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**Propaedeutic to Philosophy:**

**Dialogue and Truth in Philosophical Practice**

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**Lauren Nelson Hesse**

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Abstract of the Dissertation

## Propaedeutic to Philosophy:

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This dissertation advocates a model of dialogue as an approach to education and to philosophical discourse itself that is capable of acknowledging and accommodating the manifold possibilities for human thought. Contemporary philosophy is permeated by a loss of certainty and the increasingly problematic nature of the concept of truth, and the complication of these concepts exposes significant limitations in the ways we conceptualize thought itself. Working in this vein, Gilles Deleuze identifies what he calls an "image of thought," which characterizes the forms we have traditionally allowed thinking to take. His critique of this image, along with its subsequent development, serves to suggest valuable new directions for inquiry and, by opening up new possibilities for thought, thereby opens up philosophy itself. Before we can truly reap the benefits of this opening up of philosophy, however, we must confront the fact that human thought requires training, and the educational approaches we employ both reflect and cultivate particular images of thought. Traditional, lecture-based education reflects traditional notions of thinking and thereby cultivates thinkers who are linear and hierarchical, developing their ideas largely in isolation from other thinkers. A dialogical model of education, on the other hand, accommodates and builds on many of the new possibilities of thought opened up by Deleuze's critique. I explore two models of dialogue—the Socratic dialogue of Plato and the dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire—and propose a new model of dialogue. This proposed model aims to encourage the development of a multiplicity of voices and viewpoints, confront participants with unfamiliar and challenging insights and ways of thinking, and open a humanizing dialogical space in which participants meaningfully engage with one another. This dialogue cultivates habits of critical thought and reflection by implicitly calling for them and proceeding by means of them; thus it presents us with both a philosophical pedagogy and an approach to philosophical discourse itself. Ultimately, this model of dialogue relies on a revitalized notion of truth in order to mitigate the threat posed to authentic, collaborative inquiry by rhetorical or interpersonal

force.  According to this new account of truth, we recognize something as true when it answers questions that have not yet been asked; we adopt something akin to a Platonic myth of truth as that which makes us "better, braver, and less idle" in seeking for things we do not yet know; but we temper this notion with the perennial Socratic reminder that our "wisdom is worthless"—that we do not know what we think we know, that all of our certainties are ultimately somewhat uncertain.  We emerge with a reciprocal and necessary relationship between truth and honesty: our revitalized notion of truth serves first and foremost to make us both honest and humble, and this honesty in dialogue guides us toward ever new answers to as yet unarticulated questions.

**In Loving Memory of**
**Ben, Patrick, and Sarah.**

To the Shimer College community:
Thank you for being the gadfly that changed everything.

To my partner, Dan, with gratitude and love:
With you, I am more myself.

And to the village that raised me:
I remain rooted in you.

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# PREFACE

If we begin our lives with traditional education (as most of us do), we spend years seeking after the correct answer, the one answer implied by the question and already known by the questioner—a search in which only one person will be both correct and first; a search in which failure is so often followed up by a simple restatement of the question (*No, guess again!*); where deficiencies are not valued but are rather obstacles to be overcome, surmounted, defeated; where the response of interest does not discover anything new but merely restates something old. Those with the right to speak are those who ask the questions, while the rest of us must wait our turn, wait for the question to be asked, wait for our next chance to prove ourselves by getting the right answer. Some of us learn to take charge of this process by taking charge of questions, but we do so in such a way that the questions we ask will show the teacher how much we have learned; we ask our own questions the better to understand the teacher's answers.

It takes months and years before we realize within ourselves a voice asking questions of our own, a child's voice, uninterested in the questions that adults ask, asking instead the questions that arise spontaneously in the space between where we find ourselves and the objects confronting us. In acknowledging this voice and speaking aloud in it, in asking these questions that are so authentically our own, we finally discover what is of interest in the questions that adults ask, we finally see that they may also spring from the space between, that they ask about a closeness or a resonance between disparates, or about a shrinkage or drawing apart within a single object. Questions are no longer obstacles thrown down in front of us to be hurdled; rather,

we come to see them as a primary and very human way of relating to the world around us. We look back at young children and are struck by the methodical way the toddler explores his world; we look within ourselves and find the same impulses at work still, busily feeling out the edges of the world, drawing together and pushing apart, testing the resistance of what we encounter and thereby fashioning our own image of that world with our own minds and bodies.

At the beginning of this new awakening, coming as it often does after many years of answering questions put to us like so many tests, it is only natural that being asked to speak seriously about serious matters stimulates feelings of panic and inadequacy. In short, our first experiences with true education often frighten us silly. What we learn eventually, if we are lucky enough to do so, through this demanding apprenticeship to difficult questions, through our gradual awareness of the questions that arise within us, is how to confront the new, the unknown, to do so without direction and yet with confidence. We learn how to reside next to something unfamiliar without being unsettled, or how to be unsettled without being shaken to our core, or how to be shaken to our core without being destroyed. We learn that something will come after these catastrophes, whatever their magnitude—they will change something about us, so that we will never be affected by them in quite the same way again. What we learn this time will color each successive confrontation we have. First, we lose our solid ground, and then we learn to swim.

