

Chapter II

Repetition for Itself

Repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it. Hume's famous thesis takes us to the heart of a problem: since it implies, in principle, a perfect independence on the part of each presentation, how can repetition change something in the case of the repeated element? The rule of discontinuity or instantaneity in repetition tells us that one instance does not appear unless the other has disappeared – hence the status of matter as *mens momentanea*. However, given that repetition disappears even as it occurs, how can we say 'the second', 'the third' and 'it is the same'? It has no in-itself. On the other hand, it does change something in the mind which contemplates it. This is the essence of modification. Hume takes as an example the repetition of cases of the type AB, AB, AB, A Each case or objective sequence AB is independent of the others. The repetition (although we cannot yet properly speak of repetition) changes nothing in the object or the state of affairs AB. On the other hand, a change is produced in the mind which contemplates: a difference, something new *in* the mind. Whenever A appears, I expect the appearance of B. Is this the for-itself of repetition, an originary subjectivity which necessarily enters into its constitution? Does not the paradox of repetition lie in the fact that one can speak of repetition only by virtue of the change or difference that it introduces into the mind which contemplates it? By virtue of a difference that the mind *draws from* repetition?

What does this change comprise? Hume explains that the independent identical or similar cases are grounded in the imagination. The imagination is defined here as a contractile power: like a sensitive plate, it retains one case when the other appears. It contracts cases, elements, agitations or homogeneous instants and grounds these in an internal qualitative impression endowed with a certain weight. When A appears, we expect B with a force corresponding to the qualitative impression of all the contracted ABs. This is by no means a memory, nor indeed an operation of the understanding: contraction is not a matter of reflection. Properly speaking, it forms a synthesis of time. A succession of instants does not constitute time any more than it causes it to disappear; it indicates only its constantly aborted moment of birth. Time is constituted only in the originary synthesis which operates on the repetition of instants. This synthesis contracts the successive independent instants into one another, thereby constituting the lived, or living, present. It is in this present that time is deployed. To it belong both the past and the future: the past in so

far as the preceding instants are retained in the contraction; the future because its expectation is anticipated in this same contraction. The past and the future do not designate instants distinct from a supposed present instant, but rather the dimensions of the present itself in so far as it is a contraction of instants. The present does not have to go outside itself in order to pass from past to future. Rather, the living present goes from the past to the future which it constitutes in time, which is to say also from the particular to the general: from the particulars which it envelops by contraction to the general which it develops in the field of its expectation (the difference produced in the mind is generality itself in so far as it forms a living rule for the future). In any case, this synthesis must be given a name: passive synthesis. Although it is constitutive it is not, for all that, active. It is not carried out by the mind, but occurs *in* the mind which contemplates, prior to all memory and all reflection. Time is subjective, but in relation to the subjectivity of a passive subject. Passive synthesis or contraction is essentially asymmetrical: it goes from the past to the future in the present, thus from the particular to the general, thereby imparting direction to the arrow of time.

In considering repetition in the object, we remain within the conditions which make possible an idea of repetition. But in considering the change in the subject, we are already beyond these conditions, confronting the general form of difference. The ideal constitution of repetition thus implies a kind of retroactive movement between these two limits. It is woven between the two. This is the movement which Hume so profoundly analyses when he shows that the cases contracted or grounded in the imagination remain no less distinct in the memory or in the understanding. Not that we return to the state of matter which produces one case only when the other has disappeared. Rather, on the basis of the qualitative impression in the imagination, memory reconstitutes the particular cases as distinct, conserving them in its own 'temporal space'. The past is then no longer the immediate past of retention but the reflexive past of representation, of reflected and reproduced particularity. Correlatively, the future also ceases to be the immediate future of anticipation in order to become the reflexive future of prediction, the reflected generality of the understanding (the understanding weights the expectation in the imagination in proportion to the number of distinct similar cases observed and recalled). In other words, the active syntheses of memory and understanding are superimposed upon and supported by the passive synthesis of the imagination. The constitution of repetition already implies three instances: the in-itself which causes it to disappear as it appears, leaving it unthinkable; the for-itself of the passive synthesis; and, grounded upon the latter, the reflected representation of a 'for-us' in the active syntheses. Associationism possesses an irreplaceable subtlety. It is not surprising that Bergson rediscovers Hume's analyses once he encounters an

