of default and by the intermediary of metamorphosis. However, it causes neither the *condition* nor the *agent* to return: on the contrary, it repudiates these and expels them with all its centrifugal force. It constitutes the autonomy of the product, the independence of the work. It is repetition by excess which leaves intact nothing of the default or the becoming-equal. It is itself the new, complete novelty. It is by itself the third time in the series, the future as such. As Klossowski says, it is the secret coherence which establishes

itself only by excluding my own coherence, my own identity, the identity of the self, the world and God. It allows only the plebeian to return, the man without a name. It draws into its circle the dead god and the dissolved self. It does not allow the sun to return, since it presupposes its explosion; it concerns only the nebulae, for which alone it moves and from which it becomes indistinguishable. For this reason, as Zarathustra says at one point to the demon, we simplify matters in expounding the doctrine of eternal return as though it affected the totality of time; we make a hurdy-gurdy song of it, as he says at another point to his animals. In other words, we rely upon the overly simple circle which has as its content the passing present and as its shape the past of reminiscence. However, the order of time, time as a pure and empty form, has precisely undone that circle. It has undone it in favour of a less simple and much more secret, much more tortuous, more nebulous circle, an eternally excentric circle, the decentred circle of difference which is re-formed uniquely in the third time of the series. The order of time has broken the circle of the Same and arranged time in a series only in order to re-form a circle of the Other at the end of the series. The 'once and for all' of the order is there only for the 'every time' of the final esoteric circle. The form of time is there only for the revelation of the formless in the eternal return. The extreme formality is there only for an excessive formlessness (Hölderlin's *Unförmliche*). In this manner, the ground has been superseded by a groundlessness, a universal ungrounding which turns upon itself and causes only the yet-to-come to return.

Note on the Three Repetitions

Marx's theory of historical repetition, as it appears notably in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, turns on the following principle which does not seem to have been sufficiently understood by historians: historical repetition is neither a matter of analogy nor a concept produced by the reflection of historians, but above all a condition of historical action itself. Harold Rosenberg illuminates this point in some fine pages: historical actors or agents can create only on condition that they identify themselves with figures from the past. In this sense, history is theatre: 'their action became a spontaneous repetition of an old role. ... It is the revolutionary crisis, the compelled striving for "something entirely new", that causes history to become veiled in myth ...' (Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1962, ch.12, 'The Resurrected Romans', pp. 155–6).

According to Marx, repetition is comic when it falls short – that is, when instead of leading to metamorphosis and the production of something new, it forms a kind of involution, the opposite of an authentic creation. Comic

travesty replaces tragic metamorphosis. However, it appears that for Marx this comic or grotesque repetition necessarily comes *after* the tragic, evolutive and creative repetition ('all great events and historical personages occur, as it were, twice ... the first time as tragedy, the second as farce'). This temporal order does not, however, seem to be absolutely justified. Comic repetition works by means of some defect, in the mode of the past properly so called. The hero necessarily confronts this repetition so long as 'the act is too big for him': Polonius's murder by mistake is comic, as is Oedipus's enquiry. The moment of metamorphosis, tragic repetition, follows. It is true that these two moments are not independent, existing as they do only for the third moment beyond the comic and the tragic: the production of something new entails a dramatic repetition which excludes even the hero. However, once the first two elements acquire an abstract independence or become genres, then the comic succeeds the tragic as though the failure of metamorphosis, raised to the absolute, presupposed an earlier metamorphosis already completed.

Note that the three-stage structure of repetition is no less that of Hamlet than that of Oedipus. Hölderlin showed this with incomparable rigour in the case of Oedipus: the before, the caesura and the after. He indicated that the relative dimensions of the before and after could vary according to the position of the caesura (for example, the sudden death of Antigone by contrast with Oedipus's long wandering). The essential point, however, is the persistence of the triadic structure. In this regard, Rosenberg interprets Hamlet in a manner which conforms completely to Hölderlin's schema, the caesura being constituted by the the sea voyage: Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New*, ch. 11, 'Character Change and the Drama', pp. 135–53. Hamlet resembles Oedipus by virtue of not only the content but also the dramatic form.

Drama has but a single form involving all three repetitions. Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is clearly a drama, a theatrical work. The largest part of the book is taken up with the before, in the mode of a defect or of the past: this act is too big for me (compare the idea of 'criminal blame', or the whole comic story of the death of God, or Zarathustra's fear before the revelation of eternal return – 'your fruits are ripe but you are not ripe for your fruits'). Then comes the moment of the caesura or the metamorphosis, 'The Sign', when Zarathustra becomes *capable*. The third moment remains absent: this is the moment of the revelation and affirmation of eternal return, and implies the death of Zarathustra. We know that Nietzsche did not have time to write this projected part. That is why it has been constantly supposed that the Nietzschean doctrine of eternal return was never stated but reserved for a future work: Nietzsche gave us only the past condition and the present metamorphosis, but not the unconditioned which was to have resulted as the 'future'.

We rediscover, or find already, this theme of three temporal stages in

most *cyclical* conceptions, such as the three Testaments of Joachim of Flora, or the three ages of Vico: the age of gods, the age of heroes and the age of men. The first is necessarily by default, and as though closed upon itself; the second is open and witness to a heroic metamorphosis; but the most important and mysterious lies in the third, which plays the role of 'signified' in relation to the other two (thus Joachim wrote: 'There are two signifying things and one signified': *L'Evangile éternel*, transl. Aegester, Paris: Editions Rieder, 1928, p. 42). Pierre Ballanche, who owes much to both Joachim and Vico together, attempts to specify this third age as that of the plebeian, of Ulysses or 'no one', 'the man without name', the regicide or the modern Oedipus who 'searches for the scattered members of the great victim' (see his strange *Essais de palingénésie sociale*, Paris: Didot, 1827).

From this point of view, we must distinguish several possible repetitions which cannot be exactly reconciled:

1. An intracyclic repetition, which involves the manner in which the first two ages repeat one another – or rather, repeat one and the same 'thing', act or event yet to come. This is above all the thesis of Joachim, who establishes a table of concordances between the Old Testament and the New; but it is a thesis which cannot go beyond simple analogies of reflection.
2. A cyclic repetition in which it is supposed that, at the end of the third age and at the end of a process of dissolution, everything recommences with the first age: here, the analogies are drawn between two cycles (Vico).
3. The problem remains: isn't there a repetition peculiar to the third age, which alone merits the name of eternal return? For the two first ages do no more than repeat something which appears for itself only in the third, but in the third this 'thing' repeats itself. The two 'significations' are already repetitive, but the signified itself is pure repetition. This superior repetition, understood as an eternal return *in* the third state, is precisely what is needed both to correct the intracyclical hypothesis and to contradict the cyclical hypothesis. In effect, on the one hand, the repetition in the first two moments no longer expresses analogies of reflection, but the conditions under which eternal return is effectively produced by means of some action or other; on the other hand, these first two moments do not return, being on the contrary eliminated by the reproduction of the eternal return in the third. From these two points of view, Nietzsche is profoundly correct to oppose 'his' conception to every cyclical conception (see Kröner, XII, part 1, para. 106).

We see, then, that in this final synthesis of time, the present and future are in turn no more than dimensions of the future: the past as condition, the present as agent. The first synthesis, that of habit, constituted time as a

living present by means of a passive foundation on which past and future depended. The second synthesis, that of memory, constituted time as a pure past, from the point of view of a ground which causes the passing of one present and the arrival of another. In the third synthesis, however, the present is no more than an actor, an author, an agent destined to be effaced; while the past is no more than a condition operating by default. The synthesis of time here constitutes a future which affirms at once both the unconditioned character of the product in relation to the conditions of its production, and the independence of the work in relation to its author or actor. In all three syntheses, present, past and future are revealed as Repetition, but in very different modes. The present is the repeater, the past is repetition itself, but the future is that which is repeated. Furthermore, the secret of repetition as a whole lies in that which is repeated, in that which is twice signified. The future, which subordinates the other two to itself and strips them of their autonomy, is the royal repetition. The first synthesis concerns only the content and the foundation of time; the second, its ground; but beyond these, the third ensures the order, the totality of the series and the final end of time. A philosophy of repetition must pass through all these 'stages', condemned to repeat repetition itself. However, by traversing these stages it ensures its programme of making repetition the category of the future: making use of the repetition of habit and that of memory, but making use of them as stages and leaving them in its wake; struggling on the one hand against Habitus, on the other against Mnemosyne; refusing the content of a repetition which is more or less able to 'draw off' difference (Habitus); refusing the form of a repetition which includes difference, but in order once again to subordinate it to the Same and the Similar (Mnemosyne); refusing the overly simple cycles, the one followed by a habitual present (customary cycle) as much as the one described by a pure past (memorial or immemorial cycle); changing the ground of memory into a simple condition by default, but also the foundation of habit into a failure of 'habitus', a metamorphosis of the agent; expelling the agent and the condition in the name of the work or product; making repetition, not that from which one 'draws off' a difference, nor that which includes difference as a variant, but making it the thought and the production of the 'absolutely different'; making it so that repetition is, for itself, difference in itself.

The majority of these points stimulated a research programme which was both Protestant and Catholic: that of Kierkegaard and Péguy. No one opposed his 'own' repetition to that of habit and that of memory more than these two authors. No one more ably denounced the inadequacy of a past or present repetition, the simplicity of cycles, the trap of reminiscences, the status of differences that one was supposed to 'draw' from repetition – or, on the contrary, understand as simple variants. No one appealed to repetition as the category of the future more than these

two. No one more surely rejected the ancient ground, Mnemosyne, and with it Platonic reminiscence. The ground is no more than a condition by default, one lost in sin which must be recovered in Christ. The present foundation of Habitus is no less rejected: it does not escape the metamorphosis of the actor or the agent in the modern world, in which he may well lose his coherence, his life, his habits.[12]

However, although Kierkegaard and Péguy may be the great repeaters, they were not ready to pay the necessary price. They entrusted this supreme repetition, repetition as a category of the future, to faith. Undoubtedly, faith possesses sufficient force to undo habit and reminiscence, and with them the habitual self and the god of reminiscences, as well as the foundation and the ground of time. However, faith invites us to rediscover *once and for all* God and the self in a common resurrection. Kierkegaard and Péguy are the culmination of Kant, they realise Kantianism by entrusting to faith the task of overcoming the speculative death of God and healing the wound in the self. This is their problem, from Abraham to Joan of Arc: the betrothal of a self rediscovered and a god recovered, in such a manner that it is no longer possible truly to escape from either the condition or the agent. Even further: habit is renovated and memory is refreshed. However, there is an adventure of faith, according to which one is always the clown of one's own faith, the comedian of one's ideal. For faith has its own Cogito which in turn conditions the sentiment of grace, like an interior light. Moreover, it is in this very particular Cogito that faith reflects upon itself and discovers by experiment that its condition can be given to it only as 'recovered', and that it is not only separated from that condition but doubled in it. Hence the believer does not lead his life only as a tragic sinner in so far as he is deprived of the condition, but as a comedian and clown, a simulacrum of himself in so far as he is doubled in the condition. Two believers cannot observe each other without laughing. Grace excludes no less when it is given than when it is lacking. Indeed, Kierkegaard said that he was a poet of the faith rather than a knight – in short, a 'humorist'. This was not his fault but that of the concept of faith; and Gogol's terrible adventure is perhaps more exemplary still. How could faith not be its own habit and its own reminiscence, and how could the repetition it takes for its object – a repetition which, paradoxically, takes place *once and for all* – not be comical? Beneath it rumbles another, Nietzschean, repetition: that of eternal return. Here, a different and more mortuary betrothal between the dead God and the dissolved self forms the true condition by default and the true metamorphosis of the agent, both of which disappear in the unconditioned character of the product. Eternal return is not a faith, but the truth of faith: it has isolated the double or the simulacrum, it has liberated the comic in order to make this an element of the superhuman. That is why – again as Klossowski says – it is not a doctrine but the simulacrum of every doctrine (the highest irony); it is not a

belief but the parody of every belief (the highest humour): a belief and a doctrine eternally yet to come. We have too often been invited to judge the atheist from the viewpoint of the belief or the faith that we suppose still drives him – in short, from the viewpoint of grace; not to be tempted by the inverse operation – to judge the believer by the violent atheist by which he is inhabited, the Antichrist eternally given 'once and for all' within grace.

Biopsychical life implies a field of individuation in which differences in intensity are distributed here and there in the form of excitations. The quantitative and qualitative process of the resolution of such differences is what we call pleasure. A totality of this kind – a mobile distribution of differences and local resolutions within an intensive field – corresponds to what Freud called the Id, or at least the primary layer of the Id. The word 'id' [*Ça*] in this sense is not only a pronoun referring to some formidable unknown, but also an adverb referring to a mobile place, a 'here and there' [*Ça et là*] of excitations and resolutions. It is here that Freud's problem begins: it is a question of knowing how pleasure ceases to be a process in order to become a principle, how it ceases to be a local process in order to assume the value of an empirical principle which tends to organise biopsychical life in the Id. Obviously pleasure is pleasing, but this is not a reason for its assuming a systematic value according to which it is what we seek 'in principle'. This is the primary concern of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: not the exceptions to this principle, but rather the determination of the conditions under which pleasure effectively becomes a principle. The Freudian answer is that excitation in the form of free difference must, in some sense, be 'invested', 'tied' or bound in such a manner that its resolution becomes systematically possible. This binding or investment of difference is what makes possible in general, not pleasure itself, but the value taken on by pleasure as a principle: we thereby pass from a state of scattered resolution to a state of integration, which constitutes the second layer of the Id and the beginnings of an organisation.

This binding is a genuine reproductive synthesis, a Habitus. An animal forms an eye for itself by causing scattered and diffuse luminous excitations to be reproduced on a privileged surface of its body. The eye binds light, it is itself a bound light. This example is enough to show the complexity of synthesis. For there is indeed an activity of reproduction which takes as its object the difference to be bound; but there is more profoundly a passion of repetition, from which emerges a new difference (the formed eye or the seeing subject). Excitation as a difference was *already* the contraction of an elementary repetition. To the extent that the excitation becomes in turn the element of a repetition, the contracting synthesis is raised to a second power, one precisely represented by this binding or investment.

Investments, bindings or integrations are passive syntheses or contemplations–contractions in the second degree. Drives are nothing more than bound excitations. At the level of each binding, an ego is formed in the Id; a passive, partial, larval, contemplative and contracting ego. The Id is populated by local egos which constitute the time peculiar to the Id, the time of the living present there where the binding integrations are carried out. The fact that these egos should be immediately narcissistic is readily explained if we consider narcissism to be not a contemplation of oneself but the fulfilment of a self-image through the contemplation of something else: the eye or the seeing ego is filled with an image of itself in contemplating the excitation that it binds. It produces itself or 'draws itself' from what it contemplates (and from what it contracts and invests by contemplation). This is why the satisfaction which flows from binding is necessarily a 'hallucinatory' satisfaction of the ego itself, even though hallucination here in no way contradicts the effectivity of the binding. In all these senses, binding represents a pure passive synthesis, a Habitus which confers on pleasure the value of being a principle of satisfaction in general. Habit underlies the organisation of the Id.

The problem of habit is therefore badly framed so long as it is subordinated to pleasure. On the one hand, the repetition involved in habit is supposed to be explained by the desire to reproduce a pleasure obtained; on the other hand, it is supposed to concern tensions which are disagreeable in themselves, but may be mastered with a view to obtaining pleasure. Clearly, both hypotheses already presuppose the pleasure principle: the *idea* of pleasure obtained and the *idea* of pleasure to be obtained act only under this principle to form the two applications, past and future. On the contrary, habit, in the form of a passive binding synthesis, precedes the pleasure principle and renders it possible. The idea of pleasure follows from it in the same way that, as we have seen, past and future follow from the synthesis of the living present. The effect of binding is to install the pleasure principle; it cannot have as its object something which presupposes that principle. When pleasure acquires the dignity of a principle, then and only then does the idea of pleasure act in accordance with that principle, in memory or in projects. Pleasure then exceeds its own instantaneity in order to assume the allure of satisfaction in general (the attempts to substitute 'objective' concepts for the instance of pleasure considered too subjective, such as those of achievement or success, only bear witness to this extension conferred by the principle, here under conditions such that the idea of pleasure is merely transposed into the mind of the experimenter). Occasionally we may empirically experience repetition as subordinated to a pleasure obtained or to be obtained, but in the order of conditions the relation is reversed. Binding synthesis cannot be explained by the intention or the effort to *master* an excitation, even though it may have that effect.[13] Once again, we must beware of confusing

the activity of reproduction with the passion for repetition which underlies it. The repetition of an excitation has as its true object the elevation of the passive synthesis to a power which implies the pleasure principle along with its future and past applications. Repetition in habit or the passive synthesis of binding is thus 'beyond' the principle.

This first beyond already constitutes a kind of Transcendental Aesthetic. If this aesthetic appears more profound to us than that of Kant, it is for the following reasons: Kant defines the passive self in terms of simple receptivity, thereby assuming sensations already formed, then merely relating these to the *a priori* forms of their representation which are determined as space and time. In this manner, not only does he unify the passive self by ruling out the possibility of composing space step by step, not only does he deprive this passive self of all power of synthesis (synthesis being reserved for activity), but moreover he cuts the Aesthetic into two parts: the objective element of sensation guaranteed by space and the subjective element which is incarnate in pleasure and pain. The aim of the preceding analyses, on the contrary, has been to show that receptivity must be defined in terms of the formation of local selves or egos, in terms of the passive syntheses of contemplation or contraction, thereby accounting simultaneously for the possibility of experiencing sensations, the power of reproducing them and the value that pleasure assumes as a principle.

On the basis of passive synthesis, however, a twofold development appears, in two very different directions. On the one hand, an active synthesis is established upon the foundation of the passive syntheses: this consists in relating the bound excitation to an object supposed to be both real and the end of our actions (synthesis of recognition, supported by the passive synthesis of reproduction). Active synthesis is defined by the test of reality in an 'objectal' relation, and it is precisely according to the reality principle that the Ego tends to 'be activated', to be actively unified, to unite all its small composing and contemplative passive egos, and to be topologically distinguished from the Id. The passive egos were already integrations, but only local integrations, as mathematicians say; whereas the active self is an attempt at global integration. It would be completely wrong to consider the positing of reality to be an effect induced by the external world, or even the result of failures encountered by passive syntheses. On the contrary, the test of reality mobilises, drives and inspires all the activity of the ego: not so much in the form of a negative judgement, but in moving beyond the binding in the direction of a 'substantive' which serves as a support for the connection. It would also be wrong to suppose that the reality principle is opposed to the pleasure principle, limiting it and imposing renunciations upon it. The two principles are on the same track, even though one goes further than the other. The renunciations of immediate pleasure are already implicit in the role of principle which

pleasure assumes, in the role that the idea of pleasure assumes in relation to a past and a future. A principle is not without duties. Reality and the renunciations that it inspires within us only populate the margins, they work only within the extensions acquired by the pleasure principle; and the reality principle determines an active synthesis only in so far as it is founded upon the preceding passive syntheses.

However, the real objects, the objects proposed as reality or as support for the connection, are not the only objects of the ego, any more than they exhaust the totality of so-called objectal relations. We can distinguish two simultaneous dimensions in such a way that there is no movement beyond the passive synthesis towards an active synthesis without the former also being extended in another direction, one in which it utilises the bound excitation in order to attain something else – albeit in a manner different from the reality principle – even while it remains a passive and contemplative synthesis. Moreover, it seems that active syntheses would never be erected on the basis of passive syntheses unless these persisted simultaneously, unless they did not develop on their own account at the same time, finding new formulae at once both dissymmetrical and complementary with the activity. A child who begins to walk does not only bind excitations in a passive synthesis, even supposing that these were endogenous excitations born of its own movements. No one has ever walked endogenously. On the one hand, the child goes beyond the bound excitations towards the supposition or the intentionality of an object, such as the mother, as the goal of an effort, the end to be actively reached 'in reality' and in relation to which success and failure may be measured. But *on the other hand and at the same time*, the child constructs for itself another object, a quite different kind of object which is a *virtual* object or centre and which then governs and compensates for the progresses and failures of its real activity: it puts several fingers in its mouth, wraps the other arm around this virtual centre, and appraises the whole situation from the point of view of this virtual mother. The fact that the child's glance may be directed at the real mother and that the virtual object may be the goal of an apparent activity (for example, sucking) may inspire an erroneous judgement on the part of the observer. Sucking occurs only in order to provide a virtual object to contemplate in the context of extending the passive synthesis; conversely, the real mother is contemplated only in order to provide a goal for the activity, and a criterion by which to evaluate the activity, in the context of an active synthesis. There is no need to speak of an egocentrism on the part of the child. The child who begins to handle a book by imitation, without being able to read, invariably holds it back to front. It is as though the book were being held out to the other, the real end of the activity, even though the child seizing the book back to front is the virtual centre of its passion, of its own extended contemplation. Widely diverse phenomena, such as left-handedness, mirror-writing, certain forms of stuttering, certain

stereotypes, may be explained on the basis of this duality of centres in the infant world. What is important, however, is that neither one of these two centres is the ego. The same lack of understanding leads to the interpretation of the child's behaviour as stemming from a supposed 'egocentrism' and to the interpretation of infantile narcissism as excluding the contemplation of other things. In fact the child is constructed within a double series: on the basis of the passive synthesis of connection and on the basis of the bound excitations. Both series are objectal: one series comprises real objects which serve as correlates of active synthesis; the other virtual objects which serve as correlates of an extension of passive synthesis. The extended passive ego fulfils itself with a narcissistic image in contemplating the virtual centres. One series would not exist without the other, yet they do not resemble one another. For this reason, Henri Maldiney is correct to say, in analysing children's movement, that the infantile world is in no way circular or egocentric but elliptical; that it has two centres and that these differ in kind, both nevertheless being objective or objectal.[14] In virtue of their dissimilarity, perhaps a crossing, a twist, a helix or a figure 8 is even formed between the two centres. What, then, would be the ego, where would it be, given its topological distinction from the Id, if not at the crossing of the 8, at the point of connection between these two intersecting asymmetrical circles, the circle of real objects and that of the virtual objects or centres?

The differenciation between self-preservative and sexual drives must be related to this duality between two correlative series. The self-preservative drives are, after all, inseparable from the constitution of the reality principle, from the foundation of active synthesis and the active global ego, and from the relations with the real object perceived as satisfying or menacing. The sexual drives are no less inseparable from the constitution of virtual centres, or the extension of passive syntheses and the passive egos which correspond to them: in pre-genital sexuality, actions are always observations or contemplations, but it is always the virtual which is contemplated or observed. The fact that the two series cannot exist without each other indicates not only that they are complementary, but that by virtue of their dissimilarity and their difference in kind they borrow from and feed into one another. We see both that the virtuals are deducted from the series of reals and that they are incorporated in the series of reals. This derivation implies, first, an isolation or suspension which freezes the real in order to extract a pose, an aspect or a part. This isolation, however, is qualitative: it does not consist simply in subtracting a part of the real object, since the subtracted part acquires a new nature in functioning as a virtual object. The virtual object is a *partial* object – not simply because it lacks a part which remains in the real, but in itself and for itself because it is cleaved or doubled into two virtual parts, one of which is always missing from the other. In short, the virtual is never subject to the global character

which affects real objects. It is – not only by its origin but by its own nature – a fragment, a shred or a remainder. It lacks its own identity. The good and the bad mother – or, in terms of the paternal duality, the serious and the playful father – are not two partial objects but the same object in so far as it has lost its identity in the double. Whereas active synthesis points beyond passive synthesis towards global integrations and the supposition of identical totalisable objects, passive synthesis, as it develops, points beyond itself towards the contemplation of partial objects which remain non-totalisable. These partial or virtual objects are encountered under various names, such as Melanie Klein's good *and* bad object, the 'transitional' object, the fetish-object, and above all Lacan's object *a*. Freud definitively showed how pre-genital sexuality consisted of partial drives deducted from the exercise of self-preservative drives; such a derivation presupposes the constitution of objects which are themselves partial and which function as so many virtual centres, so many poles always doubled with sexuality.

Conversely, these virtual objects are incorporated in the real objects. In this sense they can correspond to parts of the subject's body, to another person, or even to very special objects such as toys or fetishes. This incorporation is in no way an identification, or even an introjection, since it exceeds the limits of the subject. Far from opposing itself to the process of isolation, it complements it. Whatever the reality in which the virtual object is incorporated, it does not become integrated: it remains planted or stuck there, and does not find in the real object the half which completes it, but rather testifies to the other virtual half which the real continues to lack. When Melanie Klein shows how many virtual objects the maternal body contains, it must not be thought that it totalises or englobes them, or possesses them, but rather that they are planted in it like trees from another world, like Gogol's nose or Deucalion's stones. Incorporation nevertheless remains the condition under which the self-preservative drives and the active synthesis which corresponds to them can – in turn, and with their own resources – fold sexuality back on to the series of real objects and, from without, integrate it into the domain ruled by the reality principle.

