PART I.

BEGINNINGS:
SURVEYING THE TERRAIN
CHAPTER 1.

DELEUZE’S READING OF CRITIQUE

What it means to ‘do’ the history of philosophy is a question that recurs throughout Deleuze’s many works in this field, and it is continuous with Deleuze’s understanding of what it means to do philosophy per se. Deleuze’s reconstruction of the thought of other thinkers, and his use of their concepts in his own work, is frequently combined with a polemic regarding the true nature of relationship between philosophers and the oppressive effect of “the history of philosophy” in its institutional forms. Deleuze’s reading of Kant’s ‘Copernican revolution’ reflects his understanding of thought, and its history, as itself revolutionary. Deleuze often invokes Nietzsche when speaking of the relationship between philosophy and history, and his approach resembles the “suprahistorical” perspective diagnosed in Nietzsche’s essay on “the uses and disadvantages of history for life.” In this piece, Nietzsche contrasts the “forgetfulness” or “unhistorical” sense, required for action and happiness, to the mire of reflection or “rumination”, in which those over-endowed with a historical sense can become trapped. Against both, however, he sets the suprahistorical vantage point, from which one “could scent out and retrospectively breathe this unhistorical atmosphere within which every great historical event has taken place.” Insofar as great actions are accomplished “against their time”, with a view to creating the future, they have an oracular quality. History itself acquires nobility and strength when it understands this quality and uses it in turn to serve as an “architect of the future”; “only he who constructs the future has a right to judge the past.” It is in this “untimely” way that Deleuze reads the work of other philosophers: as both revolutionary in themselves and by nature, and as participating in a contemporary philosophical gesture with its own revolutionary interests.

This ‘creative’ or ‘motivated’ approach to interpretation is also expressed in the ‘affirmative’ character of Deleuze’s reading of philosophy, again itself a part of a philosophy of affirmation. Deleuze frequently stresses that where we see an apparent negation or negative element in philosophy, we
must try to find the positive element of which it is a by-product: “every time we find ourselves confronted or bound by a limitation or an opposition, we should ask what such a situation presupposes.” Negation is never primary in philosophy for Deleuze, which is to say that it cannot be the basis of a philosophical position. Thus when it comes to critique, we cannot define critical philosophy through the notion of the inaccessibility of the thing-in-itself, but must rather look to see what it is that makes access to the thing-in-itself redundant, or more specifically, a “false problem.” After sketching Kant’s position on knowledge as applying to phenomena rather than things in themselves, for example, Deleuze writes:

It should not be thought that Kant has need of any long demonstrations to arrive at this result: it is a point of departure for Critique, the real problem of the Critique of Pure Reason begins beyond this point. Philosophy proceeds by the succession of problems, which displace rather than contradict previous ones. We do not gauge the value of a philosophy by examining points of agreement or disagreement with other philosophies or with ‘experience’, which is to say, on a propositional level, but by looking to what new possibilities it creates and what new problem it poses: what it does rather than what it says.

Deleuze’s expression of what he considers to be the central principles of a critical philosophy is largely consistent across his work. His ‘casting’ of the figure of Kant, however, varies according to the polemic in which he is engaged. In his works on philosophers from history, and most explicitly in his books on Hume and Nietzsche, he casts his subject in the role of a rival to Kant for the achievement of the critical project, thus performing a sort of philosophical ‘ventriloquism’, where the work of others is made to express his own critical aspirations and reservations. The aim of his discussions of Kant and critique is nevertheless the clarification of what he considers to be important in the critical project, and not an attack on Kant for its own sake. Thus, his own book on Kant only marginally raises the criticisms of Kant’s position which he has previously expressed, instead building a positive and coherent account of the “architectonic” of Kant’s three critiques in just over a hundred pages. In this context, moreover, he does not hesitate to recast Hume, for example, as a ‘pre-critical’ thinker. Similarly, in Deleuze’s lectures in the 70s and 80s, Kant’s importance and originality is presented using many of the
same terms with which Deleuze had previously characterised Nietzsche’s importance as a critical philosopher, at Kant’s expense. When Deleuze is writing philosophy ‘in his own name’ rather than through the philosophy of others, he adopts the customary ambivalence of the Kantian: on the one hand applauding Kant’s insights while on the other supplementing his perceived deficiencies.

The motif that both dominates Deleuze’s understanding of critique and characterises his affinity with Kant is his conception of thought as “active.” In the first place, this means that the problems and ends of philosophy must be approached from the perspective of the thinker as actor rather than spectator. As an actor or agent, the thinker is a point of transformation or “transmutation” of forces and values. The key to the active status of the thinker is that she does not simply ‘follow’ what is given, but combines and distils the given into the principle of an action. By contrast, the figure of the ‘spectator’ is less that of one who does not act than one whose actions are not assumed as such, and are thus turned against themselves in what Deleuze calls, after Nietzsche, the mode of the “reactive.” The thinker as actor also has a dramatic sense, implying a typology of ‘attitudes’ and corresponding configurations of the scenario of thought, according to the stakes of the action. These stakes, at the centre of the act of thought, beyond its subject or object, are the question and the problem: the imperative of the question and the dialectic of the problem, which fuel and govern the ongoing process of thought.

**Hume: ‘empirical’ critique**

The critical exclusion of the thing-in-itself as a theoretical object is bound up with this active conception of thought. Their connection forms the topic of Deleuze’s first reference to the notion of critique: his reading of Hume’s empiricism, which is the topic of his first book, *Empiricism and subjectivity: an essay on Hume’s theory of human nature*. Having presented philosophy in general as the “search for a plane of analysis”, from which a critique of experience can be undertaken, Deleuze presents Hume’s empiricism as a
variant that, beginning with the immanent field of passions and impressions, poses the question of how a subject capable of knowledge and morality is constituted. Empiricism, for Deleuze, is not above all an epistemological tendency regarding the source of our knowledge, but a practical theory regarding the constitution of the subject of knowledge and morality. Both require that we go beyond the partiality of the given to make universal claims, and it is through our adherence to a set of principles through our beliefs and moral commitments that we constitute ourselves as subjects endowed with a “human nature” beyond the vagaries of “spirit.” In his way, the problem of empiricism emerges as the following: “how, in the given, can a subject be constituted such that it goes beyond the given?” He contrasts this fundamental question of “empirical critique” to what he here calls “transcendental critique”, which begins with “a methodologically reduced plane that provides an essential certainty” and poses instead the question: “how can there be a given, how can something be given to a subject, how can the subject give something to itself?” In either case, however, we are to understand that the critique of experience is ultimately “the critique of a philosophy of Nature”—the renunciation of speculation as to the ‘real’ operations of things as they exist in themselves:

The two critiques, in fact, merge to the point where they become one. Why? Because the question of a determinable relation with Nature has its own conditions: it is not self-evident, it is not given, it can only be posed by a subject, a subject questioning the value of the system of his judgements, that is, the legitimacy of the transformation to which he subjects the given undergo or of the organisation which he confers upon it.

It is only as an effect of the negotiation or agon between what is given and the principles we bring to bear on it that we can address the notion of a Nature of things, including even any physiological nature that we may want to admit as the minimal presupposition of an act of thought:

It will be said that the given, at least, is given to the senses, that it presupposes the organs or even a brain. No doubt, but what must be avoided again and always, is to grant in the first place to the organism an organisation which comes to it only when the subject itself comes to the spirit, which is to say an organisation which depends on the same principles as the subject itself.

It bears noting here that in Deleuze’s book on Kant, he makes an identical point regarding critique—that “the given” obeys the same principles as our
subjectivity: “that which presents itself to us in such a way as to form a Nature must necessarily obey principles of the same kind (or rather, the *same principles*) as those which govern the course of our representations.” In this context, however, he makes the point against Hume, who is presented as a philosopher who *derives* principles *from* a (psychological) “human nature”, rather than one who *constitutes* a human nature *through* principles, and it is Kant instead who “transforms the problem.” This tendency of Deleuze to ‘switch roles’ or ‘change names’ has already been mentioned. What is important, however, in so far as it bears upon the understanding of Deleuze’s relationship with Kant, is that the point remains the same and is thus what is most essential, and that it is a recognisably Kantian point, even if applied and attributed to a pre-Kantian philosopher.

Because the theoretical content of a philosophy is the product not of a reflection on Nature, but of a dialectic between the given and a set of principles, its value is secondary in relation to this central process which forms the proper object of a critical philosophy and critical practice. Deleuze’s second discussion of critique in *Empiricism and subjectivity* extends this principle to the context of the reading of philosophers in history. Most criticisms of “great philosophers”, Deleuze argues, fall short of being truly philosophical because they remain at the level of the theoretical proposition, and locate the conditions of the theory outside of philosophy in empirical circumstances rather than at its heart:

They consist in criticising a theory without considering the nature of the problem to which it responds, and in which it finds its foundation and its structure. Thus, Hume is reproached with the ‘atomisation’ of the given, and it is considered sufficient to denounce an entire system by showing at it base a decision of Hume the person, a particular taste of Hume’s or the spirit of his time.14

Instead, Deleuze contends that a philosophical theory, and the vision of nature it yields, is necessary only in virtue of a driving question: “a philosophical theory is a developed question, and nothing else... It shows us what things are, what indeed things must necessarily be, on the condition that the question is good and rigorous.” Deleuze presents critique as a “putting into question”, where this process is understood not as a contemplative distance or suspense, but a positive imperative that generates a “nature”: “To
put something in question means to subordinate, to submit things to the question in such a way that in this constrained and forced submission they reveal to us an essence, a nature.”

It is, on the contrary, those who read theory as a simple representation of “how things are” who trivialise the difficulty of thought, as if it were born “from itself and for the fun of it.” This understanding of the imperative character of the question recalls that of Kant in his Preface to the first critique, where reason approaches nature in the manner of “an appointed judge who compels the witness to answer questions that he himself has formulated.” The critic or reader of philosophy continues this process of developing the implications of the question, showing in what sense it is rigorous or not, “in other words, how things would not be what they are were the question different from the one formulated.” The critical operation is thus presented in the same terms across the different levels of the production of thought: the constitution of the knowing and moral subject in Hume’s critique; the development of a philosophy and philosophical interpretation.

**Nietzsche: ‘genealogical’ critique**

From the first pages of Deleuze’s book on Nietzsche, Nietzsche’s philosophy is presented as a specifically critical philosophy, one of whose “principal motives” is to redress the errors of Kant. Critical philosophy is identified with a philosophy of value, which has two primary senses here. In the first place, “value” plays a role analogous to that of the “principle” in Deleuze’s reading of Hume: that to which the ‘given’ is referred—“values appear or are given as principles: an evaluation presupposes values on the basis of which phenomena are appraised.” In the second place, and on a more profound level, the philosophy of value addresses not just different values, but the multiple points of view from which values are generated: “The problem of critique is that of the value of values, of the evaluation from which their value arises, thus the problem of their creation.” As phenomena are referred to values for their sense, so values are themselves referred to a centre of evaluation or “mode of existence” as their own principle of significance. This double sense of the philosophy of value underlies the “genealogical” method in philosophy. It is
opposed both to the notion of “established” or “given” values, and to the attempt to derive value from the authority of ‘fact’, which either misunderstands the specificity of value or the question of its genesis. In so doing, they reduce the essential “pluralism” of a philosophy of value, by subjecting their variety to the unitary character of a subjective nature or objective datum:

pluralism... is but one with philosophy itself. Pluralism is the properly philosophical way of thinking, invented by philosophy; the only guarantor of freedom in the concrete spirit, the only principle of a violent atheism.23

The genealogical method serves both to distinguish the opposed orientations of the “high” and the “low”, or the “active” and the “reactive”, and is itself an expression of an “active science”, as it approaches phenomena from the perspective of the actor who bestows their value and sense. The persona of the philosopher in Nietzsche is analysed by Deleuze into three figures that represent different aspects of the genealogical method: the philosopher-doctor who interprets the phenomenon as symptom of a force; the philosopher-artist who establishes a typology and the philosopher-legislator who assigns rank or lineage.24 This portrait of thought as diagnostic, artistic and legislative runs throughout Deleuze’s philosophy, and is connected to his understanding of judgement in Kant’s philosophy. Deleuze explains reflective judgements in his book on Kant, for example, with reference to the diagnostic procedure of the doctor, and the art of the creation of concepts is referred to a form of “taste” in What is philosophy?.25 After his presentation of the philosopher “type”, Deleuze introduces his notion of the “dramatic” method in philosophy, which displaces the question of essence—what is x?—with the more primary question—who?, as the mark of a centre of evaluation which gives sense or value to the thing. This is in turn allied with Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s “will to power” as the “genetic and critical” instance of thought.

