

# OF AFFLICTION

THE EXPERIENCE OF THOUGHT  
IN GILLES DELEUZE  
BY WAY OF MARCEL PROUST

JOHAN SEHLBERG

SÖDERTÖRN DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS

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OF AFFLICTION



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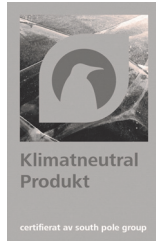
# Of Affliction

The Experience of Thought in Gilles Deleuze

by way of Marcel Proust

*Johan Sehlberg*

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*Till Rita och Aida*





Trembling, I trudge everywhere, peering, prying, into everything,  
trying  
passionate to know if somewhere, anyhow, a path leads up to a  
more perfect pasture,  
but glooming over grand schemes I never find my growing-point,  
and am always forced finally to face myself, to own frankly  
that my heart is illiterate, and my mind's strength an illusion  
I labour to keep alive. Fool, a mind not fuelled by learning  
slides into a morass. Stop the supply of marble  
to Phidias our fertile sculptor, and where are his forms and faces?

Every endeavour, every avenue, ends in frustration always,  
closed in by lack of cash, bound up by costive mind.  
Ah, when that mind reckons up its resources, the sheaves of  
reason  
stacked high, matter for self-satisfaction, are conspicuously  
absent:  
nor does creation's great king from his high castle  
send down daily supplies to ensure its survival.

Regularly the years mount up, regularly the mind's work do not  
mount up:  
as for the frills and the friendly honours, fruits of a useful life,  
its own harsh judgement forbids it that harmless enjoyment.  
Turning to survey its territory, that night-shadowed tundra,  
the mind is full of fear – of ghosts, of the fleeting glimmer  
of the thin shadows of nothing, the absence of shapes, the  
shimmer.

– Samuel Johnson, "Know Thyself" (1772)



## Abstract

The aim of the present thesis is to explicate the experience of thought corresponding to the critical undertaking characteristic of Gilles Deleuze's philosophy between *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) and *Difference and Repetition* (1968), from within the conjunction of Deleuze's *Proust and Signs* (1964) and Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927). The importance of Proust for the development of Deleuze's two major themes at the time, the overturning of Platonism and transcendental empiricism, has generally not been sufficiently recognised and investigated in Deleuze scholarship. This thesis is written in response to this disregard. To this end it seeks to develop the positive side of Deleuze's critical destruction of the "image of thought" insofar as this aspect is most elaborately and concretely expressed in relation to Proust. In order to circumscribe the real conditions of the experience of a "thought without Image", by way of Proust, but also by way of an intricate dialogue with Plato, this study seeks to overturn the classical interrogation into the *what?* of thought. Proceeding from the questions *which?*, *who?*, *how?*, and *to what effect?*, a conception of the essence of thought as determined by accidents rather than substances is established to the effect that (1) thought is no longer a voluntary exercise of a given faculty, but the result of an irruption from without finding its necessity in the contingency of the event; (2) the thinker is no more the ancient Friend of Wisdom desiring to know by virtue of nature alone, but the Jealous Lover searching for truth only under the pressure of the beloved's lies; (3) the truth is never a universal knowledge immediately recollected from a timeless past, but is extracted from randomly encountered signs distributed through time; (4) the finality of thought cannot be the recognition or representation of the Essence as an abstract and identical universal, but the experimental creation of the Essence as a singular and concrete manifestation of pure difference.

**Keywords:** Gilles Deleuze, Marcel Proust, Plato, thinking, experience, affliction, temporality, essence, literature, apprenticeship, pathology



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	13
ABBREVIATIONS.....	15
INTRODUCTION: AXES AND ORIENTATIONS.....	17
THE CARDINAL QUESTIONS: WHICH? WHO? HOW? TO WHAT EFFECT?.....	18
PROUST AND SIGNS IN THE IMAGE OF DELEUZE.....	24
PROUST AND SIGNS AND THE IMAGE OF PROUST.....	26
ONE OR SEVERAL IMAGES OF PROUST?.....	31
RESEARCH.....	34
SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS.....	39
FIRST CHAPTER: THE IMAGE.....	43
I. OF THOUGHT.....	44
THE IMAGE OF THOUGHT.....	48
THE IMAGE OF THE BEGINNING.....	54
II. OF THE IMAGE.....	58
THE IMAGE OF A THOUGHT WITHOUT IMAGE.....	63
THE IMAGE OF THOUGHT IN PROUST'S DOCTRINE OF SIGNS.....	68
SECOND CHAPTER: THE PHILOSOPHER.....	73
I. OF THE FRIEND.....	75
WHO IS THE PHILOSOPHER?.....	78
WHERE? WHEN? BY WHOM? THE QUESTION OF ESSENCE.....	80
IGNORANCE, BELIEF, DESIRE: WHO IS WHO?.....	83
II. OF THE LOVER.....	90
THE PROBLEM OF LOVE.....	92
THE ESSENCE OF LOVE.....	98
THE BIRTH OF THE ALETHOMANIAC.....	105
THIRD CHAPTER: THE APPRENTICESHIP.....	113
I. OF LEARNING.....	115
THE ROLE OF RECOLLECTION.....	117
MNEME, ANAMNESIS, EIKASIA.....	122
THE PATHOLOGY OF RECOLLECTION.....	126
THE TEMPORALITY OF THE APPRENTICESHIP.....	129
II. ON ERRING.....	135
THE PROBLEM OF THE POSSIBLE.....	140
THE ILLUSIONS OF OBJECTIVISM AND SUBJECTIVISM.....	141
CHANCE AND INDIRECTIONS.....	146
THE INTERMITTENCIES OF THOUGHT.....	149

FOURTH CHAPTER: THE ESSENCE .....	153
I. OF ASCENT .....	155
THE VOLUNTARY AND THE INVOLUNTARY .....	159
THE PATHOLOGICAL MODEL AND ITS ORIGINS.....	162
THE FACULTY OF ESSENCES .....	171
I. OF THE APEX AND DESCENT .....	175
THE SIGNS OF LIFE AND THE TRUTHS OF INTELLIGENCE.....	178
THE SUPERIORITY OF THE SIGNS OF ART .....	183
THE ESSENCE IN THE WORK OF ART .....	188
THE ESSENCE IN THE SUBJECT OF THOUGHT.....	196
CONCLUSION: THE EXPERIENCE OF THOUGHT IN THE SCIENCE OF AFFLICTION ....	207
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	213
SAMMANFATTNING (Summary in Swedish).....	219

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Works by Gilles Deleuze:

- B** *Le bergsonisme* (Paris: PUF, 1966). Trans. Hugh Tomlinson, *Bergsonism* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).
- ES** *Empirisme et subjectivité* (Paris: PUF, 1953). Trans. Constantin V. Boundas, *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
- ID** *L'Île déserte et autres textes: textes et entretiens 1953–1974*, ed. David Lapoujade (Paris: Minuit, 2002). Trans. Michael Taormina, *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2003).
- DR** *Différence et répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968). Trans. Paul Patton, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
- LS** *Logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969). Trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, *The Logic of Sense* (London: Athlone Press, 1990).
- NP** *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1962). Trans. Hugh Tomlinson, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2002).
- PCK** *La philosophie critique de Kant* (Paris: PUF, 1963). Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, *Kant's Critical Philosophy* (London: Athlone Press, 1984).
- PS** *Proust et les signes* (Paris: PUF, 1964 [1970, 1976]). Trans. Richard Howard, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text* (London: Athlone Press, 2000).

Works by Marcel Proust:

- CSB** *Contre Sainte-Beuve: précédé de Pastiches et mélanges et suivi de Essais et articles*, ed. Pierre Clarac, Bibliothèque de la Pleiade (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).
- EA** *Écrits sur l'art*, ed. Jérôme Picon (Paris: Flammarion, 1999).
- L** *Lettres*, ed. Françoise Leriche (Paris: PLO, 2004).
- I/1** *À la recherche du temps perdu*, ed. Jean-Yves Tadié, Bibliothèque de la Pleiade, vol. I–IV (Paris: Gallimard, 1987–1989). *In Search of Lost Time*, ed. Christopher Prendergast, vol. 1–6 (London: Penguin, 2002). Referenced by French and then English volume number only.

All abbreviations will be followed by French and then English pagination. All modifications of existing translations are indicated in the reference. If no translator is named the translation is the author's own.



## INTRODUCTION: AXES AND ORIENTATIONS

The general aim of this study is to inquire into *the experience* of thought in Gilles Deleuze by way of Marcel Proust. What is an act of thinking? Who or what is its subject and to whom or what does it give voice? Under what conditions and to what effects is it achieved? Any inquiry into the experience of thought in Deleuze must consider the critical endeavour engaged under the heading of the *image of thought*, since it is through this undertaking that Deleuze presents us with everything philosophical thought cannot or must not be if, that is, it is to become what it is in terms of its highest power, namely an act of creation giving rise to new concepts and new values, in the spirit of the “superior” or “transcendental empiricism” pursued under the sign of that “overturning of Platonism” once indicated as the task of modern philosophy by Nietzsche.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), *Proust and Signs* (1964), and, above all, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Deleuze presents us with a number of “postulates” constituting as many negative determinations of thought. Accordingly, Deleuze remarks that the act of thinking must not be an act of recognition, contemplation or reflection; it must not operate on the basis of representation or by the assumption of any transcendence; it must not rely on any presupposition of the faculty of thought and the love for truth as natural and universally distributed, etc. But if thought cannot lay claim to any of this, to any of the things in terms of which it has been determined throughout the history of philosophy, if it cannot be reduced to what Deleuze names the “dogmatic”, “orthodox” or “moral” *image of thought* in and through which it has come to recognise and reflect on itself, as if it were a looking glass – we have no choice, it seems, but

<sup>1</sup> DR 82/59. In connection with the work that eventually would become *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872), sometime in 1870/1871, Nietzsche writes: “Meine Philosophie *umgedrehter Platonismus*: je weiter ab vom wahrhaft Seienden, um so reiner schöner besser ist es. Das Leben im Schein als Ziel.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *KSA 7:7*[156], ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (München: DTV, 1999), 199. It is furthermore on this fragment that Heidegger’s judgement of Nietzsche’s overturning of Platonism rests, namely that in simply turning Platonism on its head, so that the sensible rather than the super-sensible is understood as true being, Platonism is not overcome as much as it is preserved. “Nimmt man die Umdrehung allein in dieser Weise, dann bleiben gleichsam die Leerstellen des Oben und Unten erhalten und werden nur verschieden besetzt. Solange aber dieses Oben und Unten die Baugestalt des Platonismus bestimmen, bleibt er in seinem Wesen bestehen.” Martin Heidegger, “Nietzsches Umdrehung des Platonismus”, in *Nietzsche I* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2008), 204. Regardless if Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche as the one who completes metaphysics rather than overcomes it is justified, his critique still demands to be taken into consideration in any endeavour aiming to achieve more than the simple inversion of which Nietzsche is accused.

to ask again: What is called thinking and who is called to think? *Why, how, and to what effect?*

THE CARDINAL QUESTIONS: WHICH? WHO? HOW?  
TO WHAT EFFECT?

The general theme of this investigation concerns Deleuze's conception of what it means to think without the dogmatic, moral, or orthodox image of thought subject to Deleuze's critique, but also to what experience of thought the counter-conception developed by way of Proust may correspond. The questions by which this inquiry into the experience of thought orientates itself – *which? who? how? to what effect?* – are thus posed, and counter-posed, within a general problematic pertaining to Deleuze's critique of the presuppositions constituting the image of thought as an internal difficulty, that is, as a difficulty engendered within and by thought itself to its own disability. This problematic, or theme, is constituted around the following questions:

(1) *Which?* In Proust, Deleuze discovers someone that, much like Nietzsche, is distrustful of the image of thought characteristic of the rationalist tradition in philosophy in general, that is, the image of a thought requiring nothing but a community of friends and the good will to use our common sense to find the truths and knowledge intrinsic to it. Everything implicitly presupposed by this image of thought amounts, in short, to an image of the origins, dispositions, and powers of thought such that it is not only essentially “dogmatic” and “moral” in nature (in the sense critically employed by Nietzsche), but also “orthodox” in that it is constituted on a model that necessarily condemns thought to a vicious circle of recognition, thus depriving it of its power to encounter the unknown and to create the new. This is an image of thought that Proust, according to Deleuze, simply cannot condone. But *which image?* is the “new” image of thought traced out by Proust? Is there also a thought without image, a thinker without presuppositions? And under what conditions and to what effect is such a thought achieved?

Crudely put, the conception of thought that Deleuze develops by way of Proust first of all sets itself up in opposition to the classic philosophical axiom, essential to the dogmatic image of thought, namely that *man thinks and desires to know by nature.*<sup>2</sup> Conversely, and according to Deleuze's reading of Proust,

<sup>2</sup> Salomon Maimon writes: “If it is true that every being strives as much as it can to persist in its *existence*, and if it is true that the existence of a thinking being consists in *thinking* (in accordance with the Cartesian

we in fact think only rarely. And whenever thinking does occur it is never as the result of a pre-given and voluntarily exercised faculty innately inclined towards the true. Instead the act of thought must be conceived as an extraordinary *event* in thought itself: appearing only contingently, intermittently, as an irruption born neither of pure volition nor pure disposition, but of a violence coming from without in the form of a *sign* involuntarily suffered, and demanding from those sensitive to such signs to subject them to interpretation.

Consequently, it is no longer evident that thought can be recognised neither as originating *in* a subject nor as an act performed *by* a subject. Hence, the subject of thought, that is, that which is subjected to thought or developed by thought, can no longer be identified as anything akin to the subject of the Cartesian *cogito*. In fact, insofar as the thinking subject constitutes an object of critique integral to Deleuze's critique of the conditions of thought, it clearly appears to find its beginning in Nietzsche's exhumation of the *presuppositions* buried by the *cogito*.<sup>3</sup> The habit, the desire, to assume that we already know what thinking is and who it is that is thinking indicated by Nietzsche, is arguably the exact kind of effect that according to Deleuze is produced by the image of thought modelled on representation and recognition. Always unwilling, "a thought comes when 'it' wants and not when 'I' want", Nietzsche writes. "It thinks: but to say that the 'it' is just that famous old 'I' – well that is just an assumption or opinion, to put it mildly, and by no means an 'immediate certainty.' In fact, there is already too much packed

identity claim [*identischer Satz*]: *cogito, ergo sum*): then it quite naturally follows from this that every thinking being must strive as much as it can to think. It is not difficult to prove that all human drives (in so far as they are human drives) can be resolved into the single drive to think; but I shall save this for another opportunity." Salomon Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, tr. Nick Midgley, Henry Somers-Hall, Alistair Welchman, Merten Reglitz (London: Continuum, 2010), 5. Evidently, the opportunity to prove the claim that *all human drives* easily can be reduced to *the drive to think* never presented itself to Maimon. And it would seem it has yet to present itself to anyone else. The modest hope of this study, however, has been to provide the opportunity not to justify Maimon's claim, but to show in what way any proof for it, regarded as a claim common to the philosophical tradition, has been indefinitely deferred. And, more importantly, how the call for a new conception of *the act of thought and the individuation of its subject* heard in this deferral, may find an answer in the philosophy of Deleuze.

<sup>3</sup> "The philosopher has to say: 'When I dissect the process expressed in the proposition "I think", I get a whole set of bold claims that are difficult, perhaps impossible, to establish, – for instance, that I am the one who is thinking, that there must be something that is thinking in the first place, that thinking is an activity and the effect of a being who is considered the cause, that there is an "I"; and finally, that it has already been determined what is meant by thinking, – that I know what thinking is.'" Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, tr. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1:16, 16.

into the ‘it thinks’: even the ‘it’ contains an interpretation of the process, and does not belong to the process itself.”<sup>4</sup>

(2) *Who?* If the image of thought pertaining to the rationalist tradition dogmatically condemns it to general arbitrariness, orthodoxy and moralism, evidently the figuration of the thinker as the friend or lover of truth is its correlative. In Proust, however, the answer to the question *who thinks?* is never figured as that ancient Friend of Wisdom enjoying a natural affinity with the true, but rather as the rival fevered with jealousy appearing at the *Symposium*, the Jealous Lover whose will to seek the truth is but the extra-moral effect of a suffering originating from the beloved’s lies and deceptions, ruses and guiles. It is in fact one of the “powers of jealousy”, Proust argues, to instil in us a heightened sensibility to *signs* demanding to be interpreted along with a poisonous “desire to know” (which does not shy away from trying to penetrate into any mystery concerning the beloved’s doings, sensibilities, or appetites – not even after death).<sup>5</sup>

Thought in the *Search* is, in other words, essentially an *affliction*: an effect in the subject caused by lies and betrayals, of unrequited love and lost illusions, of pain and grief, which one suffers despite oneself and which, rather than being a remedy or a relief, precipitates the thinker into a vicious circle of ever increasing suffering, paranoia or delirium. It may also be something else, however – in relation to the signs of nature and art, above all, but at times also in relation to the sufferings of friendship and love. In such cases, it is a source of extraordinary and inexplicable joy, of unforeseen pleasures, something capable of transforming its subject completely; even of giving birth to the world.<sup>6</sup>

(3) *How?* Famously, this kind of extraordinary joy is felt for the first time only when Marcel, the protagonist and narrator of the *Search*, feels the taste of

<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 1:16, 16. It is perhaps fair to ask in what way Nietzsche, here, in fact does something else than simply deploying a more fundamental doubt than that demonstrated by Descartes? In the case of both Nietzsche and Deleuze, the answer would arguably be, first, and in brief, that the Cartesians *dubitandum* is only provisional, a transient effect of a doubt voluntarily and methodically applied which effectively leaves everything it puts into doubt intact; and second, that even in doubting everything that is possible to doubt, Descartes is still presupposing all too much.

<sup>5</sup> IV/5: 100/484: “One of the powers [*pouvoirs*] of jealousy is to make us discover how far the reality of external events and the sentiments of the soul are levied in unknown quantities which lend themselves to thousands of different interpretations.”

<sup>6</sup> The joy caused by the experience of art, on the one hand, and what is experienced through suffering, on the other, is not the same. But after Albertine’s death, Marcel still finds himself forced to conclude that both exist in closer proximity than he first thought: “It is not only art which is able to imbue the most insignificant things with charm and mystery; this same power to bring them into an intimate relationship with ourselves is also granted to suffering.” IV/5: 75/460.

the madeleine and is subject to an “*involuntary memory*” of Combray. Such experiences of remembrance and joy is for all that not founded so much on memory as it is on the Jealous Lover’s capacity to be affected by external *signs* exactly as the madeleine, the cobblestones, the hawthorns, or the music of Vinteuil. Even if the critical impulse to expose the presuppositions of the image of thought seem to come above all from Nietzsche, it is still by way of Proust that Deleuze most clearly articulates the genesis of both thought and its subject to time. Accordingly, the answer to the question *how do we learn to think?* is conceived not only as a matter of acquiring the degree of affectivity or sensibility required to encounter and interpret the signs, but as a matter of time.

Contrary to the thinking subject born from Descartes’ discovery of the *cogito*, then, a foundation whose certainty is immediate and thus essentially independent of time, Nietzsche’s demand for a genetic account of the *how?* and *who?* of thought in terms of an effect immanent to the temporal process from which it originates, correlates directly to the principle, formulated in *Proust and Signs*, that “we seek the truth only within time, constrained and forced.” (PS 119/97) And we seek the truth within time not just because we only think *in* time, and to some extent always *with* the times, but because, Deleuze argues, only the rift of time tearing through thought and subject alike is capable of forcing the birth of the act of thought as an untimely event in thought itself.

Thus, when Deleuze claims that “the subject of the Cartesian *cogito* does not think”, this is precisely because time is deemed absent in the Cartesian image of thought, and every thought unconstrained by time is a thought fettered to the mere “possibility of thinking” – transacted by a subject thereby condemned to “remain stupid at the heart of this possibility.” (DR 353–354/276) In Deleuze’s understanding of Proust, however, *time provides* – not only the being of the signs we encounter and their sense, but the being of the subject constrained to think them as well.

As objects of learning, or as the “matter” of the apprenticeship, the signs in the *Search* never constitute the object of an “abstract knowledge”. On the contrary, we learn to think only in the course of a “temporal apprenticeship” (PS 10/4), under the constraint of time lost or wasted, rediscovered or regained. Every truth explicated from an encountered sign is effectively “a truth of time” (PS 25/17). To think is for Proust thus not a question of exercising thought in accordance with a given *method* supposedly permitting us to obtain innate *knowledge* or *ideas* intrinsic to reason (in the tradition of Descartes); but a question of the extrinsic constraints and violence of a certain “culture” or

*paideia*, a principle of exposure under which we *learn to think* only by experiencing and experimenting in and with time (in the tradition of Plato).<sup>7</sup> How can we learn to think if we do not know what it is to think? How can we learn if we are not already thinking? The progress of the apprenticeship thus appears riveted to a paradox transfiguring that of the *Meno*. Again, time provides rather than simply passing away, and jealousy is not only some random trait ascribed by Proust to his figuration of the thinker, but is rather an indication of one of the fundamental conditions of the *how?* of thought: a sensitivity or sensibility to the obscure material signs which we suffer in the contingent encounters constituting the itinerary of the indefinite process of learning that comprises the apprenticeship.

In a certain respect, it is thus clear that Deleuze's inquiry into the image of thought is relatively close to Heidegger's *What is called Thinking?* (1954).<sup>8</sup> First of all, in terms of how the problem appears in Heidegger's assertion, namely that "thinking is thinking when it answers to what is most thought-provoking [*das Denken denkt, wenn es dem Bedenklichsten entspricht*]" and that "what is most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking."<sup>9</sup> Second of all, in terms of how the problem appears through Heidegger's assertion, repeatedly referred to by Deleuze, that the *possibility* of thought alone "is no guarantee to us that we are capable of thinking", and that we may "learn to think" only "by giving our mind to what there is to think about."<sup>10</sup> Still, there is for all that no parallel to the privilege that Heidegger grants to that which is deemed inherently worthy of thought, that is, that which in itself is, as it were, "memorable" (*denkwürdig*);<sup>11</sup> just as there is no parallel in Deleuze to the privilege that Heidegger grants memory "as the gathering of thought [*die Versammlung des Denkens*]."<sup>12</sup> It would seem,

<sup>7</sup> Deleuze's interpretation of Plato's theories of learning consists, as will be shown in chapter 3 below, in an intricate reinterpretation and assemblage of the theory of *paideia* presented above all in the *Republic* and the *Symposium*, on the one hand, and a radicalisation and demythologisation of the theory of *anamnesis* principally elaborated in the *Meno* and the *Phaedrus*, on the other.

<sup>8</sup> For a survey of Deleuze's relation to Heidegger in this respect, see Benoît Dillet, "What Is Called Thinking?: When Deleuze Walks Along Heideggerian Paths," *Deleuze Studies* 7, no. 2 (May 2013): 250–74.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is called Thinking?*, tr. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 6, 28.

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger, *What is called Thinking?*, 3–4.

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, *What is called Thinking?*, 4, 35.

<sup>12</sup> "Memory is the gathering and convergence of thought upon what everywhere demands to be thought about first of all. Memory is the gathering of recollection [*die Versammlung des Andenkens*], thinking back. It safely keeps and keeps concealed within it that to which at each given time thought must be given before all else, in everything that essentially is, everything that appeals to us as what has being and has been in being [*was west und sich als Wesendes, Gewesendes zuspricht*]. Memory, Mother of the Muses – the thinking



perhaps, as if the privilege granted by Heidegger to memory and recollection as the source of poetry is something to which Proust should agree, and of which the *Search* might be declared a testimony. And yet, at least according to Deleuze's account, nothing could be further from the truth.

(4) To what effect? Although Deleuze's critique is intimately connected with the theme of *overturning Platonism*, on the one hand, and that of *transcendental empiricism*, on the other, the finality of the apprenticeship discovered in the *Search* – progressing by virtue of random violent encounters, forcing the birth of thought under the constraint of the sensible – is still the *essences* or *Ideas*. In keeping with the overturning of Platonism, the essence or the Idea may reveal itself to its subject *only in the work of art*; in keeping with Plato, the only thought capable of thinking this essence or Idea as such is the *thought without image*. In both respects, the relation between Plato, Platonism, and Deleuze's philosophy is considerably more complex than it might otherwise appear. Thus, the common conception of Deleuze's critique of Plato and Platonism as an essentially iconoclastic venture can be put into question by way of Proust. The question with which *Proust and Signs* confronts us is not so much the question of *what?* this essence or Idea is; it is rather a question of the *effect?* to which it is encountered by a thought no longer bound by the model of recognition and the form of representation. How and under what conditions is it encountered? What is its significance in thought and who is the subject of the act forced to think it?

The principal aim of this study is, in short, to provide an account of the experience of thought to which these questions, problems, and concepts correspond – at least insofar as Deleuze's philosophy is unfolded from within the first part of *Proust and Signs* published in 1964 and by way of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. The general problem around which this study principally revolves, that is, the problem permeating the principal question with which it deals, is evidently the problem of thought's beginning or genesis. It is true that the image of thought is not only attacked on the level of the genesis of thought, but also on the level of its dogmatism, the morality at its base, the orthodoxy following from its model, its lack of a revolutionary politics, etc. But if the act of thinking, according to the image appearing with Proust, is not to be described as the voluntary exercise of a natural faculty attributable to a substantial and self-identical subject, if there is no pre-given faculty of thought to be found in the subject nor any subject to be found behind the act of thought – in short, if we wish to understand the significance of Deleuze's critique of

back to what is to be thought [*das Andenken an das zu-Denkende*] is the source and ground of poesy." Heidegger, *What is called Thinking?* 3, 11.

the image of thought beyond its negative aspect, then must we not begin again, at the cusp of systematic destruction, precisely by asking: *How? where? when?* and *to what effect?* is there an act of thinking? Who thinks what and what thinks in whom? Who is *its* subject?

## PROUST AND SIGNS IN THE IMAGE OF DELEUZE

*Proust and Signs* is both an original interpretation of Proust and an inventive work of philosophy in its own right. It presents or further elucidates themes, concepts and problems in Deleuze's thought in a way that goes far beyond that of an ordinary commentary, a piece of literary criticism or some inane exemplification of a doctrine. But where *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition* have been extensively analysed as systematic works of philosophy in their own right, Deleuze's early work on Proust has thus far not been adequately recognised for its contribution to his own philosophical development. In short, *Proust and Signs* has mostly been treated as if it were a case of applied philosophy rather than a philosophical work *tout court*. It is true, of course, that *Proust and Signs* does not constitute a systematic work like *Difference and Repetition*, nor does it appear to be as theoretically elaborate as *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. But though it may seem to lack in systematics and theoretical elaboration it nevertheless develops an important theme and problematic deeply embedded within Deleuze's critical undertaking, doing so in a manner that is arguably without parallel in his other works. Although *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition* arguably push the negative and destructive aspects of Deleuze's critical operation the furthest, it seems an experimental venture taking as its point of departure the conjunction of Deleuze's *Proust and Signs* and Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1914–1927), thereby giving us an unparalleled opportunity to discover the positive aspect of Deleuze's critique and the new image of thought that subtends it.

For in *Proust and Signs* Deleuze produces an account of a real experience of thought, of real relations between thought and sensibility, such that the dogmatic image of thought erected by "classic philosophy of the rationalist type" (PS 115/94) is necessarily disrupted. However, the true value of *Proust and Signs* is not found in this disruption or destruction, but rather in it providing an exceptional positive determination of "an image of thought in opposition to that of philosophy" (PS 115/94). Proust, like Nietzsche, traces a "new image of thought" (NP 119/104) – an image, as Deleuze will formulate it in *Difference and Repetition*, of "a *thought without Image*" discoverable only 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” (DR 173/132). It is into such an experience of thought, into an act of thinking exceeding these (pre-)liminal destructive and demoralising conditions of a new image of thought, that *Proust and Signs* gives us an incomparable insight. And although there is never any single origin but always a certain heterogeneity at work in each and every conceptual (re)invention performed by Deleuze, as well as there are themes and problems connecting individual works in spite of their differences and distances, there is – to the degree that Deleuze’s contributions in the history of philosophy are also part of the movement towards an autonomous system of thought formulated in his own name – arguably no contribution to Deleuze’s understanding of *the experience of thought* more significant than *Proust and Signs* to be found between 1953 and 1968.

Contrary to how it is sometimes treated,<sup>13</sup> *Proust and Signs* is not, in the first instance, simply an index and illustrative application of lessons already learned from the previous works on Hume, Bergson, Nietzsche, Kant, on Proust’s *Search*, nor is it, in the second and third instances, a mere index and application of the changes that Deleuze’s philosophy undergoes after *Difference and Repetition* as well as in and through his collaborative efforts with Guattari. The contention of the thesis set out in this volume is that *Proust and Signs* cannot be reduced to what it may indicate or reflect, to a passive matter upon which Deleuze actively imposed a form consistent with nothing but his own ends.<sup>14</sup> In truth, Proust’s novel provides Deleuze with an exuberant source for the fashioning of new concepts of *thought, subjectivity and individuation* in a modern world where God and Subject have not only been forcefully displaced, but have no place at all; a world that has become “crumbs and chaos.” (PS 134/111) And as such, *Proust and Signs* clearly belongs to the general

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the volume on Deleuze’s philosophical sources and influences edited by Graham Jones and Jon Roffe, *Deleuze’s Philosophical Lineage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), which features articles not only on the most famous sources but also on many less frequently occurring names in Deleuze’s *œuvre* such as Hoëne Wronski, Raymond Ruyer, Albert Lautman, Bernhard Riemann and Gabriel Tarde, for example, but fails, symptomatically, to produce one on Proust. In fact, Proust is only mentioned in passing, no more than a handful of times throughout the entire anthology. Also, as will be discussed below, symptomatic here is the distinct lack of commentaries dedicated to Deleuze’s work on Proust as something more than a stepping stone towards *Difference and Repetition*, as an example of Deleuze’s relationship to literature or even as a piece of literary criticism.

<sup>14</sup> For example, albeit in their own way, Badiou and Rancière accuse Deleuze for reading literary works only in an instrumental or didactic fashion. See Alain Badiou, *Petit manuel d’inhérence* (Paris: Seuil, 2011) and Jacques Rancière, “Existe-t-il une esthétique deleuzienne ?”, in *Gilles Deleuze: une vie philosophique*, ed. Eric Alliez (Le-Plessis-Robinson: Institut Synthélabo, 1998), 525–36.

project of achieving a *total, positive and immanent* critique in the face of the modern condition, which, under the name of “a reversal of Platonism” and “transcendental empiricism”, will determine the general orientation of Deleuze’s philosophical endeavour from beginning to end.

## PROUST AND SIGNS AND THE IMAGE OF PROUST

However, *Proust and Signs* is an extraordinary work not only in view of its philosophical content, but also in view of its position and reception at the time of its publication. From a certain point of view *Marcel Proust et les signes* (1964), as it was originally entitled, is not only the first aberrant venture in an otherwise consistent series of philosophical monographs on Hume, Nietzsche and Kant (soon to be followed by monographs on Bergson and Spinoza and later Foucault, Châtelet and Leibniz),<sup>15</sup> it is also the only work to which he returns<sup>16</sup> in order to augment new and decisive developments in the work rather than simply correcting or revising it. In 1970, the title is shortened to *Proust et les signes* and “The Literary Machine” is inserted into the earlier text as an additional, extensive, chapter simply appearing before the previous conclusion. And then, in 1976, “The Literary Machine” is reworked as a separate second part and divided into five chapters to which “Presence and Function of Madness: the Spider”, first written in 1973, is appended as the conclusion. If the texts augmenting the

<sup>15</sup> It was not, however, the first text written in relation to literature rather than the history of philosophy. The book on Proust is preceded, first, by an article on Sacher-Masoch published in the review *Arguments* (nr. 21) in 1961, “De Sacher-Masoch au masochisme” (republished in *Lettres et autres textes*, 2015), later developed into *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (1967); second, by an article on Rousseau and contemporary literature, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau, precursor of Kafka, Céline and Ponge”, published in *Arts* (nr. 872) in 1962 (republished in *Desert Islands*, 2002); third, by a review of Michel Foucault’s *Raymond Roussel*, “Raymond Roussel or the Abhorrent Vacuum”, published in *Arts* (23–29 octobre) in 1963 (republished in *Desert Islands*); fourth, by an article summarising the themes of the coming book on Proust, “Unité de l’À la recherche du temps perdu”, published in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* (octobre-décembre) 1963 and later reworked as the first chapter of *Proust and Signs*. The same year as the book on Proust is published, Deleuze also writes an article on Alfred Jarry, “How Jarry’s Pataphysics Opened the way for Phenomenology”, published in *Arts* (27 May–2 June) in 1964.

<sup>16</sup> It is true, as for example Sauvagnargues remarks, that Deleuze also returns to, reworks and augments *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1970/1980) and *Foucault* (1986). However, in none of these cases, it would seem, the philosophical implications are comparable to the implications of the transformation which *Proust and Signs* undergoes between 1964 and 1976. *Proust and Signs* is not a collection simply expanded and further explained, it is rather a determinate constellation of disparate elements: a “collection without an album, a play without a stage, a flux of perceptions.” In other words, it constitutes neither a totality nor a synthesis, but rather an enduring problematic repeatedly giving rise to new conceptual inventions and problems. See Anne Sauvagnargues, *Deleuze: L’empirisme transcendantal* (Paris: PUF, 2009).

second and third edition of *Proust and Signs* may be symptomatic of transformations in Deleuze's philosophy, then the shortening of the title may be symptomatic of a turning point in the reception of Proust taking place between 1962 and 1971.<sup>17</sup>

After being praised in the 1920s Proust's literary significance then faded in the 1930s and 40s; his name was placed to the margins of literature by writers like Louis Aragon and Jean-Paul Sartre.<sup>18</sup> This begins to change again in the 1950s, however, as Proust begins to attract the attention of the likes of Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille, while also subjected to a reevaluation by the principal authors of the *nouveau roman*: Nathalie Sarraute, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Michel Butor.<sup>19</sup> It was also in the 1950s that the first Pléiade-edition of Proust's works were published (1954) as well as the posthumous *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (1952) and *Jean Santeuil* (1954). Even so, there were still no new scholarly contributions concerning Proust in France. In fact, it was not until the publication of Deleuze's *Marcel Proust and Signs* in 1964 that Proust made his entry at the Sorbonne,<sup>20</sup> as it were, only to be recognised as one of the

<sup>17</sup> Concerning the shortening of the title of Deleuze's book, Antoine Compagnon writes: "De Marcel Proust à Proust tout court, c'est très exactement le tournant qui a lieu autour de 1966: quand Marcel Proust est devenu Proust, quand 'notre jeune homme', suivant la fameuse formule de Barrès, est devenu l'écrivain du siècle." Antoine Compagnon, "Proust 66", lecture held at Collège de France, February 1, 2011: <http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/antoine-compagnon/course-2011-02-01-16h30.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> For example, in 1948, in the article "Présentation des Temps Modernes", Sartre famously accuses Proust for being mostly an irresponsible pederast believing in the existence of universal passions and furthermore complicit in the "bourgeois propaganda" maintaining class privileges: "Pédéraste, Proust a cru pouvoir s'aider de son expérience homosexuelle lorsqu'il a voulu dépeindre l'amour de Swann pour Odette; bourgeois, il présente ce sentiment d'un bourgeois riche et oisif pour une femme entretenue comme le prototype de l'amour: c'est donc qu'il croit à l'existence de passions universelles... Proust s'est choisi bourgeois, il s'est fait le complice de la propagande bourgeoise, puisque son œuvre contribue à répandre le mythe de la nature humaine." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations, II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 20.

<sup>19</sup> Blanchot writes on Proust already in *Faux pas* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), but returns to him again, at some length, in *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959). Bataille, above all, devotes a chapter to Proust in *La littérature et le mal* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957). See also, Nathalie Sarraute, *L'ère du soupçon* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956); Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Minuit, 1963); Michel Butor, *Essais sur le roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).

<sup>20</sup> Two publications associated with the Geneva School actually precede Deleuze's study: Georges Poulet's *L'espace proustien* and Jean Rousset's *Forme et signification* (both published in 1962). However, it was only after Deleuze's publication that a number of important academic studies concerning Proust were published in France: Émilien Carassus, *Le Snobisme et les Lettres françaises de Paul Borget à Marcel Proust, 1884–1914* (Paris: Armand Collin, 1966); Michel Raimond, *Le roman depuis la Révolution* (Paris: Armand Collin, 1967); Jean Milly, *Proust et le style* (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1970); Jean-Yves Tadié, *Proust et le roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971); Jean-Pierre Richard, *Proust et le monde sensible* (Paris: Seuil, 1974). Another important publication is George Painter's biography on Proust, *Marcel Proust: a biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959/1965), published in French in 1966. As shown in a letter to François Chatelet from the same year,

crucial writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century soon after. Rather than joining a choir praising the already lauded,<sup>21</sup> then, Deleuze belonged to the vanguard responsible for establishing Proust as a writer of great significance.<sup>22</sup>

Although Deleuze certainly was at the forefront of the revaluation of Proust in the 1960s, he was nonetheless not the first philosopher to draw on Proust for philosophical purposes. In the beginning of the 1950s, for example, Maurice Merleau-Ponty gave a series of lectures at Collège de France in which Proust's writings lay at the heart of his explorations of literary language as a privileged mode of experiencing the world.<sup>23</sup> Of all Merleau-Ponty's works it

Deleuze rejects an offer to review Painter's biography (suggesting Pierre Macherey in his place), because he cannot stand it: "Tu sais bien que je serais heureux, le cas échéant, d'écrire pour la Quinzaine. Hélas je ne peux pas dans le cas Painter. Car je suis comme toi, je trouve ce livre tantôt exécrable, tantôt insignifiant, et mauvais dans son principe. Or je ne veux pas faire d'article 'contre' quelque chose ou 'd'éreintement' ... Pour pouvoir écrire, faut bien admirer un tout petit peu. Painter était une merde américaine vaguement policière, vaguement ethnographique, vaguement érudite ... on ne pas en parler." See Gilles Deleuze, *Lettres et autres textes*, ed. David Lapoujade (Paris: Minuit, 2015), 33.

<sup>21</sup> As pointed out by Lambert, there is undoubtedly a deplorable tendency in secondary sources "to lionize Deleuze as an absolutely singular thinker among his generation, without peer or influence and with a unique choice of subjects". He is obviously wrong, however, when he intimates that Deleuze, in the specific case of Proust, is just another epigone "following the critical influences of Benjamin, Blanchot, Genette and Ricardou". The question whether Deleuze, in the case of Nietzsche and Proust for example, just had a good sense with respect to intellectual fashions or rather, as Lambert suggests, was simply calculating and opportunistic, is of course impossible to decide once and for all. Obviously Deleuze was eager to be in touch with his times in matters of philosophy, art and science, but this does not preclude the possibility that he also had a certain ability to be at the forefront of things, setting the pace of his times on his own terms, rather than falling in behind it. See Gregg Lambert, *In Search of a New Image of Thought*, 13–14. It is also worth noting that Deleuze's work on Proust seems to have been generally well received at the time. See, for example, Robert Barande, "L'inachèvement de l'homme Comme Structure de Son Temps", in *Revue Française de Psychanalyse* 29, no. 2–3 (1965): 281–30; R. Federman, "Marcel Proust et les signes by Gilles Deleuze", in *The French Review* Vol. 40, No. 1 (Oct., 1966). There are of course exceptions, such as Henry A. Grubbs in *The French Review*, Vol. 40, No. 6 (May, 1967). But rather than being met with controversy it was soon recognised as a classical study of Proust. See, for example, Jacques Bersani's *Les critiques de notre temps et Proust* (Paris: Garnier, 1971).

<sup>22</sup> This might explain the quite distinct lack of references to other works on Proust in the first part of *Proust and Signs* as not simply a matter of ignorance, spite or principle, since there are a number of references to other scholars such as Poulet, Genette, Barthes, Eco, Macherey already in the second part published in 1970.

<sup>23</sup> Three of these lecture series have recently been published: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le Monde sensible et le monde de l'expression. Cours au Collège de France, Notes, 1953* (Genève: Métis Presses, 2011); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Recherches sur l'usage littéraire du langage. Cours au Collège de France, Notes, 1953* (Genève: Métis Presses, 2013); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le problème de la parole: cours au Collège de France, notes, 1953–1954*, ed. Franck Robert, Lovisa Andén, and Emmanuel de Saint Aubert (Genève: Métis Presses, 2020). For an account of Merleau-Ponty's readings of Proust in these lecture series, see Lovisa Andén, *Litteratur och erfarenhet i Merleau-Pontys läsning av Proust, Valéry och Stendhal* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2017).

is indeed in these lectures that Proust features most prominently, and still they are just the intermezzo of an intimate affair maintained from *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) to the posthumously published *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964).<sup>24</sup> It is true that Deleuze remains mostly unconcerned with Merleau-Ponty, mentioning him only rarely and above all critically.<sup>25</sup> But when Michel Foucault claims one can hardly imagine two books further removed from each other than *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Logic of Sense*, this is questionable not so much because it may be false, but because he does not seem to go far enough.<sup>26</sup> Far apart in general, there are nevertheless certain points where Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty are so far removed from each other that they cannot escape meeting or crossing one another. And Proust is such an interfacial point where extremes meet and resonate with one another.<sup>27</sup>

This resonance is essentially philosophical, not historical. Apart from the fact that Merleau-Ponty in 1956 was the editor publishing Deleuze's first essay on Bergson,<sup>28</sup> there seems to have been no connections.<sup>29</sup> And this holds as far as Proust is concerned as well. Not least since Merleau-Ponty's most extensive engagement with Proust takes place in his 1952–1954 lectures at Collège de France, to which Deleuze could not have had access unless he was indeed present at the time. Furthermore, the resonance between their conceptions is not analogical, it does not proceed from external resemblances or similarities, from agreement or accord, but rather from irreconcilable differences internal to the viewpoints from which the interpretations are expressed.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the resonance does not concern the sense of the *Search* in part or as a whole at all, but rather the reasons why they both seek it out in the first place: to search for and explore the truth of sensibility as such, in order to further the development

<sup>24</sup> Anne Simon, *Trafics de Proust. Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Deleuze, Barthes* (Paris: Hermann, 2016), 39–79.

<sup>25</sup> For an overview and a systematic comparison, see Judith Wambacq, *Thinking Between Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Michel Foucault, "Theatrum philosophicum", in *Dits et écrits I, 1954–1975*, ed. Daniel Defert, François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 947.

<sup>27</sup> There are nevertheless several external similarities to be accounted for, such as the fact that both Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty emphasise to a large degree the same events in the *Search*: the music of Vinteuil, the acting of Berma, the painting of Elstir, etc. But their interpretations of these passages are at the same time, as Carbone points out, often symmetrically opposed. See Mauro Carbone, *An Unprecedented Deformation. Marcel Proust and the Sensible Ideas*, tr. N. Keane (New York: SUNY Press, 2010), 25.

<sup>28</sup> See, Gilles Deleuze, "Bergson, 1859–1941", in (ed.) Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Les philosophes célèbres* (Paris: Editions d'Art Lucien Mazenod, 1956), republished 2002 in *L'île désert*.

<sup>29</sup> See Wambacq, *Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty*.

<sup>30</sup> Concerning the internal difference of Deleuze's perspectivism, cf. NP 1/1 and PS 53/41.

of a new conception of the relation between the transcendental and the empirical – against Kant, but also beyond Kant.

This aim belongs, in both cases, to the conception of the *Search* as a search for truth. For neither Deleuze nor Merleau-Ponty does Proust's novel consist in a simple exploration of the private memories of a bygone past, nor is it a struggle to recall truths essentially known but incidentally forgotten. It is true, however, that in contrast to Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty explicitly conceives of the truth for which Proust is in search as *a truth of the past* ("the true hawthorns are the hawthorns of the past").<sup>31</sup> Still, the "past" of this truth belongs, according to Merleau-Ponty, "to a mythical time, to the time before time" – not simply to a series of presents which as of now have become the past.<sup>32</sup> The hawthorns of the past are thus not true simply because of antecedence, that is, owing to their antecedent position in a chronological series of experiences. The past of the truth is indeed cardinally rather than ordinally primitive. And the subject is always *initiated* into this past in and through the present, which opens to it not as the horizon of a bygone past, but as the being of the present itself. This "initiation" corresponds to Merleau-Ponty's rendering of Husserl's *Stiftung* and accordingly designates "the unlimited fecundity of each present which, precisely because it is singular and passes, can never stop having been and thus being universally".<sup>33</sup>

In short, it is only through the empirical, through an encounter *hic et nunc* ("the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure"), that the subject can, according to Merleau-Ponty, be initiated into a transcendental "dimension that can never again be closed", that is, a transcendental level of being "in terms of which every experience will henceforth be situated."<sup>34</sup> This dimension or level of being is, according to Merleau-Ponty, the *idea*: the "invisible of this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility, the Being of this being."<sup>35</sup> And "no one", Merleau-Ponty states, "has gone further than Proust in fixing the relations between the visible and the invisible, in describing *an idea that is not the contrary of the sensible*" but rather its "lining and its depth."<sup>36</sup>

Thus, by insisting that the *Search* is not an "exposition of memory" but a "search for truth" resulting, at its critical point, in the discovery of essences or

<sup>31</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, ed. Claude Lefort (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 243.

<sup>32</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 243.

<sup>33</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 243.

<sup>34</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 151.

<sup>35</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 151.

<sup>36</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 149; italics mine.



ideas in and through the work of art, Deleuze not only renounces a common understanding of the *Search* but he also, unbeknownst or not, reveals Proust at the precise point where his line of investigation becomes tangent to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. Again, for neither Merleau-Ponty nor Deleuze is the *Search* a journey of the soul, a journey through the interiority of the subject, undertaken to recuperate the universal truths of which forgetfulness has dispossessed us and our passions has kept us from remembering. Rather, it is conversely understood as an adventure of exteriority, chance and contingency, an adventure through which the ideal is discovered in the sensible rather than hither of or beyond it. The tangent or point of contiguity between Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty thus consists in the fact that they both end up employing Proust in their pursuits of a new understanding and configuration of the relation between the transcendental and the empirical and not, *nota bene*, in any simple analogy of content or conclusions.

### ONE OR SEVERAL IMAGES OF PROUST?

Elaborated and augmented over a period lasting from 1964 to 1976 and thus encompassing a number of developments, changes and ruptures in Deleuze's philosophy, it may appear as if the different texts brought together in *Proust and Signs* belong together only inasmuch as they all are concerned with Proust's novel. In short, the movements from the first to the second, and to the concluding part of the book, all appear as signs of profound discontinuity rather than continuity.<sup>37</sup> This study is almost exclusively concerned with the first part published in 1964, but a brief discussion of the whole of the work in its entirety may for all that still be useful.

How is *Proust and Signs* composed? First of all, there are three different answers as to what constitutes the unity of Proust's *Search* in *Proust and Signs*: (1) in the first part from 1964 the unity consists in the system of signs, that is, the different types of signs, the *worlds* or *circles* they constitute and the apprenticeship exploring them: the system unifies the disparate worlds by means of the general laws the apprenticeship discovers, while the different types of signs – their specific ways of appearing, the specific modes of interpretation they call for, the specific lines of time to which they relate to different degrees – guarantee its pluralism (unity of the diverse); (2) in the 1970 part the unity is

<sup>37</sup> According to Nabais, the composition of *Proust and Signs* in fact anticipates the concept of the rhizome later developed with Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980): "Proust and Signs est déjà ce véritable livre-rhizome dont Deleuze définira les contours à propos de Kafka." Catarina Pombo Nabais, *Gilles Deleuze: philosophie et littérature* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013), 47.

elaborated as a question of the concept of unity produced by the composition of the *Search* itself, that is, a non-unity consisting of nothing but parts or fragments that can never be totalised or synthesised as a whole and that have never been torn from any whole now missing, capable of connecting to each other only by transversals that guarantee no communication and no totalisation of the parts (unity of the absolutely fragmentary); (3) in the 1976 part, the unity of the *Search* as a form of non-unity is taken even further and is now constituted “not like a cathedral or like a gown, but like a web” being spun by the spider-narrator, that is, one thread spun for each sign affecting it, thus constructing a machine of extreme sensibility, a “body without organs” capable of apprehending the slightest vibration as a sign, allowing the spider-narrator to “spring” immediately “upon her prey.” (PS 182/218)

There are also differences on the level of the elements and components of each part: (a) the *problems* of the different parts are not the same: the first part is claimed to be concerned with “the emission and interpretation of signs”, the second part with “the production and multiplication of the signs themselves, from the viewpoint of the composition of the *Search*”, (PS 5/ix) the third part with the “presence of madness” and its “distribution”, “function” and “use” in the *Search* (PS 170/205); (b) the *models* organising the concepts in play in each part also differ: the model in the first part is an “apprenticeship”, in the second a “machine”, in the third a “body without organs”;<sup>38</sup> (c) the *categories* of signs differ: in the first part there are “wordly”, “erotic”, “sensible”, “artistic” signs (PS 22/14); in the second part there are three “orders of signs” of which the first comprises “natural and artistic signs”, the second “and amorous signs”, the third “signs of ageing, sickness, death”;<sup>39</sup> in the third part there are no longer any proper categories of signs at all but instead “worldly two kinds of sign-deliriums: deliriums of a paranoiac type of interpretation and deliriums of an eroto-maniacal or jealous type of demand” (PS 215/179); (d) the sense of the *elementary concepts* repeated in each part fluctuates accordingly: “sign”, “sense”, “essence”, “truth”, “law”, etc., all seem to change their meaning in accordance with the problem, model and categories of each part.

Now, since these differences also appear to correspond to shifts in Deleuze’s philosophy, *Proust and Signs* readily presents itself as a *laboratory* in

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, PS 10/4; 175/145; 218/182.

<sup>39</sup> PS 178–179/148. In the second part there is, apart from the three orders of signs corresponding to the three literary machines, also the cells (*boîtes*) and vessels (*vases*) which Deleuze considers as the two formal types of signs appearing in all of the categories (natural, artistic, worldly, amorous, alteration): “formally, the signs are of two types that we encounter in all the various kinds: those open boxes, which are to be explicated; those sealed vessels, which are to be chosen.” PS 156/129

which a series of experimentations takes place correlative to transformations not only in Deleuze's understanding of Proust's work, but in Deleuze's philosophical development in general,<sup>40</sup> as if the reason why Deleuze returns obsessively to Proust is that every change, displacement, or shift in his philosophical thinking also insists on a new reading of the *Search* as a testament to its development but also as a touchstone, a trial of its reality,<sup>41</sup> thereby turning *Proust and Signs* as a whole into a concrete and express manifestation of the continuities and discontinuities in Deleuze's philosophy during this entire period. And so a series of distinct but not unambiguous ruptures readily seem to present themselves – which schematically, and extremely simplified, could read as follows: (1) a reckoning with classical philosophy within classical philosophy, especially in respect to Kant's critical philosophy, beginning in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and culminating in *Difference and Repetition*, and the claim that the task of philosophy now is to pursue new means of philosophical expression in relation to the arts and the sciences; (2) a shift of orientation breaking with the verticality and ideality of classical philosophy in favour of surfaces, phantasms and simulacra, presented in a serial form simultaneously developing a plurality of themes, allowing for another productive philosophical engagement with both literature and psychoanalytical theory in *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (1967) and *The Logic of Sense* (1969);<sup>42</sup> (3) a rejection of the psychoanalytical theories of Freud and Lacan in favour of the “schizoanalysis” developed with Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*

<sup>40</sup> This is Nabais' claim viz. that *Proust and Signs* manifests subtle differences, displacements, microscopic gaps, all of which are “l'effet des révolutions énormes dans l'ensemble de l'œuvre de Deleuze.” Nabais, *Philosophie et littérature*, 47–8.

<sup>41</sup> This is, again, Nabais' understanding of the significance of *Proust and Signs* for Deleuze, i.e. that it serves as a laboratory and a test with which he feels compelled to confront the reality of his philosophy: “Marcel Proust et le monument accompli d'une fusion absolue entre l'expérience de l'écriture et une forme de vie. Il fallait repenser À la recherche du temps perdu chaque fois que la façon de comprendre cette fusion changeait dans la pensée de Deleuze. C'est comme si, en tant que point de départ, *Proust et les signes* devait être réécrit pour que Deleuze puisse croire à la densité et à la continuité de son propre développement.” Nabais, *Philosophie et littérature*, 48.

<sup>42</sup> “In my study on Masoch, and then in *Logic of Sense*, I thought I'd discovered things about the specious unity of sadism and masochism, or about events, that contradicted psychoanalysis but could be reconciled with it.” In these two works the importance of literature for Deleuze's development is clearly indicated not only by its general presence but also in the notion of a “critical and clinical” study fusing literature with medicine. This idea of a project bringing the critical and the clinical together, only culminating much later in *Essays Critique et clinique* (1993), has its beginnings in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and the notion of the philosopher as a symptomatologist, a physician of culture. It is explicitly mentioned for the first time in the study of Sacher-Masoch and then in *The Logic of Sense*. See, Daniel W. Smith, “A Life of Pure Immanence: Deleuze's ‘Critique et Clinique’ Project”, in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

(1972) and thus a further step away from the classical form of philosophy, for the sake of a practical experimentation with new means of philosophical expression.

In sum, the differences between the different parts of *Proust and Signs* are significant enough to warrant their separate treatment, not least since they belong to different philosophical trajectories within his body of work. In consideration of the above, it would be one of the main claims of this study that the first part of *Proust and Signs* plays a formative role in the development of the general problematic of the period to which it belongs, that is, the themes of transcendental empiricism and the overturning of Platonism, determining the orientation of all the works between *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*.

## RESEARCH

Even though the research on Deleuze in general has evidently reached a point where it is all but impossible to survey and account for it in full, the number of published monographs dedicated to Deleuze's relationship to Proust and the significance of *Proust and Signs* in the development of his philosophy remain scarce. Certain aspects of *Proust and Signs* are obviously often commented upon in passing or in comparison with other works by Deleuze, but accounts or commentaries approaching it as a work of philosophy in its own right, rather than as a fascinating detour into literary criticism – or, even, as an exemplification of theories and concepts developed elsewhere – seem to be particularly lacking in the case of *Proust and Signs*. There is, in other words, a general tendency to reduce, for example, the theory of signs or the doctrine of faculties presented in *Proust and Signs* either to an application of the theory elaborated already in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*,<sup>43</sup> or to a duplication of the doctrine of faculties elaborated in *Kant's Critical Philosophy*. There may be good reasons for carrying out such operations, not least since Deleuze's adventures in the arts and the history of philosophy so often and so clearly contribute to the systematic works achieved under his own name. Having said this, they must necessarily fail at

<sup>43</sup> Even though, as Bogue points out, “Deleuze puts little stress on the notion of signs as symptoms” and nowhere describes “Proust as a physician of civilization”, in the 1964 version of *Proust and Signs*, he nonetheless seems to make himself guilty of the same reduction, since he later on labels the *Search* as a “symptomatology” and groups Proust with Masoch (and, *a fortiori*, Nietzsche) as “civilisation's doctors”: see Ronald Bogue, “Deleuze and Literature”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, ed. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 290.

illuminating the significance of *Proust and Signs* as a work of philosophy in its own right.

So far, however, the only published monograph dedicated specifically to Deleuze's relation to Proust, is Keith W. Faulkner's *The Force of Time: An Introduction to Deleuze through Proust* (2007). Faulkner's study evidently has the merit of engaging with *Proust and Signs*, but nevertheless does so from a viewpoint limiting its usefulness with regard to this study. Seeking to "delve beneath the superficial reading of Proust as a thinker of signs", Faulkner proposes to "read Deleuze in reverse" and begin his inquiry in the final part instead of the first. The explicit purpose of this is to "explore *madness as ontology*" – not in the form of "a simple exegesis of Deleuze's work", however, but in order to "arm" the reader "with the tools to engage in guerilla warfare."<sup>44</sup> All in all, the orientation, method, and aims of Faulkner's study fail to make it particularly relevant to this treatment of *Proust and Signs*, which, on the contrary, is purely exegetical, focused almost exclusively on the first part, and seeks to clarify its significance with regard to the two major themes defining the period between *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*.

Evidently, there is a considerable number of studies that do deal with *Proust and Signs*, albeit only in part or in passing. As a rule, the most relevant studies among these are not the ones that, cursorily put, turn to *Proust and Signs* in search of a general theory of literature or an example of literary criticism, but rather those which conceive Deleuze's interpretation of Proust in relation to the two themes contributing to the general framework of this study. The most significant exception to this rule is Catarina Pombo Nabais' *Gilles Deleuze: philosophie et littérature* (2013), which treats the first edition of *Proust and Signs* not only astutely and in great detail, but also within the context of Deleuze's relation to Kant's critical philosophy and the doctrine of faculties, so central to the majority of studies engaging with transcendental empiricism.

Presently, there are a number of studies engaging directly with this theme and, again, often with special regard to Deleuze's relation to Kant and post-Kantianism.<sup>45</sup> Practically all of these studies present arguments and raise issues

<sup>44</sup> Keith W. Faulkner, *The Force of Time: An Introduction to Deleuze through Proust* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008).

<sup>45</sup> See Marc Rölli, *Gilles Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism: from Tradition to Difference*, trans. Peter Hertz-Ohmes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, [2003] 2012)), Levi R. Bryant, *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the ontology of Immanence* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), Christian Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy: from Kant to Deleuze*

of relevance to this study, but only Anne Sauvagnargues situates *Proust and Signs* squarely within this problematic, affording it a certain conceptual autonomy, and providing a detailed account of its significance with respect to transcendental empiricism.

According to Sauvagnargues, *Proust and Signs* in fact “bears precisely on the concepts that transcendental empiricism requires: a thinking emerging from the violent irruption of a sensible sign, and an experience of art contributing to this new image of thought.”<sup>46</sup> Sauvagnargues contends that, rather than directly contributing to the elaboration of Deleuze’s theory of signs, the work on Proust above all draws on lessons already learned from Nietzsche and Kant in this matter, but in a way that is “immanent and direct, visible only in its results and not reflected as method, as the title itself confirms: ‘Proust et les signes.’” Accordingly, Sauvagnargues finds *Proust and Signs* to be a work which, as a result of its engagement with this “programme for a transformation of aesthetics” exclusively in a “practical mode”, it “elides the examination of its theoretical conditions” rather than allowing this examination to advance further still.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, it would seem that there is an opportunity to confirm her appreciation of the practical aspect of *Proust and Signs*, on the one hand, while at the same time affirming this aspect not as a limitation but, on the contrary, as a means to deepen the theoretical aspect of the enquiry to the extent that it concerns the experience of thought, on the other.

Now, according to the general definition of transcendental empiricism as “the method that allows thought to access the real or immanent conditions of experience and to experience the conditions themselves”,<sup>48</sup> proposed by

(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), Anne Sauvagnargues, *Deleuze: L’empirisme transcendantal* (2009), and Daniela Voss, *Conditions of Thought: Deleuze and Transcendental Ideas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

<sup>46</sup> Sauvagnargues, *L’empirisme transcendantal*, 51–52.

<sup>47</sup> “Le programme de la transformation de l’esthétique, science du sensible et effet de l’œuvre, s’engage sur un mode pratique qui élide l’examen de ses conditions théoriques.” Sauvagnargues, *L’empirisme transcendantal*, 51–52.

<sup>48</sup> Miguel de Beistegui, *Immanence: Deleuze and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 20. On an exegetical level, Beistegui’s work on Deleuze in *Immanence* is of particular importance for this study, insofar as it provides an understanding of transcendental empiricism consonant with the position staked out in the following pages with regard to *Proust and Signs*. Incidentally, Beistegui has written his own book on Proust, *Proust as Philosopher: The Art of Metaphor* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), which on its own terms makes for a significant contribution to the contemporary philosophical reception of Proust. However, the relevance of this text is not as great insofar as Deleuze scholarship is concerned.

Miguel de Beistegui, Deleuze's venture develops along two distinct but inter-related axes: one *ontogenetical* (in a roughly Simondonian sense), the other *ethical* (in a roughly Spinozist sense). Under its ontogenetic aspect, we find a theoretical endeavour to discover a way to think the transcendental conditions of real experience that traces an *event* back to its real conditions in the form of pure differences, without positing any analogous or hierarchical relation between the condition and the conditioned, the transcendental and the empirical, the virtual and the actual.<sup>49</sup>

Under its other aspect, however, there is no new theory of experience to be found, but rather, as Beistegui formulates it, an effort to develop an experimental practice or "ethics" of "the experience, and the experimentation, of the real" itself.<sup>50</sup> Whereas the theory of ontogenesis is the endeavour to discover the transcendental conditions of real experience, ethics is the experimental act of discovering ways and means to empirically produce such transcendental conditions under which the real can be experienced in all its savage intensity. The problem is, first of all, that the conditions of real experience can be discovered only retroactively, that is, the differences and intensities conditioning the genesis of the conditioned can only be discovered when these intensities and differences have already been cancelled out in extensity and identity. This is why Beistegui insists on posing the question of Deleuze's transcendental-empirical ethics as a question of how "the conditions under which those very intensities, which tend to cancel themselves out in extensities", can be "not only *rediscovered theoretically* but also *practically* brought back to life, and into life?"<sup>51</sup>

In summary, to the degree that *Proust and Signs* belongs to the development of transcendental empiricism – participating in the critical confrontation with Kant's philosophy and the undertaking of finally achieving the critical project as continued by Nietzsche, Proust, Bergson, Sacher-Masoch – it is, first of all, the site on which the principal traits of Deleuze's transcendental empiricism appear for the first time in a comprehensive and concrete manner (which also allows him to reflect, in an almost allegorical fashion, on his own practice of philosophical thinking). It is through Proust that we, in a sense, get

<sup>49</sup> This effort to formulate a theory of ontogenesis starting from a principle of immanence and accounting, not for the general conditions of possibility, but for the real conditions of singular events in terms of pure and internal differences, is absolutely crucial for Deleuze's philosophical trajectory at this point, as well as one of the principal sites for the constantly recurring confrontations with Kant's critical philosophy, which has engaged a growing number of commentators in recent years, among them Sauvagnargues, Rölli, Kerslake, and Voss.