Virtual objects belong essentially to the past. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson proposed the schema of a world with two centres, one real and the other virtual, from which emanate on the one hand a series of 'perception-images', and on the other a series of 'memory-images', the two series collaborating in an endless circuit. The virtual object is not a former present, since the quality of the present and the modality of its passing here affect exclusively the series of the real as this is constituted by active synthesis. However, the pure past as it was defined above does qualify the virtual object; that is, the past as contemporaneous with its own present, as pre-existing the passing present and as that which causes the present to pass. Virtual objects are shreds of pure past. It is from the height of my

contemplation of virtual centres that I am present at and preside over my passing present, along with the succession of real objects in which those centres are incorporated. The reason for this may be found in the nature of these centres. Although it is deducted from the present real object, the virtual object differs from it in kind: not only does it lack something in relation to the real object from which it is subtracted, it lacks something in itself, since it is always half of itself, the other half being different as well as absent. This absence, as we shall see, is the opposite of a negative. Eternal half of itself, it is where it is only on condition that it is not where it should be. It is where we find it only on condition that we search for it where it is not. It is at once not possessed by those who have it and had by those who do not possess it. *It is always a 'was.'* In this sense, Lacan's pages assimilating the virtual object to Edgar Allan Poe's purloined letter seem to us exemplary. Lacan shows that real objects are subjected to the law of being *or* not being somewhere, by virtue of the reality principle; whereas virtual objects, by contrast, have the property of being *and* not being where they are, wherever they go:

> what is hidden is never but what is *missing from its place*, as the call slip puts it when speaking of a volume lost in the library. And even if the book be on an adjacent shelf or in the next slot, it would be hidden there, however visibly it may appear. For it can *literally* be said that something is missing from its place only of what can change it: the symbolic. For the real, whatever upheaval we subject it to, is always in its place; it carries it glued to its heel, ignorant of what might exile it from it.[15]

The passing present which bears itself away has never been better opposed to the pure past which perpetually differs from itself and whose universal mobility and universal ubiquity cause the present to pass. The virtual object is never past in relation to a new present, any more than it is past in relation to a present which it was. It is past as the contemporary of the present which it is, in a frozen present; as though lacking on the one hand the part which, on the other hand, it is at the same time; as though displaced while still in place. This is why virtual objects exist only as fragments of themselves: they are found only as lost; they exist only as recovered. Loss or forgetting here are not determinations which must be overcome; rather, they refer to the objective nature of that which we recover, as lost, at the heart of forgetting. Contemporaneous with itself as present, being itself its own past, pre-existing every present which passes in the real series, the virtual object belongs to the pure past. It is pure fragment and fragment of itself. As in a physical experiment, however, the incorporation of this pure fragment changes the quality and causes the present to pass into the series of real objects.

This is the link between Eros and Mnemosyne. Eros tears virtual objects

out of the pure past and gives them to us in order that they may be lived. Lacan discovers the 'phallus', understood as a symbolic organ, behind all these virtual or partial objects. He is able to give this extension to the concept of the phallus (such that it subsumes all the virtual objects) because the concept effectively comprises the preceding characteristics: testifying to its own absence and to itself as past, being essentially displaced in relation to itself, being found only as lost, being possessed of an always fragmentary identity which loses its identity in the double; since it may be searched for and discovered only on the side of the mother, and since it has the paradoxical property of changing its place, not being possessed by those who have a 'penis', yet being *possessed* by those who do not have one, as the theme of castration shows. The symbolic phallus signifies no less the erotic mode of the pure past than the immemorial of sexuality. The symbol is the always-displaced fragment, standing for a past which was never present: the object = x. But what is the meaning of this idea that virtual objects refer, in the last instance, to an element which is itself symbolic?

Undoubtedly, the whole psychoanalytic – or, in other words, amorous – game of repetition is at issue here. The question is whether repetition may be understood as operating from one present to another in the real series, from a present to a former present. In this case, the former present would play the role of a complex point, like an ultimate or original term which would remain in place and exercise a power of attraction: it would be the one which provides the *thing* that is to be repeated, the one which conditions the whole process of repetition, and in this sense would remain independent of it. The concepts of fixation and regression, along with trauma and the primal scene, express this first element. As a consequence, repetition would in principle conform to the model of a material, bare and brute repetition, understood as the repetition of the same: the idea of an 'automatism' in this context expresses the modality of a fixated drive, or rather, of repetition conditioned by fixation or regression. And if this material model is in fact perturbed and covered over with all kinds of disguises, with a thousand and one forms of disguise or displacement, then these are only secondary even if they are necessary: the distortion in the majority of cases does not belong to the fixation, or even to the repetition, but is added or superimposed on to these; it necessarily clothes them, but from without, and may be explained by the repression which translates the conflict (within the repetition) between the repeater and what is repeated. The three very different concepts of fixation, automatic repetition and repression testify to this distribution between a supposed last or first term in relation to repetition, a repetition which is supposed to be bare underneath the disguises which cover it, and the disguises which are necessarily added by the force of a conflict. Even – and above all – the Freudian conception of the death instinct, understood as a return to

inanimate matter, remains inseparable from the positing of an ultimate term, the model of a material and bare repetition and the conflictual dualism between life and death. It matters little whether or not the former present acts in its objective reality, or rather, in the form in which it was lived or imagined. For imagination intervenes here only in order to gather up the resonances and ensure the disguises between the two presents in the series of the real as lived reality. Imagination gathers the traces of the former present and models the new present upon the old. The traditional theory of the compulsion to repeat in psychoanalysis remains essentially realist, materialist and subjective or individualist. It is realist because everything 'happens' between presents. It is materialist because the model of a brute, automatic repetition is presupposed. It is individualist, subjective, solipsistic or monadic because both the former present – in other words, the repeated or disguised element – and the new present – in other words, the present terms of the disguised repetition – are considered to be only the conscious or unconscious, latent or manifest, repressed or repressing *representations* of the subject. The whole theory of repetition is thereby subordinated to the requirements of simple representation, from the standpoint of its realism, materialism and subjectivism. Repetition is subjected to a principle of identity in the former present and a rule of resemblance in the present one. Nor do we believe that the Freudian discovery of a phylogenesis or the Jungian discovery of archetypes can correct the weaknesses of such a conception. Even if the rights of the imaginary as a whole are opposed to the facts of reality, it remains a question of a 'psychic' reality considered to be ultimate or original; even if we oppose spirit and matter, it remains a question of a bare, uncovered spirit resting upon its own identity and supported by its derived analogies; even if we oppose a collective or cosmic unconscious to the individual unconscious, the former can act only through its power to inspire representations in a solipsistic subject, whether this be the subject of a culture or a world.

The difficulties of conceptualising the process of repetition have often been emphasized. Consider the two presents, the two scenes or the two events (infantile and adult) in their reality, separated by time: how can the former present act at a distance upon the present one? How can it provide a model for it, when all its effectiveness is retrospectively received from the later present? Furthermore, if we invoke the indispensable imaginary operations required to fill the temporal space, how could these operations fail ultimately to absorb the entire reality of the two presents, leaving the repetition to subsist only as the illusion of a solipsistic subject? However, while it may seem that the two presents are successive, at a variable distance apart in the series of reals, in fact they form, rather, *two real series which coexist in relation to a virtual object of another kind*, one which constantly circulates and is displaced in them (even if the characters, the

subjects which give rise to the positions, the terms and the relations of each series, remain, for their part, temporally distinct). Repetition is constituted not from one present to another, but between the two coexistent series that these presents form in function of the virtual object (object = x). It is because this object constantly circulates, always displaced in relation to itself, that it determines transformations of terms and modifications of imaginary relations within the two real series in which it appears, and therefore between the two presents. The displacement of the virtual object is not, therefore, one disguise among others, but the principle from which, in reality, repetition follows in the form of disguised repetition. Repetition is constituted only with and through the *disguises* which affect the terms and relations of the real series, but it is so because it depends upon the virtual object as an immanent instance which operates above all by *displacement*. In consequence, we cannot suppose that disguise may be explained by repression. On the contrary, it is because repetition is necessarily disguised, by virtue of the characteristic displacement of its determinant principle, that repression occurs in the form of a consequence in regard to the representation of presents. Freud, no doubt, was aware of this, since he did search for a more profound instance than that of repression, even though he conceived of it in similar terms as a so-called 'primary' repression. We do not repeat because we repress, we repress because we repeat. Moreover – which amounts to the same thing – we do not disguise because we repress, we repress because we disguise, and we disguise by virtue of the determinant centre of repetition. Repetition is no more secondary in relation to a supposed ultimate or originary fixed term than disguise is secondary in relation to repetition. For if the two presents, the former and the present one, form two series which coexist in the function of the virtual object which is displaced in them and in relation to itself, *neither of these two series can any longer be designated as the original or the derived*. They put a variety of terms and subjects into play in a complex intersubjectivity in which each subject owes its role and function in the series to the timeless position that it occupies in relation to the virtual object.[16] As for this object itself, it can no longer be treated as an ultimate or original term: this would be to assign it a fixed place and an identity repugnant to its whole nature. If it can be 'identified' with the phallus, this is only to the extent that the latter, in Lacan's terms, is always missing from its place, from its own identity and from its representation. In short, there is no ultimate term – our loves do not refer back to the mother; it is simply that the mother occupies a certain place in relation to the virtual object in the series which constitutes our present, a place which is necessarily filled by another character in the series which constitutes the present of another subjectivity, always taking into account the displacements of that object = x. In somewhat the same manner, by loving his mother the hero of *In Search of Lost Time* repeats Swann's love for

Odette. The parental characters are not the ultimate terms of individual subjecthood but the middle terms of an intersubjectivity, forms of communication and disguise from one series to another for different subjects, to the extent that these forms are determined by the displacement of the virtual object. Behind the masks, therefore, are further masks, and even the most hidden is still a hiding place, and so on to infinity. The only illusion is that of unmasking something or someone. The symbolic organ of repetition, the phallus, is no less a mask than it is itself hidden. For the mask has two senses. 'Give me, please, give me ... what then? another mask.' In the first place, the mask means the *disguise* which has an imaginary effect on the terms and relations of the two real series which properly coexist. More profoundly, however, it signifies the *displacement* which essentially affects the virtual symbolic object, both in its series and in the real series in which it endlessly circulates. (Thus, the displacement which makes the eyes of the bearer correspond with the mouth of the mask, or shows the face of the bearer only as a headless body, allowing that a head may none the less, in turn, appear upon that body.)

Repetition is thus in essence symbolic, spiritual, and intersubjective or monadological. A final consequence follows with regard to the nature of the unconscious. The phenomena of the unconscious cannot be understood in the overly simple form of opposition or conflict. For Freud, it is not only the theory of repression but the dualism in the theory of drives which encourages the primacy of a conflictual model. However, the conflicts are the result of more subtle differential mechanisms (displacements and disguises). And if the *forces* naturally enter into relations of opposition, this is on the basis of differential elements which express a more profound instance. The negative, under its double aspect of limitation and opposition, seemed to us in general secondary in relation to the instance of problems and questions: in other words, the negative expresses only within consciousness the shadow of fundamentally unconscious questions and problems, and owes its apparent power to the inevitable place of the 'false' in the natural positing of these problems and questions. It is true that the unconscious desires, and only desires. However, just as desire finds the principle of its difference from need in the virtual object, so it appears neither as a power of negation nor as an element of an opposition, but rather as a questioning, problematising and searching force which operates in a different domain than that of desire and satisfaction. Questions and problems are not speculative acts, and as such completely provisional and indicative of the momentary ignorance of an empirical subject. On the contrary, they are the living acts of the unconscious, investing special objectivities and destined to survive in the provisional and partial state characteristic of answers and solutions. The problems 'correspond' to the reciprocal disguise of the terms and relations which constitute the reality series. The questions or sources of problems correspond to the

displacement of the virtual object which causes the series to develop. The phallus as virtual object is always located by enigmas and riddles in a place where it is not, because it is indistinguishable from the space in which it is displaced. Even Oedipus's conflicts depend upon the Sphinx's question. Birth and death, and the difference between the sexes, are the complex themes of problems before they are the simple terms of an opposition. (Before the opposition between the sexes, determined by the possession or lack of the penis, there is the 'question' of the phallus which determines the differential position of sexed characters in each series.) It may be that there is necessarily something mad in every question and every problem, as there is in their transcendence in relation to answers, in their insistence through solutions and the manner in which they maintain their own openness.[17]

It is enough that the question be posed with sufficient force, as it is by Dostoyevsky or Shestov, in order to quell rather than incite any response. It is here that it discovers its properly ontological import, the (non)-being of the question which cannot be reduced to the non-being of the negative. There are no ultimate or original responses or solutions, there are only problem–questions, in the guise of a mask behind every mask and a displacement behind every place. It would be naive to think that the problems of life and death, love and the difference between the sexes are amenable to their scientific solutions and positings, even though such positings and solutions necessarily arise without warning, even though they must necessarily emerge at a certain moment in the unfolding process of the development of these problems. The problems concern the eternal disguise; questions, the eternal displacement. Neuropaths and psychopaths perhaps explore this original ultimate ground, at the cost of their suffering, the former asking *how to shift the problem*, the latter *where to pose the question*. Precisely their suffering, their pathos, is the only response to a question which in itself is endlessly shifted, to a problem which in itself is endlessly disguised. It is not what they say or what they think but their life which is exemplary, and is larger than they are. They bear witness to that transcendence, and to the most extraordinary play of the true and the false which occurs not at the level of answers and solutions but at the level of the problems themselves, in the questions themselves – in other words, in conditions under which the false becomes the mode of exploration of the true, the very space of its essential disguises or its fundamental displacement: the *pseudos* here becomes the pathos of the True. The power of the questions always comes from somewhere else than the answers, and benefits from a free depth which cannot be resolved. The insistence, the transcendence and the ontological bearing of questions and problems is expressed not in the form of the finality of a sufficient reason (to what end? why?) but in the discrete form of difference and repetition: what difference is there? and 'repeat a little'. There is never any difference – not because it comes down to the same in the answer, but because it is never anywhere

but in the question, and in the repetition of the question, which ensures its movement and its disguise. Problems and questions thus belong to the unconscious, but as a result the unconscious is differential and iterative by nature; it is serial, problematic and questioning. To ask whether the unconscious is ultimately oppositional or differential, an unconscious of great forces in conflict or one of little elements in series, one of opposing great representations or differenciated little perceptions, appears to resuscitate earlier hesitations and earlier polemics between the Leibnizian tradition and the Kantian tradition. However, if Freud was completely on the side of an Hegelian post-Kantianism – in other words, of an unconscious of opposition – why did he pay so much homage to the Leibnizian Fechner and to his 'symptomologist's' differential finesse? In truth, it is not at all a question of knowing whether the unconscious implies a non-being of logical limitation or a non-being of real opposition. Both these two forms of non-being are, in any case, figures of the negative. The unconscious is neither an unconscious of degradation nor an unconscious of contradiction; it involves neither limitation nor opposition; it concerns, rather, problems and questions in their difference in kind from answers–solutions: the (non)-being of the problematic which rejects equally the two forms of negative non-being which govern only propositions of consciousness. The celebrated phrase 'the unconscious knows no negative', must be taken literally. Partial objects are the elements of little perceptions. The unconscious is differential, involving little perceptions, and as such it is different in kind from consciousness. It concerns problems and questions which can never be reduced to the great oppositions or the overall effects that are felt in consciousness (we shall see that Leibnizian theory already indicated this path).

We have thus encountered a second beyond the pleasure principle, a second synthesis of time in the unconscious itself. The first passive synthesis, that of Habitus, presented repetition as a binding, in the constantly renewed form of a living present. It ensured the foundation of the pleasure principle in two complementary senses, since it led both to the general value of pleasure as an instance to which psychic life was henceforth subordinated in the Id, and to the particular hallucinatory satisfaction which filled each passive ego with a narcissistic image of itself. The second synthesis, that of Eros–Mnemosyne, posits repetition as *displacement* and *disguise*, and functions as the ground of the pleasure principle: in effect, it is then a question of knowing how this principle applies to what it governs, under what conditions of use and at the cost of what limitations and what extensions. The answer is given in two directions: one is that of a general law of reality, according to which the first synthesis points beyond itself in the direction of an active synthesis and ego; in the other direction, by contrast, the first synthesis is extended in the form of a second passive synthesis which gathers up the particular

narcissistic satisfaction and relates it to the contemplation of virtual objects. The pleasure principle here receives new conditions, as much in regard to a produced reality as to a constituted sexuality. Drives, which are defined only as bound excitation, now appear in differenciated form: as self-preservative drives following the active line of reality, as sexual drives in this new passive extension. If the first passive synthesis constitutes an 'aesthetic', the second may properly be defined as the equivalent of an 'analytic'. If the first passive synthesis concerns the present, the second concerns the past. If the first makes use of repetition in order to draw off a difference, the second passive synthesis includes difference at the heart of repetition, since the two figures of difference, movement and disguise – the displacement which symbolically affects the virtual object and the disguises which affect, in imaginary fashion, the real objects in which it is incorporated – have become the elements of repetition itself. This is why Freud experienced some difficulty in distributing difference and repetition from the point of view of Eros, to the extent that he maintains the opposition between these two factors and understands repetition on the material model of cancelled difference, while defining Eros by the introduction, or even the production, of new differences.[18] In fact, Eros's force of repetition derives directly from a power of difference – one which Eros borrows from Mnemosyne, one which affects virtual objects like so many fragments of a pure past. As Janet in some ways suspected, it is not amnesia but rather a hypernesia which explains the role of erotic repetition and its combination with difference. The 'never-seen' which characterises an always displaced and disguised object is immersed in the 'already-seen' of the pure past in general, from which that object is extracted. We do not know *when* or *where* we have seen it, in accordance with the objective nature of the problematic; and ultimately, it is only the strange which is familiar and only difference which is repeated.

It is true that the synthesis of Eros and Mnemosyne still suffers from an ambiguity. In relation to the first passive synthesis of Habitus, the series of the real (or the presents which pass in the real) and the series of the virtual (or of a past which differs in kind from any present) form two divergent circular lines, two circles or even two arcs of the same circle. But in relation to the object = x taken as the immanent limit of the series of virtuals, and as the principle of the second passive synthesis, these are the successive presents of the reality which now forms coexistent series, circles or even arcs of the same circle. It is inevitable that the two references become confused, the pure past assuming thereby the status of a former present, albeit mythical, and reconstituting the illusion it was supposed to denounce, resuscitating the illusion of an original and a derived, of an identity in the origin and a resemblance in the derived. Moreover, Eros leads its life as a cycle, or as an element within a cycle, where the opposing element can only be Thanatos at the base of memory, the two combining

like love and hate, construction and destruction, attraction and repulsion. Always the same ambiguity on the part of the ground: to represent itself in the circle that it imposes on what it grounds, to return as an element in the circuit of representation that it determines in principle.

The essentially lost character of virtual objects and the essentially disguised character of real objects are powerful motivations of narcissism. However, it is by interiorising the difference between the two lines and by experiencing itself as perpetually displaced in the one, perpetually disguised in the other, that the libido returns or flows back into the ego and the passive ego becomes entirely narcissistic. The narcissistic ego is inseparable not only from a constitutive wound but from the disguises and displacements which are woven from one side to the other, and constitute its modification. The ego is a mask for other masks, a disguise under other disguises. Indistinguishable from its own clowns, it walks with a limp on one green and one red leg. Nevertheless, the importance of the reorganisation which takes place at this level, in opposition to the preceding stage of the second synthesis, cannot be overstated. For while the passive ego becomes narcissistic, the activity must be *thought*. This can occur only in the form of an affection, in the form of the very modification that the narcissistic ego passively *experiences* on its own account. Thereafter, the narcissistic ego is related to the form of an I which operates upon it as an 'Other'. This active but fractured I is not only the basis of the superego but the correlate of the passive and wounded narcissistic ego, thereby forming a complex whole that Paul Ricoeur aptly named an 'aborted cogito'.[19] Moreover, there is only the aborted Cogito, only the larval subject. We saw above that the fracture of the I was no more than the pure and empty form of time, separated from its content. The narcissistic ego indeed appears in time, but does not constitute a temporal content: the narcissistic libido, the reflux of the libido into the ego, abstracts from all content. The narcissistic ego is, rather, the phenomenon which corresponds to the empty form of time without filling it, the spatial phenomenon of that form in general (it is this phenomenon of space which is presented in a different manner in neurotic castration and psychotic fragmentation). The form of time in the I determines an order, a whole and a series. The formal static order of before, during and after marks the division of the narcissistic ego in time, or the conditions of its contemplation. The whole of time is gathered in the image of the formidable action as this is simultaneously presented, forbidden and predicted by the superego: the action = x. The temporal series designates the confrontation of the divided narcissistic ego with the whole of time or the image of the action. The narcissistic ego repeats once in the form of the before or lack, in the form of the *Id* (this action is too big for me); a second time in the form of an infinite becoming-equal appropriate to the *ego ideal*; a third time in the form of the after which realises the prediction of the

superego (the id and the ego, the condition and the agent, will themselves be annihilated)! For the practical law itself signifies nothing other than that empty form of time.

When the narcissistic ego takes the place of the virtual and real objects, when it assumes the displacement of the former and the disguise of the latter, it does not replace one content of time with another. On the contrary, we enter into the third synthesis. It is as though time had abandoned all possible mnemic content, and in so doing had broken the circle into which it was lead by Eros. It is as though it had unrolled, straightened itself and assumed the ultimate shape of the labyrinth, the straight-line labyrinth which is, as Borges says, 'invisible, incessant'. Time empty and out of joint, with its rigorous formal and static order, its crushing unity and its irreversible series, is precisely the death instinct. The death instinct does not enter into a cycle with Eros, but testifies to a completely different synthesis. It is by no means the complement or antagonist of Eros, nor in any sense symmetrical with him. The correlation between Eros and Mnemosyne is replaced by that between a narcissistic ego without memory, a great amnesiac, and a death instinct desexualised and without love. The narcissistic ego has no more than a dead body, having lost the body at the same time as the objects. It is by means of the death instinct that it is reflected in the ego ideal and has a presentiment of its end in the superego, as though in two fragments of the fractured I. It is this relation between the narcissistic ego and the death instinct that Freud indicated so profoundly in saying that there is no reflux of the libido on to the ego without it becoming *desexualised* and forming a neutral *displaceable* energy, essentially capable of serving Thanatos.[20] Why, however, did Freud thus propose a death instinct existing prior to that desexualised energy, independent of it in principle? Undoubtedly for two reasons – one relating to the persistance of a dualistic and conflictual model which inspired the entire theory of drives; the other to the material model which presided over the theory of repetition. That is why Freud insisted on the one hand on the difference in kind between Eros and Thanatos, according to which Thanatos should be addressed in his own terms in opposition to Eros; and on the other hand on a difference in rhythm or amplitude, as though Thanatos had returned to the state of inanimate matter, thereby becoming identified with that power of bare or brute repetition that the vital differences arising from Eros are supposed only to cover or contradict. In any case, determined as the qualitative and quantitative return of the living to inanimate matter, death has only an extrinsic, scientific and objective definition. Freud strangely refused any other dimension to death, any prototype or any presentation of death in the unconscious, even though he conceded the existence of such prototypes for birth and castration.[21] This reduction of death to an objective determination of matter displays the same prejudice according to which

repetition must find its ultimate principle in an undifferenciated material model, beyond the displacements and disguises of a secondary or opposed difference. In truth, the structure of the unconscious is not conflictual, oppositional or contradictory, but questioning and problematising. Nor is repetition a bare and brute power behind the disguises, the latter affecting it only secondarily, like so many variations: on the contrary, it is woven from disguise and displacement, without any existence apart from these constitutive elements. Death does not appear in the objective model of an indifferent inanimate matter to which the living would 'return'; it is present in the living in the form of a subjective and differenciated experience endowed with its prototype. It is not a material state; on the contrary, having renounced all matter, it corresponds to a pure form – the empty form of time. (As a means of filling time, it makes no difference whether repetition is subordinated to the extrinsic identity of a dead matter or to the intrinsic identity of an immortal soul.) For death cannot be reduced to negation, neither to the negative of opposition nor to the negative of limitation. It is neither the limitation imposed by matter upon mortal life, nor the opposition between matter and immortal life, which furnishes death with its prototype. Death is, rather, the last form of the problematic, the source of problems and questions, the sign of their persistence over and above every response, the 'Where?' and 'When?' which designate this (non)-being where every affirmation is nourished.

