

# THE PURE FORM OF TIME AND THE POWER OF THE FALSE

## DELEUZE ON TEMPORALITY AND TRUTH

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Much of Deleuze's work toward the end of his career was oriented around two distinct but interrelated problems: the concept of time and the concept of truth. On the one hand, Deleuze argues that a fundamental revolution in our conception of time occurred in Kant. In antiquity, time had been subordinated to movement, but in Kant, time is liberated from movement and assumes an autonomy of its own. Deleuze develops this thesis most explicitly in the two volumes of *Cinema*, entitled *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image*.<sup>1</sup> Although these books are contributions to film studies as well as commentaries on Bergson's work, one of their fundamental philosophical contributions is to analyze the implications of the Kantian revolution, and to thereby extend

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* [1983], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986); *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* [1985], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989). One of the themes of these books is that the cinema, in its much shorter history, nonetheless recapitulated this philosophical revolution in the movement-time relation.

and elaborate on the theory of time initially formulated by Deleuze in the third chapter of *Difference and Repetition*.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, this new status of time puts the concept of truth in crisis. The ancients had sought something outside of movement — something immobile or invariant — through which all movements could be measured, thereby subordinating time to the eternal, the non-temporal, an ‘originary’ time. The discovery of this originary time was at the same time the discovery of the true, since the truth was universal and necessary *in all times and in all places*. But the liberation of time from movement, Deleuze argues, entails a liberation of the false from the true: the form of the true gives way to the powers of the false. Just as time is freed from its subordination to movement, the false is freed from its subordination to the true (the false is no longer ‘not true’) and, like time, assumes an autonomy of its own. Although this theme is developed explicitly in a chapter of *The Time-Image* entitled “The Powers of the False,”<sup>3</sup> it is the analytic of concepts presented in *What is Philosophy?* that is Deleuze’s most direct attempt to insert the form of time into concepts.<sup>4</sup>

The aim in what follows is to analyze the complex relation between the form of time and the powers of the false, and to explore the consequences that Deleuze derives from their respective liberations.

## 1. THE PURE FORM OF TIME

### 1.1. *Originary Time: The Ancient Coordination of Extensive and Intensive Movement*

The ancients subordinated the concept of time to the concept of movement. Aristotle, in the *Physics*, writes that time is the measure or

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* [1968], trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994), chap. 3, “Repetition-for-Itself,” 70-128.

<sup>3</sup> Deleuze, “The Powers of the False,” in *The Time-Image*, 126-55.

<sup>4</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994).

“number of movement.”<sup>5</sup> But since there are a plurality of movements, there is necessarily a plurality of times.<sup>6</sup> When a lion chases a gazelle, the different movements of each animal cannot be said to unfold in a homogenous time. Each movement has its own duration, its own articulations, its own divisions and subdivisions; in subduing the gazelle, the lion incorporates the gazelle into its own movements, its own time. The ancients were thus led to ask the question: Is there something immobile or invariant, outside of movement — or at least a most perfect movement — through which all other movements could be measured? Is there a movement of movements in relation to which all other movements could be coordinated — a great celestial schema, or what Leibniz might have called a kind of ‘metaschematism’?<sup>7</sup> This question wound up being answered in two different ways because there existed two fundamental types of movement: the *extensive* movements of the cosmos and the *intensive* movements of the soul. In antiquity, Plato and Plotinus provided the paradigmatic conceptions of time for these two kinds of movement.

In the *Timaeus*, for instance, Plato sought to incorporate the extensive movements of cosmos into a vision of a ‘planetarium’ comprised of eight globes, with the immobile earth at the center, surrounded by a sphere of ‘the fixed’ (the stars) turning on its axis, following a circuit that, by some calculations, was thought to last ten thousand years. It was precisely this movement of movements that provided a reference point by which all other extensive movements were to be measured: an invariant, a permanence. Time, in this manner, was subordinated to eternity, to the non-temporal. In Plato’s famous formula, time was “the moving image of eternity.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* 4.11.219b5-8: “time is the number of movement in respect of before and after.”

<sup>6</sup> The contemporary discipline of chronobiology, for example, examines the complex coexisting rhythms that are present within all organisms: heartbeats, reproductive rhythms, sleep patterns, and so on. See John D. Palmer, *The Living Clock: The Orchestrator of Biological Rhythms* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> See Leibniz, Letter to Arnould, 30 April 1687, where Leibniz faults the ancients for substituting a concept of ‘metempsychosis’ for a ‘metaschematism’ (*metempsychosis pro metaschematismis*).

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d. Aristotle’s definition is similarly indexed on movement: “time is the number of motion in respect of before and after” (*Physics* 4.11.219b2).

But Aristotle had already observed that time not only measures the extensive movements of cosmic bodies, but also the intensive movements of the soul, that is, *the passage from one internal state to another*. “If any movement takes place in the mind,” he wrote in the *Physics*, “we at once suppose that some time also has elapsed.”<sup>9</sup> Husserl’s celebrated study of *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* would later become the classic analysis of the structure of these internal movements, such as pre-tention and retention.<sup>10</sup> But the shift from the cosmos to the soul entails a profound change in the nature of movement, since intensive quantities are very different from extensive quantities.<sup>11</sup> Suppose I have twenty bottles, each filled with a liter of water whose temperature is fifty degrees. I can pour the water of all these bottles into a separate container: though the volume of water will now be twenty liters, its temperature will remain fifty degrees. This is because volume is an extensive quantity, whereas temperature is an intensive quantity. Extensive quantities are additive, but intensive quantities are not. If they were, as Diderot quipped, you could simply add snowballs together to produce heat.<sup>12</sup> Extensive quantity is a *parts-whole* relation: the parts are external to each other (the exteriority of relations), and one part does not contain another part; what contains parts is always a whole, even if this whole is itself a part in relation to another whole. Intensive quantity, by contrast, is a *zero-unit* relation. What distinguishes two intensive quantities is the variable *distance* through which one comprehends their distance from zero intensity, although these distances are non-decomposable. The distance of forty degrees from zero is ‘greater’ than the distance of thirty degrees from zero,

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* 4.11.219a5.