Learning to swim means that we learn to move meaningfully without the kind of foundation that we formerly considered necessary to meaningful movement. We have no ground beneath our feet that we can push on, but we gradually learn how to push on water instead. What threatens to drown us simultaneously helps to keep us afloat, but we can no longer rely on it in the same ways that we relied upon the ground.

Through a true education, on the other hand, we ultimately learn how to rely on and move meaningfully within a body of knowledge and understanding that continually shifts and changes shape around us. This is as frightening as being thrown into a deep pool, initially, because our customary supports, our sacred beliefs (either ancestral or simply youthful), are so frequently revealed as illusory or arbitrary. The more closely we examine each moment, each belief, each insight, the more we realize the countless other permutations of that idea we might entertain, or the other conflicting ideas that seem to be just as true. Little, if anything, remains still. Our perspective changes, objects change, the others with whom we speak change. Eventually, however, all of this flux ceases to be terrifying. We realize that our lives are not in fact threatened by such mutability. We learn to breathe in the atmosphere of questions rather than subsisting on the bread of answers or information. We find sources of richness in iconoclasm, in irreverence. We give up our entrenchments in favor of the pitch, the field of play. We become children again, investigating the world around us, which has once again become as strange as the world we knew as children. We played then, and we built an image of the world. We play now because our image has grown old and flat, and we find ourselves wondering what was left out.

For the young child, to play is to ask "what works" and "how it works." We play with blocks to understand how they fit with one another and what we can build with them, and something analogous can be said of the many different games that we play throughout childhood and adulthood. At their core, they are experiments, exploring what is made possible by a certain selection and configuration of objects and relationships. To play is to explore a given.[1] It is a response to something already present in the world before us, and it is through playing that we

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[1] In this sense, all of our playing is like the logic that happens within a system. We start with a set of givens, a set of assumptions or presuppositions, and we play with them in order to see what can be built with that system. We see how adding something to that system changes its possibilities.

come to understand what can be done, what things are possible and how they can be accomplished.

And insofar as this is precisely where we find ourselves—within and before a world—playfulness is thus the first gift of a true education.[2] In the field of possibility opened up by this playfulness, we then have the opportunity to practice thinking. We play in two ways—we play the way children play, testing the world, experimenting, seeing *what works* and *what would happen if*, and we also play the way athletes play sports or musicians play instruments—adhering to specific conventions, rules and forms, and exploring the space of freedom that remains within these constraints. In the case of children, the world sets its own boundaries; in the case of athletes, these boundaries are complemented by conventions. In both cases, playing means trying things out, seeing what works. We test the response of the world or of the game by performing actions, sending out signals[3] as though navigating by sonar, and when we receive our response we send out another signal.[4] We do this to probe a space or an object, or to test another creature or another mind. The musician may test the effect of different notes on a melody, or the effect of different harmonies on the listener. The diver may test how her focus on different parts of her body—the tension in her abdomen, her back, her toes—ultimately affects the splash she makes when she enters the water. The gymnast shifts her focus to shift her center of gravity, and thus

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[2] The Greek word for education, paideia [παιδεια], shares its root with the word for child or boy, παις or παιδ [*pais* or *paid*], and our English words "pedagogy" and "pedagogue" originate from the Greek. "Pedagogue" originates from παιδ, "boy," and αγωγος, "leading, guiding"; originally, "at Athens, a slave who led a boy to school, hence, a tutor, instructor" (*Etymological Dictionary of the English Language,* W.W. Skeat, Oxford).

[3] Deleuze discusses the signal and the sign in the Introduction to *Difference and Repetition* (see esp. 20) and in the "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy" in *The Logic of Sense* (see esp. 261-262).

[4] See Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*: "To learn is first of all to consider a substance, an object, a being as if it emitted signs to be deciphered, interpreted. … Everything that teaches us something emits signs; every act of learning is an interpretation of signs or hieroglyphs" (4). See also Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception:* "The passing of sensory givens before our eyes or under our hands is, as it were, a language which teaches itself, and in which the meaning is secreted by the very structure of the signs, and this is why it can literally be said that our senses questions things and that things reply to them" (372).

changes the way she moves through the air. The painter carefully chooses the colors she will use in order to balance physical accuracy with emotional resonance, while still attending to the effect each color has on those around it. The therapist tests by means of questions about different mental and emotional objects in order to help determine where the blockages are and what needs to be released.

In all of this playing, what is of importance is that we do not simply send out signals at random but do so intentionally. When I send a signal and receive a response, my next signal is not haphazard but is in itself a response to this prior exchange. (Others learn about me just as I learn about them, through the same set of signals and responses.)[5]

Playfulness not only accompanies and supports the work of true education, it lies at the very core of what it means to learn anything in life—what it means to pass from ignorance to awareness, from not-understanding to understanding. In the space opened by playfulness in education, we practice how to think critically, rigorously, well. Rather than presenting us with a paradox, the strange claim that to become rigorous we must play as children do instead invokes the true core of exploration and investigation that lies at the heart of the child's "play." To play as a child does is not to deal lightly or frivolously with the world, but rather to engage deeply and intimately in conversation with it. The concentrated rigor of play reveals an intense focus and intention to detail that characterize the child's early interactions with the world.