Blanchot rightly suggests that death has two aspects. One is personal, concerning the I or the ego, something which I can confront in a struggle or meet at a limit, or in any case encounter in a present which causes everything to pass. The other is strangely impersonal, with no relation to 'me', neither present nor past but always coming, the source of an incessant multiple adventure in a persistent question:

> It is the fact of dying that includes a radical reversal, through which the death that was the extreme form of my power not only becomes what loosens my hold upon myself by casting me out of my power to begin and even to finish, but also becomes that which is without any relation to me, without power over me – that which is stripped of all possibility – the unreality of the indefinite. I cannot represent this reversal to myself, I cannot even conceive of it as definitive. It is not the irreversible step beyond which there would be no return, for it is that which is not accomplished, the interminable and the incessant. ... It is inevitable but inaccessible death; it is the abyss of the present, time without a present, with which I have no relationships; it is that toward which I cannot go forth, for in it *I* do not die, I have fallen from the power to die. In it *they* die; they do not cease, and they do not finish dying ... not the term, but the interminable, not proper but featureless death, and not true death but, as Kafka says, "the sneer of its capital error".[22]

In confronting these two aspects, it is apparent that even suicide does not make them coincide with one another or become equivalent. The first signifies the personal disappearance of the person, the annihilation of *this* difference represented by the I or the ego. This is a difference which existed only in order to die, and the disappearance of which can be objectively represented by a return to inanimate matter, as though calculated by a kind of entropy. Despite appearances, this death always comes from without, even at the moment when it constitutes the most personal possibility, and from the past, even at the moment when it is most present. The other death, however, the other face or aspect of death, refers to the state of free differences when they are no longer subject to the form imposed upon them by an I or an ego, when they assume a shape which excludes *my* own coherence no less than that of any identity whatsoever. There is always a 'one dies' more profound than 'I die', and it is not only the gods who die endlessly and in a variety of ways; as though there appeared worlds in which the individual was no longer imprisoned within the personal form of the I and the ego, nor the singular imprisoned within the limits of the individual – in short, the insubordinate multiple, which cannot be 'recognised' in the first aspect. The Freudian conception refers to this first aspect, and for that reason fails to discover the death instinct, along with the corresponding experience and prototype.

We see no reason to propose a death instinct which would be distinguishable from Eros, either by a difference in kind between two forces, or by a difference in rhythm or amplitude between two movements. In both cases, the difference would already be given and Thanatos would be independent as a result. It seems to us, on the contrary, that Thanatos is completely indistinguishable from the desexualisation of Eros, with the resultant formation of that neutral and displaceable energy of which Freud speaks. This energy does not serve Thanatos, it constitutes him: there is no analytic difference between Eros and Thanatos, no already given difference such that the two would be combined or made to alternate within the same 'synthesis'. It is not that the difference is any less. On the contrary, being synthetic, it is greater precisely because Thanatos stands for a synthesis of time quite unlike that of Eros; all the more exclusive because it is drawn from him, constructed upon his remains. It is all in the same movement that there is a reflux of Eros on to the ego, that the ego takes upon itself the disguises and displacements which characterise the objects in order to construct its own fatal affection, that the libido loses all mnemic content and Time loses its circular shape in order to assume a merciless and straight form, and that the death instinct appears, indistinguishable from that pure form, the desexualised energy *of* that narcissistic libido. The complementarity between the narcissistic libido and the death instinct defines the third synthesis as much as Eros and Mnemosyne defined the second. Moreover, when Freud says that perhaps the process of *thought* in

general should be attached to that desexualised energy which is the correlative of the libido become narcissistic, we should understand that, contrary to the old dilemma, it is no longer a question of knowing whether thought is innate or acquired. It is neither innate nor acquired but genital – *in other words*, desexualised and drawn from that reflux which opens us on to empty time. In order to indicate this genesis of thought in an always fractured I, Artaud said: 'I am an innate genital', meaning equally thereby a 'desexualised acquisition'. It is not a question of acquiring thought, nor of exercising it as though it were innate, but of engendering the act of thinking within thought itself, perhaps under the influence of a violence which causes the reflux of libido on to the narcissistic ego, and in the same movement both extracting Thanatos from Eros and abstracting time from all content in order to separate out the pure form. There is an experience of death which corresponds to this third synthesis.

Freud supposes the unconscious to be ignorant of three important things: Death, Time and No. Yet it is a question only of time, death and no in the unconscious. Does this mean merely that they are acted [*agis*] without being represented? Furthermore, the unconscious is ignorant of no because it lives off the (non)-being of problems and questions, rather than the non-being of the negative which affects only consciousness and its representations. It is ignorant of death because every representation of death concerns its inadequate aspect, whereas the unconscious discovers and seizes upon the other side, the other face. It is ignorant of time because it is never subordinated to the empirical contents of a present which passes in representation, but rather carries out the passive syntheses of an original time. *It is these three syntheses which must be understood as constitutive of the unconscious.* They correspond to the figures of repetition which appear in the work of a great novelist: the binding, the ever renewed fine cord; the ever displaced stain on the wall; the ever erased eraser. The repetition–binding, the repetition–stain, the repetition–eraser: the three beyonds of the pleasure principle. The first synthesis expresses the foundation of time upon the basis of a living present, a foundation which endows pleasure with its value as a general empirical principle to which is subject the content of the psychic life in the Id. The second synthesis expresses the manner in which time is grounded in a pure past, a ground which conditions the application of the pleasure principle to the contents of the Ego. The third synthesis, however, refers to the absence of ground into which we are precipitated by the ground itself: Thanatos appears in third place as this groundlessness, beyond the ground of Eros and the foundation of Habitus. He therefore has a disturbing kind of relation with the pleasure principle which is often expressed in the unfathomable paradoxes of a pleasure linked to pain (when in fact it is a question of something else altogether: the desexualisation which operates in this third synthesis, in so far as it inhibits the application of the pleasure principle as

the prior directive idea in order then to proceed to a resexualisation in which pleasure is invested only in a pure, cold, apathetic and frozen thought, as we see in the cases of sadism and masochism). In one sense the third synthesis unites all the dimensions of time, past, present and future, and causes them to be played out in the pure form. In another sense it involves their reorganisation, since the past is treated in function of a totality of time as the condition by default which characterises the Id, while the present is defined by the metamorphosis of the agent in the ego ideal. In a third sense, finally, the ultimate synthesis concerns only the future, since it announces in the superego the destruction of the Id and the ego, of the past as well as the present, of the condition and the agent. At this extreme point the straight line of time forms a circle again, a singularly tortuous one; or alternatively, the death instinct reveals an unconditional truth hidden in its 'other' face – namely, the eternal return in so far as this does not cause everything to come back but, on the contrary, affects a world which has rid itself of the default of the condition and the equality of the agent in order to affirm only the excessive and the unequal, the interminable and the incessant, the formless as the product of the most extreme formality. This is how the story of time ends: by undoing its too well centred natural or physical circle and forming a straight line which then, led by its own length, reconstitutes an eternally decentred circle.

The eternal return is a force of affirmation, but it affirms everything of the multiple, everything of the different, everything of chance *except* what subordinates them to the One, to the Same, to necessity, everything *except* the One, the Same and the Necessary. It is said that the One subjugated the multiple once and for all. But is this not the face of death? And does not the other face cause to die in turn, once and for all, everything which operates once and for all? If there is an essential relation between eternal return and death, it is because it promises and implies 'once and for all' the death of that which is one. If there is an essential relation with the future, it is because the future is the deployment and explication of the multiple, of the different and of the fortuitous, for themselves and 'for all times'. Repetition in the eternal return excludes two determinations: the Same or the identity of a subordinating concept, and the negative of the condition which would relate the repeated to the same, and thereby ensure the subordination. Repetition in the eternal return excludes both the becoming-equal or the becoming-similar in the concept, and being conditioned by lack of such a becoming. It concerns instead excessive systems which link the different with the different, the multiple with the multiple, the fortuitous with the fortuitous, in a complex of affirmations always coextensive with the questions posed and the decisions taken. It is claimed that man does not know how to *play*: this is because, even when he is given a situation of chance or multiplicity, he understands his affirmations as destined to impose limits upon it, his decisions as destined

to ward off its effects, his reproductions as destined to bring about the return of the same, given a winning hypothesis. This is precisely a losing game, one in which we risk losing as much as winning because we do not affirm the *all* of chance: the pre-established character of the rule which fragments has as its correlate the condition by default in the player, who never knows which fragment will emerge. The system of the future, by contrast, must be called a divine game, since there is no pre-existing rule, since the game bears already upon its own rules and since the child-player can only win, all of chance being affirmed each time and for all times. Not restrictive or limiting affirmations, but affirmations coextensive with the questions posed and with the decisions from which these emanate: such a game entails the repetition of the necessarily winning move, since it wins by embracing all possible combinations and rules in the system of its own return. On this question of the game of repetition and difference as governed by the death instinct, no one has gone further than Borges, throughout his astonishing work:

> if the lottery is an intensification of chance, a periodic infusion of chaos into the cosmos, would it not be desirable for chance to intervene at all stages of the lottery and not merely in the drawing? Is it not ridiculous for chance to dictate the death of someone, while the circumstances of his death – its silent reserve or publicity, the time limit of one hour or one century – should remain immune to hazard? ... The ignorant suppose that an infinite number of drawings require an infinite amount of time; in reality, it is quite enough that time be infinitely subdivisible. ... In all fiction, when a man is faced with alternatives he chooses one at the expense of the others. In the almost unfathomable Ts'ui Pên, he chooses – simultaneously – all of them. He thus *creates* various futures, various times which start others that will in their turn branch out and bifurcate in other times. This is the cause of the contradictions in the novel. 'Fang, let us say, has a secret. A stranger knocks at his door. Fang makes up his mind to kill him. Naturally there are various possible outcomes. Fang can kill the intruder, the intruder can kill Fang, both can be saved, both can die and so on and so on. In Ts'ui Pên's work, all the possible solutions occur, each one being the point of departure for other bifurcations.'[23]

What are these systems constituted by the eternal return? Consider the two propositions: only that which is alike differs; and only differences are alike.[24] The first formula posits resemblance as the condition of difference. It therefore undoubtedly demands the possibility of an identical concept for the two things which differ on condition that they are alike; and implies an analogy in the relation each thing has to this concept; and finally leads to the reduction of the difference between them to an opposition determined by these three moments. According to the other formula, by contrast,

resemblance, identity, analogy and opposition can no longer be considered anything but effects, the products of a primary difference or a primary system of differences. According to this other formula, difference must immediately relate the differing terms to one another. In accordance with Heidegger's ontological intuition, difference must be articulation and connection in itself; it must relate different to different without any mediation whatsoever by the identical, the similar, the analogous or the opposed. There must be a differenciation of difference, an in-itself which is like a *differenciator*, a *Sich-unterscheidende*, by virtue of which the different is gathered all at once rather than represented on condition of a prior resemblance, identity, analogy or opposition. As for these latter instances, since they cease to be conditions, they become no more than effects of the primary difference and its differenciation, overall or surface effects which characterise the distorted world of representation, and express the manner in which the in-itself of difference hides itself by giving rise to that which covers it. The question is whether these two formulae are simply two manners of speaking which do not change things very much, or whether they apply to completely different systems; or indeed whether, while applying to the same systems (and ultimately to the world system), they do not signify two incompatible interpretations of unequal value, one of which is capable of changing everything.

It is under the same conditions that the in-itself of difference is hidden, and that difference falls into the categories of representation. Under what other conditions does difference develop this in-itself as a 'differenciator', and gather the different outside of any possible representation? The first characteristic seems to us to be organisation in series. A system must be constituted on the basis of two or more series, each series being defined by the differences between the terms which compose it. If we suppose that the series communicate under the impulse of a force of some kind, then it is apparent that this communication relates differences to other differences, constituting differences between differences within the system. These second-degree differences play the role of the 'differenciator' – in other words, they relate the first-degree differences to one another. This state of affairs is adequately expressed by certain physical concepts: *coupling* between heterogeneous systems, from which is derived an *internal resonance* within the system, and from which in turn is derived a *forced movement* the amplitude of which exceeds that of the basic series themselves. The nature of these elements whose value is determined at once both by their difference in the series to which they belong, and by the difference of their difference from one series to another, can be determined: these are intensities, the peculiarity of intensities being to be constituted by a difference which itself refers to other differences (E-E' where E refers to *e-e'* and *e* to ε-ε' ...). The intensive character of the systems considered should not prejudice their being characterized as mechanical, physical,

biological, psychic, social, aesthetic or philosophical, etc. Each type of system undoubtedly has its own particular conditions, but these conform to the preceding characteristics even while they give them a structure appropriate in each case: for example, words are genuine intensities within certain aesthetic systems; concepts are also intensities from the point of view of philosophical systems. Note, too, that according to the celebrated 1895 Freudian *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, biophysical life is presented in the form of such an intensive field in which differences determinable as excitations, and differences of differences determinable as cleared paths, are distributed. Above all, however, the syntheses of the Psyche incarnate on their own account the three dimensions of these systems in general: psychic connection (Habitus) effects a coupling of series of excitations; Eros designates the specific state of internal resonance which results; and the death instinct amounts to the forced movement whose psychic amplitude exceeds that of the resonating series themselves (whence the difference in amplitude between the death instinct and the resonating Eros).

Once communication between heterogeneous series is established, all sorts of consequences follow within the system. Something 'passes' between the borders, events explode, phenomena flash, like thunder and lightning. Spatio–temporal dynamisms fill the system, expressing simultaneously the resonance of the coupled series and the amplitude of the forced movement which exceeds them. The system is populated by subjects, both larval subjects and passive selves: passive selves because they are indistinguishable from the contemplation of couplings and resonances; larval subjects because they are the supports or the patients of the dynamisms. In effect, a pure spatio–temporal dynamism, with its necessary participation in the forced movement, can be experienced only at the borders of the livable, under conditions beyond which it would entail the death of any well-constituted subject endowed with independence and activity. Embryology already displays the truth that there are systematic vital movements, torsions and drifts, that only the embryo can sustain: an adult would be torn apart by them. There are movements for which one can only be a patient, but the patient in turn can only be a larva. Evolution does not take place in the open air, and only the involuted evolves. A nightmare is perhaps a psychic dynamism that could be sustained neither awake *nor even in dreams*, but only in profound sleep, in a dreamless sleep. In this sense, it is not even clear that thought, in so far as it constitutes the dynamism peculiar to philosophical systems, may be related to a substantial, completed and well-constituted subject, such as the Cartesian Cogito: thought is, rather, one of those terrible movements which can be sustained only under the conditions of a larval subject. These systems admit only such subjects as these, since they alone can undertake the forced movement by becoming the patient of the dynamisms which

express it. Even the philosopher is a larval subject of his own system. Thus we see that these systems are not defined only by the heterogeneous series which border them, nor by the coupling, the resonance and the forced movement which constitute their dimensions, but also by the subjects which populate them and the dynamisms which fill them, and finally by the qualities and extensities which develop on the basis of such dynamisms.

The most important difficulty, however, remains: is it really difference which relates different to different in these intensive systems? Does the difference between differences relate difference to itself without any other intermediary? When we speak of communication between heterogeneous systems, of coupling and resonance, does this not imply a minimum of resemblance between the series, and an identity in the agent which brings about the communication? Would not 'too much' difference between the series render any such operation impossible? Are we not condemned to rediscover a privileged point at which difference can be understood only by virtue of a resemblance between the things which differ and the identity of a third party? Here we must pay the greatest attention to the respective roles of difference, resemblance and identity. To begin with, what is this agent, this force which ensures communication? Thunderbolts explode between different intensities, but they are preceded by an invisible, imperceptible *dark precursor*, which determines their path in advance but in reverse, as though intagliated. Likewise, every system contains its dark precursor which ensures the communication of peripheral series. As we shall see, given the variety among systems, this role is fulfilled by quite diverse determinations. The question is to know in any given case how the precursor fulfils this role. There is no doubt that *there is* an identity belonging to the precursor, and a resemblance between the series which it causes to communicate. This 'there is', however, remains perfectly indeterminate. Are identity and resemblance here the preconditions of the functioning of this dark precursor, or are they, on the contrary, its effects? If the latter, might it necessarily project upon itself the illusion of a fictive identity, and upon the series which it relates the illusion of a retrospective resemblance? Identity and resemblance would then be no more than inevitable illusions – in other words, concepts of reflection which would account for our inveterate habit of thinking difference on the basis of the categories of representation. All that, however, would be possible only because the invisible precursor conceals itself and its functioning, and at the same time conceals the in-itself or true nature of difference. Given two heterogeneous series, two series of differences, the precursor plays the part of the differenciator of these differences. In this manner, by virtue of its own power, it puts them into immediate relation to one another: it is the in-itself of difference or the 'differently different' – in other words, difference in the second degree, the self-different which relates different to different by itself. Because the path it traces is invisible and becomes visible

only in reverse, to the extent that it is travelled over and covered by the phenomena it induces within the system, it has no place other than that from which it is 'missing', no identity other than that which it lacks: it is precisely the object = x, the one which 'is lacking in its place' as it lacks its own identity. As a result, the logical identity abstractly imputed to it by reflection, along with the physical resemblance which reflection imputes to the series which it relates, express only the statistical effect of its functioning upon the system as a whole. In other words, these express only the manner in which it conceals itself under its own effects, because of the way it perpetually *displaces* itself within itself and perpetually *disguises* itself in the series. We cannot, therefore, suppose that the identity of a third party and the resemblance of the parties in question are a condition of the being and thought of difference. These are only a condition of its representation, which expresses a distortion of that being and that thought, like an optical effect which disturbs the true, in-itself status of the condition.

We call this dark precursor, this difference in itself or difference in the second degree which relates heterogeneous systems and even completely disparate things, the *disparate*. In each case, the space in which it is displaced and its process of disguise determine a relative size of the differences brought into relation. It is well known that in certain cases (in certain systems), the difference between the differences brought into play may be 'very large'; in other systems it must be 'very small'.[25] It would be wrong, however, to see in this second case the pure expression of a prior requirement of resemblance, which would then be relaxed in the first case only by being extended to the world scale. For example, it is insisted that disparate series must necessarily be almost similar, or that the frequencies be neighbouring (w neighbour of w0) – in short, that the difference be small. If, however, the identity of the agent which causes the different things to communicate is presupposed, then there are no differences which will not be 'small', even on the world scale. We have seen that small and large apply badly to difference, because they judge it according to the criteria of the Same and the similar. If difference is related to its differenciator, and if we refrain from attributing to the differenciator an identity that it cannot and does not have, then the difference will be small or large according to its possibilities of fractionation – that is, according to the displacements and disguise of the differenciator. In no case will it be possible to claim that a small difference testifies to a strict condition of resemblance, any more than a large difference testifies to the persistence of a resemblance which is simply relaxed. Resemblance is in any case an effect, a functional product, an external result – an illusion which appears once the agent arrogates to itself an identity that it lacked. The important thing is not that the difference be small or large, and ultimately always small in relation to a greater resemblance. The important thing, for the

in-itself, is that the difference, whether small or large, be internal. There are systems with large external resemblance and small internal difference. The contrary is also possible: systems with small external resemblance and large internal difference. What is impossible, however, is the contradictory: resemblance is always exterior and difference, whether small or large, forms the kernel of the system.

Take the following examples borrowed from very diverse literary systems. In the work of Raymond Roussel, we find verbal series: the role of precursor is filled by a homonym or quasi-homonym (*b*illard–*p*illard), but this dark precursor is all the less visible and noticeable to the extent that one or other of the two series remains hidden. Strange stories fill in the difference between the two series in such a manner as to induce an effect of resemblance and external identity. The precursor, however, by no means acts by virtue of its identity, whether this be a nominal or a homonymic identity: we see this clearly in the case of the quasi-homonym which functions only by becoming indistinguishable from the differential character which separates two words (*b* and *p*). Similarly, the homonym appears here not as the nominal identity of a signifier but as the differenciator of distinct signifieds which then produces secondarily an effect of resemblance between the signifieds along with an effect of identity in the signifier. It would therefore be inadequate to say that the system is grounded upon a certain negative determination – namely, the default in which words stand in relation to things and as a result of which single words are condemned to designate several things. The same illusion leads us to conceive of difference on the basis of a supposed prior resemblance and identity, and makes it appear as negative. In fact, it is not by the poverty of its vocabulary that language invents the form in which it plays the role of dark precursor, but by its excess, by its most positive syntactic and semantic power. In playing this role it differenciates the differences between the different things spoken of, relating these immediately to one another in series which it causes to resonate. For the same reason, as we have seen, the repetition of words cannot be explained negatively, cannot be presented as a bare repetition without difference. Joyce's work obviously appeals to quite different procedures. However, it remains a question of drawing together a maximum of disparate series (ultimately, all the divergent series constitutive of the cosmos) by bringing into operation linguistic dark precursors (here, esoteric words, portmanteau words) which rely upon no prior identity, which are above all not 'identifiable' in principle, but which induce a maximum of resemblance and identity into the system as a whole, as though this were the result of the process of differenciation of difference in itself (see the cosmic letter in *Finnegans Wake*). What takes place in the system between resonating series under the influence of the dark precursor is called 'epiphany'. The cosmic extension coincides with the amplitude of a forced movement which sweeps aside

and overruns the series, ultimately a death instinct, Stephen's 'No' which is not the non-being of the negative but the (non)-being of a persistent question to which the cosmic 'Yes' of Mrs Bloom corresponds, without being a response, since it alone adequately occupies and fills that space.

Note on the Proustian experiences

These clearly have a quite different structure than Joyce's epiphanies. However, it is still a question of two series, that of a former present (Combray as it was lived) and that of a present present. No doubt, to remain at a first dimension of the experience, there is a resemblance between the two series (the madeleine, breakfast), and even an identity (the taste as a quality which is not only similar but self-identical across the two moments). Nevertheless, the secret does not lie there. The taste possesses a power only because it *envelops* something = x, something which can no longer be defined by an identity: it envelops Combray *as it is in itself*, as a fragment of the pure past, in its double irreducibility to the present that it has been (perception) and to the present present in which it might reappear or be reconstituted (voluntary memory). This Combray in itself is defined by its own essential difference, that 'qualitative difference' which, according to Proust, does not exist 'on the surface of the earth', but only at a particular depth. It is this difference which, by enveloping itself, produces the identity of the quality which constitutes the resemblance between the series. Identity and resemblance are therefore once again the result of a differenciator. And if the two series succeed one another, they nevertheless coexist in relation to Combray in itself as the object = x which causes them to resonate. Moreover, the resonance of the series may give rise to a death instinct which overruns them both: for example, the ankle-boot and the memory of the grandmother. Eros is constituted by the resonance, but overcomes itself in the direction of the death instinct which is constituted by the amplitude of a forced movement (this death instinct finds its glorious issue in the work of art, over and above the erotic experiences of the involuntary memory). The Proustian formula 'a little time in its pure state' refers first to the pure past, the in-itself of the past or the erotic synthesis of time, but more profoundly to the pure and empty form of time, the ultimate synthesis, that of the death instinct which leads to the eternity of the return in time.

The question of whether psychic experience is structured like a language, or even whether the physical world may be regarded as a book, depends upon the nature of the dark precursors. A linguistic precursor or an esoteric word does not have an identity by itself, not even a nominal one, any more than its significations have a resemblance, even an infinitely relaxed one: it is not just a complex word or a simple gathering of words, but a

word about words which is indistinguishable from the 'differenciator' of first-degree words and from the 'dissembler' of their significations. Its value, therefore, lies not in the extent to which it claims to say something but in the extent to which it claims to state the sense of what it says. The law of language which operates within representation excludes that possibility: the sense of a word can be stated only by another word which takes the first as its object. Whence the following paradoxical situation: the linguistic precursor belongs to a kind of metalanguage and can be incarnated only within a word devoid of sense from the point of view of the series of first-degree verbal representations. It is the *refrain*. This double status of esoteric words, which state their own sense but do so only by representing it and themselves as nonsense, clearly expresses the perpetual displacement of sense and its disguise among the series. In consequence, esoteric words are properly linguistic cases of the object = *x*, while the object = *x* structures psychic experience like a language on condition that the perpetual, invisible and silent displacement of linguistic sense is taken into account. In a sense, everything speaks and has sense, on condition that speech is also that which does not speak – or rather, speech is the sense which does not speak in speech. Gombrowicz, in his fine novel *Cosmos*, shows how two series of heterogeneous differences (that of hangings and that of mouths) call forth their own communication through various signs, until the inauguration of a dark precursor (the murder of the cat) which plays the role of differenciator of their differences. This is like the sense, nevertheless incarnated in an absurd representation, but on the basis of which dynamisms will be unleashed and events produced in the Cosmos system which will culminate in a death instinct which points beyond the series.[26] In this manner, the conditions under which a book is a cosmos or the cosmos is a book appear, and through a variety of very different techniques the ultimate Joycean identity emerges, the one we find in Borges and in Gombrowicz: chaos = cosmos.