<sup>10</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, ed. Martin Heidegger, trans. James Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1964).

<sup>11</sup> Deleuze analyzes the distinction between extensive and intensive quantities in detail in *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994), chap. 4, “The Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible,” 222-61; chap. 3, “Repetition-for-Itself,” 70-128.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Duhem, *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* (1914), trans. Philip Wiener (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1954), 112: “Diderot used to ask jokingly how many snowballs would be required to heat an oven.” Deleuze refers to this anecdote in his seminar of 20 March 1984. Transcriptions of Deleuze’s seminars can be found at two websites: *Le Voix de Deleuze*, at the Univ. of Paris VIII (<http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/deleuze>) and *WebDeleuze*, a site maintained by Richard Pinhas, a musician and former student of Deleuze ([www.webdeleuze.com](http://www.webdeleuze.com)).

but neither of these distances is divisible into parts.<sup>13</sup> If time is the measure of movement, then time becomes something different when it measures intensive movements rather than simply extensive movements.

Plotinus's analysis of the soul was modeled on the concept of intensive quantity, and his greatness was to have incorporated the intensive movements of the soul into his vision of the movement of the 'One,' with its emanative processes of procession and conversion. Plotinus's dialectic proceeds in terms of a series of *powers*, beginning with the One, and proceeding through thought, the soul, nature, phenomena, and so on.<sup>14</sup> Intensive movement is an ordination of non-decomposable distances, that is, an ideal *fall* that marks the relation of a series of powers to zero.<sup>15</sup> Time emerges as the measure of intensive movement in two ways. Eternity (*aeon*) designates the fact that all 'powers' are each internal to the other insofar as they are 'One.' The 'now' (*nun*) is a privileged point in the internal movement of the soul that is intrinsically distinguishable from other points through their differing degrees of power, dividing into a pure past and a pure future, while nonetheless remaining united in the One. This act of distinction is thus at the same time a synthesis, and Deleuze suggests that the Neo-Platonists were the first to see that time is inseparable from an act of synthesis.<sup>16</sup>

What one sees in both Plato and Plotinus, then, is the formation of an originary time that serves as a measure for movement, whether it is derived from the extensive movements of the cosmos (Plato) or the

<sup>13</sup> One of the classic analyses of intensive quantities is the "Anticipations of Perception" section of Kant's first critique, which recapitulates a long tradition. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), 201-208, B207-218.

<sup>14</sup> Plotinus, "Time and Eternity," Seventh Tractate of the Third Ennead, in *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Penguin, 1991), 213-32.

<sup>15</sup> On the notion of an ideal fall, see Plotinus, "Nature, Contemplation, and the One," Eighth Tractate of the Third Ennead, in *The Enneads*, 236: "Nature, asked why it brings forth its works, might answer (if it cared to listen and to speak): [...] 'Whatever comes into being is my vision, seen in my silence, the vision that belongs to my character who, sprung from vision, am vision-loving and create vision by the vision-seeing faculty in me. The mathematicians from their vision draw their figures: but I draw nothing: I gaze and *the figures of the material world take being as if they fell from my contemplation*'" (emphasis added). The rejection of 'drawing' marks Plotinus's distance from Plato's dialectic, which entails a 'real' fall of the intelligible into the sensible.

<sup>16</sup> Deleuze discusses the Platonic and Neo-Platonic conceptions of time in a remarkable series of seminars from 7 February 1984 to 27 March 1984, which include analyses that have no correlate in Deleuze's published texts.

intensive movements of the soul (Plotinus). In both cases, the result was a hierarchization of movements depending on their proximity to or distance from the eternal, which Deleuze characterizes as an originary time marked by privileged positions in the cosmos or privileged moments in the soul. The discovery of this invariant was itself the discovery of the true, since truth required a universally commensurable time and space over which it could govern.

One should note that the common distinction between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ time does not mark a break with the ancient subordination of time to movement. Objective ‘clock time’ (or ‘physical time’) and the subjective experience of ‘time consciousness’ *both* measure movement, the sole difference being the type of movement, extensive or intensive. In his debate with Bergson, Einstein famously quipped that “the time of the philosophers is not real” (he was referring to the concept of psychological time), but Einstein did not challenge the presumption that time is a measure of movement, with the movement of light as a constant.<sup>17</sup> Special relativity had its roots in the problem of the synchronization of clocks: if “time moves more slowly” for an object moving faster than another object, it is because the clocks on each object are measuring different movements.<sup>18</sup> In this sense, special relativity remained tied to the ancient conception of time.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, modernity no less than antiquity remains engaged in a vast effort to render both time and movement homogeneous and uniform: the International System of Units (SI) still subordinates time to movement, defining a second in terms of the motion of a caesium atom.<sup>20</sup> Despite these practical exigencies, the fundamental issue in

<sup>17</sup> Jimena Canales, *The Physicist and the Philosopher: Einstein, Bergson, and the Debate That Changed Our Understanding of Time* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> See Peter Gallison, *Einstein’s Clocks and Poincaré’s Maps: Empires of Time* (New York: Norton, 2004), chapter 5, “Einstein’s Clocks,” 221-293: Einstein’s work in the Swiss patent office put him in a position “to seize clock coordination as the principled starting point of relativity” (260).