Hence the two stages of Socratic dialogue: first, the propaedeutic, which must shake us free from our old stabilities, force us to relinquish the things we think we know but have never truly considered. We must first become willing and eager to learn. Only then can we attempt the

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[5] This is why the experimenter prefers to remain behind glass, or masked by a double-blind—so as not to send out any signals of her own. So as not to interfere, perhaps, but also so as not to engage. To not interfere is to not engage. This conception of the disinterested and isolated observer, however, will be discussed and critiqued in Chapter Two.

second stage: to discover or produce wisdom—to learn something.

Thinking clearly, then, involves this element of playfulness,[6] in addition to all of the logical mechanisms and tools and "critical thought" we might call to our aid in the effort to analyze or evaluate claims or ideas. It is precisely this playfulness that yields the material on which we work; in playing we open ourselves to the world, willing to encounter what is in front of us, and we react with wonder and curiosity rather than fear; insofar as true wisdom is a wisdom of the world, this openness is necessary; insofar as insight has its root within us, our being attentive to it and willing to acknowledge it when it arises offers the most profound possibilities for discovery. This authenticity is the most fecund and reliable source of the original.

Our focus here is, first, on how that space of creativity, playfulness, and authenticity is cultivated. The tools of critical thinking have been extensively explored and well documented—and so for now, we will largely leave them be. We will content ourselves with saying of them that while they manage to be very useful in helping us to make progress through the complexities and mysteries of difficult material, they are also themselves partial and insufficient. The rules and mechanisms are not adequate to constitute a viable system; the system itself requires a motive principle, a soul, a mover which imparts to the whole a sense of development and progress. The rules and mechanisms that form the infrastructure of the system are themselves tools, but they are not agents. Thus the other question we have to ask involves this motive principle, this soul that animates the use of logical tools and critical thought. What allows us to make rigorous and responsible use of these mechanisms? What guides us and keeps us honest? The search for this touchstone, this motive principle or guiding force, is thus the corollary to our

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[6] John Dewey is in agreement here. See *How We Think,* 134-140.

examination of playfulness. Because, as we will see, genuine thought requires both of these moments, and a livable balance between them creates the possibilities for the discovery, the revelation, or the production of the utterly new.

# INTRODUCTION:
# THE COGITO AND CERTAINTY

What does it mean to think clearly, to think well? Traditionally, to think well meant in many ways to think in accordance with truth. Identifying true things and upholding them, identifying false things and discarding them—these were hallmarks of the clear thinker. However, this notion of "truth" has been increasingly revealed as problematic over the last century, with a crisis of certainty permeating science, philosophy, and the arts alike. It has become increasingly passé to talk seriously about truth, and thus we have also lost our ability to use this notion as a touchstone or a litmus test of our ideas. What, then, becomes of this question, this quest—to think clearly and well?

In fact, without an objective standard such as the one provided by "truth," the ability to think clearly becomes even more crucial. As the work of analysis and evaluation becomes more difficult, we must become more agile thinkers—but it is not enough to simply embrace this freedom. We may revel in it, but we must also acknowledge that it constitutes a very real problem for us. To get carried away in our enjoyment of our freedom from this rule of truth puts us in danger of alighting nowhere, in the end. In showing all of the ways in which we can move around without the gravitational pull of truth to control and sort our thoughts, we run the risk of missing out on the subtler ways in which our milieu may be sorted or organized—or, to put it more rigorously—the ways in which our milieu may arrange itself. We must learn from its dynamism and its changes, but we must also learn from its moments of stability, its patterns, its

habits and recurrences. We must spend as much time studying our new world as we do contemplating our release from the old.

But this means that we are ultimately in a more difficult position with respect to thinking of both a formal and informal sort. The possession of an unexamined rule that could be used to test our ideas and insights acted as a crutch or a handicap—we were able to proceed more or less meaningfully without necessarily comprehending the mechanism at hand or understanding how or why it worked. But without this criterion, the need for a more profound understanding suddenly imposes itself upon us. We look not simply at whether an idea measures up to the criterion but at the many different permutations of that idea, its implications and complications, the light and shadow it casts on other ideas and objects. The loss of our simple criterion means that we must pay even more attention to these other aspects of our ideas. But we are in a more vulnerable position now, in the absence of truth, as well. Because in possessing minds which are capable of learning, of being convinced by the evidence of the world around us, we also possess minds which are susceptible to persuasion, to manipulation, to deception—in short, we have minds capable of being influenced and even controlled by other minds.

As soon as philosophy begins to make claims and to accumulate them, we find we need some way of evaluating these claims, of deciding between them. At first, we do this by examining what it means to know something and what it means for a thing to be "true." We hope that these things will help us to avoid error; but Kant and Gödel tell us that some paradoxes and antinomies are inevitable, unavoidable, and some errors result from our very attempts to know things clearly. And so we must begin to examine what it means to think and to think well. The problem here is that we do not have a reliable set of criteria for these judgments. Logical thought has illogical moments. Genius relies on intuitive leaps. Creativity cannot be reduced to an

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algorithm or a definition.[1] And "concepts themselves refer to a nonconceptual understanding" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 40). Suddenly, we must interrogate the very way in which our interrogations proceed, the mechanisms and lacunae of thought that result in the insights that puzzled us in the first place. And here, our existing tools fail us, our traditional concepts fall short, our computations skim the surface while the darker and more essential currents remain untouched. This is why epistemology must finally make way for noology[2]—i.e., the study of what is knowable must make way for the study of what is thinkable and of how thinking occurs—because we have lost our solid ground; and only by relinquishing this dream really and truly can we have a chance of discovering what new sort of creature philosophy can thus become.