Each series tells a story: not different points of view on the same story, like the different points of view on the town we find in Leibniz, but completely distinct stories which unfold simultaneously. The basic series are divergent: not relatively, in the sense that one could retrace one's path and find a point of convergence, but absolutely divergent in the sense that the point or horizon of convergence lies in a chaos or is constantly displaced within that chaos. This chaos is itself the most positive, just as the divergence is the object of affirmation. It is indistinguishable from the great work which contains all the *complicated* series, which affirms and complicates all the series at once. (It is not surprising that Joyce should have been so interested in Bruno, the theoretician of *complicatio*.) The trinity complication–explication–implication accounts for the totality of the system – in other words, the chaos which contains all, the divergent series which lead out and back in, and the differenciator which relates them one to another. Each series explicates or develops itself, but *in* its

difference from the other series which it implicates and which implicate it, which it envelops and which envelop it; *in* this chaos which complicates everything. The totality of the system, the unity of the divergent series as such, corresponds to the objectivity of a 'problem'. Hence the method of questions–problems by means of which Joyce animates his work, and before that the manner in which Lewis Carroll linked portmanteau words to the status of the problematic.

The essential point is the simultaneity and contemporaneity of all the divergent series, the fact that all coexist. From the point of view of the presents which pass in representation, the series are certainly successive, one 'before' and the other 'after'. It is from this point of view that the second is said to *resemble* the first. However, this no longer applies from the point of view of the chaos which contains them, the object = x which runs through them, the precursor which establishes communication between them or the forced movement which points beyond them: the differenciator always makes them coexist. We have encountered several times the paradox of presents which succeed one another, or series which succeed one another in reality, but coexist symbolically in relation to the pure past or the virtual object. When Freud shows that a *phantasy* is constituted on the basis of at least two series, one infantile and pre-genital, the other genital and post-pubescent, it is clear that the series succeed one another in time from the point of view of the solipsistic unconscious of the subject in question. The question then arises how to explain the phenomenon of 'delay' which is involved in the time it takes for the supposedly original infantile scene to produce its effect at a distance, in an adult scene which resembles it and which we call 'derived'.[27] It is indeed a problem of resonance between two series, but the problem is not well formulated so long as we do not take into account the instance in relation to which the two series coexist in an intersubjective unconscious. In fact the two series – one infantile, the other adult – are not distributed within the same subject. The childhood event is not one of the two real series but, rather, the dark precursor which establishes communication between the basic series, that of the adults we knew as a child and that of the adult we are among other adults and other children. So it is with the hero of *In Search of Lost Time*: his infantile love for the mother is the agent of communication between two adult series, that of Swann with Odette and that of the hero become adult with Albertine – and always the same secret in both cases, the eternal displacement, the eternal disguise of the prisoner, which thereby indicates the point at which the series coexist in the intersubjective unconscious. There is no question as to how the childhood event acts only with a delay. It *is* this delay, but this delay itself is the pure form of time in which before and after coexist. When Freud discovers that phantasy is perhaps the ultimate reality and that it implicates something which points beyond the series, we should not conclude that the childhood

scene is unreal or imaginary, but rather that the empirical condition of succession in time gives way in the phantasy to the coexistence of the two series, that of the adult that we will be along with the adults that we 'have been' (compare what Ferenczi called the identification of the child with the aggressor). The phantasy is the manifestation of the child as dark precursor. Moreover, what is originary in the phantasy is not one series in relation to the other, but the difference between series in so far as this relates one series of differences to another series of differences, in abstraction from their empirical succession in time.

If it is no longer possible in the system of the unconscious to establish an order of succession between series – in other words, if all series coexist – then it is no longer possible to regard one as originary and the other as derived, one as model and the other as copy. For it is in the same movement that the series are understood as coexisting, outside any condition of succession in time, and as *different*, outside any condition under which one would enjoy the identity of a model and the other the resemblance of a copy. When two divergent stories unfold simultaneously, it is impossible to privilege one over the other: it is a case in which everything is equal, but 'everything is equal' is said of the difference, and is said only of the difference between the two. *However small* the internal difference between the two series, the one story does not reproduce the other, one does not serve as model for the other: rather, resemblance and identity are only functional effects of that difference which alone is originary within the system. It is therefore proper to say that the system excludes the assignation of an originary and a derived as though these were a first and second occurrence, because the sole origin is difference, and it causes the differents which it relates to other differents to coexist independently of any resemblance.[28] It is under this aspect, without doubt, that the eternal return is revealed as the groundless 'law' of this system. The eternal return does not cause the same and the similar to return, but is itself derived from a world of pure difference. Each series returns, not only in the others which imply it, but for itself, since it is not implied by the others without being in turn fully restored as that which implies them. The eternal return has no other sense but this: the absence of any assignable origin – in other words, the assignation of difference as the origin, which then relates different to different in order to make it (or them) return as such. In this sense, the eternal return is indeed the consequence of a difference which is originary, pure, synthetic and in-itself (which Nietzsche called will to power). If difference is the in-itself, then repetition in the eternal return is the for-itself of difference. Yet how can it be denied that the eternal return is inseparable from the Same? Is it not itself the eternal return *of* the Same? However, we must be aware of the (at least three) different senses of the terms 'the same', 'the identical' and 'the similar'.

In the first sense, the Same designates a supposed subject of the eternal

return. In this case it designates the identity of the One as a principle. Precisely this, however, constitutes the greatest and the longest *error*. Nietzsche correctly points out that if it were the One which returned, it would have begun by being unable to leave itself; if it were supposed to determine the many to resemble it, it would have begun by not losing its identity in that degradation of the similar. Repetition is no more the permanence of the One than the resemblance of the many. The subject of the eternal return is not the same but the different, not the similar but the dissimilar, not the one but the many, not necessity but chance. Moreover, repetition in the eternal return implies the destruction of all forms which hinder its operation, all the categories of representation incarnated in the primacy of the Same, the One, the Identical and the Like. Alternatively, in the second sense, the same and the similar are only an effect of the operation of systems subject to eternal return. By this means, an identity would be found to be necessarily projected, or rather retrojected, on to the originary difference and a resemblance interiorised within the divergent series. We should say of this identity and this resemblance that they are 'simulated': they are products of systems which relate different to different by means of difference (which is why such systems are themselves simulacra). The same and the similar are fictions engendered by the eternal return. This time, there is no longer error but *illusion*: inevitable illusion which is the source of error, but may nevertheless be distinguished from it. Finally, in the third sense, the same and the similar are indistinguishable from the eternal return itself. They do not exist prior to the eternal return: it is not the same or the similar which returns but the eternal return which is the only same and the only resemblance of that which returns. Nor can they be abstracted from the eternal return in order to react upon the cause. The same is said of that which differs and remains different. The eternal return is the same of the different, the one of the multiple, the resemblant of the dissimilar. Although it is the source of the preceding illusion, it engenders and maintains it only in order to rejoice in it, and to admire itself in it as though in its own optical effect, without ever falling into the adjoining error.

These differential systems with their disparate and resonating series, their dark precursor and forced movements, are what we call simulacra or phantasms. The eternal return concerns only simulacra, it causes only such phantasms to return. Perhaps we find here the most significant point of Platonism and anti-Platonism, the touchstone of both Platonism and the overturning of Platonism. In Chapter I, we suggested that Plato's thought turned upon a particularly important distinction: that between the original and the image, the model and the copy. The model is supposed to enjoy an originary superior identity (the Idea alone is nothing other than what it is:

only Courage is courageous, Piety pious), whereas the copy is judged in terms of a derived internal resemblance. Indeed, it is in this sense that difference comes only in third place, behind identity and resemblance, and can be understood only in terms of these prior notions. Difference is understood only in terms of the comparative play of two similitudes: the exemplary similitude of an identical original and the imitative similitude of a more or less accurate copy. This is the measure or test which decides between claimants. More profoundly, however, the true Platonic distinction lies elsewhere: it is of another nature, not between the original and the image but between two kinds of images [*idoles*], of which copies [*icônes*] are only the first kind, the other being simulacra [*phantasmes*]. The model–copy distinction is there only in order to found and apply the copy–simulacra distinction, since the copies are selected, justified and saved in the name of the identity of the model and owing to their internal resemblance to this ideal model. The function of the notion of the model is not to oppose the world of images in its entirety but to select the good images, the icons which resemble from within, and eliminate the bad images or simulacra. Platonism as a whole is erected on the basis of this wish to hunt down the phantasms or simulacra which are identified with the Sophist himself, that devil, that insinuator or simulator, that always disguised and displaced false pretender. For this reason it seems to us that, with Plato, a philosophical decision of the utmost importance was taken: that of subordinating difference to the supposedly initial powers of the Same and the Similar, that of declaring difference unthinkable in itself and sending it, along with the simulacra, back to the bottomless ocean. However, precisely because Plato did not yet have at his disposition the constituted categories of representation (these appeared with Aristotle), he had to base his decision on a theory of Ideas. What appears then, in its purest state, before the logic of representation could be deployed, is a moral vision of the world. It is in the first instance for these moral reasons that simulacra must be exorcized and difference thereby subordinated to the same and the similar. For this reason, however, because Plato *makes* the decision, and because with him the victory is not assured as it will be in the established world of representation, the rumbling of the enemy can still be heard. Insinuated throughout the Platonic cosmos, difference resists its yoke. Heraclitus and the Sophists make an infernal racket. It is as though there were a strange *double* which dogs Socrates' footsteps and haunts even Plato's style, inserting itself into the repetitions and variations of that style.[29]

Simulacra or phantasms are not simply copies of copies, degraded *icônes* involving infinitely relaxed relations of resemblance. The catechism, so heavily influenced by the Platonic Fathers, has made us familiar with the idea of an image without likeness: man is in the image and likeness of God, but through sin we have lost the likeness while remaining in the image ... simulacra are precisely demonic images, stripped of resemblance. Or

rather, in contrast to *icônes*, they have externalised resemblance and live on difference instead. If they produce an external effect of resemblance, this takes the form of an illusion, not an internal principle; it is itself constructed on the basis of a disparity, having interiorised the dissimilitude of its constituent series and the divergence of its points of view to the point where it shows several things or tells several stories at once. This is its first characteristic. Does this not mean, however, that if simulacra themselves refer to a model, it is one which is not endowed with the ideal identity of the Same but, on the contrary, is a model of the Other, an other model, the model of difference in itself from which flows that interiorised dissimilitude? Among the most extraordinary pages in Plato, demonstrating the anti-Platonism at the heart of Platonism, are those which suggest that the different, the dissimilar, the unequal – in short, becoming – may well be not merely defects which affect copies like a ransom paid for their secondary character or a counterpart to their resemblance, but rather models themselves, terrifying models of the *pseudos* in which unfolds the power of the false.[30] This hypothesis is quickly put aside, silenced and banished. Nevertheless it did appear, if only momentarily, like a flash of lightning in the night, testifying to a persistent activity on the part of simulacra, to their underground work and to the possibility of a world of their own. Does this not mean, thirdly, that simulacra provide the means of challenging *both* the notion of the copy *and* that of the model? The model collapses into difference, while the copies disperse into the dissimilitude of the series which they interiorise, such that one can never say that the one is a copy and the other a model. Such is the ending of the *Sophist*, where we glimpse the possibility of the triumph of the simulacra. For Socrates distinguishes himself from the Sophist, but the Sophist does not distinguish himself from Socrates, placing the legitimacy of such a distinction in question. Twilight of the *icônes*. Is this not to indicate the point at which the identity of the model and the resemblance of the copy become errors, the same and the similar no more than illusions born of the functioning of simulacra? Simulacra function by themselves, passing and repassing the decentred centres of the eternal return. It is no longer the Platonic project of opposing the cosmos to chaos, as though the Circle were the imprint of a transcendent Idea capable of imposing its likeness upon a rebellious matter. It is indeed the very opposite: the immanent identity of chaos and cosmos, being in the eternal return, a thoroughly tortuous circle. Plato attempted to discipline the eternal return by making it an effect of the Ideas – in other words, making it copy a model. However, in the infinite movement of degraded likeness from copy to copy, we reach a point at which everything changes nature, at which copies themselves flip over into simulacra and at which, finally, resemblance or spiritual imitation gives way to repetition.

Chapter III

The Image of Thought

Where to begin in philosophy has always – rightly – been regarded as a very delicate problem, for beginning means eliminating all presuppositions. However, whereas in science one is confronted by objective presuppositions which axiomatic rigour can eliminate, presuppositions in philosophy are as much subjective as objective. By objective presuppositions we mean concepts explicitly presupposed by a given concept. Descartes, for example, in the *Second Meditation*, does not want to define man as a rational animal because such a definition explicitly presupposes the concepts of rationality and animality: in presenting the Cogito as a definition, he therefore claims to avoid all the objective presuppositions which encumber those procedures that operate by genus and difference. It is clear, however, that he does not escape presuppositions of another kind – subjective or implicit presuppositions contained in opinions rather than concepts: it is presumed that everyone knows, independently of concepts, what is meant by self, thinking, and being. The pure self of 'I think' thus appears to be a beginning only because it has referred all its presuppositions back to the empirical self. Moreover, while Hegel criticized Descartes for this, he does not seem, for his part, to proceed otherwise: pure being, in turn, is a beginning only by virtue of referring all its presuppositions back to sensible, concrete, empirical being. The same attitude of refusing objective presuppositions, but on condition of assuming just as many subjective presuppositions (which are perhaps the same ones in another form), appears when Heidegger invokes a pre-ontological understanding of Being. We may conclude that there is no true beginning in philosophy, or rather that the true philosophical beginning, Difference, is in-itself already Repetition. However, this formula, and the evocation of the idea of philosophy as a Circle, are subject to so many interpretations that we cannot be too prudent. For if it is a question of rediscovering at the end what was there in the beginning, if it is a question of recognising, of bringing to light or into the conceptual or the explicit, what was simply known implicitly without concepts – whatever the complexity of this process, whatever the differences between the procedures of this or that author – the fact remains that all this is still too simple, and that this circle is truly not tortuous enough. The circle image would reveal instead that philosophy is powerless truly to begin, or indeed authentically to repeat.

We would do better to ask what is a subjective or implicit presupposition: it has the form of 'Everybody knows ...'. Everybody

knows, in a pre-philosophical and pre-conceptual manner ... everybody knows what it means to think and to be. ... As a result, when the philosopher says 'I think therefore I am', he can assume that the universality of his premisses – namely, what it means to be and to think ... – will be implicitly understood, and that no one can deny that to doubt is to think, and to think is to be. ... *Everybody knows, no one can deny*, is the form of representation and the discourse of the representative. When philosophy rests its beginning upon such implicit or subjective presuppositions, it can claim innocence, since it has kept nothing back – except, of course, the essential – namely, the form of this discourse. It then opposes the 'idiot' to the pedant, *Eudoxus* to *Epistemon*, good will to the overfull understanding, the individual man endowed only with his natural capacity for thought to the man perverted by the generalities of his time.[1] The philosopher takes the side of the idiot as though of a man without presuppositions. In fact, *Eudoxus* has no fewer presuppositions than *Epistemon*, he simply has them in another, implicit or subjective form, 'private' and not 'public'; in the form of a natural capacity for thought which allows philosophy to claim to begin, and to begin without presuppositions.

But here and there isolated and passionate cries are raised. How could they not be isolated when they deny what 'everybody knows...'? And passionate, since they deny that which, it is said, nobody can deny? Such protest does not take place in the name of aristocratic prejudices: it is not a question of saying what few think and knowing what it means to think. On the contrary, it is a question of someone – if only one – with the necessary modesty not managing to know what everybody knows, and modestly denying what everybody is supposed to recognise. Someone who neither allows himself to be represented nor wishes to represent anything. Not an individual endowed with good will and a natural capacity for thought, but an individual full of ill will who does not manage to think, either naturally or conceptually. Only such an individual is without presuppositions. Only such an individual effectively begins and effectively repeats. For this individual the subjective presuppositions are no less prejudices than the objective presuppositions: *Eudoxus* and *Epistemon* are one and the same misleading figure who should be mistrusted. At the risk of playing the idiot, do so in the Russian manner: that of an underground man who recognises himself no more in the subjective presuppositions of a natural capacity for thought than in the objective presuppositions of a culture of the times, and lacks the compass with which to make a circle. Such a one is the Untimely, neither temporal nor eternal. Ah Shestov, with the questions he poses, the ill will he manifests, the powerlessness to think he puts into thought and the double dimension he develops in these demanding questions concerning at once both the most radical beginning and the most stubborn repetition.

Many people have an interest in saying that everybody knows 'this', that everybody recognises this, or that nobody can deny it. (They triumph easily so long as no surly interlocutor appears to reply that he does not wish to be so represented, and that he denies or does not recognise those who speak in his name.) The philosopher, it is true, proceeds with greater disinterest: all that he proposes as universally recognised is what is meant by thinking, being and self – in other words, not a particular this or that but the form of representation or recognition in general. This form, nevertheless, has a matter, but a pure matter or element. This element consists only of the supposition that thought is the natural exercise of a faculty, of the presupposition that there is a natural capacity for thought endowed with a talent for truth or an affinity with the true, under the double aspect of a *good will on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of thought.* It is because everybody naturally thinks that everybody is supposed to know implicitly what it means to think. The most general form of representation is thus found in the element of a common sense understood as an upright nature and a good will (*Eudoxus* and orthodoxy). The implicit presupposition of philosophy may be found in the idea of a common sense as *Cogitatio natura universalis.* On this basis, philosophy is able to begin. There is no point in multiplying the declarations of philosophers, from 'Everybody has by nature the desire to know' to 'Good sense is of all things in the world the most equally distributed', in order to verify the existence of this presupposition, for its importance lies less in the explicit declarations that it inspires than in its persistence among those philosophers who precisely leave it hidden. Postulates in philosophy are not propositions the acceptance of which the philosopher demands; but, on the contrary, propositional themes which remain implicit and are understood in a pre-philosophical manner. In this sense, conceptual philosophical thought has as its implicit presupposition a pre-philosophical and natural Image of thought, borrowed from the pure element of common sense. According to this image, thought has an affinity with the true; it formally possesses the true and materially wants the true. It is *in terms of* this image that everybody knows and is presumed to know what it means to think. Thereafter it matters little whether philosophy begins with the object or the subject, with Being or with beings, as long as thought remains subject to this Image which already prejudges everything: the distribution of the object and the subject as well as that of Being and beings.

We may call this image of thought a dogmatic, orthodox or moral image. It certainly has variant forms: 'rationalists' and 'empiricists' do not presume its construction in the same fashion. Moreover, as we shall see, philosophers often have second thoughts and do not accept this implicit image without adding further traits drawn from explicit reflection on conceptual thought which react against it and tend to overturn it. In the

realm of the implicit, it nevertheless holds fast, even if the philosopher specifies that truth is not, after all, 'an easy thing to achieve and within reach of all'. For this reason, we do not speak of this or that image of thought, variable according to the philosophy in question, but of a single Image in general which constitutes the subjective presupposition of philosophy as a whole. When Nietzsche questions the most general presuppositions of philosophy, he says that these are essentially moral, since Morality alone is capable of persuading us that thought has a good nature and the thinker a good will, and that only the good can ground the supposed affinity between thought and the True. Who else, in effect, but Morality, and this Good which gives thought to the true, and the true to thought? ... As a result, the conditions of a philosophy which would be without any kind of presuppositions appear all the more clearly: instead of being supported by the moral Image of thought, it would take as its point of departure a radical critique of this Image and the 'postulates' it implies. It would find its difference or its true beginning, not in an agreement with the *pre-philosophical* Image but in a rigorous struggle against this Image, which it would denounce as *non-philosophical*.[2] As a result, it would discover its authentic repetition in a thought without Image, even at the cost of the greatest destructions and the greatest demoralisations, and a philosophical obstinacy with no ally but paradox, one which would have to renounce both the form of representation and the element of common sense. As though thought could begin to think, and continually begin again, only when liberated from the Image and its postulates. It is futile to claim to reformulate the doctrine of truth without first taking stock of the postulates which project this distorting image of thought.

It cannot be regarded as a *fact* that thinking is the natural exercise of a faculty, and that this faculty is possessed of a good nature and a good will. 'Everybody' knows very well that in fact men think rarely, and more often under the impulse of a shock than in the excitement of a taste for thinking. Moreover, Descartes's famous suggestion that good sense (the capacity for thought) is of all things in the world the most equally distributed[3] rests upon no more than an old saying, since it amounts to reminding us that men are prepared to complain of lack of memory, imagination or even hearing, but they always find themselves well served with regard to intelligence and thought. What makes Descartes a philosopher is that he makes use of that saying in order to erect an image of thought as it is *in principle*: good nature and an affinity with the true belong in principle to thought, whatever the difficulty of translating this principle into fact or rediscovering it behind the facts. Natural good sense or common sense are thus taken to be determinations of pure thought. Sense is able to adjudicate with regard to its own universality, and to suppose itself universal and communic-

able in principle. In order to impose or rediscover this principle – in other words, to *apply* the mind so endowed – there must be an explicit method. There is no doubt, therefore, that in fact it is difficult to think, but the most difficult in fact may still be the easiest in principle. This is why the method itself is said to be easy from the point of view of the nature of thought (it is no exaggeration to say that this notion of ease poisons the whole of Cartesianism). When the presupposition of philosophy is found in an Image of thought which is claimed to hold in principle, we can no longer be content to oppose it with contrary facts. The discussion must be carried out on the level of principle itself, in order to see whether this image does not betray the very essence of thought as pure thought. To the extent that it holds in principle, this image presupposes a certain distribution of the empirical and the transcendental, and it is this distribution or transcendental model implied by the image that must be judged.

There is indeed a model, in effect: that of recognition. Recognition may be defined by the harmonious exercise of all the faculties upon a supposed same object: the same object may be seen, touched, remembered, imagined or conceived. ... As Descartes says of the piece of wax: 'It is of course the same wax which I see, which I touch, which I picture in my imagination, in short the same wax which I thought it to be from the start.'[4] No doubt each faculty – perception, memory, imagination, understanding ... – has its own particular given and its own style, its peculiar ways of acting upon the given. An object is recognised, however, when one faculty locates it as identical to that of another, or rather when all the faculties together relate their given and relate themselves to a form of identity in the object. Recognition thus relies upon a subjective principle of collaboration of the faculties for 'everybody' – in other words, a common sense as a *concordia facultatum*; while simultaneously, for the philosopher, the form of identity in objects relies upon a ground in the unity of a thinking subject, of which all the other faculties must be modalities. This is the meaning of the Cogito as a beginning: it expresses the unity of all the faculties in the subject; it thereby expresses the possibility that all the faculties will relate to a form of object which reflects the subjective identity; it provides a philosophical concept for the presupposition of a common sense; it is the common sense become philosophical. For Kant as for Descartes, it is the identity of the Self in the 'I think' which grounds the harmony of all the faculties and their agreement on the form of a supposed Same object. The objection will be raised that we never confront a formal, unspecified, universal object but only this or that object delimited and specified by a determinate contribution from the faculties. At this point, however, we must refer to the precise difference between these two complementary instances, *common sense* and *good sense*. For while common sense is the norm of identity from the point of view of the pure Self and the form of the unspecified object which corresponds to it, good sense is the norm of

distribution from the point of view of the empirical selves and the objects qualified as this or that kind of thing (which is why it is considered to be universally distributed). Good sense determines the contribution of the faculties in each case, while common sense contributes the form of the Same. Furthermore, if the unspecified object exists only in so far as it is qualified in a particular way, then conversely, qualification operates only given the supposition of the unspecified object. We will see below how – in an entirely necessary manner – good sense and common sense complete each other in the image of thought: together they constitute the two halves of the *doxa*. For the moment, it suffices to note the precipitation of the postulates themselves: the image of a naturally upright thought, which knows what it means to think; the pure element of common sense which follows from this 'in principle'; and the model of recognition – or rather, the form of recognition – which follows in turn. Thought is supposed to be naturally upright because it is not a faculty like the others but the unity of all the other faculties which are only modes of the supposed subject, and which it aligns with the form of the Same in the model of recognition. The model of recognition is necessarily included in the image of thought, and whether one considers Plato's *Theaetetus*, Descartes's *Meditations* or Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, this model remains sovereign and defines the orientation of the philosophical analysis of what it means to think.