<sup>19</sup> Similarly, McTaggart’s famous distinction between the A-series and the B-series (the tensed and the tenseless, the successive and the eternal), like the distinction between perdurantism and endurantism, presume the subordination of time to movement. As Carlo Rovelli argues, in *The Order of Time* (trans. Erica Segre and Simon Carnell; New York: Riverhead Books, 2018), it was general relativity that brought about “the destruction of the notion of time [as movement]” in favor of pure change or pure events (96-97).

<sup>20</sup> Robert P. Crease, *World in the Balance: The Historic Quest for an Absolute System of Measurement* (New York: Norton, 2011), 252, 264.

the theory of time is not the distinction between objective and subjective time but rather the relation between time and movement.

### 1.2. *Derived Time: Aberrations of Movement*

Nonetheless, the Kantian revolution was prepared for by the fact that both these domains — the extensive movements of the cosmos and the intensive movements of the soul — were haunted by fundamental aberrations of movement, where a *derived* time increasingly tended to free itself from the posited originary time. The closer one came to the earth — what the Greeks called the ‘sublunar’ domain — the more the extensive movements of the cosmos tended to become anomalous: the unpredictability of meteorological movements, for instance, or the movement of what comes-to-be and passes-away (becoming). Scientists can precisely predict the time of a solar eclipse, for instance, but they cannot predict whether or not they will be able to see it, that is, they cannot predict with precision the ‘sublunar’ weather. In short, the invariant provided by the ‘movement of movements’ was threatened by *crises* when cosmic movements became increasingly aberrant. Similarly, the intensive movement of the soul became marked by a *fear* that its restless movements in derived time — a *real* fall — would take on an independence of their own and would cease to be submitted to the originary time of the One, and the ‘now’ of the soul would fall into its double, the non-being of ‘instant,’ a pure disappearing. In the doctrine of the Fall developed later in Christian theology, this neo-Platonist notion of a real fall, and its corresponding fear, would take on enormous proportions.

In short, aberrant movements provoked *crises* in the extensive movements of the cosmos, and *fear* in the intensive movement of the soul. It is not by chance that, in French and many Latin languages, the same word is used for time and weather — *le temps* (from the Latin, *tempus*) — and the term has various cognates that are used to describe the aberrant motions of the cosmos (*tempest*, *temperature*, *temperate*) as well as aberrant motions of the soul (*temper*, *temperament*, *tempestuousness*).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See Michel Serres, *The Birth of Physics*, trans. Jack Hawkes; ed. David Webb (Manchester: Clinamen, 2000), 67; and Michel Serres, *Atlas* (Paris: Julliard, 1994), 100.

The question then became: Does the sublunary world, with its *tempests* and *tempestuousness*, obey the metaschematism, with its proportional rules? Or does it enjoy an independence from it, with its own anomalous movements and disharmonies? The Pythagorean discovery of irrational numbers had already pointed to a fundamental incommensurability between the speed and position of the various cosmic spheres, and the problem of calendars consists of coordinating the motions of the celestial bodies.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the search for ‘universals’ in philosophy is, in a sense, a remnant of the fear provoked in the intensive time of the soul: the very term is derived from the Latin word *universus*, meaning ‘turned toward the One’ (*uni-* ‘one’ + *versus* ‘turned,’ the past participle of *vertere*).

In Deleuze’s interpretation, these aberrant or derived movements — marked by meteorological, terrestrial, and spiritual contingencies — remained a downward tendency that still depended on the adventures of movement. They too posed a problem, a choice: either one could try to ‘save’ the primacy of movement (‘saving the appearances,’ in the Greek phrase), or one could not only accept but *will* the liberation of time with regard to movement. In effect, there were two ways in which movement could be saved. The extensive harmony of the world could be saved by an appeal to the rhythms of *rural time*, with the seasons and harvests as privileged points of reference in the originary time of Nature. The intensive harmony of the soul could be saved by an appeal to *monastic time*, with its privileged moments of prayers and vespers (the clock was initially invented to mark the hours of prayer of the monasteries); or more generally, by an appeal to a spiritual life of interiority (Luther, Kierkegaard). By contrast, the liberation of time would take place in the city, an ‘enemy’ that was nonetheless engendered by both the rural communities and monasteries themselves. The time of the city is neither a rural life nor a spiritual life, but the time of everyday life. There is no longer either an originary time or a derived time, but what Deleuze calls, simply, an *ordinary* time or an *everyday* time.

<sup>22</sup> See Anthony Aveni, *Empires of Time: Calendars, Clocks, and Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), in particular chap. 3 on the evolution of “The Western Calendar.”

### 1.3. *The Liberation of Time: Ordinary Time*

The sources of this liberation of time from movement were multiple, having socio-cultural roots in the Reformation as well as the development of capitalism. Max Weber, for instance, showed that the Reformation became conscious of this liberation of time by joining together the two ideas of a “profession” — one’s profession of faith and one’s professional activity — so that mundane professions like that of a cobbler were deemed to be as dignified as any sacred calling. Unlike the monk, whose duty was to be otherworldly, denying the self and the world, the fulfillment of one’s duty in worldly affairs became the highest form that the moral activity of individuals could take. There was only one time — everyday time — and it is in this time that we would now find our salvation.<sup>23</sup>

Likewise, Marx showed that this vision of *temporal activity* (“What do you do with your time?”), which is no longer grounded in a cosmic rhythm or a spiritual harmony, would eventually find its new model in the ‘abstract’ time of capitalism, which replaced the privileged moments of agricultural work with the any-instant-whatever (*l’instant quelconque*) of mechanized work. Time became money, the form under which money produces money (usury or credit); and money itself became “the course of time”: the abstract time of capitalism became the concrete time of the city.<sup>24</sup> It was Heidegger who would ultimately produce a prodigious philosophical concept of the everyday and its relation to time, though to some degree he still maintained the old distinction between a derived time (inauthentic) and an originary time (authentic).<sup>25</sup>

This liberation of time resulted in a fundamental change in the relationship of philosophy to the thought of everyday life (opinion). Up until the seventeenth-century, one could say that, philosophically, everyday life

<sup>23</sup> See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1905]; and *Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), as well as Deleuze’s seminar of 27 March 1984.