analogous problem: four o'clock strikes ... each stroke, each disturbance or excitation, is logically independent of the other, *mens momentanea*. However, quite apart from any memory or distinct calculation, we contract these into an internal qualitative impression within this living present or *passive synthesis* which is duration. Then we restore them in an auxiliary space, a derived time in which we may reproduce them, reflect on them or count them like so many quantifiable external-impressions.¹

No doubt Bergson's example is not the same as Hume's. One refers to a closed repetition, the other to an open one. Moreover, one refers to a repetition of elements of the type A A A A ... (tick, tick, tick, tick ...), the other to a repetition of cases such as AB AB AB A ... (tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, tick ...). The principal distinction between these two forms rests upon the fact that in the second case difference not only appears in the contraction of the elements in general but also occurs in each particular case, between two elements which are both determined and joined together by a relation of opposition. The function of opposition here is to impose a limit on the elementary repetition, to enclose it upon the simplest group, to reduce it to a minimum of two (tock being the inverse of tick). Difference therefore appears to abandon its first figure of generality and to be distributed in the repeating particular, but in such a way as to give rise to new living generalities. Repetition finds itself enclosed in the 'case', reduced to the pair, while a new infinity opens up in the form of the repetition of the cases themselves. It would be wrong, therefore, to believe that every repetition of cases is open by nature, while every repetition of elements is closed. The repetition of cases is open only by virtue of the closure of a binary opposition between elements. Conversely, the repetition of elements is closed only by virtue of a reference to structures of cases in which as a whole it plays itself the role of one of the two opposed elements: not only is four a generality in relation to four strokes, but 'four o'clock' enters into a duality with the preceding or the following half-hour, or even, on the horizon of the perceptual universe, with the corresponding four o'clock in the morning or afternoon. In the case of passive synthesis, the two forms of repetition always refer back to one another: repetition of cases presupposes that of elements, but that of elements necessarily extends into that of cases (whence the natural tendency of passive synthesis to experience tick-tick as tick-tock).

That is why what matters even more than the distinction between the two forms is the distinction between the levels on which *both* operate, separately and in combination. Hume's example no less than Bergson's leaves us at the level of sensible and perceptual syntheses. The sensed quality is indistinguishable from the contraction of elementary excitations, but the object perceived implies a contraction of cases such that one quality may be read in the other, and a structure in which the form of the object allies itself with the quality at least as an intentional part. However, in the

order of constituent passivity, perceptual syntheses refer back to organic syntheses which are like the sensibility of the senses; they refer back to a primary sensibility that we *are*. We are made of contracted water, earth, light and air – not merely prior to the recognition or representation of these, but prior to their being sensed. Every organism, in its receptive and perceptual elements, but also in its viscera, is a sum of contractions, of retentions and expectations. At the level of this primary vital sensibility, the lived present constitutes a past and a future in time. Need is the manner in which this future appears, as the organic form of expectation. The retained past appears in the form of cellular heredity. Furthermore, by combining with the perceptual syntheses built upon them, these organic syntheses are redeployed in the active syntheses of a psycho-organic memory and intelligence (instinct and learning). We must therefore distinguish not only the forms of repetition in relation to passive synthesis but also the levels of passive synthesis and the combinations of these levels with one another and with active syntheses. All of this forms a rich domain of *signs* which always envelop heterogeneous elements and animate behaviour. Each contraction, each passive synthesis, constitutes a sign which is interpreted or deployed in active syntheses. The signs by which an animal ‘senses’ the presence of water do not resemble the elements which its thirsty organism lacks. The manner in which sensation and perception – along with need and heredity, learning and instinct, intelligence and memory – participate in repetition is measured in each case by the combination of forms of repetition, by the levels on which these combinations take place, by the relationships operating between these levels and by the interference of active syntheses with passive syntheses.