<sup>50</sup> Beistegui, *Immanence*, 55.

<sup>51</sup> Beistegui, *Immanence*, 54.

to see how transcendental empiricism works for and in Deleuze and to what effects. To a large extent, and counter to intuition perhaps, it seems it is precisely Proust's idiosyncratic perversion of idealism – resulting, as will be shown, of a special variety of empiricism and an abysmal distrust of the fundamental presuppositions of rationalist philosophy – that allows Deleuze to achieve this, finding in Proust a new way to think the concept of problematic Essences or Ideas as discoverable through artistic or conceptual creation.

Still, *Proust and Signs* belongs to this trajectory not so much because it furthers the attempt to theorise the conditions of real rather than possible experience, but because it accounts for the experience and the experimentation of a thought striving to produce precisely the conditions under which the act of thinking can be created as an event in thought itself. Expressed differently, it is through Proust that Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, rather than remaining a theory of experience, also begets a practical and "ethical", perhaps even "existential", sense. Finally, if the general trajectory of transcendental empiricism has been explored in recent years, it is above all to the extent that it concerns Deleuze's relation to Kant's philosophy; while the other aspect of transcendental empiricism, its "ethical" or "existential" aspect, remains a territory largely uncharted.<sup>52</sup> This study is, then, first and foremost an attempt to trace, by way of Proust, this practical or ethical aspect – in the form of an inquiry into the experience and experimentation of thought corresponding to the new image of thought.

Evidently, this study is principally concerned with Deleuze's philosophy as explicated by way of *Proust and Signs* and Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. But equally it is a work that seeks to achieve this by drawing out their complex and productive relation to Plato. Therefore, this is a book which undertakes an examination of the genesis of thought in Deleuze by way of Proust, by way of Plato. Despite Proust's "anti-philosophy" and Deleuze's attempt to "overturn Platonism", Platonic themes imbue both *Proust and Signs* and the *Search*, the extraction and reconstruction of which constitutes one of the major contributions of this thesis. For while there is a small but significant number of texts extensively engaging with Deleuze's relationship to Plato (e.g. Smith's "The Concept of the Simulacrum: Deleuze and the Overturning of Platonism", Beistegui's "The Deleuzian Reversal of Platonism", and Carbone's "Deformation and Recognition: Proust in the Reversal of Platonism"), these texts, in a rather orthodox fashion, go in search of Deleuze's engagement with Plato in the more obvious places (e.g. the appendix to *The Logic of Sense* and the

<sup>52</sup> To date it would seem Beistegui is the only one to have opened up, in a productive way, an exploration into the "existential" side of transcendental empiricism.



chapters concerned with Ideas in *Difference and Repetition*), whereas the present study excavates the traces, in *Proust and Signs* as well as the *Search* itself, of a subterranean, sustained, obstinate, but above all productive debate with Plato's dialogues. For example, the figuration of the philosopher as jealous lover in the *Symposium*, the thought without image and the model of thought as contingent on violent encounters in the *Republic*, the theory of learning as recollection and of recollection as the pathway to Ideas in the *Meno*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Phaedrus* – all these themes become unfolded from within the conjunction of Deleuze and Proust.

### SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS

In order to situate *Proust and Signs* and this study within the general philosophical problematic orientating Deleuze's work in the first period of his philosophy, the first chapter, "The Image", broadly outlines the theme of "the image of thought" (*l'image de la pensée*). First by tracing out the image of *thought* as a problem present *within* thought, as an illusion *internal* to thought itself reminiscent of the transcendental illusion in Kant's Transcendental Dialectic. The determination of the image of thought as internal rather than external to thought will then be briefly examined, by way of Descartes' *cogito*, as a problem of elimination especially pertinent to the notion of the true beginning as a beginning without any presuppositions. The second part of the first chapter is concerned primarily with the *image* of thought. What is the status of the image in thought? How is this status transformed by Deleuze's critique of representation? Under what conditions may a *new* image emerge? In response to these questions, the notion of a *thought without Image* is examined in relation, first, to Plato's image of thought as presented in the division of the line in book VI of the *Republic*, and then through Deleuze's critique of Platonism as staking out the world of representation as the true domain of philosophical thought and the concept of an image without resemblance, the simulacrum, to which this critique gives rise. Finally, the system of signs in Deleuze's account of Proust is summarised in light of the doctrine of faculties just outlined in Plato, also amounting to the first complication of the figure of overturning Platonism in Deleuze.

In the first part of chapter two, "The Philosopher", the question *who?* is examined, first, as the proper form of critical inquiry after Nietzsche, and then, second, addressed with respect to both Plato's and Proust's critical responses to the figuration of the philosopher as the Friend. In the second part, the implications of this critique, that is, the shift from friendship (*philia*) to erotic love (*eros*), with respect to thought's fundamental condition, and from

wisdom (*sophia*) to reproduction or engendering (*genesis*), with respect to its superior end, is examined by way of Proust's transfiguration of the Jealous Lover already introduced into thought in Plato. In conclusion, the ideal of the Scientist is unfolded from the discovery of the eroto-pathological foundation of thought in Proust and the limits of love traced out in the form of two different kinds of sign-delirium, which in their turn indicate the need ultimately to exceed the figuration of the Jealous Lover. This is because, in spite of everything, the Jealous Lover remains a figure of Philosophy, in the sense that it finally cannot allow thinking to transcend the regime of truth as representation and become truly creative.

In the third chapter, "The Apprenticeship", the first part deals with questions relating to the *how?* of thought examined, first, by way of a brief examination of the famous madeleine as an event that produces no answer but rather imposes the *problem* of creation forcing Marcel to begin his apprenticeship; second, the concept of the apprenticeship as a concept of learning is investigated in respect to the complex relation between Deleuze's reading of Proust's apprenticeship and the theory of learning as recollection in Plato. Finally, the temporality of the apprenticeship is outlined in terms of its un-founding effects, that is, the essential groundlessness of thought and the disorientation of the apprenticeship that follows therefrom. In the second part, the question *how?* is further examined in relation to the un-founding of thought in a time no longer subordinate to movement, which is an implication of Deleuze's reinterpretation of the theory of *anamnesis* as rendering time rather than immediacy essential to thought. In the second part, the rudimentary conditions of the apprenticeship in Proust, that is, affectivity and exteriority, chance and constraint, are, first, adumbrated in opposition to the notion of philosophical method attacked by Proust. Second, the impossibility and groundlessness of thought as an act of volition or effort is analysed in terms of the two fundamental illusions internal to the Image of thought, threatening the progress of the apprenticeship at all times and on all levels. These are the illusions of *objectivism* and *subjectivism*. Finally, concluding the second part, the contingency not only of the act of thought as such but also of the faculties engaged in such an act, is investigated in terms of the apprenticeship's essential disorientation and dependency on chance encounters and remarkable events capable of forcing the birth of the act of thought.

In chapter four, "The Essence," the question *to what effect?* is examined. To pursue the inquiries elicited by this question successfully, the doctrine of faculties presented in *Proust and Signs* is first considered in dialogue with

Deleuze's presentation of Kant's doctrine of faculties in *Kant's Critical Philosophy*. However, the corresponding doctrine presented in *Proust and Signs* is ultimately not achieved by way of Kant, however, but by way of Plato. Arguably, it is only by way of the *pathological model of thought* extracted from Plato in the overturning of Platonism, that Deleuze can present that *image of a thought without image* demanded by transcendental empiricism. A task he will accomplish by tracing it off the adventure of Ideas or essences that await us at the apex of the apprenticeship, in the world of art. What is the original essence discovered in the signs of art? What is its superiority in relation to the other types of signs? To what effect is it encountered and by whom? In order to respond to these questions we first turn to Deleuze's presentation of the truths of the other signs, before inquiring further into the superiority of the signs of art as *immaterial* and *spiritual*, on the one hand, and as manifestly *unified*, on the other. Finally, the focus will be on the essence or Idea, which will be defined in terms of a *difference* that in important respects relates to Leibniz's concept of *differentials* as well as the *monad*, rather than to Plato's *eidōs*. By way of Leibniz the essence or Idea then appears as a *superior viewpoint* – one that is not so much individual but individuating. At last, the question of the subject of the experience of thought is reopened once more. This time as a problem of *difference and repetition*.



## FIRST CHAPTER: THE IMAGE

We live with a particular image of thought, that is to say, before we begin to think, we have a vague idea of what it means to think, its means and ends. And then someone comes along and proposes another idea, a whole other image. Proust, for example, has the idea that every thought is an aggression, appearing under the constraint of a sign, and that we think only when we are forced and constrained to think. From then on, thought is no longer carried on by a voluntary self, but by involuntary forces. (ID 193/139)

What is the image of thought? What kind of problem does it constitute? What are its effects and how can it be resisted or countered? These are the questions to be addressed in the first part of this chapter. In doing so, we shall delineate the general problem or philosophical framework for Deleuze's first engagement with Proust and the conception of his role in the critique of the so-called *dogmatic*, *orthodox*, and *moral* image of thought. To begin with, the image of thought will be outlined as a problem present *within* thought, as an illusion *internal* to thought itself. Once this is established, the internal character of the image of thought will be briefly examined as a problem surrounding presuppositions, a difficulty particularly germane to thought's beginning, insofar as the true beginning is defined as a beginning without presuppositions. This short examination will be undertaken by way of Descartes' *cogito*. If the first part of this chapter primarily concerns the image of *thought* – specifically, the problem of the beginning, and the conditions of its critique – then the second part is concerned primarily with the *image* of thought. What is the status of the image in thought? How is this status transformed by Deleuze's critique of representation? Under what conditions may a *new* image emerge? In response to these questions, the notion of a *thought without Image* is examined. This examination will be undertaken first, in relation to Plato's image of thought in the division of the line in book VI of the *Republic*, and then subsequently through Deleuze's critique of the world of representation, which Platonism may in fact found but is something that already founders in Plato. Finally, the image of thought in Deleuze's account of Proust's doctrine of signs is summarised in light of the "overturning of Platonism" just outlined.

## I. OF THOUGHT

*Proust's rivalry with rationalist philosophy. – The Image of thought in general and its postulates. – The postulates as dogmatic presuppositions and internal illusions. – The problem of the beginning: the failure of elimination in the example of Descartes. – Common sense in the model of recognition: the problem of the circle.*

According to Deleuze, Proust's *Search* presents us with an "image of thought" that both *opposes* and *rivals* philosophy: that is, it opposes the tradition that conceives of thought as an activity exclusive to or reserved for philosophy, but it also rivals philosophy precisely as a search for truth. The man of letters may venture as deep into reality as the metaphysician, according to Proust, but never by simply emulating the philosophical method or incorporating philosophical reasoning into a work of literature. The poet or novelist must, in effect, pursue truth along a completely different path than the philosopher: employing other faculties and other means of expression to exhaust other sources. Or as Proust writes in an early text, "Contre l'obscurité" (1896): "It is not by philosophical method but a kind of instinctive power (*puissance instinctive*) that *Macbeth* is, in its own way, a philosophy." (CSB 392) Regardless of this early formulation, however, if the *Search* can challenge philosophy as a search for truth it accomplishes this neither by becoming "a philosophy" nor by searching for a truth that is subjective and relative rather than objective and absolute.

It is true, of course, that Proust's search is a search for truth beginning in the subject, in the bewildering experience of a Combray unfolding in its essence from a cup of tea. Yet the search does not end where it began. The *Search*, Proust argues, is not at all a search for an "analytical" truth of the individual self, for some autobiographical truth achieved by recovering lost memories and recreating a whole otherwise missing,<sup>1</sup> but neither is it a search to ascertain an already assumed "ideological" truth.<sup>2</sup> Rather, the *Search* is, at

<sup>1</sup> As Tadié points out the use of the "I" or *je* in the *Recherche* is a discovery that had to pass through the "purgatory of the third-person" (i.e. *Jean Santeuil*) before becoming, at long last, the construction that it is: "Le je dont il découvre l'emploi n'est plus celui de la confidence, c'est un je qui est aussi un il; passé par le purgatoire de la troisième personne, il rompt avec le moi de Proust pour devenir personnage." Jean-Yves Tadié, *Proust et le roman: essai sur les formes et les techniques du roman dans À la recherche du temps perdu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971/2003), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Shortly after the publication of *Swann's Way*, Proust writes: "Mon livre est un ouvrage dogmatique et une construction! ... J'ai trouvé plus probe et plus délicat comme artiste de ne pas laisser voir, de ne pas

least in part, a search for the “great laws” of life in its erotic, social, artistic, and political aspects, pursued in the form of a construction engendering and developing the truths it discovers.<sup>3</sup>

As Proust’s description of his novel as a “search for Truth” so clearly indicates in itself, however, the *Search* does not simply oppose and rival philosophy in general, but with the rationalism of the author to the unfinished *The Search for Truth by means of the Natural Light* (1676) in particular:<sup>4</sup> in Proust’s *Search*, the philosophical search for truth as conceived by Descartes finds itself not only challenged, but critically disfigured and perverted. For example, it is likely no coincidence that the search for truth in both Proust’s *Search* and Descartes’ *Meditations* finds its orientation in the encounter with sleep and the figure of the “sleeping man”<sup>5</sup> (neighbour to primordial time and the figure

annoncer que c’était justement à la recherche de la Vérité que je partais, ni en quoi elle consistait pour moi. Je déteste tellement les ouvrages idéologiques où le récit n’est tout le temps qu’une faillite des intentions de l’auteur que j’ai préféré ne rien dire.... Non, si je n’avais pas de croyances intellectuelles, si je cherchais simplement à me souvenir et à faire double emploi par ces souvenirs avec les jours vécus, je ne prendrais pas, malade comme je suis, la peine d’écrire. Mais cette évolution d’une pensée, je n’ai pas voulu analyser abstraitement mais la recréer, la faire vivre.” Proust to Rivière, February 1914: L 667–668; italics mine.

<sup>3</sup> In 1921 Proust writes: “J’ai eu le malheur de commencer un livre par le mot ‘je’ et, aussitôt, on a cru qu’au lieu de chercher à découvrir des lois générales, je ‘m’analysais’ au sens individuel et détestable du mot.” According to Proust, the *Recherche* is no *roman d’analyse* scrutinising the most minute details of the inner life by means of a microscope, but a *roman d’aventure* proceeding towards the “great laws” of the exterior life by using a telescope to the end of introspection. Introspection is thus, according to Proust, opposed to an analysis of the self and likewise the novel’s only means to reveal general truths and laws. “Ce qui semble extérieur, c’est en nous que nous le découvrons.” This is why, he writes, Robert Louis Stevenson were able to finish his great masterpieces only “dans une boutique à Londres, où il vend des cigarettes.” Proust to Lang, October 1921: L 1040–1041.

<sup>4</sup> In keeping with Proust’s definition of his novel one may also read its title as referring to Malebranche’s *De la recherche de la vérité* (1674–1712). If nothing else, Malebranche is perhaps the perfect example of how thought is supposed to be naturally inclined towards the good and the error taken to be thought’s greatest possible “misadventure” and the only “negative of thought”, i.e. of the fifth postulate of the Image of thought. “C’est se faire esclave contre la volonté de Dieu, que de se soumettre aux fausses apparences de la vérité; mais c’est obéir à la voix de la vérité éternelle, qui nous parle intérieurement, que de nous soumettre de bonne foi à ces reproches secrets de notre raison, qui accompagnent le refus que l’on fait de se rendre à l’évidence.” Nicolas Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité*, 3 vols. (Paris: Vrin, 2006), 1:136. For Deleuze’s fifth postulate, see DR 192–198/148–153.

<sup>5</sup> Just as the entire opening of the *Search* revolves or even unfolds from “a sleeping man [*un homme qui dort*]” (I/1: 5/9), it is likewise from “a man who sleeps at night [*homo qui solem noctu dormire*]” that Descartes’ search begins. René Descartes, *Meditations*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, tr. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2:13. Henceforth referenced by the title of the individual work and volume. Cf. “La méthode de dramatisation”, where Deleuze, drawing on the sense and value of sleep in the *Search*, states: “The nightmare is perhaps one of these movements which neither someone awake, nor even the dreamer, can endure—but only the deep-sleeper in a dreamless sleep. And thought itself, considered as a dynamism

of the madman) – even if the lines they unfold from this point are entirely divergent:<sup>6</sup> one leads to the *cogito* unifying all the faculties under the identity of the thinking subject while the other takes us to the *cogito* of what Deleuze calls an “I” fractured by time and a “dissolved Self.”<sup>7</sup> Considering Proust’s critical recasting of the search for truth and the pivotal role imputed to the Cartesian figure in Deleuze’s critical endeavour in general, it probably comes as no surprise that the ghost of Descartes’ philosophy is clearly and distinctly felt in those elements comprising the dogmatic image of thought.<sup>8</sup> In the conclusion to the first part of *Proust and Signs*, “The Image of Thought”, Deleuze writes:

Proust sets up an image of thought in opposition to that of philosophy. He attacks what is most essential in a classical philosophy of the rationalist type: the presuppositions of this philosophy. The philosopher willingly presupposes that the mind as mind, the

proper to the philosophical system, is perhaps in its turn one of these terrifying movements that are irreconcilable with a formed, qualified, and composed subject, such as the subject of the *cogito* in representation.” ID 136/97–98.

<sup>6</sup> As pointed out by Dherbey, this divergence from sleep as a seemingly common point ultimately results in radically different understandings of the constitution and function of the “I” in “I think”. Dherbey, however, also provides a near perfect example of the trap of representation and recognition, tracing out this divergence in an attempt to reestablish – against Deleuze – the pivotal importance of memory in Proust. First of all, the criticism directed towards Deleuze’s subordination of memory to art is based, in its entirety, on the blatantly undue and erroneous claim that Deleuze demotes memory by arguing that there is no lost time in Proust, that is, no time lost to the *past*, but only time wasted. Second, while Dherbey admits that the subject in Proust is not a Cartesian *cogito* but rather a *cogitare*, its subject is “born” or “constructed” from memory and cognition rather than the principle preceding all such activity, he still seeks a foundation for this subject in the same model of recognition as the one evoked by Descartes, and thus, rather than overturning the Cartesian *cogito*, ends up preserving exactly what is most essential to it: “La vraie réitération ... a pour effet de faire naître le sujet, de le construire; avant elle, la vie n’est qu’un pur pâtir; après elle, la vie se connaît parce qu’elle se reconnaît.” Gilbert Romeyer Dherbey, *La Pensée de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015), 57.

<sup>7</sup> In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze indicates a lineage, also noted above, connecting Proust to *le nouveau roman* precisely in regard of the “dissolved self”, crediting it for rediscovering or returning to the essentially passive domain “of modifications, tropisms and little peculiarities” constituting the system of the dissolved self. DR 108/79. For a connection between Proust and this system as a movement of individuation, see ID 137/98.

<sup>8</sup> Deleuze’s relationship to rationalism is, as will also be suggested below, considerably more complex than it is usually assumed to be. It quickly appears one could investigate this more complex relationship in Deleuze, at least on a general level, by tracing out a lineage of rationalism beginning in Spinoza rather than Descartes – not least considering his proximity to the decades long conflict between Ferdinand Alquie and Martial Guérout in post-war France: the first a self-confessed Cartesian under whose direction Deleuze achieved his doctoral thesis, the other an esteemed Spinozist whose work was held in very high regard by Deleuze.



thinker as thinker, wants the truth, loves or desires the truth, naturally seeks the truth. He assumes in advance the goodwill of thinking; all of his research is based on a “premeditated decision.” From this comes the method of philosophy: from a certain viewpoint, the search for truth would be the most natural and the easiest; the decision to undertake it and the possession of a method capable of overcoming the external influences that distract the mind from its vocation and cause it to take the false for the true would suffice. It would be a matter of discovering and organising ideas according to an order of thought, as so many explicit significations and formulated truths, which would then fulfil the search and assure agreement between minds. (PS 115/94; tr. mod.)

The image of thought is, thus, everything that is presupposed in the beginning of an act of thought: a constellation of “presuppositions” determining the sense of thought, its form and purpose: (1) the thinker *loves and seeks the true by nature* or thought has an internal or *natural affinity with the true*; (2) thought is the exercise of a *natural faculty* which, in order to think truthfully, is dependent on nothing besides the *good will of the thinker* and the *good or common sense that is pure thought* itself; (3) thought is *formally* already in possession of the true in the form of innate ideas or *a priori* concepts, but still requires a method, permitting it to remain true to its own nature, in order to avoid the error of confusing the false with the true and thus attain the truth *materially* as well. It is, consequently, against this image of the thinker as *the good natured friend* searching for truth simply because of a natural propensity and love for the true, that Proust, according to Deleuze, posits: (a) *the jealous lover* who searches for truth only under the “pressure of the beloved’s lies” and finds truth only insofar it is unwittingly and unwillingly betrayed (PS 24/15); and it is against thought as the *voluntary exercise* of a faculty internal to a subject determined as thinking by nature, that Proust posits: (b) thought as the *involuntary effect* of a concrete situation where something “does violence” to thought and forces us to think its truth, in spite of ourselves (PS 117/95); finally, it is against *truth as innate or instantaneous* – or, in any case, something that is always subtracted from the order of time, and rediscoverable only by effort and rigorous application of method – that Proust counterposes: (c) *a truth learned only within time*, under the constraint of the forces it exerts, from suffering fortuitous encounters with material signs forcing us to think, but also to discover the necessity of what it was forced to think only in “the contingency of the encounter” itself (PS 118/97).

In outline, Deleuze's struggle against the image of thought is a struggle first of all against an implicit and unquestioned *moral* understanding of the nature of the thinker, thought itself, and its objects (already the notion that thought has a nature would, in effect, be an expression of the moralism from which the image is wrought); but also against the *orthodoxy* and *conformity* that this image implies insofar as it is founded on the transcendental model of recognition and the form of representation: a model and a form which according to Deleuze has "never sanctioned anything but the recognisable and the recognised" and will never "inspire anything but conformities." (DR 175/134) Being under the influence of the Image of thought can never amount to anything but an essentially pre-ordinate and closed system of thought, recognising itself as thinking only insofar as it recognises, and recognising itself as knowing only insofar as the recognised is organised according to the order of representation. It is the dogmatism, orthodoxy, and moralism implied by this Image that, Deleuze claims, Proust counteracts with a "new" image according to which thought is no longer subordinate to representation and recognition, to common and good sense, to the banality of morality, opinion, and communication – but rather something which opposes this order: creative rather than representational, finding its necessity in the contingency of the encounter rather than in the rules of logic and non-contradictory possibilities, and expressing at all times "the idea that every thought is an aggression, appearing under the constraint of a sign, and that we think only when we are forced and constrained to think." (ID 193/139)

#### THE IMAGE OF THOUGHT

Evidently, all the fundamental presuppositions of the image are characteristic of that "classical philosophy of the rationalist type" denounced by Proust and Deleuze alike. Still, it cannot be reduced neither to Proust's opposition to ancient or modern rationalism nor to any other tradition of philosophy in particular. In spite of Deleuze's general hostility towards rationalism, the primary object of his critical aggressions is never this or that particular philosophy, but always the presuppositions left unspoken and unquestioned, whether this be the silently accepted dogma regarding the nature of thought, the predisposition of the thinker, the character of the true, and the origin of necessity, and so on. As a problem, the dogmatic image of thought is thus seated deeper within thought itself than the history of the doctrines reflecting it. The philosophies of Plato, Descartes, and Kant all constitute decisive moments in the history of the image of thought, but the image of thought still belongs, by its very nature, to no one and nothing but

thought itself. Consequently, it is not so much different images of thought that Deleuze subjects to critique in *Proust and Signs*, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, and *Difference and Repetition*, as it is one single image of thought remaining essentially the same in all cases.<sup>9</sup>

This image comprises, in its most complete and autonomous formulation, a total of eight postulates. Each postulate furthermore comprises two figures, according to Deleuze, both of which reflect the fact that the image held in place by the two joints of recognition and representation finds both its origin and its destination in *common sense*: the first presenting the postulate under its pre-philosophical or “natural” aspect, the other presenting it under its reflected or “philosophical” aspect; the first revealing its empirical side “in the arbitrariness of examples”, the other revealing its transcendental side in “the presuppositions of the essence.” (DR 217/167) If the initial four postulates of the Image of thought is above all concerned with a philosophical understanding of common sense, presenting it not precisely as a faculty, but rather as a principle of communication permitting the faculties, in spite of their differences, to be exercised in accord with one another on an object recognised as the same to all of them; the subsequent four postulates address common sense in relation to language, that is, in regard to the propositional understanding of designation and sense, of truth and falsity, of problems and solutions, of learning and knowledge. In summary:

The first postulate institutes the good will of the thinker and the good nature of thought, that is, *the principle* positing thought as a universally distributed faculty operating exclusively along a vertical axis (*cogitatio natura*

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze’s three accounts may still be distinguished, however, at least perfunctory and schematically, in regard to the different viewpoints each of them assumes on the image of thought as a problem in thought itself. The first attack on the image of thought, effectuated through Nietzsche, is primarily concerned with (x): the genealogy of the presuppositions regarding the orientation of the thinker as well as thought itself – exposing them as the forgetful sedimentations of purely moral decisions rather than as the necessary truths of its nature; the second attack on the image, effectuated through Proust, is primarily concerned with (y): the presupposition of thought as a universal possibility, as a natural faculty with a naturally vertical orientation, which, if it is to be truthfully exercised, depends only on good will and a premeditated decision – exposing all voluntary exercise as a form of non-thought founded in the merely logical and possible, incapable of attaining any true necessity; third, the image in *Difference and Repetition* attacks all of the above, but from a viewpoint according to which (z) – the model of recognition and the form of representation – appear as the substructure to “common sense” (*sense commun*) and “good sense” (*bon sens*), otherwise determined as the two joints of “pure thought” which keep the image of thought in place and permits its illusion to constantly be reborn. Accordingly, the precise number and formulation of the “postulates” composing the image of thought differs between Deleuze’s presentations, varying with the viewpoint, but nevertheless refer to the same Image of thought in general.

*universalis*): a “naturally upright” (*naturellement droite*) thought orientated straight towards the true.

The second postulate imposes “common sense” (*sens commun*) as *the ideal* of thought insofar as it unifies the different faculties under the identity of the pure self and brings them into agreement on a form of identity in the unqualified object (*concordia facultatum*), while “good sense” (*bon sens*) serves to maintain this identity in each case involving an empirical self and a qualified object by regulating the contribution of the faculties (it is the same piece of wax that I remember, imagine, see, touch, etc.).

The third postulate institutes recognition as *the model* of thought forming the correlate to common sense as the unifying principle of subjective identity, in that it appeals to the unified faculties to harmoniously exercise themselves on an object supposed to be identical to each one of them (opening for the error of one faculty confusing its object with that of another faculty).

The fourth postulate institutes representation as *the element* of thought, that is, it posits thought as native to or at home within the order of representation that divides the essence from the appearance, the Idea from the image, or the model from the copy in terms of participation, subordinating difference to the Same and the Similar, the Analogous and the Opposed (seeking to detect and select the true pretender over the false claimant, like how Argos recognises Odysseus and Penelope’s suitors must be put to death).

The fifth postulate posits the error as *the negative* correlate to common sense, the model of recognition and the form of representation, that is, it institutes the notion that the greatest conceivable misadventure in thought is the error of taking the false for the true due to factors external to thought (madness, stupidity, or malevolence).

The sixth postulate is that of *the proposition*, the logical correlate of recognition instituting designation as the site of truth and rendering the sense it expresses – rather than the transcendental genesis of the true, of which the truth is merely an empirical result – an empty echo of the proposition.

The seventh postulate is that of *modality* or solutions, positing the problem as an interrogative restatement of a proposition at the same time as it serves as its solution, that is, the problem as something given but bound to disappear with the discovery of its pre-existent solution in common sense, the accredited truth or falsity of which represents both the beginning and the end of thought.

The eighth and final postulate is that of the result instituting knowledge as *the end* of thought, thus subordinating learning to knowledge and culture or *paideia* to method.

What is the status of these postulates and how are they to be understood? First of all, the postulates constituting the dogmatic image are not ordinary “propositions” to be communicated to a community of like minds in demand of common assent, according to Deleuze. Neither explicit nor soliciting the agreement of others, the postulates do not form regular propositions but, Deleuze argues, they are “propositional themes which remain implicit and are understood in a pre-philosophical manner.” “In this sense”, as Deleuze goes on to add, “conceptual philosophical thought has as its implicit presupposition a pre-philosophical and natural Image of thought, borrowed from the pure element of common sense.” (DR 172/131) Even if what Deleuze names the “dogmatic, orthodox, or moral image” admittedly varies and – for example, “rationalists” and “empiricists” evidently “do not presume its construction in the same fashion”<sup>10</sup> – these are simply variations in degree: the Image may differ from one philosophy to another, but there is still no reason, Deleuze argues, to “speak of this or that image of thought, variable according to the philosophy in question” – only “of a single Image in general.” (DR 172/132) As such, the Image is always one rather than multiple, and not so much something to which one submits as something one always already presupposes – in every thought invoking or otherwise relying on the common sense from which it is drawn and in which it reflects itself as “natural”; but also in every philosophical operation that seeks to return to it as a “pre-” or “non-philosophical” foundation in order to explicitly reflect on its concept, whether to add or remove certain elements, or even to rectify or to overturn it entirely.<sup>11</sup>

Second, although consisting of nothing but facts relating to common sense and empirical psychology, the Image is nevertheless a claim about what belongs to thought *de jure*. And it is precisely because the postulates belong to it by right rather than in fact that it cannot be countered or destroyed simply by positing “alternative” postulates or accounting for contradictory experiences. For example, Descartes qualifies as a philosopher precisely because he, in the beginning of the *Discourse on the Method*, is capable of raising the “old joke”, as Deleuze calls it, that “good sense is the best distributed thing in the

<sup>10</sup> DR 172/131. Considering the theme of transcendental empiricism and Deleuze’s promotion of Hume as providing decisive elements towards a new image of thought, this denouncement of empiricism and rationalism simply as two variations on the moral and dogmatic Image of thought may seem confusing. In this instance, however, Deleuze refers no more to the empiricism of Hume than to the rationalism of Spinoza, but to the reduction of empiricism to “the reverse of rationalism” or “rationalism stood on its head” that is characteristic of a history of philosophy that has “pretty much absorbed and digested empiricism” as nothing but the criticism of innate ideas or the *a priori*. ID 226/162.

<sup>11</sup> DR 173/132.

world”<sup>12</sup> from an image of thought always contradicted *de facto*, to an image of what always belongs to thought *de jure*. And so, even if in fact it is difficult to think, “the most difficult in fact may still be the easiest by right.” (DR 174/133) Under the figure of the Image, opinion is thus unduly raised up, from the level of particular facts to the level of universal principles, conditions, or Ideas. Consequently, the Image cannot be resisted or destroyed simply by example of empirical contradictions (*quid facti*), but must be opposed and counteracted as the transcendental conditions of thought (*quid juris*).<sup>13</sup>

The fact that the postulates amount to *de jure* claims concerning the principles and conditions of thought and that these *de facto* remain implicit and unquestioned is an insight important to Deleuze, since this is what permits them to persist in thought despite any and all experiences to the contrary or voluntary acts of methodic doubt, critical reflection, or systematic reduction. Since they are impossible to reduce to any contingent form of errors or confusions completely external in origin, nor to any historically determined order, system, or structure of knowledge, the postulates are above all reminiscent of the transcendental illusions exposed by Kant in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: internal to thought itself, products of its own exercise – not errors reducible to deficiencies in the empirical subject’s knowledge, particular psychological states, or external influences. And because of the internal nature of these postulates or illusions, the Image of thought is nothing of which one can simply dispose or destroy once and for all.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, 1:111.

<sup>13</sup> DR 174/133: “When the presupposition of philosophy is found in an Image of thought which is claimed to hold by right, we can no longer be content to oppose it with contrary facts. The discussion must be carried out on the level of right itself [*le plan même du droit*], in order to see whether this image does not betray the very essence of thought as pure thought. To the extent that it holds by right, 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.” It is worth noting that in *Proust and Signs*, but perhaps above all in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze uses the concepts of “the empirical” and “the transcendental” not only in relation to Kant or other transcendental philosophies, but, indiscriminately, on the history of philosophy in its entirety. And this to address precisely this problem of undue universalisation which furthermore preserves the form of *doxa* in spite of philosophy’s vows to exceed or destroy it. Plato, Descartes, and Kant may all therefore be accused of “tracing the transcendental off the empirical” and thus ascribe to thought by right what is always contradicted by it in fact. Obviously, this is, in short, a ramification of the theme or the problematic with which Deleuze himself is concerned, not a fact of negligence or ignorance.

<sup>14</sup> Although this is not the place, there is arguably an interesting comparison to be made – in spite of the apparent differences regarding the field, the approach, and the plane on which the critique is carried out – between Deleuze’s critique of the philosophical Image of thought and Bachelard’s critique of the scientific mind in *La formation de l’esprit scientifique* (1938). In summary, Bachelard argues that, lest it be mired in

Neither extrinsic to thought, finite in nature, nor expressive of a particular order or structure of power, the Image of thought is not so much imposed from without as it is a constitutive element of thought itself. Rather than a particular set of implicit rules according to which any empirical propositions or judgements is regulated, evaluated, or interpreted, the Image of thought gathers everything that still is generally presupposed in any operation claiming to analyse and account for these rules in an entirely presuppositionless and unprejudiced manner. According to Deleuze, the Image of thought thus presupposes the thought it also betrays. Still, if the Image of thought betrays “the essence of thought as pure thought” it is not because it is an *image* of thought. Its betrayal is not that of the appearance or the copy betraying the essence or the original, in accordance with the Platonic model of representation and participation, distinguishing the former as a degradation or debasement of the latter.<sup>15</sup> The betrayal of the Image of thought therefore does not amount to a problem to be constructed and solved within representation. On the contrary, it is the form of representation itself that is the problem insofar as it is presupposed as the form of all thought. It is what remains implicit also in the most unprejudiced Idiot, and betrays thought’s capacity to begin as pure thought rather than as recognition.

illusions granting undue privilege to the “empirical”, “concrete”, “immediate” insofar as these concepts remain mediated by the human all too human values and interests intrinsic to common sense, necessarily blocking the realisation of science in its pure form – both a critical and clinical elimination is needed to rid the thought of the scientific mind of all such “epistemological obstacles” that derive from common sense and impede scientific progress. To this end, Bachelard claims, the task of epistemology must be to “psychanalyser l’intérêt, ruiner tout utilitarisme si déguisé qu’il soit, si élevé qu’il se prétende, tourner l’esprit du réel vers l’artificiel, du naturel vers l’humain, de la représentation vers l’abstraction.” Gaston Bachelard, *La formation de l’esprit scientifique: contribution à une psychanalyse de la connaissance* (Paris: Vrin [1938], 2007), 13.

<sup>15</sup> In *Conditions of Thought*, Voss argues, relying on later works such as *Anti-Oedipus*, that the image of thought is *not* to be understood in terms of ideology, insofar as ideology is taken to imply an opposition between the imaginary and the real, where the former obscures or distorts the latter. According to Voss, Deleuze is first and foremost deeply critical of the notion of ideology. Instead, it is argued, he installs the image of thought beyond this opposition in order to posit it, not as a false representation of the reality of thought, of its truth, but rather as the origin of thought itself in the form of “a productive machine or apparatus of power.” *Conditions of Thought*, 19. Sauvagnargues, however, highlights the kinship of Deleuze’s image of thought with Kant’s notion of transcendental illusions, while at the same time pointing to “l’influence conjointe du concept marxien d’idéologie . . . et des penseurs comme Nietzsche et Freud qui ruinent définitivement le mythe d’une transparence de la conscience à elle-même.” *L’empirisme transcendantal*, 38. It would seem to me, however, that regardless of the influence of the Marxist critique of ideology on Deleuze, such an association risks obscuring the problem of the Image more than it helps to clarify. Not because the critique of the Image and the critique of ideology are necessarily opposed or incompatible, but because the former addresses a problem that precedes, as its condition, the problem of the latter.

## THE IMAGE OF THE BEGINNING

The postulates of which the dogmatic Image is composed are, again, not a set of explicit propositions but rather what is implicitly, silently, or ignorantly pre-supposed in the beginning of every premeditated act of thinking: a constellation of presuppositions, which, according to Deleuze, form an image of thought that “profoundly betrays what it means to think and alienates the two powers of difference and repetition, of philosophical commencement and recommencement.” (DR 217/167) The problem of how to begin and begin again assumes such significance not just in *Proust and Signs* but with respect to the problem of the Image of thought in general, precisely because it consists of *pre*-suppositions derived, in fact, from common sense or empirical psychology, but illicitly raised up to the level of transcendental conditions determining the cardinal points of thought, its axes and orientations, before any actual thinking has commenced. Consequently, the problem of destroying the Image, of liberating thought from the moralism and conformism intrinsic to it, is essentially a problem of the genesis of thought, conceived in terms of difference and repetition rather than identity and recognition.

“The problem of the beginning in philosophy has always been considered, quite rightly, a very delicate problem. For beginning signifies eliminating all presuppositions.” (DR 169/129; tr. mod.) According to Deleuze, this poses a particular difficulty in the case of philosophy. Because in contrast to the sciences, which by reason of the exclusively objective nature of their presuppositions can begin simply by employing a “rigorous axiomatic” elimination of all unwarranted presuppositions, the beginning of philosophy involves presuppositions that are “as much subjective as objective.” (DR 169/164) In order for philosophy to truly begin thinking it must thus purge itself not only of any unwarranted objective presuppositions, but of all unfounded subjective presuppositions too. And such a beginning is, of course, exactly what Descartes’ *cogito* is supposed to achieve.

As is well known, in the first of Descartes’ *Meditations* as well as in the second part of *Discourse on the Method*, Descartes contemplates the concept of the beginning in terms of a destruction or overturning (*eversio*) of the past: past knowledge needs to be demolished, pulled to the ground, since it is built on the assumption of too many *obscure* or *confused* opinions and therefore cannot, in its present state, provide the Archimedean point, the *fundamentum certum et inconcussum*, which every construct of knowledge raised up in the



name of science requires.<sup>16</sup> But it is not enough that this foundation in the form of an unconditioned minimum of certainty is *firmiter et immobile*, it also needs to be *clear* and *distinct* in all of its parts. Hence, in the *Discourse*, Descartes rejects every complex and heterogenous foundation – no matter whether the construction concerns a building, a city, a science, or the principal laws governing a state – in favour of such simple, homogenous, and transparent foundations as the *cogito* is assumed to establish.

After having put everything in doubt and discovered the proposition *ego sum, ego existo* to be necessarily true every time it is voiced or conceived, Descartes' first step towards determining the undetermined "I" that thinks and exists is to reject any definitions of man, such as *animal rationale* or *zoon logon echon*, in order to circumvent the objective presuppositions implied in all definitions proceeding from genus and differentia.<sup>17</sup> What remains to be eliminated, if thought is to rid itself of any and all obscurities threatening the certainty and clarity of its foundation, is thus all opinions not relying exclusively on natural reason, but on the senses or the imagination as well, the consequence of which is the search for a foundation of knowledge that withdraws from the order of the object into the order of the subject.

The foundation of the Cartesian beginning is for all that not simply subjective, it is also *idiotic*. First of all, it is *idios* in essence insofar as it is not so much characteristic of a form of subjectivity in general as it is peculiar to a particular empirical subject: "My plan", Descartes writes in the *Discourse*, "has never gone beyond trying to reform my own thoughts and construct them upon a foundation which is all my own."<sup>18</sup> In each case the foundation is thus supposed to belong to none but the singular or personal "I" that manifests it. Second of all, it is also *idiotikos* in essence, insofar as the "I" to which it is peculiar represents an idiotic but good-natured and self-sufficient subject; that is, the private thinker deprived of all passion for doctrine, uncorrupted by any false beliefs, and moving towards true and immediate knowledge by means of

<sup>16</sup> The same image of "overturning all the knowledge" deemed unfounded or faulty by means of a complete demolition is in fact repeated also in the *The Search for Truth*: "I know of no better way to repair it than to knock it all down." Descartes, *The Search for Truth*, 2:407.

<sup>17</sup> Descartes, *Meditations*, 2:17. The same argument returns, albeit developed in somewhat greater detail, in the *The Search for Truth*. "Eudoxus ... You exist, and you know that you exist, and you know this because you know that you are doubting. But what are you – you who have doubts about everything but cannot doubt that you yourself exist? Polyander ... I shall say I am a *man*. Eudoxus You are not paying attention to my question, and the reply you give me, however simple it may seem to you, would plunge you into very difficult and complicated problems": *The Search for Truth*, 2:410.

<sup>18</sup> Descartes, *Discourse*, 1:118.

nothing but natural reason and method in perfect conformity – and, yes, always, with common sense.<sup>19</sup> Or as formulated by Eudoxus in the Search for Truth: “My mind, having at its disposal all the truths it comes across, does not dream there are others to discover. Instead it enjoys the same tranquility as would a king if his country was so isolated and cut off from others that he imagined there was nothing beyond his frontiers but infertile deserts and uninhabitable mountains.”<sup>20</sup>

It is precisely this self-sufficient and reasonable subject discovered in this empirical idiocy that is then raised up, by virtue of the *cogito*'s necessary truth, to a universal epistemological foundation. However, according to Deleuze, the beginning instituted in the form of the *cogito* cannot be a true beginning, if that is, the definition of a true beginning is a beginning without *any* presuppositions.<sup>21</sup> It is true that Descartes escapes the pitfalls of the objective presuppositions, just as it is true that he indeed seeks to purge himself of all subjective presuppositions in the form of unfounded opinions – but this is still not enough to institute a true beginning in thought. This is because Descartes' beginning cannot be achieved, Deleuze claims, without him pretending that the sense of the elements in the proposition *ego cogito, ergo sum* are part of a universally distributed common knowledge;<sup>22</sup> as if the meaning of “thought”, “being” and the “I” of which they are predicated and supposed to determine, require nothing beyond common sense in order to be intuited with absolute certainty. It may therefore seem as if the Idiot claiming the innocence of natural reason, Eudoxus, is burdened with fewer presuppositions than the Schoolmaster perverted by doctrine, Epistemon, while he in truth “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 make itself out to begin [*se donner l'air de commencer*], and to begin without presup-

<sup>19</sup> “A man with a good mind, even one brought up in a desert and never illuminated by any light but the light of nature, could not have opinions different from ours if he carefully weighed all the same reasons.” Descartes, *The Search for Truth*, 2:405.

<sup>20</sup> Descartes, *The Search for Truth*, 2:402.

<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note, as Peden points out, that the refusal to accept the subject of the *cogito* as the beginning of philosophical thought is not so much a refusal of rationalist philosophy in general, as it is a rejection of the Cartesianism characteristic of Spinozist rationalism. Arguably, it was this Spinozist rationalism, represented by Guérout and by extension Deleuze, that in post-war France came to serve as an “antidote” to a phenomenology which, ever since its introduction in France, had been intimately associated with the Cartesian rationalism represented by Alquié and, later, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion, and Michel Henry. See Knox Peden, *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology: French Rationalism from Cavailles to Deleuze* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, 1:195; *Discourse*, 1: 111.

positions.” (DR 170/130; tr. mod.) The elimination of all objective and subjective presuppositions recognised as blocking the pure beginning can thus, in the case of the *cogito*, be effected only on the basis of a tacit displacement from the explicit order of knowledge to the implicit order of feeling: to begin in certainty no longer requires an express knowledge of concepts, such as rational and animal, but simply the feeling that one immediately recognises what it is to think, to be, and who it is that says “I”.

Clearly, the *cogito* is intended to be an answer *de jure* rather than *de facto*. The tacit displacement from knowledge to feeling, from the objective to the subjective, from the explicit to the implicit, however, does not only allow for the most fundamental presuppositions of the *cogito* to remain unquestioned, it also constitutes an illicit sliding from the transcendental to the empirical in a fashion that, at its limit, betrays the former and contaminates the latter.<sup>23</sup> This is in fact the principal reason why the self, which arises out of the Cartesian purgatory of doubt, cannot be accepted as a beginning in accordance with the total, immanent, yet positive critique advanced by Deleuze. Rather than eliminating any and all presuppositions, the most fundamental presuppositions are merely referred, in quiet, to the empirical self – only to be reflected, in the following moment, in the common sense as transcendental. Thus considered, and just as with all pretensions to an apodictic foundation in thought that precedes the act of thinking – the *cogito* is but a false beginning, amounting to nothing besides a vicious circle that furthermore turns the concept of the transcendental into a vacuous reiteration of the empirical.

The general persistence of such beginnings in philosophy, that is, a surreptitious move leading from the explicit expulsion of objective presuppositions to the implicit assumption of as many subjective presuppositions, may seem to suggest, according to Deleuze, “the conclusion that there is no true beginning in philosophy, or rather that the true philosophical beginning, that is, Difference, is in itself already Repetition.” (DR 169–170/164–165) But to invoke the figure of the circle as a model for philosophical thinking, as if it were “a question of rediscovering at the end what was there in the beginning”, or of bringing “what was simply known implicitly without concepts” into “the conceptual or the explicit”, is – the intricacy of the particular procedure notwithstanding – still to make it “too simple” for Deleuze, producing a circle never quite “tortuous enough.” (DR 170/165) If anything, he continues, the

<sup>23</sup> DR 169/129: “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.”

image of the beginning of philosophy as a circle is testimony to a sort of weakness, a powerlessness (*impuissance*) in philosophical thought as such, making it unable “to truly begin, but also to repeat authentically.” (DR 170/165)

If the Image of thought is considered injurious by Deleuze, this injury is always inflicted in function of the model of recognition and the circular foundation it establishes by means of common sense. Now, Deleuze obviously rejects recognition as a viable model for thought, but not simply because there exists such a thing as recognition in general, or because it exercises a function in every life lived, partly or wholly, under the sign of utility and survival. Rather than Deleuze identifying recognition as such as the problem, its harm lies solely in its preclusion of thought as an untimely and unforeseeable event in thought itself. After all, “it is apparent”, as Deleuze writes, “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?” (DR 176/135) The image of thought finding its model in recognition thus closes thought upon itself in a circle of illusory self-sufficiency, which, according to Deleuze, constitutes a foundational operation the ramifications of which is that thought must abandon any hope of ever obtaining the true mark of necessity, as well as betray the discovery of the transcendental in a fashion actually adverse to the accomplishment of both a total and immanent critique.

## II. OF THE IMAGE

*The Image of thought and the call for an unconditional critique: Kant by way of Nietzsche. – The division of the line and the thought without image. – Overturning the image: the failure of representation and the image without resemblance. – Summary of Proust’s system of signs in the overturning of Platonism.*

For Deleuze, the conditions of any philosophy wishing to find its beginning in a thought truly without presuppositions must, instead of silently relying on arbitrary postulates, be searched for in “a radical critique of this Image and the ‘postulates’ it implies.” And so the imperative of Deleuze’s critique is to purge systematically philosophical thinking of its dogmatic, orthodox, and moral Image of itself by means of a “radical critique”, in order to find and affirm “its difference or its true beginning” in a “thought without

Image”.<sup>24</sup> By achieving such a critique, Deleuze argues, thought would “find its difference or its true beginning, not in agreement with the *pre-philosophical* Image but in a rigorous struggle against this Image, which it would denounce as *non-philosophical*.”<sup>25</sup> Insofar as Deleuze is a critical philosopher, it is to the extent that he, following Nietzsche, commits to the destruction of the Image of thought precisely as an attempt to accomplish what Kant supposedly could not. Kant’s critical philosophy is thus not simply rejected by Deleuze. The transformation of the critique required to destroy the Image of thought preventing the discovery of pure difference as the true beginning of thought is certainly an undertaking conceived *in opposition to* Kant. Insofar as this transformation implies a step *beyond* Kant, however, this step can only be taken partly in keeping *with* Kant. Not unlike the relationships to Plato and Leibniz, Deleuze’s philosophical relationship to Kant is thus marked by a deep yet often productive ambiguity or ambivalence.

First, Deleuze argues, philosophy must realise a truly *total* critique of truth, knowledge, morality, and religion as such, rather than Kant’s “politics of compromise” the sole object of which is the rejection of all false claims and claimants within each already constituted and delimited domain, for the sake of a final justification of true knowledge, true moral and true religion.<sup>26</sup> In a sense, rather than simply seeking to amend Kant’s Transcendental Analytic, Deleuze seems to develop his critical philosophy as a continuation of Kant’s critique of

<sup>24</sup> DR 173/132. This is how it is formulated in *Difference and Repetition*, but the imperative arguably applies to the efforts at eliminating the dogmatic image of thought preceding it too. For a survey of the theme of the image of thought in Deleuze’s body of work as a whole, see Gregg Lambert’s *In Search of a New Image of Thought. Gilles Deleuze and Philosophical Expressionism* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2012).

<sup>25</sup> DR 172–173/132. There is no doubt that the chapter on the Image in *Difference and Repetition* constitutes Deleuze’s most complete account of the Image of thought. However, it is also the most virulent and “anti-philosophical” attack on the philosophical tradition as well as on the tradition of teaching its history in France. Concerning the conditions of this teaching, at least insofar as it relates to the education of Deleuze, Foucault, and Derrida, see Gary Gutting, *Thinking the Impossible: French Philosophy Since 1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> NP 102/89. Clearly, Kant would not have agreed with Deleuze’s demand for a “total” critique, at least not in the sense here evoked by Deleuze, simply because it would mean the undoing of the very foundation for philosophy that he seeks to establish. Deleuze’s conception of the critical project is in other words principally determined by Nietzsche’s critique of the critique.

the ideas of the “soul”, the “world”, and “God” elaborated in the Transcendental Dialectic – seeking to dispel or destroy, once and for all, any and all notions of a substantial self, a totality, and a first cause of this totality.<sup>27</sup>

To be truly total, the critical undertaking cannot stop in the face of any phenomenon, belief, or concept regardless of how given, self-evident or sacrosanct it may appear. In contrast to Kant’s reverent decision not to go any further than the critique of “false applications”, Deleuze, following Nietzsche, never stops insisting that there are “no moral facts or phenomena, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena; there are no illusions of knowledge, but knowledge itself is an illusion; knowledge is an error, or worse, a falsification.” (NP 103/90)

Second, the critique must also be a truly *immanent* critique of thought itself, that is, a critique that no longer presupposes thought as a universal faculty capable of acting as its own judge. It is not enough, in other words, to just criticise any use of a faculty such that it oversteps the bounds of its legitimate claims and either falls prey to some illusion or encroaches into the domain of another faculty. For if it is true that exactly nothing is given as such, then one cannot stop the inquiry at misuse but must press on into the genesis of everything which otherwise would remain implicitly presupposed by the critical operation itself. In this respect, Deleuze clearly belongs to the post-Kantian and Romantic lineage of thinkers like Maimon, Schelling, Hölderlin, and Novalis, all of whom felt it necessary to defy Kant’s interdiction and overstep the limits that his critique had imposed on the faculty of thought<sup>28</sup> – not simply to reject it, but rather to accomplish the “Copernican revolution” in philosophy that Kant had declared but never truly achieved.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> It is Descombes, in his history of contemporary French philosophy, that provides this rather fitting description of Deleuze as “avant tout un post-kantien” who thinks “après la *Dialectique transcendante* de Kant.” See Vincent Descombes, *Le Même et l’autre: quarante-cinq ans de philosophie française (1933–1978)* (Paris: Minuit, 1979), 178–179.

<sup>28</sup> Kant famously argues that while it is always permissible to ask *to what degree* and *how* it is possible to “cognize free of all experience”, what is not permitted is to ask “how the *faculty of thinking* itself is possible.” Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1998), A xvii.

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed discussion of Deleuze’s relationship to the post-Kantian tradition in general, see Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*. Kerslake in fact goes so far as to claim that “the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze represents the latest flowering of the project, begun in the immediate wake of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, to complete consistently the ‘Copernican revolution’ in philosophy.” Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, 5. Although this has the merit of highlighting Deleuze’s productive relationship to Kant and may rid him of the brand of “pre-critical metaphysician”, Kerslake constantly runs the risk of reducing the entirety of Deleuze’s philosophy to a simple amendment of Kantian transcendentalism. To date, the richest and most clarifying account of the demand for transcendental

An immanent critique of all the conditions internal to thought is necessary because the presuppositions which thus far have remained implicit must be explicated in order to be evaluated, and, insofar as they are discovered to be unfounded or illusory, eliminated. And in this respect Deleuze clearly belongs, *mutatis mutandi*, to the same critical tradition as Plato, Descartes, Kant, and Husserl.<sup>30</sup> A willful inquiry into the conditions of thought of this kind can, however, only take the elimination of unfounded presuppositions or illusions so far. It can certainly map out and evaluate what is otherwise implicitly presupposed in every beginning of thought, as it were, but it cannot effectively destroy or even temporarily suspend the Image of thought presupposing nothing but itself. To actually counteract the Image of thought, then, Deleuze must not only carry out the *negative* critique initiated by Nietzsche and consisting in the genealogical mapping and destruction of all idols wrought of morality, but eventually also trace out and elaborate “a new image of thought” from the *positive* elements he finds in Hume,<sup>31</sup> Bergson, and, perhaps above all, Proust.<sup>32</sup>

The true critique must, thus, not only be immanent and total but also *positive*. Although Kant was the first to recognise that the critique cannot restrict or limit the power of knowing without setting other and previously neglected powers free at the same time,<sup>33</sup> he nevertheless, Deleuze states, “confused the positivity of critique with a humble recognition of the rights of the criticised.

genetic conditions, with specific focus on Deleuze’s relationship to Maimon, is: Voss, *Conditions of Thought*.

<sup>30</sup> See Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, 18. See also Hughes’ suggestion of a link between Husserlian reduction and Deleuze’s account of the apprenticeship in *Proust and Signs*, in Joe Hughes, *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* (London: Continuum, 2008), 6-8.

<sup>31</sup> The structure of this critical procedure is in fact reminiscent of much that Deleuze ascribes to Hume in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*. There, Deleuze notes that the true psychology of affections developed by Hume is always doubled by a critique of the false psychology of the mind, always moving from the establishment of the absence of an idea in the mind to the presence of an affection of the mind: “The mind is at the same time the object of a critique and the term of a necessary reference. Such is the necessity of critique.” ES 12-13/29.

<sup>32</sup> “Hume, Bergson, and Proust interest me so much because in their work can be found profound elements for a new image of thought.” ID 193/139. In this interview, “On Nietzsche and the Image of Thought”, Deleuze thus seems to place Nietzsche first and foremost on the side of the negative aspect of the critique, presenting him primarily as the philosopher wielding the hammer revealing the hollow interior of all things and values inflated by morality alone. On the positive side, that is, where the positive elements towards a new image of thought are discovered, we find instead Hume, Bergson and Proust. All three bring something important to Deleuze’s thought, but insofar as the new image of thought is concerned, it would appear that Proust’s significance is not only of note but the greatest. Cf. Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, 76.

<sup>33</sup> See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xxiv-xxv.

There has never been a more conciliatory or respectful total critique.” (NP 102/89) To be a true critique, however, the critique must render the aggressiveness intrinsic to the total destruction it seeks to achieve inseparable from sensations of joy and acts of creation.<sup>34</sup> “The conditions of true critique and true creation”, Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*, “are the same: the destruction of an image of thought as presupposing nothing but itself, the genesis of an act of thought in thought itself.” (DR 182/139)

In conclusion, the critical operation called for by the untimely imperative comprises two different but ultimately indistinguishable moments. The first moment is *negative* and consists in an analysis of the objective and subjective presuppositions of the dogmatic Image of thought, that is, in exposing everything that thought must *not* be if it is to think at its highest power. The second moment is *positive* and destroys the dogmatic Image of thought by virtue of an act of thinking, the aggression of which gives birth to a new image of thought, to its appetites and inclinations, means and ends. The first moment is definite in its character, presenting itself as a discourse of immanent critique engaged in the identification, analysis, and rejection of a set of postulates as well as illusions regarding the nature of thought. On the contrary, the character of the second moment is necessarily elusive and obscure, always bordering on the unthinkable, the insensible, the unimaginable, the immemorable – almost as if exceeding the limits imposed on thought by the dogmatic Image, on the one hand, and releasing the power of a thought without image, on the other, cannot be separated from the silence of a certain “unpower” (*impouvoir*) in thought itself.<sup>35</sup>

This is a question of the limits of representation, at least to some degree: a positive determination of any mode of thought venturing to escape the prescriptions renounced by Deleuze, can never simply be to set up or install just *another* image. In this sense there really is no *alternative* to the Image of thought to discover. It can be resisted or instantaneously suspended by such constraint or violence that comes from outside and gives birth to the act of thinking in thought itself, tracing out a different or new image in the process, but there is no *either... or* begging for commitment and it cannot be replaced without also replacing one form of dogmatism and orthodoxy for another. This is why *Difference and Repetition* simply does not contain yet another call for a “new” image of thought but rather the imperative to pursue, in the form of a temporal apprenticeship, a “thought without Image, even at the cost of the

<sup>34</sup> NP 99/87: “Critique is destruction as joy, the aggression of the creator.”

<sup>35</sup> For Deleuze’s discussion of Artaud’s concept of *impouvoir*, see DR 191–192/146–147.



greatest destructions and the greatest demoralisations.” (DR 173/132) The difference from which the act of thought is born or reborn, according to Deleuze, is thus not a given representational difference determined as different in relation to a given identity, but rather a sub-representational difference or differential that is never to be recognised – only encountered, randomly and unexpectedly, in the course of an apprenticeship that is temporal and indefinite in essence. For this reason, the destruction of the Image of thought is the only condition under which the violence of the encountered sign can be allowed to give birth to an act of thought.

#### THE IMAGE OF A THOUGHT WITHOUT IMAGE

No longer calling for a new image of thought but for a thought without Image, Deleuze’s understanding of the relation between thought and image clearly appears to have changed in *Difference and Repetition*.<sup>36</sup> To raise the objection that a theory of thought claiming to begin in difference rather than in identity just amounts to another image of thought is not only to neglect that difference now precedes rather than presupposes identity, but also that the image of thought is not opposed to thought, as appearances are to the essence or the imaginary is to the real, but only to that order of representation according to which all such distinctions are made in the first place. It is not because the Image of thought is an *image* that it may be considered detrimental to thought, but because it constitutes an instantaneous image

<sup>36</sup> Already in *The Logic of Sense* the foremost characteristics of the Image of thought (the prescription of the dimensions and orientations of thought as a mould in which it is always already cast only to succeed or fail) are no longer something simply to be overcome in favour of a “thought without Image”, but rather something that, through a slight displacement of its position and status relative to the very act of thinking, belongs to every mode of thought. And if we can understand the concept of the “plane of immanence” in the much later text *What is Philosophy?* as an affirmation of the positive relation between a certain system of thought and its image then this is only because the position, meaning and value of the image has been transposed along with the viewpoint from which this conception is expressed: the image is no longer something that precedes thought, predetermining its dimensions, orientation, and ends, but on the contrary something that is traced jointly and at the same time as this thought discovers itself and its own limits in the act of thinking. In *What is Philosophy?* every system of thought thus traces a specific plane of immanence upon which it installs itself and operates. The individuation of the plane is, however, always concurrent with the development of the concepts and the mode in which they are deployed in relation to their corresponding problems. For all this, another image of thought is still not something that is already given only to be recognised and then affirmed or rejected. Not because another conception of the nature of thought is not an aggression and as much a potential cause for distress as it is for joy, but precisely because it simply does not exist before the practice that develops it. For a more detailed reading of the status of the image in this development, see Sven-Olov Wallenstein, “Images of Philosophy. Deleuze and the Form of the Question”, in *Essays, Lectures*, (Stockholm: Axl Books, 2007.)

traced off a common sense or a psychological state, yet assumed, dogmatically, to represent the entirety and full potential of thought. The call for a new image of thought in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Proust and Signs* does therefore not contradict the call for a thought without Image in *Difference and Repetition*. Rather, it can be understood as the search for an “image of a thought without image”,<sup>37</sup> which does not oppose the new image of thought as image as much as it constitutes an imperative to seek out, and create, the conditions under which a new image of thought can unfold. “The theory of thought,” Deleuze writes in the conclusion to *Difference and Repetition*, “is like painting: it needs that revolution which took art from representation to abstraction. This is the aim of a theory of thought without image.” (DR 354/276) And there can be no such thought without image and revolution in philosophy unless Platonism is overturned.<sup>38</sup>

The common understanding of Deleuze’s overturning of Platonism and critique of the image as an essentially iconoclastic endeavour is, however, clearly complicated by the fact that his criticism of Platonism as the founder of representation, coexists with a deeply felt affirmation of a particularly violent moment in the development of Plato’s conception of thought.<sup>39</sup> Most remarkable, however, in relation to the overturning of Platonism pursued by Deleuze, is perhaps the apparent coincidence that both Plato and Deleuze construct thought’s highest mode in terms of a *thought without image*. And that this image of a thought without image, achieved by virtue of a certain *paideia* or education of both senses and faculties, is repeated in the concept of the “apprenticeship” that Deleuze discovers in Proust.