### *Experiences of Certainty*

In order to ensure that we are neither carried away by the exhilarations of freedom nor subjected to the judgment of another, it becomes increasingly crucial that we look closely at what it means to think clearly—at what thinking entails, at how we learn to think, and at how our thinking is affected by other ideas or other people. This awareness constitutes the necessary foundation for all our subsequent efforts to engage in this act of thinking. We will begin by looking more closely at exactly what it is that we have lost, this notion of truth or certainty on which we had relied so heavily.

The Cartesian emphasis on "clear and distinct" conceptions, the Platonic myth of learning as recollection, and the Augustinian account of knowledge as divine illumination are all emblematic of the traditional notions of certainty in philosophy. Each of these thinkers

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[1] See Chapter 1, footnote 31 (page 84, here).
[2] That is, "the study of images of thought"; noology will be introduced and examined at greater length in the next section, "Intermezzo 1."

formulates a distinct account of the concept and experience of certainty, providing both a mechanism of that experience and a ground or guarantee for the epistemological claims that arise from them. What will be called a "mechanism" here is that faculty or experience by which we gain access to knowledge—it is how we come to know something. The "guarantee," on the other hand, expresses why we know we can rely on this knowledge that we have achieved. Plato articulates a mythological basis for the experience of certainty and Augustine gives a religious explanation, whereas Descartes attempts to give a scientific description. By looking at each of these accounts, and paying specific attention to the ways in which they converge with and diverge from one another, we can attempt to get past or to see behind those images to the concrete, immediate, and ultimately interior experience of certainty that each of these thinkers seems to describe.

At some point the kind of certainty first introduced in early mathematics became a standard for philosophical truth. John Dewey recognizes this early in *The Quest for Certainty*:

> The geometry of Euclid doubtless gave the clew [sic] to logic as the instrument of translation of what was sound in opinion into the forms of rational discourse. Geometry seemed to reveal the possibility of a science which owed nothing to observation and sense beyond mere exemplification in figures or diagrams. It seemed to disclose a world of ideal (or non-sensible) forms which were connected with one another by eternal and necessary relations which reason alone could trace. This discovery was generalized by philosophy into the doctrine of a realm of fixed Being which, when grasped by thought, formed a complete system of immutable and necessary truth. (16)

Euclid's books of the *Elements*[3] do indeed present us with a system of rigorous formalism and logical interrelationships that is as compelling in its claims to "proof" or demonstration as it is

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[3] Euclid should not be understood to be the *originator* of the proofs in his *Elements*, nor should he be credited with creating the concept of organizing existing proofs in the highly systematized mode of that work (Sarton, *History of Science* II, pp. 35ff). In his introduction to Euclid's *Elements*, Sir Thomas Heath quotes Proclus speaking of Euclid as one "who put together the Elements, collecting many of Eudoxus' theorems, perfecting many of Theaetetus', and also bringing to irrefragable demonstration the things which were only somewhat loosely proved by his predecessors" (1).

beautiful in its simplicity. Working centuries later, Descartes is willing to abandon the lifetime of education he has accrued simply because it fails to achieve a mathematical standard of certainty for him.[4] And yet, on the other hand, in the course of his radical reexamination of all that he knows, mathematics itself falls victim to his doubt as a system of admirable certainty but very limited scope: "Above all I delighted in mathematics, because of the certainty and self-evidence of its reasonings. But…I thought it was of service only in the mechanical arts…" (*Discourse on the Method* 7).[5] His motivation and his goal, then, become some kind of unification of mathematics and philosophy—the discovery of truths in philosophy that would hold up to the standards of axiomatic rigor that are exemplified in mathematical systems.[6] He describes the plan of "The Search for Truth by Means of the Natural Light" in axiomatic and almost explicitly Euclidean terms: "the items of knowledge that lie within reach of the human mind are all linked together by a bond so marvelous, and can be derived from each other by means of inferences so necessary, that their discovery does not require much skill or intelligence—provided we begin with the simplest and know how to move stage by stage to the most sublime" ("Search" 496-7).[7]

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[4] "From my childhood I have been nourished upon letters, and because I was persuaded that by their means one could acquire a clear and certain knowledge of all that is useful in life, I was extremely eager to learn them. But as soon as I had completed the course of study at the end of which one is normally admitted to the ranks of the learned, I completely changed my opinion. For I found myself beset by so many doubts and errors that I came to think I had gained nothing from my attempts to become educated but increasing recognition of my ignorance" (*Discourse* 4). Or, more succinctly, in the *Meditations*: "Several years have now passed since I first realized how numerous were the false opinions that in my youth I had taken to be true, and thus how doubtful were all those that I had subsequently built upon them" (*Meditations* 17).

[5] All references to the works of Descartes follow the Adam and Tannery page numbers, given in the margins of the volumes consulted here.