The will to power is misunderstood, on Deleuze’s account, as a desire for power. The determining nature of willing is in fact betrayed by any account which considers the will to be determined by an object or end rather than representing an end in itself: “Ends and objects, even motives, are still symptoms... What a will wants is always its own quality and the quality of corresponding forces.”26 Subjecting the activity of the will to a representation
of which it is a function degrades our conception of the will as creative and instead makes it a struggle for power or recognition in the arena of established values. It is this in turn which gives the conception of power and will—as for example in the philosophies of Hobbes, Hegel and Schopenhauer—what Deleuze calls an “affective tonality” of pathos and contradiction: “It is as if the essence of the will puts us into an unliveable, untenable and deceptive situation.” The conception of the will as inherently contradictory reaches its apotheosis in the philosophy of Schopenhauer, where the will, as “the world seen from the inside” and thus essence, futilely seeks to fulfil itself in the world of representation or appearance—hence the Buddhistic conception of will as suffering and the postulated solution in the form of a mystical renunciation.

Nietzsche’s attempt to liberate philosophy from the “old metaphysics” with a philosophy of the will is thus at the same time an attempt to liberate the will from its previous misconceptions. Against the notion of the will as representing suffering and struggle, Nietzsche’s philosophy posits the principles of the creativity of willing and the joyfulness of the will, principles which “take on an extremely precise meaning if one understands their critical aspect.” The reversal consists in seeing the will as something that gives rather than seeking to acquire or take, which determines itself and its value rather than receiving it from others or elsewhere, which affirms rather than negates. This is the “high” or “masterly” conception of the will, where negation is only the ‘wake’ of a prior affirmation, and is opposed to the “low” or “slave” conception where affirmation is derivative of a primarily negative drive. It is in its masterly form that Deleuze understands the “critical” conception of the negative:

Critique is destruction as joy, the aggression of the creator. The creator of values cannot be distinguished from a destroyer, a criminal and a critic: a critic of established values, reactive values and baseness.

**Kantian critique**

While Deleuze directs much of his analysis of the ‘critical’ Nietzsche against Kant, his own book on Kant, appearing in the following year (1963), provides a reading of Kant that mirrors in many respects his understanding of Nietzsche. Kant’s philosophy is presented as in the first place a theory of the will, and,
more importantly, of the autonomy of the will, which is to say its independence from an object or representation that would determine it. Deleuze’s book begins by identifying the principal rivals to Kant’s critique as empiricism and rationalism, in virtue of the fact that each of these schools present the will as determined by an object or end—a “representation”—external to reason. In empiricism, as it is conceived here, reason is only a means or form of “detour” for ends which ultimately belong to nature. For rationalism, while it accepts the existence of properly rational ends, these too are conceived in the form of a transcendent instance: “a Being, a Good or a Value, taken as rule of will.”

Consequently, there is less difference than might be supposed between rationalism and empiricism. An end is a representation which determines the will. In so far as the representation is of something external to the will, it hardly matters whether it is sensible or purely rational; in any case it determines the act of willing only through the satisfaction linked to the ‘object’ it represents.

Against this, Deleuze contends that for Kant, “the supreme ends are not only ends of reason, but… in positing them reason posits nothing other than itself.” In the matter of reason’s interests, it is reason alone that posits and judges their value, to the exclusion of external instances, whether empirical or divine. The object of each critique is to discover whether in the case of each faculty (understanding, desiring, pleasure and pain), it is capable of a ‘superior’, which is to say autonomous, exercise: “We may say that a faculty has a higher form when it finds in itself the law of its own exercise.” Its ‘inferior’ form would consist in its external determination, or “heteronomy.”

The second point of resonance with the reading of Nietzsche’s critique is the focus on the “pluralism” of a philosophy of will. Deleuze defines a “faculty” as in the first place corresponding to an interest of reason: the faculty of knowledge, the faculty of desire and the faculty of pleasure and pain. The difference in nature between the interests of reason represents for Deleuze an essential pluralism and one of the most original points of Kantianism, being a second point of departure from the empirical and rationalist schools. Kant’s limitation of the speculative drive of reason to the field of appearances is a function of this differentiation. It is by contrast the ‘inflation’ of the speculative interest, as in a dogmatic rationalism, and the attempt to derive all others from it, which represents a restriction of the possibilities of thought:
Under the pretext of developing the speculative interest, reason’s deeper interests are mutilated. The idea of a systematic plurality (and a hierarchy) of interests—in accordance with the first sense of the word ‘faculty’—dominates the Kantian method. This idea is a true principle, principle of a system of ends. This itself reiterates a point made by Deleuze regarding Kant in his book on Nietzsche: there he remarks that Kant’s critique is of a positive character because “it does not restrain the power of knowledge without liberating other previously neglected powers.”

This pluralism is continued in the second sense of the “faculty”, as a source of representations—reason (source of Ideas), understanding (source of concepts) and sensibility (source of intuitions). For empiricism and rationalism, such differences are understood only as differences in degree: “whether a difference in clarity, from the point of view of the understanding, or difference in vividness, from the point of view of sensibility.” The difference in nature between the faculties in this second sense corresponds to the distribution of activity and passivity between the understanding, which acts on behalf of reason in the speculative interest, and sensibility. Conversely, a difference only of degree between sensibility and understanding assigns a subordinate role to thought in relation to a transcendent instance. In his university seminars in the 80s, Deleuze maintains that the homogeneity of the faculties is demanded by classical metaphysics because of the priority it accords the infinite over the finite: “metaphysics cannot—it is not that it does not want to—it cannot attain this situation of heterogenous faculties.” This is the case because for the infinite understanding of God, which exists by right, there is no given, and thus no distinction between spontaneity and receptivity. That it exists for our own understanding is simply the sign of our finitude, “a simple fact which derives from an originary infinity”, rather than being a difference in principle and by right.

Deleuze’s seminars on Kant in the 70s present the Kantian revolution in terms that show a further overlap with the understanding of critique given in the book on Nietzsche. Here, Deleuze presents the transition to a constitutive finitude that exists by right as the crucial gesture of a philosophy concerned with the problem of value or sense rather than essence. The philosophical opposition between an intelligible essence and sensible appearance supposes, for Deleuze, a particular position of the thinking subject:
the very notion of appearance refers to a fundamental deficiency in the
subject. A fundamental deficiency, which is to say: appearance, in the end,
is the thing such as it appears to me in virtue of my subjective
constitution which deforms it.\textsuperscript{39}

The phenomenon, on the other hand, is not at all an appearance, in the pre-
critical sense of implying an essence, but rather “what appears in so far as it
appears”, or an “apparition.”\textsuperscript{40} The apparition refers not to an essence but to its
conditions or sense: “something appears, tell me what is its sense or—and this
amounts to the same thing—tell me what is its condition?”\textsuperscript{41} An appearance has
a negative relationship to its essence: together they form a “disjunctive couple”
or opposition. The apparition or phenomenon on the other hand bears a
positive relationship to its conditions, forming a “conjunctive couple.” As the
conditions of the apparition belong to the one to whom the apparition appears,
the position of the subject is reversed such that it is now constitutive:

the substitution of the conjunctive couple phenomena-conditions, or
apparitions-conditions, ensures a promotion of the subject in so far as the
subject constitutes the very conditions of the apparition, instead of
constituting and being responsible for the limitations of appearance, or
the illusions of appearance.\textsuperscript{42}

The critique of Kant

Deleuze’s criticisms of Kant are best appreciated in the light of what he does
with Kant rather than what he says against Kant, not only because what
Deleuze ‘says’ is so particularly a function of context, but because, as indicated
above—and this amounts to the same thing—criticism per se is not a matter of
interest for Deleuze except as a by-product of a more fundamental affirmation.
Deleuze’s criticism is precisely the “aggressivity of the creator.” At the end of
an essay on structuralism, Deleuze writes: “No book against anything ever has
any importance; all that counts are books for something, and that know how to
produce it.”\textsuperscript{43} The details of what Deleuze ‘does’ with Kant, and its implied
criticism, form the substance of the remainder of the thesis. What can be
outlined here are the basic elements of what he ‘says’ against Kant, which
indicate the direction of his development of the critical project, or the
particular ‘tonality’ of Deleuze’s Kantianism.

It is worthwhile to begin such an outline by directly addressing this
question of ‘tonality’, or the ‘temperamental’ differences between the two
philosophies. Deleuze’s method of “dramatisation” precisely integrates such questions into the idea of philosophy, distinguishing the ‘type’ or ‘persona’ of the thinker from the empirical person of the philosopher, and situating the former within a scenario that forms part of the transcendental condition of the concept. When introducing Kant to his students in the 70s, Deleuze presents the first challenge of the Critique of Pure Reason as its “excessive” atmosphere, at once foggy and “stifling”:

the important thing before anything else is not to understand, the important thing is to take on the rhythm of the man, the writer, the philosopher in question. If one holds fast, all this northern fog that comes down on us dissipates, and underneath there is an amazing architecture.

When I was saying to you that a great philosopher is in the end someone who invents concepts, in the case of Kant, in this fog functions a sort of thinking machine, a sort of concept-creation that is strictly frightening.

Just as Deleuze says elsewhere that his book on Kant is a book which attempts to decipher the mechanisms of “the enemy”^45, so here Deleuze describes the approach to Kant like a medieval or Gothic quest to infiltrate a remote citadel, within which functions an infernal machine-monster. In fact, the accusation of ‘monstrousness’, coming from Deleuze, is more a compliment than a criticism. Kant’s hybrid notion of the ‘synthetic a priori’ is precisely appraised by Deleuze as a “monster”, a character shared by all new concepts insofar as they disturb classes previously considered to be natural—“a philosopher can only fabricate new concepts as monsters.”^46

It is rather to the extent that Kant remains a spokesperson for “established values” or recognised categories that he comes under attack from Deleuze. While Kant announces the project of a critique that would be “total and positive”, Deleuze questions whether the reader of the Critique of Pure Reason can seriously believe that the ideals of church and state have been truly undermined therein, “and can we really believe that Kant ‘ever had any intention of doing such a thing’?”^47 Instead of the noble master philosopher who engenders new values, Kant’s ‘persona’ is that of the “justice of the peace” or magistrate, a “civil servant” who enforces ‘correct usage’ of existing values, condemns trespasses, and ensures that no boundaries are overstepped:

Kant merely pushed a very old conception of critique to the limit, a conception which saw critique as a force which should be brought to bear on all claims to knowledge and truth, but not on knowledge and truth themselves… Three ideals are distinguished: what can I know? what should I do? what can I hope for? Limits are drawn to each one, misuses
and trespasses are denounced, but the uncriticisable character of each ideal remains at the heart of Kantianism like the worm in the fruit: true knowledge, true morality and true religion.