First of all, in the famous section on the division of the line in book VI of the *Republic* (509d–511e), Plato presents *noesis* as the highest of the four modes or *pathemata* of the soul, precisely because it does *not* rely on the use of images (*aneu ton ... eikonon*); it proceeds from that which is assumed (*hypothesis*) towards the non-hypothetical or unconditioned principle (*to archen anhypotheton*). The noetic mode of thought is, hence, a pure dialectics of Ideas: it unfolds methodically or systematically only in and through Ideas (510b). And this is what separates *noesis* from *dianoia* – the second highest *pathema*, the thought of geometry and the so-called arts or *technai* – which in

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Voss, *Conditions of Thought*, 29.

<sup>38</sup> As pointed out by Beistegui, and as will be briefly touched upon here, the extent to which Deleuze’s “effort to produce another image of *thought* requires a new thought of the *image*” is quite striking. See Miguel de Beistegui, ‘The Deleuzian Reversal of Platonism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, ed. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 55.

<sup>39</sup> This moment in Plato, affirmed by Deleuze as crucial to the new image of thought developed by Proust, will be examined in greater detail in chapter 4.

its exploration of the intelligible indeed makes use of thought primarily even though it remains limited to moving from one assumption to another, thereby proceeding from the *hypothesis* it supposes at the outset to the *teleute*, its concluding supposition, without ever raising itself above the element of the image constitutive of these suppositions.

The four modes of thought of the line – *eikasia* (imagination) and *pistis* (belief) in regard of the visible; *dianoia* (thought) and *noesis* (intelligence) with respect to the intelligible – are developed by Plato in accordance with an ascending order: on the side of the visible (*to horaton*), the mode of *eikasia* corresponds to sensible images in the form of shadows and reflections (*skiai* and *phantasmata*); the mode of *pistis* corresponds to the sensible things, which cast their shadows or are reflected in water and similar surfaces; on the side of the intelligible (*to noeton*), the mode of *dianoia* corresponds to the use of representations of such sensible things as hypothetical principles (*archai*), based upon which, and without any further support from the senses, *dianoia* then proceeds methodically towards a conclusion (for example, beginning with a representation of a triangle, the geometer by means of method then approaches the triangle such as can only be seen in and through thought); finally, in the mode of *noesis*, thought again begins with hypotheses, yet this time it does not treat them as known principles but precisely as provisional steps or springboards (*epibaseis*) towards the unconditioned principle or first beginning, only to then turn around and work its way back down to a conclusion (*epi teleuten katabaine*), without any support of images or other things perceivable with the senses (511b-c).<sup>40</sup>

Thus, on the one hand, there is an ascending order of modes which is crowned by *noesis* as a completely dialectical mode of thought that breaks with the use of images by proceeding only from Idea to Idea. At the same time, that is, as thought progresses towards the imageless in accordance with the ascending order, the concept of the image undergoes a series of transpositions: the sensible original becomes a copy and in turn the original copy becomes a copy of a copy. This obviously prefigures the famous distinctions upon which Plato elaborates in relation to art as *mimesis* and the artist as *eidolou demiourgos* in Book X, that is, the distinction between *eikon*, *phantasma*, and *eidolon* figured

<sup>40</sup> In “Death and the Compass” (1942), the detective Erik Lönnrot says: “I know of a Greek labyrinth that is but one straight line.” This is generally assumed to be a reference to Zeno’s paradox. Considering that Lönnrot immediately adds that “so many philosophers have been lost upon that line”, however, one may perhaps be pardoned for associating this also to Plato’s divided line. See Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 156. Furthermore, as is noted briefly also in chapter 3, Deleuze refers to this passage in his analysis of the line of time identified as “Aion” in the 10<sup>th</sup> series of the “Ideal Game” in *Logic of Sense*.

as different kinds of images in different kinds of relations to the truth and the model. But, on the other hand, as the sensible original becomes a copy in the form of a hypothesis used by thought in the mode of *dianoia*, the soul is nonetheless compelled to posit it precisely as a principle; the copy thus returns as a mere supposition or hypothesis copied from a sense object at the very point that thought plunges fully into the realm of the intelligible and accomplishes the break with the sensible imaginary in favour of a pure dialectics of Ideas. Thus thought fulfils itself as a thought without image by transcending the limit of the sensible imaginary, only to recuperate or rather invent this limit precisely as a criterion for truth.

The distinction between the image and the Idea, the copy and the model, the Same and the Similar – so crucial to the world of representation that Platonism stakes out and finds – is a distinction Plato was already unable to guarantee, according to Deleuze. Rather than keeping the difference between what is an image in essence and what is essentially imageless firmly in place, Deleuze argues that Plato's distinction soon “wavers [*se déplace*] between two sorts of images.” (LS 295/256) There is, on the one hand, the “copies-icons” (*eikones*) which, because of their *internal resemblance* and proximity to the Idea rather than an external resemblance to another thing, are considered “well-founded” pretenders to the truth and, hence, “good” images; but there is also the other sort of image, the “simulacra-phantasms” (*eidola* or *phantasmata*), which, because of their fundamental dissimilarity, the “essential perversion and deviation” they imply, are considered “false pretenders” and, hence, “bad” images.

According to Deleuze, however, it is a mistake to assume that the difference between these two sorts of images is one of degree only, as if the phantasm or the simulacra was simply an infinitely degraded copy of a copy the discovery of which did not threaten to erase the fundamental division of the same and the similar, and thus extinguish the world of representation itself. It is exactly this mistake, however, that dawns on Plato at the end of Socrates' hunt in the *Sophist*, where we observe, according to Deleuze, “the most extraordinary adventure of Platonism: as a consequence of searching in the direction of the simulacrum and of leaning over its abyss, Plato discovers, in the flash of an instant, that the simulacrum is not simply a false copy, but that it places in question the very notions of copy and model.” (LS 295/256; cf. DR 166/127–128) Correlative to how the “final definition of the Sophist leads us to the point

where we can no longer distinguish him from Socrates himself”,<sup>41</sup> the collapse of this distinction, of this partition keeping the models and originals separate from the images and the copies, not only results in the “twilight of the icons” and the downfall of the world of representation,<sup>42</sup> but also in the discovery of the abysmal groundlessness which, in the overturning of Platonism, is the true element of thought.<sup>43</sup>

It is true, of course, that Deleuze eventually abandons the concept of the simulacrum.<sup>44</sup> Even so, the complications and problems that unfold from its discovery still remain in effect:<sup>45</sup> the Idea is no longer simply opposed to the image and the Image no longer simply opposed to thought. The image is no longer what resembles the Idea, the copy that in relation to its model is different in appearance but similar in essence, since there are no longer any identical or self-same Ideas or images created in their resemblance. Consequently, it is no longer possible to distinguish and select among pretenders well-founded or unfounded, similar or dissimilar, “good” or “bad”, so that the “false” and rebellious claimants may be repressed and sequestered, and the triumph of the “true” claimants, the arbiters of peace, secured. The only Idea or model is the *difference-in-itself* and the only image is the *image without resemblance*. “Far from being a new foundation”, Deleuze writes in “Plato and the Simulacrum” (1967), this image without resemblance “engulfs all foundations, it assures a universal breakdown (*effondrement*), but as a joyful and positive event, as an un-founding (*effondement*)” (LS 303–304/263). And this is, in summary, the truth of the image of a thought without Image as well.

<sup>41</sup> LS 295/256. Cf. DR 93/68: “The sophist is not the being (or the non-being) of contradiction, but the one who raises everything to the level of simulacra and maintains them in that state. Was it not inevitable that Plato should push irony to that point – to parody? Was it not inevitable that Plato should be the first to overturn Platonism, or at least to show the direction such an overturning should take?”

<sup>42</sup> DR 92/67: “The simulacrum seizes upon a constituent disparity in the thing from which it strips the rank of model.”

<sup>43</sup> “Modern thought”, Deleuze writes in the preface to *Difference and Repetition*, “is born of the failure of representation, of the loss of identities, and of the discovery of all the forces that act under the representation of the identical. The modern world is one of simulacra. Man did not survive God, nor did the identity of the subject survive that of substance.” (DR 1/ix)

<sup>44</sup> For a detailed exposition of the concept of the simulacrum in Deleuze, see Daniel W. Smith, “The Concept of the Simulacrum: Deleuze and the Overturning of Platonism”, in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

<sup>45</sup> The lasting effect of Deleuze’s development of the concept of the simulacrum, that is, the emergence of a world consisting in nothing but images without resemblance, is, for example, clearly felt in his reading of Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* in *Bergsonism* as well as the books on *Cinema*. And one could arguably extract a similar conception already from the conception of the subject’s constitution as a flux of images or impressions in both *Empiricism and Subjectivity* and *Proust and Signs*.

## THE IMAGE OF THOUGHT IN PROUST'S DOCTRINE OF SIGNS

As long as the overturning of Platonism, which Deleuze proclaims in his pursuit of a thought without Image, is conceived purely as an iconoclastic venture, as an abjuration of, for example, the Platonic doctrine in general, then the presentation and organisation of the doctrine of signs in *Proust and Signs* always risks appearing as a contradictory relapse into the Platonism otherwise so emphatically renounced. The system and table extracted from Proust, however, appears as a striking analogue to how the Platonic table correlates the different objects of thought with as many faculties,<sup>46</sup> organising them into two parallel and hierarchically divided orders (*ordo essendi* and *ordo cognoscendi* in the terms of modern rationalism), albeit subverting the axiological order of Plato's system so that, at least on an apparent level, the highest form of thought now corresponds to art rather than to the recognition of the Good as the terminus of the philosopher's apprenticeship or *paideia*.

Likewise, the doctrine extracted from the *Search* presents four specific types of signs in the following hierarchical order: "worldly signs" (*signes mondaines*), "signs of love" (*signes de l'amour*), "sensuous signs" (*signes sensibles*), and "signs of art" (*signes de l'art*). Each type of sign has its correlative faculty of thought, that is, the faculty upon which each type of sign calls specifically and principally in order to be interpreted or deciphered and ultimately to have its truths explicated or developed: the worldly signs correspond principally with the *intelligence*; the signs of love with the intelligence but also *the sensibility*; the sensuous signs with *the memory* or *the imagination*, albeit under the constraint of the sensibility; and, finally, the signs of art with *pure thought* as the *faculty of essences*. The hierarchy of the signs, ranging from the worldly signs at the bottom to the signs of art at the top, is determined according to the value ascribed to each type relative to the *order of the apprenticeship*, on the one hand, that is, in considering the extent to which it furthers the progression of the subject's process of learning to think; and relative to the *order of essence*, on the other, that is, relative to the kind of essence or Idea that each sign has the capacity to express and its specific degree of generality or singularity.

<sup>46</sup> Sauvagnargues and Nabais, among others, both rightly points out that in this regard Deleuze basically continues the development of the doctrine of faculties elaborated, above all, in *Kant's Critical Philosophy* from the year before. I do not contest this as much as I seek to indicate another way of explicating the development of this theme in Deleuze, which, hopefully, also has the merit of bringing to light the complexity and productivity of Deleuze's overturning of Platonism.

Accordingly, all types of signs presented by Deleuze are different in kind: they are composed by different materials; emitted and received differently; they have different relationships to their sense and different effects on the subject; they appeal to different faculties and pertain to different lines of time; and, finally, they express the essence in a different way and to different degrees. All these factors converge in the determination of their place in the hierarchy of signs in general. As already intimated, however, this hierarchy is not just some abstract conceptual construct, but relates directly to the *Search* as an apprenticeship and a search for truth in time. The signs do not simply constitute the objects of learning in general, that is, the objects of a general knowledge differing in degree only and thus distinguishable only on the level of their extensions and intensions. In truth, each type of sign provides the matter out of which each specific *world of signs* is composed. It is this plurality of worlds, materially different and strung up on essentially different lines of time, cut-off from one another on a general level yet intersecting at particular points, that constitutes the apprenticeship as a system of truth which the apprentice has no choice but to explore in the search of truth.

First of all, there is the world composed of the *worldly signs*: the world of the salon, of snobbism, of the constantly shifting trends in the life of the nobility and the bourgeoisie, the “kaleidoscope”, in Proust’s terms, of their social and political affinities and affiliations, of their appetites and inclinations in matters of pleasure and art. The signs of this world are empty in essence; never referring to “something else, to a transcendent signification or ideal content”, the worldly sign usurps “the supposed value of its sense” and replaces it with the shadow of its essential emptiness.<sup>47</sup> In this case, the aim of the apprentice is therefore not so much to decipher the extension of any particular sign as it is to map the exchange and function of the signs in general, that is, “to understand why someone is ‘received’ in a certain world, why someone ceases to be so” (PS 12/5). For all their emptiness and stereotypical stupidity, the worldly signs are still crucial to the apprenticeship by virtue of a “ritual perfection, a kind of formalism” arising out of their emptiness and permitting the effect, issuing from their producers, to be grafted onto us: a unique feeling of “nervous exaltation” deriving from the prodigious speed and intensity of their exchange. Remarkably, it is this world that marks the inception of Marcel’s apprenticeship of signs according to Deleuze – not the commonly

<sup>47</sup> PS 13/6: “This is why worldliness, judged from the viewpoint of actions, appears to be disappointing and cruel, and from the viewpoint of thought, it appears stupid. One does not act and one does not think, but one makes signs.”

cherished world of childhood, the nebulous world of Combray from which the *Search* otherwise appears to unfold.<sup>48</sup>

Second, there is the world composed by the *signs of love*: the world expressed by or implied in the beloved who appears to us as a sign, which the lover feels compelled to explicate by an act of interpretation. To fall in love is to become receptive to signs, to develop a heightened sensibility for the sign that is our beloved, while “to love is to try to *explicate*, to *develop* these unknown worlds that remain enveloped within the beloved.” (PS 14/7) If the worldly signs are essentially empty, however, the signs of love are essentially “deceptive” (*mensongers*) and can be “addressed to us only by concealing what they express: the origin of unknown worlds, of the unknown actions and thoughts that give them their sense.” (PS 16/9) It is these worlds, actions, and thoughts that the lover constantly seeks to explicate in order to be seen by the beloved, to be included in his or her world as an object of preference and desire. But, and this is the paradox to which the interpretation of the signs of love have us condemned: every effort to learn the truth, to know and control the beloved’s actions and desires, to penetrate into worlds as unknown to us as we are to them, to forestall every possible opportunity for duplicity or betrayal and thus cancel out the pain of jealousy, is an effort which in the end nourishes that jealousy and deepens our suffering all the more. Thus, the signs of love do not excite nervous exaltation, like the worldly signs, but are the “suffering of a deeper exploration.” (PS 16/9)

Third, there is the world composed of the *sensuous signs*, the signs of sensibility, of nature: the worlds of hawthorns and madeleines, of trees, steeples, and water pipes, worlds defined by a kind of quality that “no longer appears as a property of the object that now possesses it, but as the sign of an *altogether different* object that we must try to decipher, at the cost of an effort that always risks failure.” (PS 18/11) If the worldly signs refer us to their perfect emptiness, the signs of love to the unknown worlds of the beloved, then the sensuous signs always refer us to something else, that is, to another thing, place, or time. Once released from the sign keeping it captive, like Combray released from the madeleine, the thing released may bring us a sensation of extraordinary joy along with an imperative to seek out its sense and value or discover its truth.

<sup>48</sup> Whether it is in rejection of recollection and childhood memories as the defining themes of the *Search* or out of pure spite, Deleuze omits the world of Marcel’s childhood in Combray almost entirely. One may note, however, that the worlds to which the typology of signs corresponds in Deleuze are basically the worlds summarily mentioned by Proust in *Finding Time Again*. See IV/6 470/200. This, however, still does not provide any reason as to why the world of childhood should be omitted entirely.



In contrast to the signs of love, the sensuous signs are indeed “truthful” (*véridique*), they give us part of the essence and an “image of eternity”, but not the essence itself or true eternity and, according to Deleuze, can therefore not constitute the last stage of the apprenticeship. The sensuous signs are still material in both origin and destination and thus tainted still by a degree of generality.

Fourth, and finally, there is the world at the apex of the apprenticeship, the ultimate world composed by signs of art: the world of completely “dema-terialised” signs finding their entirely “spiritualised” sense in the essences or Ideas which the paintings, the novels, or the pieces of music reveal to us. And these essences or Ideas are, once again, only thinkable beyond representation and by virtue of a thought without Image. As the world of essences or Ideas, however, the world of art is also the critical *turning point* of the apprenticeship in that it “reacts on all the others and notably on the sensuous signs; it integrates them, colors them with an aesthetic meaning and penetrates [*pénètre*] what was still opaque about them.” (PS 21/13–14; tr. mod.)

In short, the signs of art teach us that the other types of signs “*already* referred to an essence that was incarnated in their material meaning,” that is, the signs of art ultimately allow us to re-descend through the stages of the apprenticeship and thus rediscover the different signs and their corresponding worlds from the viewpoint of the essence as a difference without image, as a singular Idea the signs of which are not created in its image and thus bear no resemblance to it, but nonetheless are still expressive of it. “It is only on the level of art that the essences are revealed. But *once* they are manifested in the work of art, they react upon all the other domains; we learn that they were *already* incarnated, that they were already there in all these of signs, in all the types of apprenticeship.” (PS 50/38)

In conclusion, the essence of the doctrine of faculties and the ascending dialectics most famously developed by Plato in book VI (509d–511e) and VII (514a–520a) of the *Republic*, as well as in the *Symposium* (210a–e), is thus repeated, albeit playfully, by the system of signs in the *Search*. Evidently, it is not only the basic structure of the system that is repeated, however, but also the apparent movement by which the system is traversed. The movement corresponding with Plato’s notion of *paideia* has, as we will see in the third chapter, a correlative in the movement of the apprenticeship in Proust.

This system, this table of signs will be central in further investigating the experience of thought that lays at the heart of our (and Deleuze’s) concern, that is, an experience of thought that has unbridled itself from the nullifying strictures of the dogmatic image of thought, which we set out in the first part

of this chapter. The system of signs which Deleuze presents in light of his reading of Proust marks the beginning of an account into the conditions under which a new image of thought and, *mutatis mutandi*, a thought without an image of thought is experienced. But while setting out the broad outline of this operation, it is in no way the end of the matter.

In setting out to ask an elementary but interrogative question, each of the following chapters draws out the implications of the system of signs introduced above, exposing the stakes of the experience of a thought beyond the dogmatic image. This means, in chapter three, asking the question: “how is thought learned?” once freed from the regimes of recognition and representation, and in chapter four, posing the question: “to what effect does thought think in its highest form?” once extricated from the representational conception of the essences or Ideas as given, identical, and immutable. But the question that now needs to be posed is “who is called to think?” once the philosopher has been dethroned as the paragon of good will, good sense, and the desire to know born out of a sense of wonder. It is to this question that our attention now turns.

## SECOND CHAPTER: THE PHILOSOPHER

Every time we write, we give voice to someone else [*on fait parler quelqu'un d'autre*]. And it is to a certain form that we give voice first of all. In the classical world, for example, that which speaks is the individual.... In the romantic world, it is personae [*personnages*] who speak.... Today, however, we are uncovering a world of pre-individual, impersonal singularities. They are not reducible to individuals or persons, nor to a sea without difference.... The poet Ferlinghetti talks about the fourth person singular: it is that to which we try to give voice. (ID 198/143)

As we have seen, the general purpose of Deleuze's critique of the image of thought is, in the first instance, to dissipate the vapours of moralism and orthodoxy otherwise shrouding thought from the intensities afflicting it from without as well as from within. For this to succeed, a modification of the critical question or the form of the critical inquiry is crucial: after Nietzsche, Deleuze remarks, one no longer asks *what is thinking?* but rather *who thinks?* It is in response to this shift away from universal qualities towards perspectives or viewpoints, demanding that essences be interrogated in terms of *who?* (*quissitas*) or *which?* (*haecceitas*) rather than in terms of *what?* (*quidditas*), that Deleuze will return again and again to the question of the significance of the philosopher or the *philosophos* as the name of the thinker in his works.<sup>1</sup> And while there is no explicit inquiry into the form of the question in *Proust and Signs*, as there is in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, it is perhaps with and through Proust that Deleuze explores the question *who thinks?* the furthest – albeit more in the form of practical experimentation than theoretical reflection.

The beginning of this experimentation is found precisely in the questioning of one of the fundamental presuppositions of the image of thought, namely the assumption that just as thought has a natural affinity with the true, the thinker is a friend of wisdom by nature. In Proust, however, the bond between friendship, thought, and truth is disrupted inasmuch as “friendship and philosophy are subject [*justiciable*] to the same criticism.” (PS 41/30) And the disdain of friendship commonly expressed in the *Search* promises that this criticism will radically disfigure the traditional image of the philosopher (not

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, NP 6/5–6; PS 41/30, 116/94–95, 127–135/105–111; QPh? 8–10/2–6.

even Nietzsche is spared by Proust, after all).<sup>2</sup> It is only natural, therefore, that it is by way of Proust that the ancient affiliation or affinity between thinking and friendship is severed for the sake of giving voice to someone or something else completely. The question is to what or to whom Deleuze gives voice through Proust instead and to what effect.

In the first part of this chapter the question *who?* is examined, first, as the proper form of critical inquiry in the wake of Nietzsche, and, second, with respect to both Plato's and Proust's critical responses to the figuration of the philosopher as the Friend. In the second part, the implications of this critique, that is, the shift from friendship (*philia*) to erotic love (*eros*), with respect to thought's fundamental condition, and from wisdom (*sophia*) to reproduction or engendering (*genesis*), with respect to its superior end, is examined by way of Proust's transfiguration of the Jealous Lover already introduced into thought in Plato. In conclusion, the ideal of the Scientist is unfolded from the discovery of the eroto-pathological foundation of thought in Proust and the limits of love traced out in the form of two different kinds of sign-delirium, which in their turn indicate the need ultimately to exceed the figuration of the Jealous Lover in the pursuit of a new image of thought.

<sup>2</sup> In the third volume, Proust's narrator describes friendship as "so small a thing that I find it hard to understand how men with some claim to genius – Nietzsche, for instance – can have been such simpletons as to ascribe to it a certain intellectual value, and consequently to deny themselves friendships in which intellectual esteem would have no part. Yes, it has always been a surprise to me to find a man who carried sincerity towards himself to so high a pitch as to cut himself off, by a scruple of conscience, from Wagner's music, imagining that the truth could ever be attained by the mode of expression, naturally vague and inadequate, which our actions in general and acts of friendship in particular furnish, or that there could be any kind of significance in the fact of leaving one's work to go and see a friend and shed tears with him on hearing the false report that the Louvre was burned." II/3: 688–689/392–393. Proust's criticism of Nietzsche's view on friendship should for all that not be considered as invalidating the use of the latter to examine the question *who?* in the former. To the extent that Deleuze argues that the shift from wisdom to philosophy in ancient Greece entails the internalisation of the figure of the friend in thought, there is, moreover, an interesting discrepancy between the Nietzschean and the Proustian understanding of friendship that would seem important to analyse in relation to a discussion of the philosopher's masks in general: especially since this shift from the sage to the philosopher also meant, as Smith remarks, that "friendship was made to imply not only an amorous desire for wisdom, but also a jealous *distrust* of one's rival claimants." Smith, "The Concept of the Simulacrum: Deleuze and the Overturning of Platonism", in *Essays*, 6. This, however, is not the place to undertake such a comparative study in any systematic or exhaustive fashion.

## I. OF THE FRIEND

*Who? as the principal form of critical inquiry after Nietzsche. – The opposition between thought and philosophy in Proust and Plato. – The minor forms of the question of essence and the concept of dramatisation. – The Friend, the Lover, and the rivalry within the figuration of the philosopher.*

“Who is in search of truth? And what does the man who says ‘I want the truth’ mean?” (PS 23/15) Evidently, Deleuze inherits the question “who?” or “which one?” from Nietzsche rather than Proust. And yet it is by way of Proust that it receives its perhaps most cogent answer. But why ask *who* it is that thinks rather than *what* this thinking is? What is the significance of this shift?

According to Deleuze, we must first of all distinguish between *what?* as the major or *essential form* of questioning associated with the discovery of the Idea in Platonism, on the one side, and, on the other, *who? how? when? where? how much?* as the minor or *accidental forms* associated with the sophistry to which Platonism traditionally is opposed. Second of all, we must distinguish between the different kinds of Ideas or essences to which these forms of questioning give rise: (1) the Idea conceived in terms of *simplicity* and as corresponding to the *instantaneous determination* demanded by the static and abstract form *what?*, that is, as something simple and essential into which the inessential is inscribed: i.e. the essential contains the inessential *in essence*; (2) the Idea conceived in terms of *plurality* and as corresponding to the *progressive determination* demanded by the dynamic and concrete forms *who? how? when? where? how much?* that is, as a multiplicity within the domain of which the inessential engenders the essential as an event or accident: that is, the inessential includes the essential *in case* only.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, if the major or *essential form* of questioning, which finds its beginning in the question *what?*, and which presupposes the simplicity and importance of the essence it seeks to determine, thereby rediscovering in the end what was already there from the beginning, the minor or *accidental* questions, on the contrary, lead gradually to the discovery of the essence as a remarkable *case* within the ordinary and unimportant – a singular *event* born by accident at the limit of the regular and the inessential.<sup>4</sup> In summary, what is singular,

<sup>3</sup> ID 133/95–96, DR 338/263.

<sup>4</sup> In *Difference and Repetition* this idea of the essential as an event within the inessential, as a remarkable point emerging from within a series of ordinary points, is rather playfully conceived also in terms of *vice-diction*, that is, a procedure derived from Leibniz’s conception of differential calculus and essentially

remarkable, important, can only be discovered in the process of learning: a temporal *apprenticeship* where essences are constructed from the inessential, just as time is regained from the time squandered or lost. This applies also to how in Proust the question *who?* is answered.

After Nietzsche the problem of thought shifts from a problem concerning the essence as an object of knowledge that is important in itself, to a problem of progressive “evaluation of what is important and what is not, to the distribution of the singular and regular, remarkable and ordinary points, which takes place entirely within the inessential” (DR 245/189). The effects of this shift are clearly reflected in the *symptomatology*, *typology*, and *genealogy* which, according to Deleuze, is integral to Nietzsche’s method of interpretation and evaluation. First, all phenomena are apprehended as signs or *symptoms* the sense of which must be searched in the constellation of forces producing them; second, the forces are themselves *interpreted* according to the *type* of quality they express (“active” or “reactive”); third, the type of force is in each case *evaluated* according to the *genetic element* constituting its origin or the original difference determining its essence (“noble” or “base”).<sup>5</sup>

Summarily, this amounts to what Deleuze calls a “critical reversal” insofar as the evaluation of a symptom or sign can no longer find its principle in any presupposed or given value. On the contrary, there is no value that does not presuppose an evaluation or that has not been created by an evaluative act, the principle of which is discovered in the differential and genetic element that is the evaluator’s mode of existence and style of thinking.<sup>6</sup> “The problem of critique is that of the value of values, of the evaluation from which their value arises, thus the problem of their *creation*.” (NP 1/1)

Following Deleuze’s conception of Nietzsche, one could say that truth now consists in the series of revaluations constituting the history of its function, value, and sense. Such a series of revaluations are necessarily accomplished not only in a determinate time and place, such as Athens 399 BC or Turin 1889 AD, but also by a determinate *type* of thinker, irreducible to empirical *exam-*

opposed to the dialectical procedure of *contradiction*. “This procedure of the infinitely small, which maintains the distinction between essences (to the extent that one plays the role of inessential to the other), is quite different to contradiction. We should therefore give it a special name, that of ‘vice-diction’... The inessential includes the essential in the case, whereas the essential contains the inessential in essence.” DR 66/46. See also, DR 245–248/189–92, 275/213, 338–340/263–264.

<sup>5</sup> NP 85/75.

<sup>6</sup> NP 1–2/1.

ples as well as to *anthropological characterisations*, to which each such revaluation gives voice or expression.<sup>7</sup> To the extent that the type performing the revaluation and cultivating its sense and value is not taken into consideration, the concept of truth thus remains abstract. In fact, according to Deleuze, the truth can in each case be gauged and grasped only if the concept of truth is properly *dramatised*, that is, only if it is related to the quality, quantity, and mode of the forces determining the type of thinker that expresses it.<sup>8</sup> “A type”, Deleuze writes in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, “can only be defined by determining what the will wants in the exemplars of this type. What does the one searching for truth want? This is the only way of knowing *who* or *which one* is searching for truth.” The “method of dramatisation” conceived as a “differential, typological, and genealogical method” is therefore the only adequate method for a mode of interrogating the essence, which, according to Deleuze, finds its beginning in the minor or *accidental form* of questioning the essence as plurality.<sup>9</sup> “We are led to the essence”, Deleuze writes, “only by the question: Who? Which one?” (NP 87/77; tr. mod.)

It is not just the concept of truth that is dramatised according to the forces and the relations constituting it, but the thinker as well. This is because there can be no interpretation of a sign or symptom unless it implicates not only a value but also presupposes an evaluation; such an image of thought, an image of the thinker, cannot be called into question and critically interrogated by way of the *what?*

In *Proust and Signs*, the question receives its most concrete answer: “Who searches for truth? The jealous lover, under the pressure of the beloved’s lies.” (PS 24/15) The jealous lover is thus indicated as a *type*, and both question and answer clearly correspond to the mode of inquiry and method of dramatisation outlined already in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.<sup>10</sup> This answer is in many ways crucial to Deleuze’s undertaking, but the jealous lover still does not constitute, not in itself at least, the final answer to Deleuze’s critical inquiry.

<sup>7</sup> NP 89/79.

<sup>8</sup> NP 88–89/78. “The essence of a thing is discovered in the force which possesses it and which is expressed in it, it is developed in the forces with affinity for this first one, endangered or destroyed by the forces which are opposed to it and which can take hold of it. Essence is always sense and value.” NP 87/77.

<sup>9</sup> NP 89/79.

<sup>10</sup> After the presentation of “The Method of Dramatisation”, Ferdinand Alquié’s reproaches Deleuze for promoting a conception of philosophy that endangers its specificity and threatens to reduce it to one or other form of science or psychology. In response Deleuze clarifies his use of the Jealous Lover as a *type* foreign to both the empirical sciences and empirical psychology: “when I cited the jealous man as a ‘type’ of the seeker of truth, it was not as a psychological character, but as a complex of space and time, as a ‘figure’ belonging to the very *notion* of truth.” (ID 149/107; tr. mod.)

For, insofar as the type or figuration of the jealous lover belongs to an inquiry into the experience of thought, it is, above all, as a point of departure<sup>11</sup> that affords the possibility of returning to Plato: by way of Plato, by way of Proust, the genesis of the *philosophos* is repeated not so as to affirm the image of the friend thinking in affinity with the true but instead to reveal the jealous lover as the type essential to the philosopher – born not as a continuation of the archaic lineage of the sage but in opposition to it.

#### WHO IS THE PHILOSOPHER?

Searching in Proust for a new answer to the question *who thinks?* by returning to Plato certainly seems contrary to the anti-platonism Deleuze finds to be integral to the *Search*. And so it may appear, initially, as if the development outlined above, rather than bringing us closer, would actually detract from both Proust and Plato, taken in isolation, as well as remove us further still from any possible reconstruction of their relation in positive terms. There should be no doubt, however, that Deleuze's engagement with Proust and Plato contributes positively in giving this development its particular orientation, that is, towards a conception of Ideas as problematic multiplicities closer to accidents than to stable essences, and towards an understanding of subjectivity as a matter of spatiotemporal dynamics as well as processes of individuation within an impersonal and pre-individual transcendental field.<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, the fact remains that Proust's substitution of the Jealous Lover for the humble Alethophile is made in opposition to the tradition of philosophy. This, however, does not mean that philosophy is simply negated or excluded in the *Search*: Proust is not just another herald of philosophy's end. In fact, the opposition of thought to philosophy is about as complex an issue in Proust as it is in Nietzsche. For rather than simply excluding philosophy, the answer provided by Proust, as well as the critical enquiry undertaken by

<sup>11</sup> This is not to make the claim that Deleuze's philosophy is concerned with the subject in the same sense or to the same degree as much of the phenomenological tradition following from Husserl, for example, only that the so-called "death of the subject", in this case, is a death often grossly misunderstood.

<sup>12</sup> Of course, from a certain point of view it is indubitable that this development removes Deleuze from Platonism. But this is not necessarily the same thing as distancing oneself from Plato. In fact, when Alexis Philonenko asks Deleuze, after the presentation, whether he does not, in spite of everything, finally end up in the very Platonism he seeks to overturn – provided that constitution in this tradition, at least insofar as it is understood on the basis of the Idea, and insofar as it can be understood, is always truthful or veridical –, Deleuze answers that if that is a claim made in reference to the early dialogues then the answer is no; but if it refers to the later dialogues where the Ideas appear as multiplicities one must work through or cross (*parcourir*) by virtue of questions such as *how? how much? in which case?* etc., in that case, Deleuze says, then "yes, everything I have said in fact strikes me as Platonic (*tout ce que je dis me paraît en effet platonicien*)." (ID 162/116; tr. mod.)



Deleuze by way of Proust, can be said to effect a re-dramatisation of the history of philosophy, according to which the opposition between “the philosopher” and “the anti-philosopher” – or, to be more precise, between “philosophy” and “thought” – can be said to be discovered in the origin of the tradition it denounces. This is why Deleuze can affirm Proust’s critique as aimed at the tradition of philosophy and claim to discover the possibility to overturn this tradition in Plato at the same time. “It may be”, as Deleuze writes, “that Proust’s critique of philosophy is eminently philosophical.” (PS 122/100)

Still, there can be no doubt that Proust both explicitly and implicitly opposes true thought to philosophical thought, the passionate lover of truth to the meek friend of wisdom, in a manner convenience is prone to brand as anti-philosophical. But then, so does Plato – as soon as Socrates portrays the philosopher from, for instance, the viewpoint of the Sophist and in the model of the *physiologoi* who came before him: in the *Theaetetus* (173c–d), for example,<sup>13</sup> Socrates claims that the foremost (*koryphaioi*) of the philosophers, never learn to find their way to the agora, the court, the council or any other place of public assembly; they remain ignorant of laws and decisions, political debates and intrigues as well as of ancestry. Essentially, they are absent from the city and its affairs in all but flesh (*alla to onti to soma monon en te polei keitai autou kai epidemei*), for the simple reason that the thought of the philosopher naturally despises all such superficial things, preferring to soar through the heavens above or burrow into the depths below than dwelling upon the petty matters of the surface of the earth.<sup>14</sup> Although a number of these characteristics and values certainly apply to some aspects of the figure of Socrates, there is no doubt that this portrait, which in truth shares more with the Socrates of Aristophanes’ *The Clouds* than the Socrates of Plato’s *Apology*, is an ironic portrait deployed as a ruse in the double struggle against the Sage and the Sophist – that is, against *sophia* as the end of thought and *philia* as the means to achieve it.

The ambiguity or opposition within the figure of the philosopher in Plato is of course testimony to the transformation he subjects it to, that is, to its critical renewal and the confusion that subtends it. But it is also a conscious means of deception, the purpose of which is to allow this upsetting transformation to be dramatised in the first place. The question *who?* lies at the

<sup>13</sup> For another example of how the ancient image of the philosopher as a man of wisdom is used, not to distance Socrates from the *physiologoi* or *sophiai* of old, but to distance Socrates from the Sophist; see Plato, *Greater Hippias*, 281a–283b.

<sup>14</sup> This is of course one of the accusations Socrates later defends himself against. See Plato, *Apology*, 18b, 19b.

heart of a ruse intrinsic to the dialogue as form,<sup>15</sup> repeatedly shattering the mask of the philosopher – not with the purpose of unmasking the putatively true but hitherto hidden face of the philosopher, but rather to discover a new unity in the manifold it delivers, by affirming the excess of these fragments as such. It is thus, as Socrates says in reference to Homer in the beginning of the *Sophist* (216c–d), as difficult to distinguish the philosopher from the non-philosopher as it is to distinguish gods from men, since also “the genuine philosophers who ‘haunt our cities’ – by contrast to the fake ones – take on all sorts of different appearances just because of other people’s ignorance.... Sometimes they take on the appearance of statesmen [*politikoi*], and sometimes of sophists [*sophistai*]. Sometimes, too, they might give the impression that they’re completely insane [*manikos*].” And so Socrates is always and necessarily someone other than whom he is assumed to be: not only the philosopher *but also* the lover, *and* the priest, *and* the madman... *and*, finally, the ungodly grocer of depravity, the sophist dying in the name of truth.<sup>16</sup>

To the extent that this concerns the philosopher’s identity: behind the mask, just another mask... On the other hand, the mask is obviously not just a mask, the ruse not just a ruse, but also – as Deleuze discovers through Nietzsche – *laws of nature*: “A force would not survive if it did not first of all borrow the feature of the forces with which it struggles.” (NP 5/5) And this is why “the art of interpretation must”, according to Deleuze’s understanding of Nietzsche, “also be an art of piercing masks” or a genealogical interpretation and evaluation of the dominating and dominated forces expressing themselves through the mask as well as the un-masked (NP 6/5).

#### WHERE? WHEN? BY WHOM? THE QUESTION OF ESSENCE

There is arguably no direct equivalent to Nietzsche’s ontology of forces and genealogical analysis in Proust. There is, however, the doctrine of signs which Deleuze discovers in the *Search*, a doctrine in which the types of signs, the relation to their sense, their effects, their modes of emission and reception all come into consideration relative to the general laws and rules of the space and time they occupy. For example, the signs exchanged in the salons of the bourgeois and the nobility are both completely vacuous, void

<sup>15</sup>The form *who?* is in fact intrinsic to the form of the dialogue and Plato’s philosophy cannot, in truth, be explained if its implicit and explicit insistence in the dialogues is not accounted for. See Monique Dixsaut, *Le Naturel philosophe: Essais sur les Dialogues de Platon* (Paris: Vrin, 2016), 197.

<sup>16</sup>This irony is doubled by the political irony pointed out by François Chatelet, namely that “Socrates, the anti-democrat, dies a democratic death due to democracy’s failure.” François Chatelet, *Platon* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 56.

of everything except the emptiness allowing them to replace not only individual actions or feelings but, at their limit, entire lives.<sup>17</sup> And since they are void and vacuous there is never any real reference involved: they do not in themselves refer to another object, to any transcendent or ideal significance, but always only to themselves as the apparent replacement for something that is never going to take place: a feeling of friendship or love is signalled, not felt; a generosity is signalled, never given. In this world, the task of interpretation is therefore not so much to release the secret that the sign keeps within itself as it is to keep track of the traffic of the signs: to track and map origins and destinations, modes of emission and reception.

Who is invited where, when, and by whom? Who is the upstart, the sycophant, the reject? Who is the eminence, the loyalist, the apostate? The worldly signs are thus not explained in terms of their explicit or implicit senses or significations, but in reference either to the *law* governing the traffic and economy of signs in general, or to the *rules* regulating the traffic and exchange in a particular salon.<sup>18</sup> Thus the significance of the worldly signs in spite of their vacuity: “For nothing gives us more to think [*ne donne plus à penser*] than what goes on in the head of a fool. Those who are like parrots, in a group, are also ‘prophetic birds’: their chatter signals the presence of a law.” (PS 101/83; tr. mod.) The salon is, in other words, tragical. The repetition of a tragedy conceivable only in terms of the erotic, cultural, social, economical, or political aspects of the spatiotemporal dynamisms that it dramatises in each and every iteration.

If we are to understand the complete reality of a concept, such as truth, then, just as with any concept, it must always be *dramatised*. For this reason,

<sup>17</sup> Here a life is ultimately just another sign signalled across the distance of a lifetime wasted in the salons, that is, nothing more than a charming or dreary, talented or concealed flicker in the darkness of collective forgetfulness. For example, there is the case of Dechambre and the Verdurins, the previously loved and praised but now deceased and replaced pianist. III/1: 288/294, 293/299. There is also Alix, “one of the ‘three Fates’ of the Faubourg Saint-Germain”, on the one hand appearing to Marcel like a “moss-covered” and “crumbling goddess in a park”, an impervious “block of marble” immune to all sorts of ignominy and slander hurled at her, but whose entire life, on the other hand, is suddenly engulfed in a single and unremarkable sign, ominously hinting of her doom: “Alix bore the blow without flinching. Her gaze was piercing and blank, her nose nobly arched. But one cheek was flaking. A hint of strange green and pink vegetation was invading her chin. Another winter perhaps would lay her low [*peut-être un hiver de plus la jetterait bas*].” II/3: 497–499/196–199.

<sup>18</sup> PS 12/5.

the *who?* that insists in the *Search* is always articulated with a set of spatio-temporal coordinates (*where?* and *when?*).<sup>19</sup> For, as Deleuze writes regarding Nietzsche, the concept of truth can only be determined “on the basis of a pluralist typology”. This typology always finds its beginning in a “topology”, that is, in an enquiry into “which *region* such truths and errors belong to, what their *type* is, *who* [qui] formulates and conceives them.” (NP 120/105; tr. mod.) Dramatisation therefore always involves an enquiry into the dynamisms producing the sign akin to the one we find in Proust’s doctrine of signs. Proust’s doctrine of signs thus contains elements analogous to the categories of high or low, noble or base, active or reactive, climate and diet, which Deleuze finds in Nietzsche.<sup>20</sup>

The immediate concern of any critical enquiry pursued in the form of *who?*, however, would seem to be precisely where or to whom this question should actually be addressed. An additional problem is, of course, that even if we assumed either the dialectician or the physician to be the one to ask, there will always be rival claims to the truth of these names. In the form *who?*, then, there is also an insistent *which?* or a call for a criterium of selection. Does this mean that the privilege attributed to the form *what?* by the ever-triumphant Socrates is warranted, and that it is in fact the only plausible means to reveal the *eidos* or *ousia* beyond the fleeting manifold of the sensible? After all, according to Socrates, you simply cannot answer the question *what is Virtue?* or *what is Beauty?* only by naming *who is virtuous* or *who is beautiful*. It must not be that the discovery of an unchanging principle beyond the sensible is the natural end of thinking. But, irrespective of this, is it not rather *who?* that constitutes the persistent question in Socrates’ interrogations of the citizens of Athens, sooner or later surfacing from the depths, commanding an answer: Who is the Virtuous? Who is the Sophist? Who is Socrates?

In fact, according to Deleuze, the privilege of *what?* is already challenged explicitly in Plato. As Plato’s thought develops and the “Platonic dialectics becomes a serious and positive thing”,<sup>21</sup> Deleuze claims, the questioning that coalesces around the form of the *what?* increasingly appears to be bound to contradiction. And so it is not due to a simple flaw in Socrates’ reasoning or his interlocutors that early dialogues such as *Lysis* and *Laches* have come to be known as Plato’s aporetic dialogues. In the later dialogues, Deleuze points out,

<sup>19</sup> NP 108/94–95; 118/104: “The truth of a thought must be interpreted and evaluated according to the forces or power that determine it to think and to think this rather than that.”

<sup>20</sup> NP 2–3/2.

<sup>21</sup> ID 133/95.

the minor questions otherwise assumed to touch upon the merely accidental rather than the essential are now prevalent: *who?* in the *Statesman*, *where and when?* in the *Sophist*, *how much?* in the *Philebus* and *in which case?* in *Parmenides*.<sup>22</sup> Thus, at this point, Deleuze writes, “[i]t is as if the Idea was positively determinable only in function of a transcendental typology, topology, posology and casuistry. So, the Sophists are reproached not so much for having utilised inferior forms of questions, as for not knowing how to determine the conditions under which these acquire their ideal import and sense.” (ID 133/95; tr. mod.)

Felt in all these dialogues is what Deleuze calls “the problem of measuring rivals and selecting claimants”, that is, in the absence of an objective foundation for one’s selection, the problem is that of distinguishing or differentiating between true and false pretenders, originals and copies, models and simulacra. This problem of “selective difference” is in fact the problem permeating all of Plato’s philosophy, according to Deleuze, presiding also “over his classification of the arts and sciences” (DR 85/60). And so it is in its correlating “will to selection” that we discover the true “motivation” behind Plato’s theory of Ideas (LS 192/253). This is, moreover, the problem to which Plato’s method of division, *diarexis*, corresponds: that is, not to a problem of contradiction or *antiphrasis*, but to the problem of rivalrous pretendants or *amphisbetesis*.<sup>23</sup> Deleuze claims that the problem of the definition and division of species is treated ironically by Plato. Instead it is a question of how to “make the difference” and thus a matter of “operating in the depths of the immediate, a dialectic of the immediate, a dangerous trial, without thread and without net. For according to the ancient custom of myth and epic, false claimants must die.” (DR 85/60, tr. mod.)

#### IGNORANCE, BELIEF, DESIRE: WHO IS WHO?

Even though it is the case that the question *who?* haunts both Plato and Proust in general, the problematic that compels Proust to pose the question *who?* is, on a deeper level, not exactly the same as the one that imposes itself on Plato. Who loves, desires, exploits, deceives *who?* How can I know the complete reality implicated in *who?* in such a way that it will provide more than just generalities, the empirical particularities of an individual or the

<sup>22</sup> ID 133/95. Concerning the reference to the *Statesman* here, *Le Politique* in French, the English translation by Michael Taormina (New York: Semiotexte, 2004) reads, erroneously, the *Republic* instead.

<sup>23</sup> For Deleuze’s reading of Plato’s method of division in light of Nietzsche’s call for an overturning of Platonism, see DR 82–89 as well as the appendix in LS, “Plato and the Simulacrum”.

accidental variations of a type? How can I find out who does what without being deceived, without deceiving myself? This is a recurrent problem in the *Search*.<sup>24</sup> And in a certain sense it is the general problem of the irreducibly plurivocal form of philosophical thinking exteriorised in Plato's dialogues too: Who is speaking? Who is thinking? The problem for Plato is that we know nothing about who someone is, why someone thinks, speaks, and acts as they do, until we have an understanding not only of what they *do not know* and what they *believe themselves to know*, but also of the nature and the orientation of their *desires*.<sup>25</sup>

To this end, the enunciation in itself can never provide a sufficient answer, but requires an interpretation of – or experimentation with – signs, which, in a certain sense, is silent.<sup>26</sup> Hence Socrates' exclamation in *Lysis* at the sight of Hippothales' blushing cheeks: "Aha! You don't have to answer that, Hippothales, for me to tell me whether you are in love [*eras*] with any of these boys or not – I can see that you are not only in love [*eros*] but pretty far gone too. I may not be good at anything else, but I have this god-given ability to tell [*gignoskein*] pretty quickly when someone is in love [*eronta*], and who he's in love with [*eromenon*]." (*Lysis*, 204b–c) In the *Search* we find something to a similar effect, *mutatis mutandis*, when Proust declares that "I relied on words only when I could read them like a rush of blood to the face [*les paroles elles-mêmes ne me renseignait qu'à la condition d'être interprétées à la façon d'un afflux de sang*]" (III/5: 596/77).

<sup>24</sup> In fact, the question *who?* is so insistent that Marcel's enquiry must continue even beyond death in the case of Albertine: "The questions I had to put to myself about Albertine were not peripheral, unimportant questions, those questions of detail which are the only kind that we really ask ourselves concerning any person other than ourselves, thereby allowing ourselves, clad in waterproof thought, to wade through suffering, lies, vice and death. No, as regards Albertine, *it was a question of essence*: who was she deep down, what were her thoughts, whom did she love, had she lied to me, had my life with her been as lamentable as that of Swann with Odette?" IV/5: 97/482; italics mine. Albeit indifferent to the question of division, this quest for knowledge in Proust does seemingly correspond to Plato's problem, at the very least insofar as it concerns the fear of self-deception: "For the worst of all deceptions is self-deception." 428d, *Cratylus*.

<sup>25</sup> To satisfy these conditions belongs, as Dixsaut shows, to the double function of the dialogue in Plato: "reconduire tout énoncé à son origine – au désir qui en ordonne le contenu – et rendre explicite la subordination de toute thèse à l'hypothèse ontologique qui la commande." Dixsaut, *Le Naturel philosophe*, 198.

<sup>26</sup> This is also why Socrates' divine task cannot consist in an exegetical interpretation of the meaning of the oracle's words in themselves, but in a trial by interrogation, an experiment in which he must put his fellow citizens to the test and invent himself as the touchstone (*basanos*).

The “silent interpretation” to which this amounts,<sup>27</sup> an interpretation precisely of such signs that otherwise escape both the intelligence and the perception due to their inherent objectivism,<sup>28</sup> is an invaluable lesson in comparison to any friendship – no matter if it concerns a genius or a charlatan.<sup>29</sup> It is, as Proust’s narrator tells us, nothing short of a necessary affliction forcing us to realise “that the truth has no need to be spoken to be made apparent, and that it may perhaps be gathered with more certainty, without waiting for words and without even taking them into account, from countless external signs, even from certain invisible phenomena, analogous in the world of human character to atmospheric changes in physical nature.”<sup>30</sup>

The question is where or to whom the explicated *who?* belongs? Empirically there is, of course, always the possibility of making a distinction between the Geometer and the Dialectician or the Diplomat and the Doctor in terms of aptitude, object, method, etc.<sup>31</sup> Such distinctions may result in establishing empirical differences; yet in no case are they sufficient in answering the question *who?* in such a way as to disturb or disrupt what Deleuze seeks to draw to our attention. Even if implicitly, thinking is presupposed to be a natural faculty and true thought a universal possibility, requiring little more than an appetite for wisdom and the good will to realise it in defiance of any distractions.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the *who?* of thinking is, in short, not to be searched in any empirical typology or psychology.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> PS 14/7: “It may be that friendship is nourished on observation and conversation, but love is born from and nourished on silent interpretation.”

<sup>28</sup> PS 40/29. The problem of objectivism will be dealt with in more detail in chapter 3.

<sup>29</sup> The relationship to Bergotte and Saint-Loup are the most obvious examples of such a disappointment that underpins the criticism of friendship in the *Search*.

<sup>30</sup> II/3: 365/63; tr. mod. Cf. Plato, *Lysis*, 204b–c.

<sup>31</sup> In point of fact, this was a distinction impossible to make in 5th century Greece on the basis of something like formal education alone, which may explain why the question always seems so pressing in Plato (especially in the case of the Doctor and the Sophist); see R. G. A. Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy: A Study of Peitho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 18–22.

<sup>32</sup> See the *Theaetetus*, for example, where Socrates famously states that “wonder is indeed the philosopher’s feeling, for there is no other beginning for philosophy than wonder [*mala gar philosophou touto to pathos, to thamazein: ou gar alle arche philosophias he aute*]”, 155d.

<sup>33</sup> Even if the Sophist admittedly constitutes the diametrical opposite and enemy of the Philosopher in Plato, there should be no doubt that sophism still remains a merely accidental affliction whose corruption of the soul never can reach deep enough to put the general presuppositions of the image of thought at risk. Thus, the Sophist may be perverted by greed and lies as well as lack a proper *techne*, etc. (*Theaetetus*, 172d–173b) – but as far as the possibility of thought is concerned these attributes never, irrespective of constellation, number or severity, seem to amount to anything that cannot, at least in principle, be cured by a properly philosophical *paideia* and the self-knowledge supposedly resulting from it: that is, any more than a want of morals and a lacking character.

Rather, it needs to be conceived and constructed as a critical means aimed at exposing the transcendental presuppositions which, if we simply refer to what is supposed to be universally recognised as the empirical subject, otherwise risks eluding us. And this transcendental *who?* to which the idea of thought as a natural possibility is testimony, is, as Deleuze suggests in *Difference and Repetition*, one of the reasons why, at the end of the *Sophist*, one can no longer distinguish the Sophist from Socrates, even though Socrates will go to any length to distinguish himself from the Sophist, whom he aims to pin down and capture.<sup>34</sup> After all, the task given to Socrates by the Delphic god would effectively be deprived of both sense and purpose if these presuppositions could not unify the *who?* organising the act of thought – especially since the ultimate objective of Socrates’ interrogations is not simply to establish that the knowledge of, say, Meletus the Poet or Dionysius the Tyrant, is faulty or absent, but to kindle the cold flame of *philosophia* in their souls by inflicting the intuition that,<sup>35</sup> in spite of the power of their purportedly natural faculty and any sentiment to the contrary, not only do they not know themselves – *they are not yet thinking*.<sup>36</sup>

Even if on a deeper level the *who?* of thought is many and none rather than a certain someone – that is, a transcendental effect rather than an empirical identity – there is still a general definition at the origin of this enquiry that needs further consideration: the *figure* of the *philosophos* as the friend of wisdom. According to Deleuze, Proust “sets in opposition to the traditional pairing of friendship and philosophy”, not the pair of philosophy and love, but “a more obscure pairing formed by love and art.” (PS 41/30)

<sup>34</sup> See DR 93/68 and 168/128. Cf. Plato, *Sophist*, 268a–d; *Theaetetus*, 162c–d, 164c–d.

<sup>35</sup> In the *Seventh Letter*, 340b–e, Plato accounts for his third political journey to the tyrant’s court in Syracuse and the test he used on Dionysius in order to find out if he really was “inflamed by philosophy, as it were by fire (*exemmenos hypo philosophias hospes pyros*)” or simply feigned such a disposition out of vanity. The test of the philosopher consists in learning about the philosophical activity in its complete reality, proving oneself capable of affirming this endless and arduous task as a singular possibility and a wonderful mode of life: to be bound to philosophy always and in everything, to be bound to a way of life beneficial for learning, remembering and impassionate or “sober reasoning” (*logizesthai dynaton ... nephonta*).

<sup>36</sup> This is why Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*, despite his ambivalence, can still turn to Socrates when he, in an attempt to turn philosophy towards a future of emancipating new and active modes of life, states that the general purpose of thought must be, as it was for Socrates, to “wound stupidity” and “deprive it of its good conscience”: misfortune (*Unheil*), Nietzsche claims in the name of Socrates, and contrary to tradition, does not stem from selfishness at all, but from voluntarily submitting oneself to *doxa*, to the tyrannical opinion of the herd, that is, from a “want of thought and stupidity” (*Gedanklosigkeit und Dummheit*). Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4:328.



The most apparent reason for this is Proust's will to destroy the prejudice of "philosophy" as the synonym of "thought", in order to release thought not only from the chains of philosophy as the proper form of thinking, from wisdom or *sophia* as its natural object and end, but also from friendship or *philia* as the condition of its attainment.

As Deleuze shows, Proust repeatedly denounces philosophy as incapable of anything but abstract truths devoid precisely of such forcible *necessity* otherwise said to be its identificatory trait:<sup>37</sup> that is, of nothing more than a logical or possible truth, the choice of which is always arbitrary. In accordance with this general critique of the image of thought, the reason for this rejection is found in the fundamental presupposition Deleuze discovers to be under constant attack in Proust: "Proust does not believe that man, nor even a supposedly pure mind, has by nature a desire for truth, a will-to-truth.... The truth is not to be found by affinity, nor by goodwill, but is *betrayed* by involuntary signs." (PS 24/15) And "the mistake of philosophy", Deleuze continues, "is to presuppose in us" precisely such "a benevolence of thought [*une bonne volonté de penser*], a desire, a natural love of truth." (PS 24/16). Naturally, it is this presupposition that subjects friendship and philosophy to the same criticism in Proust: "According to Proust, friends are like well-disposed minds [*esprits de bonne volonté*] that are explicitly in agreement as to the signification of things, words, and ideas; but the philosopher too is a thinker who presupposes in himself the benevolence of thought [*la bonne volonté de penser*], who attributes to thought the natural love of truth and to truth the explicit determination of what is naturally worked out by thought [*naturellement pensé*]." (PS 41/30)

For Proust, as for Nietzsche,<sup>38</sup> the refutation of such an essential love for truth is not so much about proving once again that the truth is *de facto* searched for quite rarely or only under certain duress; but rather about undoing the philosophical claim that there is a necessary connection between thought and truth, that thought searches, loves or wants the truth *de jure*. For Proust there simply is no such affinity; to rely on such an affinity is to rely on an illusion; and it is by relying on such an illusion that philosophy has become incapable of anything beyond advancing abstract and possible truths, validated or justified by logic alone: for "philosophy, like friendship, is ignorant of the obscure regions in which are elaborated the effective forces that act on

<sup>37</sup> PS 25/16–17.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. NP 108/95.

thought,” Deleuze writes,<sup>39</sup> “the determinations that *force* us to think. Neither goodwill nor an elaborated method has ever been enough to learn how to think; it takes more than a friend to approach the truth.” (PS 116/95; tr. mod.) If Proust finds the origin or genesis of thought in *sensations* or *impressions*,<sup>40</sup> in external signs acting directly upon sensibility, that is, as conditioned by the affectivity of the subject and the affects to which it is subjected – the orientation of thought, the development of the sign, is effectively determined by the obscure magnetism of desire.<sup>41</sup>

At first glance it may seem as if Proust’s institution of desire as integral to not only the figure of the thinker but thought itself would be at the heart of the anti-philosophy of the *Search* and thus set up his antagonistic relation vis-à-vis Plato. Yet the opposition between philosophy and desire belongs to Platonism and not Plato; it belongs to Christianity and not the order of the Olympians. In truth, to the extent that Proust’s anti-philosophy ties in with desire and remains bound to truth, the *Search* is an event that pushes Plato to the limit and does not involve any straightforward rejection. For rather than epitomising the anti-philosophical thinker par excellence, Proust’s Jealous Lover is – at its limit – still another figuration of the philosopher: that is, not yet the step beyond, but the bridge to its event, the arches of which reach far into the past.

Although it is true that Plato is the essential point of eruption from whence the figure of the *philosophos* arises, it is equally true that the ancient tradition, which figures the philosopher as the “friend of wisdom”, has only been able to establish and maintain its apparent continuity by obscuring, ignoring, skirting

<sup>39</sup> In Deleuze’s reading, Proust displays a strong affinity with Nietzsche on the matter of obscure zones, albeit Proust approaches this from a different angle: friendship. See, for example, *Beyond Good and Evil* where Nietzsche insists on restoring the will to truth, not to some *de jure* alliance with thought as such, but to “instinctive activity” (*Instinkt-Thätigkeiten*), to a “drive” (*Trieb*), to the valuations” (*Werthschätzungen*) or “physiological requirements for the preservation of a particular type of life.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1:3, 1:6.

<sup>40</sup> IV/6: 459/188: An impression is for the writer what an experiment is for the scientist, except that for the scientist the work of the intelligence precedes it, and for the writer it comes afterward.” See also CSB 211.

<sup>41</sup> Malcolm Bowie, who is clearly indebted to Deleuze’s reading of Proust to a far greater extent than is explicitly admitted in either of his works on Proust, makes the following conclusion in his chapter on “Proust, Jealousy, Knowledge”: “Proust has reminded us in the simplest possible way that all works of the mind ... are works of passion too ... That novel is indeed one of the most elaborate and circumstantial portrayals of the theorising mind that European culture possesses. In it, all theories are made within the force-field of human desire and in their turn provide that desire with unsuspected opportunities and restrictions.” Malcolm Bowie, *Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 65.

the disruptive and disturbing effects of this eruption.<sup>42</sup> In truth, the figuration of the philosopher as a “friend of wisdom” is a veil of fiction fabricated by stitching the supposed historical appearance of the *philosophos* in Pythagoras to the semantic and conceptual originality of the term *philosophia* in Plato, thus giving it a sense true neither to Pythagoras nor to Plato,<sup>43</sup> but rather to the Christian sentiment of finitude, that is, of an imperfection consubstantial to the human faculties of thought vis-à-vis a wisdom or science that is divine by right.<sup>44</sup> The birth of philosophy and the figure of the philosopher in Plato cannot, therefore, be explained just by expounding the etymology of the name, by revealing the individual components of *philo-sophia* or *philo-sophos*, as if their event were the result of two otherwise self-evident terms simply being sutured to one another. Such an explanation would in effect give us nothing more than the tradition’s retrograde symbol of a false origin and a fanciful shift from myth to reason, from belief to knowledge, from divine inspiration to scientific method.<sup>45</sup>

The philosopher in Plato is simply not the *philos* humbled by a *sophia* impossible to attain and glimpsed only as a divine presence in the Sage, nor is he the *philos* humbled by the task of attaining a *sophia* to which one may indeed aspire and which actually may be obtained, if only by virtue of arduous ascetic

<sup>42</sup> Dixsaute comments that “la tradition a occulté tout ce que le philosophe dans son sens platonicien impliquait d’opposition et d’arrachement à la *sophia*. Une continuité s’est aussitôt rétablie par-dessus les Dialogues, et tout se passe dès lors comme si le philosophe était simplement venu conférer un nouveau contenu à la *sophia*, comme si le philosophe était la dernière figure du *sophos*.” Dixsaute, *Le naturel philosophe*, 78.