[6] See *Discourse* 19: "And considering that, of all those who have hitherto searched for truth in the sciences, only mathematicians have been able to find any demonstrations, that is to say, certain and evident reasonings, I did not at all doubt that it was with these same things that they had examined [that I should begin]; although I expected from them no other utility but that they would accustom my mind to nourish itself on truths and not be content with false reasonings." Or, later: "For ultimately, the method that teaches one to follow the true order and to enumerate exactly all the circumstances of what one is seeking contains everything that gives certainty to the rules of arithmetic" (*Discourse* 21).

[7] This passage occurs in the introduction to the dialogue and is given in Descartes' authorial voice. Later in the dialogue, Eudoxus, who is generally understood to be Descartes' mouthpiece, reiterates this claim: "…you must, as

Descartes clearly envisions the possibilities of philosophical knowledge to be of a kind with mathematical propositions—enumerable, systematic, rationally knowable, and logically inferable from one another—and he makes this kind of philosophical edifice the final aim of his endeavors. Mathematics, perhaps the Euclidean system itself, has provided Descartes with an image of apodictic certainty, an analogue of what certainty in philosophy should look like. This connection becomes even more explicit in the "Second Replies" to the objections raised against his *Meditations*, in which he outlines a philosophical system modeled explicitly on Euclidean geometry, beginning with Definitions, Postulates, and Common Notions, and going on to derive Propositions ("Author's Replies to the Second Set of Objections" 160ff). However, mathematics itself falls short of its pretensions to certain knowledge because without our indulgence, it cannot progress; without our willingness to accept its terms, its axioms, it cannot even begin. The mathematical system which seems to generate truths so solid remains contingent in its reliance upon undemonstrated presuppositions.

But the *feeling* of certainty or of "metaphysical certainty" (*Discourse* 38) that accompanies the study of these proofs seems to be irresistible for Descartes, so much so that he resolves to withdraw himself from the truths he had formerly accepted, to revoke his credulity, and to "proceed in this way until I recognize something certain, or, if nothing else, until I at least recognize for certain that there is no certainty" (*Meditations* 24).[8] By doubting the reliability of

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a result of this, begin to see that if you simply know how to make proper use of your own doubt, you can use it to deduce facts which are known with complete certainty—facts which are even more certain and more useful than those which we commonly build upon that great principle, as the basis to which they are all reduced, the fixed point on which they all terminate, namely, 'It is impossible that one and the same thing should exist and at the same time not exist'" ("Search" 522). Later in that dialogue, he puts it more concisely: "all truths follow logically from one another, and are mutually interconnected" (526).

[8] In the first place, "knowing something certain" involves two elements, both external and internal, a truth in the world and an awareness of that truth—that is, certainty as a subjective experience of something objectively true in the world. However, "knowing for certain that nothing is certain" is in a sense merely half of this equation: it is a definitive internal awareness but it is directed at an absence or a lack in the world. Insofar as this lack may be found

the senses and of everything gained through them, he finds himself utterly without foundation, "finally compelled to admit that there is not one of my former beliefs about which a doubt may not properly be raised" (*Meditations* 21). He is saved from this intellectual nihilism only by his discovery that every act of thought simply confirms the certainty of his own existence. On the foundation of this one truth—*I think, therefore I am*—(along with the guarantees provided by his faith in God, as we will see later), he claims to regain everything he had lost, albeit perhaps a bit too quickly.

The certainty that Descartes finds in the *Cogito* is, somewhat ironically, grounded upon an inability or a lack—his *inability* to doubt this proposition transforms it into to the first principle of an entire philosophy.[9] In a Socratic turn of thought, a deficiency is turned into a strength, ignorance into wisdom. Socrates began by uncovering or illuminating the uncertainty of the things he and his fellow Athenians thought they knew. However, he did not stop at this simple confusion or uncertainty but turned it upon itself; his *recognition* of that uncertainty yielded his greatest insight. It was not simply his ignorance that set Socrates apart but his recognition, awareness, and even understanding of that ignorance: "This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, *understands* that his wisdom is worthless" (*Apology* 23b, emphasis added). In a similar move, Descartes begins by intentionally casting doubt upon all of the things he was accustomed to regarding as certain. He achieves a radical doubt, an almost

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necessary or eternal, it might approach a kind of concreteness, but it is concrete or definite in a very different way than an objective truth, a truth manifested in the world might be.

[9] This lack is especially apparent in the prior formulations of something like the *Cogito*. One is found in Augustine's *City of God.* Augustine's answer to the skeptics in that work is, "If I am mistaken, then I exist." Aristotle's predates even Augustine's: "whenever we perceive we are aware that we perceive and whenever we think we are aware that we think, and…being aware that we are perceiving or thinking is being aware that we *are*" (*Nicomachean Ethics,* IX.1170a32-b1). But Aristotle's use of this argument is even more glancing than Augustine's, as it is embedded in the context of a broader hypothetical argument regarding the worth of one's friends. Not until Descartes does this particular insight advance to a central position in philosophy and bear the weight of the entire philosophical system that Descartes builds upon it.

universal doubt, until he comes upon one simple phrase that he is logically unable to doubt. It is

his awareness of this inability that gives rise to his famous first principle, generating certainty out

of confusion: an inability to doubt has resulted in an acceptance "without scruple" (*Discourse*

32).