<sup>24</sup> Deleuze, seminar of 7 February 1984.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). Book Two recapitulates the analysis of ‘everydayness’ provided in Book One, but it does so in temporal terms.

was suspended in order to accede to something that was not everyday, namely, *a meditation on the eternal*. By contrast, the ordinary time of urban everydayness would no longer be related to the eternal, but to something very different, namely, *the production of the new*. In other words, given the flow of average everydayness, I can either raise myself vertically toward the transcendent or the eternal, at least on Sundays (or Saturdays, or Fridays), through understanding or faith; or I can remain at the horizontal flow of everydayness, in which temporality moves toward the new rather than the eternal. The *production of the new* will be the correlate of ordinary time in exactly the same way that the *discovery of the true* was the correlate of originary time with the ancients. The aim of philosophy would no longer be to *discover* pre-existent truths outside of time but to *create* non-preexisting concepts within time.<sup>26</sup>

#### 1.4. *The Pure Form of Time: The Kantian Revolution*

Deleuze argues that Kant was the first philosopher to give expression to this new conception of time, since he freed time entirely from its subordination to movement, rendering it independent and autonomous. Newton, in the *Principia*, had fostered this ‘Copernican revolution’ by positing an absolute time and space in which motion occurs, although Kant’s formulation goes beyond Newton’s.<sup>27</sup> What Kant did in the *Critique of Pure Reason* was to derive the necessary consequences from anomalies of movement, whether cosmological (the movements of the universe) or psychological (the movements of the soul).<sup>28</sup> Within philosophy, Kant freed time entirely from cosmology and psychology, as

<sup>26</sup> For Deleuze’s elucidation of these themes, see 17 April 1984 and 4 May 1984. See also *Two Regimes of Madness*, 238: “Philosophy creates concepts, which are neither generalities nor even truths; they are rather of the order of the Singular, the Important, the New.”

<sup>27</sup> See Isaac Newton, *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, Book 1 (1689), trans. Andrew Motte (1729), rev. Florian Cajori (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1934), who noted his own inversion of the movement/time relation: “Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equally without relation to anything external, and by another name is called duration: relative, apparent, and common time, is some sensible and external (whether accurate or unequable) measure of duration by the means of motion, which is commonly used instead of true time; such as an hour, a day, a month, a year” (6) (77 in the original Motte translation).

<sup>28</sup> Deleuze, seminar of 17 April 1984.

well as the eternal. Such is the conclusion Kant draws in the Transcendental Dialectic, where the Self (the soul), the World (the cosmos), and God (the eternal) are all shown to be transcendent illusions of reason that are derived from our new position in time. As a result, time is no longer dependent on *either* extensive or intensive movements, and it thereby ceases to be a measure of movement. Instead, all movements — whether originary or derived, anomalous or aberrant — are now seen to take place within time.

The reversal can be seen in the opening pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in the Transcendental Aesthetic. Before Kant, time had largely been defined by succession, space by coexistence, and eternity by permanence.<sup>29</sup> In Kant, by contrast, succession, simultaneity, and permanence are all shown to be *modes* or *relations* of time itself: succession is the rule of what is in different times; simultaneity is the rule of what is at the same time; and permanence is the rule of what is for all times. Deleuze summarizes these analyses by saying that Kant reconceived time as a *pure and empty form* of everything that changes and moves. Deleuze is here giving the concept of ‘form’ a new sense, since the form of time is not an eternal form, in a Platonic sense, but rather the pure form of what is *not* eternal.<sup>30</sup> Time is liberated: it ceases to be a cosmological or psychological time in order to become a formal time, a pure deployed form.

This is also why Deleuze insists that the pure form of time is *non-chronological*, since time cannot be reduced to any of its modes (and succession or chronology is merely a mode of time), nor can time be reduced to what takes place in time. We cannot even say that the immutable form of time is permanent, since what is permanent — no less than what is successive or simultaneous — appears and is perceived in time, whereas the immutable form of time itself cannot be perceived.

<sup>29</sup> See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, ed. H.G. Alexander (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1956), 15: “I hold it [space] to be an order of coexistences, as time is an order of successions.”

<sup>30</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “On Four Formulas That Might Summarize the Kantian Philosophy,” *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1997), 29.

Indeed, so thoroughly is the concept of time tied to movement that it would perhaps be more accurate to speak, not of the pure form of time, but rather the pure form of change, which would be characterized by its infinite *variability*.<sup>31</sup> If there is any salvation within this pure and empty form of change — time rendered ordinary — it takes place, in Kant, through the activity of *synthesis*, which is a process brought to bear, not on time itself, but on the modes of time, in order to render both being and knowledge possible.<sup>32</sup> In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze famously modified the Kantian analysis of synthesis in the direction of a concept of *passive syntheses*, which includes habit, memory, and the new.<sup>33</sup>

Bergson would later write, “the more we study the nature of time, the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, the creation of forms, *the continual elaboration of the absolutely new*,”<sup>34</sup> and this is especially so in the domain of thought. The production of the new, as opposed to the discovery of the true, is the direct consequence of the liberation of time, and it is the source of Deleuze’s well-known definition of philosophy as the *creation* of concepts.<sup>35</sup> (Kant’s *a priori* categories are relics of the originary time of the ancients.) In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy, art, and science are all determinations

<sup>31</sup> The definition of *chaos* given in *What is Philosophy?* is itself a description of the pure form of time: “Chaos is characterized less by the absence of determinations than by the infinite speed with which they take shape and vanish” (42); it implies the lack of any synthesis or rhythm between these determinations, “which spring up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence” (118).