In the attempt to produce an immanent critique that refuses any transcendent instance as a source of value, Kant is accused of simply interiorising the same values, which as 'facts' of reason remain beyond the scope of critique. Deleuze distinguishes in Kant the ideal of an “internal” critique, and the actuality of Kant’s critique as a reflexive process with reason as its own judge: “Kant lacked a method which permitted reason to be judged from the inside without giving it the task of being its own judge.”

This latter model produces a peculiar form of the will turned against itself, embodying both master and slave, judging and judged: “both priest and believer, legislator and subject, conquering and conquered slave, reactive man in the service of himself.”

Deleuze identifies a tension in Kant that is remarked upon by Émile Bréhier, in the account that he gives of Kant and critique in his series of volumes on the history of philosophy. Within Kant’s project of “the justification of values” we find “two directions, which are perhaps are irreconcilable.” On the one hand, Kant foregrounds the principles of activity, liberty and spontaneity throughout the three critiques. On the other hand, these are to a greater or lesser extent placed out of the reach of experience, and their products impose themselves as ‘givens’. It is a tension within critique between two tendencies, one of which presents itself under the dynamic aspect of an open-ended process of transformation, and the other which appears as the formalisation of a status quo that is impervious to actual variables:

Criticism has thus indeed been, and it remains, under the first aspect, a stimulus to thought, a doctrine which transforms the “givens” into tasks for activity, a philosophy of spiritual work, and it has given birth in the 19th century to all of the doctrines which seek in reality a work to be done rather than a thing to be verified. But, under the second aspect, it appears as an implacable justification of the given. He has a static conception of science, subjecting it to conditions which science has long since overcome; a rigorist conception of morality, which places it outside of the real conditions of human activity; a formalist conception of art, which risks emptying it of all of its content. In this way the mind is everywhere forced to follow paths already traced: the Kantian a priori marks both its domination and the subjugation.

It is this tendency of Kant to allow the ‘given’ to re-enter thought on the level of values and reproduce metaphysical structures of thought on the level of the transcendental that constitutes the ‘failed’ aspect of critique for Deleuze.
The focus of an “internal” critique, that is not thereby a reflexive circle, must be where values are engendered, and where the synthesis broaches a ‘new path’. In his book on Kant, Deleuze himself locates what he sees to be the hinge between a ‘static’ and ‘dynamic’ conception of thought in Kant. In order for the faculties of reason, understanding and intuition to function in the moral and theoretical interest, they must presuppose a form of ‘common sense’—a *sensus communis* expressed in the determinate relationship between the faculties in each exercise. Despite the mutability of the relation according to the different interests, within any given perspective the collaboration of the faculties to a theoretical or moral end can only appear as a *fait accompli*:

Kant says that the accord of the faculties is capable of *several proportions* (depending on which faculty determines the relation). But each time we assume the perspective of a relationship or an accord which is already determined, it is inevitable that common sense should seem to us a kind of *a priori* fact beyond which we cannot go.53

The problem of the deduction of the relationship between the faculties cannot thus be posed for Deleuze within the context of the first two critiques, and remains its “ultimate task.” The detail of Deleuze’s analysis of this problem will be presented in the third section of the thesis, but its direction can be anticipated here. What is presupposed by the formal and determined common sense exercised in the moral and theoretical interest is not a more profound determination issuing from being or nature but rather the “free and indeterminate accord” which is the topic of the third critique: “It is only at the level of this free and indeterminate accord (*sensus communis aestheticus*) that we will be able to pose the problem of a ground of the accord or a genesis of common sense.”54 The ‘empirical’ character of Deleuze’s critique—his “transcendental empiricism”55—is to be understood in the light of this problem of ‘engendering’ an accord: discovering ‘conditions of actuality’ that would not be external or indifferent to the conditioned. By distinguishing the positive and negative sense which each of these terms—“transcendental” and “empirical”—has, for Deleuze, we arrive at an adequate conception, in summary form, of the points of affiliation and departure between Deleuzean and Kantian critique.

Deleuze’s embrace of empiricism, as already indicated, has never been in order to support a ‘psychological’ or ‘naturalist’ approach to philosophy. On this point, like Kant, he is adamant that philosophy distinguishes itself by
operating on a plane of right and value over fact. Deleuze appraises empiricism rather in the mode of a “radical” empiricism or pluralism, whose central tenet is the absence of internal or pre-determined relations. At the centre of empiricism is not sensation or ‘lived experience’, but rather the imagination, which undergoes a ‘becoming-thought’ in an ongoing dialogue with circumstance:

“Empiricism] treats the concept as the object of an encounter, as a here-and-now or rather as an Erewhon from which emerge inexhaustibly always new ‘heres’ and ‘nows’, distributed differently… I make, remake and undo my concepts from the perspective of a moving horizon, an always decentred centre, and an always displaced periphery which repeats and differentiates them.”

The empirical world, in its positive sense, is the world where the term of being—*est*—is replaced with the term of conjunction—*et*—, thought following a “Harlequin” mosaic of the conjunction and addition of finite and non-totalisable elements.

The negative sense of the empirical for Deleuze, aside from its psychological implications, is that by which it refers to a form of ‘common sense’, or the habitual coordinates of lived experience: subject, object, representation, recognition. This notion of common sense as a dominant “image of thought” will be examined in the third chapter of this section. Deleuze reproaches Kant, for example, for having confused the “empirical”, in this sense, with the transcendental, by incorporating the subject and object into thought’s conditions of possibility. The negative sense of the empirical is thus inseparable from the negative sense of the transcendental for Deleuze. It is not the transcendental *per se* that is rejected, but rather its presupposition of the same categories that it is required to account for. As we saw in Deleuze’s portrayal of “transcendental” critique in his book on Hume, the problem comes from assuming *in advance* or as given—in particular the subject, and its ‘inherent’ disposition to thought—what can only be posited within the context of a determined synthesis. Deleuze argues that the specification of the subject and object of identity presupposes a more profound synthesis or “dramatisation” on the level of the Idea, which is the topic of the next section.

The last piece published by Deleuze during his lifetime reiterates his commitment to a transcendental empiricism, and resumes this understanding of the term. It begins:
What is a transcendental field? It is distinguished from experience, in so far as it does not refer to an object nor belong to a subject (empirical representation). Thus it presents itself as a pure current of a-subjective consciousness, pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness, qualitative duration of consciousness without a self. It can appear curious that the transcendental is defined by such immediate givens: we will speak of transcendental empiricism, by opposition to everything that constitutes the world of subject and object.\textsuperscript{58}

The overriding problem of critique for Deleuze—both his own version and according to his understanding of Kant—is how thought negotiates those elements of determinacy and indeterminacy occurring in thought and the world. Deleuze is by no means an anti-systematic thinker for whom ‘anything goes’: on the contrary, his approach invariably works on the assumption of the existence of an intricate mechanism of interlocking ideas, even where this seems the least probable—as in the case, for example, of Nietzsche. Deleuze’s notion of a conceptual system, however, is inseparable from the question of its relationship with an ‘outside’ to philosophy: its point of departure and regeneration through an imperative encounter that is as idiosyncratic as it is compelling. In the “Letter-Preface” to Jean-Clet Martin’s book on his philosophy, Deleuze indicates that he considers his own combination of a systematic thought which nevertheless integrates an account of its differentiation and renewal to be an original project: “I believe in philosophy as a system… For me, the system must not only be in perpetual heterogeneity, it must be a \textit{heterogenesis}—something which, it seems to me, has never been attempted.”\textsuperscript{59} Determination lies on the side of thought rather than being, but this determination is an act rather than a given, and it is provoked precisely in virtue of ‘objective’ indeterminacy. Rather than identify the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ in Kant from Deleuze’s perspective, it is rather the case in Deleuze—as per Bréhier’s appraisal—that for a given element in Kant’s thought we can apprehend its productive or restrictive dimension, trace a ‘noble’ or ‘base’ lineage.
Endnotes for Part I Chapter 1

1 Nietzsche, “On the uses and disadvantages of history for life”, *Untimely Meditations*.
2 “On the uses and disadvantages…” pp. 64-65.
3 “On the uses and disadvantages…” p. 94.
4 DR, F71/E50.
5 Even Hegel’s philosophy, *within which* negation features as a central concept, is grounded according to Deleuze in a more fundamental stance which *generates* this role given to the negative, such as the position of ‘the slave’ (in the analysis of Hegel in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*), or the use of the question “what is?” (in the presentation of Hegel in “Method of Dramatisation”).
6 PCK, F11/E6, translation modified: the English gives “begins here” rather than “beyond” for “commence au-delà”.
7 ES, F92/E87.
8 ES, F91-92/E86, translation modified.
9 ES, F92/E87.
10 ES, F94/E88.
11 ES, F95/E88-89.
12 ES, F95/F99, translation modified, Deleuze’s italics.
14 ES, F118/E105, translation modified.
15 ES, F119/E106, translation modified.
16 ES, F119/E106, translation modified.
17 ES, F119/E106.
18 CPR, Bxiii.
19 ES, F119/E106.
20 NP, F1/E1, translation modified (reading *mobiles* as ‘motives’ or ‘motivations’ rather than ‘motifs’, as rendered in the English translation).
21 NP, F1/E1.
22 NP, F1/E1.
23 NP, F4/E4, translation modified.
24 NP, F86/E75.
25 PCK, F85-86/E59-56; QP?, F13/E8, F74/E77.
26 NP, F89/E78.
27 NP, F94/E82.
28 NP, F96/E84.
29 NP, F99/E87.
30 PCK, F6/E2.
31 PCK, F7/E2.
32 PCK, F7/E2.
33 PCK, F9/E4.
34 PCK, F13/E7, my italics.
35 NP, F102/E89, translation modified.
36 PCK, F34/E22.
37 Gilles Deleuze, Seminar on Kant/Foucault, c. 1982/83, para. 1.
38 Seminar on Kant/Foucault, c. 1982/83, para. 2.
39 Gilles Deleuze, First lesson on Kant, 14/3/78, para. 14.
40 The distinction here that Deleuze makes between appearance and phenomenon is not that made by Kant, but rather between the pre-critical sense of appearance as ‘illusion’ and its critical sense as a presentation referred to its conditions of possibility.
41 First lesson on Kant, 14/3/78, para. 18.
42 First lesson on Kant, 14/3/78, para. 19.
43 “How do we recognise structuralism?”, F334/E282.
44 Gilles Deleuze, First lesson on Kant, 14/3/78, para. 1.
46 Gilles Deleuze, First lesson on Kant, 14/3/78, para. 59.
47 NP, F102/E89, referring to Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 25.
48 NP, F102-103/E89-90.
49 NP, F104/E91.
rather than the reasonable being, functionary of current values, both master and slave, judging
and judged: both priest and believer, legislator and subject, conquering and conquered slave.”
51 Emile Bréhier, “Kant et la philosophie critique”, Le Dix-Huitième Siècle, F564/E249,
translation modified.
53 PCK, F36/E23.
54 PCK, F36/E24.
55 DR, F79/E56.
56 DR, F3/Exx-xxi, translation modified.
57 Deleuze, “Hume”, in François Chatelêt (ed), Histoire de la Philosophie 4—Les Lumières: le
XVIIIe Siècle, Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1972, p. 67. See also the section ‘Sur l’empirisme’ (F68-
75/E54-59, within the chapter “Sur la supériorité de la littérature anglaise-américaine”), in
Dialogues, F69/E55.
58 Gilles Deleuze, “L’immanence: une vie…” in Philosophie, p. 3.
59 “Lettre-Préface” to Jean-Clet Martin’s Variations: La philosophie de Gilles Deleuze, p. 8.
CHAPTER 2:

KANT AND THE ORIENTATION OF THOUGHT

The critical attitude

Kant understood his critical philosophy as both an expression of the Enlightenment spirit of his time and as an agent of its further development. These two functions are united in so far as Enlightenment, like critique, is not so much an achieved state as a proposed, and perhaps perpetual, task. In his essay “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?”, Kant makes a point of distinguishing between living in an “age of enlightenment” and living in an “enlightened age”, and if, in the Critique of Pure Reason, our age is “in especial degree, the age of criticism…”, this character takes the form of an injunction: “…and to criticism everything must submit.” On the levels of the subject, society, and philosophical discourse, Kant poses the problem of enlightened thought in terms of relations of power, which is to say, in terms of the will and its relation to authority, rather than knowledge. A practical orientation is already at the heart of critical philosophy before it turns its attention to the principles of morality in Kant’s practical philosophy ‘proper’: in either case it is a matter of identifying the relationship between freedom and lawfulness which is consistent with the autonomy of reason. The maxim of enlightenment for Kant is “to think for oneself” or Sapere aude!: “Have the courage to use your own understanding!” It is not through lack of knowledge that we do not think for ourselves, and conversely “those who are exceedingly rich in knowledge are often least enlightened in their use of it.” The meaning of this motto in the political or social context of Enlightenment is continuous with the philosophical axiom of critique, whereby the internal sense of reason is the “supreme touchstone” of truth.

The obstacles to thinking for oneself come from both inside and outside. Kant begins his essay on the Enlightenment by defining it as “man’s
emergence from his self-incurred immaturity”, where “immaturity” is the “inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another.” This immaturity is “self-incurred” in so far as it is based in deficiencies of the will—“laziness and cowardice”—rather than ignorance. We maintain ourselves in a state of immaturity when we alienate the effort of thought in another person or thing—“a book to have understanding in place of me, a spiritual adviser to have a conscience in place of me, a doctor to judge my diet for me, and so on”—or simply when we rely on “dogmas and formulas.” This is, on the one hand, a matter of convenience for ourselves, but this dependence is also fostered and reinforced by the interests of those “guardians” in whom we entrust the work of understanding, who “will soon see to it that by far the largest part of mankind (including the entire fair sex) should consider the step forward to maturity not only as difficult but also as highly dangerous.” This influence may become so ingrained that an individual may become “really incapable for the time being of using his own understanding, because he was never allowed to make the attempt.”

This “ability to think for oneself” does not mean for Kant to educate oneself on a matter before passing judgement, the existence of innate ideas revealed through introspection, or the rights of personal opinion. Autonomy means following a law which one gives to oneself. Thinking for oneself is based on the assumption and extension of the principles of freedom and lawfulness, which are combined in the notion of autonomy. When we think for ourselves on a given matter, we consider whether its basis and implications are consistent with these principals:

- to employ one's own reason means simply to ask oneself, whenever one is urged to accept something, whether one finds it possible to transform the reason for accepting it, or the rule which follows from what is accepted, into a universal principle governing the use of one's reason.

Because this process does not bear on the content of what is proposed, no objective grounds of refutation are necessary. At the same time, it does not consist in a 'merely' subjective refutation, in the sense of being based on private opinion, as it appeals to lawful principles—the principle of law itself. The principles of autonomous reason are thus at the same time internal to the act of thought and of a public nature.
In the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant focuses on the autonomy of reason as necessary condition for the constitution of thought as a *discipline*, which is to say a “science.” He recounts the way logic, mathematics, geometry and (much later) the natural sciences constituted themselves *qua* sciences under the effect of a revolution in thought, critique being the attempt at a similar revolution, or ‘becoming-scientific’ of metaphysics. The revolutionary gesture in each case is to assign reason a leading role in the determination of its objects: it is only if reason provides the conditions of knowledge that this knowledge can be truly *a priori*. In geometry, the first true geometrician learns that he does not “read off” geometrical properties from a concept or a figure, but “bring[s] out what was necessarily implied in the concepts that he had himself formed *a priori*, and had put into the figure in the construction by which he presented itself.”¹¹ Similarly in the natural sciences:

> [Galileo, Stahl] learned that reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own, and that it must not allow itself to be kept, as it were, in nature’s leading strings, but must itself show the way with principles of judgement based upon fixed laws, constraining nature to give answer to questions of reason’s own determining.¹²

Following this procedure in metaphysics, Kant contends that what is given to our faculty of knowledge can become known only in virtue of its conforming to the *a priori* principles of our intuition and understanding, the *Critique of Pure Reason* being the elaboration of these principles.

The critical gesture is thus to consider the possibility of a science not through the relation that its claims have to things in themselves, but to the principles of reason. Human reason is not considered to be relative to an ‘in-itself’ of knowledge—the ideal knowledge of a divine understanding—but as valid in its own right. Neither are appearances relative to an ‘in-itself’ of the object, but only to their sense within the structures of this same understanding. It is this transmutation of thought from the plane of objective truths or essences to that of value or sense that gives critique its positive meaning and force, as well as its ‘revolutionary’ impact. If a ‘critical’ position implies being ‘outside’ the object being criticised, this is not, in the case of Kant’s critique, a position of higher or more profound truth, but precisely a shift in orientation from the object to its conditions:
The critique of pure reason can be regarded as the true tribunal for all disputes of pure reason; for it is not involved in these disputes—disputes which are immediately concerned with objects—but is directed to the determining and estimating of the rights of reason in general.\(^\text{13}\)

It is because critique assumes at its outset the autonomy of reason, and takes as its task the formal elaboration of its internal constitution and principles, that the limitations that this uncovers need not be understood in a negative sense. The inability of reason to know objects beyond experience is a by-product of its power to know objects by determining their conditions. The “unanswered” questions of reason lose in effect their implication of a deficiency on the part of reason once referred to the principles of reason’s internal constitution. “I have not evaded [the questions of metaphysics] by pleading the insufficiency of human reason”, Kant writes in the first Preface to the first critique,

On the contrary I have specified these questions exhaustively, according to principles; and after locating the point at which, through misunderstanding, reason comes into conflict with itself, I have solved them to its complete satisfaction.\(^\text{14}\)

If Kant has emerged historically as a philosopher of ‘finitude’, this term should thus not be understood as referring to a physical (empirical/psychological) or metaphysical limitation—i.e. an inferiority in relation to a divine understanding. This is not a term used by Kant in this sense, but has rather come to be attached to Kant through the work of the post-Kantians (Fichte, Hegel) and Heidegger. It is part of the revolution that critique effects that reason’s ‘finitude’ is that of self-containment rather than inadequacy, at least in Kant’s view: “Pure reason is, indeed, so perfect a unity that if its principles were insufficient for the solution of even one of all the questions to which it itself gives birth we should have no alternative but to reject the principle.”\(^\text{15}\) The essential elements of critique are the constitution of an internal transcendental field of reason, defined by its autonomy or self-legislation, and the removal of external standards of relativity to a divine understanding or conformance to an object. The difference between seeing critique as positive or negative, as a restricting or liberating gesture, is in the ordering of these factors: whether we see the turning to the internal structure of reason as a reaction to a realisation of limits, or an action in the name of reason with the consequence that external standards drop away. It is a different philosophical gesture to claim that knowledge of a thing in itself is
impossible, and that it is redundant, or even noxious. The first implies a restriction of thought, the second a departure in another direction. The first implies that the question of a relation to things in themselves is the central problem, the second that it is no longer a problem, having displaced the centre elsewhere. The contention here is not just that, in fact, Kant’s critique occupies this latter position, that it has displaced the problem, as most philosophical innovations do, but also that it thematises this principle of turning back to the source of a contention, the formulation of a problem, and makes this arena the centre of thinking. As initially suggested, critique does not (just) displace former problems by erecting an alternative system, but by turning to the problem of problem-formulation itself.

Orientation and disorientation: the division of reason

Central to the notion of critique is the notion of “transcendental illusion.” Unlike “logical” illusions, in the form of “formal fallacies” of argument, transcendental illusion cannot be simply corrected and dispelled once the error is pointed out, but is a structural problem belonging to the nature of reason itself. The defining character of reason, for Kant, is the tendency to always go beyond, to repugn limits: to search for the unconditioned principle of any conditioned state of affairs. Thus it posits objects beneath appearances, essences beneath existents, and a range of metaphysical or ‘speculative’ concepts beyond all possible experience, such as a Supreme Being. Following this tendency, if reason goes beyond what is given to something which makes it possible, this idea, qua ‘unconditioned’, is itself posited as something beyond its relative status with respect to reason, as something independently existing:

not only does our reason itself feel a need to make the concept of the unlimited the basis of the concept of everything limited—and hence of all other things; this need in fact also extends to the assumption that the unlimited exists. The error of reason is not in thinking entities such as a thing in itself or a Supreme Being, but in claiming to know them, and assigning to a transcendent idea the principle of its own foundation. Kant thus establishes a division within reason between its knowledge, which applies to appearances (the given
constituted as phenomenon by the understanding), and its thought, which applies to the Ideas of reason or noumenon. This division broaches that between the theoretical and practical application of reason. What is not known theoretically may nevertheless serve as a practical horizon for our experience, whether theoretical or moral: “it is still open to us to enquire whether, in the practical knowledge of reason, data may not be found sufficient to determine reason’s transcendent concept of the unconditioned.”

The corrective operation of critique is thus not to suppress this tendency to posit transcendent ideas as such, but to assign it another place, or to understand its sense. Kant’s essay on “What is Orientation in Thinking?” is dedicated to the sense in which reason’s tendency to “surpass experience” in its theoretical and moral endeavours serves as both a source of illusion and its corrective. The “proper function” of our concepts, he writes there, is their “experimental” use in conjunction with sensible intuitions. In the case of concepts of a “speculative” nature, however, such as a Supreme Being, which go beyond the scope of any possible experience, we require a principle that guides us as to their significance: “how else could we endow our concepts with sense and significance if we did not attach them to some intuition…?” In this case, it is more than the problem of “thinking for ourselves” without need for objective knowledge, but thinking for ourselves in cases where objective or empirical information is impossible. And in the same way that certain basic interests are served by renouncing our rational autonomy in everyday life, the positing of a supreme entity beyond all experience corresponds to a fundamental need of reason.