<sup>43</sup> According to Dixsaute, the tradition has invented “une origine fictive” by making Pythagoras an advocate, *avant la lettre*, of “un platonisme affadi”, based solely on “une étymologie refusée par Platon. Car Platon est à l’origine d’un sens tel que *philosophie* cesse de s’entendre comme un terme composé, et c’est cela qui est toujours oublié ou masqué.” Dixsaute, *Le Naturel philosophe*, 73.

<sup>44</sup> Dixsaute, *Le naturel philosophe*, 78.

<sup>45</sup> See DR 85–89/61–63 for Deleuze’s discussion of the founding function of the myth in Plato. Also, Dixsaute remarks that the function of the repeated use of myth in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* specifically, is to point out that insofar as it is a matter of eros, it is in fact the myth that is *logos* and the logos that is *mythos*. Dixsaute, *Le naturel philosophe*, 223. For a general discussion of the origins of philosophy important to Deleuze in this regard, articulated in opposition to the tradition that dreams of a birth of a rationality against both mythology and religion, and providing historical-anthropological justification of Deleuze’s Nietzschean understanding of the dogmatic image of thought as originating in a *moral* decision made on political and social grounds relating to the democratic city-state: see Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Les origines de la pensée grecque* (Paris: PUF, [1962] 2017) and Marcel Detienne, *Les maîtres de vérité dans la Grèce archaïque* (Paris: Livre de Poche, [1967] 2006). See also Deleuze’s brief text, “Plato, the Greeks”, in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, where Deleuze explicitly draws on Vernant in outlining the problem of immanence-transcendence in ancient Greece.

practices purposed to deliver the soul from its bodily tomb. The names *philosophia* and *philosophos* are simply not signs of humility at all; neither are signposts to pious aspiration in a spirit of *philia* as the new and humble road toward *sophia*. On the contrary, they signal the ruin of wisdom as the end of thought and the spirit of friendship as the means to get there: the philosopher is not the last figure in the archaic line of *sophoi*. It is rather its undoing.<sup>46</sup> Even if, and out of necessity, the mask of the Sage must remain in play the true nature of the *philosophos* in Plato lies elsewhere and infinitely closer to the Jealous Lover. And thus, Deleuze writes, “Socrates can rightly say: I am Love more than the friend, I am the lover; I am art more than philosophy; I am the stingray, the constraint and the violence, rather than the good will.” (PS 123/101; tr. mod.)

## II. OF THE LOVER

*Metaxy and the shift toward the Jealous Lover. – The beloved as a sign and the contradictions implied in its interpretation. – The deceptive signs of love and the suffering implied in their explication. – Jealousy as the essence of love and Sodom and Gomorrah as the essence of jealousy. – The eroto-pathological genesis of the alethomaniac and the delirium at the limit of love as an image of thought.*

Famously, Socrates’ only claim to wisdom is his ignorance. But there are in fact three claims in Plato’s dialogues running counter to this figure of inscience as the *sophia* proper of the philosopher: first, but of less concern here, towards the end of *Gorgias* (521d) Socrates makes the claim that he is “one of few, not to say the only one” in Athens aspiring to the true “art of politics” (*politike technē*) and “the only one” currently practicing “politics” (*ta politika*); second, in the *Theatetus* (148e–151d), Socrates famously claims to master the art of midwifery (*maieutike technē*), that is, the art of delivering souls of their wisdom and determining whether the offspring has been “delivered of a phantom (*eidolon*)” or of “a fertile truth (*gominon alethes*)”, although he himself must always be “barren in wisdom” (*agonos eimi sophias*); third, in the *Phaedrus* (257a) Socrates pleads to Eros not to deprive him of “the art of love” (*erotike technē*) the god has granted him, but instead

<sup>46</sup> “Le philosophe ne se nomme donc pas philosophe par humilité. C’est l’oracle du dieu qui dans son *Apologie* désigne Socrate comme le plus sages des hommes, afin d’humilier la *sophia*.” Dixsaut, *Le Naturel philosophe*, 83.

make the beautiful boys find him worthy of a still higher “esteem” (*timios*).<sup>47</sup> However, in the *Symposium* (177d–e) Socrates not only admits that “love” (*ta erotika*) is the only thing he can claim “to know” (*epistasthai*) – Socrates becomes Eros and Eros becomes the Philosopher. So if the philosopher in Plato can neither be regarded as *sophos* in the archaic sense of the Sage, in possession of or in contact with divine knowledge, nor as the *philo-sophos* in the traditional sense of the Friend of Wisdom who aspires to a knowledge either unattainable or one that is attainable only with great difficulty, it would seem the *Symposium* constitutes a decisive step in the disfiguration of the above schemas as well as in the (re-)introduction of the Jealous Lover as the essential figuration of the philosopher.

This is, first of all, because it is through Socrates’ account of his encounter with Diotima that the figure of the philosopher is articulated to Eros and thus appears, by virtue of genealogy, as a figure essentially in-between (*metaxy*) gods and men, wealth and poverty, wisdom and ignorance: a rough and savage lover, either sleeping on streets and doorsteps or roaming the city with paltry clothes and bare feet, but also a skilled and cunning hunter for wisdom and beauty.<sup>48</sup> Or “in any case”, as Monique Dixsaut remarks, “cunning enough and skilled enough to make wisdom the name of his madness.”<sup>49</sup> Second of all, it is clearly not, at least not according to Deleuze, the spirit of friendship that soars over the *Symposium*, but the spirit of *agonism*: its participants do not enact a conversation among friends seeking agreement in common sense, but the strife of drunken and amorous rivals.<sup>50</sup> Hence Alcibiades retort when Socrates

<sup>47</sup> As we have seen, already in *Lysis* (204b–c) Socrates claims that in spite of being useless in general, the gods have at least given him the ability “to discern” (*gignoskein*) a “lover” (*eronta*) or a “beloved” (*eromenon*) by virtue of silent signs alone. The strongest claim to this effect, however, is delivered in the *Theages* (128b): “I know none of these magnificent and splendid subjects. I wish I did! I am always saying, indeed, that I know [*epistamenos*] virtually nothing, except a certain small subject – love [*ton erotikon*], although, on this subject, I’m thought to be amazing, better than anyone else, past or present.” For a summary of the statements on eros running counter to the general image of Socrates and their significance, see James M. Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence: Plato’s Erotic Dialogues* (Columbia: Missouri University Press, 2003), 1–5.

<sup>48</sup> See 203b–204c, *Symposium*. It is worth noting that this characterisation of the philosopher as identical with Eros also contains a number of the principal traits found in the traditional portrait of the Cynic, for whom Socrates later would become a mythological figure of origin alongside Heracles. See, A. A. Long, “The Socratic Tradition: Diogenes, Crates, and Hellenistic Ethics”, in *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy*, ed. Branham & Goulet-Cazé (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

<sup>49</sup> Dixsaut, *Le Naturel philosophe*, 128.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. QPh? 12/6. Dixsaut points out that there are in fact only two occurrences of *philosophos* in the *Symposium*, both times claiming desire and delirium as its essential attributes. Dixsaut, *Le Naturel philosophe*, 236. For a summary of the features allowing for Socrates’ identification with Eros in the

begs of the beautiful Agathon, at whose feet he has been lying until now, to protect him from Alcibiades' violence and erotic *mania*, by making him forgive Socrates and thus reconcile them: "I shall never forgive you!" (*Symposium*, 213d) Furthermore, during Alcibiades' intervention, Socrates not only becomes indistinguishable from the daimonic Eros revealed by Diotima, he also appears as a sign of the Dionysian *thiasos* or retinue: a sign in which, if cracked open, both the figure of Silenus – the perpetually drunk teacher of pessimism – and the figure of the Satyr – the wily beast of insatiable sexual appetite – are implicated; not unlike how Baron de Charlus (first name: Palamède)<sup>51</sup> at times cracks open to reveal a multitude of tutelary aunts, the occasional *grande dame*, or scores of young girls, welling up from his convoluted and complicated soul and into his voice, manners and thoughts. Third, and finally, it is through Diotima's intervention that the philosopher as well as philosophy itself plunges not only into the element of Eros, but also becomes bound to creation rather than contemplation.<sup>52</sup>

#### THE PROBLEM OF LOVE

To understand the figure of the Jealous Lover, however, one must understand the concept of love elaborated in the *Search*. In Proust, Deleuze argues, "to fall in love is to individualise someone by the signs he bears or emits. It is to become sensitive to these signs, to undergo an apprenticeship" (PS 14/7). Falling in love is a process conditioned by the development of a sensibility capable of being affected by and apprehending those signs already in circulation. But the appearance of the object of love is not simply a matter of a terminable selective process through which "the one" is finally chosen, once and for all, out of a manifold of desirable objects. It also involves a continuous individuation of the beloved individual as a manifold in itself. And this is not simply a process of recognition through which specific

*Symposium*, see Catherine Osbourne, *Eros Unveiled: Plato and the God of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 94–97.

<sup>51</sup> III/3: 298–301/304–306; PS 58–59/45, 141/116. By the end of the *Apology* (41a–b), Socrates muses on the nature of the afterlife as either a complete lack of perception or as a relocation of the soul, stating, in the case of the latter, that "I am willing to die many times if that is true. It would be a wonderful way for me to spend my time whenever I met Palamedes". Somewhat playfully one could say that to bring together Proust and Plato, Socrates and Charlus, in this manner, could, if nothing else, at least be considered an attempt to redeem the condemned Socrates' vision of an afterlife of pleasure, although this way it may not turn out *exactly* as Socrates had envisioned it.

<sup>52</sup> The possibility of developing, after Nietzsche, Proust, and Deleuze, a concept of thought and the thinker defined more in terms of creation and (re)production than in terms contemplation already from within Plato's philosophy, is a possibility that cannot be systematically explored here, however.

qualities in the apparition and the personality of the beloved are fused, over time, into a single and recognisable whole. For the beloved is not just mere semaphore, a simple transmitter of signs; rather, he or she appears to the lover as a sign in him- or herself, a sign in which an unknown multiplicity of *possible* worlds or souls are *implicated*, and which the lover is compelled to *explicate*.

As Albertine slowly begins to separate from the volatile constellation of beautiful girls by virtue of the signs she is diffusing, assembled bit by bit from partial objects that moments ago could have belonged to any of them (a straight nose, a dark complexion, two hard eyes, two pink cheeks...),<sup>53</sup> she also becomes, as if by tropism, the principal object of Marcel's desire. The real question here, however, is not the final destination of Albertine's empirical identity, but how to access, in Deleuze's formulation, such a "landscape that is no longer the one we see, but on the contrary the one in which we are seen?" (PS 14/8) This problem is effectively revealed already in the first encounter with *la bande à part* and the young woman soon about to be known as Albertine:

I glimpsed her oblique, laughing glance, looking out from the inhumane world which circumscribed the life of their little tribe, an inaccessible *terra incognita*, obviously incapable of harbouring or offering a home to any notion of who or what I was...Did she see me, at the moment when the black ray from her eyes encountered me? If so, what must I have seemed like to her [*qu'avais-je pu lui représenter*]? What sort of world was the one from which she was looking at me [*du sein du quel univers me distinguait-elle*]? I could not tell, any more than one can tell from the few details which a telescope enables us to descry on a neighbouring planet whether its inhabited by human beings, whether or not they can see us, or whether their view of us had inspired any reflections in them. (II/2: 152/374)

Confronted with such a tribe of girls, holding a multiplicity of almost indistinguishable objects of desire, the problem of love is a problem of individuation and selection on the level of its elements. Who is who among them? Who is it that I desire? But Albertine is more than one in herself. Not just because she would appear as another before or after a certain point in time or in the eyes of another lover. The pluralism in play here cannot be

<sup>53</sup> II/2: 147–152/370–374.

reduced to a multitude of subjective viewpoints on a self-identical reality. The beloved is a sign. To be a sign is to be a multiplicity irreducible to both subjective experience and objective properties.<sup>54</sup> And to be in love is to continuously search for an answer to the questions with which this sign confronts us, by explicating all that it implicates, thereby exhausting its every *possibility*.<sup>55</sup>

There is, as Deleuze claims, thus a paradox at the heart of Proust's conception of love. This paradox, however, seems to arise, first of all, from the conception that we cannot interpret, that is, explicate, develop, unfold the signs of the beloved without them carrying us away to unknown worlds that are and will remain both strange and indifferent to us, worlds which have not "waited for us in order to take form, that formed themselves with other persons, and in which we are at first only an object among others."<sup>56</sup> A "curious torsion", as Deleuze later will describe it, "by which we are ourselves caught in the unknown world expressed by the beloved, emptied of ourselves, taken up [*aspiré*] into this other universe." (PS 145/120) Every explication or development of signs of love is, therefore, necessarily alienating and aberrant. And this

<sup>54</sup> The objective and the subjective aspects correspond to two illusions according to Deleuze, these two illusions will be treated in greater detail in chapter 3.

<sup>55</sup> The "content" of a being is, in the terms of the second part, its "expressivity" (PS 145/120). However, this expressive content is always *incommensurable* with the container, so that the explication of what is implicated in the signs is unconditionally destined to rupture the subjective association of the container and the contained at one point or another. Hence, as mentioned before, the strange fate of the lover trying to explicate the beloved in order to discover a viewpoint from which to *see* the beloved in the landscape subjectively associated with him or her, only to end up being *seen him- or herself*, caught up in this strange landscape from the unknowable viewpoint of the beloved. As the sign of a bewildering multiplicity, the different faces of the beloved do not only *implicate* such "cells" or "half-open boxes" (*boîtes entreouvertes*) to *explicate*. In brief, Albertine also *complicates* a multiplicity of Albertines in the form, not of boxes to explicate, but of *non-communicating* pieces, fragments without a whole, "closed vessels" (*vases clos*), from which we must *choose*. Falling and being in love is thus a process of continuous *individuation* of both container and contained, but also, even after the initial individuation-selection that first produced "Albertine", a continuous process of *selection*.

<sup>56</sup> PS 15/8. In a certain sense, the problem of seeking to explicate the beloved in terms of a world lies not so much in the treatment of the beloved as a world but in the treatment of this world as an object. This problem of course belongs to the illusion of objectivism that will be discussed further in chapter 3. However, it is interesting to note that the notion of the beloved as a world in connection with the notion of an illusion of objectivism, so distinctly intimates the problem at the heart of Kant's antinomy. We can *reason* about the world *as if* it were an object, but we can never *know* it as such. To treat it as an object is therefore to resign oneself to an illusion internal to the intelligence and perception. Or as summarised by Smith: "Whenever we think of the world as an object (rather than as the problematic of the series of conditions), we enter into the domain of a false problem, an illusion internal to reason itself." Smith, "Deleuze, Kant, and the Theory of Immanent Ideas", in *Essays*, 109.



is why, as Deleuze explains, we often tend to fall in love with those “not of our ‘world’ nor even our type.” (PS 14/7) Just as it is the reason why the beloved often becomes bound to “landscapes that we know sufficiently to long for their reflection” in our loved one’s eyes, but which are then “reflected from a viewpoint so mysterious that they appear to be inaccessible, unknown: Albertine envelops, incorporates, amalgamates ‘the beach and the breaking waves.’” (PS 14/8; tr. mod.) Even the familiar, the unremarkable, what is ownmost, becomes strange once in pursuit of the signs of the unknown, of the truth, armed with nothing but a pressing desire to unfold them.<sup>57</sup>

It is because the signs of love always lead one astray that every attempt to access or insert oneself in the possible worlds of the beloved invariably results in a greater degree of estrangement. So rather than the act of explication forced by jealousy making known the unknown, it makes the unknown known as unknowable.<sup>58</sup> And the greater this unknown and mysterious nature of the worlds imprisoned in the beloved, as well as of the sensibility out of which they have grown, impresses itself upon us, the more painful love becomes. “There is no doubt that we are unaware of the nature of each individual’s personal sensibility, but generally we do not even know that we are unaware of it, for we are indifferent to other people’s sensibilities. As far as Albertine was concerned ... I was well aware that it was unknown [*inconnue*] to me, and the fact that it was unknown to me was already a source of pain.” (IV/5: 126/511; tr. mod.) Besides the nature of its signs, there is yet another side to the paradox of love in Proust, namely the essence of love.

<sup>57</sup> IV/5: 231/616: “I felt alone in the world, alienated from all things, and I was not calm enough to detach myself from my palpitating heart and impose some stability on the world around me. The city I saw before me was still Venice. Its personality and its name appeared to me as mendacious fictions that I no longer had the heart to relate [*inculquer*] to its stones. The palaces appeared reduced to their congruent parts and their portions of indifferent marble, and the waters to a combination of nitrogen and hydrogen, eternal and blind, anterior and exterior to Venice, ignorant of Turner and the Doges. And yet this unexceptional place was as alien as a place where you have just arrived, which does not yet know you, or a place that you have left and that has already forgotten you. There was nothing now I could tell it about me, nothing of mine that I could invest it with, it forced me to withdraw within myself, I was no more than a beating heart and a mind anxiously following the words of ‘*O sole mio*.’” For a reading of this passage in terms of an “ontological crisis” involving a failure of recognition and of the imagination, resulting in a complete deprivation of the self, see Leo Bersani, *Marcel Proust: The Fictions of Life and of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1965] 2013), 7–10.

<sup>58</sup> PS 168/139: “Jealousy is no longer simply the explication of *possible worlds* enveloped in the beloved (where others, like myself, can be seen and chosen), but the discovery of the *unknowable world* that represents the beloved’s own viewpoint and develops within the beloved’s homosexual series. Here the loved is no longer in relation to anything except beings of the same kind but different from me, sources of pleasures that remain unknown to me and unavailable” and therefore so much more terrifying and painful.

The paradox of love thus has two aspects to consider: the nature of the signs of love and the essence of love itself. First of all, from the viewpoint of the apprenticeship, signs are not reducible to communicative signals, to the explicit or conventional sense conveyed by voluntary enunciations or gestures (e.g. “a rush of blood to the face”). An explicit or conventional statement, a rational or analytical expression of the truth,<sup>59</sup> is not necessarily meaningless. The problem is that for the purpose of explicating what is implicated in the beloved, such signals can – at best – only be, according to Proust, of service indirectly, for example by involuntarily *betraying* a truth it was supposed to dissimulate. The signs of love are not only signs beyond convention or analytical enunciations, however. They are also inherently deceptive and deluding: “The lies of the beloved are the hieroglyphs of love.” (PS 16/9)

The signs of love are defined by Deleuze as essentially false or deceptive (*mensongers*). Accordingly, they are on the one hand signs of lies to which the lover responds in kind: every sign of love is a sign of a lie, a symptom of a secret or a conspiracy that cannot be reciprocated with an announcement of the truth. Indeed, the only *possible* outcome of an avowal of love in the *Search* is a love unrequited.<sup>60</sup> Every sign of a lie therefore appears to necessitate another lie, intended, not only to hide the lover’s true desires, but to force the beloved into divulging the truth hidden by the lie that begot it in the first place. And due to these signs’ infinite referral of their sense to something other than themselves, the web of lies constituting an affair of the heart can only sprawl outwards and be subject to further complication until, at its limit, there can be no experience of truth that does not at the same time border on a paranoid delirium or death. For example, in fear of Albertine leaving him Marcel devises a preventive ruse in which, in order to make her stay, he feigns to take leave of her instead, only to find himself repeating the death of their love in advance,<sup>61</sup> in great detail and without any assurance as to its outcome. A fatal “repetition turned toward the future” (PS 28/19) rather than the past:

And here I was suddenly, insanelly destroying this solid existence [*pesante vie*]. True, I was only pretending to destroy it, but that was enough to make me wretched; ... perhaps because one knows that a feigned farewell is only anticipating an hour which must finally come; and then one is not quite sure that one has not triggered the mechanism which will make that hour strike.... I

<sup>59</sup> III/5: 596/77.

<sup>60</sup> At least this is the case after a certain point in the apprenticeship, i.e. after the narrator has learned to overcome the first illusion of objectivism in the realm of love. See PS 39/28 and I/1: 271/278.

<sup>61</sup> PS 28/19.

felt, but did not believe, that I controlled the future, because I knew that my feeling came from the fact that the future did not yet exist and that I could not therefore be subject [*accablé*] to its inevitability [*nécessité*]. (III/5: 856–857/327–328)

Famously, the final outcome of Marcel's enactment of this "scene of jealousy" is not the reparation of love, but the double fatality of Albertine leaving him and then dying soon thereafter. This points to how the principal effect of the signs of love distinguishes them from the empty signs circulating in and around the salons, the vacuity and rapid exchange of which certainly are the cause of intense affects in their own right, bringing the subject to a state of "nervous exaltation". All the same, it is *love* that *hurts*. The lover is not just shoved from station to station, ever more estranged to him- or herself, since every explication amounts to yet another necessary exclusion from the truth. Rather, in every sign interpreted, in every lie deciphered, and every little joy thus experienced, there is also the laceration of a pain that only becomes deeper. And just as in the case of the repetition towards the future and the death of love, this pain cannot be explained without reference to the status and function of *possibility* in Proust's conception of love and jealousy.

In summary, then, possibility is the first principle of pain in the world of love in the *Search*.<sup>62</sup> The beloved is a sign and every such sign expresses a "possible world unknown to us." (PS 14/7) But the possible is not only the reason why the signs of love are deceptive, in the sense of leading every interpretation astray on the forking path of jealous speculation; they are also traitors to the flesh. Every sign of preference, every thinkable and unthinkable pleasure longed for, craved and eventually bestowed upon the lover can only partially amount to an actual enjoyment or the satisfaction of a desire, since all signs expressing the beloved's preference for us are, at the same time, signs that express "worlds to which we do not belong". These signs carry not only enjoyment but, at the same time, a painful "image of the *possible world*" in which others may be or in which these same others receive the same delights (PS 15/8). It is precisely because of the possible worlds that bleed through every sign of love that Swann, for instance, finds himself regretting all the pleasures he has enjoyed with Odette or made her aware of – for the simple reason that each and every pleasure is yet another possibility of affliction.

<sup>62</sup>I return to the question of possibility and impossibility in chapter 3.

All the sensuous [*voluptueux*] memories he carried away from her house were like so many sketches, 'plans', ... that allowed Swann to form an idea of the ardent or swooning attitudes she might adopt with other men. So that he came to regret every pleasure he enjoyed with her, every invented caress whose sweetness he had been so imprudent to point out to her, every grace he discovered in her, for he knew that a moment later, they would supply new instruments for torturing him. (I/1: 272/279)

Every sign of love wished for and eventually granted by the beloved is necessarily also a sign that hurts, insofar as it expresses a possibility, thus carrying away and confronting the lover with a world whose constitution, conditions and laws always will remain unknown, in and for which he or she lacks every possible significance. This, however, does not only apply to every such possibility that the beloved brings into the present, possibilities whose genetical conditions belong to a past absolutely removed from us. It applies also to every possibility introduced by the lover, necessarily belonging to the future; as if any and all such possibilities cannot be but immediately stolen away to a realm of future suffering, in the exact moment it is first introduced as a pleasure, and as a means, perhaps, to secure the preference of one's beloved. Thus Deleuze concludes: "The contradiction of love consists in this: the means we count on to preserve us from jealousy are the very means that develop jealousy, giving it a kind of autonomy, of independence with regard to our love." (PS 15/9) Jealousy is thus not simply a secondary effect of love originating from the essential indeterminacy and promiscuity of the signs. On the contrary, it will turn out to constitute the very essence of love.

#### THE ESSENCE OF LOVE

Jealousy is commonly understood as an untoward effect of love. This may initially seem to be the case in Proust too: "Instantly, his jealousy, as if it were the shadow of his love, would furnish itself with a duplicate of the new smile she had given that very evening – and which, inverse now, mocked Swann and was filled with love for another man" (I/1: 271/278). In essence, however, and contrary to Swann's sentiment, jealousy is not the shadow of love for Proust; rather, love is a mere shade of jealousy: "The first law of love is subjective: subjectively, jealousy is deeper than love, it contains love's truth." (PS 16/9) But what does this reversal or overturning imply?

"It is true", Proust writes, "that a person's attractions (*charmes*) are a less frequent cause of love than some such phrase as: 'No, this evening I shan't be free.'" (III/4: 193/199) Love grows in and out of jealousy. This is why, Deleuze

claims, Proust always maintains that a “mediocre love is worth more than a great friendship”, just as the friendship with “a superior mind [*esprit*] or a great friend are worth no more than even a brief love.” (PS 42/31) Why is love and friendship inferior to jealousy according to Deleuze? It is because what we discover in jealousy is the experience of an affliction that “goes further in the apprehension (*la saisie*) and interpretation of signs” than any friendship or exanimate marriage ever could. It is because what gives rise to that new faculty of sensibility, that higher power of affectivity, which allows us to receive and transmit formerly unknown types of signs, to find and select the beloved, to explicate and expose the secrets otherwise kept forever out of reach, is not love but jealousy.

In fact, jealousy enjoys a primacy in Proust such that there is not even a need for anything like a preceding sexual or spiritual “chemistry” for love to ensue. Perhaps there is no clearer indication of this than Swann’s first impression of Odette de Crecy, the future Mme Swann: “She had seemed to Swann not without beauty, certainly, but as having a kind of beauty that left him indifferent, that aroused no desire in him, even caused him a sort of physical repulsion” (I/1: 193/199). Indifference and repulsion may indeed seem like unfavourable conditions for falling in love, but love here is for Proust only a second order effect; that is to say, love is a consequence of jealousy rather than the necessary terminus of a natural development, beginning in the closeness of two hearts or a flash of desire.<sup>63</sup> And if love occasionally and in spite of everything would seem to arise in the reverse order – that is, from a love that precedes the possession of its object and loves him, her or it for solely their objective loveliness, rather than from any subjective pleasure<sup>64</sup> – well, this origin cannot be anything but a semblance engendered by an erring imagination or memory and a failure to adequately explicate the signs.<sup>65</sup> “Love is born

<sup>63</sup> I/1: 193/199: “This closeness of two hearts, if it is no longer, as it was in one’s earliest youth, the goal towards which love necessarily tends, still remains linked to it by an association of ideas so strong that it may become the cause of love, if it occurs first.”

<sup>64</sup> I/1: 193/199. Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre’s article on Husserl from 1939, where he, somewhat surprisingly, arrives at the following conclusion: “Husserl a réinstallé l’horreur et le charme dans les choses. Il nous a restitué le monde des artistes et des prophètes: effrayant, hostile, dangereux, avec des havres de grâce et d’amour. Il a fait la place nette pour un nouveau traité des passions qui s’inspirerait de *cette vérité si simple et si profondément mécon-nue par nos raffinés: si nous aimons une femme, c’est parce qu’elle est aimable*. Nous voilà délivrés de Proust.” Jean-Paul Sartre, “Une idée fondamentale de Husserl”, in *Situations I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947) 32; italics mine.

<sup>65</sup> In Swann’s case, at this point, Proust remarks, when love already has had time to inflict a number of wounds of delusion and all one searches for in infatuation and love is a *subjective pleasure* – love “no longer evolves solely in accordance with its own unknown and inevitable laws [*lois inconnues et fatales*], before

in such a case,” Proust writes, “like certain nervous diseases, from the inaccurate explanation (*explication*) of a painful malaise. An explanation which there is no point in rectifying, at least where love is concerned, a sentiment which (whatever its cause) is always erroneous.” (III/4: 193–194/199)

In the end, however, all conceivable reasons for loving someone will turn out to be either subjective or objective illusions: objective when the reason for love is attributed to properties assumed to be intrinsic to the object of love itself, as if the secret of love was contained in the beloved; subjective when the love one feels for someone is essentially a compensation for the disappointment yielded by the attempt at an objective interpretation, that is, when love is merely a secondary effect of the beloved having become bound up with a subjective chain of favourable associations, rendering the beloved loveable only to the extent he or she reflects the lover’s preferences, inclinations, phantasms, etc.<sup>66</sup> Considering the illusory reasons for love, and given that jealousy is an affliction that can grow rampant on possibility alone, one may ask how something that, in a certain sense, *is not* can produce affects stronger than what actually *is*?<sup>67</sup>

Jealousy, in any case, takes the lover further and deeper, simply because of one’s heightened sensibility towards signs and the excessive, incessant and aberrant ventures in the art of “silent interpretation” he or she is thus constantly compelled to undertake. From this viewpoint, however, jealousy not only constitutes the truth in love but also “the destination of love, its finality.” (PS 16/9) If the lover interpreting the signs of the beloved is necessarily “the interpreter of lies”, the “Egyptologist” deciphering “the hieroglyphs of love” (PS 16/9), what is it that these “hieroglyphs” hide or dissimulate? If jealousy is not the shadow of love but rather its condition, truth and destination – what is the condition, truth, and destination of jealousy?

our astonished and passive heart. We come to its aid, we distort it with memory, with suggestion. Recognising one of its symptoms, we recall and revive the others.” I/1: 194/200.

<sup>66</sup> Objectivism is certainly a problem in Proust’s world of love, but it is a minor one. It belongs above all to the first love or the loves of youth, that is, to Marcel’s love for Gilberte Swann and Oriane, the Duchess of Guermantes. Principally, but not exclusively, then, love and jealousy constitute a subjective problem in the *Search*. Ultimately, however, it will reveal itself as a *transsubjective* problem comprising “series”, “themes” and “laws”, reaching into the past as well as the future, into the micro series of the particular beloved as well as the macro series of love in general. Each love is part of a larger successive series of loves, but each particular love as well as beloved is also a smaller series in him- or herself. See *infra*, n. 45 in chap. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Spinoza’s discussion of the superior intensity of things imagined as necessary: Spinoza, *Ethics: Proved in Geometrical Order*, ed. Matthew J. Kisner, trans. Michael Silverthorne and Matthew J. Kisner, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 4:p9–13.

There is an essential ambiguity to the signs of love in Proust that involves the lie, but whose truth must be searched on a deeper level than in the intricate web of lies of the beloved. Now, Deleuze indicates two “laws of love” in Proust, one subjective and the other objective. The *subjective* law of love states that *jealousy is deeper than love* and that the truth and destination of jealousy is found at the point towards which all the signs of the beloved’s lies *converge*: Gomorrhah.<sup>68</sup> This point of exclusion first discovered by Marcel in Mlle Vinteuil cannot, however, be reduced to an empirical determination of hers or anyone else’s sexuality, because what jealousy discovers here, according to Deleuze, is not simply the sexual preference of a particular individual, but the subjective *a priori* point of unconditional exclusion and the origin of jealousy: “the feminine possibility par excellence” or the essence of jealousy and the condition of love. (PS 16–17/9–10) In reference to the two principal scenes in which Marcel discovers homosexual love,<sup>69</sup> Deleuze then goes on to conclude that, for Marcel, “Mlle Vinteuil explicates all loved women, as Charlus implicates all lovers.” Thus, if Gomorrhah is the secret of every female beloved, then Sodom is the secret implicating every male lover. Consequently, the *objective* law of love states that “heterosexual loves [*les amours intersexuelles*] are less profound than homosexual ones” (PS 17/10).<sup>70</sup> Thus, analogous to how

<sup>68</sup> Subjectively, that is, insofar as Marcel is concerned, the destination of love as a process of explication of the beloved’s signs is Gomorrhah as the point of absolute exclusion. If the pain associated with the threat from rivaling lovers of the same sex is still possible to endure, this is only because it is still possible for Marcel to imagine such an affair and the kind of pleasures it may involve. The love between Albertine and another woman, on the other hand, is essentially unknown and unimaginable and therefore inflicts a pain impossible to endure. In revealing Albertine’s essential duplicity, Marcel thus finds himself suddenly treading a “terrible *terra incognita*”, confronted with a rift in time and space opening unto “a new phase of unsuspected suffering” III/4: 500/508.

<sup>69</sup> In Combray Marcel watches as Mlle Vinteuil and her friend enact a “sadistic scene” in which they “profanate” the memory of M. Vinteuil, her father, by making love in front of his photograph; in Paris, in the courtyard of the hôtel de Guermantes, Marcel watches the encounter of Charlus and Jupien.

<sup>70</sup> It is worth noting that the term here used by Deleuze in seeming opposition to homosexuality is *inter-sexuel* rather than *hétérosexuel*. It is true that “intersexual” indeed can be used to denote attractions between opposite sexes, but it is more commonly used to designate either an individual displaying characteristics of both sexes (i.e. androgyn, hermaphrodite), or a homosexual individual that appears to be characterised by the traits of the opposite rather than the apparent sex. This evidently ties into the theory of “sexual inversion” popularised around the turn of the 20th century and elaborated by Proust in the *Search*. According to this theory, the homosexual in fact embodies a sort of inversion of their apparent gender so that the male/female homosexual can be said to enact feminine/masculine traits in attitude and behaviour. Hence Proust’s descriptions of Charlus’s soul being that of a woman: “I understood now why, a moment ago, when I had seen him coming out from Mme de Villeparisis’s, I had been able to think that M. de Charlus had the look of a woman: he was one! He belonged to that race of beings, less contradictory than they appear to be, whose ideal is virile, precisely because their temperament is feminine, and who are in life

love subjectively finds its truth in jealousy, heterosexual love objectively finds its “truth in homosexuality.” (PS 17/10) The two laws of love thus indicated by Deleuze permit us, in turn, and by extension, to distinguish and name a number of modes and cases of exclusion produced by Sodom and Gomorrah to further clarify its function: (1) under the subjective aspect, either Sodom or Gomorrah marks the damned point of absolute exclusion (*lex Albertine*); (2) under the objective aspect either of them always implicates all hetero- or intersexual loves as the result of nothing but vapid lies or erroneous mistakes, in any case excluding them from the truth (*lex Charlus*); (3) under the subjective-objective aspect, both Sodom and Gomorrah threatens at some point to call every homosocial relation into question in one exclusionary way or another (*lex Albertine/Andrée* or *Marcel/Saint-Loup*). As we trace the series unfolding from Sodom and Gomorrah further, however, we will finally discover, as Deleuze writes, that “at the infinity of our loves, there is the original Hermaphrodite.” (PS 17/10) If jealousy holds the truth of love and Sodom and Gomorrah the truth of jealousy, it is the Hermaphrodite that holds the truth of these two essential poles in the sense that it allows us to go beyond their apparent duality, referring us to the conditions of their genesis in chaos or pure difference instead.<sup>71</sup> Finally, then, we note that (4) under the aspect of the

like other men in appearance only ... A race on which a malediction weighs and which must live in falsehood and in perjury” (III/4: 16/18). This means that what in contemporary terms appears as a homosexual relationship can actually be, in accordance with the theory of inversion, explained in terms of a “latent heterosexuality”, since it may well be the case that the “male” part in one of the lovers simply desires the “female” part in the other and thus, in essence, constitutes an affair of “intersexual” rather than “homosexual” love. In principle, a “homosexual” relationship is thus only the case where an essential “male”, for example, is attracted to another essential “male”, irrespective of whether the object of attraction is a man or a woman in appearance, etc. For an account of the theory of inversion, see chap. 1, “Sexual/Textual Inversion”, in Ladenson, *Proust’s Lesbianism*.

<sup>71</sup> It is important to note that, according to Deleuze, this original Hermaphrodite belongs to Jerusalem and “the accursed race” (*le race maudit*) rather than the freemen of Athens, in that, unlike the mythological *androgynos* related by Aristophanes in the *Symposium* (189e), it does not actually (re)unite the two sexes in a third, capable of fertilising and reproducing itself. For instead of constituting the point where the male and the female series converge in the third sex of the man-woman, this Hermaphrodite is the infertile or impotent source from which they unfold as the two separate and infinitely diverging series of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Hermaphrodite is thus the original and absolute difference or, in Deleuze’s words, “the accursed depth (*le fond maudit*) where everything is elaborated.” (PS 18/11) To the extent that the male and the female parts are assembled by Deleuze in this notion of the original Hermaphrodite, then, this assemblage is not made with the view of (re)constituting a harmonious whole free from oppositions or contradictions, but rather to posit an essentially problematic and chaotic complex of asymmetric and non-communicating bits and pieces, fragments, without a whole. Ultimately, then, this trajectory thus takes us closer to Deleuze’s search for a way to think the transcendental genetic conditions that can explain the



Hermaphrodite, the subjective and objective aspects of Sodom and Gomorrah runs through all possible permutations in unexpected and unforeseen ways, all of them exclusive in a specific way and to a certain degree (*lex Morel*).

Sodom and Gomorrah thus constitute the essence of jealousy and the condition of love in their capacity of two non-communicating poles of absolute and reciprocal exclusion, forever converging but never unified in the original Hermaphrodite.<sup>72</sup> To return to the question of the heightened sensibility implied by jealousy as well as by the discovery of Sodom and Gomorrah, the individuals belonging to either side or pole “compensate”, according to

genesis of the two poles corresponding to these laws in terms of internal differences, rather than simply assuming them as a given polarity or duality.

<sup>72</sup> Here it is perhaps inevitable to address the question of the extent to which Deleuze’s interpretation of Proust approaches Freud’s theory of repressed homosexual desires as the primary pathogen in paranoia and erotomania, when he points to Sodom and Gomorrah as the sources of a heightened sensibility bordering, at its limit, on delirium. Paranoia and erotomania is, according to Freud, the result of a psychological mechanism of self-defence spiralling out of control in an attempt to repress the homosexual desires or wishes (*Wünsche*) originating in a narcissistic fixation and object-choice during childhood. In short, instead of choosing and repeating an image of the mother as the libidinal object, the narcissist chooses and repeats an image of him or herself and charges it with large quantities of homosexual libido. As a compensation for the loss of the initial narcissism or self-love characteristic of the child and megalomaniac that this implies, there is a transfer or displacement of libidinal energy from the real self (*das wirkliche Ich*) to an ideal self (*Idealich*). The ideal self does not constitute the correct measure, as it were, but also forms the surveilling agency, the “conscience” charged with the *pleasurable* task of maintaining the ideal self by preserving the homosexual libido invested in it. “Recognition of this agency enables us to understand the so-called ‘delusions of being noticed’ or more correctly, of being *watched*, which are such striking symptoms in the paranoid diseases”, Freud writes in *Introduction to Narcissism* (1914). It may seem tempting to identify a certain resonance of Freud’s theory in Deleuze’s notion of an “original difference” that “presides over our loves” in the form of an image, an original image constantly repeated on a subjective as well as a trans-subjective level: “Perhaps this is the image of the Mother – or that of the Father for a woman, for Mlle Vinteuil.” (PS 84/67) The origin of Marcel’s series of loves may perhaps be located in his childhood relation to his mother, Deleuze argues, just to immediately divert a Freudian reading by adding that this original image is, on a more profound level, “a remote image beyond our experience, a Theme that transcends us, a kind of archetype. Image, idea, or essence rich enough to be diversified in the beings we love and even in a single loved being, but of such a nature too that it is repeated in our successive loves and in each of our loves in isolation.” (PS 84/67) There is indeed an image of the mother at the origin, Deleuze concedes, but there is also the co-originary image of Swann depriving Marcel of his mother’s presence: the anguish suffered in her absence is also already the anguish of Swann suffering from the absence of his beloved Odette. In short, the love for the mother is not an (E)dipal origin of repressed desires but already a repetition of loves exceeding the individual experience; the mother only provides “the transition from one experience to another, the way in which our experience begins but already links up with other experiences that were those of someone else.” (PS 89/72) In conclusion, the search for the origins of love, paranoia, and erotomania thus cannot be limited to the Oedipal figures and constellations, but must be made to encompass a trans-subjective depth deeper than any individual subject – the “intersubjective unconscious” (DR 163/124). Another possible interpretation of these origins will be discussed briefly below.

Deleuze, “by the intensity of the sign for the secret to which they are bound.” (PS 18/11) Summarily, if, instead of the friend, the jealous lover approaches the truth, this is empirically due to the heightened capability of apprehending signs that the affliction of jealousy brings with it; and, transcendently, due to the unconscious *apprehension* of the exclusive truth of Sodom and Gomorrah as the ultimate destinations of love. If, on the other hand, the love of the “inverted” is deeper than that of the hetero- or intersexuals it is because, first, individuals like Charlus or Albertine display – due to their general predicament and the secretive mode of life it necessitates – an even greater capacity to seize and transmit signs than the merely jealous lover; and, second, because to a greater degree they possess a *comprehension* of Sodom and Gomorrah as the truths behind every love that otherwise appears to connect or (re)unite the sexes.<sup>73</sup> This extraordinary affectivity, and the intensity of the signs to which it gives rise, is why Charlus is recognised by Deleuze as “the most prodigious emitter of signs” (PS 12/6), just as it is why the narrator experiences the “endlessly kindled glances” given to Albertine by an unknown woman at the casino in Balbec, as if they were the signals from an “alternating and revolving light”, as if “she was signalling to her ... with the aid of a lighthouse (*phare*).”<sup>74</sup>

Naturally, although already prepared through the gradual progression of the apprenticeship, the final discovery of these points of exclusion will always strike the apprentice in signs as an astonishing surprise: the discovery of Mlle Vinteuil and her friend at Montjouvain; Charlus and Jupien in the courtyard of the Guermantes; the adventures pursued by Albertine in her rushes of “criminal folly” – all such discoveries were in their own way anticipated and

<sup>73</sup> Such comprehension, however, is mostly betrayed involuntarily and often on the self-deceiving pretext of terminating the moment to ward off any ill-natured rumours. See, for example, Charlus digressions in III/5: 800/273: “From the moment Brichot had begun talking about men’s reputations, M. de Charlus’s whole face had betrayed the particular kind of impatience that we see in an expert on medical or military matters, when lay people who know nothing about them begin to say foolish things about therapeutics or strategy. ‘You haven’t the first idea of what you’re talking about, he finally said to Brichot ... Good Lord, I don’t mean to say that a bad reputation (or what people call a bad reputation) can never possibly be unjustified. But it’s so rare, so out of the ordinary that for practical purposes it doesn’t exist. I’m an expert on the subject, I hunt out examples, and I’ve found one or two that weren’t mythical.”

<sup>74</sup> III/4: 245/250. Although the narrator is indeed capable of recognising that signs are being exchanged in this situation, he lacks the capacity to interpret and understand them – capable only of a disturbing feeling suggestive of deception, that is, that these signs are secretly carrying “the conventional meaning of a lover’s assignation for the following day. Who knows? that assignation might not perhaps be the first ... It was perhaps because Albertine had already yielded to her desires or to those of a friend that the latter felt free to address these dazzling signals to her.” III/4: 245/250.

prepared for long before they were abruptly and unexpectedly revealed.<sup>75</sup> The dim presentiments of these unimaginable incidents had all seemed imaginary until they were not: “And yet the deluge of reality that submerges us, enormous though it may be compared with our timid and negligible suppositions, had been anticipated by them. It is often only for want of the creative spirit that we do not go far enough in suffering.” (III/4: 500/508) At the same time, however, in the moment where he discovers the source of his greatest pain, he also discovers a supposedly impossible feeling, “that of a man caused to leap so far upwards by the shock that he has received that he has attained a point to which no effort could have raised him.” (III/4: 500/507–508) Discoveries such as those of Sodom and Gomorrah are both stupefying and painful to Marcel. And still, as he is forced to conclude, “the most terrible reality brings us, at the same time as suffering, the joy of a beautiful discovery” (III/4: 500/508).

#### THE BIRTH OF THE ALETHOMANIAC

To formulate a general answer to the question *who searches for truth?*, let us turn to the transfiguration of Swann at the mercy of jealousy. As the caesura of infatuation marked by the sign of the cattleya draws to an end, Swann finds himself back by the house of Odette de Crecy at night, considering whether or not he should knock on the shutters and so expose Odette’s duplicity, as well as the identity of the lover now relishing in the pleasures he had presumed were his and his alone. Staring at the light bleeding through the shutters, a life and a world unknown and still hidden from him just moments ago is now suddenly within grasp, illuminated by a lamp and imprisoned in a room “into which, when he chose, he could go to surprise it and capture it” (I/1: 269/276). Of course, it all ends in failure: the shutters knocked upon are not Odette’s and the only thing revealed when eventually they are flung open is just another misadventure of his will to know. But on the other hand, by virtue of this failure, Swann feels that their love remains unspoilt while his jealousy is still a secret – “that proof of loving her too much which, between two lovers, exempts forever after, from loving enough, the one who receives it.” (I/1: 271/278)

<sup>75</sup> PS 111/91. Ladenson suggests that as far as Gomorrah is concerned, the discovery at Montjouvain is actually foreshadowed by an even earlier and, perhaps also, even more hermetic relationship between two women, namely that of Marcel’s mother and grandmother; which, in turn, mirrors the relationship between Mme de Sévigné and her daughter. See, chapter 5, “Mothers and Daughters: The Origins of Gomorrah”, in *Proust’s Lesbianism*.

For all that, it is the moment preceding this that is important: the moment, that is, when he imagines himself overturning the situation, no longer being the one held up to ridicule but “the one to see them, confident in their error”, laughing at his illusions while in truth being “outwitted by him whom they believed to be so very far away” (I/1: 269/276). In this instance the Jealous Lover discovers a *passion for truth*, a *desire to know* stronger than any threat of ignominy. At the same time, as Deleuze writes, he “experiences a tiny thrill of joy” upon discovering that he has “deciphered one of the beloved’s lies, like an interpreter who succeeds in translating a complicated text, even if the translation offers him personally a disagreeable and painful piece of information.”<sup>76</sup> This is the moment when Swann finds himself impassioned by a will to truth beyond his senses, but it is also the discovery of truth as an object of *pleasure* for the faculty of intelligence as such: “He felt a sensuous pleasure [*une volupté à connaître*] in finding out the truth that so impassioned him” (I/1: 270/277). An enjoyment out of which, as Malcolm Bowie has pointed out,<sup>77</sup> the Jealous Lover rises as a Historian, an Archaeologist – a Scientist:

And perhaps, what he was feeling at this moment, which was almost pleasant, was also something different from the assuaging of a doubt and a distress: it was a pleasure in knowledge [*un plaisir de l’intelligence*]. If, ever since he had fallen in love, things had regained for him a little of the delightful interest they had once had for him, but only insofar as they were illuminated by the memory of Odette, now it was another of the faculties of his studious youth that his jealousy revived, a passion for truth, but for a truth that was likewise interposed between him and his mistress, taking its light only from her, a completely individual truth whose sole object, of an infinite value and almost disinterested in its beauty, was Odette’s actions, her relationships, her plans, her past. At all other periods of his life, the little everyday words and deeds of a person had always seemed worthless to Swann ... But in this strange phase of love, an individual person assumes something so profound that the curiosity he now felt awakening in him concerning the smallest occupations of this woman, was the same curiosity he had once had about History. And all these things that would have shamed him up to now, such as spying, tonight, outside a window, tomorrow perhaps, for all

<sup>76</sup> PS 23/15. It is interesting to note, in this context, that one of the imperatives guiding Bachelard’s psychoanalysis of objective knowledge is that it should “rendre clairement conscient et actif le plaisir de l’excitation spirituelle dans la découverte du vrai.” Bachelard, *La formation de l’esprit scientifique*, 13.

<sup>77</sup> See Bowie, *Freud, Proust, Lacan*, 49–54.

he knew, cleverly inducing neutral people to speak, bribing servants, listening at doors, now seemed to him to be, fully as much as were the deciphering of texts, the weighing of evidence, and the interpretation of old monuments, merely methods of scientific investigation with a real intellectual value and appropriate to a search for the truth. (I/1: 269–270/276–277)

In this passage we find indicated the schematics of such a situation – the spatio-temporal coordinates, affects, intensities, dispositions, etc. – where the subject is actually compelled to search for the truth by some force indifferent to both the will and common sense: the birth of the alethophile. To summarise: (1) truth, in this case, does not concern the exact nature of an abstract and timeless universal – such as Justice, Virtue, Love – but a completely individual or singular truth discoverable only by means of surveillance, investigation and re-evaluation of the most minute details of the otherwise unremarkable life of a foul to middling love interest; (2) the search is not simply the active continuation of a natural inclination towards truth always already at work within the subject, but the result of an encounter between an affective constraint in the form of a sign and a subject capable of being significantly affected by it; (3) the method called upon to uncover the truth does not consist so much in a systematic effort to block any and all vitiating external influences, founded upon a virtuous and ascetic mode of life, as in a complete subjection both to the world and the passions such that no ways and means can ever appear illicit or unjustified to the jealous lover; (4) the discovery of the truth, finally, neither sets the subject free nor does it constitute a moment of even temporary release, instead it leads the subject into a vicious circle consisting in the exasperating conjunction of the existential anguish and pain of learning the truth, on the one hand, and the pure pleasure that intelligence nonetheless procures through its discovery, on the other.

The pursuit of truth is furthermore driven by a will not only to possess the beloved physically, but to know and dominate all of her or his thoughts and desires completely. To alleviate the suffering of exclusion at the heart of jealousy, the beloved must be completely exhausted. It is to this end that the beloved finally is sequestered and isolated, imprisoned, as if in a laboratory, so as to be easier to control, to observe, to study exhaustively without external interference. In Proust, however, there are effectively two moments of exhaustion that furthermore coincide with two moments of jealousy: the first moment coincides with the jealousy from which love is born and the loving

subject's involuntary exhaustion of itself, effectuated in the attempt to explicate the object's secret worlds; the second with the jealousy by which love dies and the relatively successful exhaustion of the beloved object by which this is achieved, namely by means of isolating the object from those unknown worlds that made it loveable to begin with. Although it may be a strange pleasure to discover the truths that also hurt us, there is a paradox of depletion or impoverishment to this operation of exhaustive explication such that the desire to know results not only in a further obfuscation and estrangement of the self, but also in the death of love and the lovers alike.<sup>78</sup>

*Addendum concerning the sign-deliriums:* Is this indifference what awaits us at the end of love, at the end of *philia* as the model of thought and of the Jealous Lover as the figuration of the thinker? Is the mutual death of the object and the subject of science what makes it necessary to overstep this figuration? Fortunately, things are not so simple. There is a risk far more menacing than indifference awaiting at the extremes of this model: the sign-delirium.<sup>79</sup> In the concluding part of *Proust and Signs*, "Presence and Function of Madness: The Spider", Deleuze elaborates on this limit further by explicitly indexing both Charlus and Albertine to two specific types of "sign-delirium" derived from late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century psychiatry in general and from Gaëtan Gatian

<sup>78</sup> In the first moment, the eroto-pathological birth of the Scientist arguably finds a correlative in the elements of the logic of jealousy – sequestration, voyeurism, and profanation – and the method or procedure to which it arguably amounts. In the crudest possible terms: (a) a given phenomenon calls for a concept to organise and explain its reality; (b) but the sense of the concept itself is impossible to explicate fully as long as it remains connected to the concrete reality furnishing it with further sense; (c) the concept is severed from the concrete reality in which it was discovered by means of abstraction; (d) the sense of the isolated concept is exhausted analytically to the point where it has no other sense than that of an abstraction too arbitrary and too large for the reality that it is supposed to express and is thus deprived of all interest. The second moment consists, in turn, of two distinct moments both relating the figure of exhaustion to death. In order for love to die, the only true palliative against jealous love, it is not enough to simply isolate and exhaust the object, since the only thing needed for love to be rekindled is that the object escapes its confinement and reestablishes its connections to worlds unknown and inaccessible to us. If the first moment of exhaustion kills the object of love, insofar as it renders it null and void for the subject, there still remains – boxed up in the lover's soul – a manifold of subjects in a nascent or aborted state, nurtured or preserved purely by function of memories and associations and still in love with the imprisoned, fugitive, or already deceased, object. For love to truly die, then, both the object(s) and subject(s) of love must die. This is the defining trait of the second moment of exhaustion: it does not restore the subject to itself as much as it extirpates all the different subjects within the lover still in love with the beloved. In Proust, there remains, in short, no self to which love can be restored.

<sup>79</sup> Although it is true that the delirium of signs encountered at the limit of the image of thought incarnated by the Jealous Lover is basically only intimated or suggested in the first part of *Proust and Signs* and explicitly developed only in the last part, there is arguably nothing preventing the final exposition of madness from being treated as an extrapolation of that which first only was intimated.

de Clérambault's theories of the "psychoses of passion" in particular:<sup>80</sup> *deliriums of interpretation of the paranoiac type* (Charlus); and *deliriums of demand of the erotomaniacal or jealous type* (Albertine/Marcel). Just as Charlus and Albertine incarnate the limits of love in the form of Sodom and Gomorrah, they also mark out the zones of obscurity where the subject of the signs risks passing over into delirium. We already know that from the very beginning Deleuze identifies Charlus as "the most prodigious emitter of signs", but in the final conclusion to *Proust and Signs* this determination is augmented and pushed to its limits with the claim that Charlus presents himself "as an enormous flashing sign (*signe clignotant*), a huge optical and vocal box (*boîte*): anyone who listens to Charlus or who meets his gaze finds himself confronting a secret, a mystery to be penetrated, to be interpreted, which he presents from the start as likely to proceed to the point of madness." (PS 207/172; tr. mod.) Consequently, this constraint, this pressing need to interpret Charlus, discovers its own principle in that, Deleuze argues, Charlus himself is an interpreter so forceful and unremitting it would seem that this is what actually constitutes "his proper madness, as if that were already his delirium, a delirium of interpretation." (PS 208/172)

In accordance with Clérambault's definitions, Charlus' delirium of interpretation is to be considered an affliction growing from within, insidiously, as it were, without any definitive date of inception or delineated beginning, a product of *endogenous* forces that according to Clérambault causes the paranoid interpreter's "conceptions" to "constantly radiate in all directions", extending progressively in the form of "a circular and infinite network" in the centre of which the subject lives and through which, as Deleuze remarks, his "verbal investments" are mobilised.<sup>81</sup> The kind of delirium assigned to Albertine, on the other hand, is a product of *exogenous* forces: its date of inception is fully determinable and, contrary to the conceptions of the paranoid interpreter, the erotomaniac's conceptions here develop linearly, according to Clérambault. That is, it develops in finite "sectors" comprising a fundamental "postulate" (e.g. "I do not love him, he loves me") and a variable number of derivate postulates (e.g. "He will never know happiness without me" or "He only claims not to know me in order to hide his true feelings"), which may indeed increase in quantity and scope but only within

<sup>80</sup> PS 214–219/179–182. For the source of this theory and the distinctions taken up by Deleuze, see: Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault, "Les délires passionnels. Érotomanie, Revendication, Jalousie: Présentation de malade" (1921), in *CŒuvre psychiatrique*, ed. J. Fretet, 2 vols. (Paris: PUF, 1942), 1:337–346.

<sup>81</sup> PS 214/178. Clérambault, "Les délires passionnels", 1:342.

the confines delineated by the static and already determined relation between a specific subject and a specific object. Contrary to the constantly expanding delirium of the paranoiac, then, the erotomaniac is only delirious within the domain of its own desire.<sup>82</sup>

Charlus' madness may seem obvious from the start. On the other hand it seems absurd, on a first glance, to assign an erotomaniacal delirium to Albertine, considering that: (a) the common understanding of erotomania or de Clérambault's syndrome is that it consists in the subject's delusion of being loved and/or pursued by someone;<sup>83</sup> (b) that it is above all Marcel that is engaged in a delirious pursuit of Albertine despite the certainty that his love is and will remain unrequited, rather than the other way around. Deleuze is clearly aware of these objections but will argue, first of all, that erotomania indeed consists in the delirious pursuit of an object of desire, rather than in the paranoid delusion of being loved or persecuted;<sup>84</sup> second of all, that it is ob-

<sup>82</sup> According to Clérambault, these sectors consist in a fundamental postulate (e.g. "it was the Object who started and is the only one in love") – around which a number of postulates derived from it coalesce over time (e.g. "the Object can never know happiness without the admiring Subject" or "the Object's paradoxical behaviour is simply due to timidity, doubt, pride or a desire to test the Subject"). If the paranoiac's circular, irradiant network of conceptions is ever-expanding, gradually encompassing more and more of the world, then the erotomaniac's or the jealous lover's conception can expand only by remaining within the boundaries of the one and the same sector, that is, the number of postulates may increase, but the fundamental viewpoint must remain the same. This is why Clérambault claims that while the delirious interpreter "errs in mystery, troubled, astonished and passive, reasoning about everything he observes and searching for explanations he discovers only gradually", the delirious erotomaniac "advances towards a goal, with a conscious demand, complete from the start, delirious only in the domain of his own desire: his cogitations are polarised, just as his will is, because of his will." And since all "imaginative and interpretative work" is limited "to the space expanding between the object and the subject", according to Clérambault, the erotomaniac develops his conceptions not in a circular but in a linear fashion, that is, in finite and non-communicative "sectors". See Clérambault, "Les délires passionnels", 1:338–342.

<sup>83</sup> The object of the delusion is often a stranger and often out of reach, such as the King of England, George V, in the case related by Clérambault in "Coexistence de deux délires: Persécution et Érotomanie" (1920), in *Œuvre psychiatrique*, 1:323–337.

<sup>84</sup> PS 215/179. In view of the escape from the especially trite interpretation of the *Search* as the symptom of repressed homosexual desires that Clérambault seems to make possible, it is worth noting that contrary to Clérambault, who separates paranoia as a delirium of interpretation from erotomania as delirium of claim or jealousy, Freud views erotomania exclusively as a symptom of narcissistic fixation, paranoia and repressed homosexual fantasies. In fact, Freud believes all forms of paranoia to be constituted around a core conflict concerning homosexual desires, the main reason being that at least all the paranoiac forms can be explained in terms of contradictions of the basic formula "I (a man) love him (a man)". In the case of paranoiac erotomania, for example, the male subject haunted or persecuted by such homosexual desires will seek to ward them off by repressing the inner or unconscious proposition "I love him" through a series of constrained negations and projections: that is, the subject defends himself against his desires by



viously true that Marcel's jealous pursuit of Albertine constitutes a case of erotomaniacal delirium. However, Deleuze argues, although this is discovered too late, it is still obvious that Albertine is not just a passive object of pursuit but also an active subject in her own right, doubling and extending Marcel's jealousy and erotomania through her own pursuits of young laundry-maids and fishing-girls.<sup>85</sup> This is also true, Deleuze writes, regarding the jealous Marcel's delirious "demand" (*revendication*) to confine and isolate Albertine, which in turn is doubled by Albertine's practice of hunting out and isolating the young girls she desires with the help of Morel.<sup>86</sup> In this regard, then, Marcel's and Albertine's relationship constitutes a form of obscure zone, a "zone of indiscernibility", within which it is practically impossible to say where one erotomaniacal or jealous delirium begins and the other ends. Likewise, there is an analogous relation between Marcel and Charlus in the sense that "there is no way of distinguishing the labour of Charlus's interpretative delirium from the narrator's long labour of interpretative delirium concerning Charlus." (PS 216/180–181)

Thus, in the end both Albertine and Charlus – that is, both the erotomaniacal and the paranoid types of deliriums of interpretation – appear as mere extensions of Marcel's own maddening sensibility to signs, on the one hand, and of the Jealous Lover as the figuration of the thinker, on the other.<sup>87</sup>

transforming its basic proposition, first, into the transitory proposition "I do not love him – I love her", and then, finally, into the external or conscious proposition "I can tell that she loves me". And so it is the failure to take such negations and projections of the homosexual fantasy into consideration that is the reason, Freud claims, why so many cases of erotomania can appear to us as a form of exaggerated or twisted heterosexual fixation without any evident motives. It should be noted, however, that Freud's theory allows for a fixation on the transitory proposition "I do not love him – I love her", thus potentially giving rise to a case of erotomaniacal pursuit of this object. See, Sigmund Freud, "Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)", in Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1953).

<sup>85</sup> For Andrée's final revelation of the true nature of Albertine's desires and her erotomaniacal adventures alongside Morel, see IV/5: 179–180/564–565.

<sup>86</sup> For example, Andrée reveals that soon after Albertine had met him at the Verdurins for the first time, Morel "took it upon himself – with her permission to take his own pleasure too, for he like inexperienced young things and, as soon as he had set them off down the slippery slope, would cast them loose – he took it upon himself to lure young laundry-maids and young fisher-girls ... who could fall in love with a boy but would not have responded to the advances of a girl. As soon as the girl was well and truly under his thumb, he took her to a secluded spot and gave her over to Albertine. Fearing that they might lose Morel, who of course joined in the act, the girls always did what they were told to but lost him all the same" IV/5: 179/564.