Such an orientation is a hindrance to philosophy. The supposed three levels – a naturally upright thought, an in principle natural common sense, and a transcendental model of recognition – can constitute only an ideal orthodoxy. Philosophy is left without means to realise its project of breaking with *doxa*. No doubt philosophy refuses every particular *doxa*; no doubt it upholds no particular propositions of good sense or common sense. No doubt it recognises nothing in particular. Nevertheless, it retains the essential aspect of *doxa* – namely, the form; and the essential aspect of common sense – namely, the element; and the essential aspect of recognition – namely, the model itself (harmony of the faculties grounded in the supposedly universal thinking subject and exercised upon the unspecified object). The image of thought is only the figure in which *doxa* is universalised by being elevated to the rational level. However, so long as one only abstracts from the empirical content of *doxa*, while maintaining the operation of the faculties which corresponds to it and implicitly retains the essential aspect of the content, one remains imprisoned by it. We may well discover a supra-temporal form or even a sub-temporal primary matter, an underground or Ur-*doxa*: we have not advanced a single step, but remain imprisoned by the same cave or ideas of the times which we only flatter ourselves with having 'rediscovered', by blessing them with the sign of philosophy. The form of recognition has never sanctioned anything but the recognisable and the recognised; form will never inspire anything but conformities. Moreover, while philosophy refers to a common sense as

its implicit presupposition, what need has common sense of philosophy? Common sense shows every day – unfortunately – that it is capable of producing philosophy in its own way. Therein lies a costly double danger for philosophy. On the one hand, it is apparent that acts of recognition exist and occupy a large part of our daily life: this is a table, this is an apple, this the piece of wax, Good morning Theaetetus. But who can believe that the destiny of thought is at stake in these acts, and that when we recognise, we are thinking? Like Bergson, we may well distinguish between two kinds of recognition – that of the cow in the presence of grass, and that of a man summoning his memories: the second can serve no more than the first as a model for what it means to think. We said above that the Image of thought must be judged on the basis of what it claims in principle, not on the basis of empirical objections. However, the criticism that must be addressed to this image of thought is precisely that it has based its supposed principle upon extrapolation from certain facts, particularly insignificant facts such as Recognition, everyday banality in person; as though thought should not seek its models among stranger and more compromising adventures. Take the example of Kant: of all philosophers, Kant is the one who discovers the prodigious domain of the transcendental. He is the analogue of a great explorer – not of another world, but of the upper or lower reaches of this one. However, what does he do? In the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* he describes in detail three syntheses which measure the respective contributions of the thinking faculties, all culminating in the third, that of recognition, which is expressed in the form of the unspecified object as correlate of the 'I think' to which all the faculties are related. It is clear that, in this manner, Kant traces the so-called transcendental structures from the empirical acts of a psychological consciousness: the transcendental synthesis of apprehension is directly induced from an empirical apprehension, and so on. In order to hide this all too obvious procedure, Kant suppressed this text in the second edition. Although it is better hidden, the tracing method, with all its 'psychologism', nevertheless subsists.

In the second place, recognition is insignificant only as a speculative model. It ceases to be so with regard to the ends which it serves and to which it leads us. What is recognised is not only an object but also the values attached to an object (values play a crucial role in the distributions undertaken by good sense). In so far as the practical finality of recognition lies in the 'established values', then on this model the whole image of thought as *Cogitatio natura* bears witness to a disturbing complacency. As Nietzsche says, Truth may well seem to be 'a more modest being from which no disorder and nothing extraordinary is to be feared: a self-contented and happy creature which is continually assuring all the powers that be that no one needs to be the least concerned on its account; for it is, after all, only "pure knowledge"....'[5] What is a thought which

harms no one, neither thinkers nor anyone else? Recognition is a sign of the celebration of monstrous nuptials, in which thought 'rediscovers' the State, rediscovers 'the Church' and rediscovers all the current values that it subtly presented in the pure form of an eternally blessed unspecified eternal object. Nietzsche's distinction between the creation of new values and the recognition of established values should not be understood in a historically relative manner, as though the established values were new in their time and the new values simply needed time to become established. In fact it concerns a difference which is both formal and in kind. The new, with its power of beginning and beginning again, remains forever new, just as the established was always established from the outset, even if a certain amount of empirical time was necessary for this to be recognised. What becomes established with the new is precisely not the new. For the new – in other words, difference – calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable *terra incognita*. What forces does this new bring to bear upon thought, from what central bad nature and ill will does it spring, from what central ungrounding which strips thought of its 'innateness', and treats it every time as something which has not always existed, but begins, forced and under constraint? By contrast, how derisory are the voluntary struggles for recognition. Struggles occur only on the basis of a common sense and established values, for the attainment of current values (honours, wealth and power). A strange struggle among consciousnesses for the conquest of the trophy constituted by the *Cogitatio natura universalis*, the trophy of pure recognition and representation. Nietzsche laughed at the very idea that what he called will to power could be concerned with this. He called both Kant and Hegel 'philosophical labourers' because their philosophy remained marked by this indelible model of recognition.

Kant, however, seemed equipped to overturn the Image of thought. For the concept of error, he substituted that of illusion: internal illusions, interior to reason, instead of errors from without which were merely the effects of bodily causes. For the substantial self, he substituted a self profoundly fractured by a line of time; while in the same movement God and the self encountered a kind of speculative death. However, in spite of everything, and at the risk of compromising the conceptual apparatus of the three Critiques, Kant did not want to renounce the implicit presuppositions. Thought had to continue to enjoy an upright nature, and philosophy could go no further than – nor in directions other than those taken by – common sense or 'common popular reason'. At most, therefore, Critique amounts to giving civil rights to thought considered from the point of view of its *natural law*: Kant's enterprise multiplies common senses, making as many of them as there are natural interests of rational thought. For while it is true that in general common sense always implies a

collaboration of the faculties upon a form of the Same or a model of recognition, it is no less true that, depending upon the case, one active faculty among others is charged with the task of providing that form or that model, along with the contribution of the other faculties subjected to it. Thus, imagination, reason and the understanding collaborate in the case of knowledge and form a 'logical common sense'. Here, understanding is the legislative faculty which provides the speculative model on which the other two are summoned to collaborate. In the case of the practical model of recognition, by contrast, reason legislates with regard to the moral common sense. There remains a third model involving a properly aesthetic common sense in which the faculties attain a free accord. While it is true that in general all the faculties collaborate in recognition, the formulae of that collaboration differ according to the nature of that which is to be recognised: object of knowledge, moral value, aesthetic effect. ... Far from overturning the form of common sense, Kant merely multiplied it. (Must not the same be said of phenomenology? Does it not discover a fourth common sense, this time grounded upon sensibility as a passive synthesis – one which, even though it constitutes an Ur-*doxa*, remains no less prisoner of the form of *doxa*?[6]) We see to what degree the Kantian Critique is ultimately respectful: knowledge, morality, reflection and faith are supposed to correspond to natural interests of reason, and are never themselves called into question; only the use of the faculties is declared legitimate or not in relation to one or other of these interests. Throughout, the variable model of recognition fixes good usage in the form of a harmony between the faculties determined by a dominant faculty under a given common sense. For this reason, illegitimate usage (illusion) is explained solely in the following manner: in its natural *state*, thought confuses its interests and allows its various domains to encroach upon one another. This does not prevent thought from having at its base a good natural *law*, on which Critique bestows its civil sanction; nor does it mean that the domains, interests, limits and properties are not sacred and grounded upon inalienable right. Critique has everything – a tribunal of justices of the peace, a registration room, a register – except the power of a new politics which would overturn the image of thought. Even the dead God and the fractured I are no more than a passing bad moment, the speculative moment: they are resuscitated in a more integrated and certain form than ever, more sure of themselves, but with other, practical or moral, interests.

Such is the world of *representation* in general. We said above that representation was defined by certain elements: identity with regard to concepts, opposition with regard to the determination of concepts, analogy with regard to judgement, resemblance with regard to objects. The identity of the unspecified concept constitutes the form of the Same with regard to recognition. The determination of the concept implies the comparison

between possible predicates and their opposites in a regressive and progressive double series, traversed on the one side by remembrance and on the other by an imagination the aim of which is to rediscover or re-create (memorial–imaginative reproduction). Analogy bears either upon the highest determinable concepts or on the relations between determinate concepts and their respective objects. It calls upon the power of distribution present in judgement. As for the object of the concept, in itself or in relation to other objects, it relies upon resemblance as a requirement of perceptual continuity. Each element thus appeals to one particular faculty, but is also established across different faculties within the context of a given common sense (for example, the resemblance between a perception and a remembrance). The 'I think' is the most general principle of representation – in other words, the source of these elements and of the unity of all these faculties: I conceive, I judge, I imagine, I remember and I perceive – as though these were the four branches of the Cogito. On precisely these branches, difference is crucified. They form quadripartite fetters under which only that which is identical, similar, analogous or opposed can be considered different: *difference becomes an object of representation always in relation to a conceived identity, a judged analogy, an imagined opposition or a perceived similitude.*[7] Under these four coincident figures, difference acquires a sufficient reason in the form of a *principium comparationis*. For this reason, the world of representation is characterised by its inability to conceive of difference in itself; and by the same token, its inability to conceive of repetition for itself, since the latter is grasped only by means of recognition, distribution, reproduction and resemblance in so far as these alienate the prefix RE in simple generalities of representation. The postulate of recognition was therefore a first step towards a much more general postulate of representation.

'... some reports of our perceptions do not provoke thought to reconsideration because the judgment of them by sensation seems adequate, while others always invite the intellect to reflection because the sensation yields nothing that can be trusted. – You obviously mean distant appearances, or things drawn in perspective. – You have quite missed my meaning ...'.[8] This text distinguishes two kinds of things: those which do not disturb thought and (as Plato will later say) those which *force* us to think. The first are objects of recognition: thought and all its faculties may be fully employed therein, thought may busy itself thereby, but such employment and such activity have nothing to do with thinking. Thought is thereby filled with no more than an image of itself, one in which it recognises itself the more it recognises things: this is a finger, this is a table, Good morning Theaetetus. Whence the question of Socrates' interlocutor: is it when we do not recognise, when we have difficulty in recognising, that we truly think?

The interlocutor seems already Cartesian. It is clear, however, that the dubitable will not allow us to escape from the point of view of recognition. Moreover, it will only give rise to a local scepticism – or, indeed, to a generalised method – on condition that thought already has the will to recognise what essentially distinguishes doubt from certitude. The same goes for dubitable as for certain things: they presuppose the good will of the thinker along with the good nature of thought, where these are understood to include an ideal form of recognition as well as a claimed affinity with the true, that *philia* which predetermines at once both the image of thought and the concept of philosophy. Certainties force us to think no more than doubts. To realise that three angles of a triangle should be equal to two right angles does suppose thought, it supposes the will to think, to think of triangles and even to think of their angles: Descartes remarked that we cannot deny this equality should we think of it, but we can indeed think, even of triangles, without thinking of that equality. All truths of that kind are hypothetical, since they presuppose all that is in question and are incapable of giving birth in thought to the act of thinking. In fact, concepts only ever designate possibilities. They lack the claws of absolute necessity – in other words, of an original violence inflicted upon thought; the claws of a strangeness or an enmity which alone would awaken thought from its natural stupor or eternal possibility: there is only involuntary thought, aroused but constrained within thought, and all the more absolutely necessary for being born, illegitimately, of fortuitousness in the world. Thought is primarily trespass and violence, the enemy, and nothing presupposes philosophy: everything begins with misosophy. Do not count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think. The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself.

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. In this sense it is opposed to recognition. In recognition, the sensible is not at all that which can only be sensed, but that which bears directly upon the senses in an object which can be recalled, imagined or conceived. The sensible is referred to an object which may not only be experienced other than by sense, but may itself be attained by other faculties. It therefore presupposes the exercise of the senses and the exercise of the other faculties in a common sense. The object of encounter, on the other hand, really gives rise to sensibility with regard to a given sense. It is not an *aisthēton* but an

aisthēteon. It is not a quality but a sign. It is not a sensible being but the being *of* the sensible. It is not the given but that by which the given is given. It is therefore in a certain sense the imperceptible [*insensible*]. It is imperceptible precisely from the point of view of recognition – in other words, from the point of view of an empirical exercise of the senses in which sensibility grasps only that which also could be grasped by other faculties, and is related within the context of a common sense to an object which also must be apprehended by other faculties. Sensibility, in the presence of that which can only be sensed (and is at the same time imperceptible) finds itself before its own limit, the sign, and raises itself to the level of a transcendental exercise: to the 'nth' power. Common sense is there only in order to limit the specific contribution of sensibility to the conditions of a joint labour: it thereby enters into a discordant play, its organs become metaphysical.

Second character: that which can only be sensed (the *sentiendum* or the being of the sensible) moves the soul, 'perplexes' it – in other words, forces it to pose a problem: as though the object of encounter, the sign, were the bearer of a problem – as though it were a problem.[9] Must problems or questions be identified with singular objects of a transcendental Memory, as other texts of Plato suggest, so that there is the possibility of a training aimed at grasping what can only be recalled? Everything points in this direction: it is indeed true that Platonic reminiscence claims to grasp the immemorial being *of* the past, the *memorandum* which is at the same time afflicted with an essential forgetting, in accordance with that law of transcendental exercise which insists that what can only be recalled should also be empirically impossible to recall. There is a considerable difference between this essential forgetting and an empirical forgetting. Empirical memory is addressed to those things which can and even must be grasped: what is recalled must have been seen, heard, imagined or thought. That which is forgotten, in the empirical sense, is that which cannot be grasped a second time by the memory which searches for it (it is too far removed; forgetting has effaced or separated us from the memory). Transcendental memory, by contrast, grasps that which from the outset can only be recalled, even the first time: not a contingent past, but the being of the past as such and the past of every time. In this manner, the *forgotten* thing *appears* in person to the memory which essentially apprehends it. It does not address memory without addressing the forgetting within memory. The *memorandum* here is both unrememberable and immemorial. Forgetting is no longer a contingent incapacity separating us from a memory which is itself contingent: it exists within essential memory as though it were the 'nth' power of memory with regard to its own limit or to that which can only be recalled. It was the same with sensibility: the contingently imperceptible, that which is too small or too far for the empirical exercise of our senses, stands opposed to an essentially imperceptible which is

indistinguishable from that which can be sensed only from the point of view of a transcendental exercise. Thus sensibility, forced by the encounter to sense the *sentiendum*, forces memory in its turn to remember the *memorandum*, that which can only be recalled. Finally, the third characteristic of transcendental memory is that, in turn, it forces thought to grasp that which can only be thought, the *cogitandum* or *noēteon*, the Essence: not the intelligible, for this is still no more than the mode in which we think that which might be something other than thought, but the being of the intelligible as though this were both the final power of thought and the unthinkable. The violence of that which forces thought develops from the *sentiendum* to the *cogitandum*. Each faculty is unhinged, but what are the hinges if not the form of a common sense which causes all the faculties to function and converge? Each one, in its own order and on its own account, has broken the form of common sense which kept it within the empirical element of *doxa*, in order to attain both its 'nth' power and the paradoxical element within transcendental exercise. Rather than all the faculties converging and contributing to a common project of recognising an object, we see divergent projects in which, with regard to what concerns it essentially, each faculty is in the presence of that which is its 'own'. Discord of the faculties, chain of force and fuse along which each confronts its limit, receiving from (or communicating to) the other only a violence which brings it face to face with its own element, as though with its disappearance or its perfection.

Let us pause, however, at the manner in which Plato determines the nature of the limits in each case. The text of *The Republic* defines that which is essentially encountered, and must be distinguished from all recognition as the object of a 'contradictory perception'. Whereas a finger always calls for recognition and is never more than a finger, that which is hard is never hard without also being soft, since it is inseparable from a becoming or a relation which includes the opposite within it (the same is true of the large and the small, the one and the many). The sign or point of departure for that which forces thought is thus the coexistence of contraries, the coexistence of more and less in an unlimited qualitative becoming. Recognition, by contrast, measures and limits the quality by relating it to something, thereby interrupting the mad-becoming. In defining the first instance by that *form of qualitative opposition or contrariety*, however, does not Plato already confuse the being of the sensible with a simple sensible being, with a pure qualitative being [*aisthēton*]? The suspicion is reinforced when we consider the second instance, reminiscence. For reminiscence only appears to break with the recognition model when in fact it is content to complicate the schema: whereas recognition bears upon a perceptible or perceived object reminiscence bears upon another object, supposed to be associated with or rather enveloped within the first, which demands to be recognised for itself

independently of any distinct perception. This other thing, enveloped within the sign, must be at once never-seen and yet already-recognised, a disturbing unfamiliarity. It is then tempting to say poetically that this has been seen, but in another life, in a mythical present: You are the image of ... . By this means, however, everything is betrayed: first, the nature of the encounter in so far as this does not merely propose a particularly difficult test for recognition, an envelopment that is particularly difficult to unfold, but instead opposes all possible recognition; second, the nature of the transcendental memory and of that which can only be recalled. For this second instance is only conceived in the *form of similitude in the reminiscence*, to the point where the same objection arises: reminiscence confuses the being of the past with a past being, and since it is unable to assign an empirical moment at which this past was present, it invokes an original or mythical present. The importance of the concept of reminiscence (and the reason why it must be radically distinguished from the Cartesian concept of innateness) consists in its manner of introducing time or the duration of time into thought as such. By this means, it establishes an opacity peculiar to thought, and testifies to the existence of both a bad nature and an ill will which must be shaken by signs from without. As we have seen, however, because time is introduced here only in the form of a physical cycle, and not in its pure or essential form, thought is still supposed to possess a good nature and a resplendent clarity which are merely obscured or waylaid amidst the misadventures of the natural cycle. Reminiscence is still a refuge for the recognition model, and Plato no less than Kant traces the operation of the transcendental memory from the outlines of its empirical exercise (we see this clearly in the account of the *Phaedo*).

As for the third instance, that of pure thought or that which can only be thought, Plato determines this instance in terms of separated contraries. Thus, under the pressure of reminiscence, we are forced to think such things as Largeness which is nothing but large, Smallness which is nothing but small, Heaviness which is nothing but heavy, or Unity which is nothing but one. According to Plato, therefore, the essence is defined by the *form of real Identity* (the Same understood as *auto kath' hauto*). Everything culminates in the great principle: that there is – before all else, and despite everything – an affinity or a filiation – or perhaps it should be called a philiation – of thought with the true; in short, a good nature and a good desire, grounded in the last instance upon the *form of analogy in the Good*. As a result, the Plato who wrote the passage from *The Republic* cited above was also the first to erect the dogmatic and moralising image of thought which neutralises that text and allows it to function only as a 'repentance'. Having discovered the superior or transcendent exercise of the faculties, Plato subordinated this to the forms of opposition in the sensible, similitude in reminiscence, identity in the essence and analogy in

the Good. In this manner he prepared the way for the world of representation, carrying out a first distribution of its elements and already covering the exercise of thought with a dogmatic image which both presupposes and betrays it.

The transcendental form of a faculty is indistinguishable from its disjointed, superior or transcendent exercise. Transcendent in no way means that the faculty addresses itself to objects outside the world but, on the contrary, that it grasps that in the world which concerns it exclusively and brings it into the world. The transcendent exercise must not be traced from the empirical exercise precisely because it apprehends that which cannot be grasped from the point of view of common sense, that which measures the empirical operation of all the faculties according to that which pertains to each, given the form of their collaboration. That is why the transcendental is answerable to a superior empiricism which alone is capable of exploring its domain and its regions. Contrary to Kant's belief, it cannot be induced from the ordinary empirical forms in the manner in which these appear under the determination of common sense. Despite the fact that it has become discredited today, the doctrine of the faculties is an entirely necessary component of the system of philosophy. Its discredit may be explained by the misrecognition of this properly transcendental empiricism, for which was substituted in vain a tracing of the transcendental from the empirical. Each faculty must be borne to the extreme point of its dissolution, at which it falls prey to triple violence: the violence of that which forces it to be exercised, of that which it is forced to grasp and which it alone is able to grasp, yet also that of the ungraspable (from the point of view of its empirical exercise). This is the threefold limit of the final power. Each faculty discovers at this point its own unique passion – in other words, its radical difference and its eternal repetition, its differential and repeating element along with the instantaneous engendering of its action and the eternal replay of its object, its manner of coming into the world already repeating. We ask, for example: What forces sensibility to sense? What is it that can only be sensed, yet is imperceptible at the same time? We must pose this question not only for memory and thought, but also for the imagination – is there an *imaginandum*, a *phantasteon*, which would also be the limit, that which is impossible to imagine?; for language – is there a *loquendum*, that which would be silence at the same time?; and for the other faculties which would find their place in a complete doctrine – vitality, the transcendent object of which would include monstrosity; and sociability, the transcendent object of which would include anarchy – and even for faculties yet to be discovered, whose existence is not yet suspected.[10] For nothing can be said in advance, one cannot prejudge the outcome of research: it may be that some well-known faculties – too well known – turn out to have no proper limit, no verbal adjective, because they are imposed and have an exercise only under the

form of common sense. It may turn out, on the other hand, that new faculties arise, faculties which were repressed by that form of common sense. For a doctrine in general, there is nothing regrettable in this uncertainty about the outcome of research, this complexity in the study of the particular case of each faculty: on the contrary, transcendental empiricism is the only way to avoid tracing the transcendental from the outlines of the empirical.

Our concern here is not to establish such a doctrine of the faculties. We seek only to determine the nature of its requirements. In this regard, the Platonic determinations cannot be satisfactory. For it is not figures already mediated and related to representation that are capable of carrying the faculties to their respective limits but, on the contrary, free or untamed states of difference in itself; not qualitative opposition within the sensible, but an element which is in itself difference, and creates at once both the quality in the sensible and the transcendent exercise within sensibility. This element is intensity, understood as pure difference in itself, as that which is at once both imperceptible for empirical sensibility which grasps intensity only already covered or mediated by the quality to which it gives rise, and at the same time that which can be perceived only from the point of view of a transcendental sensibility which apprehends it immediately in the encounter. Moreover, when sensibility transmits its constraint to the imagination, when the imagination in turn is raised to the level of transcendent exercise, it is the phantasm, the disparity within the phantasm, which constitutes the *phantasteon*, which is both that which can only be imagined and the empirically unimaginable. With regard to memory, it is not similitude in the reminiscence but, on the contrary, the dissimilar in the pure form of time which constitutes the immemorial of a transcendent memory. Finally, it is an I fractured by this form of time which finds itself constrained to think that which can only be thought; not the Same, but that transcendent 'aleatory point', always Other by nature, in which all the essences are enveloped like so many differentials of thought, and which signifies the highest power of thought only by virtue of also designating the unthinkable or the inability to think at the empirical level. We recall Heidegger's profound texts showing that as long as thought continues to presuppose its own good nature and good will, in the form of a common sense, a *ratio*, a *Cogitatio natura universalis*, it will think nothing at all but remain a prisoner to opinion, frozen in an abstract possibility ... : 'Man can think in the sense that he possesses the possibility to do so. This possibility alone, however, is no guarantee to us that we are capable of thinking.'[11] It is true that on the path which leads to that which is to be thought, all begins with sensibility. Between the intensive and thought, it is always by means of an intensity that thought comes to us. The privilege of sensibility as origin appears in the fact that, in an encounter, what forces sensation and that which can only be sensed are

one and the same thing, whereas in other cases the two instances are distinct. In effect, the intensive or difference in intensity is at once both the object of the encounter and the object to which the encounter raises sensibility. It is not the gods which we encounter: even hidden, the gods are only the forms of recognition. What we encounter are the demons, the sign-bearers: powers of the leap, the interval, the intensive and the instant; powers which only cover difference with more difference. What is most important, however, is that – between sensibility and imagination, between imagination and memory, between memory and thought – when each disjointed faculty communicates to another the violence which carries it to its own limit, every time it is a free form of difference which awakens the faculty, and awakens it as the different within that difference. So it is with difference in intensity, disparity in the phantasm, dissemblance in the form of time, the differential in thought. *Opposition, resemblance, identity and even analogy are only effects produced by these presentations of difference*, rather than being conditions which subordinate difference and make it something represented. There is no *philia* which testifies to a desire, love, good nature or good will by virtue of which the faculties already possess or tend towards the object to which they are raised by violence, and by virtue of which they would enjoy an analogy with it or a homology among themselves. Each faculty, including thought, has only involuntary adventures: involuntary operation remains embedded in the empirical. The Logos breaks up into hieroglyphics, each one of which speaks the transcendent language of a faculty. Even the point of departure – namely, sensibility in the encounter with that which forces sensation – presupposes neither affinity nor predestination. On the contrary, it is the fortuitousness or the contingency of the encounter which guarantees the necessity of that which it forces to be thought. There is no *amicability*, such as that between the similar and the Same or even that which unites opposites, to link sensibility to a *sentiendum*. The dark precursor is sufficient to enable communication between difference as such, and to make the different communicate with difference: the dark precursor is not a friend. President Schreber reformulates Plato's three moments, in his own way and in restoring them to their original communicative violence: the nerves and the annexation of nerves, examined souls and the murder of souls, constrained thought and the constraint to think.