The essay on orientation in thinking asserts the need of philosophy to establish and justify its primary coordinates before proceeding with its theoretical propositions. In his well-known analogy, Kant compares the procedure of orienting oneself in thought with the concrete process of physical orientation in space, starting with its original astronomical or navigational meaning: “to use a given direction… in order to find the others, and in particular that of sunrise [the orient].” In this process, the identification of objective coordinates—e.g. the time, the position of the sun—are necessarily related to the internal “feeling” which differentiates right and left. Kant deliberately uses the term “feeling”, as right and left do not present any
differences “seen from the outside”, but differ in nature from objective coordinates and are irreducible to them. This subjective aspect of orientation is nevertheless the more fundamental insofar as if there was a systematic alteration of objective coordinates—if the position of the celestial bodies were reversed, following Kant’s example—it would be necessary and sufficient for the astronomer to attend to the internal sense of right and left to establish the reversed situation and thus reorient herself. Further still, when no clear external reference point is available it is an internal principle of orientation alone that serves as a guide, “if I have to walk and take the correct turnings at night on streets with which I am otherwise familiar, but in which I cannot at present distinguish any of the houses.” Transposing this principle to orientation in thought, Kant presents reason as the internal, subjective principle that is both the source of all objective sense and our guide when objective coordinates are lacking.

Kant’s argument hinges on maintaining the “rights” of the subjective tendency of the will as a principle of the foundation of thought over and against appeals to “good sense” or a “sense of the truth” which claim an intellectual or intuitive insight into transcendent entities. The subjective principle of orientation that Kant evokes, unlike a “common sense”, has no content and is not an intellectual faculty, but consists only in the formal sense or directionality of reason per se—“the feeling of a need inherent in reason itself.” It is the apprehension of the objective pretensions of reason in terms of its subjective tendency to surpass limits, “to extend its sphere beyond the frontiers of experience.” The “illusion” of reason is to translate the subjective necessity of reason to posit an unconditioned principle into the revelation of an objective necessity. The critical gesture of Kant is to take the movement of reason one step further, to push even this apparent limit and address the question of right to this tendency itself. Given that we do, in fact, posit a range of principles and entities which form the purportedly objective infrastructure of our knowledge and practice, by what right do we do so? This question refocusses the problem of thought back on reason and the will as the source of objects and their value, subordinating transcendent grounds to immanent conditions of right. As the French Kantian scholar Alexis Philonenko writes:
The answer is, according to Kant, in the question itself; it is in the need of reason to raise itself beyond the sensible world that we will find its principle of orientation in thought. It is thus in reflecting on its own desire for being that reason will be able to orient itself in being; it is in penetrating the “sense” of its need that it will find a sense in suprasensible space, in thought. Critique consists in the correct “use” of the tendency of reason to surpass experience by reformulating this transcendence as its autonomy from the given. The solution is thus a matter of recognising the specific “right” of this need of reason without thereby according it objective validity.

Kant’s denial of an objective status to supra-sensible entities does not amount to considering them as figures of the imagination or theoretical fancies. If reason proposes certain concepts which do not admit of any correlate in possible experience, we are entitled to admit them as subjective principles in a hypothetical relationship to the objects of experience, but without thereby making any claim as to their objective existence: “We must simply refrain from claiming that what is only a necessary presupposition is in fact a free insight.” In so far as they are capable of functioning as principles, their subjective status should not be understood in a privative sense (‘merely’ subjective), but rather as signifying their role as immanent dimensions of our actions and judgements rather than objects of knowledge. In all cases we only legitimately exercise our reason according to the principles it gives itself, but in doing so we may also presuppose or ‘act with’ the belief in a particular conception of the universe as a whole, a unified nature or a Supreme Being. The ‘weight’ of these presuppositions, and the ‘need’ of reason, effectively waxes and wanes according the necessity of decisive action. In theoretical judgements, where we have no objective grounds of knowledge, we may be safest in refraining from any judgement, but where “it is not a matter of indifference whether one wishes to make a definite judgement on something or not” it is then that “the right of the need of reason supervenes as a subjective ground for presupposing and accepting something which reason cannot presume to know on objective grounds.” The constraint of the necessity of judgement is further accentuated in the case of our moral actions, where “we are compelled to assume that God exists not only if we wish to pass judgement, but because we must pass judgement.”
Kant’s argument for the orientating principle of reason in its subjective exercise is both directed against and an attempt to explain the speculative grounding of reason in the existence of a Supreme Being as the object of logical demonstration, “intellectual intuition”, or “good sense”. He intervenes in a historical debate between the philosophers Mendelssohn and Jacobi over the nature of reason and its compatibility with our freedom and religious faith. Mendelssohn assimilates the laws of reason to a logical apparatus by which we can formally demonstrate philosophical truths and the existence of a Supreme Being. If we are in danger of losing ourselves in such an abstract sphere—specifically, if logic leads us to conclusions incompatible with faith—we can appeal to our faculty of “good sense”. As Kant notes, apart from its extreme vagueness, the appeal to good sense is already an admission of the inadequacy of logic alone. The most serious problem however, for Kant, with the notion of a “good sense” which forms a counterpoint to logical reason, is that it was taken up by Jacobi and others as a faculty of “rational inspiration” which would allow of an intuitive confirmation of the divine beyond the lawful limitations of reason. Both Jacobi and Mendelssohn misinterpret the sense of the autonomy of reason—Jacobi placing an overemphasis on the freedom of reason to the neglect of its laws, and Mendelssohn an overemphasis on the rules of conceptual logic to the neglect of reason’s freedom:

since human reason nevertheless continues to strive for freedom, the first use which it makes of its long unaccustomed liberty, once it has broken its bonds, must degenerate into misuse, into a presumptuous confidence in the independence of its own powers from every restriction, and into a conviction of the sole authority of speculative reason which accepts only what can be justified on objective grounds and by dogmatic conviction, but rashly dismisses everything else.

Despite the distance between Mendelssohn’s confidence in the powers of logical demonstration, and Jacobi’s faith in the genial insight, both testify to an ‘infatuation’ with the supra-sensible concepts of reason which leads them to make an illegitimate leap from their conception to their existence. Kant uses the notion of the autonomous judgement of reason to articulate this gap: maintaining its distance, while at the same time using the difference between subjective and objective sense to give it a practical relevance. Kant maintains reason between a subordination to ‘objective’ ideals or its reduction to subjective whim by aligning it with the notion of duty. It is neither grounded
in *what is*—any external nature or rule—nor expresses simple possibilities, but is driven by its own presupposition of right: of what *must be*.

**Truth and method**

It is apparent why Kant’s Copernican revolution is sometimes understood as a movement whereby the object, once the ‘centre of gravity’ of knowledge, now ‘revolves around’ the subject: the new transcendental relation is not that between a knowledge or representation and the thing in itself, but knowledge and the principles of the faculty of knowing. But this explanation shows as well why the ‘revolution’ is not simply a reversal, but a displacement onto another plane. A transcendental field is constituted through the establishment of principles that assure the autonomous exercise of reason in relation to its interests. It is not as a *being* that the subject grounds the critique but as a principle of unity and freedom within the multiple exercises of the faculty of reason. It is in relation to these that any objective, *or subjective*, fact acquires value, outside of which it may *be* anything at all, but *mean* nothing.

There is nevertheless an asymmetry in the relation of the subject and the object to ‘pure reason’ that distinguishes the formality of critique from the formality of a general logic. The subject of the critique is the index of its active nature: a proposition cannot exist in itself but is always the connected to a subject as a *judgement*. In addition to this, a judgement does not only refer to a subject who judges, but also to an *interest* or domain of operation. The identity of an object is thus doubly subordinate to the subjective conditions of judgement and the interest which determines the production of that judgement, outside of which it is entirely indeterminate. It is thus that a critical methodology implies a kind of pluralism, as it is now reason’s interests, which are multiple, and its judgements, which are synthetic, which determines essence rather than a thing-in-itself or ‘being’ which would be unitary.

In this way, Kant interposes between concept and thing the questions “who?”, “how?”, “in what case?”, “where?”. The answers to these questions are not empirical examples but places assigned by a transcendental apparatus, the *topoi* of reason’s legislative and regulative domains, the type of subject which
corresponds to these, the action which determines its objective coordinates. Kant's three Critiques each present conceptions of the subject which differ in nature: the “I” of the transcendental unity of apperception in the Critique of Pure Reason is not the “I” apprehended as a pure freedom in the Critique of Practical Reason nor the “indeterminate accord” of the Critique of Judgement. We know, from Kant's problematisation of the notion of the ‘soul’, and his denial of the self as object of knowledge, that these differences are not simple variations of an underlying substantial identity. Each subject is rather a component of a synthetic apparatus generated from a distinct problem, and it is this apparatus that forms the “centre” of thought. Whatever principle—unity, spontaneity, ‘responsiveness’—it may represent within a given synthesis, this remains a ‘role’ immanent to the synthesis itself.

In critique, methodology goes beyond a technical protocol to integrate space, time and point of view into thought. This notion will be examined in detail in the next section in relation to a ‘problematic’ model of thought, but it contributes here to the question of the overall ‘image’ of thought in critique. Jules Vuillemin has drawn out the importance of the role of method in philosophy in establishing a table of philosophical systems, and in particular the category of “intuitionism”, into which he places the philosophies of Kant, Descartes and Epicurus. The intuitionist system is defined by Vuillemin in opposition to “dogmatic” criteria of truth. The essential tenets of the dogmatic system are that truth belongs to the relationship between the proposition and the thing or state represented by the proposition, that the relationship is one of adequation, and that the truth-value of this relationship transcends the conditions of its demonstration. In an intuitionist system on the other hand, truth pertains to a relationship of conformity between a representation or proposition and a “canon”, which is to say a system of rules or a method that comprises an intuitive or a-logical element. The basic element of thought is not the proposition but the judgement. As the existence of a truth depends on its demonstration, it is possible for a proposition to have no determinate truth-value (those pertaining to the future, for example), and one can speak of a “genesis” of truth and falsity at the moment of its demonstration according to the canon.
Vuillemin’s typology is drawn to show how different philosophies negotiate the tension between a theoretical imperative, that demands logical consistency in the world, and a practical imperative that requires an allowance for freedom. Vuillemin addresses the terms of this debate as it was posed in antiquity (“the aporia of Diodorus”), but it is also this conflict that forms the backdrop to Kant’s essay on orientation in thinking. The “intuitionist” system on the one hand appears to present a negative resolution to the problem: by circumscribing the domain of truth to possible experience, the physical field of appearances, a space for freedom is allowed by default, because this field does not touch things as they are in themselves. It is however a different and more positive picture that emerges both in Kant’s essays on orientation and enlightenment, and in his analysis of the “illusions” of thought. The ‘negative’ picture resembles the ordinary understanding of the tension between freedom and necessity, which places necessity on the one side, as an objective fact which we ‘know’, and freedom on the other, as private desire which we (want to) ‘believe’, however unaccountably. This however is the reverse of how Kant distributes the terms in his analysis. It is on the contrary the drive to complete a logical chain of reasons which Kant ‘pathologises’ as an inevitable but ultimately illogical impulse of reason, which is opposed to the necessary constraints of knowledge and which itself forms indirect evidence of our freedom.

It is in fact the duality of “two sides” that the centrality of the methodological apparatus overcomes. The distinction between noumenon and phenomenon has a sense only within thought rather than representing an independent division between the ‘reality’ of the object and our subjective apprehension of it. Assigning a determining role to method integrates the duality of the theoretical and the practical: one is immediately the other. This self-sufficiency of thought is nevertheless the opposite of an idealism: the dualism of thing and representation is not overcome by reducing one to the other, but by eliminating the transcendent point of view which could give ‘real’ meaning to the distinction by embracing them both and measuring one against the other. This divine place is not vacated in order that the human may replace it: it is left vacant as the seat of indeterminacy in the world, the preservation of a real outside to thought. An implied consequence of confining truth to
judgement is the necessity of suspending or withholding judgement in any final or definitive sense, a tolerance of the indeterminate, including within the self. Conversely, it is this tolerance or assumption of indeterminacy that gives sense to the affirmative judgement as a committed act rather than an emanation of a “thinking thing” or a psychological habit. It is in this way that the notion of transcendental method sets the necessity of “discipline” against a metaphysics or anthropology of thought, as a function of what knowledge and morality must be, rather than what they cannot do.