Descartes' most famous formulation of the *Cogito*—"I am thinking, therefore I exist," or

even more concisely, "I think, therefore I am" (*Discourse* 32)—is in fact an earlier incarnation of

what he phrased more rigorously (if less concisely) in the *Meditations*: "this proposition, *I am, I*

*exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind"

(*Meditations* 25). Descartes himself, in the *Second Replies*, implicitly acknowledges the

misleading nature of his first formulation: while its use of the word "therefore" implies that a

logical argument of some kind is being made, Descartes' own standards of rigor prevent him

from adopting the implicit assumption that this argument would require—i.e., "If I am thinking,

then I exist" (see "Second Replies" 140-141). Instead, his later formulation rests upon another

foundation, a non-logical foundation. It is not the strength of logical implication that guarantees

his existence but the *act* of thinking, doubting, conceiving, realizing. The performance of the

phrase "I am, I exist" is all the proof it requires, as far as Descartes is concerned. Any activity,

any performance, requires the existence of an actor, and all mental phenomena are actions.[10]

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[10] This move introduces the dimension of time into Descartes' system in two ways. First, time is implied in any sort of activity whatsoever; activity manifests itself in a change of some kind, while change can only be understood through the passage of time. In order for the *Cogito* to achieve its pre-logical grounding, its utterance must occur in time. More strikingly, by Descartes' own admission, this temporal basis for the *Cogito*'s certainty also seems to restrict that certainty in time. Another translation of the *Meditations'* version of the *Cogito* (given above) reads, "this pronouncement 'I am, I exist' is *necessarily true every time* I utter it or conceive it in my mind" (*Meditations* 25, tr. Cress, emphasis added). The performance of the *Cogito* can only impart certainty during that very performance and does not guarantee its validity in all times and places. Descartes seems to back off on this implication later in the *Meditations*: " 'let anyone who can do so deceive me; so long as I think that I am something, he will never bring it about that I am nothing. *Nor will he one day make it true that I never existed, for it is true now that I do exist*" (*Meditations* 36, emphasis added). Here, he seems to find a permanent validity in the *Cogito* as a result of any performance of it. But this perhaps confuses the epistemology and the ontology of the *Cogito*, because, whereas my current awareness and performance of the *Cogito* can in fact give rise to my awareness of the *Cogito*'s own permanence, the *Cogito*'s validity is in fact performative. Unless it has become implicit in all further thoughts—at

What is interesting here is that while Descartes seems to be demanding a specific kind of logical

certainty from his knowledge, his first principle itself—the foundation of all subsequent

knowledge—must be guaranteed by other means. The expression of the *Cogito* is linguistic, but

its foundation is performative. It relies upon an intimate connection between the systems of

language and experience, but this very connection itself is not without its difficulties.[11] The

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least virtually, as in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* "The **I think** must **be able** to accompany all my representations" (B131, B Deduction, bold in original)—the failure to think the *Cogito* means that one's *knowledge* of one's existence cannot be guaranteed.

[11] A brief detour through Parmenides' poem and Plato's musings on that poem in the *Sophist* provides a useful illustration of the pitfalls inherent in any claims we might make about the application of linguistic statements to experiential realities—or, in Parmenidean parlance, between "thinking" and "being." (Citations given here refer to Peter Manchester's class handout for PHI 600: "Plato and Platonism" in the Spring of 2006. Translations given are either those of Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, or Manchester.)

In his Poem, Parmenides claimed that "the same is to think as well as to be" (Parmenides B2: translation by Peter Manchester)—a striking claim that definitively restricts the possibilities for coherent thought.

> Come now, and I will tell you…
> the only ways of enquiry that are to be thought of.
> The one, that [it] is and that it is impossible for [it] not to be,
> is the path of Persuasion (for she attends upon Truth);
> the other, that [it] is not and that it is needful that [it] not be,
> that I declare to you is an altogether indiscernible track:
> for you could not know what is not—that cannot be done
> -- nor indicate it. (Parmenides B2, translated by Manchester)

Although Parmenides here traces out two possibilities, only one is truly available to us: the discussion of things that are, regarding their necessity. This restriction limits us to speaking about eternal things, for "it is impossible for [them] not to be." The other logical possibility is to say of what *is not* that *it is not*; but this Parmenides calls an "indiscernible track," as we have no access to things that are not and therefore we have no way of saying anything whatsoever about them. Non-being cannot even be indicated, pointed at, as there is simply no thing to indicate and thus no way to indicate it.

Plato's *Sophist* takes up these claims and draws out their implicit argument. At its most basic, it can be understood as follows: the naming of non-being imparts to it some manner of being and therefore fails to actually indicate non-being. Moreover, any of the words we might use (nouns or verbs) to speak about non-being implicitly attach number to those things they reference—they are singular or plural; "some," "one," "many," and even "none" must be paired with a singular verb ending. But the attribution of number implies being; therefore number cannot be applied to non-being; therefore words cannot be applied to non-being. Non-being cannot be named or treated in speech in any manner.