The very principle of communication, even if this should be violence, seems to maintain the form of a common sense. However, it is nothing of the sort. There is indeed a serial connection between the faculties and an order in that series. But neither the order nor the series implies any collaboration with regard to the form of a supposed same object or to a subjective unity in the nature of an 'I think'. It is a forced and broken connection which traverses the fragments of a dissolved self as it does the borders of a fractured I. The transcendental operation of the faculties is a

properly paradoxical operation, opposed to their exercise under the rule of a common sense. In consequence, the harmony between the faculties can appear only in the form of a *discordant harmony*, since each communicates to the other only the violence which confronts it with its own difference and its divergence from the others.[12] Kant was the first to provide the example of such a discordant harmony, the relation between imagination and thought which occurs in the case of the sublime. There is, therefore, something which is communicated from one faculty to another, but it is metamorphosed and does not form a common sense. We could just as well say that there are Ideas which traverse all the faculties, but are the object of none in particular. Perhaps in effect, as we shall see, it will be necessary to reserve the name of Ideas not for pure *cogitanda* but rather for those instances which go from sensibility to thought and from thought to sensibility, capable of engendering in each case, according to their own order, the limit- or transcendent-object of each faculty. Ideas are problems, but problems only furnish the conditions under which the faculties attain their superior exercise. Considered in this light, Ideas, far from having as their milieu a good sense or a common sense, refer to a para-sense which determines only the communication between disjointed faculties. Neither are they illuminated by a natural light: rather, they shine like differential flashes which leap and metamorphose. The very conception of a natural light is inseparable from a certain value supposedly attached to the Idea – namely, 'clarity and distinctness'; and from a certain supposed origin – namely, 'innateness'. Innateness, however, only represents the good nature of thought from the point of view of a Christian theology or, more generally, the requirements of creation (which is why Plato opposed reminiscence to innateness, criticising the latter for ignoring the role of a form of time in the soul as a consequence of pure thought, or the necessity of a formal distinction between a Before and an After capable of grounding forgetting in that which forces thought). The 'clear and distinct' itself is inseparable from the model of recognition which serves as the instrument of every orthodoxy, even when it is rational. Clarity and distinctness form the logic of recognition, just as innateness is the theology of common sense: both have already pushed the Idea over into representation. The restitution of the Idea in the doctrine of the faculties requires the explosion of the clear and distinct, and the discovery of a Dionysian value according to which *the Idea is necessarily obscure in so far as it is distinct*, all the more obscure the more it is distinct. Distinction-obscurity becomes here the true tone of philosophy, the symphony of the discordant Idea.

Nothing is more exemplary in this respect than the exchange of letters between Jacques Rivière and Antonin Artaud. Rivière defended the image of an autonomous thinking function, endowed in principle with its own nature and will. In fact, we are confronted with great difficulties in thinking: lack of method, technique or application, and even lack of health.

These, however, are fortunate difficulties: not only because they prevent the nature of thought from devouring our own nature, not only because they bring thought into relation with obstacles which are so many 'facts' without which it would not manage to orientate itself, but also because our efforts to overcome these obstacles allow us to maintain an ideal of the self as it exists in pure thought, like a 'superior degree of identity with ourselves', which persists through the factual variations, differences and inequalities which constantly affect us. The reader notes with astonishment that the more Rivière believes himself to be close to an understanding of Artaud, the further away he is, and the more he speaks of something altogether different. Rarely has there been such misunderstanding. Artaud does not simply talk about his own 'case', but already in his youthful letters shows an awareness that his case brings him into contact with a generalised thought process which can no longer be covered by the reassuring dogmatic image but which, on the contrary, amounts to the complete destruction of that image. The difficulties he describes himself as experiencing must therefore be understood as not merely in fact but as difficulties in principle, concerning and affecting the essence of what it means to think. Artaud said that the problem (for him) was not to orientate his thought, or to perfect the expression of what he thought, or to acquire application and method or to perfect his poems, but simply to manage to think something. For him, this was the only conceivable 'work': it presupposes an impulse, a compulsion to think which passes through all sorts of bifurcations, spreading from the nerves and being communicated to the soul in order to arrive at thought. Henceforth, thought is also forced to think its central collapse, its fracture, its own natural 'powerlessness' which is indistinguishable from the greatest power – in other words, from those unformulated forces, the *cogitanda*, as though from so many thefts or trespasses in thought. Artaud pursues in all this the terrible revelation of a thought without image, and the conquest of a new principle which does not allow itself to be represented. He knows that *difficulty* as such, along with its cortège of problems and questions, is not a *de facto* state of affairs but a *de jure* structure of thought; that there is an acephalism in thought just as there is an amnesia in memory, an aphasia in language and an agnosia in sensibility. He knows that thinking is not innate, but must be engendered in thought. He knows that the problem is not to direct or methodically apply a thought which pre-exists in principle and in nature, but to bring into being that which does not yet exist (there is no other work, all the rest is arbitrary, mere decoration). To think is to create – there is no other creation – but to create is first of all to engender 'thinking' in thought. For this reason Artaud opposes *genitality* to innateness in thought, but equally to reminiscence, and thereby proposes the principle of a transcendental empiricism:

> I am innately genital. ... There are some fools who think of themselves as beings, as innately being. I am he who, in order to be, must whip his innateness. One who innately must be a being, that is always whipping this sort of non-existent kennel, O bitches of impossibility! ... Underneath grammar there lies thought, an infamy harder to conquer, an infinitely more shrewdish maid, rougher to overcome when taken as an innate fact. For thought is a matron who has not always existed.[13]

It is not a question of opposing to the dogmatic image of thought another image borrowed, for example, from schizophrenia, but rather of remembering that schizophrenia is not only a human fact but also a possibility for thought – one, moreover, which can only be revealed as such can through the abolition of that image. It is noteworthy that the dogmatic image, for its part, recognises only *error* as a possible misadventure of thought, and reduces everything to the form of error. This, indeed, is the fifth postulate that we should take into account: taking error to be the sole 'negative' of thought. Without doubt this postulate belongs to the others as much as they belong to it: what can befall a *Cogitatio natura universalis* which presupposes a good will on the part of the thinker along with a good nature on the part of thought except that it be mistaken – in other words, that it take the false for the true (the false according to nature for the true according to the will)? Does not error itself testify to the form of a common sense, since one faculty alone cannot be mistaken but two faculties can be, at least from the point of view of their collaboration, when an object of one is confused with *another* object of the other? What is error if not always false recognition? Whence does it come if not from a false distribution of the elements of representation, from a false evaluation of opposition, analogy, resemblance and identity? Error is only the reverse of a rational orthodoxy, still testifying on behalf of that from which it is distanced – in other words, on behalf of an honesty, a good nature and a good will on the part of the one who is said to be mistaken. Error, therefore, pays homage to the 'truth' to the extent that, lacking a form of its own, it gives the form of the true to the false. It is in this sense that in the *Theaetetus*, under the sway of an apparently quite different inspiration from that in *The Republic*, Plato presents simultaneously both a positive model of recognition or common sense, and a negative model of error. Not only does thought appropriate the ideal of an 'orthodoxy', not only does common sense find its object in the categories of opposition, similitude, analogy and identity, but error itself implies this transcendence of a common sense with regard to sensations, and of a soul with regard to all the faculties whose collaboration [*syllogismos*] in relation to the form of the Same it determines. For if I cannot confuse two things that I perceive or conceive, I can always confuse something I see with something I conceive or remember – when, for example, I slip the

present object of my sensation into the engram of *another* object of my memory – as in the case of 'Good morning Theodorus' when it is Theaetetus who passes by. Error in all its misery, therefore, still testifies to the transcendence of the *Cogitatio natura*. It is as though error were a kind of failure of good sense within the form of a common sense which remains integral and intact. It thereby confirms the preceding postulates of the dogmatic image as much as it derives from them, proving them by *reductio ad absurdum*.

It is true that this proof is completely ineffectual, since it operates in the same element as the postulates themselves. Yet it is perhaps easier to reconcile the *Theaetetus* and the text from the *Republic* than it may at first seem. It is not by chance that the *Theaetetus* is an aporetic dialogue, and the aporia on which it closes is that of difference or *diaphora* (to the same extent that thought requires that difference transcend 'opinion', opinion requires for itself an immanence of difference). *Theaetetus* is the first great theory of common sense, of recognition, representation and error as their correlate. However, the aporia of difference exposes its failure from the outset, along with the need to search in a quite different direction for a doctrine of thought: perhaps the one indicated by Book VII of the *Republic*? ... Always with the reservation that the *Theaetetus* model continues to act in a subterranean manner, and that the persistent elements of representation still compromise the new vision of the *Republic*.

According to the hypothesis of the *Cogitatio natura universalis*, error is the 'negative' which develops naturally. Nevertheless, the dogmatic image does not ignore the fact that thought has other misadventures besides error: humiliations more difficult to overcome, negatives much more difficult to unravel. It does not overlook the fact that the terrible Trinity of madness, stupidity and malevolence can no more be reduced to error than they can be reduced to any form of the same. Once again, however, these are no more than *facts* for the dogmatic image. Stupidity, malevolence and madness are regarded as facts occasioned by external causes, which bring into play external forces capable of subverting the honest character of thought from without – all this to the extent that we are not only thinkers. The sole effect of these forces in thought is then assimilated precisely to error, which is supposed in principle to include all the effects of factual external causes. The reduction of stupidity, malevolence and madness to the single figure of error must therefore be understood to occur in principle – whence the hybrid character of this weak concept which would not have a place within pure thought if thought were not diverted from without, and would not be occasioned by this outside if the outside were not within pure thought. For this reason, we cannot be content to invoke certain facts against the in-principle dogmatic image of thought. As in the case of recognition, we must pursue the discussion at the level of principle itself, by questioning the legitimacy of the distribution of the empirical and the

transcendental carried out by the dogmatic image. For it rather seems to us that there are facts with regard to error, but which facts? Who says 'Good morning Theodorus' when Theaetetus passes, 'It is three o'clock' when it is three-thirty, and that 7 + 5 = 13? Answer: the myopic, the distracted and the young child at school. These are effective examples of errors, but examples which, like the majority of such 'facts', refer to thoroughly artificial or puerile situations, and offer a grotesque image of thought because they relate it to very simple questions to which one can and must respond by independent propositions.[14] Error acquires a sense only once the play of thought ceases to be speculative and becomes a kind of radio quiz. Everything must therefore be inverted: error is a fact which is then arbitrarily extrapolated and arbitrarily projected into the transcendental. As for the true transcendental structures of thought and the 'negative' in which these are enveloped, perhaps these must be sought elsewhere, and in figures other than those of error?

In one way or another, philosophers have always had a lively awareness of this necessity. There are few who did not feel the need to enrich the concept of error by means of determinations of a quite different kind. (To cite some examples: the notion of superstition as this is elaborated by Lucretius, Spinoza and the eighteenth-century *philosophes*, in particular Fontanelle. It is clear that the 'absurdity' of a superstition cannot be reduced to its kernel of error. Similarly, Plato's ignorance or forgetting are distinguished from error as much as from innateness and reminiscence itself. The Stoic notion of *stultitia* involves at once both madness and stupidity. The Kantian idea of inner illusion, internal to reason, is radically different from the extrinsic mechanism of error. The Hegelian idea of alienation supposes a profound restructuring of the true–false relation. The Schopenhauerian notions of vulgarity and stupidity imply a complete reversal of the will–understanding relation.) What prevents these richer determinations from being developed on their own account, however, is the maintenance, despite everything, of the dogmatic image, along with the postulates of common sense, recognition and representation which comprise its cortège. The correctives can thus appear only as 'repentances' which complicate or inconvenience the image without overturning its implicit principle.

Stupidity [*bêtise*] is not animality. The animal is protected by specific forms which prevent it from being 'stupid' [*bête*]. Formal correspondences between the human face and the heads of animals have often been composed; in other words, correspondences between individual differences peculiar to humans and the specific differences of animals. Such correspondences, however, take no account of stupidity as a specifically human form of bestiality. When satirical poets proceed through the various degrees of insult, they do not stop with animal forms but continue on to more profound regressions, passing from carnivores to herbivores and

ending with cloaca as though with a universal leguminous and digestive ground. The internal process of digestion is more profound than the external gesture of attack or voracious movement: stupidity with peristaltic movements. This is why tyrants have the heads not only of beasts but also of pears, cauliflowers or potatoes. One is neither superior nor external to that from which one benefits: a tyrant institutionalises stupidity, but he is the first servant of his own system and the first to be installed within it. Slaves are always commanded by another slave. Here too, how could the concept of error account for this unity of stupidity and cruelty, of the grotesque and the terrifying, which doubles the way of the world? Cowardice, cruelty, baseness and stupidity are not simply corporeal capacities or traits of character or society; they are structures of thought as such. The transcendental landscape comes to life: places for the tyrant, the slave and the imbecile must be found within it – without the place resembling the figure who occupies it, and without the transcendental ever being traced from the empirical figures which it makes possible. It is always our belief in the postulates of the *Cogitatio* which prevents us from making stupidity a transcendental problem. Stupidity can then be no more than an empirical determination, referring back to psychology or to the anecdotal – or worse, to polemic and insults – and to the especially atrocious pseudo-literary genre of the *sottisier*. But whose fault is this? Does not the fault lie first with philosophy, which has allowed itself to be convinced by the concept of error even though this concept is itself borrowed from facts, relatively insignificant and arbitrary facts? The worst literature produces *sottisiers*, while the best (Flaubert, Baudelaire, Bloy) was haunted by the problem of stupidity. By giving this problem all its cosmic, encyclopaedic and gnoseological dimensions, such literature was able to carry it as far as the entrance to philosophy itself. Philosophy could have taken up the problem with its own means and with the necessary modesty, by considering the fact that stupidity is never that of others but the object of a properly transcendental question: how is stupidity (not error) possible?

It is possible by virtue of the link between thought and individuation. This link is much more profound than that which appears in the 'I think': it is established in a field of intensity which already constitutes the sensibility of the thinking subject. For the I and the Self are perhaps no more than indices of the species: of humanity as a species with divisions. The species has undoubtedly reached an implicit state in man. As a result, the form of the *I* can serve as a universal principle for recognition and representation, whereas the specific explicit forms are recognised only by means of this I, and the determination of species is only the rule of one of the elements of representation. The I is therefore not a species; rather – since it implicitly contains what the species and kinds explicitly develop, in particular the represented becoming of the form – they have a common fate, *Eudoxus*

and *Epistemon*. Individuation, by contrast, has nothing to do with even the continued process of determining species. Not only does it differ in kind from all determination of species but, as we shall see, it precedes and renders the latter possible. It involves fields of fluid intensive factors which no more take the form of an I than of a Self. Individuation as such, as it operates beneath all forms, is inseparable from a pure ground that it brings to the surface and trails with it. It is difficult to describe this ground, or the terror and attraction it excites. Turning over the ground is the most dangerous occupation, but also the most tempting in the stupefied moments of an obtuse will. For this ground, along with the individual, rises to the surface yet assumes neither form nor figure. It is there, staring at us, but without eyes. The individual distinguishes itself from it, but it does not distinguish itself, continuing rather to cohabit with that which divorces itself from it. It is the indeterminate, but the indeterminate in so far as it continues to embrace determination, as the ground does the shoe. Animals are in a sense forewarned against this ground, protected by their explicit forms. Not so for the I and the Self, undermined by the fields of individuation which work beneath them, defenceless against a rising of the ground which holds up to them a distorted or distorting mirror in which all presently thought forms dissolve. Stupidity is neither the ground nor the individual, but rather this relation in which individuation brings the ground to the surface without being able to give it form (this ground rises by means of the I, penetrating deeply into the possibility of thought and constituting the unrecognised in every recognition). All determinations become bad and cruel when they are grasped only by a thought which invents and contemplates them, flayed and separated from their living form, adrift upon this barren ground. Everything becomes violence on this passive ground. Everything becomes attack on this digestive ground. Here the Sabbath of stupidity and malevolence takes place. Perhaps this is the origin of that melancholy which weighs upon the most beautiful human faces: the presentiment of a hideousness peculiar to the human face, of a rising tide of stupidity, an evil deformity or a thought governed by madness. For from the point of view of a philosophy of nature, madness arises at the point at which the individual contemplates itself in this free ground – and, as a result, stupidity in stupidity and cruelty in cruelty – to the point that it can no longer stand itself. 'A pitiful faculty then emerges in their minds, that of being able to see stupidity and no longer tolerate it...'.[15] It is true that this most pitiful faculty also becomes the royal faculty when it animates philosophy as a philosophy of mind – in other words, when it leads all the other faculties to that transcendent exercise which renders possible a violent reconciliation between the individual, the ground and thought. At this point, the intensive factors of individuation take themselves as objects in such a manner as to constitute the highest element of a transcendent sensibility, the *sentiendum*; and from faculty to faculty,

the ground is borne within thought – still as the unthought and unthinking, but this unthought has become the necessary empirical form in which, in the fractured I (Bouvard *and* Pécuchet), thought at last thinks the *cogitandum*; in other words, the transcendent element which can only be thought ('the fact that we do not yet think' or 'What is stupidity?').

Teachers already know that errors or falsehoods are rarely found in homework (except in those exercises where a fixed result must be produced, or propositions must be translated one by one). Rather, what is more frequently found – and worse – are nonsensical sentences, remarks without interest or importance, banalities mistaken for profundities, ordinary 'points' confused with singular points, badly posed or distorted problems – all heavy with dangers, yet the fate of us all. We doubt whether, when mathematicians engage in polemic, they criticize one another for being mistaken in the results of their calculations. Rather, they criticize one another for having produced an insignificant theorem or a problem devoid of sense. Philosophy must draw the conclusions which follow from this. The element of sense is well known to philosophy; it has even become very familiar to philosophers. Nevertheless, this is perhaps not enough. Sense is defined as the condition of the true, but since it is supposed that the condition must retain an extension larger than that which is conditioned, sense does not ground truth without also allowing the possibility of error. A false proposition remains no less a proposition endowed with sense. Non-sense would then be the characteristic of that which can be neither true nor false. Two dimensions may be distinguished in a proposition: *expression*, in which a proposition says or expresses some idea; and *designation*, in which it indicates or designates the objects to which what is said or expressed applies. One of these would then be the dimension of sense, the other the dimension of truth and falsity. However, in this manner sense would only found the truth of a proposition while remaining indifferent to what it founds. Truth and falsity would be matters of designation (as Russell says: 'The question of truth and falsehood has to do with what words and sentences indicate, not with what they express.'[16]). We are then in a strange situation: having discovered the domain of sense, we refer it only to a psychological trait or a logical formalism. If need be, a new value, that of the nonsensical or the absurd, is added to the classical values of truth and falsity. However, the true and the false are supposed to continue in the same state as before – in other words, as if they were independent of the condition assigned to them or of the new value which is added to them. Either too much is said, or not enough: too much, because the search for a ground forms the essential step of a 'critique' which should inspire in us new ways of thinking; not enough, because so long as the ground remains larger than the grounded, this critique serves only to justify traditional

ways of thinking. The true and the false are supposed to remain unaffected by the condition which grounds the one only by rendering the other possible. By referring the true and the false back to the relation of designation within the proposition, we acquire a sixth postulate: the postulate of designation or of the proposition itself, which both incorporates and follows from the preceding postulates (the relation of designation is only the logical form of recognition).

In fact, the condition must be a condition of real experience, not of possible experience. It forms an intrinsic genesis, not an extrinsic conditioning. In every respect, truth is a matter of production, not of adequation. It is a matter of genitality, not of innateness or reminiscence. We cannot accept that the grounded remains the same as it was before, the same as when it was not grounded, when it had not passed the test of grounding. If sufficient reason or the ground has a 'twist', this is because it relates what it grounds to that which is truly groundless. At this point, it must be said, there is no longer recognition. To ground is to metamorphose. Truth and falsity do not concern a simple designation, rendered possible by a sense which remains indifferent to it. The relation between a proposition and what it designates must be established within sense itself: the nature of ideal sense is to point beyond itself towards the object designated. Designation, in so far as it is achieved in the case of a true proposition, would never be grounded unless it were understood as the limit of the genetic series or the ideal connections which constitute sense. If sense points beyond itself towards the object, the latter can no longer be posited in reality exterior to sense, but only at the limit of its process. Moreover, the proposition's relation to what it designates, in so far as this relation is established, is constituted within the unity of sense, along with the object which realises this unity. There is only a single case where the designated stands alone and remains external to sense: precisely the case of those singular propositions arbitrarily detached from their context and employed as examples.[17] Here too, however, how can we accept that such puerile and artificial textbook examples justify an image of thought? Every time a proposition is replaced in the context of living thought, it is apparent that it has exactly the truth it deserves according to its sense, and the falsity appropriate to the non-sense that it implies. We always have as much truth as we deserve in accordance with the sense of what we say. Sense is the genesis or the production of the true, and truth is only the empirical result of sense. We rediscover in all the postulates of the dogmatic image the same confusion: elevating a simple empirical figure to the status of a transcendental, at the risk of allowing the real structures of the transcendental to fall into the empirical.

Sense is what is expressed by a proposition, but what is this *expressed*? It cannot be reduced either to the object designated or to the lived state of the speaker. Indeed, we must distinguish sense and signification in the

following manner: signification refers only to concepts and the manner in which they relate to the objects conditioned by a given field of representation; whereas sense is like the Idea which is developed in the sub-representative determinations. It is not surprising that it should be easier to say what sense is not than to say what it is. In effect, we can never formulate simultaneously both a proposition and its sense; we can never say what is the sense of what we say. From this point of view, sense is the veritable *loquendum*, that which in its empirical operation cannot be said, even though it can be said only in its transcendental operation. The Idea which runs throughout all the faculties nevertheless cannot be reduced to sense, since in turn it is also non-sense. Nor is there any difficulty in reconciling this double aspect by means of which the Idea is constituted of structural elements which have no sense themselves, while it constitutes the sense of all that it produces (structure and genesis). There is only one kind of word which expresses both itself and its sense – precisely the nonsense word: abraxas, snark or blituri. If sense is necessarily a nonsense for the empirical function of the faculties, then conversely, the nonsenses so frequent in the empirical operation are like the secret of sense for the conscientious observer, all of whose faculties point towards a transcendent limit. As so many authors have recognised in diverse ways (Flaubert, Lewis Carroll), the mechanism of nonsense is the highest finality of sense, just as the mechanism of stupidity is the highest finality of thought. While it is true that we cannot express the sense of what we say, we can at least take the sense of a proposition – in other words, the *expressed*, as the *designated* of another proposition – of which in turn we cannot express the sense, and so on to infinity. As a result, if we call each proposition of consciousness a 'name', it is caught in an indefinite nominal regress, each name referring to another name which designates the sense of the preceding. However, the inability of empirical consciousness here corresponds to the 'nth' power of the language and its transcendent repetition to be able to speak infinitely of or about words themselves. In any case, thought is betrayed by the dogmatic image and by the postulate of propositions according to which philosophy would find a beginning in a first proposition of consciousness: Cogito. But perhaps Cogito is the name which has no sense and no object other than the power of reiteration in indefinite regress (I think that I think that I think ...). Every proposition of consciousness implies an unconscious of pure thought which constitutes the sphere of sense in which there is infinite regress.