Michel Foucault characterises the philosophical impulse of Kant’s essay on the Enlightenment as an orientation of thought towards the demands of the present, which is expressed in two principal activities, for him inseparable: an interrogation the conditions of autonomy of Western rationality, and an elaboration of the ethos of the individual thinker—“the indefinite work of freedom.” Attention to “the present” is not, for Foucault, a question of the content of thought, but belongs to its form. When Kant enjoins his audience to “think for themselves”, to set themselves aside from social, scientific and metaphysical authority and make an independent judgement when something is proposed to them, he brings the act of thought into the “present” in a way that is not to do with a historical or empirical moment in time, but rather an actuality cleared by thought itself as the rule of both freedom and law. Foucault aligns Kant’s understanding of the Enlightenment with an understanding of modernity that he identifies with the consciousness of “attitude” and which, like Deleuze, he traces to the Greeks: “a manner of both acting and behaving which at the same time marks a belonging and presents itself as a task.” It is “attitude” which “makes it possible to grasp the “heroic” aspect of the present moment.” The relationship of critique with the broader question of modernity is examined in detail in the third section, where it overlaps the issues raised by Kant in his third critique on judgement. The point here is how Kant displaces the problem of foundation in philosophy by reconceiving thought as a framework for the production of truths rather than their revelation. The premise of thought as a mode of orientation is an underlying disorientation or absence of foundation in the traditional, transcendent, sense, the ‘negative’ condition of a reason that claims to be
autonomous, and the ‘positive’ condition of a reason which sees itself as a perpetual task.

It is this notion of discipline as a transformational practice ‘against nature’ which Deleuze presents as the correct understanding of “method.” Deleuze rejects method in so far as it serves as a “dogmatic” tool, a way of preserving the integrity of thought by transcending contingent circumstances: “Time and place matter little if we apply method: it enables us to enter the domain of ‘that which is valid for all times and places.’”37, and later: “Method in general is a means by which we avoid going to a particular place, or by which we maintain the option of escaping from it.”38 To this he opposes the (Greek) notion of culture or paideia as the selection and integration of internal and external forces that are consolidated in an “attitude” of the thinker: “We have the truths that we deserve according to the place where we carry our existence, the hour we watch over, the element that we inhabit.”39 These truths are not simply the reflection of a given moment but represent a critical response to actual forces by laying the coordinates of a territory. Deleuze’s “territorial” conception of philosophy is the topic of the next chapter.
Endnotes for Part I Chapter 2

1. QE, p. 58.
2. CPR, Axiin.
3. QE p. 54.
4. OT, p. 249n.
5. QE, p. 54.
6. QE, p. 54.
7. QE, p. 54.
8. QE, p. 54.
9. QE, p. 54.
10. OT, p. 249n.
11. CPR, Bxiv.
12. CPR, Bxiv.
13. CPR, A751/B779, my italics.
14. CPR, Axii-Axiii.
15. CPR, Axii.
17. OT, p. 241.
18. CPR, Bxxi.
19. OT, p. 237.
20. OT, p. 238.
21. OT, p. 239.
22. OT, p. 240.
23. OT, pp. 239-240.
24. Alexis Philonenko, Introduction to Kant’s Quest-ce que s’orienter dans la pensée?, p. 67.
25. OT, p. 242n.
26. OT, p. 240.
27. OT, pp. 240-241.
29. OT, p. 243.
30. OT, p. 248.
31. The precise interpretation of how Kant’s re-orientation of thought is analogous to the Copernican revolution in astronomy is of course a subject of great debate. The simplistic representation of the change as a simple reversal of the direction of the relations between subject and object is nevertheless, I think, a common one—it is referred to (probably with irony) by Vuillemin for example: “Such was the project of the famous Copernican Revolution… making the object turn around the subject instead of making the subject turn around the object…”, L’heritage kantien et la révolution copernicienne, p. 1.
33. CPR, A255/B311: “The division of objects into phenomena and noumena, and the world into a world of the senses and the world of the understanding, is… quite inadmissible in the positive sense, although the distinction of concepts as sensible and intellectual is certainly legitimate.”
34. Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”, F71/E46, translation modified.
35. “What is Enlightenment?” (Foucault), F67/E39, translation modified.
36. “What is Enlightenment?” (Foucault), F67/E40.
37. NP, F118/E103.
38. NP, F126/E110.
39. NP, F125/E110, translation modified.
CHAPTER 3:

DELEUZE AND THE “IMAGE OF THOUGHT”

The problem of beginning in philosophy has always been considered, quite rightly, as very delicate.
—Deleuze, Différence et répétition, Chapter 3: “The Image of Thought.”

The search for the “plane”

In his 1953 book on Hume, Deleuze writes:

We could say that philosophy in general has always sought a plane of analysis, from which it can undertake and lead the examination of the structures of consciousness, which is to say its critique, and justify the whole of experience.

The notion of a “plane” posited by thought as its point of departure, is one which pursues Deleuze’s philosophy from its earliest expression to his last monograph, What is philosophy?, with Guattari, forty years later. It forms the cornerstone of a prolonged polemic around the problem of foundation in philosophy. The problem of foundation is addressed by Deleuze from the perspective of philosophy as a whole as well as in relation to individual claims. What interests him is the set of implicit presuppositions that constitute the disciplinary ‘terrain’ of philosophy: the “image of thought” that underwrites the legitimacy of a philosophical practice. A philosophy or a philosophical claim has, for Deleuze, in the first place a territorial or quasi-judicial sense before its truth status can be considered. The notion of thought’s “image” persists throughout Deleuze’s work, and has a particular pertinence to his understanding of critique. In the most general terms, it refers to “the image thought gives itself of what it means to think, to make use of thought, to be oriented in thought.”

Deleuze first introduces the notion of the “image” that thought gives to itself as an orienting principle in the section on “Critique” in Deleuze’s Nietzsche and Philosophy. Here, the notion of thought’s image is developed in the context of diagnosing what, over the course of Deleuze’s treatment of this
notion, is variously called a ‘classical’, ‘dogmatic’, or ‘traditional’ conception of philosophy. It is an attempt to identify the crucial “deficiency” which afflicts philosophy’s conception of its foundational plane and hampers the realisation of critique. The analysis of the dogmatic image of thought is developed in most detail in Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*, where it forms the subject of the central chapter, singled out by Deleuze in his preface to the 1994 English translation as the chapter "which now seems to me to be the most necessary and the most concrete." Like the Kantian understanding of orientation in thinking, the image of thought is the mode by which a philosophy represents its own beginning or point of departure, and thus incorporates an understanding of the relationship between the pre-philosophical and philosophy proper.

The critical nature of this approach is first indicated by the level of the analysis. While the specific notion of an “image of thought” is wholly Deleuze’s, to address philosophical thought from the perspective of its identity and foundation as a discipline, and in particular its self-conception, is a recognisably Kantian procedure. In the second place, the conceptualisation of thought in terms of its territorial “rights”, legislative domains, and variant interests is a cornerstone of the critical method. The originality of Kant’s famous essay on orientation in thinking pertains as much to its formulation of the question of thought in quasi-geographical terms as to the answer that is given therein. In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari consider Kant’s revolution to consist in his “territorial” conception of thought, privileged over either its subject or object:

Subject and object give a poor approximation of thought. Thinking is neither a line drawn between a subject and a subject, nor a revolving of one around the other. Rather, thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth. Kant is less a prisoner of the categories of subject and object than he is believed to be, since his idea of Copernican revolution puts thought into a direct relationship with the earth. These analogies are not simply metaphors, but indicate the basis of critique as, following Kant’s view, “a completely new science”—the science of ‘scientificity’ or disciplinarity itself. In non-figurative terms, the questions of the territory and orientation of thought refer to critique’s concern with the domain of “right” as distinct from “fact.” Deleuze aligns the foundational plane of philosophy or its ‘image’ with what it designates as belonging to it ‘by right’, as distinct from its empirical coordinates:
The image of thought implies a strict division between fact and right: what pertains to thought as such must be separated from contingent features of the brain or historical opinions... The image of thought retains only what thought can claim by right.10

The distinction between the domains of right and fact is a defining feature of philosophy as a discipline, for Deleuze. It operates a selection among all possible things in order to circumscribe what belongs to philosophy proper, whether this is a certain ‘kind’ of thing, or all things taken under a certain aspect. This is what is immediately ‘active’ about philosophy for Deleuze: already in its enunciation it changes the world through a virtual redistribution of its coordinates and alliances.

While it belongs to all philosophy to repugn ‘this’ world (of fact) in favour of a plane of right, for Deleuze this character of philosophy has two sides: a revolutionary impulse which institutes an original plane and constructs a new world immanent to thought, and a “reactive” or moral impulse which posits a transcendent realm ‘behind’ the variabilities of this world. These divergent tendencies represent alternative resolutions to the ‘problem’ of foundation and mark the distinction between the “dogmatic” image of thought and its critical form. It is thus conflicting understandings of the notion of ‘right’ in philosophy, the status of the foundation of thought as transcendent or immanent, that is first at issue in the philosophical project of critique. Both Kant and Deleuze understand this conflict in terms of a central tension within thought which leads it to alienate its autonomy in external authorities. The originality of Kant’s category of the transcendental for Deleuze is that it represents the identification of the plane of right with ‘right’ itself: the principles of lawfulness and autonomy as self-sufficient and immanent criteria for thinking. It is an active model that demands conformity from nature as opposed to the speculative ideal of conformity to nature. Deleuze reads Kant’s revolution as a reversal of the hierarchy obtaining in classical philosophy between an infinite plane which exists ‘by right’, represented by the figure of a Supreme Being, and our own de facto finite powers of thought.11 Instead, Kant makes finite reason coextensive with the plane of right, in relation to which even a divine being must be measured and judged, and which relegates infinity to the worldly mode of the indefinite. This “discovery” of the transcendental by Kant is compared by Deleuze to the act of a great explorer, a discoverer “not of another world, but mountain or underground of this one.”12
Like Kant, Deleuze traces the privilege of a transcendent notion of ‘right’ to the movement of thought which works back from conditional or conditioned forms to the principle that serves as their condition, thus establishing an ideal plane in order to define an independent essence which corresponds to the concept of identity. Deleuze refers to Plato to account for the privilege of this conception of right: Plato’s “mathematical” or “hypothetical” method separates the Idea as essential and unitary quality from its diverse physical manifestations. It is this notion of right that supports the traditional authority of the question ‘what is x?’ over the apparently more ‘minor’ questions of ‘who?’, ‘how?’ etc. In Plato’s dialogues, it is the signature of the philosopher to ask what is the Beautiful, or the Just *itself*, as distinct from the non-philosopher who resort to examples of *who*, for example, is beautiful, or *cases* of justice. The question ‘what is?’, however, is only apparently crucial to the discovery of essence, according to Deleuze. Alongside the mathematical conception of right in Plato’s work there is at the same time in the dialogues a ‘juridical’ or dialectical notion of right—the question ‘by what right?’—concerned with the legitimacy of claims. The ambiguity of the status of Plato’s ideas can be understood as the slide between these two senses of ‘right’. The importance of identifying the Idea frequently gives way to the importance of the dialectical process itself, the set of philosophical ‘conditions’ immanent to the drama of thought:

the question *What is?* in the end only animates the so-called aporetic dialogues... As soon as the Platonic dialectic becomes a serious and positive thing, we see it take other forms: *who?* in the Politics, how much? in the Philebus, where and when in the Sophist, in what case in the Parmenides.13