What is in question throughout this domain that we have had to extend to include the organic as such? Hume says precisely that it is a question of the problem of habit. However, how are we to explain the fact that – in the case of Bergson’s clock-strokes no less than with Hume’s causal sequences – we feel ourselves in effect so close to the mystery of habit, yet recognise nothing of what is ‘habitually’ called habit? Perhaps the reason lies in the illusions of psychology, which made a fetish of activity. Its unreasonable fear of introspection allowed it to observe only that which moved. It asks how we acquire habits in acting, but the entire theory of learning risks being misdirected so long as the prior question is not posed – namely, whether it is through acting that we acquire habits ... *or whether, on the contrary, it is through contemplating?* Psychology regards it as established that the self cannot contemplate itself. This, however, is not the question. The question is whether or not the self itself is a contemplation, whether it is not in itself a contemplation, and whether we can learn, form behaviour and form ourselves other than through contemplation.

Habit *draws* something new from repetition – namely, difference (in the first instance understood as generality). In essence, habit is contraction.

Language testifies to this in allowing us to speak of ‘contracting’ a habit, and in allowing the verb ‘to contract’ only in conjunction with a complement capable of constituting a habitude. It will be objected that the heart no more has (or no more is) a habit when it contracts than when it dilates. This, however, is to confuse two quite different kinds of contraction: contraction may refer to one of the two active elements, one of the two opposing moments in a tick-tock type series, the other element being relaxation or dilation. But contraction also refers to the fusion of successive tick-tocks in a contemplative soul. Passive synthesis is of the latter kind: it constitutes our habit of living, our expectation that ‘it’ will continue, that one of the two elements will appear after the other, thereby assuring the perpetuation of our *case*. When we say that habit is a contraction we are speaking not of an instantaneous action which combines with another to form an element of repetition, but rather of the fusion of that repetition in the contemplating mind. A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to contract a habit. This is no mystical or barbarous hypothesis. On the contrary, habit here manifests its full generality: it concerns not only the sensory–motor habits that we have (psychologically), but also, before these, the primary habits that we are; the thousands of passive syntheses of which we are organically composed. It is simultaneously through contraction that we are habits, but through contemplation that we contract. We are contemplations, we are imaginations, we are generalities, claims and satisfactions. The phenomenon of claiming is nothing but the contracting contemplation through which we affirm our right and our expectation in regard to that which we contract, along with our self-satisfaction in so far as we contemplate. We do not contemplate ourselves, but we exist only in contemplating – that is to say, in contracting that from which we come. Whether pleasure is itself a contraction or a tension, or whether it is always tied to a process of relaxation, is not a well-formed question: elements of pleasure may be found in the active succession of relaxations and contractions produced by excitants, but it is a quite different question to ask why pleasure is not simply an element or a case within our psychic life, but rather a *principle* which exercises sovereign rule over the latter in every case. Pleasure is a principle in so far as it is the emotion of a fulfilling contemplation which contracts in itself cases of relaxation *and* contraction. There is a beatitude associated with passive synthesis, and we are all Narcissus in virtue of the pleasure (auto-satisfaction) we experience in contemplating, even though we contemplate things quite apart from ourselves. We are always Actaeon by virtue of what we contemplate, even though we are Narcissus in relation to the pleasure we take from it. To contemplate is to draw something from. We must always first contemplate

something else – the water, or Diana, or the woods – in order to be filled with an image of ourselves.

No one has shown better than Samuel Butler that there is no continuity apart from that of habit, and that we have no other continuities apart from those of our thousands of component habits, which form within us so many superstitious and contemplative selves, so many claimants and satisfactions: ‘for even the corn in the fields grows upon a superstitious basis as to its own existence, and only turns the earth and moisture into wheat through the conceit of its own ability to do so, without which faith it were powerless ...’.² Only an empiricist can happily risk such formulae. What we call wheat is a contraction of the earth and humidity, and this contraction is both a contemplation and the auto-satisfaction of that contemplation. By its existence alone, the lily of the field sings the glory of the heavens, the goddesses and gods – in other words, the elements that it contemplates in contracting. What organism is not made of elements and cases of repetition, of contemplated and contracted water, nitrogen, carbon, chlorides and sulphates, thereby intertwining all the habits of which it is composed? Organisms awake to the sublime words of the third *Ennead*: all is contemplation! Perhaps it is irony to say that everything is contemplation, even rocks and woods, animals and men, even Actaeon and the stag, Narcissus and the flower, even our actions and our needs. But irony in turn is still a contemplation, nothing but a contemplation. ... Plotinus says that one determines one’s own image, and appreciates it, only by turning back to contemplate that from which one comes.