<sup>87</sup> On another level, the double delirium at the heart of this search for truth renders the relation between the narrator and the *Search* analogous to that of the spider and its web: just as the narrator constantly finds

The philosopher's relationship to the truth, insofar as it coincides with the figuration of the Jealous Lover, thus shares a number of traits ascribed to both the paranoid and, perhaps above all, the erotomaniacal mode of relating to the object of desire: the obsession, the inversions, the projections, all deliriums within the domain of his or her desire for or will to knowledge ("I do not desire this or that petty thing of the world, determined by my appetite, I love the truth" and "It is not I who love the truth, it is, in spite of appearances, the truth that loves me, haunts me, demands to be enunciated").

himself deploring his lack of talent for observation or for seeing, hearing and remembering, yet can still apprehend the signs silently circulated in each of the worlds he traverses, the spider too is "without "eyes, without nose, without mouth" but nevertheless capable of feeling and responding to even the slightest vibration surging through the threads and into its body as so many signs disclosing the prey's location. And so the narrator appears as the "spider-narrator whose web is the *Search* being spun, being woven by each thread stirred by one sign or another: the web and the spider, the web and the body are one and the same machine." PS 218/182. And it is on the plane of this strange machine of affectivity that the "narrator-spider" sends out, Deleuze concludes, "a thread toward Charlus the paranoiac, another thread toward Albertine the erotomaniac, in order to make them so many marionettes of his own delirium, so many intensive powers of his body without organs, so many profiles of his own madness." PS 219/182; tr. mod.

### THIRD CHAPTER: THE APPRENTICESHIP

The Search for lost time is in fact a search for truth. If called a search for lost time, it is only to the degree that truth has an essential relation to time. (PS 15/23)

The answer to the question *who?* in Proust is displaced from the humble Friend to the Jealous Lover. And, as we have already seen, this displacement amounts to a critical disfiguration of the thinker in perfect consonance with the imperative to destroy the moral Image of thought, which Deleuze principally inherits from Nietzsche: the Friend searching for truth only because of a natural affinity with the true is disfigured so as to reveal, in its place, the Jealous Lover searching for truth only to expose the beloved's lies. Clearly, this cannot amount to a change only in the conception of the thinker; it must also necessarily imply a change in the conception of truth as well as in the conditions of its discovery, that is, in the search itself. For, despite this displacement and the general opposition to Cartesian rationalism, both Proust and Deleuze still conceive the *Search* precisely as a *search for truth*.<sup>1</sup>

What is this search? What is this truth? It has often been assumed that the *Search* is a search for truth essentially orientated towards memory or recollection, towards the recollection of a time lost. And insofar as it constitutes the account of an apprenticeship, that is, a process of learning, the *Search* would also seem to align itself perfectly with Plato's famous theory that "searching [*zetein*] and learning [*manthanein*] are, as a whole, recollection [*anamnesis*]." (*Meno*, 81d) According to Proust, however, the only way the *Search* may discover the true is by means of its *construction*: that is, it is only as a construction that the *Search* can discover the true – not as a simple account of recovered memories, regardless of its truthfulness or verisimilitude.<sup>2</sup> Even though Deleuze insists on rejecting every notion of memory as the *Search's* defining element, he still readily concedes that memory is an element of relative importance.<sup>3</sup> According to Deleuze, however, memory can be ascribed this relative importance only as the means towards an end but never as the end in itself:

<sup>1</sup> See PS 23/15 and Proust to Rivière: L 677.

<sup>2</sup> Again, see Proust to Rivière: L 677.

<sup>3</sup> It can be noted, however, that in a letter to one Joseph Emmanuel Voeffray in 1983, a student writing his master's thesis on the theme of transcendental empiricism in Deleuze's philosophy, Deleuze explains that all of his works have begun with "the simple idea that one has not understood something essential for this

that is to say, the progress of the apprenticeship may occasionally be furthered by means of memory, but memory is still not “the most profound means” of the search, nor is the lost time it seeks to recover the “most profound structure” of time (PS 9/3). The *truth* – not the memories; the *future* – not the past: according to Deleuze this is the basic formula of the *Search* as an *apprenticeship of signs*.

What is essential to the *Search* is not in the madeleine or the cobblestones. On the one hand, the *Search* is not simply an effort of recollection, an exploration of memory: search, *recherche*, is to be taken in the strong sense of the term, as in the expression “the search for truth”. On the other hand, lost time is not simply “time past”, it is also time wasted ... One might invoke Proust’s Platonism: to learn is still to remember. But however important its role, memory intervenes only as the means of an apprenticeship that transcends recollection both by its goals and by its principles. The *Search* is oriented to the future, not to the past. (PS 9–10/3–4).

In accordance with Deleuze’s emphasis on certain empiricist traits that can be identified in the *Search*, as well as his will to disassociate it from the theme of memory commonly assumed to define it, the figure of “the Méséglise way and the Guermantes way” otherwise so strongly associated with the remembrance of his childhood’s Combray, now become “not so much as the sources of memory as the raw materials, the lines of an apprenticeship.” (PS 11/3) The apprenticeship is a process of learning or “initiation” to which the apprentice, the “Egyptologist” compelled to decipher the hieroglyphs encountered within the domain of his or her own desire, necessarily must subject him- or herself.<sup>4</sup> For all that, the apprenticeship does not discover its end or finality in a sum of knowledge, but in the question *how?* of thought or the *problem of learning* as such. “We never know how someone learns;

subject: in my Proust, for example, the simple idea was that memory had no importance.” Deleuze, *Lettres et autres textes*, 92. This is obviously an exaggeration, however, simply meant to stress that the *Search* is not to be defined by the theme of memory.

<sup>4</sup> PS 112/92: “The Egyptologist, in all things, is the man who undergoes an initiation – the apprentice.” The notion of initiation is also associated with the problem of the beginning, but Deleuze’s conception of the apprenticeship as temporal in essence clearly opposes the immediacy otherwise pertaining to, for example, the Cartesian initiation as achieved by the *omnibus dubitandum*. There are also distinctly Christian traits to the Cartesian initiation: to be initiated is to eliminate what was before, to have it washed away in order to be born anew, to rise up under a new name and as a member of a community of souls. The initiation as communion.

but whatever the way, it is always by intermediary of signs, by wasting time, and not by the assimilation of some objective content.” (PS 31/22)

How does the apprentice learn to think? What is this apprenticeship and how does it differ from the common understanding of learning as the acquisition of knowledge? How does it progress and what is the role of memory and recollection in view of this progress? In the first part of the following chapter these questions relating to the *how?* of thought will be responded to, first of all, through a brief examination of the famous madeleine as an event that produces no answer but rather imposes a *problem* forcing Marcel to begin his apprenticeship. Second, the ambiguous and rather complex relationship between Proust’s apprenticeship and the theory of learning as recollection is investigated by way of Plato. Finally, the temporality of the apprenticeship is outlined in terms of its un-founding effects, that is, the essential groundlessness of thought and the disorientation of the apprenticeship that follows therefrom.

In the second part, the practical side of the *how?* of thought is further examined in relation to this essential groundlessness and disorientation in Proust. First, the rudimentary conditions of the apprenticeship in Proust, that is, affectivity and exteriority, chance and constraint, are summarily traced out in opposition to the notion of philosophical method. Second, the impossibility and groundlessness of thought as an act of volition or effort is analysed in terms of the two fundamental illusions internal to the Image of thought, threatening the progress of the apprenticeship at all times and on all levels, that is, the illusions of *objectivism* and *subjectivism*. Finally, concluding the second part, the contingency not only of the act of thought as such but also of the faculties engaged in such an act, is investigated in terms of the apprenticeship’s essential disorientation and dependency on chance encounters and remarkable events capable of forcing the birth of the act of thought.

## I. OF LEARNING

*Outline of the problem imposed by the madeleine. – Two models of thought in Plato: anamnesis and melete. – Recollection in opposition to innateness. – The distinction between mneme and anamnesis and the role of eikasia in the genesis of representation. – The faculty of recollection as pathos. – The temporality of thought: the pure past.*

To understand the nature of this search, of this apprenticeship that Deleuze discovers in Proust, we need to return to the moment of its inception. For the suggestion that the *Search* is more than an exposition of memories,

voluntary and involuntary, is not only Deleuze's immediate claim in *Proust and Signs*, but also manifest already in the first experience of involuntary memory: the famous case of the madeleine.<sup>5</sup> This experience, produced by the encounter between Marcel's palate and the tea-soaked cookie, the Combray conjured up *sub specie aeternitatis*, does not so much present a solution discovered in the past, as it imposes a pressing *problem* regarding the solution that must be searched in the future:

At the very instant when the mouthful of tea mixed with cake-crumbs touched my palate, I quivered, attentive to the extraordinary thing that was happening in me. A delicious pleasure had invaded me, isolated me, without my having any notion to its cause. It had immediately made the vicissitudes of life unimportant to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory, acting in the same way that love acts, by filling me with a precious essence, or rather *this essence was not in me, it was me*. I had ceased to feel I was mediocre, contingent, mortal. Where could it have come from – this powerful joy? (I/1: 44/47; italics mine)

The question here is obviously not: "What is this memory of my past that I suddenly remember and what can it tell me about myself as an individual?" But rather: "What is this powerful, ravishing, sensation of pleasure cancelling out all self-doubt as well as the fear of death? What is its cause? Who have I become? And, most importantly, how can it be *repeated*?" The sensation in question is obviously connected to the tea and the cookie as sensible objects, as catalysts, but the pleasure and joy experienced exceeds them both infinitely and therefore cannot be of the same nature, according to Proust. Further examination is thus called for and the instant reaction is to repeat the action that seem to have caused the sensation in the first place, but a second mouthful of tea provides no more than did the first. In fact, the intensity of the sensation rather diminishes with every subsequent mouthful,

<sup>5</sup>In view of the fact that there are hardly any references to previous commentaries in the original part of *Proust and Signs* it is not immediately apparent who is actually being denounced here, who it is that represents this conception to Deleuze. However, apart from an arguably already widespread and common understanding, prone to reducing the *Search* to an exposition of voluntary and involuntary memory beginning with the madeleine, one of the first commentators of the *Search*, Sybil de Souza, explicitly argues for the both central and decisive significance of the involuntary memory in *La philosophie de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Rieder, 1939). This is possibly one of the earlier commentaries Deleuze has in mind when for good reason rejecting memory as what constitutes the "unity" of the *Search*. However, the commonplace notion of memory as the key to the *Search* is still widespread: see, for example, Martin Hägglund, *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 21.

with every such effort to plunge into the depths of the sensible object itself, which is why the narrator – if he chooses to carry on – risks losing the sensation completely without its secrets having ever been revealed:

It is clear that the truth I am seeking is not in the drink, but in me. The drink has awoken it in me, but does not know that truth, and cannot do more than repeat indefinitely, with less and less force, this same testimony which I do not know how to interpret ... I put down the cup and turn to my mind. It is up to my mind to find the truth. But how? What grave uncertainty, whenever the mind feels overtaken by itself [*se sent dépassé par lui-même*]; when it, the seeker, is also the obscure country where it must seek and where all its baggage will be nothing to it. *Seek? Not only that: create. It is face to face with something that does not yet exist and that only it can accomplish, then bring into its light.* (I/1: 45/48; italics mine)

The sensible objects as well as the sensation itself are thus felt to exceed or transcend themselves in the direction of something essential but still unknown. And at this point in the apprenticeship, interpreting this type of sensible sign, the truth of this event is explored as something not really to be found in the sensible objects inevitably involved in it, nor precisely in the sensation itself, but rather in the experiencing subject ravished by the sensation itself. And so the recollection of Combray seems to beckon the narrator towards some “obscure country” of the soul, an unknown geography where experiences and memories of the past ultimately serve nothing, since the object, the truth searched for, is not only obscured by forgetfulness but does not as yet quite exist ; as if its reality was cut just short of existence and still awaits its birth into actuality. Besides from the fact that in the case of the madeleine Marcel never undertakes an investigation into both its cause and nature for which it still calls, the aporia implicated in this experience of involuntary memory is still the problem that forces the inception of the apprenticeship as it is narrated in the *Search*: How can we search if we do not know what we are searching for? How can we find what still does not exist?

#### THE ROLE OF RECOLLECTION

Deleuze often repeats that the *Search* is not an “exposition of memory” but “the narrative of an apprenticeship”, a search for truth in which “every act of learning is an interpretation of signs or hieroglyphs.” (PS 11/4) From this viewpoint the apprenticeship in Proust is nothing but a process of learning:

to search for the truth is to learn, and to learn is to be an apprentice to the signs you *encounter*. In regard to the apprenticeship's development, the *Search* is not reflective but *experimental*: its truth is the product of an adventurous exploit in the spirit of empiricism, rather than a result exacted by rigorous application of method or an insight rewarded through devoted acts of contemplation.

The apparent similarities connecting Deleuze's conception of the apprenticeship in Proust to Socrates' theory of learning in the *Meno*, to Diotima's doctrine in the *Symposium* or the allegory of the cave in the *Republic*, are in this instance difficult to neglect. Yet if these two movements would prove to be unified in Proust's apprenticeship, this would be a clear sign that something that was inconceivable for Plato is invented in the *Search* by Proust. There is no theory of recollection in neither the *Symposium* nor the *Republic*, just as there is no ascending dialectics in the *Meno*. In fact, there is a discrepancy haunting the models of thought presented in the *Symposium*, *Republic* and *Theaetetus*, on the one hand, and in the *Meno*, *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo*, on the other.<sup>6</sup> Crudely put, the first group hardly mentions *anamnesis* at all and attempts to ground learning (*mathesis*) in an attentive or studious effort (*melete*) figured as a repetition oriented towards the future, whereas the second group attempts to ground learning in feats of *anamnesis* figured as a repetition oriented towards the past.

In Plato, the apparent rivalry between these two models still seems undecided. Yet it is clear that the model of thought underpinning the theory of learning from which the notion of recollection is missing, is the model generally favoured by Deleuze. And this for the simple reason that what it discovers is a model of thought that does not immediately rely on any transcendent elements in order to find its orientation, to progress in learning or to discover its necessity, since the fundamental conditions of thought in this model are chance, affectivity and desire rather than recollection, immortality and asceticism. This conception would still be found wanting, however, were it not for Deleuze's elaboration of a certain ramification of the theory of recollection, namely that it is by way of recollection that time is introduced into thought as

<sup>6</sup> See Jacob Klein, chap. V.6 "The avoidance of the *anamnesis* thesis in other dialogues, and especially in the *Theaetetus*", in *A Commentary on Plato's Meno* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989). For an attempt to reconcile the two models by way of the divided line in book VI of the *Republic*, see Richard Mohr, "The Divided Line and the Doctrine of Recollection in Plato", *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* Vol. 18, No. 1 (June 1984): 34–41.



one of its necessary conditions. It would seem, therefore, that the apprenticeship, which Deleuze locates in Proust, draws on both of these apparently conflicting models of thought in order to transfigure learning as an apprenticeship of signs, thereby affirming at one and the same time the necessity of (1) a sensibility capable of receiving the contingent encounter and (2) a pure thought capable of conceiving the essence in this encounter.

True, Deleuze firmly rejects the notion that it is in respect to memory and recollection that Platonism can be found in Proust. To conceive of learning as recollection, however, is still one of Plato's exceptional inventions as far as Deleuze is concerned. In fact, on the basis of the concept of the apprenticeship invented through Proust, Deleuze will later claim that Plato's conception of recollection, and the privilege that is afforded to the indeterminate process of learning over the ideal of absolute knowledge,<sup>7</sup> is what, in view of the history of philosophy in general and Hegel in particular, what marks him out as "the exception." (DR 215/166) This is because his concept of learning can never be reduced, Deleuze claims, to the "empirical conditions of knowledge", to a "preparatory movement", an "intermediary between non-knowledge to knowledge", which must always "disappear in the result." Indeed, if this movement between ignorance and a state of knowing truly were what learning is, then learning really would be nothing. But Plato knew, Deleuze argues, that if we are to understand what is called thinking and under what conditions it may take place, then it is "from 'learning', not knowledge, that the transcendental conditions of thought must be drawn." (DR 215–216/165–166) This, Deleuze continues, is the reason why Plato determines "the conditions in the form of *recollection*, not innateness." (DR 216/166)

Evidently, *anamnesis* in Plato is usually understood in terms of a theory of learning founded on innate knowledge.<sup>8</sup> In the *Meno*, for example, Socrates does indeed state that the soul, by virtue of its immortality, its infinite repetition of life and death, has already learned everything there is to know, if only to forget it again every time it is reborn. And since "the whole of nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything," Socrates claims, "nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only – a process men call learning –

<sup>7</sup>The conception of learning as recollection in the *Meno* delivered by Dixsaut in *Platon-Nietzsche: L'autre manière de philosopher* clearly aligns itself with Deleuze's reading of Plato as seen through a Proustian optics: "Socrate a réussi à montrer que se ressouvenir n'est pas se ressouvenir d'un savoir mais chercher, risquer de se tromper, comprendre qu'on s'est trompé, et continuer à chercher: apprendre. Quel rapport avec l'immortalité de l'âme, sa préexistence, son savoir total? Aucun". Dixsaut, *Platon-Nietzsche*, 52.

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, Dominic Scott, *Recollection and Experience: Plato's Theory of Learning and its Successors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

discovering everything else for himself, if he is brave and does not tire of the search, for searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection.” (81c–d) According to Deleuze, however, *anamnesis* in Plato does *not* presuppose innate knowledge.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, as Deleuze argues becomes explicit in the *Phaedo* (76a–d), already in Plato recollection is opposed to innateness and learning is counterposed to knowledge. First of all, we do not begin by learning only to end up with knowing; to learn we need to already have known and to already have forgotten. The temporality of learning in Plato is thus not reducible to the chronological sequence learn-then-know. It is in fact inverted only then to be overthrown, in view of eliminating the distinction subordinating learning to knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

This is not an opposition, for all that, between something mythical and something real; on Deleuze’s account, innateness and recollection are both equally mythical. The opposition that it does set up is instead between the myth of *instantaneity*, corresponding to innate knowledge, and the myth of *circular time* corresponding to recollection. “When Plato expressly opposes recollection and innateness,” Deleuze writes, “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.” (DR 118/87)

In Proust the relation between learning and recollection has shifted such that while to recollect is still to learn, the act of learning now involves so much more than recollection. This displacement, which opens up for a certain overturning of the problem, can clearly be construed as a perverted repetition of Plato’s theory. Still, if learning is repetition also in Proust, this repetition is not oriented towards a “mythical” or “pure past of the Idea”, that is, a past constituted by successive presents organised, in the function of the Idea that provides their foundation, into a “circle of time” such that “the pure past which defines them is itself still necessarily expressed in terms of a present, as an ancient mythical present.” (DR 118/88) So it is true that time is introduced into thought through Plato’s concept of *anamnesis*; but it is equally true, according to Deleuze, that what is actually introduced into thought by Plato is the physical, circular, periodic *movement of the soul* and not time itself.

The repetition of learning in Proust is instead oriented towards the future as an open system of absolutely incongruous pieces whose quantity, quality,

<sup>9</sup>DR 118/87.

<sup>10</sup>See Dixsaut, *Platon-Nietzsche*, 51–52.

and relations can be neither anticipated nor determined ahead of its event. And insofar as the future of learning may accidentally open itself up to us by way of the past, this past discovers its pure form not in an Idea grounding it in the form of a present that once was but is no longer, but instead in a past that is all the more because it never was present at all. Past and future are both unhinged from the present, no longer conceived in its image and no longer pivoting around it as derivative dimensions defined by possibility or probability rather than reality, discovering themselves as the real yet inactual forces constituting the true plurality of time instead.<sup>11</sup> Thus the return to Plato in Proust with respect to recollection or involuntary memory must not be understood as an effort to (re-)establish recollection as the foremost instrument of the apprenticeship or learning, but rather as a twofold aggression intended to distinguish learning from knowledge, on the one hand, and, on the other, to make thought a subject of the force of time.

Thus, because of the theory of *anamnesis* we do not have to wait until Kant for time to become essential to thought, in thought. The time introduced into thought by Plato is, however, arguably still “a matter of physical time, of a periodic or circular time which is that of the *Physis* and is still subordinate to events which occur within it, to the movements which it measures or to the transformations which gives it its rhythm [*aux avatars qui le scandent*].” (DR 118–119/88; tr. mod.) Insofar as thought and learning is concerned, however, the time to which Plato’s theory of recollection subjects thought is for all that still not “the empirical time of the thinker subject to factual conditions” for whom it “takes time to think”, but rather the “time of pure thought” constituting its condition *de jure*, the form of which is such that time now “takes thought” instead.

From Deleuze’s viewpoint the theory of recollection in Plato thus renders thought essentially related to time.<sup>12</sup> And this, in turn, introduces crucial elements of “difference, apprenticeship and heterogeneity” into thought (DR 216/166). “The importance of the concept of recollection (and the reason why it must be radically distinguished from the Cartesian concept of innateness”),

<sup>11</sup> Following Deleuze’s later reading of Kant it is worth noting that time is out of joint not only in Kant, but in Proust as well. Cf. “On Four Poetic Formulas that might Summarise the Kantian Philosophy”, in Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> According to Deleuze, the decisive discovery of an essential relationship between time and thought in Plato’s concept of recollection or *anamnesis* is then forsaken by philosophy. After Plato time is expelled from thought for the sake of immediacy, as epitomised by Descartes, and does not return into thought until Kant. This opposition is at the heart of Deleuze’s comment in *Difference and Repetition* that there is “nothing more instructive”, with respect to the theory of time, “than the difference between the Kantian and the Cartesian *cogito*.” (DR 116/85)

Deleuze summarises, “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.” (DR 185/142)

#### MNEME, ANAMNESIS, EIKASIA

Crudely put, in Plato there are elements towards an image of thought completely at variance with the image eventually erected in the name of Platonism.<sup>13</sup> If the theory of learning based on an affective model of thought in Plato seems to offer itself to us as an important but limited contribution, then recollection offers itself to us as a truly poisonous fruit. Recollection presents us, on the one hand, with time as an essential element in the ontogenesis of thought, which moreover is crucial for our understanding of its transcendental conditions in general, but is at the same time a concept ripe with both a model of representation and elements of transcendence that would severely impede the development of this understanding and cannot, furthermore, be brought to any agreement with the fundamental tenets of Deleuze’s philosophy. And so according to Deleuze, Plato eventually betrays these elements towards a thought (un)founded in difference when he subjects them to the “mythical form of resemblance and identity” again, thus allowing them to be “crushed by the emerging dogmatic image” while at the same time “bringing forth a groundlessness that it remains incapable of exploring.” (DR 216/166) It belongs to Proust to dig up these elements towards another image of thought and another theory of learning again – to give voice to “a new *Meno*” claiming that

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.“ (DR 216/166–167)

According to Socrates’ theory of learning in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, to learn is to recollect and there is recollection (*anamnesis*) as soon as we, upon

<sup>13</sup> This does not only concern the theory of recollection as a theory of learning in the form of an apprenticeship discussed here, but also the affective model of thought presented in book VII of the *Republic* which Deleuze discusses on three separate occasions during the 1960s: in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, *Proust and Signs* and *Difference and Repetition*. I will return to this issue in chapter 4.

encountering something, come to think of something else. Recollection or *anamnesis* must not, however, be confused with memory or *mneme*, nor reduced to a simple association of ideas. *Mneme* concerns the conservation or “safeguarding” of perceptions belonging to the union of the body and the soul that persists and perishes in chronological time, and which, since they never have been truly forgotten, can be recalled in the form of imprints (*phantasmata* or *eidola*) by force of the will alone. *Anamnesis*, on the other hand, relates to a kind of knowledge that concerns the intelligible and the movement of the intellect trying to seize it alone. This is a knowledge which is irreducible to perceptions and their imprints, and which cannot be, first, separated from the complete forgetfulness from which it irrupts. The flow of time is ruptured and the present of the body is surpassed. Second, this knowledge recalls as a whole through a single effort of the will, but it is a whole that is retrieved piece by piece through a repetition of an immemorial past.<sup>14</sup> Finally, and more importantly for our present purposes, this form of recollection cannot, regardless of whether the relation between what is encountered and what is recollected is one of similarity or dissimilarity, be separated from a certain experience, a certain *pathos* suggesting that one of them “falls short” of and is “inferior” to the other (*Phaedo*, 74c–e). This takes place on both sides of the division between the intelligible and the visible.

With respect to the visible, the realm governed by the Sun, there is according to Plato always a kind of “double vision” at work: for example, upon seeing “images” (*eikones* or, more precisely, *eidola*) such as a tree reflected in still water or a face in a looking glass, one cannot help but to see through this image to the “original” (*eoiken*) upon which it unconditionally depends. This distinction between “image” and “original” is, on the one hand, made on the basis of the faculty of belief (*pistis*) and the trust it allows us to feel for the world of “originals”, such as the tree and the face – i.e. those things we recognise as trustworthy and by virtue of which we to orientate ourselves.<sup>15</sup> On the other, the difference between “image” and “origin” is predicated on the faculty of the imagination (*eikasia*) that allows us to be affected by, and thus to see, an image precisely as an image (*hos eikon*), that is, an “image” whose relation to the

<sup>14</sup> For an informative account of these two forms of memory in Plato, see Monique Dixsaut, “Platon et ses deux mémoires”, in *Platon et la question de l'âme: études platoniciennes II* (Paris: Vrin, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Klein emphasises that this trust, *pistis*, which we feel for the world of originals and their images “extends far beyond any distrust or suspicion we might feel on occasion.” We feel “at home” in the world also beyond that which is immediately “familiar” to us, that is, to the extent that the “usual and the unusual, the expected and the unexpected, routine and novelty, are labels put on things and events within the frame of our all-embracing, all-familiar common experience.” Klein, *Plato's Meno*, 114.

“original” upon which it depends, determines not only the clarity or lack thereof by which we perceive them, but the degree of “truth” (*aletheia*) in each of them too.<sup>16</sup> The *pathema* named *eikasia* corresponding to the lowest type of visible things according to the division in book VI of the *Republic*, thus has a crucial role in thought not only within the visible realm but in general, due to its power of differentiation allowing us to distinguish, or at least not confound, “image” and “original”. Or as Jacob Klein remarks: “Our response to an image cannot help reproducing the very mode of being of what we call ‘image’ (*eikon*): ‘image’ is uniquely that which *is not* what it *is*.”<sup>17</sup>

Again, this operation is not limited to the visible or sensible and its corresponding faculties. Concisely, according to Plato, anything striking us as incomplete or imperfect, is met by a positing of something complete or perfect as the foundation to which it is intrinsically related. With regard to the intelligible, the realm governed by the Good, there is operative, in the words of Klein, a “dianoetic extension of *eikasia*” such that it constitutes our understanding of “visible things in terms of their intelligible foundations.”<sup>18</sup> And so the distinction between “original” and “image” is displaced such that it no longer simply concerns two types of visible things, but is repeated on the level of the division of the intelligible and the visible as such: the world of our senses is not what it seems to be, but merely an image of the intelligible world of Ideas. This is also where, in order to answer the question of how we can recognise what we do not actually know, the notion of *anamnesis* as the repetition of the virtual knowledge of the immortal soul is introduced by Socrates: “Whenever someone, on seeing something, realises that that which he now sees wants to be like some other reality but falls short and cannot be like that other since it is inferior, do we agree that the one who thinks this must have prior knowledge of that to which he says it is like, but deficiently so?” (*Phaedo*, 74d–e)

The object of thought thereby discovered to be thought’s own, in contrast to which the shortcomings of the sensible things appear, is not just the foundation of knowledge, however, but of the senses as well. Before we can begin “to see or hear or otherwise perceive” we must, Socrates argues, possess some knowledge of that which truly is, such as the Just, the Good or the Beautiful itself – that is, “all those things which we mark with the seal of ‘what it is’, both when we are putting questions and answering them.” (75b–d). The Ideas (*eide*), which by virtue of the dianoetic extension of *eikasia* appear to us as the

<sup>16</sup> Klein, *Plato’s Meno*, 114–115.

<sup>17</sup> Klein, *Plato’s Meno*, 115.

<sup>18</sup> Klein, *Plato’s Meno*, 120.

“models” (*paradeigmata*) of which the sensible things we perceive are more or less lacking “copies” (*homiomata*),<sup>19</sup> precede our ability to perceive them, but nevertheless rely on our senses in order to be recollected from forgetfulness (75e). The genesis and use of our faculties of sensibility would thus seem to be dependent on a prenatal knowledge of pre-existing intelligible objects or Ideas.<sup>20</sup>

The imagination’s deceptive tendency to posit a transcendent, or in any case illusory, foundation of the sensible is felt in Proust as well. In fact, the many deceptions and disappointments suffered by the narrator throughout the course of the *Search* all seem to be exacerbated by a similar misgiving or apprehension, a pressing feeling of some deficiency or lack, either on the side of the object experienced or on the side of the subject experiencing it. In either case, what is signaled is the fact that the truth or the essence, of whatever is at hand, is neither here nor there but always elsewhere and otherwise to be found. Such is, for instance, the experience of the young Marcel upon seeing the hawthorns in the garden of Tansonville:

But though I remained there in front of the hawthorns breathing in their invisible, unchanging smell, bringing it into the presence of my thoughts, which did not know what to do with it, then losing it, and then finding it again, absorbing myself in the rhythm that tossed their flowers here and there ... they offered me the same charm endlessly and with an inexhaustible profusion, but without letting me study it more deeply ... I turned away from them for a moment, to accost them again with renewed strength.... But although I formed a screen for myself with my hands so that I would have only them before my eyes, the feeling they awakened in me remained vague and obscure, seeking in vain to detach itself, to come and adhere to their flowers. They did not help me to clarify it, and I could not ask other flowers to satisfy it. (I/1: 136–137/140)

We recognise here a difficulty that repeats the experiencing of the madeleine, namely the apparent impossibility of clarifying an extraordinary, confusing, sensation impressed upon the subject by a sensible sign with the aid of nothing but the senses: just as another mouthful of tea did not help him then, another breath of the flower’s smell will bring him no closer to discovering

<sup>19</sup> See for example *Parmenides*, 132a–e.

<sup>20</sup> As we will see further down, this is important if we are to understand what is at stake in Deleuze’s transformation of the apprenticeship in view of transcendental empiricism.

the secret of the hawthorns now.<sup>21</sup> And this regardless of how many times the effort is repeated. There is a disparity felt between the hawthorns and the confusing sensation they give rise to as they, in their materiality, appear to transcend themselves in the direction of a universe hidden within, unknown to us, holding their secret. And this disparity, as pointed out by Miguel de Beistegui,<sup>22</sup> is temporal in nature and belongs to the aporia of the imagination as the only available “organ of joy” in the *Search*: the unbridled imagination can instil sense and value in an object to the extent that the associations thus created yield the subject joy, but only insofar as the object remains absent.<sup>23</sup>

In the space of its absence, a space of abstract possibility, located either between the actual present of the subject and the future presence of the object, or as a distance in the past itself, the imagination is allowed to anticipate it and thus enrich or embellish it to the extent of its powers – but as soon as the object presents itself, this joy is necessarily exchanged for disappointment. From a general point of view, the apprenticeship in Proust consists in a series of such imaginative anticipations and subsequent disillusion: “What is important”, Deleuze writes, “is that the hero does not know certain things at the start, gradually learns them, and finally receives an ultimate revelation. Necessarily then, he suffers disappointments: he ‘believed’, he suffered under illusions; the world vacillates in the course of the apprenticeship.” (PS 36/26)

#### THE PATHOLOGY OF RECOLLECTION

It is thus true that searching is learning and learning is remembering, not only in Plato but in Proust as well. Yet for all that in Proust learning is not so much about remembering as it is about being subjected to something. It is ultimately about becoming the apprentice to an encounter apprehended as an emission of signs, the event of which calls to be interpreted to the full extent of one’s powers. The apprentice is, on the one hand, someone who is affected by signs in the sense that one becomes the subject of the forces they express. On the other hand, one must also subject oneself to these signs precisely as an apprentice: that is, by pursuing a process of becoming sensitive,

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 79c–d, *Phaedo* where Socrates explains how the soul is struck by vertigo when it uses the body to examine something with the aid of the senses alone. This happens because the body and the senses drive the soul towards that which is never the same, always changing – rather than towards that to which its nature is most closely related and it can investigate successfully only by itself: the realm of the immortal and the changeless – so that the soul “itself strays” (*auto planotai*), “confused and dizzy” (*tarattetai*), as if its contact with the sensible had made it “intoxicated” (*hosper methuoussa*).

<sup>22</sup> Beistegui, *Proust as Philosopher*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Beistegui, *Proust as Philosopher*, 13.



receptive to them, learning to think in relation to them, through them. The fundamental condition of learning in Proust is, therefore, neither *mneme* nor *anamnesis*, neither sense nor meaning, but affectivity: the capability of being affected by an object “as if it emitted signs to be deciphered, interpreted. Everything that teaches us something emits signs; every act of learning is an interpretation of signs or hieroglyphs.” (PS 10/4) Hence, insofar as recollection is still an effective instrument in the search for truth in Proust, a means for experimental progress, this is only because it constitutes a mode of affecttion, a *pathos* of the soul.<sup>24</sup> This is why learning is still remembering, but remembering still is nothing more than to learn.

Through Proust, Plato’s notion of recollection is thus subjected to a kind of perversion, such that while learning still comprises recollection as a means among others, neither learning nor recollection no longer rest on the presupposition of any innate or otherwise *a priori* knowledge of the intelligible. Furthermore, it can no longer be considered the result of such arduous spiritual efforts and ascetic practices as Socrates in the *Phaedo* claims to be characteristic precisely of those who are “practicing philosophy in the right way” (*orthos philosophousa*), and by doing so have overcome the fear of death (80e). It does not matter if it is through memory, imagination, intelligence, or some other faculty – learning in Proust is never a factor of continuous effort nor of the abstinence from worldly pleasures. On the contrary, it is nothing but tangential to the power of involuntary and contingent encounters to afflict us and shock us into thinking: its genesis and necessity depends on an

<sup>24</sup> In the *Phaedo*, Socrates asks Simmias if he doubts that learning is recollection, and Simmias answers that he does not, but that he wants “to experience (*pathein*) the very thing we are discussing, recollection”: 73b. Then, in 73d, Socrates indirectly affirms this conception of recollection as something which befalls you, as *pathos*, when he says: “Well, you know what happens [*paskhousi*] to lovers: whenever they see a lyre, a garment or anything else that their beloved is accustomed to use, they know the lyre, and the image [*eidōs*] of the boy to whom it belongs comes into their mind. This is recollection.” According to Socrates, then, we “experience [*paskhomen*] something like this” as soon as we see something and come to realise that what we now are seeing, irrespective of whether it seems to be like or unlike at the moment, “wants [*bouletai*] to be like some other reality but falls short and cannot be like that other since it is inferior”: 74d–e. In this case, that is, from a paradigmatic point of view, recollection finds its foundation in the soul’s intrinsic knowledge of the intelligible Idea. The Idea constitutes a sort of prior knowledge (albeit not propositional) by virtue of which the image can be distinguished from the original, the copy from the model: although the sensible object may at one point seem to be like or bear a resemblance to the Idea or *eidōs* to which it refers, the essential dissemblance, the difference in nature separating the intelligible and the sensible, must sooner or later always strike us as the sign of an intrinsic and irremediable lack on behalf of the sensible thing. As Dixsaute concludes: “La réminiscence est un *pathos*. Se ressouvenir, c’est pâtir du manque de réalité vraie et de qualité parfaite des choses sensibles.... Tout cela doit être pensée dans un contexte érotique, et dynamiquement.” Dixsaute, *Platon et la question de l’âme*, 59. Cf. Deleuze’s remarks on the relationship between Eros and recollection in DR 115/85. I will return briefly to the question of memory in chapter 4.

exteriority of thought distributed and determined by chance and contingency, to which the subject must somehow be exposed or expose itself. And the fear of death is overcome, not through any assurance of the soul's immortality gleaned from abstract arguments concerning the conditions of possibility for recollection, but through a disruption of the self, suffered at the hands of time itself, and affirmed in such a joyful act of creation as constitutes thought in its highest power. Again: "One might invoke Proust's Platonism: to learn is still to remember. But however important its role," Deleuze writes, "memory intervenes only as the means of an apprenticeship that transcends recollection both by its goals and by its principles. The Search is oriented to the future, not to the past." (PS 10/4)

The apprenticeship in the *Search* is thus not defined so much by the moments of voluntary and involuntary memory scattered across its course, as it is by the course itself as a process of learning at the mercy of time: a wasteful, volatile and erratic search for the truth finding its fundamental condition in the *patho-logical system* constituted by the apprentice's affectivity and the contingent signs to which the formation of faculties and modes of exercise correspond. Consequently, the signs – irrespective of whether they call upon the faculty of memory, imagination, intelligence, or some other faculty – are the concern of the *Search*, not so much as objects of a theory or an "abstract knowledge" (PS 10/4), but inasmuch as they feed the process of *experimentation* driving the apprentice towards the truth. A process for which the intensity and quality of the suffering experienced and experimented with constitute the essential means and measure of its progress. "What is essential in the *Search* is not memory and time, but the sign and truth. What is essential is not to remember, but to learn." (PS 111/91)

In conclusion, then, the subordination of memory to the apprenticeship and the privilege afforded the future over the past is, on a general level, meant to bar any notion of the *Search* as a work above all concerned with memory, supposedly finding its purpose in a reflection on memory and forgetfulness as such. To the extent that the process of recollection is still important in Proust, however, it is not because it enables one to restore a lived past the particular truth of which otherwise would haunt us as a lack of reality in our selves; nor because it enables us to recollect an un-lived past of universally distributed knowledge, of pre-given and unchanging Ideas.<sup>25</sup> The most decisive consequences of Deleuze's interpretation of the role of memory in the *Search* is in

<sup>25</sup> Actually, as pointed out by Dixsaut, this is not even the case in the *Memo*. What always belongs to the soul but is forgotten through birth is not the Ideas or Forms, but "the truth of beings", that is, the knowledge of

fact that it, on the one hand, gives the narrator a certain “presentiment” of the essences awaiting his discovery in the signs of art, and, on the other, that the past actualised in such involuntary events anticipating the discovery of the essences destroys the common notion of the past as something that *has been* but *is no longer*. The waves of lost time surging against the shores of consciousness in the event of involuntary memories are not constituted by a series of past presents no longer real, but by a pure past that has never been present, never been lived, yet still expresses an even higher degree of reality than the always already passing present ever will. No longer simply a dimension of the present, no longer an accumulation of past presents preserved by psychological or physiological means, to be recalled to the best of one’s ability – the pure past now *preserves itself in itself*.

#### THE TEMPORALITY OF THE APPRENTICESHIP

“To learn”, Deleuze writes, echoing the *Meno*, “is to remember; but to remember is nothing more than to learn, to have a presentiment.” (PS 81/65) Considering that Deleuze finds all presuppositions concerning an innate or *a priori* knowledge capable of orienting the apprentice abolished in Proust, from whence, then, does this “presentiment” come and what is its function in thought? Part of the answer can be anticipated by returning once again to the madeleine and the problem that it poses to its apprentice. Already in the case of the madeleine, the truth of the event’s tendency to transcend itself towards an unknown is intimated as something which in both origin and destination is temporal in nature. Even though Deleuze in *Proust and Signs* avoids any particularly detailed analysis of the madeleine, he will later, in *Difference and Repetition*, return to it as the moment where the past is unhinged from the present and the discovery of essence is prefigured:

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 which it could be. Former presents may be represented beyond forgetting by active synthesis, in so far as forgetting is empirically

how they in their truth differ from sensible things, a difference which is, for knowledge itself, a knowledge about how this truth differs also from “true opinion”. What is forgotten at birth is thus not a sum of knowledge (*connaissances*) but the knowledge (*savoir*) concerning *the mode of being* of that which is to be known. Forgetfulness does not concern neither one nor several determined knowledges, nor the intelligible Ideas or Forms, but the soul’s own capacity to attain what truly is. See Dixsaut, *Platon et la question de l’âme*, 55–56.

overcome. Here, however, it is within Forgetting, as though im-memorial, that Combray reappears in the form of a past which was never present: the in-itself of Combray. (DR 115/85)

According to Deleuze, what sets the involuntary memory (passive synthesis) apart from voluntary memory (active synthesis) is its ability to present to us the *past as past* – not *as a present that has been but is no longer*. In fact, the past recovered for us by voluntary memory is nothing more than an *image* of the present that it was, and is therefore, as Deleuze specifies, “doubly relative: relative to the present that it has been, but also to the present with regard to which it is now past.” (PS 72/57) Rather than “the being in-itself of the past”, to which we are subjected by involuntary memory, in voluntary memory we recall but an *image of the past*, recomposed of *presents*, yet still untrue to both the present that is and the present that was. This is why Proust’s narrator later will state how the Combray that the taste of the madeleine “had awoken within me bore no relation to what I was *trying to remember* with the help of a uniform memory; and I understood that life might be deemed dreary, even though at certain moments it may seem so beautiful, because for the most part it is on the basis of something quite different from it, *on the basis of images which retain nothing of life itself*, that we judge it and that we disparage it.” (IV/6: 448/178; italics mine)

This inclination to figure the past in the image of the present, which is also an inability to conceive the past *as past*, rests on an illegitimate assumption concerning the nature of passing time according to Deleuze, namely the notion that for the present to become past it would first have “to wait for a new present” before it can “pass by, or become past.” (PS 73/57–58) According to Deleuze, however, the past in Proust is not constituted as past only *after* it has passed by, rather it *coexists with the present as past*. Otherwise, that is, if the present did not coexist “with itself as present *and* past”, Deleuze continues, “it would never pass, a new present would never come to replace this one.” (PS 73/58) Second, the past does not need anything else to contain or preserve it; it does not need to pass into something other than itself in order to be past, since “it is in itself, survives and preserves itself in itself” (PS 73/58). In Proust much like in Bergson, then, Deleuze argues, “the entire past is conserved in itself”.<sup>26</sup> And it is this past conserved in its entirety that in involuntary memory

<sup>26</sup> DR 115/84. As is well known, Proust is commonly connected with Bergson and the claim has even been made, more than once, that the *Search* is in fact nothing but a novelisation of Bergson’s philosophy of time. But Deleuze argues the contrary, insisting instead that if there is “a resemblance between Bergson’s conceptions and Proust’s, it is on this level – not on the level of duration, but of memory.” PS 73/58. This

is made flesh again, reborn under the sign of Eros: "Every recollection, 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." (DR 115/85)

Accordingly, the problem posed by the sudden and involuntary recollection of Combray is not relative to any present at all, but only to the pure past, to the being in itself of the past holding its essence. And so Combray, as it re-emerges "within Forgetting, as though immemorial", does not belong to Marcel at all and never has, neither in the past nor in the present: it is impersonal but also singular; individuating rather than individual. The problem is not what the sign forcing the recollection really means or what the recollected itself really signifies, but how *the past can be repeated as past*, that is, how it can be repeated in its essence or as a past irreducible to the "former present that it was, or to the present in relation to which it is past? How can we save it *for ourselves*?" (DR 115/84) It would seem, Deleuze continues, "the answer has long been known: recollection. (DR 115/84)

This answer may seem surprising. Not least because of Deleuze's rejection of the common notion of the *Search* as a novel in which memory is the key to everything, but also because we have just established that to simply *search* for the truth of such an event as something already given and just waiting to be found, would have its apprentice suffer not only indefinitely but also in vain. Granted, however, that the truth in this case belongs to invention and creation as much as to searching and discovering.<sup>27</sup> How, then, can recollection still be the answer for Deleuze?

According to Deleuze the problem posed by the madeleine, the perplexing and extraordinary joy that it inexplicably instils, can never be solved by means of voluntary memory, for the reason that voluntary memory will try to seize the past in terms of a former present, in the image of a present that was but is no longer, rather than as the past in itself, that is, as a past that is autonomous, self-contained and independent of the present. And such images of the past, as *fortiori* conjured up by efforts of voluntary memory, can never bring the subject

argument positing that the possibility of a comparison between Bergson and Proust must take place in regard to memory rather than time is then repeated again, not only in *Difference and Repetition* but in *Bergsonism* also: "Their conception of time is extremely different, but both acknowledge a kind of pure past, a being in itself of the past." B 55/126.

<sup>27</sup> This is also Macherey's understanding of the search determining the *Search*: the true search is characterised by "l'invention et non la découverte; si le mot vérité a un sens, celui-ci n'est pas retrospectif mais prospectif" and we are called upon to "la configurer et à la reconfigurer au fur et à mesure que nous nous évertuons à l'approcher, au cours d'une démarche dont les résultats ne sont pas à l'avance programmés ni *a fortiori* garantis, mais demeurent en permanence à l'essai." Pierre Macherey, *Proust*, 44.

the kind of extraordinary joy associated with involuntary memory, for the simple reason that it cannot repeat the past authentically or in its difference. The repetition of the past belonging to voluntary memory or to *mneme*, in Platonic terms, as the repetition of a former present in accordance with the utilitarian ends of habit, is sterile and depreciating in essence. The advent of the essence of Combray in involuntary memory, on the other hand, returns precisely as a *problem* that prefigures the essence finally discovered in art, by briefly suspending the order of time and revealing, not eternity in itself, but an image of the eternity felt as the presentiment which, at last, is discovered to have oriented the apprenticeship from the start. How can there be such a presentiment orientating the apprentice, if the apprenticeship is still to be understood as a disorientated exploration of the groundlessness otherwise precluded by Plato's theory of recollection? And how can the apprenticeship's progress be furthered if its progression is conditioned exclusively by involuntary acts and events?

As we have seen, the crucial invention in Plato's theory of learning as recollection is found, according to Deleuze, in the dissociation of learning from ends of knowledge and, on a deeper level, in the introduction of time into thought. Plato, however, betrays his own invention, according to Deleuze, as soon as the force of time is neutralised and embalmed in the figure of a mythical past. Provided that Deleuze seeks to explore the groundlessness following from thought's unconditional subjection to time in the Proustian perversion of Plato's theory of learning, abolishing all notions of innate or otherwise pre-given knowledge functioning, at its very minimum, as a principle of orientation, how then, one may ask, does he solve the aporia of learning that Plato's concept of recollection was supposed to solve, namely that we cannot learn what we already know any more than we can learn that of which we are completely ignorant? In fact, the consequences of rejecting all notions of a principle supposed to determine the orientation of thought before the fact would – from a practical rather than a reflective viewpoint – be a false problem for Deleuze, since the orientation of thought, in principle, is determined by the forces presently in possession of it, by the timeline unfolding in the act of interpretation charged with explicating the sign currently affecting us. Again, the apprenticeship in Proust is on the whole less a matter of time-consuming reflection than it is experimentation, where one finds in time both its form and matter.

In involuntary memory the past returns to counter-actualise or unground the present of thought, rather than to constitute that to which thought can

return in order to ground itself in the present. There is, therefore, no foundation (*fondement*) for thought other than the un-founding (*effondement*) that is incessantly and cruelly carried out by time.<sup>28</sup> Since it has no foundation but its own un-founding in time, the orientation of the act of thought cannot be determined in advance of itself, before its event in thought. Instead, it must be determined simultaneously with this event, that is, coincidentally, in and by time as the condition of our power to be affected by such signs capable of giving birth to both the thinker and the act of thought, with no other warrant for its necessity than the contingency of its own irruption.<sup>29</sup> “To seek the truth is to interpret, decipher, explicate. But this ‘explication’ blends [*se confond*] with the development of the sign in itself. This is why the Search is always temporal, and the truth always a truth of time.” (PS 25/17; tr. mod.) In the *Search*, however, “Time itself is plural.” (PS 25/17) The un-founding of thought is thus not simply an effect of the same order of change that everything undergoes before eventually perishing, including ourselves: it is an effect of the plurality of time itself as well as of the combinations and complications of this plurality.

According to Deleuze this plurality begins with the major distinction between *time lost* and *time regained*, but ultimately comprises four distinct “structures of time, each having its truth.” This is because, on the one side, lost time is not only the “passing time, which alters beings and annihilates what once was”, but also “the time one wastes” on anything that may block or defer any effort towards the achievement of the work of art. On the other side, regained time is not only time “recovered at the heart of time lost, which gives an image of eternity”, but also an “absolute, original time, an actual eternity that is affirmed in art.” (PS 26/17)

<sup>28</sup> With respect to the figure of the eternal return in Nietzsche, Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*: “By ‘ungrounding’ [*effondement*] we should understand the freedom of the non-mediated ground, the discovery of a ground behind every other ground, the relation between the groundless and the ungrounded, the immediate reflection of the formless and the superior form which constitutes the eternal return.... Moreover, that cruelty which at the outset seemed to us monstrous, demanding expiation, and could be alleviated only by representative mediation, now seems to us to constitute the pure concept or Idea of difference within overturned Platonism: the most innocent difference, the state of innocence and its echo.” (DR 92/67) It can be noted that the theme of “grounding” is the subject of an early seminar held by Deleuze at lycée Louis le Grand in 1956–1957 and recently published in English under the title *What is Grounding?*, trans. Arjen Kleinherenbrink (Grand Rapids: & Publishing, 2015). For a detailed analysis, see Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*.

<sup>29</sup> “The sign is the object of an encounter, but it is precisely the contingency of the encounter that guarantees the necessity of what it leads us to think.” (PS 118/97)

Time lost, time wasted, time found again and time regained – they all constitute specific lines of time, which the act of thought may unfold in accordance with the simultaneous development of the specific type of sign that happened to force its event. And each type of sign, Deleuze states, corresponds to a privileged line of time. The worldly signs correspond to the lost time of alteration and annihilation manifesting itself in society’s shifting fashions and changing political trends, in the faces and bodies of acquaintances suddenly disfigured beyond recognition, but also, and perhaps above all, to the time wasted on worldly pleasures such as friendships or useless lovers. The signs of love and jealousy correspond to lost time too, but to lost time in “the purest state”: they carry within them their own alteration, annihilation, just as love, during all its stages and intensities, compulsively repeats its future demise and, in the scenes of jealousy, “acts out its dissolution.” (PS 28/19)

In turn, sensible signs such as the madeleine recalling Combray or the boots recalling the death of his grandmother, correspond to what Deleuze determines as the time found again in lost time itself: the line of time giving us an “image of eternity” and either inexplicably restores the subject to the joy, beauty and plenitude otherwise felt to be lost to the world, or precipitates it into the harrowing feeling of irreparable loss that constitutes “the sign of a Time lost forever instead of giving us the plenitude of the Time we regain.” (PS 28/19) The signs of art, finally, correspond to the complication of all lines of time. This is the time regained, the original time that presents us with “eternity” through the affirmation, in the artwork, of “alogical or supralogical” essences exceeding both object and subject infinitely (PS 50/37). Furthermore, the kind of truth that appertains to each line of time reaches its apex in the singular and absolutely immaterial truth discovered in the artwork, only to become more and more general and material, mired deeper and deeper in life, the further down we proceed along the hierarchy of signs, until reaching its lowest form in the worldly signs, the most material type of sign that emits the most general form of truth.

In the end, however, the structure of the signs is not that simple, not that clear. Although “each kind of sign” indeed has a privileged line of time to which it corresponds, it also “participates unequally [*inégale*ment] in several lines of time”, just as “each line of time mingles unequally several kinds of signs.” (PS 26/17; tr. mod) According to Deleuze, the time wasted thus extends into the signs of love as well as into those of sensibility, just as the time lost already pervades the worldly signs while still lingering in the signs of sensibility. The original or absolute time – the time regained – “reacts in its turn upon time wasted and time lost. And it is in the absolute time of the work of



art that all the other dimensions are united and find the truth that corresponds to them.” (PS 35/25) For the apprentice’s every encounter with a sign, there is not only the question of which line of time this sign principally corresponds to, but of its relation or participation in an entire “combinatory” of timelines, finding its source in the pluralism at work at the heart of Proust’s conception of time and which constantly, inevitably, “multiplies the combinations.” (PS 26/17) And the outcome of all this is always, in each and every encounter, above all determined by chance.

## II. ON ERRING

*Affectivity in the example of the indolent mind and the notion of an impossibility to will. – The possibility of thought as thought’s true impediment and false problem. – The illusions of objectivism and subjectivism in the example of Berma. – The indirections and meanderings of the Search as a straight line. – The contingency and intermittence of thought and its faculties.*

In light of the un-founding and disorienting effects of the *Search* on Deleuze’s temporal conception of the apprenticeship, the ramifications and complications of these subversions on the conditions of learning evidently demand examination as well. No longer is the thinker an immortal Soul oriented by innate, formal, knowledge that it is in the process of recovering materially from forgetfulness. Instead, the essentially erring apprentice may discover the truth only to the extent that it is exposed to signs and thus to the force of Time. And it is this principle of exposure that subtends “the double idea of ‘constraint’ and of ‘chance’” which Proust, according to Deleuze, sets against the philosophical notion of method: “Truth depends on an encounter with something that forces us to think and to seek the truth.... Precisely, it is the sign that constitutes the object of an encounter and works this violence upon us. It is the accident of the encounter that guarantees the necessity of what is thought. Fortuitous and inevitable” (PS 25/16).

As far as there is an itinerary that the apprentice should follow, this itinerary is contingent on accidents and encounters. Thus, any force of necessity that takes hold of the apprentice can only be discovered in and through the contingency of the event’s irruption. In fact, insofar as what connects both Proust and Deleuze is that they belong to the obscure lineage of empiricism – a line of thought that arguably brings together the figures of Hume, Nietzsche and Bergson also – the same point is encircled, namely that for anything significant to be either learned or discovered an act of thought must exceed the model of recognition, and this means that one must “make the necessary

encounters”<sup>30</sup> Here, no power of will, no degree of resolution, no amount of effort or industry can never, at least not by itself, constitute a principle of sufficient reason for the genesis of an act of thought marked by that necessity which, according to Proust, is also the mark of truth. The fundamental condition of thought is, in short, the subject’s exposure to the force of Time and its power to be affected by the signs to which Time has it forcibly exposed. What are the implications of this shift towards contingency and chance, of this discovery of thought as essentially *self-insufficient*?

At least one effect of discovering this principle of exposure is felt already on the level of the narrative in the *Search*, that is, in the account of a writer who despite his efforts is always not yet writing and never fails to defer its beginning further still. But this issue of a persistent desire to think or write vis-à-vis the experience of its impossibility is in fact present to Proust even before the *Search*.<sup>31</sup> In a way anticipating much of Deleuze’s understanding of the conditions of thought in *Proust and Signs*, in “On Reading” (1905) Proust gives a description of a certain affliction of the nervous system such that “even if none of the organs themselves are affected, the sufferer is swallowed up in a kind of *impossibility to will* [impossibilité de vouloir] ... His brain, his legs, his stomach, his lungs are unharmed. He has no real incapacity that prevents him from working, walking, eating, being out in the cold, but he finds it impossible to will the various acts he is otherwise perfectly able to perform.”<sup>32</sup> The characteristics of this affliction allow for a comparison with a particular kind of mind (*esprit*), Proust claims: a mind characterised by a sort of indolence or frivolity stopping its kind from *spontaneously* descending into “the deeper regions of themselves where the true life of the mind begins.”<sup>33</sup>

Although this “indolent mind” (*esprit paresseux*) would not be altogether incapable of discovering and exploiting the “true riches” of the soul once it is led to the obscure regions they inhabit, they would, Proust writes, nonetheless be condemned to a life “on the surface, in a perpetual forgetting of themselves, a kind of passivity which makes them the plaything of every pleasure and reduces them to the stature of those who surround them, jostling them this

<sup>30</sup> PS 37/27.

<sup>31</sup> “On Reading (“Sur la lecture”) was originally Proust’s preface to his translation of Ruskin’s *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), but it was also published as a separate text in *La renaissance latin* (June 15th, 1905). It was later reworked, renamed and republished as “Journées de lecture” in *Pastiches et mélanges* (1919).

<sup>32</sup> Marcel Proust, “Sur la lecture”, in *Écrits sur l’art*, ed. Jérôme Picon (Paris: Flammarion, 1999), 206; “On Reading”, in Marcel Proust and John Ruskin, *On Reading with Sesame and Lilies I: Of King’s Treasuries*, ed. and tr. Damion Searles (London: Hesperus Press Limited, 2011), 25; tr. mod.

<sup>33</sup> Proust, “On Reading”, 207/25; tr. mod.

way and that". What saves them from this stupor is an "outside intervention" (*intervention étrangère*).<sup>34</sup> The complete passivity of the self and the powerlessness ensuing from their natural disposition, would exile indolent spirits from their deepest depths and truest selves, and in the end abolish even the sentiments and memories of their former "inner nobility" (*noblesse spirituelle*) – unless, again, an "exterior impulse comes to forcibly reintroduce them into the life of the mind [*vie de l'esprit*], where they will suddenly recapture the power to think for themselves and to create."<sup>35</sup>

According to Proust, however, such a rapturous event in the life of the mind cannot take place at all times or under any circumstances. First, the indolent mind cannot find anything in itself, by itself, that could release it from its stupor. Second, it is susceptible to a creative impulse only insofar as it is in a solitary state, outside of which "the creative activity that is to be resurrected in him cannot occur."<sup>36</sup> While this state of solitude is unconditional, it does not constitute a sufficient reason in itself. The indolent mind cannot extract anything from solitude that might dislodge and mobilise it, no matter its purity, since, in Proust's view, it is at all times "unable to set its creative activity in motion by itself."<sup>37</sup> Third, the indolent mind requires solitude, but it requires even more someone or something besides itself. However, this necessary other cannot come in any form, since "even the loftiest conversation or the most insistent advice would not help him in the slightest either, because it cannot directly produce original activity."<sup>38</sup>

Thus, with respect to the power of creation pursued, the indolent mind is useless not only on its own but also in the company of others. Company, conversation and counsel clearly belong outside of it, but no matter how entertaining the company, how good the friendship, how refined the subject of conversation, how sincere and intelligent the advice received may be – nothing *explicit, objective, communicated*, in friendship or otherwise, can ever result in an impulse other and original enough to truly set the indolent mind in motion. "What is needed", Proust concludes, "is an intervention that occurs deep within ourselves while coming from someone else, the impulse of another mind that we receive in the bosom of solitude."<sup>39</sup> So, even if it is incapable on its own and while keeping company (at least to the degree the alterity of the

<sup>34</sup> Proust, "On Reading", 207/25–26.

<sup>35</sup> Proust, "On Reading", 207/26; tr. mod.

<sup>36</sup> Proust, "On Reading", 207–208/26.

<sup>37</sup> Proust, "On Reading", 208/26.

<sup>38</sup> Proust, "On Reading", 208/26.

<sup>39</sup> Proust, "On Reading", 208/26.

other affects the mind in the form of a conventional, communicable discourse), the impulse must come from another while being received as if originating from within.<sup>40</sup> At this point, it would seem that for Proust only reading can afford us this impulse: it is by reading the signs of another that these very signs, served to us from outside, are nevertheless ingested as if they were cut from the insides of our own mind.<sup>41</sup> In the *Search*, however, the signs capable of forcing us to think are no longer confined to words written in books or pamphlets. Rather, they are discovered to be constantly multiplied and dispersed, settling darkly in everything from the movement of the universe to a noisy water pipe or a slanting ray of sun.

The apprenticeship's progress here depends on the distribution of chance, that is, on remarkable encounters and singular events. But this evidently begs the question of the significance or insignificance of the ordinary, of all the apparently negligible, inconsequential, or irrelevant moments that unfold in-between the apprenticeship's singular and remarkable encounters. Is it all just a waste of time? Is the ordinary or the unremarkable nothing more than time irretrievably lost to the detriment of the apprentice's vocation, that is, the work of art or philosophy calling for creation? Is art or thought in its purest form constituted exclusively by singular or remarkable elements?

The principle of exposure and the significance ascribed to the time wasted by Deleuze obviously points to the contrary. From a different perspective but to a similar effect, Blanchot's comments on Proust in *The Book to Come* (1959) indicates a crucial difference, with regard precisely to the relationship between the singular and the ordinary, between Proust's aborted novel *Jean Santeuil* and the interminable *Search*. Blanchot argues that in *Jean Santeuil*, the significance of singular moments of "inspiration" is conceived in a manner that, on the one hand, echoes the final revelations in the *Search* and the resulting aesthetics of the Time lost and wasted, recovered or regained. In *Jean Santeuil*, on the other hand, the final revelation results in the protagonist pledging himself to an art constituted solely by such singular moments. According to Blanchot, it thus seems as if Proust in *Jean Santeuil* "conceived of a purer art, concentrated on moments alone, without padding, without summoning voluntary memories or general truths formed or grasped again by

<sup>40</sup> The only thing that meets all the requirements as defined by Proust in "On Reading" is, according to himself, the act of reading: "Thus the only discipline which can exert a beneficial influence on such minds is reading ... Emerson rarely began to write without re-reading several pages of Plato: Dante is not the only poet whom Virgil has brought to the threshold of paradise."

Proust, "On Reading", 208/27.