The error of the ‘non-philosopher’ is not in asking these more ‘minor’ questions, but in misunderstanding their transcendental status, as part of an ideal distribution of coordinates in thought: the topics of “a transcendental typology, topology, posology, casuistic.”14

This dramaturgical sense of the conditions of thought forms what Deleuze calls the “method of dramatisation.” Just as the image of thought describes a philosophical terrain of right, the method of dramatisation indicates philosophical personae and the nature of the ‘quest’. Both are part of Deleuze’s contention that what is primary in the act of philosophical foundation is not an underlying *logos*, but a *drama* or *mythos* that orients thought by laying out its
scene, ideal protagonist and goal. Deleuze develops the notion of the method of dramatisation alongside that of the image of thought in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, where the argument focuses on the replacing the metaphysics of identity with the notion of the will as a transcendental and generative principle, corresponding to the legislative notion of right:

Willing is not an act like any other. Willing is both the critical and genetic instance of all of our actions, feelings and thoughts. The method is as follows: relating a concept to the will to power, in order to make it the symptom of a will without which it could not even be thought (nor the feeling experienced, nor the action undertaken). The conditions of sense of a given concept or phenomenon are thus the quality of will that posits it, the “type” of subject it supposes, and the world that it implies. It is by way of a “dramatisation” of the concept of truth that Deleuze’s conception of the dogmatic image of thought takes shape: “Who is seeking the truth? In other words: what does the one who seeks the truth want? What is his type, his will to power?” The dogmatic image incorporates an ideal of the persona of the thinker, a community of other thinkers, and the backdrop of a well-disposed nature. Thus, while being a tool for analysing the image of thought of a given philosophy, the method of dramatisation is thus itself based on a particular image of thought, as precisely the effect of a will which determines its world and its subjects.

The special problem which assigning a foundational plane must negotiate, on Deleuze’s account, is that, on the one hand, it must satisfy the need of philosophy to have a secure ground, and on the other, make it possible for philosophy to present itself as operating “without presuppositions.” It must thus ‘belong’ to philosophy, in order to be the foundation of philosophy and not something else, without being part of philosophical discourse proper, in which case it would in turn need to be founded. The plane is not identical with philosophy, but is rather that from which or in relation to which the activity of thinking is undertaken. While posited by philosophy, the foundational plane thus represents a pre- or not-yet- philosophical state of affairs. There is thus an ambiguity in the notion of foundation: it must maintain a position sufficiently distant from philosophy proper so as not to become identified with it, and sufficiently close that it not run the risk of turning away or against it, “as if it vacillated between falling into what it founds and being engulfed in groundlessness.” This dilemma reflects what is later identified as the double
function of the plane of thought: to give form or ‘consistency’ to chaos on the one side, and to serve as a corrective or counter-measure to common opinion:

It is as if the struggle against chaos does not take place without an affinity with the enemy, because another struggle develops and takes on more importance—the struggle against opinion, which nevertheless claims to protect us from chaos itself…¹⁹

Chaos is prefigured in the threat of groundlessness and regress, but the inability to eliminate presuppositions, i.e. taking something already given as a foundation, risks a deferral to opinion: the doxa or ‘orthodoxy’. The temptation to employ the evidences of ‘common sense’ to ward off chaos is more treacherous to thought for Deleuze than pure disorder, and it is this tendency that forms the basis of his critique of the dominant ‘illusion’ concerning philosophical foundation in the form of the “dogmatic” image of thought.

The dogmatic image of thought

The core idea of the dogmatic form of the image of thought is that thought has a ‘natural’ affiliation with the truth, and the thinker a natural predisposition to think and a good will towards the truth. Truth is what belongs to thought ‘by right,’ even if not always in fact, and the task of the thinker is thus to realise the truth that is promised by this principle: “it is therefore sufficient to “truly” think in order to think truthfully.”²⁰ The dogmatic image presents the foundation of thought in the form of an implicit nature which unites the subject and object of thought and forms the common ground of a community of thinkers. It conceives of the pre-philosophical as an unrealised identity—a “state of nature”—which awaits formalisation through concepts. It is in part the presupposition of the ‘naturalness’ of thought that explains why it is eminently ‘unthought’ and implicit within this image: it is what ‘goes without saying’. The assumption of naturalness is also one of the respects in which this image of thought is characterised as ‘dogmatic’: its implicit claim is that the formal basis of its activity is in a ‘nature of things’. In What is philosophy?, the dogmatic illusion is presented as the projection of transcendent “figures” onto a properly immanent foundational plane: “great Object of contemplation, Subject of reflection, Other subject of communication”.²¹ The universality of these figures allows philosophy to claim a genuine beginning, as it presupposes
nothing that is not shared by all, while their underlying affinity provides the security it requires. What thus characterises the dogmatic image of thought is its identification of the foundational plane with a transcendent given, whose direction it simply ‘follows’, instead of assuming responsibility for its position.

Deleuze uses the example of the Cartesian *cogito* in order to illustrate the mechanism of the dogmatic image. Having eliminated all objective or conceptual assumptions that would require further elaboration or justification, Descartes’ *cogito* presents itself as a point of departure for philosophical enquiry endowed with an internal certitude. Deleuze argues however that rather than eliminate presuppositions, the *cogito* only changes their form and scope so that instead of openly appealing to a specialised knowledge, it silently invokes a universally shared ‘common sense’. The *cogito* can only serve as a starting point only because it is assumed that “everybody knows” what it means to think, to be and to be a self:

> It is clear, however, that [Descartes] does not escape presuppositions of another kind—subjective or implicit—that is, contained in a feeling instead of in a concept: it is presumed that everyone knows, independently of concepts, what is meant by self, thinking and being. The pure self of ‘I think’ thus appears to be a beginning only because it has referred all its presuppositions back to the empirical self.

The formula of self-evidence, “everybody knows”—what precisely ‘goes without saying’—allows philosophy to proceed secure in its foundation, while maintaining an innocence with regard to its assumptions because it has coded them as natural and universal.

It is for this reason that Deleuze nominates the “postulate of common sense” as the first characteristic of the dogmatic image of thought. This philosophical common sense, rather than representing any particular set of opinions, is simply the assumption of a natural capacity for thought within the subject: a *cogitatio natura universalis*. According to this principle, thought is the natural exercise of a universally shared faculty: thought, in short, has a *nature*. In order to be a secure foundation for thought this nature must of necessity be ‘good’, i.e., oriented towards the truth. The corollary of common sense is thus the postulate of “good sense”: that “thought is in affinity with the true; it formally possesses the true and materially wants the true.” It makes no difference to the dogmatic image that “in fact” we often or mostly do not
think, and that thought is difficult and fraught with error; these characteristics refer to what belongs to thought “by right”, to thought *qua* thought.

The activity of philosophy thus consists in presenting in an explicit and conceptual form what is apprehended implicitly under the form of common sense:

a matter of rediscovering at the end what was there in the beginning, of recognising, bringing to light what was simply known without a concept in an implicit manner—whatever the complexity of the extraction, whatever the difference between the procedures of different authors.25

This process is reflected in the third and fourth ‘postulates’ of the dogmatic image: the act of *recognition* as the model for philosophical activity, with *representation* as its element. The essence of this model is the recovery or reproduction of an identity through the convergence of information from different sources. If the ‘I think’ is the icon of common sense, this is because it is the site of the coordination of the different faculties of perception, memory and imagination on an object that is thereby identified as ‘the same’: “As Descartes says of the piece of wax: ‘It is of course the same wax that I see, which I touch, which I picture in my imagination, in short the same wax which I thought it to be from the start.’”26 It is both the banality and conservative character of recognition as a model of thought that Deleuze considers to be particularly “deplorable” (*facheuse*).27 While a given philosophy may renounce a particular ‘doxa’ or ‘common sense’ on the level of content, as long as it retains “the essential, which is to say the form”28, it compromises its duty to operate independently from the orthodoxy. Beneath the banality of recognition as a model of speculation lies the menace of recognition as an acquiescence to established values: “The form of recognition has never sanctified anything but than the recognisable and the recognised; form will never inspire anything but conformities.”29

The fifth postulate of the dogmatic image is error as the only “negative” of thought. Error is simply the reverse of the ‘correct’ functioning of thought, a case of misrecognition or misrepresentation, which Deleuze analyses as the confusion of the object of one faculty (eg. perception) with *another* object of another faculty (eg. memory or imagination): “as in the case of ‘Good morning Theodorus’ when it is Theaetetus who passes by”.20 Because the dogmatic image posits an internal affinity between thought and truth, the source of error can only be external, coming from the fact that “we are not only thinkers.”31
The activity of thought consists in the attempt to reconcile the plane of what belongs to philosophy by right and the world of fact, in two senses or directions. On the one hand, the promise or potential of the implicit nature of thought must be brought to light in an explicit form, and on the other the deviations that befall thought through outside influences must be corrected. These two functions are fulfilled by establishing a philosophical orthodoxy in the form of an agreed set of conventional signs for thought, or the application of a method: “Method is an artifice but one through which we are brought back to the nature of thought and ward off the effect of the alien forces which alter it and distract us.”

Cases more complicated than simple error—the “terrible Trinity of madness, stupidity, and malevolence” must also be reduced to forces external to thought, although this indicates the ambiguity of the relationship of the nature of thought to its “accidents”: “[error] would not have a place within pure thought if thought were not diverted from the outside, but it would not result from this outside if it were not within pure thought.”