It is easy to multiply reasons which make habit independent of repetition: to act is never to repeat, whether it be an action in process or an action already completed. As we have seen, action has, rather, the particular as its variable and generality as its element. However, while generality may well be quite different from repetition, it nevertheless refers to repetition as the hidden basis on which it is constructed. Action is constituted, in the order of generality and in the field of variables which correspond to it, only by the contraction of elements of repetition. This contraction, however, takes place not in the action itself, but in a contemplative self which doubles the agent. Moreover, in order to integrate actions within a more complex action, the primary actions must in turn play the role of elements of repetition within a ‘case’, but always in relation to a contemplative soul adjacent to the subject of the compound action. Underneath the self which acts are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action and the active subject. We speak of our ‘self’ only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third party who says ‘me’. These contemplative souls must be assigned even to the rat in the labyrinth and to each muscle of the rat. Given that contemplation never appears at any moment during the action – since it is always hidden, and since it ‘does’

nothing (even though something is done through it, something completely novel) – it is easy to forget it and to interpret the entire process of excitation and reaction without any reference to repetition – the more so since this reference appears only in the relation in which both excitations and reactions stand to the contemplative souls.

The role of the imagination, or the mind which contemplates in its multiple and fragmented states, is to draw something new from repetition, to draw difference from it. For that matter, repetition is itself in essence imaginary, since the imagination alone here forms the ‘moment’ of the *vis repetitiva* from the point of view of constitution: it makes that which it contracts appear as elements or cases of repetition. Imaginary repetition is not a false repetition which stands in for the absent true repetition: true repetition takes place in imagination. Between a repetition which never ceases to unravel itself and a repetition which is deployed and conserved for us in the space of representation there was difference, the for-itself of repetition, the imaginary. Difference inhabits repetition. On the one hand – lengthwise, as it were – difference allows us to pass from one order of repetition to another: from the instantaneous repetition which unravels itself to the actively represented repetition through the intermediary of passive synthesis. On the other hand – in depth, as it were – difference allows us to pass from one order of repetition to another and from one generality to another within the passive syntheses themselves. The nods of the chicken’s head accompany its cardiac pulsations in an organic synthesis before they serve as pecks in the perceptual synthesis with grain. And already in the series of passive syntheses, the generality originally formed by the contraction of ‘ticks’ is redistributed in the form of particularities in the more complex repetition of ‘tick-tocks’, which are in turn contracted. In every way, material or bare repetition, so-called repetition of the same, is like a skin which unravels, the external husk of a kernel of difference and more complicated internal repetitions. *Difference lies between two repetitions*. Is this not also to say, conversely, that repetition lies between two differences, that it allows us to pass from one order of difference to another? Gabriel Tarde described dialectical development in this manner: a process of repetition understood as the passage from a state of general differences to singular difference, from external differences to internal difference – in short, repetition as the differentiator of difference.³

The synthesis of time constitutes the present in time. It is not that the present is a dimension of time: the present alone exists. Rather, synthesis constitutes time as a living present, and the past and the future as dimensions of this present. This synthesis is none the less intratemporal, which means that this present passes. We could no doubt conceive of a perpetual present, a present which is coextensive with time: it would be sufficient to consider contemplation applied to the infinite succession of instants. But such a present is not physically possible: the contraction