<sup>32</sup> In Kant’s A Deduction, apprehension, reproduction, and recognition are the three temporal modes of synthesis. See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), 131-38, A98-111. Deleuze nonetheless insists that it is important not to confuse the synthesis of time with time itself, which is the fundamental error of Martin Heidegger’s reading of Kant in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1962). See Deleuze’s critique in 17 April 1984.

<sup>33</sup> See Deleuze, “Repetition for Itself,” in *Difference and Repetition*, 70-128. Joe Hughes provides an insightful analysis of Deleuze’s notion of passive synthesis, which is derived in part from Husserl, in *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* (London: Continuum, 2008), esp. 8-19.

<sup>34</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 13. It is true that, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze utilizes Bergson primarily to elucidate his concept of the ‘pure past’ (second synthesis), turning to Nietzsche, Kant and Hölderlin to explicate the conditions for the production of the new (third synthesis). See Daniela Voss, “Deleuze’s Third Synthesis of Time,” in *Deleuze Studies* 7.2 (2013): 194–216.

<sup>35</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 2.

of thought that take place within the pure form of time: from the infinite *variability* of time, philosophers extract *variations* that converge as the components of a consistent concept; scientists extract *variables* that enter into determinable relations in a function; and artists extract *varieties* that enter into the composition of a work of art.<sup>36</sup>

But this leads us to our second topic: Why does the liberation of time necessarily lead to a crisis in the traditional concept of truth?

## 2. THE POWERS OF THE FALSE

If the discovery of originary time was one and the same as the discovery of the true, Deleuze argues that the liberation of time puts the concept of truth in crisis and leads to the establishment of an autonomous concept of the false. In other words, the liberation of time from its subordination to movement is at the same time the liberation of the powers of the false from the form of the true. This is a provocative claim on Deleuze's part, since philosophers tend to have as deep a reverence for the concept of truth as believers have for the concept of God.

### 2.1. *The Form of the True*

What exactly is the form of the true? Since Aristotle, the form of the true has had a precise sense: the true is that which is *universal and necessary*, always and everywhere, in all times and in all places. The false, in turn, is effectuated in *error*: the false has no form, and error consists in giving the false the form of the true, although error itself does not itself affect the form of the true as universal. To be sure, this is not a universality of fact (*de facto*) but a universality of right (*de jure*). In fact, it may be that people rarely think, and rarely think the true. But to say that only the true has a form is to insist that, in principle, if you think a triangle, you cannot deny that a figure that has three angles necessarily has three sides. Universality and necessity qualify the judgments that

<sup>36</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 202.

are made of the form of the true. Since the false has no form, judgments made about it are by right deprived of all universality and necessity. The 'truthful person' is thus someone who would allow their mind and body to be modified only by the form of the true. The activity through which this takes place can be called the *in-formation* of the soul by the true, which takes as its model the eternal, that is, the universal and the necessary.

But how then does the form of time put the form of the true in crisis? A simplistic interpretation of this would be to say that truth changes with time, but this is a banal claim. The truth is never put in crisis if it is a question of a simple change in its *content*, and for an obvious reason: a change in content does not affect the *form* of the true. At one moment, it may be held to be true that the sun revolves around the earth; later, it may be held to be true that the earth revolves around the sun. Such changes are obviously important, but they relate to a different set of problems; they do not affect the 'form' of the truth. We could say that, while we once 'believed' the sun revolved around the earth, we now 'know' that the opposite is true *and has always been true*; we were in error, we mistook the false for the true. Error affects the content of the true, but neither error nor changes in content affect the form of the true.

Deleuze's thesis is much more profound. What puts the form of the true in crisis is the form of time *independent of its content* — that is, independent of what is true at one moment and then ceases to be true at the next moment. The form of time, in other words, cannot be confused with *chronology*, that is, the before and after, which affects the content of what is in time. But what then is this non-chronological form of time that undoes the form of the true?

## 2.2. *The Master Argument: The Problem of Contingent Futures*

The confrontation between the form of the true and the form of time had already taken place in antiquity, under the classical form of the problem of contingent futures, a problem that was encapsulated most succinctly in what came to be known as the 'Master Argument' of

Diodorus Cronus.<sup>37</sup> The argument is as follows: If it is *true* that a naval battle *may* take place tomorrow, two logical paradoxes seem to follow. The principle of non-contradiction says that, of two contradictory propositions — “there will be a naval battle tomorrow” and “there will not be a naval battle tomorrow” — one is necessarily true and the other is necessarily false. If the naval battle indeed takes place, we can say that it was the first proposition, and *only* that proposition, that was true.