The status of error as the principal negative of thought correlates with the sixth postulate of the dogmatic image, which privileges the proposition and its referential function as the site of truth and falsity. Deleuze again protests the triviality of this image of truth and falsity—“Who says ‘Good morning Theodorus’ when Theaetetus passes, and ‘It is three o’clock’ when it is three-thirty, and that 7 + 5 = 13? The myopic, the distracted, the small child at school.” More profoundly, these postulates fail to grasp both the true enemy or “negative” of thought and the true ‘transcendental’ or ‘genetic’ conditions of truth and falsity. The dogmatic image of thought separates the referential function of a proposition, in which lies its truth and falsity, from its expressive function, wherein it has a meaning. It is only in the case of isolated examples that are invented or divorced from any context that this separation is possible, according to Deleuze. He instead contends that a non-trivial notion of truth and falsity is entirely dependent on conditions of sense: “Every time a proposition is replaced within the context of living thought, we see that it has exactly the truth that it deserves according to its sense, and the falsity appropriate to the non-sense that it implies.” It is stupidity, the inability to appreciate or produce these conditions, which constitutes the internal threat to thought, and it depends not on the categories of true and false in the propositional sense, but rather the remarkable and the ordinary:
Already teachers know well that one rarely encounters errors or something false in “homework” (except in exercises where propositions must be translated one by one, or a fixed result is required). But nonsenses, remarks without interest or importance, banalities taken to be remarkable, the confusion of ordinary ‘points’ with singular ones, problems which are badly posed or divorced from their meaning, such is the worst and the most frequent, and yet pregnant with menace, a lot we all share.37

The sense of a proposition relies on grasping “that set of problems and questions in relation to which propositions serve as elements of response and cases of solution.”38 The postulate according to which reference or designation is privileged over sense is thus reinforced by the seventh postulate of the dogmatic image that privileges the modality of the solution over that of the problem or question. Like sense, the problem or question is considered to be the “neutralised double” of the proposition: the construction of problems is based on a modification of the propositional form (as in Aristotle), and the value of the problem is defined according to its possibility of receiving a solution. This tendency is in turn supported by the eighth and final postulate of the dogmatic image: the postulation of knowledge as the goal of thought rather than learning or “culture.” The necessity of locating truth and falsity at the level of the problem is a persistent theme in Deleuze’s work, and one that will be most fully elaborated in the second part of thesis. Deleuze defines learning as the “subjective acts carried out when one is confronted with the objecticity (objectivité) of a problem.”39 This process constitutes a form of spiritual training and an “involuntary adventure”40 that Deleuze identifies with the work of culture, in the disciplinary sense outlined above. By contrast, knowledge rests on “the calm possession of a rule enabling solutions”41, the collaboration of the faculties in the “premeditated decision”42 of the thinker. There is always an arbitrary quality, Deleuze contends in Proust and Signs, to truths that are arrived at through an intentional process of ‘realisation’, by applying a method and achieving a consensus.43 The profound truths are rather those that interpellate us against our will, which emerge from nowhere and demand our attention.
The (non-) sense of the dogmatic image

Deleuze’s diagnosis of the dogmatic image of thought is not focused on a particular philosophy or tradition, but aims at “a single Image in general which constitutes the subjective presupposition of philosophy as a whole.” As with Kant’s transcendental illusions, it represents an ‘undertow’ of thought which reigns in the absence of critical vigilance. The diagnosis of the dogmatic image as a pernicious ‘habit’ of thought represents the first step of its critique. The Kantian notion of error being internal to thought in the form of inevitable illusions is recognised by Deleuze as representing an important challenge to the traditional conception of error coming to thought from outside. It also provides an important model of philosophical analysis for Deleuze, prefiguring the typical form of relationship he establishes between the terms of a dichotomy, where one is a degraded version of the other, or ‘the same thing’ viewed from a degraded perspective.

Kant is appraised by Deleuze as contesting the “naturalness” of thought presented by the dogmatic image, both on the grounds that reason left to its ‘natural’ tendencies leads into error, and because the task of reason is to ‘give the orders’ to nature rather than to follow it. This theory of critique as a thought ‘against nature’ runs throughout Deleuze’s reflections on the subject. It begins with his diagnosis of empiricism as a form of critique based on the theory of external relations: “we will call non-empiricist every theory according to which, in one way or another, relations are derived from the nature of things.” In Nietzsche’s philosophy of will, again presented as a critical philosophy, the forces in thought that oblige us to think are identified with the transformation of culture, or the Greek notion of paideia: “Culture, according to Nietzsche, is essentially training and selection… It expresses the violence of the forces which seize thought in order to make it something affirmative and active.” Deleuze’s next book, on Kant, begins with Kant’s definition of philosophy as the relation of all knowledges to the ends of human reason, declaring that: “The supreme ends of Reason form the system of Culture.” What is opposed to “culture” is less “nature”, in its ordinary sense, than its laudative sense in philosophy, denoting what is universally shared, universally given, or what belongs most essentially to something. “Culture”, for Deleuze, denotes the principle by which thought necessarily marks a departure from an
established state of affairs or status quo, whether natural or cultural, in their ordinary senses.

From Deleuze’s account of stupidity, it is clear that in one sense the dogmatic image is a particular manifestation of the obtuseness that threatens thought from within: taking the superficial for the profound, the commonplace for the significant, what is secondary for what is primary. More precisely, Deleuze accuses the dogmatic image of a systematic confusion of the true conditions of thought and its external expressions: the transcendental and the empirical. Thus on the one hand the dogmatic image assumes that thought is generated along the lines of the coordinates of everyday experience: the subject and object and the act of recognition. On the other hand, it is precisely the elements of thought which Deleuze considers to belong to thought ‘by right’—learning, the form of the problem and question, the events that provoke thought—which on the dogmatic model are relegated to the level of the empirical, psychological or historical.

Of all the traits of the dogmatic image of thought, the most important one, which distances it most from critique, is how it suppresses the active nature of thought and effaces the process of its own construction under the auspices of ‘nature’. The ideal of a philosophy without presuppositions is not itself the object of Deleuze’s criticism, only its dogmatic interpretation where this ideal comes at the expense of the accountability of thought. As Deleuze writes on the dogmatic image of thought in *Nietzsche and philosophy*:

> By establishing a bond of right between thought and truth, by relating the will of a pure thinker to truth in this way, philosophy avoids relating truth to a concrete will of its own, to a type of forces, to a quality of the will to power. 48

and later:

> We are never referred to the real forces that make thought, thought itself is never related to the real forces it supposes as thought. 49

Insofar as the dogmatic image conceives thought as the expression or reflection of nature—subjective or objective—rather than a specific will, it can maintain both an ideal of innocence and an indifference to how thought comes about. A critical understanding integrates its presuppositions as the immanent coordinates of a will or act which posits them, this latter assuming the central role of a foundation that is opposed to nature.
The lack of accountability of thought in the dogmatic image has two senses. On the one hand, the apparent ‘innocence’ of the dogmatic image represents for Deleuze a real impotence. By referring the production of thought to the expression of a natural tendency, the dogmatic image of thought avoids all the questions that pertain to its ‘conditions of actuality’: its where, when, in what case, who and why. Neither desire nor good will are enough for Deleuze to explain how and why the potentiality of thought is realised—what is it that makes us think? To refer thinking to a faculty of thought and to conceive truth as a property of ‘true’ thought amounts to an invocation of ‘occult powers’ on the scholastic model. Deleuze refers to the “natural stupor” and “eternal possibility” of this image of thought: it lacks a “claw, which would be that of absolute necessity, which is to say an original violence inflicted upon thought, a strangeness, an enmity which alone would bring it out of its natural stupor or eternal possibility”. On the other hand, Deleuze analyses the dogmatic image precisely as an expression of a “concrete will” beneath the apparent innocence of the “will to truth”, and it is from this perspective that the eminently conservative character of the dogmatic image emerges. The “will to truth” is not a speculative drive, according to Deleuze, but rather moral. The transcendent plane of right posited by the dogmatic image is ‘another world’ behind this one, and it is through a corrective activity undertaken in this world that passage to the other one is assured. The essence of its activity of recognition and representation is the elimination of non-conforming elements: “we always come up against the virtuism of the one who wills the truth: one of his favourite occupations is the distribution of wrongs, he renders responsible, he denies innocence, he accuses and judges life, he denounces appearance.” In both its ‘concrete’ and apparent form, the dogmatic image of thought testifies to a certain ‘will to nothingness’: firstly through its will to anonymity, the suppression of its conditions, and secondly because it only acts in the name of returning to an original state.

The dogmatic image of thought posits the nature of thought as a possibility and the task of thought as the realisation of this possibility, the process being based on an underlying identity. In Deleuze’s ‘critical’ image of thought, the actualisation of thought is instead inseparable from a departure or difference from ‘nature’, taking the form of a drama and an event rather than reproducing an identity. Deleuze uses the term “virtual” to describe the status
of the foundational plane of the critical image of thought in relation to its actuality, in order to mark its difference from the order of possibility. While the possible represents a form of pre-existence or predetermination in relation to the real, the virtual is indeterminate in relation to an actual determination. The indeterminacy of the virtual as condition for the actual, however, has both a negative and a positive sense. In the first place it is indeterminate ‘by default’, because actualisation is identified with the act of determination. In order for indeterminacy to be a sufficient rather than a simply necessary condition of action, however, it must provoke it in some sense. An actualisation is provoked by an encounter with indeterminacy in the positive form of a problem or problematic object. The gauge and definition of a problem, like that of an act, resides in its departure from a natural or essential state of affairs, which precisely calls for an action, for something to be done. The engendering of thought through an encounter with an external instance is what Deleuze calls the “genitality” of thought—after Artaud—which he opposes to the notion of thought’s “innateness.” Ultimately, the distinction between “realisation” and “actualisation” is not one between two different processes but rather a different distribution of their coordinates—precisely the difference represented by divergent images of thought. Any “realisation”, for Deleuze, presupposes an “actualisation”: the drama that gives it sense, and the necessary element of the real that differs from the possible and gives impetus to action. These are simply effaced or subsumed in the dogmatic image in virtue of its position that what counts is the principle of identity, and what animates thought is its own nature.

The next section will focus on this juncture between the possibility of thought and its actuality, namely the various forms of combination between Idea, concept and sensibility in Kant and Deleuze’s synthetic conception of thought. These combinations come under the heading of the ‘problematic’, in virtue of the special meaning we can give to this term from its function in geometry, where it integrates conceptual and non-conceptual factors in thought, and its related sense in Deleuze’s thought as the Ideal guide for conceptual synthesis.
Endnotes for Part I Chapter 3

1 DR, F169/E129, translation modified.
2 ES, F92/E87, translation modified.
3 QP?, F39-40/E37, translation modified.
4 NP, Ch. 11: “The concept of truth”, F108/E94.
5 NP, F108/E95.
6 DR, Exvii.
7 See, for example, the Preface to the first edition of CPR, Axi: “It [the indifference to metaphysics] is a call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all its task, namely that of self-knowledge…”
8 QP?, F82/E85.
9 Prolegomena, Preface, p. 12 (scholarly pagination 4:262).
10 QP?, F40/E37.
11 In, for example, his book on Foucault, (“The ‘Classical’ Historical Formation”, F131/E124) and in his teaching in the seventies.
12 DR, F176/E135.
13 MD, p. 91.
14 MD, p. 92.
15 NP, F88-89/E78.
16 NP, F108/E94-95.
17 cf, DR, F169/E129.
18 DR, F551/E274.
19 QP?, F191/E203.
20 NP, F118/E103, translation modified.
21 QP?, F52/E51.
22 DR, F169/E129.
24 DR, F172/E131.
25 DR, F170/E129.
26 DR, F174/E133, citing Descartes’ second Meditation.
27 DR, F175/E134, translation modified (English edition: “Such an orientation is a hindrance to philosophy”).
28 DR, F175/E134.
29 DR, F176/E134.
30 DR, F193/E149.
31 DR, F194/E149.
32 NP, F118/E103.
33 DR, F194/E149.
34 DR, F194/E149, translation modified, Deleuze’s italics.
35 DR, F195/E150, translation modified, Deleuze’s italics.
36 DR, F200/E154, translation modified.
37 DR, F198-199/E153, translation modified.
38 DR, F204/E157.
39 DR, F214/E164, “Objectité”, referring to a state, means ‘objecthood’, but in this context, as referring to a kind of thing, most probably derives from Husserl’s Logical Investigations, where an “objectivity”—Gegenständlichkeit—means not an individual thing, but a complex event or state of affairs as expressed by a sentence.
40 DR, F215/E165.
41 DR, F214/E164.
42 DR, F215/E165.
43 Proust and signs, F116-117/E95-96.
44 DR, F172/E132.
46 NP, F123/E108.
47 PCK, F5/E1.
48 NP, F108/E95.
49 NP, F118/E103-4, translation modified.
50 DR, F181/E139, translation modified.
51 NP, F110/E96.