<sup>41</sup> Macherey, *Proust*, 32–33.

intelligence, to which later on he will think he has accorded a large place in his work: in sum, a ‘pure’ narrative made only of those points from which it is formed, *like the sky, where apart from the stars there is only emptiness.*<sup>42</sup>

This “pure art” would thus build exclusively on essences extracted from such singular moments in order to be able to tear through “the conventional surface of being” and at the same time allow him to eliminate not just the ordinary as such but “all that would make his book the result of labor.”<sup>43</sup> Proust eventually finds himself unable to respond productively to this ideal, according to Blanchot, and the attempt to create an impression of life consisting of nothing but “separate hours” in *Jean Santeuil* thus fails. This is because Proust in *Jean Santeuil* still “kept to a piecemeal concept,” Blanchot claims, “in which the void is not represented but remains void.”<sup>44</sup> Conversely, the *Search* is “a massive, uninterrupted work” that truly has “succeeded in *adding the void as a fullness to the starry points* and, this time, made the stars sparkle wonderfully, because they *no longer lacked the immensity of the emptiness of space.*”<sup>45</sup> The essential is, in other words, an event within the inessential.

In summary, there can be no work of art, no philosophical treatise, nothing joyful or significant without the time wasted on exposing one’s being to the force of Time and everything following in its wake. The purity of art or thought in Proust or Deleuze is not the purity of a homogenous origin, but of a system of heterogenesis constituted or engendered by pure, unmediated, differences.<sup>46</sup> Hence, the paradoxical importance of the empty signs of the salons, the worldly signs imparting a feeling of nervous exaltation to us due to the disquietude of their producers and the constantly accelerating speed of their traffic. Even so, to waste one’s time in a fashion deserving of the singular sign or remarkable event to come, is not, regardless of this insight, a painless and uncomplicated task.

<sup>42</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 19; italics mine.

<sup>43</sup> Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, 20.

<sup>44</sup> Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, 21.

<sup>45</sup> Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, 21; italics mine.

<sup>46</sup> In crude terms, this idea of a system of heterogenesis can be translated into the terms that will be adopted in chapter four of this book, namely the transcendent exercise to which the faculties are raised in the encounter with the pure differences which, according to Deleuze, constitutes the essence or the Idea in the overturning of Platonism. For a detailed account of the concept of heterogenesis in Deleuze, see Martijn Boven, “A System of Heterogenesis: Deleuze on Plurality”, in *Phenomenological Perspectives on Plurality*, ed. Gert-Jan van der Heiden, vol. 12, Studies in Contemporary Phenomenology (Brill, 2014), 175–94.

## THE PROBLEM OF THE POSSIBLE

“[I] felt that I had no talent or perhaps a disease of the brain kept it from being born.” (I/1: 170/173) Either there is a lack of genius or the brain is beset by disease – in any case, it seems that from a certain viewpoint the problem of thought in Proust is first and foremost a problem concerning possibility; a problem Deleuze largely inherits from Bergson and the criticism of the tendency to retroactively posit the possible as pre-existing its own realisation, thereby precluding the irruption of the novel.<sup>47</sup> This problem is felt on two basic levels in the *Search*: first, the problem that thought remains an *unrealised* possibility despite an explicit will to the contrary; second, the problematical and implicit presupposition that thought is understood as a *natural* possibility. The first concerns the problem encompassing the entire course of the *Search*: there is a desire, an ambition to be a writer but never anything written. And the second provides the reason or the principle accounting for the recurrence and persistence of the first, that is, the internal illusion of thought as a natural possibility. Although distinct, these two aspects of the problem of possibility evidently cannot be separated. The problem of its realisation depends on the presupposition of the faculty of thought existing as a pre-given possibility awaiting its realisation as an act of thinking, but it is only through an enquiry into why and how this possibility remains unrealised in the *Search* that the presupposition of thought as a natural possibility appears as a true problem.

The problem of possibility is effectively felt as soon as the question of what deserves to or should be written poses itself, in that the spontaneous response to all such inquiries always seem to be stupefaction or perplexity – there seem to be never any Ideas of unfathomable depth deserving to be raised up to a work of art or philosophy. How can you possibly be a writer if you cannot conceive of something worth writing? How can you ever begin to write if you do not know what is to be written or cannot think at all? “It was time to find out what I meant to write. But as soon as I asked myself this, trying to find a subject in which I could anchor some infinite philosophical meaning, my mind would stop functioning, I could no longer see anything but empty space before my attentive eyes.” (I/1: 170/173) All of Marcel’s willful efforts to plumb the soul for promising subjects thus brings nothing besides a confrontation with the soul’s own destitution, always so blank in its own reflection. And

<sup>47</sup> This critique of the category of possibility in Bergson is crucial in Deleuze’s development of the concept of virtuality. Interestingly, however, it is Proust’s formula – real but not actual, ideal but not abstract – that is credited for providing the best definition of the virtual. See, B 99–101/96–98.

every attempt to begin the work at last always seems to be averted by chance, deferred by indolence, postponed by preference or cancelled by another desire. There are, however, two general obstructions that would explain why this possibility of thought, of creation, must remain unrealised almost throughout the entire *Search*: the illusion of *objectivism*, on the one hand, and the illusion of *subjectivism*, on the other.

#### THE ILLUSIONS OF OBJECTIVISM AND SUBJECTIVISM

In relation to the problem of thought, the illusion of objectivism concerns, first of all, an experience of deficiency: a lack of objective qualities consubstantial with the subject.<sup>48</sup> A deficiency of this sort is of course what most urgently appears to prevent the protagonist from simply *being* a writer of genius. This possibility is excluded by inference, from the want of such qualities as are objectively presupposed by the concept of genius. But the inference of such an objective deficiency in the subject would, of course, not be conceivable at all were it not for the habit of attributing “the signs that it bears” to the object itself (PS 37/27). There can, in short, be a lack integral to the subject in question only in so far as there is already a more general illusion in place, to which the particular illusory deficiency is added as a subtraction: it is the object in itself that above all holds “the secret of the signs it emits.” (PS 37/27) This illusory deficiency is thus precisely not an absence or a lack, there is nothing missing, no nothingness for failure to disclose, since the illusion is always more than what is supposed to be missing in itself.<sup>49</sup> It is an illusion derived from another illusion and both illusions are gratuitously added to what is really there. This is, summarily, the complex or constellation of illusions which earlier prompted Proust to analyse the idle and unproductive character of the indolent mind as the effect of a *de facto* impossibility to “will” or “want” (*vouloir*), a contingent nervous affliction, rather than a *de jure* impossibility of thought proper to thought itself.

<sup>48</sup> In the *Search* the following general deficiencies can, arguably, be distinguished: (1) an objective deficiency intrinsic to the object (e.g. insignificance, triviality); (2) an objective deficiency intrinsic to the subject (e.g. lack of talent, stupidity); (3) a subjective deficiency extrinsic to the subject (e.g. insufficient or absent effort); (4) a subjective deficiency extrinsic to the object (e.g. inattentiveness, ignorance, incompetence). In many cases, however, the deficiencies experienced cannot be separated from their corresponding illusions. For example, the objective deficiency of the subject resulting in an unrealised possibility, i.e. an absent talent or cognitive ability, is ultimately not a lack or deficiency at all but the effect of an illusion originating in the unquestioned presupposition of thought as a possibility.

<sup>49</sup> See the first chapter, “Intuition as Method”, in *Bergsonism* where Deleuze discusses Bergson’s analysis of the notion of “nothingness” or “nonbeing” (*le néant*) as a *false problem*.

This “objectivism” is all a question of habit. As such, however, it is also able to present itself in the guise of a specific nature. “Everything”, Deleuze writes, “pushes us to it: perception, passion, intelligence, habit and even self-love (*amour-propre*).” (PS 37/27; tr. mod.) These faculties are habitually presupposed as given by nature and thus represented as natural, but really are nothing but acquired habits in themselves. And it is in this capacity that they constantly drive us towards the object by virtue of an empty promise: the secret of the name Guermantes is to be found in and known by the duchess de Guermantes herself; the secret of the hawthorns is to be discovered by just gazing intently at their colours, breathing in their scent or touching them one more time. This habit of simply identifying what the sign signifies with the object that emits it, settling for recognition rather than venturing into the depths of the event, traces out “the indolent mind”. Such indolence is what according to Deleuze makes us pass over “our most beautiful encounters” as well as shy away from the decisive “imperatives emanating from them”. (PS 37/27; tr. mod.)

The appetite for objectivism also affects the notion of thought initially in play in the *Search*, for which its first figure is doubt. Consequently, the “talent” or “disposition” presumably required to fulfil the desire of being a writer is constantly called into question from the exact moment this desire is born. Not the least so after Marcel is encouraged by his father to show his prose poem to the diplomat Norpois: “Until that moment, my only thought had been that I had no gift for writing; but M. de Norpois now freed me of the very urge [*désir*] to write.” (II/2: 444/26) Norpois’ view on literature and notion of success or genius in literature,<sup>50</sup> soon turns out to stand disastrously opposed to Marcel’s as well as to his poem (“he handed it back to me without a word”, I/2: 447/29). And as soon as the protagonist’s deep admiration for Bergotte is revealed,<sup>51</sup> Norpois can no longer keep himself from discharging his content in having discovered the deeper reason behind his distaste for Marcel’s poem: “In that

<sup>50</sup> What constitutes a most successful career in literature for Norpois is exemplified by the son of a friend who has practically secured himself a seat in the Académie des sciences morales by writing a book, first, “on the Sentiment of the Infinite on the western shore of Lake Victoria-Nyanza, and then this very year a work of lesser scope, but still written with a nimble, nay sometimes a sharp nib, on the repeating rifle in the Bulgarian army.” I/2: 445/27.

<sup>51</sup> I/2 464/47: “Well now, I’m afraid that’s not a view I can share, M. de Norpois said (and when I realised that the thing I set far above myself, the one thing I saw as the highest in the world, was the least of his admirations, the doubts planted in my mind about my own intelligence were much more crippling than those which usually assailed me). Bergotte is what I call a flute-player.... Now that I’m aware of your quite excessive admiration for Bergotte, I can appreciate better that little thing you showed me before dinner, about which, by the way, the less said the better – I owe it to you to say so, for did you not say yourself, quite openly, that it was mere childish scribbling? (It was true, I *had* said so – but I had not meant it.)”



piece you showed me, one can detect Bergotte's pernicious influence. Now, clearly, it will come as no surprise to you to learn that it contained none of his better qualities" (I/2: 465/48).

At this point, however, Marcel clearly deceives himself regarding both his own faculties as well as Norpois' intelligence in matters of art,<sup>52</sup> and in fact is more deceived by the latter than he is with the former: the appreciation of Norpois' judgement obviously proceeds from an illusion obscuring his inescapable idiocy outside the world of diplomacy. Marcel's misgivings concerning his own artistic abilities are for all that not simply another delusion. Even though he eventually realises the truth about Norpois' frail understanding of art, he will nonetheless remain under the sway of this particularly decisive illusion concerning both himself and the requirements of art: that is, the illusion that the specific talents or abilities of which he has been found wanting are precisely the abilities and talents called for by artistic creation. This illusion obviously pervades the *Search* almost in full and is not properly dispelled until the final revelations.

The specific illusion of an objective deficiency in the individual subject thus corresponds to the encompassing and general illusion of what Deleuze calls "objectivism". Consequently, the objective illusion concerns more than certain objective qualities presupposed in the subject, such as a basic cognitive ability or talent. It also entails, for example, the objects of the subject's expectations, phantasms and desires. In any case, these two aspects of the objective illusion often intersect. Consider the episode of Marcel's first visit to see Berma perform.<sup>53</sup> At this point of the apprenticeship the value of Berma's acting can only be adequately appreciated in connection to a play of high esteem with which the protagonist is familiar; likewise it is above all through a highly esteemed and intimately known play that Berma's acting is allowed to adequately reveal the reality of which it expresses. This is because an unknown play would not allow what belongs to the text to be distinguished from what Berma adds to it

<sup>52</sup> I/2: 466/49: "I was devastated by what M. de Norpois had said about the piece I had given him to read; and at the thought of the difficulties I encountered whenever I tried to write an essay, or even just engage in some consecutive thinking, I became once more acutely aware of the fact that I had no gift for writing."

<sup>53</sup> I/2: 433/15: "A Carpaccio in Venice, La Berma in *Phèdre*, were masterworks of pictorial or dramatic art; and the glamour that surrounded them gave them such vital force, and made them so indivisible into their parts, that if I had to look at Carpaccios in a room at the Louvre, or see La Berma in a play that I had never heard of, I would never have felt that delight of amazement at being face to face at last with the unique and ungraspable object of so many thousands of dreams. Also, in my expectation that La Berma's acting would give me a revelation about nobility and grief [*douleur*], I had the impression that everything great and true in her acting was bound to become greater and truer if she put it into [*superposait*] a work of genuine worth, instead of embroidering Truth and Beauty on the coarse cloth of some valueless vulgarity."

in the form of “intonations” and “gestures” that nonetheless remain congenial to the play. Thus judgement must be suspended.<sup>54</sup>

Conversely, a play of high esteem known by heart would appear as if wrought in a sort of invisible yet still material matter,<sup>55</sup> allowing it to appear as an emptied space “awaiting only the fluent frescoes that La Berma would lavish upon them and the unconstrained appreciation with which I would greet the inexhaustible felicities of her inspiration.” (I/2: 433/15) Thus, in this case the objective illusion is at least double. First there is the reduction to mere object, then to mere condition of possibility: Racine’s *Phèdre* becomes nothing more than an empty space allowing for the isolation and recognition of Berma’s talent; Berma’s talent becomes nothing more than an emptied vehicle allowing for the revelation of certain aspects of an abstract idea. Both sides are never supposed significant at the same time, and one side is always obscured by the other.

Again, the rhythm of the *Search* comes from the many disappointments and deceptions to which Marcel is subjected over the course of his apprenticeship. Consequently, after finally being granted the opportunity to see Berma, his wish to see her perform *Phèdre* famously ends in disappointment. Unable to find in her performance what his imagination had promised him would be there, he suddenly discovers himself forced to conclude that, at best, her geniality as an actress is exaggerated; at worst, the splendour of Art and the value of Beauty imaginatively offered in their absence is but a lie. If there were no other way out than talent or faculty, to be found wanting in these respects would evidently be a disastrous discovery. Still, a means to surmount the deficiencies derived from the illusion of objectivism soon seems to present itself in the form of the possibility of effort and discipline: that is, it appears as if the objective lack can be compensated through industrious effort on the part of the subject. This solution, however, will quickly turn out to be a double impasse.

In spite of it appearing to be dependent on nothing but resolution and discipline, Marcel is bound to discover himself incapable of realising also this extrinsic possibility of thought, thus proving himself to be not only naturally

<sup>54</sup> I/2: 433/15: “Seeing her in a new play would make it difficult for me to appreciate her skill and diction.”

<sup>55</sup> I/2: 433–434/15: “Duma’s *Le Demi-Monde* and Musset’s *Les Caprices de Marianne*, titles which to my eye, like *Phèdre*, were transparent, full of nothing but illumination [*clarté*], because the works were so well known to me, glowing through and through with the smile of Art.” Despite this, can we not make a distinction between the object as a completely invisible but material matter and the object as a transparent but completely spiritual matter? It must be noted that in this case Marcel is mistaken: his understanding of art is flawed, and what at this point he anticipates as the ideal transparency of the artwork is not the transparency or translucency that will later be revealed to him.

untalented but also virtually incapable of *becoming* a writer. Even if at one point he were to have succeeded in mustering sufficient effort and discipline to in fact achieve a poem by means of hard work, this poem would for all that appear only as a semblance of an artwork: not a true creation, but an emulation of something created. Effort and industry, *melete* in Platonic terms, can for this reason never attain any creation or truth marked by true necessity on its own. And the subject's attempt at compensation can therefore never be anything more than a pseudo-solution to a pseudo-problem engendered by the assumption of its possibility. Hence, it is not so much the intrinsic and extrinsic deficiencies of the subject or the object that is responsible for this dearth of creation that, in a certain sense, turns the course of the *Search* into, as Blanchot writes, a "long, sad wandering" or a "sterile migration".<sup>56</sup> This is the first figure of the second form of obstruction, namely the illusion of subjectivism.

The illusion that effort and discipline could possibly compensate for what is found to be lacking in the object of desire is, however, merely one aspect of the subjective illusion. There is another crucial aspect which furthermore appears to be rooted even deeper than the illusion of the subject's compensation for the object's lack, namely the belief that sense is constituted exclusively on the side of the subject. According to Deleuze, it is this illusion that marks the essential limitation of Swann as well as, to some extent at least, Bergotte: that is, the habit of substituting any perceived lack of meaning in the object with subjective chains of association. In Bergotte's view, for example, a certain gesture of Berma's is not exactly meaningful in itself, but rather derives its sense and value from the impression that she, unknowingly or not, incarnates a "pretty little Phèdre straight out of the sixth century BC" and thus "brings to life a form of art that is the antithesis of Racine." (I/2: 550/136; cf. PS 47/35) Likewise, Swann can appreciate the beauty of Odette all the more because her face and body seems to house the fragments of a fresco by Botticelli and vice versa (resulting, ultimately, in a reduction of both Odette and the fresco).<sup>57</sup>

The objective and subjective deficiencies are thus most of all just an indication that the problem consisting in the inability to realise the supposedly natural possibility of thought is a pseudo-problem. This pseudo-problem

<sup>56</sup> Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> I/1: 220–221/226–227: "He looked at her; a fragment of the fresco appeared in her face and in her body and from then on he would always try to find it in her again, whether he was with Odette, or was only thinking of her, and even though he probably valued the Florentine masterpiece only because he found it again in her, nevertheless that resemblance conferred a certain beauty on her too, made her more precious."

concealing the impossibility of thought, which is thought under its voluntary aspect, obviously finds part of its determination in the particular image of thought renounced by Deleuze through Nietzsche and Proust (i.e. the image of thought presenting the faculties of the mind as determined and given at all times, subservient to the will, defined by a love of truth, their errors or divergences susceptible to correction by the application of method), but it is evidently also conditioned by the concept of possibility as such. Ill posed problems beget ill-conceived solutions.

#### CHANCE AND INDIRECTIONS

As we have seen, Deleuze presents the apprenticeship as a gradual progression: it is the movement of a subject learning, passing through a “system of signs” (PS 84/103). This system consists in a constellation of different “worlds of signs”, defined according to the basic “type of sign” that constitutes each such world’s specific “substance” or “matter” (*matière*): thus, the signs of worldliness, love, sensibility and art all constitute separate worlds of signs. These worlds are in turn arranged in corresponding “circles that intersect at certain points”, but can also be closed off or sequestered from one another within a certain “common domain”. In such cases the exchange of signs immediately falters or breaks down (e.g. the nobleman par excellence, baron de Charlus, pursuing love in the bourgeois salon of Mme Verdurin). These circles are, moreover, arranged according to a hierarchy determined by the efficacy of each circle of signs pertaining to the apprenticeship’s progression towards its critical point and the “final revelation” (PS 103/84). The distance between the subject’s initial ignorance and the revelations of art is not, however, covered in the fashion of a straight line leading directly from ignorance to knowledge, but in a sprawling motion from illusion to disillusion that again is interspersed with disappointments and compensations. The world of the apprenticeship therefore staggers, sways, falters once, twice, many times, as its course is run and disappointments are suffered.<sup>58</sup> “And still”, Deleuze writes, “we give a linear character to the development of the *Search*.” (PS 21/36; tr. mod.)

On one level, Deleuze certainly attempts to counter the linear representation of the apprenticeship and explain the constant digressions, interruptions, and impasses marking this apprenticeship as it moves through the different circles of signs making up the *Search*: insisting on the plurality of the system,

<sup>58</sup>In *Proust*, Macherey writes: “La recherche de la vérité paraît alors indissociable d’une errance dont l’allure ne peut être à l’avance préfigurée ou dirigée.” Macherey, *Proust*, 50.

of the signs, of the subject; on the constant insecurities, indecisions, disorientations appearing alongside revelations both significant and insignificant; figuring Marcel's apprenticeship as an erring movement driven by the intermittencies of the heart as well as of being. Thus, a "partial revelation" may occur and certain "progress" be made in relation to a particular circle of signs, only to coincide with some "regress" in one or several other circles. And never may any assurance be obtained that the progress brought about by some joyful revelation in one moment shall not perish in despondency in the next. Or unexpectedly appear again, but elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> Any and all progress, Deleuze concludes, is thus at peril at every single moment of time and in each of its dimensions: "What is gained in one is not gained in the other." (PS 26/36) In spite of the acknowledgement of all this intermittence, contingency, and aberrance progressively determining the course of the apprenticeship, the *Search* at the same time appears to retain its generally linear character also in Deleuze.

There are several reasons for this semblance remaining in play in *Proust and Signs*. First, the *Search* evidently traces a life almost from beginning to end, from cradle to corruption. In the representation, however, such a complex and meandering lifespan always runs the risk of being reduced to a simple line, the distance of which it simply takes time to cover. Second, and more importantly, in Deleuze's presentation of the apprenticeship there is also, as have already been mentioned, a formal proximity to an ascending-descending "dialectics" of the classic type: moving from illusion to revelation, from ignorance to disillusion, tugging the subject willingly or forcibly along this straight line, cutting through every circle of signs until it finally reaches the critical point, the apex of the system, in the signs of art.<sup>60</sup> Since the different types of signs are not only arranged in circles but also in accordance with a gradated order, it would in retrospect seem as if the ending had been determined before the apprenticeship had even begun.

How can this apparently teleological determination of the apprenticeship be reconciled with the essential disorientation and groundlessness of the

<sup>59</sup> PS 26/36.

<sup>60</sup> As we have seen, the apparent dialectics presented by Deleuze in *Proust and Signs* is quite similar to the dialectics of the divided line in the *Republic* but also to that of the lover in Plato's *Symposium* (210a–e). The real question, however, is if there is actually any dialectics at all in play? This of course depends on the definition. If the definition of a dialectical process is that it needs to pass through one or several negative phases in which it is *aufgehoben* into its opposite, before finally reaching its highest point or the absolute, then Deleuze's interpretation of Proust hardly qualifies as a dialectic. There is first of all no such thing as *Aufhebung* or "sublation" in Proust; and while there is progression, it does not proceed by negation and synthesis. For a more detailed comparison between Proust and Hegel, see Macherey, *Proust*.

apprenticeship? Regardless of whether or not it is at last deemed to meet the formal criterion of a “dialectics”, if the *Search* still traces a line, this line is a labyrinth:<sup>61</sup> no direction but deviations, no terminal points but the infinite line: progression by digression, completion by exhaustion. It is thus important to look beyond the apparently teleological and dialectical character of the *Search* as it appears from the viewpoint of the final revelation, that is, according to the apprentice’s retrograde movement through all the stages of the apprenticeship preceding the discovery of essences in art. For as soon as you do, you discover that there really are no guarantees that anything, beneficial or detrimental, should ever befall any apprentice pursuing an apprenticeship: progression as well as regression are contingencies, effects of chance encounters in the disorienting dark of a starless night – not feats of orientation.<sup>62</sup> This is first of all because the apprenticeship is essentially related to signs and the capacity to be affected by them: that is, to be an apprentice is to learn, to learn is to interpret signs, to be able to interpret signs is to be capable of apprehending them, to be capable of apprehending the signs is to be sensitive to them, and to be sensitive to signs is, finally, to have the capacity of being affected by them.

To use one of Deleuze’s examples: a piece of wood is only so many signals to the carpenter’s touch and tools; the wood’s grain structure an emission of signs to which the carpenter becomes sensitive in becoming a carpenter and learns to work accordingly;<sup>63</sup> just as the doctor becomes sensitive to the signs of disease in becoming a symptomatologist and learns to name and rename, group and regroup symptoms accordingly, in a diagnostic production of illnesses.<sup>64</sup> “There is no apprentice who is not ‘the Egyptologist’ of something.” (PS 4/10) With respect to a life that above all reaches for truth, however, both the craft and the materials in which to learn it appears only dimly, elusively. Where is this truth to be searched? How is it to be reached or discovered?

<sup>61</sup> Cf. 10<sup>th</sup> series of the “Ideal Game” in *Logic of Sense* and the reference to Borges’ aforementioned short story “Death and the Compass”, where the notion of “a labyrinth that consists of a single straight line that is invisible and endless” is presented. See LS 78/62; Borges, *Collected Fictions*, 156.

<sup>62</sup> The principle of disorientation, from which any semblance of progression being a result of wilful efforts and deliberative orientation in Deleuze’s account of Proust arises as an effect, is perhaps best summarised by Beckett: “Let me hear nothing of the moon, in my night there is no moon, and if it happens that I speak of the stars it is by mistake.” Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*, in *The Selected Works of Samuel Beckett*, ed. Paul Auster, 4 vols (New York: Grove, 2010), 2:11.

<sup>63</sup> PS 10/4.

<sup>64</sup> PS 10/4. For the image of the philosophy as symptomatology, typology and genealogy and the philosopher as a physician, artist, legislator, see, for example, chap. III:1 in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and chap. 1 in *Masochism*. For an informative survey of this particular strand in Deleuze’s philosophy, see Smith, “‘A Life of Pure Immanence’: Deleuze’s ‘Critique et clinique’ Project”, in *Essays on Deleuze*. See also chap. 1, “Sickness, Signs, and Sense”, in Bogue, *Deleuze on Literature*.

“There is a great deal of chance in all this,” as Proust writes, “and a second sort of chance, that of our death, often does not let us wait very long for the favours of the first.” (I/1: 43/47)

#### THE INTERMITTENCIES OF THOUGHT

The contingent nature of such decisive encounters is peculiarly explained by Proust early in the first volume, when Proust’s narrator considers a certain belief he finds to be “very reasonable”, namely the “Celtic belief” that the souls of the dead become captured in some inferior being – like an animal, a plant, a stone – and thus remain “effectively lost to us until the day, which for many never comes, when we happen to pass close to the tree, come into possession of the object that is their prison. Then they quiver, they call out to us, and as soon as we have recognised them, the spell is broken. Delivered by us they have overcome death and they return to live with us.” (I/1: 44/47) This belief does not only function as the model for the irruption of involuntary memories, however, since such forgotten pasts are not alone in being imprisoned in unknown and insignificant objects, out of reach of facultative efforts and in wait to be delivered by chance or not at all. Still, it is not just the occasional memory or sensation and the progress or regress they may bring about that is contingent and unforeseeable: the possibility of the apprenticeship itself is contingent and left to chance, insofar as neither the general capacity of thought nor its specific faculties are given in advance of the encounter calling them into being: “To be sensitive to signs, to consider the world as an object to be deciphered, is doubtless a gift”, Deleuze concludes. “But this gift risks remaining buried in us if we do not make the necessary encounters.” (PS 37/26–27)

The apprenticeship considered as a process of learning requires, in brief, a general affectivity and a particular sensitivity to certain signs. This capacity is not universally distributed, however, not even as a pre-existing and essential but as of yet latent possibility waiting to be realised as soon as circumstances allow. The genesis of this affectivity itself depends on encounters and thus on chance. And irrespective of Deleuze’s choice of words in the aforementioned quote: until this gift is actually given, it is nothing at all, it is not “buried” (*enfoui*) as much as it has yet to be conceived. And it may yet turn out not to be conceivable at all. “Our organs”, Proust writes, “atrophy or become stronger or more subtle according as the need for them increases or diminishes.” (III/4 219/225)

As he observes in the dance of Albertine and Andrée, a new sensibility and its correlative world of suffering is conjured up by Dr. Cottard's highly scientific remark that the two women are likely to be at the "height of arousal" at this precise moment, since it "is chiefly through the breasts that women experience it" (III/4: 191/197). Signs and signals imperceptible and inconceivable before, now become an ever menacing reality, a constant threat to the function and integrity of the organism: that is, all the insignificant and inconsequential moments of life now become signs of peril and sources of suffering.<sup>65</sup> The calm of the soul and the integrity of the organism does for all that not really need anything or anyone besides itself to be at risk. That is, nothing "external" is required since there is always also an "internal" threat in the form of a disturbing flash of memory or a terrifying flight of fancy. The memory of a certain pose made by Albertine in the presence of another woman, for example, "was now enough to destroy the state of calm I had been able to recover, I no longer needed to go out of doors to breathe in toxic germs, I had, as Cottard would have said, intoxicated myself." (III/4: 199/205)

In concise terms: the gift is the sign, but it is also the capacity to receive it. The sign exists no more before being received than the capacity to receive it occurs before encountering the sign. An encounter is thus essentially a matter of chance, but not even chance encounters arise out of nothing or occur in a void. On the contrary, every encounter is complicated, just as each element in such an encounter is complicated, and always already so, or (at the very least) so inclined. For each and every thing there is, as Deleuze already writes in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, "always a plurality of senses, a *constellation*, a complex of successions but also of coexistences which make interpretation an art." (NP 4/3–4) Each encounter, just as every single element of this encounter, thus consists in a past of successions and a present of coexistences, all of which are co-implicated in, and intricately within, several timelines simultaneously. But even though this constitutes both the elements and the complex as an open system, the outcome is for all that not completely undetermined.

To return, at last, to the question: how to reconcile the *Search*'s apparently linear or dialectical development with the essential groundlessness and disorientation revealed to be the fundamental condition of the apprenticeship? Here, there is a certain "predisposition", according to Deleuze. This "predisposition", however, still does not make the outcome exactly "predetermined", which is why Deleuze states that "vocation is always predestination with

<sup>65</sup> III/4: 199/205: "Trivial incidents such as habitually float in the ambient atmosphere, where the majority of people absorb them all day long without their health suffering or their mood changing for the worse, but which are morbid and generative of a fresh pain for someone so predisposed."



regard to signs.” (PS 4/10) There is a certain “predisposition” due to the complexity of elements and constellations. There is also a certain “predestination”, since a specific sign calls upon a certain faculty in a process of reciprocal actualisation. Having said this, there is no strict “predetermination” since neither this “predisposition” nor this “predestination” is cause for the interpretation resulting from an encounter to be predictable in the sense of being completely determinable in advance.

The “predestination” in question does not consist in a vacillation or a momentary waver between a delimited set of predictable outcomes, however: it is not a question of being unable to predict the exact result of the encounter with certainty, while still having the capacity to predict that the result will belong to a definite set of probable results, as if it were a question of either this or that, depending on the conditions – but never, under any circumstances, of something happening outside of the predictable. No, in Deleuze, the encounter is precisely an idea of the creation of the unpredictable itself. For this reason, the interpretation is not a simple effect symmetrical to a simple cause and therefore is never traceable back to any cause; which is to say, its individuated reality can never be explained by reference to a principle of individuation preceding the genesis of this reality. Expressed differently, the encounter involving a certain sign, a certain faculty, and an interpretative act of thinking marked by necessity constitutes a complex system of individuation, a processual system of creation whose product is unpredictable and always involves more than the moulding of a simple matter into a simple form. And such production of the unpredictable, of the new, is, as we have seen, in no way guaranteed by the encounter alone.

In this part of our inquiry into the experience of thought, the question of *how?* thinking is born has been at issue. Even though Deleuze generally rejects the common view of the *Search* as a search for memories of a bygone past, just as he rejects the identification of its movement with the Platonic theory of learning as recollection, the relation between the Proustian apprenticeship and the Platonic *paideia* has proved to be decidedly more intricate and obstinate.

In order to put the question of the *how?* in its proper light, recourse to the notion of learning was necessary in this chapter, simply because, as we have shown, the common notion of learning already presupposes thought as a natural faculty the exercise of which requires nothing more than good will and the application of method in order to escape error and to elicit the innate knowledge recognised as missing and in need of recollection. This, however, is already to presuppose too much. The possibility of thought alone is not, as we have seen, a sufficient principle for the genesis of an act of thought and,

moreover, learning cannot be reduced to an intermediate movement destined to disappear in the knowledge that results therefrom. In Proust, thought is no longer presumed to be a given possibility (e.g. in Marcel's inability to think and write by virtue of the will alone) no more than learning is supposed to be subordinate to knowledge as the re-cognition of innate Ideas (e.g. the madeleine and the demand for its truth to be created). Thus, to reopen the question of *how?* with regard to Deleuze's interpretation of Proust is to return to the paradox concerning how to learn the truth not only of what is still unknown to the apprentice, but of that which does not yet exist. In crude terms, how can the apprentice learn to encounter the new in thought?

As we have seen, the implications of all of the above amounts to an un-founding, displacement, and overturning of the relation between learning, knowing, and thinking. From this point on, what it means to learn is not to recognise and recollect, but to expose oneself to the force of Time and contingent encounters. According to Deleuze, then, thought does not proceed from any natural possibility, but precisely from this violent encounter that not only gives birth to the act of thinking in thought itself, but also, Deleuze claims, "leads us in spite of ourselves to Essences." (PS 122/100) How, though, might we reconcile the concept of essence or Ideas with the overturning of Platonism implied by the empiricism intrinsic to Proust's and Deleuze's conception of the apprenticeship? In order to answer this we must inquire into the concept of essence born from the overturning of Platonism into a transcendental empiricism.

## FOURTH CHAPTER: THE ESSENCE

After years spent in a sanatorium in the wake of the Great War, the aged Marcel finds himself on a train heading towards Paris, reflecting on the many disappointments he has suffered at the hands of art as well as at his own ambitions to become an artist, only to conclude that as far as the apparent conflict between life and art is concerned, it is not on life but on art that he has wasted his time.<sup>1</sup> The ideal of art has at this point thus been exhausted. All that remains is a harrowing feeling of deficiencies, both on the side of the subject and the object respectively,<sup>2</sup> inevitably transposing both art itself and the life of the artist from the realm of the ideal to that of impossibility and emptiness. The pressing problem for Marcel is not so much to know or not know, however, but the impending threat that not only art and the artistic mode of life but life in general should be bereft of all sense and value: “I knew now that I could never attain to anything more than frivolous pleasures”, Marcel concludes, only to add that “if perhaps I did sometimes have pleasures – not of the intellect – I wasted them, and always on a different woman; so that if destiny had granted me another hundred years of life, free of infirmities, it would only have added successive extensions to a tediously protracted existence, which there seemed to be no point in prolonging thus far, let alone even further.” (IV/6: 444/173–174)

At this point, it seems, we are once again confronted with that antinomy of the imagination, that “inevitable law” stating that while our only source of beauty and joy is the imagination, we still “can imagine only what is absent” and are thus condemned to live out our lives in illusion (IV/6: 450–451/180). This definitive impasse at the end of the long series of defeats and amends that constitute the apprenticeship, cannot, as we already know, be overcome simply by will. After all, voluntary efforts can only take us so far in the interpretation of signs until which time a point is reached where it must confront its own incapacity to truly think or slip into a delirium of signs, precipitating

<sup>1</sup> IV/6: 433–435/163–164: “The thought of my lack of literary talent ... which I had almost identified ... with the pointlessness and falsity of literature, this thought, perhaps less painful now but more dismaying than ever, its subject being not an infirmity peculiar to myself alone, but the non-existence of the ideal in which I had for so long believed .... There is really no point in depriving myself of the life of a man of the world, I told myself, since the famous ‘work’ which I have so long hoped each day to begin the next day, is one that I am not, or am no longer, fitted to, and perhaps corresponds to no reality whatever.”

<sup>2</sup> IV/6: 444/174: “I now had proof that I was no longer good for anything, that literature could no longer bring me any joy, whether through my own fault, because I was not talented enough, or through the fault of literature, if it was indeed less pregnant with reality than I had thought.”

another painful cycle of disappointments and compensations. In its voluntary aspect thought is thus not only disorientated or delirious but powerless. Incapacitated, in essence, of attaining any truth beyond those of possibility or logic. And so the only way to raise thought above contingency and arbitrariness and attain necessity in thought is, according to Deleuze, by way of affliction or “the adventure of the involuntary.” (PS 116–117/95)

What, however, characterises an “involuntary exercise” and what are the conditions for such acts of thought in Proust? What is the function of the involuntary exercise in the system of thought which Deleuze delineates in Proust? To pursue these inquiries successfully, the doctrine of faculties presented in *Proust and Signs* must first be considered, if only briefly, in dialogue with Deleuze’s presentation of Kant’s doctrine of faculties in *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*. On a general level: because the distinction between a voluntary and an involuntary exercise of the faculties belongs, at its limit, to a conception of critique no longer aimed at achieving any “justification” of *doxa*, but at attaining “a different way of feeling: another sensibility.” (NP 108/94) But in particular because the open system of faculties, which Deleuze delineates in Proust, formulates a number of critical affirmations of certain aspects of Kant’s doctrine, such as the “free and indeterminate accord” as well as the “discordant accord” of the faculties discovered in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. This said, the doctrine presented in *Proust and Signs* is not achieved owing to Deleuze’s critical resuscitation through Kant, but by means of a recovery of Plato. It is, arguably, only by way of the pathological model of thought extracted from Plato in the overturning of Platonism, that Deleuze can present that image of a thought without image demanded by transcendental empiricism. A task he will accomplish by tracing it off the adventure of Ideas or essences that await us at the apex of the apprenticeship, in the world of art.

What is the original essence discovered in the signs of art? What is its superiority in relation to the other types of signs? To what effect is it encountered and by whom? These questions will be addressed in the second part of the chapter. In order to do so, however, we must, in the first subsection, turn to Deleuze’s presentation of the other signs and their corresponding truths, before investigating the superiority of the signs of art in terms of their *immaterial* and *spiritual* character, on the one hand, and their manifest *unity*, on the other. Subsequently, in section three, the focus will be on the essence or Idea, which will be defined in terms of a *difference*, and which in important respects relates to Leibniz’s concept of *differentials* as well as the *monad*, rather than to Plato’s *eidōs*. By way of Leibniz the essence or Idea then appears as a *superior viewpoint* – one that is not so much individual but individuating.

And, finally, the question of the subject of the experience of thought is reopened once more. This time as a problem of *difference* and *repetition*.

## I. OF ASCENT

*Kant's doctrine of faculties in respect of Proust and Signs. – The voluntary and the involuntary as modes of exercise integral to all faculties in contrast to division between active and passive faculties in Kant. – The pathological model of thought and its origins in Plato's Republic. – The faculty of essences at the limit of the violence of the sign.*

For Proust the principal opposition is not so much a conflict between thinking and feeling, between *logos* and *pathos*, or even between the various faculties: it is an opposition between the voluntary and involuntary modes of their exercise.<sup>3</sup> This distinction is, as a matter of fact, at the heart of Proust's criticism of philosophy. As long as thought is believed to be a voluntary activity grounded in good will and common sense, purposed to communicate explicit significations to a community of like minds, in a spirit of friendship and for the sake of agreement – as long as this is what thought is presumed to be, all of the truths it declares will remain chained to contingency, arbitrariness and abstraction.<sup>4</sup>

In the *Search*, however, truth is essentially related to time. Time in Proust is not simply the measure or number of change, but an exteriority of real constraints, of real forces capable of afflicting thought from within, pushing its faculties to the utmost limits of their powers, where they give birth – involuntarily – to an act of thought in thought itself, marked, finally, by the truth of necessity. It is only at the involuntarily confronted limit of its power that the faculty is pushed to exceed both itself and the contingencies afforded us by the order of passing time. The “search for truth” is thus, Deleuze claims, precisely “the adventure of the involuntary.” (PS 116–117/95) But why the involuntary?

<sup>3</sup> According to Sauvagnargues, it is this distinction between voluntary and involuntary exercise of the faculties introduced by Proust that results in a profound transformation of the system of the faculties that Deleuze experiments with after Kant. By virtue of this distinction Deleuze can subvert Kant's understanding of the “pure exercise” of the faculty. For Kant purity in this case is a question of autonomy, spontaneity as a form of activity and the independence of thought in regard to the empirical, whereas for Deleuze it is rather a question of passivity and the intrusion of a material sign in thought. “La pureté, chez Deleuze,” Sauvagnargues argues, “est pathologique au sens kantien, de sorte que la spontanéité se fait passivité.” *L'empirisme transcendantal*, 71.

<sup>4</sup> PS 116/95.

It is true that although Kant is never mentioned in *Proust and Signs*, the doctrine of faculties presented therein may be said to echo Deleuze's presentation of Kant's doctrine in *Kant's Critical Philosophy*.<sup>5</sup> In Deleuze's reconstruction of Kant's critical philosophy, the doctrine of the faculties assumes the function of a "theoretical matrix",<sup>6</sup> a general optics allowing him to produce an almost kaleidoscopic vision of the relationships of the three *Critiques* as presenting a "complete system of permutations."<sup>7</sup>

Summarily, each *Critique* is associated with the *autonomous exercise* or "higher form" of a specific faculty of the mind (*Gemüt*) (knowledge, desire, pleasure and pain), the corresponding interest or disinterest of which determines,<sup>8</sup> in turn, the relationship between the cognitive faculties (reason, imagination, understanding) as well as which of them that, once raised to a *transcendental exercise*,<sup>9</sup> must assume an *a priori* legislative role within each domain (knowledge, practice, judgement).<sup>10</sup> Just as, according to the speculative interest of reason in *Critique of Pure Reason*, the understanding is legislative in the faculty of knowledge then, according to reason's practical

<sup>5</sup> I will discuss Kant in more detail below, but Kant will in any case be treated here only insofar as it is required to explain the context of Deleuze's presentation of Proust's doctrine and its contemporary reception. In later years the relation to Kant has been dealt with extensively, and in far greater detail than I am capable of doing here. For example, please see: Sauvagnargues, Voss, and Kerslake. For a detailed analysis of the Kantian aspects of Deleuze's reading of Proust in general, see chap. 4, "Typologie de signes et théorie de facultés", in Sauvagnargues, *L'empirisme transcendantal*; for a discussion of how these aspects amount to a specifically "Kantian theory of literature", as manifest in *Proust and Signs*, see chap. 1, "Le Proust de 1964. Pour une théorie kantienne de la littérature", in Pombo Nabais, *Philosophie et littérature*.

<sup>6</sup> Sauvagnargues, *L'empirisme transcendantal*, 70.

<sup>7</sup> PCK 97/68. Deleuze derives the elements of this system from the two definitions of faculty he discovers in Kant: first, the faculties of the mind (*Gemüt*) are defined according to the various relationships of a representation in general: i.e. *the faculty of knowledge* (relates to its object in terms of agreement), *the faculty of desire* (relates to its object in terms of causality), *the feeling of pleasure and pain* (relates to its subject in terms of affection); second, they are defined as the specific sources of the various types of representations: e.g. *imagination* (images), *reason* (ideas), *understanding* (concepts). Although the faculties of knowledge, desire and the feeling of pleasure and pain seem to always presuppose each other in some way, it is not in "the actual combinations" that Kant's interest lies, according to Deleuze. Rather, Kant's principal question concerns whether or not each of these faculties is "capable of a *higher form*" or, in other words, capable of finding "*in itself* the law of its own exercise" and thus attain *autonomy*. See PCK 9–10/3–4, 13–15/7–9.

<sup>8</sup> PCK 63–65/43–45.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze's use of the words "transcendent" and "transcendental" in the books on Proust and Kant may be confusing, since he sometimes speaks of the *transcendental exercise* in Kant as a *transcendent exercise* in Proust. In neither case is it a question of thinking an object that is transcendent in the sense of belonging outside of *this* world, but rather of the faculty transcending, exceeding the limit of its empirical exercise.

<sup>10</sup> For an informative contextualisation of *Kant's Critical Philosophy* and Deleuze's emphasis on the doctrine of the faculties in relation to other Kant scholarship, see Kerslake, *Immanence*, 76–80.

interest in *Critique of Practical Reason*, reason is legislative in the faculty of desire.

As for the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Deleuze states that while the faculty of feeling never attains its higher form, it still promotes a free accord of the faculties and reveals the condition of reflective judgement; and while the imagination cannot raise itself to the same legislative function as either reason or the understanding, it still liberates itself from the tutelage of the understanding, opening for a “free play” or an “indeterminate accord” of the faculties, and thereby constituting the very condition of possibility for the determinate relationships and legislative functions in the preceding *Critiques*.<sup>11</sup> The third *Critique* thus assumes a role within the system radically different to that traditionally ascribed to it: no longer simply complementary or set out to bridge the divide between the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the third *Critique* now provides the foundation for Kant’s system as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

This discovery is crucial not only to Deleuze’s conception of Kant’s philosophy, but to the theory of thought elaborated from Empiricism and Subjectivity to *Difference and Repetition* as well. Indeed, it can be argued that the precise way in which the typology of signs and its corresponding doctrine of faculties in *Proust and Signs* is constructed is itself, an extension of what Deleuze discovers in the *Critique of Judgment* (indeterminate accord, discordant accord, transcendent exercise).<sup>13</sup>

First, the different types of signs are distinguished by Deleuze according to which faculty they, in each case, force to take on its “involuntary form”, pushing it to its own limit, raising it to a “transcendent exercise” where it “ceases to

<sup>11</sup> According to Deleuze, “the first two *Critiques* set out a relationship between the faculties that is determined by one of them; the last *Critique* uncovers a deeper free and indeterminate accord of the faculties as the condition of possibility of every determinate relationship.” PCK 97/68. See also, PCK 16–17/9–10, 72/49.

<sup>12</sup> “The *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in its aesthetic part, does not simply exist to complete the other two *Critiques*: in fact, it provides them with a ground. The *Critique of the Power of Judgment* uncovers the ground presupposed by the other two *Critiques*: a free agreement of the faculties.” ID 82/58. Kerslake notes that Deleuze takes the model of the genesis of the faculties’ relationships as presented in the third *Critique* and extends it to other faculties, inquiring whether each faculty has its “own kind of ‘transcendent exercise’”, which would open for the possibility of a “model of ‘genesis’ at work within Kant’s own system.” Kerslake, *Immanence*, 80.

<sup>13</sup> In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze comments on the disrepute of the doctrine of the faculties as follows: “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.” DR 186/143.

be interchangeable” and discovers its exclusive capacity to interpret or explicate “the type of sign that does it particular violence” (PS 121/99): the worldly signs call upon the intelligence; the signs of love call upon the sensibility, on the one hand, and the intelligence, on the other; the signs of sensibility call upon the memory and the imagination; the signs of art, causing pure joy, call upon pure thought as the faculty of essences.<sup>14</sup>

Second, the indeterminate and unstable equilibrium of the disjointed faculties, which is the condition for the joint work of every determinate and stable configuration, is reset each time the apprentice moves from one world to another, repeating the adventure of the involuntary “on the level of each faculty” forced to raise itself to a transcendent exercise, rendering the system of the faculties essentially open and variable for still unknown faculties to be born.<sup>15</sup>

Third, the hierarchy of the various worlds of signs is determined according to “the vocation of each faculty” discovered in the transcendent exercise and its response to the sign afflicting it:<sup>16</sup> the sensibility grasps the signs as such;

<sup>14</sup> According to Nabais, Deleuze thus presents what she calls “une vraie table transcendante de l’expérience esthétique” comprising and combining “quatre types de signes, quatre facultés, quatre formes du temps, quatre moments du sens vers l’essence.” Nabais, *Philosophie et littérature*, 60. Sauvagnargues also discerns a “table systématique” connecting “trois axes: une typologie des signes selon leur quadruple nature ... ; une théorie des facultés ... ; enfin, une philosophie du temps qui connecte la pluralité des signes à la diversité des structures temporelles” Sauvagnargues, *L’empirisme transcendantal*, 69. Besides the fact that Sauvagnargues accepts a wider definition of faculty and discerns six different faculties rather than Pombo Nabais’ four, and besides Nabais intimating a teleological development where sense becomes essence – they both present *Proust and Signs* as situated squarely within transcendental empiricism conceived as a project with a Kantian and a Bergsonian aspect. This is no doubt a perfectly warranted reading in several ways. But if either of these two sides gets overstated, there is always the risk of occluding the import proper to Proust himself, as well as neglecting the negotiations with Plato that underpins so much of the what Deleuze extracts from Proust.

<sup>15</sup> PS 119/98. See also *Difference and Repetition*, where Deleuze, first, opens for the possibility of a genesis of “faculties yet to be discovered, whose existence is not yet suspected” with reference to the case of the imagination in Kant’s third *Critique*; second, and more relevant in this context, connects this genetical possibility of still unknown faculties to the unpredictable and unforeseeable nature of the search or *recherche* as an apprenticeship: “For nothing can be said in advance, one cannot prejudge the outcome of the search [*recherche*]: 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 the search [*recherche*], 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.” DR 186–187/143–144; tr. mod.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §28, 5:262: “in our aesthetic judgment nature is judged as sublime not insofar as it arouses fear, but rather because it calls forth our power [*Kraft*] (which is not



the intelligence, the memory and the imagination explicates, deciphers, unfolds their sense – only “pure thought” is capable of being “forced to conceive essence as the sufficient reason of the sign and its sense.” (PS 122/100)

#### THE VOLUNTARY AND THE INVOLUNTARY

Even so, the system Deleuze elaborates through Proust also disfigures Kant’s system significantly, if not completely. If the transcendent exercise is a question of spontaneous faculties attaining autonomy and independence vis-à-vis the empirical for Kant, the transcendent exercise in Proust depends on an empirical encounter between a passive faculty and a material sign. Thus, if spontaneity is purity in Kant, purity in Proust is passivity. In truth, Kant’s fundamental division between active and passive faculties – according to which sensibility appears as an exclusively passive source, the import of which, from the viewpoint of knowledge, is always already determined by the *a priori* forms of the understanding’s categorial spontaneity – is completely transfigured. For, in Proust, the voluntary and involuntary cuts through all the faculties and furthermore places the passivity of the involuntary above the spontaneity of the voluntary.<sup>17</sup> “Voluntary and involuntary do not designate different faculties, but rather a different exercise of the same faculties. Perception, memory, imagination, intelligence, and thought itself have only a contingent exercise as long as they are exercised voluntarily; so what we perceive, we could just as well remember, imagine, or conceive, and conversely.” (PS 120/99)

As long as they are employed according to habit and interests in suppressing difference for the sake of recognising only what is conventional, communicable, and useful, then, regardless of where in the hierarchy of the signs they operate, all faculties will end up failing to conceive the truth or what is essential in the signs affecting them. Employed voluntarily our faculties do not

part of nature) to regard those things about which we are concerned (goods, health and life) as trivial, and hence to regard its power [*Macht*] (to which we are, to be sure, subjected in regard to those things) as not the sort of dominion over ourselves and our authority, to which we would have to bow if it came down to our highest principles and their affirmation or abandonment. Thus, nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to the point of presenting those cases in which the mind can make palpable to itself the sublimity of its own vocation even over nature.” Kerslake remarks that here, where the imagination is forced to exceed its own limits by the faculty of reason, the imagination is “oriented by the violent apprehension of its ultimate relation with reason. It is as if, in the encounter with the sublime, imagination and reason meet ‘in person’, beyond the mediations of conceptual understanding.” Kerslake, *Immanence*, 80.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Macherey, *Proust*, 25. Macherey does not connect the critique of the *a priori* forms of the sensibility directly to the involuntary, but to the role of the intelligence in what we can identify as the image of thought.

only fail in life in general, but in art as well. This is the case, for example, with realist or objectivist art in general as well as descriptive literature or the literary criticism of Sainte-Beuve and the Goncourts, in particular.<sup>18</sup> Art is thus not necessarily an instance of truth, no more than the self-proclaimed lover of art necessarily is the one capable of extracting its truth or essence.<sup>19</sup> Just like these “weak-willed, sterile art-lovers”, the kind of art priding itself on its putative realism and descriptive accuracy always remains on the surface of things, rather than drilling holes to the reality hidden beneath, in order to reveal the differences which must, if things are to have any sense at all, be “disentangled” from them:

Preserved by our memory, it is the piecemeal sequence of all those inaccurate expressions, in which nothing of what we have really experienced remains, which constitutes our thought, our life, reality, and all that the so-called art of ‘real life’ can do is reproduce that lie, in an art which is as simple as life, devoid of beauty, ... a tedious and pointless duplication of what our eyes see and our intellect records (IV/6: 473–474/203–204).

Exercised voluntarily, memory is no more a claimant for the truth than the intelligence or any other faculty.<sup>20</sup> But why does any voluntary exercise amount to no more than the proliferation of a “lie”, that is, in a certain sense, to less than nothing? According to Deleuze, the duplication or vacuous repetition here testified to by Proust is inevitable as long as all “the faculties are harmoniously exercised, but one in place of the other, in the arbitrary

<sup>18</sup> See IV/6: 459–474/189–204. See also PS 43/46/32–34.

<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, Proust argues, “since they cannot take in the truly nourishing elements in art, they are permanently in need of artistic pleasures, victims of a bulimia which never lets them feel satisfied.” IV/6: 471/201. It is interesting to compare this with the view expressed by Ezra Pound in relation to impressionist music: “That is the whole flaw of impressionist or ‘emotional’ music. It is like a drug: you must have more drug, and more noise each time, or this effect, this impression which works from the outside, in from the nerves and sensorium upon the self – is no use, its effect is constantly weaker and weaker. I do not mean that Bach is not emotional, but the early music starts with the mystery of pattern; if you like, with the vortex of pattern; with something which is, first of all, music, and which is capable of being, after that, many things. What I call emotional, or impressionist music, starts with being emotion or impression and then becomes only approximately music.” Ezra Pound, “Arnold Dolmetsch” (1918), in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1968), 434. Considering that Proust insists that his novel is conceived as a work of construction, this comparison to Pound could, if anything, serve to emphasise the fact that the affect, which according to Proust is produced by the sign, is not the same as an affection or emotion.

<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, empirical or voluntary exercise can, no more in Proust than in Plato, conceive anything “new”: “Aucune pensée nouvelle ne saurait surgir de la mémoire empirique, simple ‘sauvegarde de la sensation’, ou de la mémoire intellectuel, réactualisation du déjà appris.” Monique Dixsaut, *Platon-Nietzsche: L’autre manière de philosopher* (Paris: Fayard, 2015), 53–54.

and in the abstract.” (PS 121/99) The voluntary, habitual, harmonious exercising of the faculties relies, in other words, firstly on a “subjective principle”, capable of bringing the faculties together, allowing them to be applied jointly and concordantly on a supposedly identical object. To ensure that an object can be recognised as one and the same, regardless if it is touched or seen, imagined or remembered, the model of recognition inseparable from voluntary exercise requires “a common sense as *concordia facultatum*” (DR 174/133).

Each faculty still has its particularities, Deleuze remarks, but in order for an object to be recognised all the faculties must nevertheless relate themselves jointly to one and the same object. For one faculty to be able to recognise the object as identical with another, however, there must furthermore be a “form of identity in the object” to which they themselves can relate. And this form, Deleuze argues, finds its foundation in the “unity of a thinking subject, of which all the other faculties must be modalities.” (DR 174/133) Consequently, it is the identity of the unified thinking subject that provides the foundation for the joint exercise of the thinking subject’s faculties and their agreement with the object. And this unity of the thinking subject epitomised by Descartes’ *cogito* provides in turn nothing but “a philosophical concept for the presupposition of a common sense; it is the common sense become philosophical.”<sup>21</sup>

This model has a general value for the ordinary, but is nearly worthless from the viewpoint of art as well as speculative thought. This is because the faculties, inasmuch as they are exercised voluntarily and in accordance with common sense, are unable to “reach the reality of life”,<sup>22</sup> as Proust says, succumbing instead to the indolence of recognition and the indifferentiating

<sup>21</sup> DR 174/133.

<sup>22</sup> “If reality were a kind of residue of experience, more or less identical for everybody, because when we talk about bad weather, a war, a cab-stand, a brightly lit restaurant, a garden in flower, everybody knows what we mean, if reality were just that, then no doubt some sort of cinematographic film of things would be enough and ‘style’ and ‘literature’ which departed from their simple data would be an artificial irrelevance.” IV/6: 468/198. It would thus seem as if Proust here approaches Deleuze’s understanding of “common sense” as opposed to “good sense”, that is, as something closer to that “communal sense” (*gemeinschaftliche Sinne*) presented in Kant’s aesthetic rather than the *sensus communis* or *bon sens* of Descartes, i.e. as a faculty for judging that in its reflection takes account (*a priori*) of everyone else’s way of representing in thought”, the judgment is thus related “not so much to the actual as to the merely possible judgments of other’s”, that is, to a judgment from which the “limitations that contingently attach to our own judging” are simply abstracted, by virtue of “leaving out as far as is possible everything in one’s representational state that is matter, i.e., sensation, and attending solely to the formal peculiarities of his representation or his representational state.” Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, tr. Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §40, 173–174.

force of habit (“the ballast”, as Beckett writes, “that chains a dog to his vomit”).<sup>23</sup> Only involuntarily can these faculties break with the image of thought and succeed in interpreting the type of sign exclusive to them: “Instead of an indifferent perception, a sensibility that apprehends and receives signs, the sign is the limit of this sensibility, its vocation, its extreme exercise. Instead of a voluntary intelligence, a voluntary memory, a voluntary imagination, all these faculties appear in their involuntary and transcendent form; then each one discovers that it alone can interpret, each explicates a type of sign that does it particular violence.” (PS 121/99) The highest form of the involuntary, conceived as a means of experimentation towards another sensibility, is, as we will see, achieved by the signs of art.

#### THE PATHOLOGICAL MODEL AND ITS ORIGINS

Evidently, one may argue that the doctrine of faculties outlined in *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* is recreated in *Proust and Signs* in a fashion that suggests there is in Proust the means to repeat certain aspects of Kant’s critical philosophy, needed in order to achieve the renewal of critical philosophy called for already by Nietzsche, while presenting the “new image of thought” from which the achievement of such a venture must proceed.<sup>24</sup> It is true that in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze credits Kant as not only “the one who discovers the prodigious domain of the transcendental”, but as the one best “equipped to overturn the Image of thought”: substituting “internal illusions” for external “errors”; replacing a self “profoundly fractured by a line of time” for the substantial and unitary self; subjecting, in one and the same movement, both “God and the self to a kind of speculative death.” (DR 176–178/135–136)

Regardless if Kant seemed equipped for this task, he still could not find it in himself, Deleuze claims, to renounce all the implicit presuppositions upon which the conceptual architecture of his system now rested. Obliging thought to model itself on *doxa*, that is, to discover its transcendental conditions in “the empirical acts of a psychological consciousness” (DR 177/135), Kant thus has no choice but to remain within the bounds of common sense: an advocate of thought’s good, conciliatory and respectful nature, still at the feet of “true

<sup>23</sup> Beckett, *Proust*, in *Selected Works*, 4:515.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, NP 121/106. As mentioned above, this is the line of argument that both Sauvagnargues and Nabais follow. In their own ways, both suggest that, in short, the positive reading of Kant’s third *Critique* (i.e. the discordant accord, the sublime, etc.) warrants the claim that Deleuze displays a “Romantic” understanding of art or literature at this point in time.

knowledge, true morality, true religion” (NP 106/90; cf. DR 179/137) – fettered, in other words, to the *philia* which “predetermines at once both the image of thought and the concept of philosophy.” (DR 181/139) To be brief, if the theory of faculties retrived from Kant’s critical philosophy is important to Deleuze, this is because it aids him in conceiving a model of thought no longer caught in the *mise en abîme* of representation and recognition, compulsively reproducing the image of itself as reflected in common sense. Instead, the *transcendent exercise of disjointed faculties* discovered in Kant’s third *Critique* allows Deleuze to trace out a model of thought that in itself discovers a passage to its own limit, an opening to the outside.

For all that, the theory of the faculties through which Proust’s image of thought is outlined in opposition to a generalised rationalism in philosophy, is not accomplished through Kant, but through Plato.<sup>25</sup> It is in Plato that the origins of the pathological model can be located and that is needed if, according to Deleuze, one is to truly exploit Kant’s late inventions in the pursuit of a new image of thought: “Proust is a Platonist,” Deleuze writes, “but not in the vague sense, not because he invokes essences or Ideas apropos of Vinteuil’s little phrase. Plato offers us an image of thought under the sign of encounters and violences.” (PS 122/100) Certainly, in the end Plato will also be accused of betraying everything implied by the model he is accredited of having discovered.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless at crucial moments in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, *Proust and Signs* and *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze returns to book VII of the *Republic* in order to excavate a model of thought that is founded, on one level, in the formative constraint of culture or *paideia*. Here the *method* of voluntarily implanting “knowledge into souls that lack it” is replaced with an *education* that demands that the entire soul is “turned around” in an act of learning purposed to train thought on the true and maintain it there (518b–519d).<sup>27</sup> On another level, this model of thought is constituted within a violence of which thought itself becomes the subject, in

<sup>25</sup> See NP 124/210, PS 122–124/100–102 and DR 180–192/138–148. Sauvagnargues also takes note of this important return to Plato, but does not really explore its significance any further, opting to remain within the framework of the Kantian doctrine of the faculties instead: *L’empirisme transcendantal*, 77.

<sup>26</sup> See, in particular, DR 184–186/141–142.