But this is where the paradox emerges, in a double form. On the one hand, we began with two *possible* propositions, each of which changes modality once the event takes place: the first becomes necessary, while the second is now rendered impossible. In this case, the principle of non-contradiction is saved only at the price of contravening a second logical principle, namely, that the impossible cannot be derived from the possible. On the other hand, while the proposition “there will be a naval battle tomorrow” was true yesterday, it was not *necessarily* true, since yesterday it was still possible that the naval battle could have not taken place. In this case, the principle of non-contradiction is saved by denying that a true proposition of the past is *necessarily* true. The paradox of contingent futures thus takes on two forms: *the impossible proceeds from the possible* and *what is true in the past is not necessarily true*.<sup>38</sup>

It is easy to regard this paradox as a sophism, and philosophy has been marked by numerous attempts to resolve it. Aristotle, for instance, was partisan of a solution which held that what is necessary is only the *alternative* between the two propositions.<sup>39</sup> The ‘master argument’ nonetheless shows the difficulty of conceiving a direct relation between

<sup>37</sup> For a classic statement of the problem, see Epictetus, *Discourses*, trans. Robin Hard (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), 2.19. Deleuze was influenced in particular by two French analyses of the Master Argument: Jules Vuillemin, *Necessity of Contingency: The Master Argument* (Stanford, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information Publications, 1996); and Pierre-Maxime Schuhl, *Le Dominateur et les possibles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960). The problem was also taken up by Kierkegaard in *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David F. Swenson and Howard V. Hong (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1936), 89 ff. For Deleuze’s discussion, see the seminars of 8 November, 22 November, and 29 November 1983, as well as *The Time-Image*, 130-31.

<sup>38</sup> Deleuze, seminar of 29 November 1983.

<sup>39</sup> See Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, 19a24-25, 30-31: “It cannot be said without qualification that all existence and non-existence is the outcome of necessity [...] A sea-fight must either take place tomorrow or not, but it is not necessary that it should take place tomorrow, neither is it necessary that it should not take place, yet it is necessary that it either should or should not take place tomorrow.”

truth and the form of time, which is precisely what obliged philosophers to keep truth in the eternal rather than in time.<sup>40</sup> Centuries later, it was Leibniz who gave the most ingenious and influential response to the problem of contingent futures as an attempt to save the form of the true. It is indeed possible that the naval battle could have *not* taken place — or that Adam could have *not* sinned, or that Caesar could have *not* crossed the Rubicon — but according to Leibniz, these events take place in worlds that are different from ours: these other worlds are possible, but they are not *compossible* with our world. To resolve the paradox of contingent futures, Leibniz was compelled to create the entirely new concept of *incompossibility*: the relation between the naval battle taking place and not taking place is no longer a simple relation of contradiction, but a relation of impossibility through the intermediary of implied worlds.<sup>41</sup> The concept of impossibility allows Leibniz to resolve the paradoxes of the master argument in two ingenious ways. First, it is not the impossible but only the *incompossible* that proceeds from the possible; and second, the past may indeed be true without being necessarily true; in Leibniz's famous phrase, it "*inclines* without necessitating."<sup>42</sup> In this way, Leibniz was able to claim that he had saved the old conception of truth, even at the level of 'truths of existence.'

In doing so, however, Leibniz both revealed and concealed something. What he revealed, consciously and explicitly, was that the ancient concept of truth was above all a theological and moral (and not merely epistemological) concept, since only the infinite understanding of God is able to comprehend the infinity of possible worlds, and Leibniz's appeal to the 'best,' as the criteria of the actually existing world, is a quintessential moral notion. But what remained concealed in Leibniz was the fact that truth could not confront existence without confronting the depth of time. If Leibniz short-circuited time, if he rarely used the

<sup>40</sup> Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 130.

<sup>41</sup> See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, trans. E.M. Huggard, ed. Austin Farrer (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985), III, §§ 169 ff., for his explicit analysis of the Master Argument.

<sup>42</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Letter to Arnaud, 14 July 1686, in *Philosophical Papers and Letters of G.W. Leibniz*, ed. Leroy E. Loemker (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1956), 337.

word ‘time’ (the word ‘time’ never appears in the *Theodicy*, even though it is the object of the book), it is because he conceived of time simply through one of its modes, namely, succession (chronology). Leibniz explored the abyss of existence, but recoiled before the chasm of time, which would have forced him to confront the discovery that the substance of time is non-chronological.<sup>43</sup> Deleuze suggests that, in Leibniz, the crisis of truth, like the crisis of theology, enjoyed “a pause rather than a solution,” but in fact this supposed pause has continued to this day in the contemporary modal logic of possible worlds.<sup>44</sup> Philosophers who speak of what is “true in all possible worlds” are intent on defending the form of the true when it is confronted with the form of time, with all the theological and moral presuppositions such a project requires.

### 2.3. *The Falsifier*

The Master Argument allows Deleuze to paint at least an initial picture of what he will call the ‘falsifier’ (*le faussaire*). If the ‘truthful person,’ as a *conceptual persona*, is someone who allows his being to be *in-formed* by the form of the true, we could say that the falsifier is someone who, from the possible, makes the impossible emerge; or who, from the past, makes something that is not necessarily true.<sup>45</sup> The falsifier, Deleuze writes, “imposes a power of the false as adequate to time, in contrast to any form of the true that would control time.”<sup>46</sup>

Readers of Deleuze know the classic examples he provides of works that are, to a certain degree, ‘falsifying’ in this manner, such as Jorge Luis Borges’s famous story “The Garden of the Forking Paths”<sup>47</sup> or Robbe-Grillet’s screenplay for Alain Resnais’ film *Last Year at Marienbad*, both of which make time appear directly in the form *impossible presents* and *not-necessarily-true pasts*.<sup>48</sup> Borges imagines a situation in

<sup>43</sup> Deleuze, seminar of 6 December 1983.

<sup>44</sup> Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 131.

<sup>45</sup> Deleuze, seminar of 29 November 1983.

<sup>46</sup> Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 132.

<sup>47</sup> Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 131; and the seminar of 6 December 1983.