The first paradox of sense, therefore, is that of proliferation, in which that which is expressed by one 'name' is designated by another name which doubles the first. No doubt this paradox may be avoided, but at the risk of falling into another: this time, the proposition is suspended, immobilised, just long enough to extract from it a double which retains only the ideal content, the immanent given. The paradoxical repetition essential to

language then no longer consists in a redoubling but in a doubling; no longer in a precipitation but in a suspension. This double of the proposition appears distinct at once from the proposition itself, the formulator of the proposition and the object which it concerns. It is distinguished from the subject and the object because it does not exist outside of the proposition which expresses it. It is distinguished from the proposition itself because it relates to the object as though it were its logical attribute, its 'statable' or 'expressible'. It is the *complex theme* of the proposition and, as such, the first term of knowledge. In order to distinguish it at once both from the object (God or the sky, for example) and from the proposition (God is, the sky is blue), it is stated in infinitive or participial form: to-be-God or God-being, the being-blue of the sky. This complex is an ideal event. It is an objective entity, but one of which we cannot say that it exists in itself: it insists or subsists, possessing a quasi-being or an extra-being, that minimum of being common to real, possible and even impossible objects. In this way, however, we fall into a nest of secondary difficulties, for how are we to avoid the consequence that contradictory propositions have the same sense, given that affirmation and negation are only propositional modes? Or how are we to avoid the consequence that an impossible object, one which is self-contradictory, has a sense even though it has no 'signification' (the being-square of a circle)? Or again, how are we to reconcile the transience of an object with the eternity of its sense? Finally, how are we to avoid the following play of mirrors: a proposition must be true because its expressible is true, while the expressible is true only when the proposition itself is true? All these difficulties stem from a common source: in extracting a double from the proposition we have evoked a simple phantom. Sense so defined is only a vapour which plays at the limit of things and words. Sense appears here as the outcome of the most powerful logical effort, but as Ineffectual, a sterile incorporeal deprived of its generative power.[18] Lewis Carroll gave a marvellous account of all these paradoxes: that of the neutralising doubling appears in the form of the smile without a cat, while that of the proliferating redoubling appears in the form of the knight who always gives a new name to the name of the song – and between these two extremes lie all the secondary paradoxes which form Alice's adventures.[19]

Is anything gained by expressing sense in the interrogative rather than the infinitive or participial form ('Is God?' rather than to-be-God or the being of God)? At first glance the gain is slight. It is slight because a question is always traced from givable, probable or possible responses. It is therefore itself the neutralised double of a supposedly pre-existent proposition which may or must serve as response. All the orator's art goes into constructing questions in accordance with the responses he wishes to evoke or the propositions of which he wants to convince us. Even when we do not know the answer, we question only in supposing that in principle it

is already given, or that it already exists in another consciousness. That is why – in accordance with its etymology – interrogation always takes place within the framework of a community: to interrogate implies not only a common sense but a good-sense, a distribution of knowledge and of the given with respect to empirical consciousnesses in accordance with their situations, their points of view, their positions and their skills, in such a way that a given consciousness is supposed to know already what the other does not (What time is it? – You who have a watch or are close to a clock. When was Caesar born? – You who know Roman history). Despite this weakness, the interrogative formula has at least one advantage: at the same time as it invites us to consider the corresponding proposition as a response, it opens up a new path for us. A proposition conceived as a response is always a particular solution, a case considered for itself, abstractly and apart from the superior synthesis which relates it, along with other cases, to a problem as problem. Therefore interrogation, in turn, expresses the manner in which a problem is dismembered, cashed out and revealed, in experience and for consciousness, according to its diversely apprehended cases of solution. Even though it gives us an insufficient idea, it thereby inspires in us the presentiment of that which it dismembers.

Sense is located in the problem itself. Sense is constituted in the complex theme, but the complex theme is that set of problems and questions in relation to which the propositions serve as elements of response and cases of solution. This definition, however, requires us to rid ourselves of an illusion which belongs to the dogmatic image of thought: problems and questions must no longer be traced from the corresponding propositions which serve, or can serve, as responses. We know the agent of this illusion: it is interrogation which, within the framework of a community, dismembers problems and questions, and reconstitutes them in accordance with the propositions of the common empirical consciousness – in other words, according to the probable truths of a simple *doxa*. The great logical dream of a combinatory or calculus of problems is compromised as a result. It was believed that problems or questions were only the neutralisation of a corresponding proposition. Consequently, how could it not be believed that the theme or sense is only an ineffectual double, traced from the type of proposition that it subsumes or even from an element supposed to be common to all propositions (the indicative thesis)? The failure to see that sense or the problem is extra-propositional, that it differs in kind from every proposition, leads us to miss the essential: the genesis of the act of thought, the operation of the faculties. Dialectic is the art of problems and questions, the combinatory or calculus of problems as such. However, dialectic loses its peculiar power when it remains content to trace problems from propositions: thus begins the history of the long perversion which places it under the power of the negative. Aristotle writes:

> The difference between a problem and a proposition is a difference in the turn of phrase. For if it be put in this way, 'Is two-footed terrestrial animal the definition of man?' or 'Is animal the genus of man?' the result is a proposition; but if thus, 'Is two-footed terrestrial animal the definition of man or not?' and 'Is animal the genus of man or not?' the result is a problem. Similarly too in other cases. Naturally, then, problems and propositions are equal in number; for out of every proposition you will make a problem if you change the turn of phrase.

(The illusion wends its way into contemporary logic where the calculus of problems is presented as extra-mathematical, which is true, since it is essentially logical or dialectical. It is still inferred, however, from a simple calculus of propositions, copied or traced from the propositions themselves.)[20]

We are led to believe that problems are given ready-made, and that they disappear in the responses or the solution. Already, under this double aspect, they can be no more than phantoms. We are led to believe that the activity of thinking, along with truth and falsehood in relation to that activity, begins only with the search for solutions, that both of these concern only solutions. This belief probably has the same origin as the other postulates of the dogmatic image: puerile examples taken out of context and arbitrarily erected into models. According to this infantile prejudice, the master sets a problem, our task is to solve it, and the result is accredited true or false by a powerful authority. It is also a social prejudice with the visible interest of maintaining us in an infantile state, which calls upon us to solve problems that come from elsewhere, consoling or distracting us by telling us that we have won simply by being able to respond: the problem as obstacle and the respondent as Hercules. Such is the origin of the grotesque image of culture that we find in examinations and government referenda as well as in newspaper competitions (where everyone is called upon to choose according to his or her taste, on condition that this taste coincides with that of everyone else). Be yourselves – it being understood that this self must be that of others. As if we would not remain slaves so long as we do not control the problems themselves, so long as we do not possess a right to the problems, to a participation in and management of the problems. The dogmatic image of thought supports itself with psychologically puerile and socially reactionary examples (cases of recognition, error, simple propositions and solutions or responses) in order to prejudge what should be the most valued in regard to thought – namely, the genesis of the act of thinking and the *sense* of truth and falsehood. There is, therefore, a seventh postulate to add to the others: the postulate of responses and solutions according to which truth and falsehood only begin with solutions or only qualify responses. When, however, a false problem is 'set' in a science examination, this propitious scandal serves only to remind families that problems are not ready-made

but must be constituted and invested in their proper symbolic fields; and that the master text necessarily requires a (necessarily fallible) master in order to be written. Pedagogic experiments are proposed in order to allow pupils, even very young pupils, to participate in the fabrication of problems, in their constitution and their being posed as problems. Moreover, everyone 'recognises' after a fashion that problems are the most important thing. Yet it is not enough to recognise this in fact, as though problems were only provisional and contingent movements destined to disappear in the formation of knowledge, which owed their importance only to the negative empirical conditions imposed upon the knowing subject. On the contrary, this discovery must be raised to the transcendental level, and problems must be considered not as 'givens' (data) but as ideal 'objecticities' possessing their own sufficiency and implying acts of constitution and investment in their respective symbolic fields. Far from being concerned with solutions, truth and falsehood primarily affect problems. A solution always has the truth it deserves according to the problem to which it is a response, and the problem always has the solution it deserves in proportion to *its own* truth or falsity – in other words, in proportion to its sense. This is what is meant by such famous formulae as: 'The really great problems are posed only once they are solved' or 'Mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve' – not because practical or speculative problems are only the shadow of pre-existing solutions but, on the contrary, because the solution necessarily follows from the complete conditions under which the problem is determined as a problem, from the means and the terms which are employed in order to pose it. The problem or sense is at once both the site of an originary truth and the genesis of a derived truth. The notions of nonsense, false sense and misconstrual [*contresens*] must be related to problems themselves (there are problems which are false through indetermination, others through overdetermination, while stupidity, finally, is the faculty for false problems; it is evidence of an inability to constitute, comprehend or determine a problem as such). Philosophers and savants dream of applying the test of truth and falsity to problems: this is the aim of dialectics as a superior calculus or combinatory. However, as long as the transcendental consequences are not explicitly drawn and the dogmatic image of thought subsists in principle, this dream also functions as no more than a 'repentance'.

The natural illusion (which involves tracing problems from propositions) is in effect extended into a philosophical illusion. The critical requirement is recognised, and the attempt is made to apply the test of truth and falsity to problems themselves, but it is maintained that the truth of a problem consists only in the possibility that it receive a solution. The new form of the illusion and its technical character comes this time from the fact that the form of problems is modelled upon the *form of possibility* of

propositions. This is already the case with Aristotle. Aristotle assigned the dialectic its real task, its only effective task: the art of problems and questions. Whereas Analytics gives us the means to solve a problem already given, or to respond to a question, Dialectics shows how to pose a question legitimately. Analytics studies the process by which the syllogism necessarily leads to a conclusion, while Dialectics invents the subjects of syllogisms (precisely what Aristotle calls 'problems') and engenders the elements of syllogisms concerning a given subject ('propositions'). However, in order to judge a problem, Aristotle invites us to consider 'the opinions accepted by all men or by the majority among them, or by the wise' in order to relate these to general (predicable) points of view, and thereby form the *places* which allow them to be established or refuted in discussion. The common places are thus the test of common sense itself: every problem the corresponding proposition of which contains a logical fault in regard to accident, genus, property or definition will be considered a false proposition. If the dialectic appears devalued in Aristotle, reduced to the simple probabilities of opinion or the *doxa*, this is not because he misunderstood the essential task but, on the contrary, because he conceived the realisation of that task badly. In the grip of the natural illusion, he traced problems from the propositions of common sense; in the grip of the philosophical illusion, he made the truth of problems depend upon the common places – in other words, upon the logical possibility of finding a solution (the propositions themselves designate cases of possible solutions).

At most, the form of possibility varies throughout the history of philosophy. Thus, while the partisans of a mathematical method claim to be opposed to the dialectic, they nevertheless retain the essential – namely, the ideal of a combinatory or a calculus of problems. Instead of having recourse to the logical form of the possible, however, they separate out another, properly mathematical form of possibility – be it geometric or algebraic. Problems, therefore, continue to be traced from the corresponding propositions, and to be evaluated according to the possibility of their finding a solution. More precisely, from a geometric and synthetic point of view, problems are inferred from a particular type of proposition known as theorems. Greek geometry has a general tendency on the one hand to limit problems to the benefit of theorems, on the other to subordinate problems to theorems themselves. The reason is that theorems seem to express and to develop the properties of simple essences, whereas problems concern only events and affections which show evidence of a deterioration or projection of essences in the imagination. As a result, however, the genetic point of view is forcibly relegated to an inferior rank: proof is given that something cannot not be rather than that it is and why it is (hence the frequency in Euclid of negative, indirect and *reductio* arguments, which serve to keep geometry under the domination of the principle of identity and prevent it from becoming a geometry of sufficient reason). Nor do the essential

aspects of the situation change with the shift to an algebraic and analytic point of view. Problems are now traced from algebraic equations and evaluated according to the possibility of carrying out a series of operations on the coefficients of the equation which provide the roots. However, just as in geometry we imagine the problem solved, so in algebra we operate upon unknown quantities as if they were known: this is how we pursue the hard work of reducing problems to the form of propositions capable of serving as cases of solution. We see this clearly in Descartes. The Cartesian method (the search for the clear and distinct) is a method for solving supposedly given problems, not a method of invention appropriate to the constitution of problems or the understanding of questions. The rules concerning problems and questions have only an expressly secondary and subordinate role. While combating the Aristotelian dialectic, Descartes has nevertheless a decisive point in common with it: the calculus of problems and questions remains inferred from a calculus of supposedly prior 'simple propositions', once again the postulate of the dogmatic image.[21]

The variations succeed one another, but all within the same perspective. What do the empiricists do but invent a new form of possibility: probability or the physical possibility of finding a solution? And Kant himself? More than anyone, however, Kant wanted to apply the test of truth and falsehood to problems and questions: he even defined Critique in these terms. His profound theory of Ideas as problematising and problematic allowed him to rediscover the real source of the dialectic, and even to introduce problems into the geometrical exposition of Practical Reason. However, because the Kantian critique remains dominated by common sense or the dogmatic image, Kant still defines the truth of a problem in terms of the possibility of its finding a solution: this time it is a question of a transcendental form of possibility, in accordance with a legitimate use of the faculties as this is determined in each case by this or that organisation of common sense (to which the problem corresponds). We always find the two aspects of the illusion: the natural illusion which involves tracing problems from supposedly pre-existent propositions, logical opinions, geometrical theorems, algebraic equations, physical hypotheses or transcendental judgements; and the philosophical illusion which involves evaluating problems according to their 'solvability' – in other words, according to the extrinsic and variable form of the possibility of their finding a solution. It is then fatal that the ground should itself be no more than a simple external conditioning. A strange leap on the spot or vicious circle by which philosophy, claiming to extend the truth of solutions to problems themselves but remaining imprisoned by the dogmatic image, refers the truth of problems to the possibility of their solution. What is missed is the internal character of the problem as such, the imperative internal element which decides in the first place its truth or falsity and measures its intrinsic genetic power: that is, the very object of

the dialectic or combinatory, the 'differential'. Problems are tests and selections. What is essential is that there occurs at the heart of problems a genesis of truth, a production of the true in thought. Problems are the differential elements in thought, the genetic elements in the true. We can therefore substitute for the simple point of view of conditioning a point of view of effective genesis. The true and the false do not suffer the indifference of the conditioned with regard to its condition, nor does the condition remain indifferent with regard to what it renders possible. The only way to take talk of 'true and false problems' seriously is in terms of a production of the true and the false by means of problems, and in proportion to their sense. To do so, it is sufficient to renounce copying problems from possible propositions, and defining the truth of problems in terms of the possibility of their finding a solution. On the contrary, 'solvability' must depend upon an internal characteristic: it must be determined by the conditions of the problem, engendered in and by the problem along with the real solutions. Without this reversal, the famous Copernican Revolution amounts to nothing. Moreover, there is no revolution so long as we remain tied to Euclidean geometry: we must move to a geometry of sufficient reason, a Riemannian-type differential geometry which tends to give rise to discontinuity on the basis of continuity, or to ground solutions in the conditions of the problems.

Not only is sense ideal, but problems are Ideas themselves. There is always a difference in kind between problems and propositions, an essential hiatus. A proposition by itself is particular, and represents a determinate *response*. A series of propositions can be distributed in such a way that the responses they represent constitute a general *solution* (as in the case of the values of an algebraic equation). But precisely, propositions, whether general or particular, find their sense only in the subjacent problem which inspires them. Only the Idea or problem is universal. It is not the solution which lends its generality to the problem, but the problem which lends its universality to the solution. It is never enough to solve a problem with the aid of a series of simple cases playing the role of analytic elements: the conditions under which the problem acquires a maximum of comprehension and extension must be determined, conditions capable of communicating to a given case of solution the ideal continuity appropriate to it. Even for a problem which has only a single case of solution, the proposition which designates this case would acquire its sense only within a complex capable of comprehending imaginary situations and integrating an ideal of continuity. To solve a problem is always to give rise to discontinuities on the basis of a continuity which functions as Idea. Once we 'forget' the problem, we have before us no more than an abstract general solution, and since there is no longer anything to support that generality, there is nothing to prevent the solution from fragmenting into the particular propositions which constitute its cases. Once separated from

the problem, the propositions fall back into the status of particular propositions whose sole value is designatory. Consciousness then attempts to reconstitute the problem, but by way of the neutralised double of particular propositions (interrogations, doubts, likelihoods, hypotheses) and the empty form of general propositions (equations, theorems, theories ...).[22] So begins the double confusion which assimilates problems to the series of *hypotheticals* and subordinates them to the series of *categories*. The nature of the universal is lost, but with it equally the nature of the singular, for the problem or the Idea is a concrete singularity no less than a true universal. Corresponding to the relations which constitute the universality of the problem is the distribution of singular points and distinctive points which determine the conditions of the problem. Proclus, even while maintaining the primacy of theorems over problems, rigorously defined the conditions of the problem in terms of an order of events and affections.[23] Leibniz, too, clearly stated what separates problems and propositions: all kinds of events, 'the how and the circumstances', from which propositions draw their sense. These events, however, are ideal events, more profound than and different in nature from the real events which they determine in the order of solutions. Underneath the large noisy events lie the small events of silence, just as underneath the natural light there are the little glimmers of the Idea. Singularity is beyond particular propositions no less than universality is beyond general propositions. Problematic Ideas are not simple essences, but multiplicities or complexes of relations and corresponding singularities. From the point of view of thought, the problematic distinction between the ordinary and the singular, and the nonsenses which result from a bad distribution among the conditions of the problem, are undoubtedly more important than the hypothetical or categorical duality of truth and falsehood along with the 'errors' which only arise from their confusion in cases of solution.

A problem does not exist, apart from its solutions. Far from disappearing in this overlay, however, it insists and persists in these solutions. A problem is determined at the same time as it is solved, but its determination is not the same as its solution: the two elements differ in kind, the determination amounting to the genesis of the concomitant solution. (In this manner the distribution of singularities belongs entirely to the conditions of the problem, while their specification already refers to solutions constructed under these conditions.) The problem is at once both transcendent and immanent in relation to its solutions. Transcendent, because it consists in a system of ideal liaisons or differential relations between genetic elements. Immanent, because these liaisons or relations are incarnated in the actual relations which do not resemble them and are defined by the field of solution. Nowhere better than in the admirable work of Albert Lautman has it been shown how problems are first Platonic Ideas or ideal liaisons between dialectical notions, relative to 'eventual

situations of the existent'; but also how they are realised within the real relations constitutive of the desired solution within a *mathematical, physical* or other field. It is in this sense, according to Lautman, that science always participates in a dialectic which points beyond it – in other words, in a meta-mathematical and extra-propositional power – even though the liaisons of this dialectic are incarnated only in effective scientific propositions and theories.[24] Problems are always dialectical. This is why, whenever the dialectic 'forgets' its intimate relation with Ideas in the form of problems, whenever it is content to trace problems from propositions, it loses its true power and falls under the sway of the power of the negative, necessarily substituting for the ideal objecticity of the *problematic* a simple confrontation between opposing, contrary or contradictory, propositions. This long perversion begins with the dialectic itself, and attains its extreme form in Hegelianism. If it is true, however, that it is problems which are dialectical in principle, and their solutions which are scientific, we must distinguish completely between the following: the problem as transcendental instance; the symbolic field in which the immanent movement of the problem expresses its conditions; the field of scientific solvability in which the problem is incarnated, and in terms of which the preceding symbolism is defined. The relation between these elements will be specifiable by only a general theory of problems and the corresponding ideal synthesis.

Problems and their symbolic fields stand in a relationship with signs. It is the signs which 'cause problems' and are developed in a symbolic field. The paradoxical functioning of the faculties – including, in the first instance, sensibility with respect to signs – thus refers to the Ideas which run throughout all the faculties and awaken them each in turn. Conversely, the Idea which itself offers sense to language refers each case to the paradoxical functioning of the faculty. The exploration of Ideas and the elevation of each faculty to its transcendent exercise amounts to the same thing. These are two aspects of an essential apprenticeship or process of *learning*. For, on the one hand, an apprentice is someone who constitutes and occupies practical or speculative problems as such. Learning is the appropriate name for the subjective acts carried out when one is confronted with the objecticity of a problem (Idea), whereas knowledge designates only the generality of concepts or the calm possession of a rule enabling solutions. A well-known test in psychology involves a monkey who is supposed to find food in boxes of one particular colour amidst others of various colours: there comes a paradoxical period during which the number of 'errors' diminishes even though the monkey does not yet possess the 'knowledge' or 'truth' of a solution in each case: propitious moment in which the philosopher-monkey opens up to truth, himself producing the true, but only to the extent

that he begins to penetrate the coloured thickness of a problem. We see here how the discontinuity among answers is engendered on the basis of the continuity of an ideal apprenticeship; how truth and falsity are distributed according to what one understands of a problem; and how the final truth, when it is obtained, emerges as though it were the limit of a problem completely determined and entirely understood, or the product of those genetic series which constitute the sense, or the outcome of a genesis which does not take place only in the head of a monkey. To learn is to enter into the universal of the relations which constitute the Idea, and into their corresponding singularities. The idea of the sea, for example, as Leibniz showed, is a system of liaisons or differential relations between particulars and singularities corresponding to the degrees of variation among these relations – the totality of the system being incarnated in the real movement of the waves. To learn to swim is to conjugate the distinctive points of our bodies with the singular points of the objective Idea in order to form a problematic field. This conjugation determines for us a threshold of consciousness at which our real acts are adjusted to our perceptions of the real relations, thereby providing a solution to the problem. Moreover, problematic Ideas are precisely the ultimate elements of nature and the subliminal objects of little perceptions. As a result, 'learning' always takes place in and through the unconscious, thereby establishing the bond of a profound complicity between nature and mind.

The apprentice, on the other hand, raises each faculty to the level of its transcendent exercise. With regard to sensibility, he attempts to give birth to that second power which grasps that which can only be sensed. This is the education of the senses. From one faculty to another is communicated a violence which nevertheless always understands the Other through the perfection of each. On the basis of which signs within sensibility, by which treasures of the memory, under torsions determined by the singularities of which Idea will thought be aroused? We never know in advance how someone will learn: by means of what loves someone becomes good at Latin, what encounters make them a philosopher, or in what dictionaries they learn to think. The limits of the faculties are encased one in the other in the broken shape of that which bears and transmits difference. There is no more a method for learning than there is a method for finding treasures, but a violent training, a culture or *paideïa* which affects the entire individual (an albino in whom emerges the act of sensing in sensibility, an aphasic in whom emerges the act of speech in language, an acephalous being in whom emerges the act of thinking in thought). Method is the means of that knowledge which regulates the collaboration of all the faculties. It is therefore the manifestation of a common sense or the realisation of a *Cogitatio natura*, and presupposes a good will as though this were a 'premeditated decision' of the thinker. Culture, however, is an involuntary adventure, the movement of learning which links a sensibility,

a memory and then a thought, with all the cruelties and violence necessary, as Nietzsche said, precisely in order to 'train a "nation of thinkers" ' or to 'provide a training for the mind'.

Of course, the importance and dignity of learning are often recognised. However, this takes the form of a homage to the empirical conditions of knowledge: a nobility is discovered in this preparatory movement which must nevertheless disappear in the result. Moreover, even if we insist upon the specificity of learning and upon the time involved in apprenticeship, this is in order to appease the scruples of a psychological conscience which certainly does not allow itself to dispute the innate right of knowledge to represent the entire transcendental realm. Learning is only the intermediary between non-knowledge and knowledge, the living passage from one to the other. We may well say that learning is, after all, an infinite task: it is none the less cast with the circumstances and the acquisition of knowledge, outside the supposedly simple essence of knowledge in the form of an innate or *a priori* element, or even a regulative Idea. Finally, apprenticeship falls rather on the side of the rat in the maze, while the philosopher outside the cave carries off only the result – knowledge – in order to discover its transcendental principles. Even in Hegel, the extraordinary apprenticeship which we find in the *Phenomenology* remains subordinated, with regard to its result no less than its principle, to the ideal of knowledge in the form of absolute knowledge. It is true that, here again, Plato is the exception. For him, learning is truly the transcendental movement of the soul, irreducible as much to knowledge as to non-knowledge. It is from 'learning', not from knowledge, that the transcendental conditions of thought must be drawn. That is why Plato determines the conditions in the form of *reminiscence*, not innateness. In this manner, time is introduced into thought, – not in the form of the empirical time of the thinker subject to factual conditions, and for whom it takes time to think, but in the form of an in-principle condition or time of pure thought (time takes thought). Reminiscence then finds its proper object, its memorandum, in the specific material of apprenticeship – in other words, in questions and problems as such, in the urgency of problems independently of their solutions, in the realm of the Idea. Why should it be that so many fundamental principles concerning what it means to think are compromised by reminiscence itself? For as we have seen, Platonic time introduces difference, apprenticeship and heterogeneity into thought only in order to subject them again to the mythical form of resemblance and identity, and therefore to the image of thought itself. As a result, the whole Platonic theory of apprenticeship functions as a repentance, crushed by the emerging dogmatic image yet bringing forth a groundlessness that it remains incapable of exploring. A new Meno would say: it is knowledge that is nothing more than an empirical figure, a simple result which continually falls back into experience; whereas learning is the true transcendental structure which

unites difference to difference, dissimilarity to dissimilarity, without mediating between them; and introduces time into thought – not in the form of a mythical past or former present, but in the pure form of an empty time in general. We always rediscover the necessity of reversing the supposed relations or divisions between the empirical and the transcendental. Moreover, we must regard the postulate of knowledge as the eighth postulate of the dogmatic image, one which incorporates and recapitulates all the others in a supposedly simple result.