<sup>27</sup> Socrates mentions a certain “art” or “craft” supposed to achieve this as expediently as possible, the “art of turning around” (*technē tes periagōges*): “It isn’t the craft of putting sight into the soul. Education takes for granted that sight is there but that it isn’t turned the right way or looking where it ought to look, and tries to redirect it appropriately.” 518d. In both *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze argues that “method” is to be substituted by something akin to the greek concept of *paideia*, that is, a “violent training” or a “culture” consisting in a contingent system of “selective forces” that permeates the “entire individual”, thus individuating thought by means of violence or exterior constraints: NP 124/108–109; DR 215/165.

contingent encounters that “lead and turn the soul around”, forcing it to exceed itself as an operation of recognition and thus to apprehend the essence or *ousia* (523b–525a). Thus, when Socrates turns his attention to the subject of things that generate thought and furthermore are “fitted in every way to draw one towards being [*ousia*]” (523a), he makes a distinction between two kinds of perceptions:

Some sense perceptions *don't* summon the understanding [*noesis*] to look into them, because the judgement of sense perception [*aisthesis*] is itself adequate, while others encourage it in every way to look into them, because sense perception seems to produce no sound result. You're obviously referring to things appearing in the distance and to *trompe l'oeil* paintings [*eschiagraphemena*]. You're not quite getting my meaning.” (523b)

On Deleuze's account, Plato here makes a distinction between things which allow thought to remain “inactive or give it only the pretext of an appearance of activity” and such things which “give thought [*donnent à penser*], which force thought [*forcent à penser*].”<sup>28</sup> There are, in summary, only two categories of phenomena: *recognisable objects* and *encountered signs*. In relation to the first kind of objects thought amounts to no more than recognition or opinion (*doxa*) as something which, from a certain viewpoint, assumes the function of a temporary relief from its afflictions, a palliative against its suffering.<sup>29</sup> In spite of the fact that it may indeed involve itself completely with uncertain or doubtful things or ruminates indefinitely, this still cannot

<sup>28</sup> PS 122/100. In *Platon: Le désir de comprendre* (Paris: Vrin, 2003) Monique Dixsaut makes the argument that what here is interpreted by Deleuze as something which effectively *forces* thought is, in truth, no more than an “invitation” to think that the soul can decline if it deems it futile or choose to exploit only sophistically. “Les contradictions de la perception ne forcent pas à penser, elles sont seulement occasions d'interrogation, possibilités d'éveil de l'intelligence” (37). Rather than conceiving thought as born from this encounter, as Deleuze maintains, albeit via Kant and Proust, Dixsaut presents the encounter in Plato as a simple *invitation* to the soul to enter into a dialogue with itself, in accordance with her definition of the dialogical “mouvement de l'interroger-répondre” as the only thing which “mérite le nom de ‘pensée’” (37).

<sup>29</sup> See also 38c–e *Philebus*, where Socrates discusses how deficient perceptions may inspire us to pass judgment on what we perceive within a particular space of possibility or contingency, but never a true desire to think. Doubt in regard of perception thus cannot give rise to thought, that is, it does not constitute a genetic condition of thought and can thus never amount to anything more than a true or false judgment or opinion. As noted by Dixsaut, “la genèse de la pensée n'a rien de nécessaire en une âme qui non seulement ne désire pas penser, mais désire au contraire ne plus avoir à le faire.... Sa pente naturelle mène cette sorte de pensée vers une opinion, donc vers sa propre suppression, habitée qu'elle est par son désir de se dispenser de penser, de penser même cette pauvre pensée qui la tourmente quand elle perçoit mal ou pas du tout.” Dixsaut, *Platon-Nietzsche* (Paris: Fayard, 2015), 40–41.

be called thinking, Deleuze claims, since it is only yet another opportunity for thought to be absorbed by its own image, an image “in which it recognises itself the more it recognises things” (DR 181/138). Neither something appearing in the distance inspiring us with doubt,<sup>30</sup> nor a certainty such as the sum of the three angles of any triangle being invariably equal to the straight angle in a Euclidian space, can thus ever give birth to an act of thought, according to Deleuze.<sup>31</sup> This is why Plato in the *Republic*, rather than surmising that such thought amounts to no more than a palliative judgement or opinion, he understands *dianoia* as succeeded by *noesis* in the hierarchy of the *pathemata*: in contrast to *dianoia*, the *pathema* called *nous* or *noesis* discovers its difference precisely in rupturing with *doxa* and *pistis*, upon which *dianoia* still relies, even if it may concern itself above all with intelligible things.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast, the other kind of objects presented by Plato gives rise to a *simultaneously contradictory* or *opposite perception* which simply cannot be resolved in an identity. And so, Socrates must ask whether any of the faculties of sense in fact ever present anything “clearly and adequately” or, on the contrary, always present such simultaneously opposite perceptions that refuse being recognised and confuse the soul (523e–524a). To the sense of sight, a finger may always be just a finger and never “at the same time the opposite of a finger” (523d), according to Socrates, while “the sense set over the hard” is necessarily also “set over the soft” and therefore cannot help but report whatever it senses as “both hard and soft” at the same time (524a). In opposition to the object of recognition, which cannot but preserve thought in a state of indolence, the sign capable of forcing thought despite itself is composed precisely of such sensations. In such cases, thought is constrained to confront what Deleuze calls “the coexistence of contraries, the coexistence of more and less in an unlimited qualitative becoming.” (DR 184/141)

When encountering such a sign, the soul, instead of coming to rest in a palliative act of recognition, is puzzled or stupefied. The senses provide it not with anything uniform and recognisable, but with disturbing and conflicting

<sup>30</sup> In the beginning of Descartes *Meditations* he states that “the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects that are very small and in the distance [*interdum sensus circa minuta quaedam & remotiora nos fallant*].” Descartes, *Meditations*, 2:212. This is why Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* claims that Socrates’ interlocutor seems “already Cartesian.” DR 181/139.

<sup>31</sup> Socrates argues that in all such cases, “an ordinary soul isn’t compelled to ask the understanding what a finger is, since sight doesn’t suggest to it that a finger is at the same time the opposite of a finger. No, it doesn’t. Therefore, it isn’t likely that anything of that sort would summon or awaken the understanding. No, it isn’t.” 523d–e.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Dixsaut, *Platon-Nietzsche*, 41.

reports of one thing being hard *and* soft or heavy *and* light at the same time, so that it finds itself questioning the meaning of these determinations, summoning its cognitive faculties (*logismos*, *noesis*), counting and relating in an attempt at clarification. If each of the “opposite” qualities (*tanantia*) that are “mixed up” (*synkexymena*) in the perception turns out to be “one, and both two,” Socrates states, “the soul will understand that the two are separate, for it wouldn’t understand the inseparable to be two” (524b), and can then go on to question the being or essence of each thing separately. Each time a thing is encountered in which opposite qualities are confounded it will thus “compel” or “force” (*anankazein*: 524e; cf. 510b, 511a, c) the perplexed soul to mobilise its faculties in an act of thought: “puzzled [*psyche aporein*],” Socrates explains, it “would look for an answer, would stir up its understanding [*kinousa en heaute ten ennoian*] and would ask what the one itself is. And so this would be among the subjects that lead the soul and turn it around towards the study of that which is.” (524e–525a)

As for the model presented according to the divided line in book VI, it is explicit that inasmuch as *dianoia* is still bound to *doxa* yet also relates to a part of the intelligible segment, there is some exterior constraint upon it to use the images constituting the sensible as assumptions or “hypotheses” from which the soul is “forced to investigate” (*zetein anankazetai ex hypotheseon*) its object as if they constituted first principles. (510b) Stirred by an obscure sign and by way of its dianoetic images (*noeta*) of a corresponding invisible object, the *dianoia* proceeds towards its relatively clear yet still contingent conclusion. If *dianoia* remains confined to the images of the visible and the invisible, the highest *pathema* of the soul termed *noesis* constitutes a thought truly without image. Proceeding from true hypotheses rather than presumed principles, “reason itself” (*logos*) is permitted to grasp “the unhypothetical first principle of everything” by virtue of the “power of dialectic” (*dialegesthai dynamei*): “Having reached this principle,” Socrates claims, “it reverses itself and, keeping hold of what follows from it, comes down to a conclusion without making use of anything visible (*aistheto*) at all, but only of ideas themselves (*eidesin autois*), moving on from ideas to ideas, and ending in ideas (*eide*).” (511b–c) The encounter with an obscure yet distinct sign and the subsequent *periagoge* it effectuates – that is, the violent process of turning thought toward the essence – are thus found at each level of every adventure of thought.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> “Aller vers l’inconnu, créer de nouvelles expériences, expérimenter l’impossible: Platon et Nietzsche ne sont sans doute pas les seuls philosophes à l’avoir fait, mais ils sont les seuls à avoir dit que c’est cela qu’il faut appeler ‘penser.’” Dixsaut, *Platon-Nietzsche*, 64. Although Dixsaut is clearly wrong when she claims



Summarily, there are at least two points that are relevant to Deleuze in this passage from the *Republic*: first, the encounter with the sign in Plato finds its proper element in sensibility and non-sense rather than in sense;<sup>34</sup> second, by virtue of the sensibility being undetermined by anything *a priori* in Plato, the senses as well as the other faculties are principally deregulated and thus, by the constraint of the encountered sign propagating from faculty to faculty, are raised one by one to a transcendent exercise until pure thought is forced, pathologically,<sup>35</sup> to think the essence. Already in Plato, then, it is clear that each faculty has what Deleuze calls “its own particular given and its own style, its peculiar way of acting upon the given” (DR 174/133) in a manner suggestive of a coincidental and contemporaneous individuation of both sign and faculty directly in sensibility, where neither element can presuppose the other as already given and where no intermediary instance regulates their relation. “Do hearing and sound need another kind of thing in order for the former to hear and the latter to be heard,” Socrates asks, “a third thing in whose absence the one won’t hear or the other be heard?” “No,” Glaucon replies, “they need nothing else.” (507c–d)

The only, albeit decisive, exception to the independence of the faculties from any mediating third element is, according to Socrates, “sight” (*opsis*) and “the visible” (*to horaton*). Both “the sense of sight” (*tou horan aisthesis*) and “the power to be seen” (*tou horasthai dynamis*) ultimately depend on the mediation of the sun and its light. (507d–508a) To see the visible by virtue of the Sun as intermediary, or to recognise the truth in analogy with the Good,

Plato and Nietzsche are the only ones who have called such adventures in the unknown and the impossible “thought”, it nonetheless remains that there is a sort of subterranean lineage to be traced from Plato to Deleuze by way of Nietzsche and Proust.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. DR 188/144–145, where Deleuze, in reference to Heidegger’s dictum that the possibility of thought is no guarantee that we are thinking, writes: “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.” The object of the encounter is, hence, not an already individuated and immediately recognisable *quality*, that is, it is not something positively given, it is not something already constituted delivered to a sense the sensibility of which is also already constituted, limited and regulated, but a “transcendental sign”: a sign which can only be sensed yet is insensible at the same time, constituting the genetic condition of sensibility in a faculty of sense which in the sign discovers its own limit and is forced to raise itself to a level of transcendent exercise. See Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, 100.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A534/B562: “Freedom in the practical sense is the independence of the power of choice from *necessitation* by impulses of sensibility. For a power of choice is *sensible* insofar as it is *pathologically affected* (through moving-causes of sensibility); it is called an *animal* power of choice (*arbitrium brutum*) if it can be *pathologically necessitated*.”

thus implies precisely the kind of illuminating mediation that furnishes thought with a communal region of sense. Thought is thereby confined to the sedate empirical exercise of recognising things everybody is already supposed to know.

In recognition the sensible in the object relates to the senses. However, in accordance with the demands of recognition, the sensible not only refers to an object that can be experienced by other faculties also, the object can itself be remembered, imagined, or conceived just as well as it can be sensed.<sup>36</sup> In such cases the sensibility is thus not allowed to sense the sensible in the encounter in its specificity or its singular difference, only in the possible generality ascribed to it in and by a common sense. And as long as it is regulated by recognition and common sense, thought must always feel it necessary to anticipate and dissolve the encounter in some harmless generality, lest it runs the risk of discovering anything unexpected and disturbing – just as the citizens of Athens felt it necessary to anticipate and eliminate the risk of encountering

<sup>36</sup> *Short remark on the Proustian formula of foreign language:* As Deleuze notes (PS 39–40/28–29, 32–33), Proust repeatedly criticises the powers of perception or observation for its deficiency at grasping the truth. At a remarkable point in the *Search*, Proust provides two examples that may be articulated to Plato's presentation of seeing and hearing, in keeping with Deleuze's critique of recognition: "I did once have the illusion of seeing, and on another occasion of hearing, the unknown desires and pleasures felt by Albertine." IV/5: 126/511. The problem of jealous love is, at its limit, that of learning to know the strange and bewildering sensibility of the beloved other. To this end, the sense of sight is again incapable of amounting to any result for which it could not be interchanged. After Albertine's death Marcel at one point sees in Andrée, her friend and lover, a "miraculously exhumed and priceless relic" which seemed to present to him "Albertine's desire incarnate in the form of Andrée as she appeared to me, just as Venus figured Jupiter's desire." IV/5 127/511. There is no doubt that this is a moment of joy, but it is a joy of the most fugitive and contingent kind since this wondrous sight of Andrée soon is transformed into disappointment and indifference: "Andrée handed me Albertine, but only now that she was dead and had lost for me not only her life but, in retrospect, something of her reality, as I saw she was not unique and indispensable for Andrée, who had been able to replace her with other friends." IV/5 127/511. In the case of hearing, which just as in Plato seems to eschew the communal sense to a higher degree and thus resist recognition further, Marcel has hired two laundry-maids to stage a scene from the metonymical Gomorrah in another attempt to materialise Albertine's sensibility: "As one caressed the other, her partner started suddenly to make a noise which at first I was unable to interpret, for we never perfectly understand the significance of a strange sound which expresses a sensation that we do not ourselves feel. If we are listening in an adjoining room, without being able to see, we may take for a fit of giggles the screams of a patient operated on without anaesthetic; ... It took me a while to understand that this particular sound expressed by analogy something, however different, which I had experienced, what I called pleasure; and this pleasure must have been very powerful to shake the person who felt it to such an extent that it drew from her this unknown language" IV/5: 130–131/515. Somewhat playfully one could perhaps say that maybe it is precisely this kind of "unknown" or "foreign" language which makes language itself stutter that Proust has in mind when he, in *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, formulates what later will become a recurring formula in Deleuze: "Beautiful books are written in a kind of foreign language." CSB 305.

Socrates again, lest they be condemned to stop peddling their ignorance as knowledge and thus be forced to recognise that in recognising they are not yet thinking.

It is, of course, because of this intimate bond between the sense of sight, the visible, the sun, and the model of recognition that Deleuze claims that “the essences dwell in obscure zones, not in the temperate regions of the clear and distinct.”<sup>37</sup> This is why Elstir’s technique of painting in the *Search* necessarily coincides with an effort to suspend the intelligence where he makes “himself ignorant so as to paint” (II/2: 196/419) by “trying to wrench what he knew from what he was going to feel [*tâchait d’arracher à ce qu’il venait de sentir ce qu’il savait*]” and thus “dissolve this aggregate of reasoning that we call vision [*cet agrégat de raisonnements que nous appelons vision*].” (II/3: 713/417; tr. mod.)

Involuntarily afflicted by an obscure sign, the faculty addressed cannot help but break with the demands of common sense and recognition, in order to discover not what possibly may concern and be grasped also by other faculties but rather what only it can apprehend, what constitutes its exclusive concern in the object. If only a minimum of the specificity of sensibility is retained in the joint contribution of the faculties requisitioned by recognition, then in contrast the object of the forcible encounter “really gives birth to sensibility in the sense”, a point Deleuze makes with reference to the case of *noesis* according to the Divided Line. “It is not an *aistheton*, but an *aistheteon*. 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.” (DR 182/139; tr. mod.)

Thus, from the viewpoint of a sensibility, which in all acts of recognition can grasp “only that which also could be grasped by other faculties”, the sensible in the encounter is not just that which only can be *sensed*, but also that which is *insensible* or *imperceptible* and gives birth to sensibility at the same time. The encounter thus disrupts habit and allows each of the faculties to be disjointed and deregulated, so that they can attain the limits of their diverging powers, doing so unimpeded by any principle of collaboration or accord:

<sup>37</sup> PS 122/100; tr. mod.; cf. NP 126/110. This recurring figure of the obscure belongs to Deleuze’s critique of Descartes’ distinction of the clear-distinct, in favour of the pairing derived from Leibniz of the obscure-distinct, which Deleuze claims finds a new role in the doctrine of the faculties: “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. The distinct-obscure becomes here the true tone of philosophy, the symphony of the discordant Idea.” DR 332–333/259. See also n. 76 below.

sensing what is *insensible* yet can only be sensed; remembering what is *immemorable* yet can only be remembered; thinking what is *unthinkable* yet can only be thought.<sup>38</sup> Each faculty, Deleuze argues, thus discovers its ownmost passion in the form of “its differential and repeating element, along with the instantaneous engendering of its action and the eternal replay [*ressassement*] of its object, its manner of coming into the world already repeating.” (DR 186/143)

Paradoxically, in passing through Kant Deleuze is able to discover an even more productive doctrine of faculties present in Plato. This in turn, allows him to criticise Kant and complete the doctrine proper to transcendental empiricism in Proust: a doctrine not traced off any logical, moral, or aesthetic common sense or any empirical psychology of the ordinary mind, but where the relationships of the faculties are fundamentally indeterminate, susceptible to a disjointed rather than joint work, exercised in a mode of discordant accord, diverging rather than converging in identity and unity, raising themselves to a level of transcendent exercise, where each discovers that their highest power coincides with their capacity to suffer the violence of the sensible, of the sign.<sup>39</sup>

It may seem as if Deleuze here returns to a model in which the faculties converge in the absolute unity and identity of the essence. But, the violence of the encounter propagating in the series does in fact not join the faculties in an accordance, so much as it ruptures all the joints and forces them to diverge, in relation to one another and in relation to common sense: “Each faculty is out of joint. But what are the joints, if not the form of the common sense that had all the faculties revolve and converge?”<sup>40</sup> And so, just as the guests gathered in the *Symposium* are driven to the limits of their powers not as friends seeking agreement, but as drunken and violent lovers venturing to defeat their rivals – each disjointed faculty is pushed by another to its proper limit in a discord, where each faculty is forced to sense, remember, or conceive what is exclusive

<sup>38</sup> Cf. DR 182–184/139–141.

<sup>39</sup> It falls outside of the scope of this study, but *Proust and Signs* could arguably be constructed as another response, as it were, to the problems represented by the “four poetic formulas” which according to Deleuze “could summarise Kantian philosophy”: Shakespeare’s *time is out of joint*; Rimbaud’s *Je est un autre*; Kafka’s *secret law*; and Rimbaud’s *dérèglement de tous les sens*. See Deleuze, “On Four Poetic Formulas That Might Summarise the Kantian Philosophy”, in *Critique et clinique*. This would not, however, be a matter of simply cross-referencing the formulas ascribed to Kant and the formulas extracted from Proust (i.e. *a little bit of time in its pure state; real but not present, ideal but not abstract; beautiful books are written in a kind of foreign language*), but rather of working out equivalents to the Kantian formulas in and through Proust.

<sup>40</sup> DR 184/141; tr. mod.

to it in its involuntary exercise until, finally, pure thought is mobilised towards the discovery of essence.<sup>41</sup>

Only the sensibility grasps the sign as such; only intelligence, memory, or imagination explicates the sense, each according to a certain kind of sign; only pure thought discovers essence, is forced to conceive essence as the sufficient reason of the sign and its sense. (PS 121–122/99–100)

### THE FACULTY OF ESSENCES

In Proust, Deleuze finds a model that clearly resonates with the one Plato constructs around the notion that some things are “provocative” or “stimulating” to thought (*parakletika tes dianoias*) and others not, or that some things are simply recognised in a sedate manner and others – a shock to thought.<sup>42</sup> At this point, we must consider a crucial difference separating Plato and Proust, namely that in Proust the forcible signs do not belong to the object as a state of things or a *state of the world*, according to Deleuze, but are inscribed into the *state of the soul*. When struck by such a shocking sensation, installing the subject(s) in two places or two moments at once, as is the case in Proust, there can be no convergence of the faculties, neither on the side of the object nor the subject.

In fact, instead of converging, as is the case in Kant, the faculties diverge: no longer working on an object assumed to be identical to all of them in accord, each faculty works in discord with all the others on a difference that appeals to, and is apprehensible for, it alone. Each is constrained to raise itself to a transcendent exercise and grasp the essence.<sup>43</sup> In so far as Proust is concerned, however, such transcendent exercises of the faculties do not address any object outside of the world. Rather, it is this transcendent or involuntary

<sup>41</sup> Cf. DR 184/141: “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 disparate or its incomparable.” (Tr. mod.)

<sup>42</sup> PS 119/97. Bryant points out that “transcendental empiricism is an empiricism insofar as it must rely on an encounter to engender thought.” For all that, the object of the encounter is not of any particular importance: it may be “Socrates, a temple or a demon.” DR 182/139. It is here that transcendental empiricism deviates from the classical variety, according to Bryant, since “the object of the encounter is the occasion of thought, but not that which is to be thought.” See Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, 93.

<sup>43</sup> In summarising Proust’s Platonism in the beginning of the second part of *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze writes: “the disjunct use of the faculties in their involuntary exercise has, as we know, its model in Plato’s education of a sensibility open to violence of signs, a remembering soul that interprets and discovers their meaning, an intelligence that discerns essence.” PS 131/108.

exercise that allows the faculty to seize and be seized by, precisely, “that in the world which concerns it exclusively and brings it into the world.” (DR 186/143) The limit of each faculty is thus not the limit at the end of experience, but the limit at the beginning of an experiment: it is the point to which the power of its regular exercise must be brought, only to collapse under the weight of its powerlessness. It is forced open and exposed to a violence of the sensible, to an outside *in* the sensible, populated by essences or Ideas that are – not transcendent – but “coiled [*enroulées*] within what forces us to think” and “let themselves be conceived only if we are forced to do so.”<sup>44</sup>

All signs capable of stirring thought is, again, only apprehensible by virtue of that “terrible ability” of the body which enables the sensibility to remain. As Proust formulates it, it is “scored long afterwards by the original and indelible mark of the new event, as the furrow scored by a flash of lightning.” (IV/5: 8/392) This does not mean, however, that sensibility constitutes the destination of each encountered sign. Nor does it mean that there is a privileged faculty of Ideas in analogy with the role ascribed to reason by Kant.

First of all, there are no faculties given *a priori*, since they always must find their genesis in the encounter with the transcendental sign of the essence or Idea. The doctrine of faculties, as it were, is not given and closed but open and variable. This means that the faculties themselves are not limited to sensibility, reason, understanding, imagination, or memory, but may include a faculty of “speech” (*langage*) – speaking what can only be spoken and is “silence at the same time” – or a faculty of “sociability, whose transcendent object would also be anarchy”, and so on. (DR 187/143)

<sup>44</sup> PS 122/100. With respect to the relation between the sensible and the insensible or the visible and the invisible, this is, as already noted in the introduction, clearly a point at which Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty appear both to converge and diverge, that is, insofar as it ties into the latter’s statement that “no one has gone further than Proust in fixing the relations between the visible and the invisible, in describing *an idea that is not the contrary of the sensible*” but rather its “lining and its depth.” Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible*, 193/149; italics mine. Wambacq admits that Deleuze’s presentation is confusing in regard to Plato’s role in the establishment of the image of thought. However, she then quickly moves on to brush this off as the expression of an anti-Platonism which both Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty find revitalised in Proust, claiming that in the end “it is clear that Deleuze ultimately sees Plato as the philosopher who situates the origin of thinking in the goodwill of the subject”. Wambacq, *Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty*, 149. As has been shown above, however, there is nothing simple about Deleuze’s relation to Plato. Rather than rejecting Plato as the founder of the dogmatic image as being his final word on the matter, it would seem to be the starting point from where Deleuze’s reversal of Platonism is carried out. There is an imperative equally to proceed through Plato as there is to go against Plato, precisely in the form of transcendental empiricism. Carbone, on the other hand, draws the rather surprising conclusion that what Deleuze actually does is to realise the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty: *Deformation*, 32.

Second, the number and nature of the faculties constituting the system at any given moment can be neither grounded in nor “traced off” any empirical psychology of the ordinary mind, but results from an experimentation with signs, problems, essences experienced in “extreme places” and “extreme times, where the highest and deepest truths live and rise up.” (NP 126/110)

Third, each faculty has its own essence or Idea: a transcendent object encountered at the limit of the empirical or voluntary exercise of each faculty, an object which it *cannot grasp* but, all the same, is *forced to grasp*: sensibility thus senses what can only be sensed but is also the insensible; memory recollects what can only be recollected but is also impossible to recollect; pure thought thinks what can only be thought but is also unthinkable, etc.

Each faculty is thus brought to the point where it disrupts, entering into a transcendent exercise and propagating its affliction to another faculty. Each faculty furthermore corresponds immediately to an essence or Idea, but, for all that, this Idea or essence is not exclusive to this particular faculty. There is a “communication” of the faculties. However, what is being communicated is not what is graspable to all of them as a common sense. On the contrary, the violence, which each faculty has to bring to its own limit and thereby communicate to the next, afflicts them precisely as something that is different to each of them.

In *Proust and Signs* Deleuze repeatedly determines “pure thought” as the “faculty of essences” and distinguishes it from memory, desire, imagination, and intelligence as if it were just another faculty of thought in general.<sup>45</sup> The different types of signs force us to search for the truth and in doing so appeal to the involuntary exercise of their principal faculty. In the case of artistic signs, these are, accordingly, presented as the type of signs that “force us to *think*” by mobilising “pure thought as a faculty of essences.” (PS 120/98; italics mine)

In keeping with the aforementioned schematics extracted from Kant and Plato, Deleuze then goes on to define the mobilisation of pure thought in terms of an effect, not of the signs of art directly, but of the other faculties insofar as they have been raised up to an involuntary exercise, thereby promoting this faculty of essences as defining thought as such or in its highest form. “The signs,” Deleuze writes, “mobilise, constrain a faculty: intelligence, memory, or imagination. This faculty, in its turn, mobilises *thought*, forces it to *think* the essence. Under the signs of art, we learn what pure thought is as a faculty of essences and how the intelligence, the memory, or the imagination diversify it in relation to the other kinds of signs.” (PS 120/98–99; italics mine)

<sup>45</sup> See, PS 32/23, 70/55, 106/86. Deleuze at one point also relates pure thought to sleep, claiming that “like sleep, art is beyond memory; it appeals to pure thought as a faculty of essences.” PS 59/46.

In conclusion, each faculty *of* thought corresponds to an essence or Idea, but the essence thus grasped in each case is *its* essence, not the essence of essence or the essence as such. Thus, memory grasps the essence of memory, the imagination grasps the essence of imagination, the sensibility grasps the essence of sensibility, and so on. Only a thought without image, or pure thought as the faculty of essences, thinks what can only be thought: the essence as revealed in the work of art.

This final revelation is obviously the turning point at which the essence appears to the apprentice at last, indicating a crucial moment in time which separates all that came before from everything yet to come. However, it is the turning point in another sense, since what it reveals is not only the reality of essences but also that there are two viewpoints from which this essence must be considered at the same time: from the viewpoint of the apprentice's progression through the system of signs, on the one hand, and from the viewpoint of the essence's regression through the same system, on the other. There is thus a "before" and "after" the final revelation, even though the essence transcends any and all such chronological determinations and extends itself across the entire line of time at once, reaching as far back into the past as it does into the future.

This is why Deleuze insists, in a seemingly Platonic fashion, that it is not enough to discover the essence or Idea in the present, but that it must also be (re-)discovered in the past by way of a retrograde movement through the system. After having discovered the essence, the apprentice must then descend again, through each of the different worlds of signs he or she already had to pass in order to ascend to the point of the final revelation in the first place. This, he or she must undertake in order to rediscover that, in the earlier stages of the apprenticeship the essence is something still unknown but nonetheless already present. This retrograde movement thus surveys and determines the essence's repetition in each world of signs, as well as determining the principal faculty called upon to extract the truth or the essence of each world, at each stage of the apprenticeship. The truths of the intelligence, of the memory and of the imagination are, in summary, the essence repeated and refracted in accordance with the composition of each type of sign.

Associated with the revelation of essence in art is thus a problem of repetition. In truth, however, this problem pervades *Proust and Signs* in its entirety. It appears on different levels but is also multiplied on each of these levels. For example, the apprenticeship as a whole or in the guise of Platonic dialectics clearly constitutes a problem of repetition: the trajectory of the apprenticeship is first of all repeated on a macro level where the different



worlds are repeated once from the viewpoint of progression and once from the viewpoint of essence. It also appears on the intermediate level of the trials and errors that constitute Marcel's progression through the system of truth, that is, in the mistakes originating in the illusions of subjectivism and objectivism repeated in each and every world of signs. It is as if each world in itself constitutes a local apprenticeship. In the case of love, for example, the problem of repetition appears on several levels in Deleuze's reading.<sup>46</sup> And all of these repetitions in all the different worlds of the apprenticeship reflect, at their limits, that the problem of the essence or the Idea in Proust is not in any way a problem of participation, but of difference and repetition.

## II. OF THE APEX AND DESCENT

*From the impasse of the apprenticeship to its final revelation in the world of art. – The signs of worldliness, love, and sensibility, and the truths of the intelligence. – The superiority of the signs of art: immaterial, spiritual, singular. –*

<sup>46</sup> *Short remark on repetition in the series of love:* First, Marcel's love for Gilberte, Oriane and Albertine constitute a series where each element repeats the preceding one by differentiating itself from it at the same time (they do not, therefore, resemble one another but, on the contrary, appear as a series of unforeseeable and surprising contrasts). The series cannot develop through the repetition of differences, however, without also converging towards its law, that is, without the lover at the same time approaching an understanding of the original theme being repeated. This understanding can furthermore be achieved only at the end of love, when the lover is no longer in love and the faculty of love has itself been depleted. The series of loves thus constitute an apprenticeship of its own, according to Deleuze: at first the lover believes the truth of love to be bound to and thus discoverable in the object of his desires; then, the lover believes the truth of love to be bound to and discoverable in himself as a subject, in subjectivity itself; at last, as he is approaching the end of love, he can also sense the presence of an original theme or an idea which transcends both his subjective states and the objects in which it incarnates itself, reaching a trans-subjective level comprising not only his own love for Gilberte, Oriane and Albertine but also Swann's love for Odette. Second, love is not only a series of individual love affairs involving different objects of desire: each individual object of desire in itself constitutes a series of different objects. This micro-series of Albertines, for example, reflects and repeats the macro-series, so that the series Gilberte-Oriane-Albertine-Odette is reflected in the series Albertine<sup>1</sup>, Albertine<sup>2</sup>, Albertine<sup>3</sup>, Albertine...<sup>4</sup> Third, each individual love affair also repeats and reflects the repetition of the apprenticeship in general: the love for Albertine has a beginning, a development, and an end (as if vaguely following the form of a sonata: exposition, development, repetition). Deleuze therefore claims that one can distinguish two periods of jealousy in Marcel's love for Albertine: the first leading towards love and the other towards forgetfulness, arranged so that the second repeats the first but through inversion. Here the three stages are distinguished in the descent towards forgetting: the return to an undifferentiated perception analogue to that of the *bande à part* from which Albertine once was individuated; the return to the discovery of Albertine's tastes and inclinations, reconnecting with the first intuitions of Gomorrah but in a moment of indifference towards the truth; and, finally, the notion that Albertine has returned to life (resurrected by a mistake), which brings Marcel incomparably little joy in comparison to the amount of suffering he experienced upon first learning of her death.

*The essence in the work of art as the pure difference and the complication of Time. – The essence as principle of individuation in the subject of thought.*

To return to the impasse at the end of the apprenticeship: although memory may in principle be no more pivotal to the apprenticeship than the intelligence on Deleuze's account, it is nevertheless by way of memory that Marcel is led finally to the revelation that ultimately resolves the antinomy of the imagination which constitutes it. Indeed, the decisive series of experiences which at last seem to afford him the potential means to restore art and thus life, all of them appeal to memory, all of them conjure up fragments of the past accompanied by sensations of intense joy. Summarily, the acceleration and multiplication of involuntary events taking place as Marcel returns to Paris and the Guermantes' hôtel prompts the investigation into involuntary memory, which earlier had been neglected and postponed. Here we discover the two formulas which according to Deleuze belong to the conception of essence in Proust, which, at one and the same time, point towards Deleuze's own conception of virtuality.<sup>47</sup>

First, there is the aporia of the imagination, which only a moment ago had struck him as an "inevitable law", forever condemning him to experiencing beauty and joy only *in absentia*.<sup>48</sup> This "iron law" is, however, suddenly suspended in an event of involuntary memory, revealing instead a fragment of the pure past or, put otherwise, *a little bit of time in its pure state*.<sup>49</sup> a pure past such that, from the viewpoint of transcendent or involuntary exercise, it constitutes that which can only be recollected, the "immemorial".

<sup>47</sup> A great number of books and articles have already been written on the subject of virtuality and the virtual, at least insofar as it concerns Bergson. It seems then judicious to treat this theme only cursory and to the extent it is necessary for the general argument presented in this study. Here, the focus is not so much the virtual character of the essence, but rather the essence as an event in the experience of thought itself. See, for example, Keith Ansell Pearson, *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual: Bergson and the Time of Life* (London: Routledge, 2002) and Valentine Moulard-Leonard, *Bergson-Deleuze Encounters: Transcendental Experience and the Thought of the Virtual* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), to mention only a fraction of the studies dedicated to the subject.

<sup>48</sup> Beistegui, *Proust*, 13.

<sup>49</sup> IV/6: 451/180: "But now all the consequences of that iron law had suddenly been neutralised, suspended, by a wonderful natural expedient, which had held out the prospect of a sensation . . . both in the past, which enabled my imagination to enjoy it, and in the present, where the actual shock to my senses of experiencing the sound, the touch of linen, etc., had added to the dreams of the imagination the thing which they were habitually deprived of, the idea of existence – and thanks to this subterfuge, had allowed my being to obtain, to isolate, to immobilise – for the duration of a flash of lightning – the one thing it never apprehends: *a little bit of time in its pure state*." (Italics mine)

At the same time, when seen from the viewpoint of an empirical or voluntary exercise, this fragment of the pure past is precisely what is impossible to remember, it is the “immemorable” (DR 183/140). The essence in the form of “a little bit of time in its pure state” is, therefore, apprehensible only under the condition of a profound forgetfulness.<sup>50</sup> And it is only through an encounter with a sensuous sign – such as “a single sound, a single scent” – that the power of habit can be broken, so that what was “already heard or breathed long ago” may “once again, both in the present and the past, *be real without being present* [actuel], *ideal without being abstract*” (IV/6: 451/181; italics mine).

Proust thus determines the essence incarnated in involuntary memory as a fragment of pure time, an invasive piece of pure past that disrupts habit and disarranges the organisation of the faculties, forcing them to mobilise in such a way that they find themselves overstepping their limits and thereby permitting the return of something un-lived, new, inhuman even, into the present as well as the past of the subject(s). What returns here is something from “outside” of the order of passing time, something real but not actual, ideal but not abstract, something of the past but all the while absolutely new. This irruption of what is “outside” of the temporal order coincides with the rebirth of a similarly “extra-temporal” self, finding “its sustenance and delight” only in the essences it is able to extract: “One minute freed from the order of time has recreated in us, in order to feel it, the man freed from the order of time.” (IV/6: 451/181)

This, however, is no more than the experience of being forced to conceive the essence in its derivative or secondary form, according to Deleuze. If voluntary memory is capable of giving us nothing beyond “desiccated images” of a past already maimed by habit, in involuntary memory the past returns with such intensity that it appears, no longer in the form of contingent imprints or copies of perceptions safeguarded by memory, but as “fragments of existence subtracted from time” (IV/6: 454/183–184; tr. mod.). Certainly, to contemplate what returns to us in these experiences amounts to nothing less

<sup>50</sup> If habit installs us in a common sense, effacing differences and making us forget, this complete forgetfulness – from within which involuntary memory is capable of recalling and repeating a pure past as a force of differentiation – keeps all the impressions intact, according to Proust. “If the memory, thanks to forgetfulness, has not been able to make a single connection, to throw up a single link between it and the present moment, if it has stayed in its place, at its date, if it has kept its distance, its isolation in the depths of a valley or at the very peak of a summit, it suddenly makes us breathe a new air, new precisely because it is an air we have breathed before, this purer air which the poets have tried in vain to make reign in paradise and which could not provide this profound feeling of renewal if it had not already been breathed, for the only true paradise is a paradise that we have lost.” IV/6: 449/179.

than a “contemplation of eternity”, Proust writes, though, irrespective of its object and intensity, it is “itself fugitive.” (IV/6: 454/183) Thus, the contemplation that involuntary memory gives to thought does not give us eternity in itself. What it gives us instead is a brief but nonetheless enrapturing image of eternity at its full, insupportable, intensity.<sup>51</sup>

What is the original essence discovered in the signs of art? What is its superiority in relation to the other types of signs? To what effect is it encountered and by whom? These are the questions that will be addressed in the second part of this chapter. In order to do so we must first turn to Deleuze’s presentation of the other signs and their corresponding truths, before investigating the superiority of the signs of art in terms of their *immaterial* and *spiritual* character, on the one hand, and their manifest *unity*, on the other. Subsequently, the focus will be on the essence or Idea defined as a *difference*, which in important respects relates to Leibniz’s concept of *differentials* as well as the *monad*, rather than to Plato’s *eidos*. By way of Leibniz the essence or Idea then appears as a *superior viewpoint* that is not so much individual as it is individuating. Finally, the question of the subject of the experience of thought is reopened once more, but this time as a problem of *difference and repetition*.

#### THE SIGNS OF LIFE AND THE TRUTHS OF INTELLIGENCE

Deleuze often stresses the fact that Proust generally opposes the notion of reason or intelligence as the foremost means of thought and the sole means of accessing any truths of the world and the self alike. In a manner which at first glance does not seem all that dissimilar from his contemporaries, for example, Taine or Bergson,<sup>52</sup> Proust repeatedly points out the vanity of relying on nothing but the intelligence in the hope of discovering the truth: essentially bent towards utility and objectivism, the intelligence dreams of the objective content and explicit significations it alone is capable of discovering and communicating, excluding everything besides.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> PS 79/63.

<sup>52</sup> Concerning Proust’s relation to contemporary psychological and philosophical theories on memory, see chap. 2, “Proust among the psychologists”, in Beistegui’s *Proust*.

<sup>53</sup> Just as the perception believes the world is there to be *seen or observed*, Deleuze remarks, the intelligence believes the truth is there to be *said and formulated*. It cannot conceive of the truth in any other way and it is this inclination towards the objective, the explicit, and the conventional, that is responsible for producing the intelligence’s diverse interests: *conversation, friendship, and philosophy* as “a voluntary and pre-meditated exercise of thought by which we may determine the order and content of objective significations.” PS 40/29–30.

In spite of the intelligence's reputedly natural love for truth and its aptness for finding it, it is still not through any of its specific occupations that we discover the truth. Again, the decisive opposition here is not exactly one between reason and passion, active and passive, but rather of the voluntary and the involuntary exercise of every faculty. And so, if there is anything akin to irrationalism in Proust, this irrationalism, much like in the case of Nietzsche, does not amount to an opposition to thinking but, on the contrary, to rationalism as non-thought, to the reasonable being as a non-thinker.<sup>54</sup> Proust's issue with rationalism and the privilege of intelligence in philosophy in general is, therefore, not so much a question of complete disqualification as it is a question of the order and mode in which the intelligence is activated. There are, on the contrary, signs only the intelligence can interpret, truths only it can find. It is the only faculty capable of discovering the true sense of the worldly and erotic signs that provoke anxiety and pain – but only on the condition that it is not voluntarily employed, "in advance", as it were, but rather "comes after", forced into action by the nervous exaltation or the suffering instilled by the signs. If not; well, then it appears as rather useless.<sup>55</sup> "How much more sharply suffering probes the psyche than does psychology!" (IV/5: 3–4/387–388)

The truth of love is, in brief, unthinkable without the painful affliction of the lover's jealousy or loss. Still, if it seems that this renders the intelligence altogether worthless, it is only because one fails to note its true role in the system of the signs and its function in the discovery of its relative inferiority. The intelligence indeed fails both to anticipate and to grasp Albertine's escape, but so does the imagination. The thought of her leaving could have struck him "a thousand times over, as clearly and as unambiguously as you like, without my ever having any truer realisation of what this departure would mean to me, that is, what it would mean in reality – something original, devastating, unknown, an entirely novel evil." (IV/5: 8/392) This is neither because there were

<sup>54</sup> Cf. NP 107/93: "In irrationalism we are concerned only with thought, only with thinking. What is opposed to reason is thought itself; what is opposed to the reasonable being is the thinker himself."

<sup>55</sup> IV/5: 3–4/387–388: "It is true that a moment earlier ... I had thought that I no longer loved Albertine, believing that I had taken everything into account, that I was completely lucid and that I had plumbed the depths of my heart. But however great our intelligence, it cannot conceive all the elements that constitute it and which remain undetected as long as no event capable of isolating them makes them start to solidify out of the volatile state in which they exist for most of the time. I was mistaken when I thought that I saw clearly into my heart. But this knowledge, which the finest insights of my intellect had not given me, had just been brought home to me, as hard, dazzling and strange as crystals of salt, through the sudden stimulus of pain."

no prior notions of the *possibility* of Albertine leaving, nor because this was not actually *foreseen*.<sup>56</sup> The reason is, according to an argument of Proust's distinctly reminiscent of Hume,<sup>57</sup> that in order "to represent an unknown situation, the imagination borrows elements already known, and for this reason fails to represent it." (IV/5: 8/392) The voluntary imagination is, in other words, a reproductive faculty: a faculty of disfiguration and refiguration that cannot go beyond the limits set by experience. It may be capable of accomplishing infinite permutations within those limits, but it cannot bring anything into being not previously planted there by impression: "What was never seen, or heard of," as Hume concludes, "may yet be conceived".<sup>58</sup>

Considering, first, that the imagination is capable of thinking the unknown only as a re-composition of the already familiar rather than in its untimeliness or novelty; second, that the intelligence is capable of thinking truth only as a logical possibility rather than as a necessary reality; and, third, that Albertine's departure was an event "as surprising as any revealed by a physicist's latest discovery, a prosecutor's fresh inquiry into a crime, or a historian's new insight into some revolution" (IV/5: 7/391) – it should come as no surprise that this event is something that goes far beyond the power and scope of any and all unconscious premonitions, imaginative representations or logical hypotheses. In fact, of all the faculties commonly presupposed, only the sensibility has the capacity to grasp the event. After all, only "the body's terrible ability to keep records" allows "our sensibility" to remain "scored long afterwards by the

<sup>56</sup> IV/5: 8/392: "Even if I had foreseen this departure, I might have thought of it ceaselessly year after year, without all such thoughts, even if joined together, having the slightest connection either in intensity or in quality with the unimaginable hell that Françoise had allowed me to glimpse when she said, 'Miss Albertine has left.'"

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, 1.2.6: "Let us chace our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass. This is the universe of the imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produc'd." See also Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, 2.4–5: "But though our thought seems to possess this unbounded liberty, we shall find . . . that all this creative power of the mind amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the sense and experience." See also Bergson, *La pensée et le Mouvant*, (Paris: Flammarion, 2014), 72: "La pensée se représente ordinairement le nouveau comme un nouvel arrangement d'éléments préexistants; pour elle rien ne se perd, rien ne se crée."

<sup>58</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, 2.4. In *Empirisme et subjectivité* Deleuze points out a double function of the imagination in Hume: "As the place of ideas, the fancy is the collection of separated individuals. As the connection of ideas, it moves through the universe, engendering fire dragons, winged horses, and monstrous giants. The depth of the mind is indeed delirium, or – same thing from another point of view – change and indifference." ES 4/23; tr. mod.

original and indelible mark of the new event, as the furrow scored by a flash of lightning.” (IV/5: 8/392)

The sensibility and the pain it allows are thus sources of knowledge far superior to the intelligence alone. And yet this is something only the intelligence can grasp. It alone is capable of conceiving the truth of its own inferiority.<sup>59</sup> The sensibility’s affectivity makes it far superior to the intelligence, but it is nevertheless only through the intelligence’s affirmation of its own inferiority that the truths implicated in the signs of love can be explicated and the shock to the sensibility explained.<sup>60</sup> From the viewpoint of the involuntary as the highest mode of exercise in which the essences are grasped, then, on the level of each faculty, the faculty of intelligence is of value to the search only insofar as (1) it is engaged *after* the sign has been encountered and (2) another faculty has called for its aid, just as the memory or the imagination can attain no truth in voluntary use. But what is this involuntarily discovered truth of the intelligence?

First of all, the truth finally extracted by the intelligence is of a different order than that first revealed by pain. Whereas the truth of the intelligence is a general truth, the truth of a sudden pain is, above all, particular. According to Proust, however, the physical pain suffered by virtue of the sensibility also suspends any and all chronological distinctions, and thereby “renders the pain contemporary with all the periods in our lives when we have suffered” (IV/5: 8/392). So, at first, the pain indeed appears as the sign of a particular event, revealing, for example, the truth of Albertine’s departure and demise (IV/5: 3/387: “something which I had thought meant nothing to me, was quite simply my whole life”) by disrupting the indifference instituted by habit, exposing it as a spectre of a morality bred and nourished by the intelligence, by its desire for utility and efficacy and its prohibition against wasting time. And yet there is, according to Proust, truth(s) also of another order to be extracted from such petty affairs of the heart or days squandered at the racetracks. In fact, one of the most important lessons of the apprenticeship is, according to Deleuze, that there are truths to be extracted precisely from lost or wasted time.

<sup>59</sup> IV/5: 7/391: “It is life which little by little, case by case, allows us to realise that what is most important for our hearts or our minds is taught to us not by reason but by other powers. And then it is the intellect itself, which, recognising their superiority, uses its reasoning in order to abdicate in their favour and accepts the role of collaborator and servant.”

<sup>60</sup> IV/5: 123/508: “I was struck with a shock so cruel that from that moment on I thought far more of preventing it from hurting me than searching it for memories. A few moments after the shock, my intellect, lagging behind like thunder after lightning, brought me the explanation [*la raison*].”

Under the constraint of sensibility the intelligence is capable of transposing the pain of lost love to a general level where, as Proust formulates it, it is rendered “contemporary” with a lifetime of pain. From the suffering endured in each particular case, the intelligence is then capable of extracting a truth in the form of a general law.<sup>61</sup> The suffering of the lover can appear to be bound to a particular beloved only to the extent that we still believe the truth to be discoverable in the object emitting the sign. In truth, however, our love does not really belong to anyone, not even to ourselves: it is ours only as “a part of our soul, longer lasting than the various selves which die successively within us”, which ultimately “must detach itself from individuals and recreate its general nature” (IV/6: 476/206). This extraction of a general rather than particular truth from our suffering is also – as we have already seen in the case of Swann, but which from the viewpoint of essence is repeated on a different level – a moment of conversion in which the intelligence, not only “transmutes the particular into the general” (PS 92/74–75), but also exchanges pain for joy: “Each person who makes us suffer can be linked by us to a divinity of which he or she is only a fragmentary reflection at the lowest level, a divinity (or Idea) the contemplation of which immediately gives us joy in place of the pain we had before.” (IV/6: 477/207) And this capacity is exclusive to the intelligence.<sup>62</sup>

It is not only in the signs of love that general truths are discovered, however. The process of turning an empirical encounter with a particular sign into the “spiritual equivalent” of a general truth is in fact applied in relation to each of the non-artistic types of signs in the *Search*, thus providing us with as many general *laws* and *ideas*.<sup>63</sup> In summary, the general truths extracted from the

<sup>61</sup> “One feels”, Proust writes, but it is only when this feeling has been exposed to and clarified by the intelligence that “one can make out, and even then only with difficulty, the form of what one felt.” IV/6: 475/205.

<sup>62</sup> PS 92/74–75: “Only the intelligence can discover generality and find it a source of joy.” There is no doubt that Spinoza is folded into Deleuze’s reading of Proust, much like that essence which can only be explicated–intricated in something else. And this to the extent that it would arguably be possible to read the *Search* precisely as an ethics in Spinoza’s sense. This subterranean parallelism connecting Spinoza and Proust is only implicit in *Proust and Signs*, but is perhaps most apparent in this theme of the intelligence’s ability to transform suffering into joy, by virtue of an adequate knowledge of one’s place in the universe as viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*. Cf. Spinoza, *Ethics*, 5: prop. 29–32. On the conspicuous absence of Spinoza in *Difference and Repetition*, Beistegui remarks that it should not be taken as “an indication of his limited role in the elaboration of the problematic of difference, and the thesis of univocity. Rather, we should understand the book on Spinoza as the necessary theoretical and historical supplement to *Difference and Repetition*.” *Immanence*, 40. This argument could probably be extended to most of Deleuze’s publications during the 1960s, i.e. Spinoza is silent but in no way absent.

<sup>63</sup> IV/6: 457/187: “In each case I had to try to interpret the sensations as the signs of so many laws and ideas, at the same time as trying to think, that is to draw out from the penumbra what I had felt, and convert it



signs of love, the worldly signs, and the sensible signs are the following: (1) from the emptiness of the worldly signs of society the intelligence finally extracts what Deleuze calls the “general laws” of “vacuity, stupidity and forgetfulness”, which in a mechanical fashion governs the metamorphoses of the social, historical and political aspects of social life in general as well as determines the local laws or rules of particular salons; (2) from the lying nature of the signs of love is eventually extracted, again by the intelligence, the “general laws of the lie”, “the laws of contact, attraction and repulsion”, which, according to Deleuze, ultimately “form a veritable ‘physics’ of deception”, governing the *serial repetitions* of our loves, that is, the way “the image”, “the theme” or “the original difference presiding over our loves” repeats itself on the macro level of individual loves, on the micro level of each individual love, as well as on the “trans-subjective” level connecting us to the series of other lovers; (3) the signs of sensibility appealing to memory or imagination are, on the one hand, a truthful source of either extraordinary joy or irreparable loss (plenitude or nothingness), yet, on the other, they still remain too “material” to be able to produce a truth entirely unmarked by any contingencies or illusions on the side of either the object or the subject.

#### THE SUPERIORITY OF THE SIGNS OF ART

The system of the signs constituting the apprenticeship is presented by Deleuze according to a hierarchical order. In spite of the general antagonism towards rationalism marking so much of Deleuze’s philosophy, the order of the apprenticeship and the hierarchy of the signs in Proust is determined in a fashion mirroring the formal distinction between *ordo cognoscendi* and *ordo essendi*: first, the hierarchy is determined by the efficacy of the signs and their corresponding faculties considered in view of the apprentice’s progressive ascent towards the revelation of essence; second, by the truth proper to each line of time and each type of sign considered in view of the essence’s descent through the series and the degree of refraction it is subjected to at each level.<sup>64</sup> From both viewpoints the worldly signs, the erotic

into a spiritual equivalent. And what was this method, which seemed to me to be the only one, but the making of a work of art?”

<sup>64</sup> If nothing else, this – along with the persistent embrace of the concept of essence, the demand for a continuity between the sensible and the intelligible (present in the elaboration of the pathological model), the conception of the differential essence as the “sufficient reason” of the sign and its meaning, of the act of thought itself, etc. – reveals that Deleuze is more closely bound to rationalism than he is usually assumed to be. In fact, Bryant goes as far as to characterise Deleuze as a “hyper-rationalist who discovers intelligibility even in the apparent chaos of the matter of intuition”, making the claim that this is an aspect of Deleuze’s

signs, the sensuous signs, and the intelligence, memory, and imagination, to which they relate, are “inferior” to the signs of art and the faculty of essences. For although the sensuous signs – the taste of the madeleine, the smell of a public urinal, the feeling of a starched napkin, the sound of a spoon, etc. – is important insofar as they provide the beginning of art, prefigure the discovery of essence, partially retains its power of difference and repetition, and reveal to us “a new structure of time” in the “time rediscovered at the heart of lost time itself” (PS 107/87), they are still capable only of setting us on the path towards art and reveal a derivative form of the essence or an “image of eternity.”<sup>65</sup> If the apprentice’s path to the essences or the Ideas is still paved by acts of remembrance or *anamnesis* also in Proust, it is to this extent only.

The sensuous signs may for this reason permit us to receive a flash of the essence from the depths of a pure past and in doing so they also afford us a sensation of extraordinary joy or grief. Nonetheless, what these signs cannot explain is, for example, why Combray or Venice reappears in its essence rather than as it was lived, or why encountering this type of sign must cause such extraordinarily intense feelings. The common understanding of the *Search* as a novel founded in memory must thus be overturned by Deleuze also on this level: “We must not regard art as a more profound means of exploring involuntary memory. We must regard involuntary memory as a stage, which is not even the most important stage, in the apprenticeship of art.” (PS 81/65) If life previously threatened not only to render art inferior to life but to render

thought which has been “occluded by undue emphasis on the experimentalist dimension of his thought.” Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, 41, 64. While I would agree that Deleuze’s relation to rationalism is far more complex and positive than is normally recognised, I think it is a mistake to posit the rationalism in Deleuze as simply opposed to his experimentalism, since this is to underestimate the significance of transcendental empiricism as a problematic and provocative theme, rather than a fully determinable concept, which serves to open up for a number of unorthodox, complex, connections and productive relations to philosophies and philosophers otherwise excluded almost by default. An example of this complexity within rationalism could be, as Toscano has pointed out, that “Deleuze’s sundering of the lineage of rationalism (pitting Spinoza against Descartes) can accordingly be understood as a split in the understanding of what it is to think in general, and to think being in particular.” Alberto Toscano, “Everybody Thinks: Deleuze, Descartes and rationalism”, *Radical Philosophy* 162 (Jul/Aug 2010): 8–17. I therefore concur with Voss’ reservation against Bryant’s attempt to simply impose a classic rationalist vocabulary on Deleuze, i.e. claiming that for Deleuze “experience is intelligible in principle”, that he seeks to “rationalise intuitions themselves”, etc., since this clearly runs the risk not only of oversimplifying but also distorting Deleuze’s philosophical aims. See Voss, *Conditions of Thought*, 8.

<sup>65</sup> PS 19–20/12, 72–73/57. “Had not nature herself, from this point of view, set me on the way to art, wasn’t she herself the beginning of art ...?” IV/6: 468/198.

life indifferent to the living, this threat has now been exchanged for a recognition of art's superiority over life and the possibility of restoring life to a source of joy and beauty.

What is it that makes the signs of art superior? According to Deleuze, they are superior to the other signs because they carry no trace of materiality that would cause the singular essence to be refracted into a truth whose generality increases with the opacity of the sign.<sup>66</sup> The artistic signs are completely "immaterial" both as implicated and as explicated, both in their origin and their destination, and thus capable of expressing the true, unrefracted unity of a completely "immaterial sign and of an entirely spiritual sense." (PS 53/40)

The signs of art alone thus allow the essence to manifest itself freely and directly rather than through a process of analogy the destination of which must always be, to some degree, material. And this is the case as soon as the encountered sign forces its subject to discover its sense by way of something else (e.g. the starched napkin and Balbec; the steeples and the three girls): the more material the sign, the more opaque its matter or substance, that is, the more refracted its spiritual sense, and the more general its truth. Every analogy thus entails a separation of the sign and the sense, a divergence such that the explication of whatever the sign may imply must always lead the apprentice to discover its sense in someone or something else, in some other place or time. There are instances of analogy in every world of signs presented in the *Search*, including – but not defining – the world of art. And to the extent that there is still analogy in art and whatever its importance may be, art in Proust, Deleuze claims, still "does not find its profoundest formula here." (PS 53/40)

How can this immateriality of the signs and its spiritualised sense be understood? How does it relate to the theme of transcendental empiricism? To begin, Deleuze explains the immateriality of the artistic signs in Proust by example of the famous "little phrase" of Vinteuil, as heard by Swann and the acting of Berma as seen by Marcel. First, just as the piano and the violin produce the sound of the little phrase precisely by virtue of their materiality, the music itself can be "decomposed materially: five notes very close together, two of which recur." Second, breaking the musical phrase down into its material elements in this way tells us very little, however, since "in their case, as in Plato, 3+2 explains nothing." This is because, although both the instruments and the notes certainly are material, and though Swann encounters "so confused an impression", this "kind of impression" still appears to him as "perhaps the only one which is purely musical, immaterial, entirely original,

<sup>66</sup> PS 64/50.

irreducible to any other order of impression. An impression of this kind, is for an instant, so to speak, *sine materia*.” (I/1: 206/212; cf. PS 51/39) For all the immaterial signs and the spiritual sense which comprise the world of the artwork in its essence, the work of art is always encountered, at first, in the form of a “a material impression” that “enters us through our senses”, but from which “it is also possible to extract something spiritual [*l'esprit*].” (IV/6: 457/187) In the artwork we do not meet with something beyond all possible experience, but with an insensible outside *in* the sensible itself, which, to the extent of its subject's powers, is then transmuted into a *spiritual equivalent*.<sup>67</sup>

According to Deleuze, the material instruments and the sounding notes in themselves are thus nothing but *images* of the “dematerialised” instruments, on the one hand, and of “an entirely spiritual entity”, on the other (PS 51/39). And so the fragment of Vinteuil's composition appears to Swann “as if the instrumentalists were not so much playing the little phrase as performing the rituals it required in order to make its appearance”, but he still does not experience it like a *seen* ideality, but as “the refreshing sense of a metamorphosis in the momentary blindness with which he was struck as he approached it, felt it to be present” – albeit in the “disguise of this body of sound.” (I/1: 342/350) Similarly, in Berma's performance of Racine's *Phèdre*, she uses both her voice and her body, but rather than simply “testifying to ‘muscular connections’” her gestures instead appear to “form a transparent body that refracts an essence, an Idea.” (PS 52/39) All of Berma's means of expression thus become transmuted into a sort of translucent and completely spiritual matter, expressive of an essence or Idea that is, as it were, “real but not actual, ideal but not abstract”:

Voice, stage presence, gestures, veils, around that embodiment of an idea represented by a line of poetry (an embodiment which, unlike human bodies, does not stand in the way of the soul like an opaque obstacle that prevents us from seeing it, but is there like a purified, vitalised garment in which the soul is diffused and can be discovered), were merely additional coverings which, instead

<sup>67</sup> IV/6: 457/187. According to Sauvagnargues, the sign is the object of an encounter “qui met la pensée en rapport d'effraction avec son dehors sensible”: *L'empirisme transcendantal*, 133. Likewise, Beistegui argues for a kind of “hyper-sensible” outside in the sensible, such that the ideas and concepts of thought are “not generated from within, but from without, as a result of an encounter that comes from the sensible.” *Immanence*, 13. Thought's relation to its outside is promoted as crucial also by Zourabichvili, even conceiving Deleuze's entire philosophy in terms of a “logique du dehors”; but Zourabichvili never goes on to determine this outside as specifically “sensible”, preferring instead to define it as “un dehors absolu dans le monde ou du monde, mais qui échappe à la visée d'un monde extérieur.” François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze: Une philosophie de l'événement* (Paris: PUF, 1996), 36.

of concealing, revealed the greater splendour of the soul that had assimilated and spread itself through them, like lava-flows of different substances, turned translucent, superimposed on each other, only to refract the more richly the imprisoned, central ray of light that shines through them, and to render more far-reaching, more precious and more beautiful the flame-drenched matter in which it is sheathed. (II/3: 348/46)

Clearly, in this remarkable passage we discover not only a condensed expression of Deleuze's theory of artistic signs in *Proust and Signs*, but also the moment when Marcel's artistic sensibility exceeds that of Swann's, which remained essentially unable to release the essence of the artwork from the material chains of his subjective associations, finding in the "little phrase" only "the national anthem" of his and Odette's love, or in Odette's features simply an occasion to rediscover a fresco by Botticelli.<sup>68</sup> Once again, the signs, even those of art, are never simply given for an equally given subject to receive. The sign and the subject are, on the contrary, both becoming what they are in the encounter as an event of simultaneous constitution or individuation *in* the given.<sup>69</sup> The essence or the Idea discovered in the signs of art does not constitute a stable essence always already given before the individuation of the sign and its sense in the encounter. Rather, as we will see soon enough, the essence is not itself given as much as it is that by which the given is given.<sup>70</sup> Even if the themes of transparency and opacity,<sup>71</sup> of the essence as subject to material refraction, may suggest that Deleuze is affirming Platonism rather than overturning. But, as we will see, this is simply not the case. In *Proust and Signs* the overturning of Platonism has already begun. But, that it should retain so much of Plato's philosophy is, as we know, "not only inevitable but desirable." (DR 82/59)

<sup>68</sup> I/1: 215/221, 219/225.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. ES 92/87: "The construction of the given makes room for the constitution of the subject. The given is no longer given to a subject, the subject is constituted in the given." (Tr. mod.)

<sup>70</sup> PS 53/41. Cf. DR 286/222.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Sara Guindani, "Reflets de vérité: transparence et opacité chez Proust", in *Proust et la philosophie aujourd'hui*, ed. Mauro Carbone and Eleonora Sparvoli (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2008). Guindani argues, contrary to the above, that Deleuze in his reading of Proust is actually more of a Platonic idealist than Proust himself, sacrificing all materiality and opacity for the sake of situating "la vérité ultime de la *Recherche* dans des 'signes qui n'ont plus rien d'opaque'" (109). But Deleuze's reading does not neglect the importance of opacity in Proust. On the contrary, the doctrine of signs is founded in time precisely as an obscurity internal to perception, thought, and the subject as such. And the essences or Ideas themselves are in fact, as will be discussed below, not transparent or clear at all but on the contrary essentially obscure.