<sup>48</sup> Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 130.

which a killer comes to my house. Various outcomes are possible: the killer could kill me, I could kill him, we could both die, we could both live. But in Borges's text, all these outcomes are narrated as if they were *taking place simultaneously*, all at once. Revealingly, at the end of the *Theodicy*, Leibniz had narrated the life of Sextus, a character from Roman history, in a similar way, charting out the various bifurcating possibilities in his life. But what prevented Leibniz's God from making all these possibilities, and even impossibilities, pass into existence — as they do in Borges's story — is that it would turn him into a mendacious God, a trickster God, a deceiving God, an 'evil genius' — something Descartes and Leibniz both saw very clearly, but shrank from with a kind of horror.

It is precisely here that the truthful God would be replaced by a *falsifying* God, and the concept of the false would achieve its autonomy: *to say that something is false no longer means that it is 'not true.'* Error consists in ascribing to the false the form of true; but when the false is liberated from the form of the true, it ceases to be reducible to error, and takes on a *power* of its own. The form of the true is replaced by the power of the false, and what stands opposed to the form of the true (the eternal) is the production of the new, the power of metamorphosis or becoming. As an example of this, we need look no further than Deleuze's own philosophical concepts. The ultimate aim of the analytic of concepts developed in *What is Philosophy?* is to introduce *the pure form of time* into concepts. To introduce time into concepts means that concepts do not have an *identity*, but they do have a *consistency*, that is, a *becoming* or a *metamorphosis*.

In an important text, Deleuze analyzes how his own concept of intensity passed through a series of transformations.<sup>49</sup> In *Difference and Repetition* (1968), the concept of intensity is primarily related to the dimension of depth. In *Logic of Sense* (1969), however, the concept of intensity is retained, but it is now related primarily to the dimension of

<sup>49</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Note for the Italian Edition of *Logic of Sense*," in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006), 65.

surface — same concept, but different components. In *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), the concept makes a third metamorphosis that is related to neither depth nor surface; rather, rising and falling intensities are now events that take place on a body without organs.<sup>50</sup> Even within Deleuze's corpus, the concept of intensity does not stay the same, but undergoes internal mutations and metamorphoses. In other words, Deleuze's concepts are governed not by the form of the true, but by the form of time. What distinguishes the eternal form of the true from the temporal power of the false is that the false always appears as a *plurality* or *multiplicity* of powers ( $x^1$ ,  $x^2$ ,  $x^3$ ...). One is always tempted to ask, "What is a falsifier?" but this is a badly posed question. The falsifier exists only within a series, in a plurality: behind every falsifier there is always another falsifier, like a mask behind every mask.

Deleuze suggests that, historically speaking, there are three great works that have taken the falsifier as their fundamental theme: Herman Melville's masterpiece, *The Confidence Man*, the fourth book of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and Orson Welles's great final film, *F for Fake*.<sup>51</sup> An episode from Welles's film is particularly instructive. Welles was fascinated by Hans van Meegeren, the famous Dutch forger of Vermeer's works during the Second World War. But what exactly is the difference between a forger like van Meegeren and an artist like Vermeer? Both are falsifiers, but the true artist knows how to metamorphose, whereas the forger does not know how to change. At bottom, the forger depends upon the truthful person: the expert in art who is able to judge between a genuine Vermeer and a forgery. But the expert recognizes the true Vermeer by means of criteria that he himself has established concerning Vermeer's style, or Vermeer's periods. Van Meegeren simply had to study these criteria and use them to produce his forgeries, to the point where the experts said, "This is clearly a genuine Vermeer because it corresponds to all our criteria." The expert

<sup>50</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts*, ed. Sylvère Lotinger, trans. Michael Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 261: "I've undergone a change. The surface-depth opposition no longer concerns me. What interests me now is the relationships between a full body, a body without organs, and flows that migrate."

<sup>51</sup> Deleuze, seminar of 12 June 1984.

always has a forger within him, and both the forger and the truthful person are nourished off the same substance: judgment. Both Vermeer and Van Meegeren are falsifiers, but whereas the forger is at best capable of effectuating transcendent criteria of judgment about Vermeer in his forgeries, Vermeer himself, as an artist, effectuated an immanent power of metamorphosis and becoming.

In other words, not everything is 'equal' in the chain of falsifiers. Even the truthful person is a falsifier — Plato was being a falsifier when he created the concept of an uncreated 'Idea' — and one could say that *the form of the true is the first power of the false*. At this extreme, the falsifier is someone who wants to *judge* life from the viewpoint of transcendent values, that is, from the viewpoint of an eternal 'truth.' At the other extreme, however, falsifiers are those who do not judge life, but rather are capable of changing themselves, metamorphosing, inventing and creating. The power of the false is no longer effectuated in 'judging life' but in 'assuring metamorphoses,' that is, in *creating the new*.<sup>52</sup>

But the paradigmatic example of the powers of the false is provided, not by art, but by science. It is often said that what distinguishes science from other modes of knowledge is that it is not dogmatic, like theology, but rather is willfully fallible, that is, it will quickly alter its hypotheses and claims to 'truth' based on new evidence. But there are perhaps two ways of understanding this fallibility. In the first, if truth is expressed in propositions that refer to or denote reality, then one could see science, in principle at least, marching toward a kind of complete or 'absolute' truth, where the descriptions given in propositions will perfectly denote the corresponding reality — the map will become equivalent to the territory. Science, in this view, is an asymptotic progress toward an ideal, and that ideal is the 'Form of the True,' even if in fact science may never reach this ideal. As Kant showed, it is the idea of God that expresses this ideal of absolute knowledge. Indeed, it has been argued that, in the seventeenth century, science was a secularized theology: the notion of one God as an eternal being with immutable attributes was transferred onto a single Nature governed by a set of unchanging laws

<sup>52</sup> Deleuze, seminar of 12 June 1984.