implied in any contemplation always qualifies an order of repetition according to the elements or cases involved. It necessarily forms a present which may be exhausted and which passes, a present of a certain duration which varies according to the species, the individuals, the organisms and the parts of organisms under consideration. Two successive presents may be contemporaneous with a third present, more extended by virtue of the number of instants it contracts. The duration of an organism's present, or of its various presents, will vary according to the natural contractile range of its contemplative souls. In other words, fatigue is a real component of contemplation. It is correctly said that those who do nothing tire themselves most. Fatigue marks the point at which the soul can no longer contract what it contemplates, the moment at which contemplation and contraction come apart. We are made up of fatigues as much as of contemplations. That is why a phenomenon such as need can be understood in terms of 'lack', from the point of view of action and the active syntheses which it determines, but as an extreme 'satiety' or 'fatigue' from the point of view of the passive synthesis by which it is conditioned. More precisely, need marks the limits of the variable present. The present extends between two eruptions of need, and coincides with the duration of a contemplation. The *repetition of need*, and of everything which depends upon it, expresses the time which belongs to the synthesis of time, the intratemporal character of that synthesis. Repetition is essentially inscribed in need, since need rests upon an instance which essentially involves repetition: which forms the for-itself of repetition and the for-itself of a certain duration. All our rhythms, our reserves, our reaction times, the thousand intertwinings, the presents and fatigues of which we are composed, are defined on the basis of our contemplations. The rule is that one cannot go faster than one's own present – or rather, one's presents. *Signs* as we have defined them – as habitudes or contractions referring to one another – always belong to the present. One of the great strengths of Stoicism lies in having shown that every sign is a sign of the present, from the point of view of the passive synthesis in which past and future are precisely only dimensions of the present itself. A scar is the sign not of a past wound but of 'the present fact of having been wounded': we can say that it is the contemplation of the wound, that it contracts all the instants which separate us from it into a living present. Or rather, that we find here the true meaning of the distinction between natural and artificial: natural signs are signs founded upon passive synthesis; they are signs of the present, referring to the present in which they signify. Artificial signs, by contrast, are those which refer to the past or the future as distinct dimensions of the present, dimensions on which the present might in turn depend. Artificial signs imply active syntheses – that is to say, the passage from spontaneous imagination to the active faculties of reflective representation, memory and intelligence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Descartes could draw his conclusion only by expelling time, by reducing the Cogito to an instant and entrusting time to the operation of continuous creation carried out by God. More generally, the supposed identity of the *I* has no other guarantee than the unity of God himself. For this reason, the substitution of the point of view of the 'T' for the point of view of 'God' has much less importance than is commonly supposed, so long as the former retains an identity that it owes precisely to the latter. God survives as long as the *I* enjoys a subsistence, a simplicity and an identity which express the entirety of its resemblance to the divine. Conversely, the death of God does

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Note on the Three Repetitions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We call this dark precursor, this difference in itself or difference in the second degree which relates heterogeneous systems and even completely disparate things, the *disparate*. In each case, the space in which it is displaced and its process of disguise determine a relative size of the differences brought into relation. It is well known that in certain cases (in certain systems), the difference between the differences brought into play may be 'very large'; in other systems it must be 'very small'.²⁵ It would be wrong, however, to see in this second case the pure expression of a prior requirement of resemblance, which would then be relaxed in the first case only by being extended to the world scale. For example, it is insisted that disparate series must necessarily be almost similar, or that the frequencies be neighbouring (w neighbour of w_0) – in short, that the difference be small. If, however, the identity of the agent which causes the different things to communicate is presupposed, then there are no differences which will not be 'small', even on the world scale. We have seen that small and large apply badly to difference, because they judge it according to the criteria of the Same and the similar. If difference is related to its differentiator, and if we refrain from attributing to the differentiator an identity that it cannot and does not have, then the difference will be small or large according to its possibilities of fractionation – that is, according to the displacements and disguise of the differentiator. In no case will it be possible to claim that a small difference testifies to a strict condition of resemblance, any more than a large difference testifies to the persistence of a resemblance which is simply relaxed. Resemblance is in any case an effect, a functional product, an external result – an illusion which appears once the agent arrogates to itself an identity that it lacked. The important thing is not that the difference be small or large, and ultimately always small in relation to a greater resemblance. The important thing, for the

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

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

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

Note on the Proustian experiences

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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