## THE ESSENCE IN THE WORK OF ART

The work of art has the following general traits: (1) it constitutes a “world of signs” finding their origin in the two aspects of the impression, namely, what it *designates*, on the one hand, and what it *signifies*, on the other, though it presents them in the perfect *unity* that constitutes the *essence*; (2) the “medium” or *milieu* in, with and through which the individuation of the artistic signs constituting this world takes place, is nothing but the completely “dematerialised” medium of *style*; (3) the “matter” in and through which the sense of the signs, the essence or the Idea, expresses itself, is the completely “spiritualised matter” of the *painter’s colours*, *the composer’s timbres* or *the words of the writer* (PS 60/46–47). If life previously threatened not only to render art inferior to life but also to render life indifferent to those living it, this threat has now been exchanged for the recognition of the signs of art’s immaterial and spiritual superiority over the signs of life. By way of art, the signs carry with them the possibility of restoring or renewing life itself as a source of joy and beauty, also in its full presence and intensity.

A definition of the essence as “the unity of sign and sense as it is revealed in the work of art” is not, however, sufficient to explain why and how the discovery of the essence can restore art in life and life through art. What, then, is this essence or Idea capable of achieving this? “It is a difference,” Deleuze writes, “the absolute and ultimate Difference. *Difference is what constitutes being, what makes us conceive being.* This is why art, insofar as it manifests essences, is alone capable of giving us what we in vain sought from life” (PS 53–54/41). The difference in question is not an *empirical* difference, that is, an extrinsic or external difference between two objects or, expressed differently, a difference that is founded on identity and thus determinable only in accordance with the principle *omnis determinatio est negatio*.<sup>72</sup> On the contrary, this difference of the essence is not given; it does not allow itself to be determined negatively or to be represented in relation only to a conceived identity, a judged analogy, an imagined opposition, or a perceived similitude.

All such relationships are in fact merely the empirical or representational effects of a difference of an entirely different order,<sup>73</sup> that is, of a *transcendental* or internal difference that cannot be given in its empirical diversity, because such a difference is the condition by virtue of which the given is given as

<sup>72</sup> Voss, *Conditions of Thought*, 126–127. For an account of this principle’s origins in Hegel’s reading of Spinoza, see Simon Duffy, *The Logic of Expression: Quality, Quantity, and Intensity in Spinoza, Hegel, and Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 2016), 15–19.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. DR 179–180/137.

diverse. It is, in short, that which simultaneously and coincidentally gives birth to the sensible, as well as the sensibility capable of sensing it in its essential difference. The essence, the difference, is thus what according to Deleuze affords the sign and the sense with a *sufficient reason* to exist, thereby bringing them into the world.<sup>74</sup> “Beyond the sign and the sense, there is Essence, like the sufficient reason for the other two terms and their relation.” (PS 111/90–91) The essence or the Idea revealed in the signs of art in Proust is thus not a *seen* ideality, a *noeton*, that is, an ideal object that can be grasped by reason alone, independent of all senses, and therefore represented as clear and distinct. On the contrary, Proust’s essence, as revealed in the work of art, attains its status as *real but not present, ideal but not abstract*. It does so only by completely eluding representation and recognition and instead, in affecting the mind – not, though, as a cause but as an obscure yet sufficient reason for the act of thought – it erupts as an event in thought itself.

In summary, the essence is neither a seen ideality nor a simple cause but a dynamic or genetic differential of thought,<sup>75</sup> effective on an unconscious or sub-representational level.<sup>76</sup> In describing the signs of art and the essence in terms of transparency or opacity, immateriality or materiality, Deleuze does not simply revert to Descartes’ distinction between ideas as either “*clear and distinct*” or “*obscure and confused*.” Rather, following Leibniz, all the signs capable of raising a faculty to its transcendent exercise and thus attain its corresponding essence in Proust would be characterised by Deleuze as *obscure and distinct, in opposition to objects of recognition and general concepts which always must appear clear and confused*.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the essence is not representa-

<sup>74</sup> Cf. DR 286/222. See also Deleuze’s analysis of sufficient reason as “the cry of Reason par excellence” in chap. II.4, “Sufficient Reason”, in *The Fold*.

<sup>75</sup> Voss provides great insight into Deleuze’s concept of internal difference through her rigorous analysis of his reinterpretation of differential calculus by way of Leibniz and Maimon, relating it to his conception of essences or Ideas as problematic and genetic conditions of thought. Voss summarises its function as follows: “Deleuze sees in the mathematical procedure of integration (the generation of primitive functions from differentials) a model to explain the nature of the transcendental in philosophy. He will conceive a kind of ‘transcendental function’, which by virtue of the reciprocal determination of its sub-representational differential elements, generates thought (concepts and values) and real experience alike.” Voss, *Conditions of Thought*, 85.

<sup>76</sup> Voss, *Conditions of Thought*, 121.

<sup>77</sup> *Short remark on the different Ideas in Leibniz*: Deleuze obtains these distinctions by a radical reinterpretation of Leibniz’s critique of Descartes’ distinction of the clear and distinct as capable of leading us to anything besides the recognition of an object and never to true knowledge, that is, because it allows us to know neither its essence nor the cause of its necessity (sufficient reason). According to Leibniz, clear ideas are in truth “in themselves confused”, yet still permit us to recognise an object and distinguish it from

tional: it does not appear to the mind as an object of reflection or contemplation, but erupts as the violence of an obscure and unconscious sign forcing

others: ideas of sensible qualities such as colours or the feeling of warmth are thus “clear” in that they allow for recognition, but still not “distinct” since we cannot *analyse* the composition of their parts in order to *define* them. Contrary to Descartes’ claim, then, not all ideas that allow us to distinguish objects (*idées distinguants*) are to be called distinct but only those which are “distinguished” (*idées distinguées*), that is, ideas “which are in themselves distinct and which distinguish in the object the marks which make it known, thus yielding an analysis or definition. Ideas which are not like this we call ‘confused’.” G. W. Leibniz, *Nouveaux essais sur l’entendement humain* (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), 198. In short: an idea can be clear enough to distinguish an object from another, but still be too confused to provide an analysis and definition. This, according to Deleuze, allows for what he later calls “the principle of the proportionality of the clear and distinct” to be overturned and a new set of distinctions to be elaborated. In Deleuze’s interpretation the clear is distinguished from the distinct not in terms of a *difference in degree* (i.e. the more it is distinct, the clearer it is; the more obscure its components, the more confused the idea), but in terms of a *difference in kind* such that the clear is in itself confused and the distinct is in itself obscure, yielding the pair *clear-confused* in opposition to the pair *distinct-obscure*. As Voss shows, Deleuze can use this new set of distinctions in combination with the concept of “differentials” he discovers in Maimon’s critique of Kant, on the one hand, and Leibniz’s concept of “minute perceptions” (*petites perceptions*), on the other, in order to establish his theory of a “differential unconscious”: an unconscious consisting of a manifold of minute perceptions within finite thought itself. The purpose of this theory is thus to establish a kind of continuity between thought and the unthinkable, the sensibility and the insensible, etc., in the form of a temporal rift in the subject and in thought which, at its limit, constitutes both the subject and thought itself. The differential unconscious is, in short, a rough analogue to the *fuscum subnigrum* of the soul in Leibniz, an obscurity in thought which redistributes the relation between the sensible and the intelligible in such a way that it provokes a more complex image of rationalism’s supposed subordination of the sensible under the intelligible, but also a new understanding of the essence or Ideas discovered in art as distinct-obscure. Possibly, this raises an interesting question concerning the history of the concept of *aesthetics*, insofar as this concept can be traced from Baumgarten’s redistribution of the above distinctions in Leibniz, on to Kant, and then German Romanticism, etc. In the crudest possible terms: to Baumgarten only conceptual knowledge like science and philosophy can be *distinct*, *complete* and *adequate*, whereas the ideas of poetry necessarily are confused, thus being either obscure or clear (extensive clarity, intensive clarity). So, if the Ideas of art in Proust can, as Deleuze claims, be obscure *and* distinct, then would this not seem to indicate the possibility of tracing, from the same point of departure, another lineage in aesthetics? On the development of the concept of aesthetics beginning with Baumgarten’s reading of Leibniz to which the lineage indicated by Deleuze would constitute an alternative, see Sven-Olov Wallenstein, “Baumgarten and the Invention of Aesthetics”, *SITE*, 33 (2013): 32–58. For a clarifying exposition of Deleuze relation to Leibniz and Maimon on these matters, see chap. 2 and 3 in Voss, *Conditions of Thought*. For the distinctions in Leibniz, upon which Deleuze draws, see, for example, G. W. Leibniz, “Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas” (1684), in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, ed. and tr. Leroy E. Loemker (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 291–294; this early publication is later referenced by Leibniz himself in *Nouveaux essais*, 197–204. For Deleuze’s reinterpretation of Leibniz in view of the differential unconscious, see DR 274–276/212–214. This is also a point where Deleuze sees Leibniz and Spinoza as joined in a common struggle against Descartes, see *Spinoza et le problème de l’expression* (Paris: PUF, 1968) 138–139.



its creation.<sup>78</sup> And if the essence in its highest form forces thought to think the essence of essence, this essence must also be considered the essence of thought, not because it explains thought as an abstract possibility, but because it is what *creates* the act of thinking in thought itself. This is, succinctly, the meaning of Deleuze's claim that "the act of thinking does not follow from a natural possibility" but is "the only true creation. Creation is the genesis of the act of thinking within thought itself." (PS 118–119/97) And the act of thinking thus created is necessarily also creative, since it is constrained to experience this essence as a difference internal to itself, demanding that it be expressed, translated, by its own means.<sup>79</sup>

To think is always to interpret, that is, to explicate, to develop, to decipher, to translate a sign. Translating, deciphering, developing are the form of pure creation. There is no more an explicit signification than a clear idea. There are only senses implicated in signs; and if thought has the power to explicate the sign, to develop it in an Idea, this is because the Idea is already there in the sign, in the enveloped and coiled state, in the obscure state of what forces us to think. We seek the truth only within time, constrained and forced.<sup>80</sup>

At its highest power, in its highest, involuntary form, i.e. in the encounter with an essence revealed through art, thought is always creation, both in its

<sup>78</sup> This is, again, one of the points where Proust and Spinoza encounter each other in Deleuze's philosophy, cf. the discussion of the different illusions concerning the consciousness and the body in chap. 2, "On the Difference between the Ethics and a Morality" (1970), in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*: "It is a matter of showing that the body exceeds the knowledge that we have of it, and that thought likewise exceeds the consciousness we have of it." 29/18; "The entire *Ethics* is a voyage in immanence, but immanence is the unconscious itself, and the conquest of the unconscious. Ethical joy is the correlate of speculative affirmation." 43/29.

<sup>79</sup> With respect to thought's need for an exterior impulse in order to discover its own power of creation, Proust writes in "On Reading" that "Emerson rarely began to write without re-reading several pages of Plato; Dante is not the only poet whom Virgil has brought to threshold of paradise." (209/27) This need for exterior constraint, however, is also "dangerous" insofar as we are not capable of responding to it adequately, that is, as an internal difference, and "instead of awakening us to an individual inner life, it takes its place: when truth no longer seems to us an ideal we can realise only by the intimate progression of our thoughts and the efforts of our heart, but instead starts to seem like a material thing deposited in the pages of books, like honey made by others, which we can taste, passively, in a perfect repose of body and mind" (209/27).

<sup>80</sup> PS 119/97. Cf. DR 275/214: "The nature of the Idea is to be distinct and obscure. In other words, the Idea is precisely *real without being actual, differentiated without being differentiated, and complete without being entire.*"

origin and in its destination. And this is one of two general reasons as to why Deleuze determines the world enveloped by the encountered essence giving birth to thought as “the beginning of the World in general, a beginning of the universe, an absolute, radical beginning.” (PS 57/44) If this first reason belongs to Proust’s conception of the temporality corresponding to the signs of art, the other, as we will see below, belongs to the effects of this discovery on the conception of the subject.

Again, we become capable of thinking only under the constraint of time. Time is not only the exterior constraint which gives birth to the act of thought, however. It is also what thought is constrained to think. Some signs force us to think the time lost, others to find it again, but it is only the time of the essences that is capable of repeating the birth of the world. The sensuous signs and the involuntary memories have already given us an image of this time, but eternity is found in its original form only in the essences revealed by the signs of art. In reference to “certain Neoplatonists”,<sup>81</sup> Deleuze defines this eternity as “the birth of Time itself.” (PS 58/45)

Eternity thus cannot be conceived neither as absence of change nor as endless duration. Rather, Deleuze argues, the eternity of the essence is the *complication* of all time in itself. Thus it is what necessarily precedes the explication of time in all its other dimensions. “This ideal reality, this virtuality, is essence.” And it is precisely in this “envelopment”, this “involution” (*enroulement*) of time in the essence that, according to Deleuze, it finds its “superior state” (PS 76/61). Eternity conceived as *omnia complicans* is thus what *complicates* time as a force of creation or expression in the essences: ideal but not determinate, real but not explicated, plural but not diversified, individuating but not individual.<sup>82</sup> And this is what contrasts the eternity of the essences discovered

<sup>81</sup> Deleuze is not explicit about whom he is referring to here, but “uno ictu mutationes tuas . . . complectitur” is taken from the end of the last book of Boethius’ *The Consolation of Philosophy*, tr. Victor Watts (London: Penguin Books, 1999), V, 6, 137: “Each future thing is anticipated by the gaze of God which bends it back and recalls it to the presence of its own manner of knowledge; it does not change, as you think, with alternate knowledge of now this and now that, but with one glance anticipates and embraces your changes in its constancy [*sed uno ictu mutationes tuas manens praevenit atque complectitur*].” Deleuze explicitly refers to the same text in the 23<sup>rd</sup> series of *The Logic of Sense*, see LS 190/162. In any case, it would seem that what Deleuze has in mind here is Boethius’ commentators as well as Giordano Bruno and Nicholas of Cusa, especially the latter’s definition of God as “the enfolding of all things” (*omnia complicans*) and “the unfolding of all things” (*omnia explicans*), in *Of Learned Ignorance*, book II, chap. 3, 111. See also Beistegui, *Immanence*, 37–38.

<sup>82</sup> PS 58/45: “The Word, *omnia complicans*, and containing all essences, was defined as the supreme complication, the complication of contraries, the unstable opposition. From this they derived the notion of an essentially expressive universe, organised according to degrees of immanent complications and

in the work of art from the other lines of time in Proust: rather than simply explicating the sign in the sense, the artistic sign resists or counters the explication of the event in the direction of the complication that is the essence, which insists in the sign precisely as creation, (re)created and creative.<sup>83</sup> “The work carried out by our vanity, our passion, our imitative faculties, our abstract intelligence, our habits, is the work that art undoes, making us follow a contrary path, in a return to the depths where whatever has really existed lies unrecognised within us.” (IV/6: 475/205)

Art, in Deleuze’s words, allows us, in a precise manner, to counter the time explicated in its empirical dimensions and rediscover it as “coiled within the essence, as it is born in the world enveloped by essence, identical to eternity. Proust’s extratemporality is this time in a nascent state and the artist-subject who regains it.” (PS 59/46) Lost time in all its forms is obviously a line of time already explicated. And the image of eternity discovered in the time recovered by involuntary memory also depends on such an explicated timeline, since the only time that can be found again is time that has been wasted or lost. But involuntary memory also involves the return of the past in itself, that is, a pure, un-lived or even inhuman past which, according to Deleuze, “suddenly supervenes, in a time already deployed, a developed time.” (PS 78/62) The pure past discovered within passing time no doubt “transcends all the empirical dimensions of time”, Deleuze remarks, but is for all that not only “the centre around which we can coil [lost time] anew”,<sup>84</sup> in order to have an “instantaneous image of eternity.”<sup>85</sup> This is because this pure past, by co-existing with the present as past, is also what allows for every present to pass: it is the principle from which all empirical dimensions of time must unfold. Eternity, on the other hand, is the “original time, coiled, complicated within

following an order of descending explications.” Drawing on this, Beistegui goes so far as to say that *Proust and Signs* is “in many ways a Neoplatonic book.” Beistegui, *Immanence*, 38.

<sup>83</sup> Clearly, the concept of *contre-effectuation* that Deleuze later develops in *The Logic of Sense* draws much on Proust’s conception of art as ultimately ungrounded in time. See, for example, the 20<sup>th</sup> series “On the Event” in *The Logic of Sense*, where Deleuze presents the concept of counter-effectuation in relation to the poet Joë Bousquet.

<sup>84</sup> PS 78/63. Cf. Boethius, *Consolation*, IV, 6, 105: “Imagine a set of revolving concentric circles. The inmost one comes closest to the simplicity of the centre, while *forming itself a kind of centre for those set outside it to revolve round.*” (Italics mine)

<sup>85</sup> PS 78/63. In Boethius’ terms, the pure past achieves this image by attaching itself “to some sort of presence in this small and fleeting moment, and since this presence bears a certain resemblance to that abiding present, it confers on whatever possesses it the appearance of being that which it imitates.” Boethius, *Consolation*, V, 6, 133.

essence itself, embracing simultaneously all its series and dimensions.<sup>86</sup> In keeping with the figure of implication-explication as the fundamental movement in the logic of immanence and expression permeating Deleuze's philosophy,<sup>87</sup> time itself is complicated in the essence, that is, each line of time is implicated in every other and kept there in a state of *com*-plication. At the same time, and irreversibly, the essence is also explicated in the timelines unfolding with each sign's explication in the implicated sense.<sup>88</sup>

The essence in art is thus not eternal because it is timeless or perpetual, but because the creation of Time and the beginning of the World is complicated within it in the form of an "unstable opposition" that must always be created again, a differential essence that can only be repeated as an act of creation that always must differ from itself. In a sort of perversion of Plato's theory of Ideas, while the encountered signs refer to something outside of them, it is an outside that is folded into them, the existence of which is never given as such but only as a violence in thought, something that in itself can be unfolded only as other than itself. The radical incommensurability of a sign such as the madeleine as the "container" and the in-itself of Combray explicated as its "content" resulting from this, thus finds its unity in the essence as a transcendental differential determining the obscure but distinct rules of its creation in time and space. And this is why Deleuze is so fond of Proust's image of how Combray unfolds out of a cup of tea, just like those "little pieces of paper", which until steeped in water are "indistinct", but then "stretch and shape themselves, colour and differentiate, become flowers, houses, human figures, firm and recognisable." (I/1: 47/50)

It is in this expressive movement of the essence's implication-explication that the materiality of the sign and its relation to the sense intervenes and makes a crucial difference. Depending on the kind of sign in which the essence implicates itself, it must also explicate itself in a sense of greater or lesser

<sup>86</sup> PS 59/46. Cf. Boethius, *Consolation*, V, 6, 133–134: "[God] embraces all the infinite recesses of past and future [*infinitaque praeteriti ac futuri spatia complectens omnia*] and views them in the immediacy of its knowing as though they are happening in the present."

<sup>87</sup> Zourabichvili claims that implication is in fact "le mouvement logique fondamental de la philosophie de Deleuze" forming, in conjunction with explication and complication, a "logique de l'expression." *Une philosophie de l'événement*, 86–87. Beistegui traces a similar logic in view of the problem of immanence, concluding that these three movements find a unity in Spinoza's concept of expression, which thus can "realise immanence: immanence turns out to be expressive, and expression turns out to be immanent, in what has become a system of logical (and no longer simply historical) relations." *Immanence*, 39.

<sup>88</sup> Zourabichvili identifies implication as the "thème fondamentale parce qu'elle apparaît deux fois dans le système du pli: la *complication* est une implication en soi, l'*explication* une implication en autre chose." *Une philosophie de l'événement*, 87.

generality. The essence of an involuntary memory is therefore particular insofar as it explicates the local essence of Combray, but nonetheless general insofar as it achieves this explication in a sensation shared by two separate moments. The essence of our love, on the other hand, can never be explicated in any particular beloved or emotional state, but must ultimately always amount to a general law governing not only the repetition of love's subjective series, but the serial repetition of transsubjective series as well.<sup>89</sup> In art, sign and sense are perfectly unified in the essence, the expression of which is the artwork that expresses the essence in turn. The explication of the dematerialised sign in the spiritualised sense implicated in it, does in this case refer us only to itself – not as identity or resemblance, but as a difference always different from itself (“only differences resemble each other”).<sup>90</sup> And so Deleuze can claim that Vinetuil's music on each occasion repeats a beginning of the universe, but also that “Charlus' genius is to retain all the souls that compose him in the ‘complicated’ state: this is how it happens that Charlus always has the freshness of a world just created and unceasingly emits primordial signs that the interpreter must decipher, that is, explicate.” (PS 58–59/45)

In summary, essence is time itself in a state of complication, but it cannot give birth to time or diversify itself, Deleuze argues, “without also having the power to repeat itself, identical to itself.” (PS 62/49) And it can repeat only by creating and recreating itself in different temporalities, materials, mediums, and subjects, but never in its own image: there is no resemblance between the condition and the conditioned, between the complicated and the explicated, between the essential difference and the diverse. Only the essence revealed in

<sup>89</sup> PS 92–93/75: “Essence is incarnated in the signs of love but necessarily in a serial, and hence a general, form.... In short, essence has assumed the generality of a Theme or an Idea, which serves as a law for the series of our loves.”

<sup>90</sup> LS 302/261; tr. mod. Cf. LS 124/102: “We seek to determine an impersonal and pre-individual transcendental field, which does not resemble the corresponding empirical fields, and which nevertheless is not confused with an undifferentiated depth. This field cannot be determined as that of a consciousness.” It is important that the transcendental condition and the conditioned are different not only in degree but in kind for Deleuze, because insofar as transcendental philosophy traces the transcendental off the empirical, and thereby the condition remains external to the conditioned, one always ends up, as pointed out by Bryant, in a vicious circle, since “the conditions are supposed to account for the possibility of truth within experience, yet the conditions themselves get their justification insofar as experience is taken to be true.” Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, 32. This relates, in other words, to Deleuze's preference for the virtual as motivated by the problem formulated by Bergson in regard to the possible as opposed to the real, but nonetheless – simply because it is not taken as impossible or self-contradictory – as pre-existent to its realisation: the condition or the truth thereby becomes only a retroactive truth or condition, that is, a mere abstraction from facts. For a discussion of this problem in relation to the notion of a differential unconscious as elaborated through Leibniz and Maimon, see Voss, *Conditions of Thought*, 126–128.

artistic creation has this twofold power of difference and repetition in full, that is, the power to give birth to Time and the World. The *Search* is itself testament to this. The essence in Proust thus behaves in a way that evokes Plato's theory of Ideas and the problem of participation, but only by way of a fundamental perversion: the essence is indeed "itself by itself" (*auto kath' auto*), but only insofar as it is always of this world; it is indeed "of likeness" (*homoiotetos*), but only insofar as only differences are like one another; it is indeed the One (*to hen*) but only insofar as the Many is complicated in the One and the One explicates itself as itself in the Many. And so on. As essence, the eternity in Proust appears much closer, *mutatis mutandi*, to that doctrine of "reproduction and birth in beauty" (*tes genneseos kai tou tokou en to kalo*) taught by Diotima as the only mortal means towards immortality in the *Symposium* (206e–208b), than to the changeless or the everlasting eternity of the One in which the Many participate only from without and in terms of a greater or lesser likeness.<sup>91</sup>

#### THE ESSENCE IN THE SUBJECT OF THOUGHT

The signs of art and the essences they manifest are, as Deleuze repeats, "superior" to life in that the signs are immaterial, their sense entirely spiritual, and the essence a power of difference and repetition that is real but not actual, ideal but not abstract.<sup>92</sup> It is this transcendental or virtual character of the signs of art and their essences that, to paraphrase Deleuze, renders *sleep* the phenomenon closest to the noumenon in Proust.<sup>93</sup> "If we look for something in life that corresponds to the situation of the original essences," we find it only "in a certain profound state. This state is sleep." (PS 59/45) Like art, sleep also is beyond intelligence, memory, and imagination, appealing only "to pure thought as a faculty of essences." (PS 59/46) From the viewpoint of consciousness or representation, the complicated and

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Dixsaut, *Le naturel philosophe*, 243: "La dialectique du *Banquet* ... affirment que le désir et l'intelligence ne sont pas deux termes étrangères l'un à l'autre, deux forces d'origine ou de direction différentes. L'intelligence quand elle se ressouvient complètement d'elle-même, le désir quand il va jusqu'au terme de sa force, produisent les mêmes effets. Quand éros ne se crispe pas, ne s'aliène pas dans ses fictions, quand on ne lui substitue pas une multiplicité d'appétits susceptibles d'être satisfaits, il se connaît et s'accomplit, il est le mouvement même de l'intelligence. *Etre intelligent, c'est toujours de nouveau enfanter de l'intelligible, c'est devenir toujours plus inventif.*" (Italics mine)

<sup>92</sup> PS 53/41, 70/55.

<sup>93</sup> As Deleuze notes, the *Search* itself begins with a remarkable presentation of a sleeping man as if enveloped in an indeterminate state of complication, out of which not only Time but the *Search* itself seems to emerge: "A sleeping man holds in a circle around him the sequence of the hours, the order of the years and worlds." (I/1: 5/9)

problematic essence is thus essentially obscure, which is why it is *only* in works of art that Marcel can discover the “diversity” or “variety” otherwise “vainly sought in life and in travel”.<sup>94</sup> The “world of real differences”, Proust writes, “does not exist on the surface of the earth, among all the countries our perception makes uniform [*que nôtre perception uniformise*] ... Does it in fact exist anywhere? The Vinteuil septet had seemed to tell me that it did.” (III/5: 781/254; tr. mod.)

To return briefly to the pathological model of thought, there is at this point a great divide separating Plato and Proust regarding where or in what the signs become expressive of vis-à-vis the kind of problematic difference or “unstable opposition” that, as we have just seen, constitutes the essence as a power of creation in Proust. In Plato, as Deleuze later formulates it, the sign forcing memory to remember, or compelling thought to think, is encountered in sensible qualities or relations “apprehended in process, in variation, in opposition, in ‘mutual fusion’”, which represent “a state of things, a state of the world that imitates the Idea as best it can, according to its powers.” Conceived as stable and as always already given, the essence or the Idea in this context assumes the presupposed function of a *seen objectivity*, a “thing in itself separating opposites, introducing the perfect mean into the whole.” (PS 131–132/108–109; cf. DR 185/142) In Proust, the confusing and disturbing “qualitative becoming” or “unstable opposition” is, on the contrary, “inscribed within a *state of the soul*”, so that this quality cannot be completely dissociated from the subject and thus must remain “inseparable from a chain of subjective associations”, which are there, however, “only to be transcended in the direction of Essence.” (PS 132–133/109–110) The essence or the Idea discovered in Proust’s reminiscence is no longer “the stable essence, the seen ideality” to which the soul ascends from a state of the world in Plato, but a “creative or transcendent viewpoint” to which the subject ascends “from a mood, from a state of soul, and from its associative chains.”<sup>95</sup>

Rather than as a difference in or between objects, then, Proust conceives the essence as “the qualitative difference in the ways we perceive the world, a

<sup>94</sup> III/5: 665/142. It can be noted that in citing this passage Deleuze replaces, deliberately or not, the word *variété* with *diversité*: PS 54/41.

<sup>95</sup> See also LS 9–12/1–3. On the one hand, Deleuze, through the *Philebus* and the *Parmenides*, establishes this unlimited qualitative becoming as a “deeper” and “more secret” duality in Plato than that of the intelligible and the sensible, Idea and matter – a “subterranean duality”: contrasting the fixed qualities, the limited and measured things, to an unlimited becoming or a “becoming-mad” which “eludes the present” and “causes future and past, more and less, too much and not enough to coincide in the simultaneity of a rebellious matter.” On the other, Deleuze, through the *Cratylus*, establishes a particular bond between this kind of “pure becoming” and language.

difference which, if there were no art, would remain the eternal secret of each individual.” (IV/6: 474/204) The essence is thus neither something external and objective nor explicit and communicable, according to Proust, but something that is, “in part” at least, “subjective and impossible to communicate.” (IV/6: 464/193) And it is precisely in the capacity of a difference that is qualitative rather than quantitative, transcendental rather than empirical, internal rather than external, subjective rather than objective, that Deleuze relates Proust’s concept of essence to Leibniz’s concept of the monad. Consequently, the essence is defined as a finite *viewpoint* inseparable from the “internal difference” or the “final quality at the heart of a subject” (PS 54/41). It is in this regard that Deleuze claims that Proust, rather than being a Platonist, is “Leibnizian: the essences are veritable monads, each defined by the viewpoint to which it expresses the world, each viewpoint itself referring to an ultimate quality at the heart of the monad.”<sup>96</sup> But to conceive of this return to Leibniz as some surreptitious collapse into the illusion of subjectivism, as an illicit compensation in the form of a perspectivism where the essence becomes relative to a difference between subjects rather than between objects, would, according to Deleuze, be to ignore “the texts in which Proust treats essences as Platonic Ideas and confers upon them an independent reality.” (PS 55/42)

The essence in Proust is related to the subject, insofar as, for one thing, the essence constitutes a difference internal to it, and insofar as, for another, this difference constitutes the viewpoint from which it expresses the world. The world expressed from one such subjective viewpoint is for all that not identical to the world expressed from another. On the contrary, each subject “expresses an absolutely different world.” (PS 55/42) And so if all monads express the same infinite world from different finite viewpoints, so that the objective world essentially remains the same but is multiplied in each and every monad,<sup>97</sup> then what Proust discovers in the encountered works of art implies a similar multiplication. The difference being that Proust accomplishes this by operating both on the side of the subject and on the side of object, so that “instead of seeing only a single world, our own,” from multiple perspectives,

<sup>96</sup> PS 54/42. See also the note in the second part of *Proust and Signs* where Deleuze claims not only that Proust knew Leibniz’s philosophy from school but that he himself has “found that Proust’s singular essences were closer to the Leibnizian monads than to Platonic essences.” PS 196/188.

<sup>97</sup> “Because of the infinite multitude of simple substances it is as if there were as many different universes; but they are all perspectives on the same one, according to the different *point of view* of each monad.” G. W. Leibniz, *Monadology* (1714), in *Philosophical Texts*, ed. and tr. R. S. Woolhouse and R. Francks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), §57, 275.



“we see it multiplied, and have at our disposal as many worlds as there are original artists, all more different from another than those which revolve in infinity” (IV/6: 474/204). No longer differentiated from one another by differences of degree, each world is the expression of a difference in kind that is just as irreducible to empirical psychology as it is to any *a priori* form of subjectivity in general. Every subject thus expresses an absolutely different world,<sup>98</sup> the essence of which certainly does not exist “outside of the subject expressing it,” Deleuze writes, “but is expressed as the essence not of the subject but of Being, or of the region of Being that is revealed to the subject.” (PS 56/43) The essence is thus always “deeper than the subject expressing it” as well as being of an entirely “different order.” (PS 56/43) And this depth is, summarily, the depth of creation drawn from the essence’s fundamental powers of difference and repetition, its power of expression.

The subject expresses a viewpoint, but this viewpoint blends with the subject only to a certain degree and is ultimately impersonal and indeterminate in essence.<sup>99</sup> Nowhere is this as clear as in Marcel’s encounter with Vinteuil’s septet and the subject’s position in the portrayal of its development: “It was a wrestling-match of pure energies” that “struggled against each other ... without the encumbrance of their bodies, their outward appearances, their names, and they found in me an inward spectator [*spectateur intérieur*] – equally indifferent to names and individual character – ready to involve himself in their immaterial, dynamic combat and to follow with passion its vicissitudes of sound.” (III/5: 764/239) This is an image of the indeterminate complication in the essence that precedes every explication, out of which the impersonal and indeterminate energies eventually emerge as something determinate and individual. And it is by virtue of this event that the subject assumes an “interior” viewpoint. This viewpoint is interior because it cannot be reduced to the subject: the subject does not constitute it and it does not depend on the subject; the truth of the event is therefore not relative to the position of the subject involved in its development. On the contrary, rather than the event being an object appearing within a field of view that is relative to an already individuated subject, an event is what first comes to view and becomes the subject of the differential essence to which it necessarily corresponds.<sup>100</sup> And

<sup>98</sup> PS 55/43: “What we call the external world is only the disappointing projection [*projection décevante*], the standardising limit [*limit uniformisante*] of all these worlds expressed.”

<sup>99</sup> PS 56/43: “The viewpoint is not identified with the person who assumes it; the internal quality is not identified with the subject it individualises.”

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pli: Leibniz et le baroque* (Paris, Minuit, 1988); *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (London: Athlone Press 1993), 26-27/19-20. “The point of view is not what varies with

so the truth is not dependent on the subject's viewpoint. It is the subject who is relative to the truth of the differential essence as the condition of its genesis. The subjective viewpoint is thus interior to this individualisation of the essence as "primordial elements" in a state of discord or disparity, precisely because the viewpoint to which the subject becomes tied is not only itself an effect of this creative process, but also its determination. As that which becomes subject comes to occupy the viewpoint on the essence, it also effectuates its closure, it closes the world that the essence creates. "Essence", Deleuze writes, "is not only particular, not only individual, but individualising." (PS 62/48) And what it individualises and determines as essence is above all a "viewpoint" that is irreducible to the subject as well as to the object, a viewpoint that is superior because it creates.<sup>101</sup> In contrast to the Ideas of Platonism, the essence and the viewpoint in Proust is not something already given, individualised and determined, not a clearly and distinctly seen ideality. Nor is it something completely indifferent and undetermined. In itself the essence is indeed impersonal and indeterminate,<sup>102</sup> according to Deleuze, but also *singular*. The essence is something *remarkable*, *singular*, and *important* not in opposition to the universal or the general, but to the *ordinary*, the *regular*, and the *unimportant* in which it takes place as an event or a case.<sup>103</sup>

Again, the essence is the sign's outside folded into it, and therefore it is to be experienced through its unfolding alone, although only as already unfolded in a sense no longer bearing any resemblance to it. The essence or the Idea can thus only be experienced indirectly. To avoid misunderstanding here: indirectly does not mean that the sense already unfolded in its difference is

the subject, at least in the first instance; it is, to the contrary, the condition in which an eventual subject apprehends a variation (metamorphosis), or: something = x (anamorphosis). For Leibniz, for Nietzsche, for William and Henry James, and for Whitehead as well, perspectivism amounts to a relativism, but not the relativism we take for granted. It is not a variation of truth according to the subject, but the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject. This is the very idea of Baroque perspective."

<sup>101</sup> The emphasis on the essence as a superior viewpoint increases almost exponentially in part two, see for example PS 133/110/, 138/114, 144/119, 185/154, 194/161. Insofar as Deleuze draws on Leibniz in this regard, there is indeed a certain continuity from *Proust and Signs* to *The Fold*.

<sup>102</sup> Deleuze, "Bergson's Conception of Difference", ID 72/51: "Indetermination never means that the thing or the action could have been another." (Tr. mod.)

<sup>103</sup> DR 245/189–190. The distinction singular/regular is manifest, albeit in a different way, in Deleuze's account of the painter facing a white canvas nevertheless filled with "givens" (*données*) in the form of innumerable clichés, that is, a series of regular, ordinary, and unimportant points that the artist must prolong to singular, remarkable, and important points in the creation of the work of art: the essential is, in other words, a case in the inessential. *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 83. Concerning the mathematical sources of the concept of the singular/regular in Deleuze, see Voss, *Conditions of Thought*, 186–191

inferior to its origin, as if it merely constituted a degraded imitation of the essence from without (which, if it indeed did define art, is rightly denounced by Plato). “Style for a writer, like colour for a painter, is a question not of technique but of vision”, Proust writes. “It is the revelation, which would be impossible by direct or conscious means, of the qualitative difference in the ways we perceive the world.”<sup>104</sup> No, if reality consists, as Proust claims, in a “certain relationship” between our sensations and our memories, its truth can never appear through description or observation alone, but must be rediscovered through *style* conceived, beyond all common definitions, as the art of producing a relation between two sensations of different times and spaces in order to extract their “common essence”, allowing them to escape the “contingencies of time” by complicating them in a “metaphor.” (IV/6: 468/198)

According to Deleuze, however, the metaphor in art is not so much a transposition of sense as it is a “veritable transmutation of matter [*matière*].”<sup>105</sup> In art the style is what “dematerialises” the sign and “spiritualises” the colour, sound, or words, that is, it is the “matter” that marks out the destination of its explication.<sup>106</sup> And it is in order to make its matter as transparent, ductile and luminous as possible that the style, according to Deleuze, repeats “the unstable opposition, the original complication, the struggle and exchange of the primordial elements that constitute essence itself.” (PS 62/48) Such indeterminate states as recreated by this repetition are the only condition under which a work of art may unfold according to Deleuze. But it is also this kind of repetition of a genesis that the two struggling motifs in Vinteuil’s music or the complication of elements in Elstir’s painting reveals to us precisely by repeating it.<sup>107</sup> It is not by chance, in other words, that Elstir’s studio appeared to Marcel as a “laboratory out of which would come a kind of new creation of

<sup>104</sup> IV/6: 474/204. Evidently, already Proust’s definition announces an unorthodox conception of style, which, rather than concerning a particular diction, tone, or syntax, evokes Rimbaud’s famous image of the Seer (*voyant*) – attaining “the unknown” only by virtue of “a long, immense and rational *derangement* of all the senses [*raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens*].” Arthur Rimbaud, “Lettre à Paul Demeny, 15 mai 1871”, in *Rimbaud: Complete Works, Selected Letters*, tr. and ed. Wallace Fowlie, rev. Seth Whidden (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 376–377.

<sup>105</sup> PS 61/47. For an elaborate reading of the figure of the metaphor as relating to hyper-sensible ideas in Proust, which owes considerably to Deleuze’s reading, see chap. 4, “Giving joy (metaphor)”, in Beistegui, *Proust*.

<sup>106</sup> Elstir’s painting appears to consist precisely in such dematerialisation and spiritualisation of the sign and the sense: “The young man’s jacket and the splash of the wave had taken on a new dignity, in virtue of the fact that they continued to exist, though now deprived of what they were believed to consist in, the wave being now unable to wet anyone, and the jacket unable to be worn.” II/2: 190/414.

<sup>107</sup> PS 61–62/48: “Thus, Elstir’s painting, where the sea becomes land, the land sea, where the city is designated only by ‘marine terms’ and the water by ‘urban terms’.”

the world”, extracted by the painter from “the chaos made of all the things we see” (II/2: 190/414). Style is indeed “essentially metaphor”, Deleuze concludes, but only to the extent that “metaphor is essentially metamorphosis” (PS 61/48). Neither a figure of transposition nor of synthesis, by relating two disparate elements or one difference directly to another, the style of the essence achieves an irreversible metamorphosis: the birth of a creation related to its predecessors only insofar as it is the unmediated expression of the same difference by which it expresses itself.

According to the logic of expression belonging to the theme of immanence, the style thus expresses the essence of which it is also an expression. But in contrast to the viewpoint which relates to the essence statically, expressing it as a determinate difference, as a cut-out (*découpage*) of the essence as the complication of differences,<sup>108</sup> of a world – the style relates to the essence dynamically, expressing it as a divergent repetition, that is, not according to any hylo-morphic schema such that a given form is imposed on a given matter, but rather as a continuous individuation of two differences, a variable form and a variable matter, in and through time.<sup>109</sup> “An essence is always a birth of the world,” Deleuze repeats, “but style is that continuous and refracted birth, that birth regained in matters adequate to essences, that birth which has become the metamorphosis of objects. Style is not the man, style is essence itself.” (PS 62/48)

To revisit the question of the *who?* of thought, it is thus clear that the experience of thought does not belong to any given subject in whose nature thought is entailed as a possibility, but rather to an event in thought itself that is explicated in and as its subject. Albeit formally distinct, the problematic theme *who?* can therefore not be fully separated neither from the theme of *how?* nor from that of *what? or to what effect?* On the level of the self as constituted in the habitual present, this relation between thought and its subject becomes clear as soon as we consider Proust’s doctrine of signs, not in terms of a linear communication of information from sender and retriever, but as

<sup>108</sup> See also *Bergsonism*, where Deleuze repeatedly joins together Plato and Bergson (but also Kant) by way of intuition as a method of division or *diairesis*, conceived as the tracing and cutting (*découpage*, *recoupage*) according to the “natural articulations” of difference in the “composites” (*mixtures*) appearing in perception.

<sup>109</sup> PS 62/48: “Essence individualizes and determines the matters in which it is incarnated, like the objects it encloses within the rings of style.” It is clear that Deleuze already here is thinking individuation in a manner close both to Leibniz and to Simondon, from which he later also obtains the concept of *modulation* which is approximated here in terms of continuous individuation. See also the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> series in *The Logic of Sense*.

one of relations external to their terms demanding to be thought, that is, to be explicated or translated, from the middle (*milieu*) rather than from either of the terms to which it relates.<sup>110</sup> Such relations do not presuppose any third term in which the other two are included, because the experience, as Deleuze writes already in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, is “not the affection of an implicated subject, nor the modification or mode of a substance” (ES 93/87-88), but the movement, in this case, of the signs explicated in the subject and of the subject implicated in the signs.<sup>111</sup> The experience of thought in Proust does not therefore suppose any pre-given subject. The signs of society, for example, are not already given objects affecting an already given subject, according to the properties assumed to be intrinsic to the type of sign whose effects are currently experienced. And the feeling of nervous exaltation associated with the signs of society is not an effect of the signs on or in an already constituted subject: it is the nervous subject that is constituted as the effect of the way in which these signs are explicated, that is, as a movement exceeding what is given in the direction of something not presently given. In this case, however, the signs of society do not really “refer to something else, to a transcendent signification or to an ideal content”, but rather substitutes the action or the thought signalled with nothing but its void.<sup>112</sup> It is from this ghostly return of the void implicated in worldly signs, that a subject of nervous exaltation emerges as a relational effect rather than its principle. This is, of course, true of the other types of signs as well: rather than affecting a subject receiving them each in accordance with any given nature, it is the movement of their explication that gives rise to a subject according to their specific mode of explication-implication (i.e. a subject of pain, paranoia, pleasure, obsession, pure joy, etc.).<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> ES 113/101: “Relations are external to their terms. This means that ideas do not account for the nature of the operations that we perform on them, and especially for the relations that we establish among them.” See also the article “Hume” (1972), where Deleuze explains the world of the external relations introduced by Hume as a “world of exteriority, a world where thought itself is in a fundamental relation to the Outside, a world where terms exist like veritable atoms, and relations like veritable external bridges—a world where the conjunction “and” dethrones the interiority of the verb “is,” a Harlequin world of colored patterns and non-totalizable fragments, where one communicates via external relations.” ID 228/168.

<sup>111</sup> For example, I see a lyre or a gown by Fortuny and think of my lover; I see in the milkmaid’s face the resemblance of a portrait by Vermeer; I hear the notes of Vinteuil’s little phrase escape from the piano and think the latter the cause of the former, etc. – every such relation is precisely a passage from the given to the not given and every such passage consists in the explication and implication of a sign and a sense.

<sup>112</sup> PS 13/6: “It anticipates action as it does thought, annuls thought as it does action, and declares itself adequate: whence its stereotyped aspect and its vacuity.”

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *Empiricism and Subjectivity* where Deleuze states that “experience is the succession, the movement of separable ideas, insofar as they are different, and different insofar as they are separable. We must begin

But is there not on a different level another drama of explication-implication and of thought becoming subject that plays itself out? The relationship between the “original difference” or the transcendental “Image, idea or essence” (PS 83–84/68) and its explication in the serial repetition of our loves, for example: since this image is repeated “only all the more, and all the better, in that it escapes us in fact and remains unconscious” (PS 84–85/68), does it not find a correlate – in the relationship between the figuration of the thinker as the Friend or the Jealous Lover and the style of thought expressed by a particular subject?<sup>114</sup> And , on yet another level, do not the eminent individualities of Charlus, Albertine, Swann, or Norpois – rather than represent various modes ultimately converging in the subjective unity of Marcel Proust – appear to both implicate such images and explicate themselves, precisely as differences, as variations, in that singular viewpoint which complicates the diverging thoughts of Proust–the Narrator–Marcel?

In spite of the general hostility towards philosophy revealed throughout the *Search*, perhaps one could go so far as to translate the Proustian schema bringing the series of sign, sense, and translation as well as of style, viewpoint, and essence together in a logic of creation, to the apprenticeship of the philosopher in pursuit of the act of thought as true creation. Incarnating, first, the viewpoint of the Friend, condemned to a life in illusions and the impossibility of conceiving anything beyond the empty abstractions and current trends of the signs trafficked in the Salon, but eventually leading to the conceptualisation of certain objective, mechanical, or statistical laws of the social, historical, cultural, and political as empty repetitions founded in forgetting and dissipation (*lex Tantalus*); second, incarnating the viewpoint of the Lover, constantly falling prey to the passions of jealousy and rivalry, incessantly scenting, courting, and stalking the divinity of Truth only to end up chased into delirium or death by the very same hounds of interpretation, but taking into the grave the concept of serial repetitions expressing the general laws of

with *this* experience because it is *the* experience. It does not presuppose anything else and nothing else precedes it.” ES 93/87–88.

<sup>114</sup> Evidently, there is almost a lifetime of thinking separating the new image of thought presented in 1964’s *Proust and Signs* and the presentation of thought’s new image in 1991’s *What is Philosophy?*. And yet it would still seem as if the invention of “conceptual personae” (*personnages conceptuels*) in the latter, is anticipated – albeit in a different and nebulous form – already in the former. The “conceptual personae” forms, together with the image of thought as a “plane of immanence”, the basic presuppositions of conceptual creation in philosophy. See chap. I.3, “Conceptual Personae”, in *What is Philosophy?*, 74/76–77.

subjective desires, the laws of deception and the paradox of inclusion-exclusion (*lex Actaeon*); third, incarnating the viewpoint of the Sensitive spirit, sensible to the remarkable truths and joys discoverable in the violent impressions trapped within otherwise ordinary things and texts, just waiting to be released by anyone sensitive enough to unfold their secrets beyond the bounds of habit, elaborating concepts to capture their particularity, but which are still too general to provide anything but an image of their essence; fourth, and finally, incarnating the Essence itself as a power of creation and assuming the viewpoint of the Artist: the philosopher becomes capable of pure creation by virtue of a thought without image, translating the difference of the Essence *immediately* into a concept (rather than a timbre, a syntax, a colour) identical with this difference itself, thus cutting out a new and unexpected viewpoint on the world it also creates, a world still unknown a moment ago.

A great philosopher creates new concepts: these concepts simultaneously surpass the dualities of ordinary thought and give things a new truth, a new distribution, a new way of dividing up the world. (ID 28/22)





## CONCLUSION: THE EXPERIENCE OF THOUGHT IN THE SCIENCE OF AFFLICTION

Which? Who? How? To what effect? These are the cardinal questions that have orientated this study of the experience of thought in Deleuze by way of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. The aim has been to inquire into the *experience* and *experimentation* corresponding to Deleuze's critique of the dogmatism, morality, and conformity at the heart of the Image of thought, insofar as the positive effects of this endeavour become especially manifest in Deleuze's relation to Proust. The image of thought Deleuze seeks to trace out through Proust sets itself up in opposition to classic philosophical postulates such as: (1) thought is simply the voluntary exercise of a universally distributed capacity to think; (2) the search for truth is simply the expression of a universally distributed desire to know; (3) the truths finally found are truths innate to thought which, due to extrinsic obfuscation or intrinsic forgetfulness, simply need to be re-cognised or re-collected as true.

In this study, the image counter-posed to the dogmatic Image of thought has been traced out and interrogated by way of Proust, by way of Plato. Beginning with the question of *which?* image is the dogmatic Image of thought, and *which?* is the image dramatised by Proust in opposition to this Image, the general characteristics of the counter-image extracted therefrom by Deleuze proved to be: (a) the act of thinking is, at its highest power, an involuntary event in thought that may be born only under the constraint of Time and the (im)material sign it forces us to encounter; (b) the truth is searched for only by the Lover bestowed with a heightened sensibility to signs by the jealousy he or she suffers at the mercy of a lying and deceiving beloved; (c) the truths learned in the course of the apprenticeship of signs are marked as true only to the extent that their necessity derive from the contingency of the encounter itself. Considering thought's extra-moral character, essential temporality, and origins in sensibility and chance as discussed in the first chapter, the *how?* of thought can no longer be considered the voluntary realisation of a *natural possibility with an intrinsically vertical orientation*. Instead, the *how?* to which Proust's image of thought corresponds demands to be understood as a matter of the *involuntary effect* of a sign encountered within the plurality of Time as a real force. In consequence, any *I* called out in answer to the *who thinks?* raised by an event of the aforementioned kind, does not so much belong to the identity of a unified subject or transcendental consciousness, as it does to the *viewpoint* from which the explication or development of the sign

proceeds. And as explored in the second chapter, the viewpoint to which the general traits of the counter-image subsequently turned out to belong was not the type or figuration of the humble Friend of Wisdom, but that of the Jealous Lover: the fevered rival excluded from the salon or symposium of truth, compulsively interpreting every sign of betrayal and preference emitted by the object of desire, only to become the subject of suffering that is nothing but the effect of the signs and the pains of love.

Although Deleuze never makes any explicit connection in his work on Proust, it becomes abundantly clear in the aftermath of Albertine's death that this *who?*, this viewpoint of thought, is analogous, *mutatis mutandi*, to the self defined by Hume as "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement."<sup>1</sup> Thus, as Deleuze had written more than ten years before in his book on Hume, *Empirisme et subjectivité* (1953), the subject of thought is not substantial but "defined by and as the movement through which it develops itself [*qui se développe soi-même*]. Subject is that which is developing [*qui se développe*]." (ES 90/85; tr. mod.) The subject of thought in Proust is thus not nature, nor does it have a nature, it blends with the sign, with the impression or the image developing in and through the process of interpretation it has been compelled to unfold.<sup>2</sup> Thought's subject is, in other words, inseparable from the movement of the signs and thus also from the temporality of the apprenticeship, outlined in the third chapter.

The relational reality of this *who?*, that is, the fact that the self riveted to the act of thought consists only in a variable series of images and sensations without resemblance, is especially poignant in the case of Albertine's death and Marcel's memory of her; although Albertine may be dead, the mere fact that she is dead has not killed her. On the contrary, she seems to be all the more alive precisely to the extent that memory keeps raising her up again and again, until she finally absorbs the entire world, haunting all the hours, places, seasons, and incarnations of the self. "To enter inside us", Proust writes, "people have always been obliged to take on the form and to fit into the framework of time ... They depend on memory, and our memory of a moment is not informed of everything that has happened since, the moment which it

<sup>1</sup> Hume, chap. 1.4.6, "Of Personal Identity", in *Treatise*, 165.

<sup>2</sup> ES 90/85. Hume, *Treatise*, 165: "The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different; whatever natural propensity we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity."

registered still lives on, and, with it, the person whose form was sketched within it. And then this fragmentation not only makes the dead person live on, it multiplies her form.” (IV/5: 60/445) This is, in other words, testimony to the workings of that principle which Beckett called “the poisonous ingenuity of Time in the science of affliction.”<sup>3</sup>

To remember Albertine is, in summary, not simply to preserve her, but also to involuntarily multiply and disperse her image in time and space. Even in death Albertine is not one but a *bande à part*. And this is true of the perceiving, remembering, imagining, or conceiving subject too: “I was not one single man,” Proust writes, “but the march-past of a composite army manned, depending on the time of day, by passionate, indifferent or jealous men – jealous men who were never jealous of the same woman.” (IV/5: 71/456) Thus, both the subject and the object are both implicated and intricately within open and variable series of instantaneous and incommensurable images fragmented across time: a constantly splintering and diverging series of impressions preserved in memory or in forgetting; forming, not a totality or an identity, but an open, kaleidoscopic system of moments, sensations, or images, in the movement of which the subject is constituted by constantly exceeding, and reflecting, itself.

In accordance with Deleuze and Proust’s predilection for empiricism, the relations of this movement or development are always exterior to their terms and must thus be thought from the middle rather than from the extremity of the terms to which they relate. The doctrine of signs discovered by Deleuze is thus testimony that in Proust, just as in Hume, a relation is “what allows a passage from a given impression or idea to the idea of something not presently given.” (ID 228/164) For example, I see a lyre or a gown by Fortuny and think of my lover; I see in the milkmaid’s face the resemblance of a portrait by Vermeer; I hear the notes of Vinteuil’s little phrase escape from the piano and think the latter the cause of the former. But to experience thought as a succession of such associations or passages from one thing to another or to nothing at all, is in any case not to experience the establishment of a relationship between two already given terms in a third term that includes them. The signs of society or love are not already given objects affecting an already given subject, according to the properties assumed to be intrinsic to the type of sign whose effects are currently experienced.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Beckett, *Proust*, in *Selected Works*, 4:513.

In fact, as we have seen in Proust, the experience of thought does not implicate any pre-given subject at all. For example, the feeling of nervous exaltation associated with the signs of worldliness: this feeling is not an effect of the signs on or in an already constituted subject – it is the nervous subject that is constituted as the effect of the way in which these signs pass from one thing to another or overstep what is given in the direction of what is not given. In this case, however, the signs of society do not really “refer to something else, to a transcendent signification or to an ideal content”, but rather substitutes the action or the thought signalled with nothing but its void. It is out of this vacuous repetition of the worldly signs and the ghostly return of the void that they implicate, that a subject of nervous exaltation emerges as a relational effect rather than as a constitutive principle. This is, of course, true of the other types of signs too: rather than affecting a subject receiving them each in accordance with their nature, it is, on a certain level, the mode of passage from the given to the non-given which they allow that gives rise to a subject corresponding to their effect (anxiety, pain, paranoia, obsession, pleasure, joy etc.). In the crudest possible terms: this is not a subject having an experience of thought, but rather the experience of thought itself becoming a subject of Time.

As to the *effect?* of such experiences, in the case of the worldly signs and the signs of love this becoming-subject of thought is not the effect of a pure experience. This is because in these instances the subject’s sense of unity and continuity in the present is still determined and maintained by habit in conjunction with memory, imagination, and intelligence – all of which serve to subsume any and all differences that otherwise would threaten its integrity under an apparently stable identity serving to safeguard the subject’s unity as the warrant of the form of identity in the object demanded by common sense. This mechanism is apparent in the case of voluntary memory: “My memory probably then affirmed the difference between these sensations; but all it could do was to rearrange homogeneous elements in different ways”, Proust writes. That is, voluntary memory simply rummages the images it has retained for anything pleasurable, reassuring, or flattering, and effaces the differences between the forms contained in these moments precisely to this end. Marcel’s feeling of what it means to willingly recall images of the past is therefore that of simply “leafing through an album of watercolours painted in the different places I had been to choose illustrations of each of these days, enabling me to say, with the selfish pleasure of a collector, as I catalogued the illustrations of my memory: ‘I’ve certainly seen some beautiful things in my life.’” (IV/6:

452/181–182) The effect of involuntary memory, however, is a kind of experience that does not only unsettle the form and location of the object, but the resurgence of a “pure” past also reveals the subject’s essential temporality, its universal un-founding in time, by disrupting its unity and exposing its essential contingency. “Our selves are composed of our successive states, superimposed”, Proust thus writes, “but this superimposition is not immutable like the stratification of a mountain. A tremor is liable at any moment to throw older layers back up to the surface.” (IV/5: 125/509)

All individuation of thought’s subject involves, disruption and creation to a degree, yet the individuation of thought by way of involuntary memory is still, in opposition to that by way of art, dependent on “determinations that remain external and contingent.” (PS 79/63) These determinations are not found on the side of the origin of involuntary memory as such, however, but merely on the side of its destination: in the substances and the mediums in and through which the essence is incarnated. In involuntary memory, the essence is no longer “master of its own incarnation, of its own selection, but is selected according to data that remain external to it.” (PS 80/64) Thus, when Proust states that “we have no freedom at all in the face of the work of art” and “that we cannot shape it according to our wishes”, the sign of art forcing thought to think the essence is superior to the sensuous sign precisely because it exercises, in itself, a less rigorous constraint on thought and therefore must remain contingent, rather than achieve true necessity or the necessity of truth. This is, in short, why Deleuze states that “all the Selves of involuntary memory are inferior to the Self of art, from the viewpoint of essences themselves.” (PS 79/63)

Insofar as the subject is individuated or becomes subject in relation to the signs of art and the essences they express, then, as discussed in the fourth chapter, there is no exterior elements that affect the explication-implication of the essence: nothing to safeguard the subject from its complete disruption and dissolution, but also nothing to impede the pure creation and thus the violent intrusion of an unknown future in thought itself. In summary, the different selves or subjects comprising Marcel are thus the creation of an essence as refracted in a certain type of sign and expressed as a particular form of subjectivity, but this is obviously true also of the other characters in the *Search*. And perhaps especially of Charlus, this “most prodigious emitter of signs”, the “master of Logos”, displaying an “imperial individuality” even at the brink of death, an “incredible and inspired ageing” divulging something of eternity itself in his nebulous essence, capable of repeating and redistributing “his

many souls, which were already present in a glance or in a word of the younger Charlus.” (PS 27/18–19)

Undertaken in this study is, in conclusion, an unfolding of the experience of thought from within the conjunction of Gilles Deleuze’s *Proust and Signs* and Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, which has sought to elucidate the conditions of thought’s genesis and individuation by also engaging with Deleuze’s subterranean perversion of Plato and the overturning of Platonism with which it coincides. And thereby, hopefully, this study has also produced an image of what Deleuze in *Proust and Signs* designates as a “concrete and dangerous” thought, that is, the image of a kind of pathological and practical *aesth/ethics* which, under the sign of a transcendental empiricism, finds its highest form in a dialectics of pure differences, its highest power in a thought without Image.

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## SAMMANFATTNING

(Summary in Swedish)

Föreliggande avhandling syftar till att med utgångspunkt i Gilles Deleuzes *Proust et les signes* (1964) och Marcel Prousts *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927) undersöka tänkandets erfarenhet i Deleuzes tidiga filosofi. Prousts betydelse för Deleuzes tänkande i allmänhet och för den filosofiska utvecklingen under 1960-talet i synnerhet har hittills inte uppmärksammats i tillräcklig grad. I syfte att fylla ut denna forskningslucka utarbetas här de produktiva följdverkningarna av den kritik Deleuze som underkastar den ”dogmatiska bilden av tänkandet”, vilka kommer till uttryck på ett särskilt konkret sätt i mötet med Proust. För att utforska de reella snarare än möjliga betingelserna för ett sådant ”tänkande utan bild” som i en paradoxal figur härigenom avtecknar sig som tänkandets idealbild, söker sig denna avhandling bort från den klassiska frågan om tänkandets *vad?* för att genom Proust, men också genom en fördjupad dialog med Platon, i stället utfråga tänkandets erfarenhet och essens i termer av *vilken?*, *vem?*, *hur?*, och *vilken effekt?* I enlighet med Deleuzes förståelse av tänkandets essens som bestämd av accidenser eller händelser snarare än oföränderliga substanser, fastställs således att: (1) tänkandet inte längre kan betraktas som det frivilliga utövandet av en i förväg given förmåga, utan måste förstås som effekten av ett i förhållande till tänkandet yttre våld sådant att tankeaktens nödvändighet nu bestäms av händelsens tillfällighet; (2) tänkarens figur inte längre kan föreställas i termer av den antika vishetsvän vars begär till sanningen härrör endast ur människans natur, utan måste tänkas i termer av den svartsjuka älskare som söker efter sanningen endast i den mån detta krävs för att avslöja den älskades lögn; (3) sanningen inte längre kan tänkas som en tillfälligt bortglömd men universell kunskap som vi återkallar från ett tidlöst förflutet, utan i termer av en sanning som måste utvinnas ur de tecken som Tiden slumpmässigt ställer i lärlingens väg; (4) tänkandets ändamål inte längre kan bestå i igenkännandet och återgivandet av ett abstrakt allmänbegrepp, utan måste förstås i termer av det möte med Essensen som en ren skillnad förmoden att skapa tankeakten som på samma gång upptäcker densamma.



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What is an act of thinking beyond the traditional image of thought? Who or what is its subject and to whom or what does it give voice? Under what conditions is thinking learned and to what effects is it achieved? If these questions generally imbue the thought of Gilles Deleuze from *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) up to *Difference and Repetition* (1968), it is arguably in *Proust and Signs* (1964) that the questions concerning the essence and conditions of thought are elaborated to the greatest extent and effect. Whereas *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition* have been extensively analysed as systematic works of philosophy in their own right, Deleuze's early work on Proust has not been adequately recognised for its significance in overturning the classical question "what is thinking?" This study sets out to remedy this oversight.

The aim of this study is to explicate in what ways the general problem surrounding the experience of thought finds concrete articulation for Deleuze in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–1927). For it is Proust who not only destroys the image of thought intrinsic to the tradition of philosophy in an iconoclastic fashion, but dramatises the experience of thought as experimentation beyond the figures of the dogmatist, the moralist, and the conformist in philosophy.

**Johan Sehlberg** is a researcher and lecturer in philosophy at Södertörn University. This is his doctoral dissertation.

Philosophy, Critical and Cultural Theory, School of Culture and Education,  
Södertörn University.

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