(*Deus sive natura*).<sup>53</sup> Monotheism was transformed into a mononaturalism that still held on to an eternal form of the true.<sup>54</sup>

The second way of understanding the fallibility of science would be to recognize that, precisely *because* of its fallibility, most of the hypotheses that science currently takes to be true are inevitably going to be revised and perhaps even rejected in the future and will be replaced by new hypotheses. In other words, many of the propositions now taken to be true in science are almost certainly false, and the propositions and hypotheses that will replace them in the future will also turn out to be false. In this view, the supposed ‘progress’ of science is in fact a movement from falsity to falsity. Far from progressing toward the ‘form of the true,’ science is itself a movement that embodies the powers of the false as a power of metamorphosis and becoming, a series of falsities (which does not mean ‘untruths’), a multiplicity of powers. The theme of the ‘power of the false’ thus has little to do with the power of fiction, or illusion, or the power of telling lies, interesting as such notions are. Deleuze’s claim is much more profound: even at the heart of science, it is the power of the false that reigns, and not the form of the true. This is hardly a new idea. The Popperian thesis that *every theory is born refuted* means nothing else. The physicist John Archibald Wheeler held that laws of nature themselves evolve, rather than being eternal and immutable.<sup>55</sup> And Nancy Cartwright, in *How the Laws of Physics Lie* and other works, has similarly argued against “universal laws” as the central explanatory and predictive mechanisms employed in the sciences in favor of a patchwork of *ceteris paribus* laws that, taken literally, are

<sup>53</sup> See Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, 2nd. ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986), 3-9.

<sup>54</sup> Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004), 33: “Multiculturalism acquires its rights to multiplicity only because it is solidly propped up by mononaturalism.”

<sup>55</sup> John Archibald Wheeler, “On Recognizing ‘Law without Law,’” Oersted Medal Response at the joint APS–AAPT Meeting, New York, 25 January 1983, *American Journal of Physics* 5, no. 3 (1983): 398-404: “All of physics, in my view, will be seen someday to follow the pattern of thermodynamics and statistical physics, regularity based on chaos, ‘law without law.’ Specifically, I believe that everything is built higgledy-piggledy on the unpredictable outcomes of billions upon billions of elementary quantum phenomena, and that the laws and initial conditions of physics arise out of this chaos by the action of a regulating principle, the discovery and proper formulation of which is the number one task of the coming third era of physics” (398).

false.<sup>56</sup> Deleuze's contribution is to have provided a rigorous exposition of an autonomous concept of the false, and to have shown how it is derived from the pure form of time.

But how, finally, are we to ultimately understand Deleuze's appeal to the autonomy and independence of the concept of falsity? The power of the false can be said to be *creative*, but creative of what? At one point, Deleuze suggests that there is no reason not to return to the term 'truth': the power of the false is creative of truth.<sup>57</sup> But this implies an entirely new concept of truth: truth as something to be created (the powers of the false) has nothing to do with the truth of the truthful person, or with the form of the true. If one makes these modifications in the concept of the truth, one could say that philosophy, science, and art, *as* powers of the false, are nothing other than enterprises in the creation of truth within the pure form of time. Yet this suggestion, made almost in passing, risks concealing the import of Deleuze's analyses, reducing his concept of the false to another in a long line of proposed conceptions of truth (Platonic, empiricist, pragmatist, linguistic). For Deleuze's significance lies elsewhere. Nietzsche seems to have been the first to have questioned the *value* of truth ("Suppose we want truth: *why not rather* untruth?")<sup>58</sup> and to have proposed a *critique* of the concept of truth ("The will to truth requires a critique — let us thus define our own task — the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*").<sup>59</sup> In showing how time puts the concept of truth in crisis, Deleuze carries Nietzsche's critique to a higher power, showing that *truth is itself a power of the false*, and thus that the critique of the concept of truth must be undertaken from the viewpoint of the false.

<sup>56</sup> See Nancy Cartwright, "The Truth Doesn't Explain Much," in *How the Laws of Physics Lie* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 44-53: "Most scientific explanations use *ceteris paribus* laws. These laws, read literally as descriptive statements, are false, not only false but deemed false even in the context of use" (52); "Where Do Laws of Nature Come From: Fundamentalism versus the Patchwork of Laws," in *The Dappled World: A Study in the Boundaries of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 23-34; and "The Dethronement of Laws in Science," in *Rethinking Order: After the Laws of Nature* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 25-52.

<sup>57</sup> Deleuze, seminar of 13 December 1983.

<sup>58</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), § 1, 199.

<sup>59</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Essay 3, § 24, 589.

Far from simply proposing a new concept of true, Deleuze shows that the true is secondary to the false, and that the false, in its relation to the pure form of time, is a far more important concept to philosophy than the concept of truth.

KEYWORDS: Gilles Deleuze, Immanuel Kant, time, temporality, truth, falsity, concepts, the new.

SUMMARY:

This paper explores the relation of the theory of time and the theory of truth in Deleuze's philosophy. According to Deleuze, a mutation in our conception of time occurred with Kant. In antiquity, time had been subordinated to movement, it was the measure or the "number of movement" (Aristotle). In Kant, this relation is inverted: time is no longer subordinated to movement but assumes an independence and autonomy of its own for the first time. In Deleuze's phrasing, time becomes the *pure and empty form* of everything that moves and changes — not an eternal form (as in Plato), but precisely the form of what is *not* eternal. In turn, the theory of time is inextricably linked to the concept of truth, since to say that a proposition is true means that it is true "in all times and in all places." Truth, in other words, is timeless, eternal, non-temporal. When the form of the true is confronted with the form of time, the concept of truth is necessarily put into crisis, and Deleuze's argument is that time allows the *power of the false* to assume an autonomy of its own. The analysis will attempt to show how the liberation of time from movement (*the pure and empty form of time*) leads to a liberation of the false from the true (*the power of the false*).