We have listed eight postulates, each in two forms: (1) the postulate of the principle, or the *Cogitatio natura universalis* (good will of the thinker and good nature of thought); (2) the postulate of the ideal, or common sense (common sense as the *concordia facultatum* and good sense as the distribution which guarantees this concord); (3) the postulate of the model, or of recognition (recognition inviting all the faculties to exercise themselves upon an object supposedly the same, and the consequent possibility of error in the distribution when one faculty confuses one of its objects with a different object of another faculty); (4) the postulate of the element, or of representation (when difference is subordinated to the complementary dimensions of the Same and the Similar, the Analogous and the Opposed); (5) the postulate of the negative, or of error (in which error expresses everything which can go wrong *in* thought, but only as the product of *external* mechanisms); (6) the postulate of logical function, or the proposition (designation is taken to be the locus of truth, sense being no more than the neutralised double or the infinite doubling of the proposition); (7) the postulate of modality, or solutions (problems being materially traced from propositions or, indeed, formally defined by the possibility of their being solved); (8) the postulate of the end, or result, the postulate of knowledge (the subordination of learning to knowledge, and of culture to method). Each postulate has two forms, because they are both natural and philosophical, appearing once in the arbitrariness of examples, once in the presuppositions of the essence. The postulates need not be spoken: they function all the more effectively in silence, in this presupposition with regard to the essence as well as in the choice of examples. Together they form the dogmatic image of thought. They crush thought under an image which is that of the Same and the Similar in representation, but profoundly betrays what it means to think and alienates the two powers of difference and repetition, of philosophical commencement and recommencement. The thought which is born in thought, the act of thinking which is neither given by innateness nor presupposed by reminiscence but engendered in its genitality, is a thought without image. But what is such a thought, and how does it operate in the world?

Chapter IV

Ideas and the Synthesis of Difference

Kant never ceased to remind us that Ideas are essentially 'problematic'. Conversely, problems are Ideas. Undoubtedly, he shows that Ideas lead us into false problems, but this is not their most profound characteristic: if, according to Kant, reason does pose false problems and therefore itself gives rise to illusion, this is because in the first place it is the faculty of posing problems in general. In its natural state such a faculty lacks the means to distinguish what is true or false, what is founded or not, in any problem it poses. The aim of the critical operation is precisely to provide this means, since the science of metaphysics 'has to deal not with the objects of reason, the variety of which is inexhaustible, but only with itself and the problems which arise entirely from within itself ...'.[1] We are told that false problems result from an illegitimate employment of Ideas. It follows that not every problem is false: in accordance with their properly understood critical character, Ideas have a perfectly legitimate 'regulative' function in which they constitute true problems or pose well-founded problems. That is why 'regulative' means 'problematic'. Ideas are themselves problematic or problematising – and Kant tries to show the difference between, on the one hand, 'problematic' and, on the other, 'hypothetical', 'fictitious', 'general' or 'abstract', despite certain texts in which he assimilates the terms. In what sense, then, does Kantian reason, in so far as it is the faculty of Ideas, pose or constitute problems? The fact is that it alone is capable of drawing together the procedures of the understanding with regard to a set of objects.[2] The understanding by itself would remain entangled in its separate and divided procedures, a prisoner of partial empirical enquiries or researches in regard to this or that object, never raising itself to the level of a 'problem' capable of providing a systematic unity for all its operations. The understanding alone would obtain answers or results here and there, but these would never constitute a 'solution'. For every solution presupposes a problem – in other words, the constitution of a unitary and systematic field which orientates and subsumes the researches or investigations in such a manner that the answers, in turn, form precisely cases of solution. Kant even refers to Ideas as problems 'to which there is no solution'.[3] By that he does not mean that Ideas are necessarily false problems and thus insoluble but, on the contrary, that true problems are Ideas, and that these Ideas do not disappear with 'their' solutions, since they are the indispensable condition without which no solution would ever exist. Ideas have legitimate uses only in relation to concepts of the understanding; but conversely, the con-

cepts of the understanding find the ground of their (maximum) full experimental use only in the degree to which they are related to problematic Ideas: either by being arranged upon lines which converge upon an ideal *focus* which lies outside the bounds of experience, or by being conceived on the basis of a common *horizon* which embraces them all.[4] Such focal points or horizons are Ideas – in other words, problems as such – whose nature is at once both immanent and transcendent.

Problems have an objective value, while Ideas in some sense have an object. 'Problematic' does not mean only a particularly important species of subjective acts, but a dimension of objectivity as such which is occupied by these acts. An object outside experience can be represented only in problematic form; this does not mean that Ideas have no real object, but that problems *qua* problems are the real objects of Ideas. The object of an Idea, Kant reminds us, is neither fiction nor hypothesis nor object of reason: it is an object which can be neither given nor known, but must be represented without being able to be directly determined. Kant likes to say that problematic Ideas are both objective and undetermined. The undetermined is not a simple imperfection in our knowledge or a lack in the object: it is a perfectly positive, objective structure which acts as a focus or horizon within perception. In effect, the undetermined object, or object as it exists in the Idea, allows us to represent other objects (those of experience) which it endows with a maximum of systematic unity. Ideas would not systematise the formal procedures of the understanding if their objects did not lend a similar unity to the matter or content of phenomena. In this manner, however, the undetermined is only the first objective moment of the Idea. For on the other hand, the object of the Idea becomes indirectly determined: it is determined by analogy with those objects of experience upon which it confers unity, but which in return offer it a determination 'analogous' to the relations it entertains with them. Finally, the object of the Idea carries with it the ideal of a complete and infinite determination, since it ensures a specification of the concepts of the understanding, by means of which the latter comprise more and more differences on the basis of a properly infinite field of continuity.

Ideas, therefore, present three moments: undetermined with regard to their object, determinable with regard to objects of experience, and bearing the ideal of an infinite determination with regard to concepts of the understanding. It is apparent that Ideas here repeat the three aspects of the Cogito: the *I am* as an indeterminate existence, *time* as the form under which this existence is determinable, and the *I think* as a determination. Ideas are exactly the thoughts of the Cogito, the differentials of thought. Moreover, in so far as the Cogito refers to a fractured I, an I split from end to end by the form of time which runs through it, it must be said that Ideas swarm in the fracture, constantly emerging on its edges, ceaselessly coming out and going back, being composed in a thousand different manners. It is

not, therefore, a question of filling that which cannot be filled. Nevertheless, just as difference immediately reunites and articulates that which it distinguishes, and the fracture retains what it fractures, so Ideas contain their dismembered moments. It is for the Idea to interiorise the fracture and its antlike inhabitants. There is neither identification nor confusion within the Idea, but rather an internal problematic objective unity of the undetermined, the determinable and determination. Perhaps this does not appear sufficiently clearly in Kant: according to him, two of the three moments remain as extrinsic characteristics (if Ideas are in themselves undetermined, they are determinable only in relation to objects of experience, and bear the ideal of determination only in relation to concepts of the understanding). Furthermore, Kant incarnated these moments in distinct Ideas: the Self is above all undetermined, the World is determinable, and God is the ideal of determination. It is here, perhaps, that we should seek the real reasons for which, just as the post-Kantians objected, Kant held fast to the point of view of conditioning without attaining that of genesis. If the mistake of dogmatism is always to fill that which separates, that of empiricism is to leave external what is separated, and in this sense there is still too much empiricism in the *Critique* (and too much dogmatism among the post-Kantians). The 'critical' point, the horizon or focal point at which difference *qua* difference serves to reunite, has not yet been assigned.

Just as we oppose difference in itself to negativity, so we oppose *dx* to not-A, the symbol of difference [*Differenzphilosophie*] to that of contradiction. It is true that contradiction seeks its Idea on the side of the greatest difference, whereas the differential risks falling into the abyss of the infinitely small. This, however, is not the way to formulate the problem: it is a mistake to tie the value of the symbol *dx* to the existence of infinitesimals; but it is also a mistake to refuse it any ontological or gnoseological value in the name of a refusal of the latter. In fact, there is a treasure buried within the old so-called barbaric or pre-scientific interpretations of the differential calculus, which must be separated from its infinitesimal matrix. A great deal of heart and a great deal of truly philosophical naivety is needed in order to take the symbol *dx* seriously: for their part, Kant and even Leibniz renounced the idea. Nevertheless, in the esoteric history of differential philosophy, three names shine forth like bright stars: Salomon Maïmon – who, paradoxically, sought to ground post-Kantianism upon a Leibnizian reinterpretation of the calculus (1790); Hoëne Wronski, a profound mathematician who developed a positivist, messianic and mystical system which implied a Kantian interpretation of the calculus (1814); and Jean Bordas-Demoulin who, in the course of reflections upon Descartes, offered a Platonic interpretation of the calculus (1843). A Leibniz, a Kant and a Plato of

the calculus: the many philosophical riches to be found here must not be sacrificed to modern scientific technique. The principle of a general differential philosophy must be the object of a rigorous exposition, and must in no way depend upon the infinitely small. The symbol dx appears as simultaneously undetermined, determinable and determination. Three principles which together form a sufficient reason correspond to these three aspects: a principle of determinability corresponds to the undetermined as such (dx, dy); a principle of reciprocal determination corresponds to the really determinable ($\frac{dy}{dx}$); a principle of complete determination corresponds to the effectively determined (values of $\frac{dy}{dx}$). In short, dx is the Idea – the Platonic, Leibnizian or Kantian Idea, the 'problem' and its being.

The Idea of fire subsumes fire in the form of a single continuous mass capable of increase. The Idea of silver subsumes its object in the form of a liquid continuity of fine metal. However, while it is true that continuousness must be related to Ideas and to their problematic use, this is on condition that it be no longer defined by characteristics borrowed from sensible or even geometric intuition, as it still is when one speaks of the interpolation of intermediaries, of infinite intercalary series or parts which are never the smallest possible. Continuousness truly belongs to the realm of Ideas only to the extent that an ideal cause of continuity is determined. Taken together with its cause, continuity forms the pure element of quantitability, which must be distinguished both from the fixed quantities of intuition [*quantum*] and from variable quantities in the form of concepts of the understanding [*quantitas*]. The symbol which expresses it is therefore completely undetermined: dx is strictly nothing in relation to x, as dy is in relation to y. The whole problem, however, lies in the signification of these zeros. Quanta as objects of intuition always have particular values; and even when they are united in a fractional relation, each maintains a value independently of the relation. As a concept of the understanding, *quantitas* has a general value; generality here referring to an infinity of possible particular values: as many as the variable can assume. However, there must always be a particular value charged with representing the others, and with standing for them: this is the case with the algebraic equation for the circle, $x^2 + y^2 - R^2 = 0$. The same does not hold for $ydy + xdx = 0$, which signifies 'the universal of the circumference or of the corresponding function'. The zeros involved in dx and dy express the annihilation of the quantum and the quantitas, of the general as well as the particular, in favour of 'the universal and its appearance'. The force of the interpretation given by Bordas-Demoulin is as follows: it is not the differential quantities which are cancelled in dy/dx or 0/0 but rather the individual and the individual relations within the function (by 'individual', Bordas means both the particular and the general). We have passed from one genus to another, as if to the other side of the mirror: having lost its mutable part or the property of variation, the function represents only the

immutable along with the operation which uncovered it. 'That which is cancelled changes in it, and in being cancelled allows a glimpse beyond of that which does not change.'[5] In short, the limit must be conceived not as the limit of a function but as a genuine cut [*coupure*], a border between the changeable and the unchangeable within the function itself. Newton's mistake, therefore, is that of making the differentials equal to zero, while Leibniz's mistake is to identify them with the individual or with variability. In this respect, Bordas is already close to the modern interpretation of calculus: the limit no longer presupposes the ideas of a continuous variable and infinite approximation. On the contrary, the notion of limit grounds a new, static and purely ideal definition of continuity, while its own definition implies no more than number, or rather, the universal in number. Modern mathematics then specifies the nature of this universal of number as consisting in the 'cut' (in the sense of Dedekind): in this sense, it is the cut which constitutes the next genus of number, the ideal cause of continuity or the pure element of quantitability.

In relation to x, dx is completely undetermined, as dy is to y, but they are perfectly determinable in relation to one another. For this reason, a principle of determinability corresponds to the undetermined as such. The universal is not a nothing since there are, in Bordas's expression, 'relations of the universal'. dx and dy are completely undifferenciated [*indifferenciés*], in the particular and in the general, but completely differentiated [*differentiés*] in and by the universal. The relation dy/dx is not like a fraction which is established between particular quanta in intuition, but neither is it a general relation between variable algebraic magnitudes or quantities. Each term exists absolutely only in its relation to the other: it is no longer necessary, or even possible, to indicate an independent variable. For this reason, a principle of reciprocal determinability as such here corresponds to the determinability of the relation. The effectively synthetic function of Ideas is presented and developed by means of a reciprocal synthesis. The whole question, then, is: in what form is the differential relation determinable? It is determinable first in qualitative form, and in this connection it expresses a function which differs in kind from the so-called primitive function. When the primitive function expresses the curve, $dy/dx = -(x/y)$ expresses the trigonometric tangent of the angle made by the tangent of the curve and the axis of the abscissae. The importance of this qualitative difference or 'change of function' within the differential has often been emphasized. In the same way, the cut designates the irrational numbers which differ in kind from the terms of the series of rational numbers. This is only a first aspect, however, for in so far as it expresses another quality, the differential relation remains tied to the individual values or to the quantitative variations corresponding to that quality (for example, tangent). It is therefore differentiable in turn, and testifies only to the power of Ideas to give rise to Ideas of Ideas. The universal in relation to

a quality must not, therefore, be confused with the individual values it takes in relation to another quality. In its universal function it expresses not simply that other quality but a pure element of qualitability. In this sense the Idea has the differential relation as its object: it then integrates variation, not as a variable determination of a supposedly constant relation ('variability') but, on the contrary, as a degree of variation of the relation itself ('variety') to which corresponds, for example, the qualified series of curves. If the Idea eliminates variability, this is in favour of what must be called variety or multiplicity. The Idea as concrete universal stands opposed to concepts of the understanding, and possesses a comprehension all the more vast as its extension is great. This is what defines the universal synthesis of the Idea (Idea of the Idea, etc.): the reciprocal dependence of the degrees of the relation, and ultimately the reciprocal dependence of the relations themselves.

It is Salomon Maïmon who proposes a fundamental reformulation of the *Critique* and an overcoming of the Kantian duality between concept and intuition. Such a duality refers us back to the extrinsic criterion of constructibility and leaves us with an external relation between the determinable (Kantian space as a pure given) and the determination (the concept in so far as it is thought). That the one should be adapted to the other by the intermediary of the schematism only reinforces the paradox introduced into the doctrine of the faculties by the notion of a purely external harmony: whence the reduction of the transcendental instance to a simple conditioning and the renunciation of any genetic requirement. In Kant, therefore, difference remains external and as such empirical and impure, suspended outside the construction 'between' the determinable intuition and the determinant concept. Maïmon's genius lies in showing how inadequate the point of view of conditioning is for a transcendental philosophy: both terms of the difference must equally be thought – in other words, determinability must itself be conceived as pointing towards a principle of reciprocal determination. The concepts of the understanding recognize reciprocal determination, if only in a completely formal and reflexive manner; for example, in the cases of causality and reciprocal influence. The reciprocal synthesis of differential relations as the source of the production of real objects – this is the substance of Ideas in so far as they bathe in the thought-element of qualitability. A triple genesis follows from this: that of qualities, produced in the form of differences between real objects of knowledge; that of space and time in the form of conditions for the knowledge of differences; that of concepts in the form of conditions for the difference or the distinction between knowledges themselves. Physical judgement thus tends to ensure its primacy over mathematical judgement, while the origin of extensity is inseparable from the origin of the objects which populate it. Ideas appear in the form of a system of ideal connections – in other words, a system of differential relations between

reciprocally determined genetic elements. The Cogito incorporates all the power of a differential unconscious, an unconscious of pure thought which internalizes the difference between the determinable Self and the determining I, and injects into thought as such something unthought, without which its operation would always remain impossible and empty.

Maïmon writes:

> When I say, for example: red is different from green, the concept of the difference in so far as this is a pure concept of the understanding is not considered to be the relation between the sensible qualities (otherwise the Kantian question *quid juris* would still apply). Rather: either, in accordance with Kant's theory, it is considered to be the relation between their spaces as *a priori* forms, or, in accordance with my own theory, it is considered to be the relation between their differentials which are *a priori* Ideas. ... A particular object is the result of the particular rule of its production or the mode of its differential, and the relations between different objects result from the relations between their differentials.[6]

In order to understand better the alternative offered by Maïmon, let us return to a famous example: the straight line is the shortest path. 'Shortest' may be understood in two ways: from the point of view of conditioning, as a schema of the imagination which determines space in accordance with the concept (the straight line defined as that which in all parts may be superimposed upon itself) – in this case the difference remains external, incarnated in a rule of construction which is established 'between' the concept and the intuition. Alternatively, from the genetic point of view, the shortest may be understood as an Idea which overcomes the duality of concept and intuition, interiorises the difference between straight and curved, and expresses this internal difference in the form of a reciprocal determination and in the minimal conditions of an integral. The shortest is not a schema but an Idea; or it is an ideal schema and no longer the schema of a concept. In this sense, the mathematician Houël remarked that the shortest distance was not a Euclidean notion at all, but an Archimedean one, more physical than mathematical; that it was inseparable from a method of exhaustion, and that it served less to determine the straight line than to determine the length of a curve by means of the straight line – 'integral calculus performed unknowingly'.[7]

Finally, the differential relation presents a third element, that of pure potentiality. Power is the form of reciprocal determination according to which variable magnitudes are taken to be functions of one another. In consequence, calculus considers only those magnitudes where at least one is of a power superior to another. No doubt the first act of the calculus consists in a 'depotentialisation' of the equation (for example, instead of $2ax - x^2 = y^2$ we have $dy/dx = (a-x)/y$). However, the analogue may be found in the two preceding figures where the disappearance of the *quantum* and

the *quantitas* was the condition for the appearance of the element of quantitability, and disqualification the condition for the appearance of the element of qualitability. This time, following Lagrange's presentation, the depotentialisation conditions pure potentiality by allowing an evolution of the function of a variable in a series constituted by the powers of i (undetermined quantity) and the coefficients of these powers (new functions of x), in such a way that the evolution function of that variable be comparable to that of the others. The pure element of potentiality appears in the first coefficient or the first derivative, the other derivatives and consequently all the terms of the series resulting from the repetition of the same operations. The whole problem, however, lies precisely in determining this first coefficient which is itself independent of i. It is on this point that Wronski's objection intervenes, being directed as much against Lagrange's presentation (Taylor's series) as against Carnot's (compensation of errors). Against Carnot, he objects that the so-called auxiliary equations are incorrect not because they imply dx and dy but because they neglect certain complementary quantities which diminish at the same time as dx and dy: far from explaining the nature of differential calculus, therefore, Carnot's presentation presupposes it. The same applies to Lagrange's series, where – from the point of view of the rigorous algorithm which, according to Wronski, characterises 'transcendental philosophy' – the discontinuous coefficients assume a signification only by virtue of the differential functions which compose them. If it is true that the understanding provides a 'discontinuous summation', this is only the matter for the generation of quantities: only 'graduation' or continuity constitutes their form, which belongs to Ideas of reason. That is why differentials certainly do not correspond to any engendered quantity, but rather constitute an unconditioned rule for the production of knowledge of quantity, and for the construction of series or the generation of discontinuities which constitute its material.[8] As Wronski says, the differential is 'an ideal difference' without which Lagrange's undetermined quantity could not carry out the determination expected of it. In this sense, the differential is indeed pure power, just as the differential relation is a pure element of potentiality.

A principle of complete determination corresponds to this element of potentiality. Complete determination must not be confused with reciprocal determination. The latter concerned the differential relations and their degrees or varieties in the Idea which correspond to diverse forms. The former concerns the values of a relation – in other words, the composition of a form or the distribution of singular points which characterise it: for example, when the relation becomes null, infinite, or 0/0. It is indeed a question of the complete determination of the parts of the object: it is now in the object, and therefore on the curve, that the elements which present the previously defined 'linear' relation must be found. Moreover, it is only

here that the serial form within potentiality assumes its full meaning: it even becomes necessary to present what is a relation in the form of a sum. For a series of powers with numerical coefficients surround one singular point, and only one at a time. The interest and the necessity of the serial form appear in the plurality of series subsumed by it, in their dependence upon singular points, and in the manner in which we can pass from one part of the object where the function is represented by a series to another where it is expressed in a different series, whether the two series converge or extend one another or, on the contrary, diverge. Just as determinability pointed towards reciprocal determination, so the latter points towards complete determination. All three form the figure of sufficient reason in the threefold element of quantitability, qualitability and potentiality. Ideas are concrete universals in which extension and comprehension go together – not only because they include variety or multiplicity in themselves, but because they include singularity in all its varieties. They subsume the distribution of distinctive or singular points; their distinctive character – in other words, the *distinctness* of Ideas – consists precisely in the distribution of the ordinary and the distinctive, the singular and the regular, and in the extension of the singular across regular points into the vicinity of another singularity. There is no abstract universal beyond the individual or beyond the particular and the general: it is singularity itself which is 'pre-individual'.

The interpretation of the differential calculus has indeed taken the form of asking whether infinitesimals are real or fictive. From the beginning, however, other issues were also involved: is the fate of calculus tied to infinitesimals, or must it not be given a rigorous status from the point of view of finite representation? The real frontier defining modern mathematics lies not in the calculus itself but in other discoveries such as set theory which, even though it requires, for its own part, an axiom of infinity, gives a no less strictly finite interpretation of the calculus. We know in effect that the notion of limit has lost its phoronomic character and involves only static considerations; that variability has ceased to represent a progression through all the values of an interval and come to mean only the disjunctive assumption of one value within that interval; that the derivative and the integral have become ordinal rather than quantitative concepts; and finally that the differential designates only a magnitude left undetermined so that it can be made smaller than a given number as required. The birth of structuralism at this point coincides with the death of any genetic or dynamic ambitions of the calculus. It is precisely this alternative between infinite and finite representation that is at issue when we speak of the 'metaphysics' of calculus. Moreover, this alternative, and therefore the metaphysics, are strictly immanent to the techniques of the calculus itself.

That is why the metaphysical question was announced from the outset: why is it that, from a technical point of view, the differentials are negligible and must disappear in the result? It is obvious that to invoke here the infinitely small, and the infinitely small magnitude of the error (if there is 'error'), is completely lacking in sense and prejudges infinite representation. The rigorous response was given by Carnot in his famous *Reflections on the Metaphysics of Infinitesimal Calculus*, but precisely from the point of view of a finite interpretation: the differential equations are simple 'auxiliaries' expressing the conditions of the problem to which responds a desired equation; but a strict compensation of errors is produced between them such that no differentials persist in the result, since the latter can be arrived at only between fixed or finite quantities.

By invoking the notions of 'problem' and 'problem conditions', however, Carnot opened up for metaphysics a path which went beyond the frame of his own theory. Already Leibniz had shown that calculus was the instrument of a combinatory – in other words, that it expressed problems which could not hitherto be solved or, indeed, even posed (transcendent problems). One thinks in particular of the role of the regular and singular points which enter into the complete determination of a species of curve. No doubt the specification of the singular points (for example, dips, nodes, focal points, centres) is undertaken by means of the form of integral curves, which refers back to the solutions for the differential equation. There is nevertheless a complete determination with regard to the existence and distribution of these points which depends upon a completely different instance – namely, the field of vectors defined by the equation itself. The complementarity of these two aspects does not obscure their difference in kind – on the contrary. Moreover, if the specification of the points already shows the necessary immanence of the problem in the solution, its involvement in the solution which covers it, along with the existence and the distribution of points, testifies to the transcendence of the problem and its directive role in relation to the organisation of the solutions themselves. In short, the complete determination of a problem is inseparable from the existence, the number and the distribution of the determinant points *which precisely provide its conditions* (one singular point gives rise to two condition equations).[9] However, it then becomes more and more difficult to speak of error or the compensation of errors. The condition equations are not simply auxiliaries, nor are they imperfect equations, as Carnot suggested. They are constitutive of the problem, and of its synthesis. It is through lack of understanding of the ideal objective nature of the problematic that these are reduced to errors – albeit useful ones; or fictions – albeit well-founded ones; in any case, to a subjective moment of imperfect, approximative or erroneous knowledge. By 'problematic' we mean the ensemble of the problem and its conditions. If the differentials disappear in the result, this is to the extent that the problem-instance differs in kind