In this manner, the complete identification of language with reality or experience involves us in irreconcilable difficulties. After reaching this point in the *Sophist*, Theaetetus and the Stranger attempt a detour by means of a "parricide"; they go on to examine the possibilities afforded by rejecting Parmenides' binary view of being and non-being. Non-being, rather than being understood as a contrary or opposite of being (which would entail the Parmenidean difficulties elaborated above), can also be understood as the *other*. The Stranger gives the example of the "non-great" as a term that does not mean the contrary of great, or "small"; Theaetetus confirms that this term suggests simply the absence of greatness or something *other* than greatness.

This understanding of non-being as "otherness," however, introduces the possibility for deception or falsehood into language. Suddenly, it becomes possible to say of things that *are* that they *are not*, or of things that *are not* that they *are* (these are the most basic forms of "false speech" and "false opinion" that are given in the *Sophist*). The two systems of language and reality are thereby divorced, and this is in fact the way we generally experience them: many

*Cogito* is a linguistic articulation, performed in time, that guarantees the existence of its subject as well as the ability of that subject to *know* that its existence is guaranteed. It is one situation in which a linguistic statement guarantees the veracity of an experiential reality, while the experiential performance guarantees the linguistic statement. The two systems, converging in this one phrase, serve as guarantors for one another.

This realization throws into relief one additional and somewhat awkward truth about axiomatic, logical systems: any logical system must have a non-logical foundation. If we return to the example of Euclid's *Elements,* once the reader has accepted the axioms (definitions, postulates, common notions), these axioms absolutely guarantee the propositions that follow.[12] Within the system, these proofs or demonstrations manage to achieve a deductive certainty that cannot be controverted *except by a rejection of the axioms*. The only weakness of this system lies in the fact that its axioms themselves are fundamentally unproven and un-provable; or, rather, that any possible proof of those axioms will necessarily fall short of the standard of demonstration that is demanded for the system's internal propositions. The logical inferences that guarantee the propositions cannot guarantee the axioms themselves, and this will always be the case; if the axioms were in fact demonstrable by the same kinds of inferences, the system would be tautological and therefore of limited usefulness. Thus, in any logical system, if the axioms are to have any sort of basis, this foundation must be external to the system itself. Euclid's "common notions" draw on what we would call "common sense" to establish rules for

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things can be said that cannot be experienced, while many things that we experience cannot be communicated in words. It is this very separation between language and thought that gives rise to Descartes' anxiety about achieving reliable certainty; i.e., once we know we can be deceived it suddenly becomes critically important that we find ways of identifying deception (either intentional or incidental) so that we may avoid falling victim to it.

[12] It is possible that Gödel's theorem calls even this guarantee into question; if the axiomatic system is either complete or consistent, then it seems conceivable that some demonstrable propositions might contradict other demonstrable propositions, casting doubt upon each of them.

the system; while this basis is extra-logical, it gains its strength from the fact that few people are likely to disagree with such statements as "things which are equal to the same thing are also equal to each other." The reliability of arithmetic may well have its origins in our experience of the physical conservation of matter, such that adding two apples to two apples will never yield any number other than four apples. Our experience of the world as adhering reliably to the laws of physics inclines us to accept this assumption as unproblematic, but it is an assumption nonetheless.

Descartes guarantees his first principle, his first axiom, by relying on the connection between experience and language. Once he has done so, he works backward by inquiring into what mechanism allowed him to recognize the guarantee or ground of this first principle. The source of his certainty, he discovers, is a "clear and distinct perception" (*Meditations* 35) or a "natural light" (*Meditations* 38).[13] These phrases describe the quality and strength of the insight that grounds his first principle, and they refer to the non-logical basis for a certainty that rivals logical demonstration. Although he is unable to elucidate this insight in the kind of syllogism whose certainty he admires, Descartes' "clear and distinct perception" gives him something akin to syllogistic certainty, a certainty incommensurate with any explanations or demonstrations that might be offered in support of it. In a final turn, Descartes brings this ground into his system: he discovers the principle of "clear and distinct perception" through his experience with the *Cogito*, but he then proceeds to postulate this principle as a rule for that system. This move contributes to the famous Cartesian circle and illustrates the problem of grounding one's first principles. It is as though, in incorporating the ground into his system, Descartes is attempting to overcome the natural and perhaps even necessary incommensurability between the certainty guaranteed within

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[13] Cf. also "metaphysical certainty" in *Discourse* (38).

a system and that which grounds the system itself.

It is clear that Descartes is concerned with capturing and examining a certain type of experience, the "clear and distinct" perception which functions as a mechanism that he can use to identify or recognize something like certainty. But what kind of mechanism is he describing? Or, more precisely, what kind of experience comprises this mechanism? And how does Descartes himself describe this experience? Despite the fact that, in his project of radical doubt, Descartes problematizes the information gained through the senses and the senses themselves as potentially misleading, he sometimes makes use of overtly visual imagery to describe the experience that yields his ultimate certainty: "there is nothing at all the proposition '*I am thinking, therefore I exist*' to assure me that I am speaking the truth, except that I **see** very clearly that in order to think it is necessary to exist" (*Discourse* 33, bold added). He is clearly not implying that the actual, physical faculty of sight accomplishes his perception here—what would it *look* like to exist as a necessary complement to thinking?—but his choice of sight as an image or analogue for the experience of considering this claim is itself telling. In *The Quest for Certainty*, Dewey draws our attention to the implications of this visual dimension in our conceptions of intellectual activity:

> The theory of knowing is modeled after what was supposed to take place in the act of vision. The object refracts light to the eye and is seen; it makes a difference to the eye and to the person having an optical apparatus, but none to the thing seen. The real object is the object so fixed in its regal aloofness that it is a king to any beholding mind that may gaze upon it. A spectator theory of knowledge is the inevitable outcome. (23)

In the later *Meditations*, and even directly following this passage in the *Discourse*, Descartes draws away from these visual metaphors, modifying his vocabulary to speak instead of clearly and distinctly "conceiving" or "perceiving." However, each of these descriptors runs into some of the limitations of the original visual imagery: sight, perceptions, and conceptions cannot be

properly quantified. While on the one hand this visual imagery can give the sense of providing us with clearly delineated objects and relationships, on the other hand the visual field is haunted by its own internal sources of slippage or uncertainty. As Descartes himself had objected, sight is not wholly reliable—it can be tricked, it can fail, and our other faculties (imagination, memory, etc.) can circumvent it; thus, this "sight" of truth also requires a level of faith, without promising absolute assurance. Descartes is forced to simply describe his insights as "clear and distinct," but even he admits "there is some difficulty in recognizing which are the things that we distinctly conceive" (*Discourse* 33). The fact is that certainty is best described as a qualitative or *felt* experience, as Descartes humorously seems to admit in the *Meditations*: "whenever I turn my attention to those very things that I think I perceive with such great clarity, *I am so completely persuaded by them that I spontaneously blurt out these words*: 'let anyone who can do so deceive me; so long as I think that I am something, he will never bring it about that I am nothing'" (*Meditations* 36, emphasis added).[14]

Thus the central problem of certainty remains: this qualitative or felt experience of certainty is woefully inadequate to sustain the certainty it claims. Moreover, we all know only too well how treacherous this experience can be and how frequently and absolutely it can go wrong. Plato and Augustine both grappled with this same basic problem, and each proposed his own solution to add logical weight to the conclusions indicated by this "feeling." Plato described a feeling of recognition that would arise in connection with a "correct" answer and gave, by way of explanation or description, a mythological basis for trusting that feeling. In Plato's *Meno*, Socrates pulls a young slave boy away from his work in order to demonstrate to Meno that the

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[14] One might also consider a passage from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* in this connection: "Whereas the theorem belongs to the rational order, *the problem is affective* and is inseparable from the metamorphoses, generations, and creations within science itself" (TP 362, italics added).

boy, who has never been taught geometry, can nonetheless distinguish right from wrong answers to geometrical questions. Socrates leads the boy through a geometrical proof, proceeding by means of the answers the boy delivers in response to his questions; on receiving a wrong answer to a question, Socrates divides the larger question into smaller ones and works more slowly through them, until the boy delivers the correct answer. The claim being made here is that the boy, in some sense, knows without having been taught, and the implication is that this is common to all knowers. There are some things we can recognize as being true or false without any prior formal education to tell us that this is the case.

Socrates' ostensible interpretation of this phenomenon is that it is a result of "anamnesis," or learning by recollection, and he supports this interpretation with a mythological explanation: the soul, when it can be shown to "know" things it has not been taught, is simply remembering these truths from a prior acquaintance with them, in a prior existence. This existence should not be understood as the prior incarnation of the soul in another body, but a life of the soul preceding its physical embodiment. In this prior, non-embodied life of the soul, the soul is introduced to and comes to know all things: "Inasmuch as the soul is immortal and has been born many times and has seen all things both here and in the house of Hades, there is nothing which it has not learned" (*Meno* 81c). These are the things that the embodied soul can be shown to "recollect" without having "learned" them.[15]

As we saw earlier, Descartes' "mechanism" of certainty is the clear and distinct

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[15] Socrates here provides an explanation for how learning is possible, although it is in many respects simply a postponement or displacement of the real question. He recounts this myth in response to an epistemological problem indicated by Meno: "And in what way will you seek, Socrates, for that which you know nothing at all about what it is? What sort of thing among those things which you do not know are you proposing to seek for yourself? Or, even if, at best, you should happen upon it, how will you know it is that which you did not know? (*Meno*, 80d). In asking how one can search for what one does not already know, Meno is in effect asking how it is possible to learn anything at all. Socrates' answer suffices for this world, but it also relies specifically upon another mode of learning, one that is primary and fundamental, capable of imparting wisdom or knowledge in the first place. It is this latter form of learning that remains without explanation but which is also necessary if the explanation for learning is to avoid infinite regress.

perception, and the guarantee of this mechanism is provided by the interconnection of language and experience in the *Cogito*. Plato also gives us his own mechanism and guarantee of certainty. In the experience of recognition as recollection, we find the mechanism by which Plato believes he can identify or achieve certainty. In turn, this mechanism is guaranteed by the myth of the soul's prior acquaintance with all truths and its corresponding ability to recollect those truths once more. There are a couple of strong reasons to favor Plato's myth over Descartes's "clear and distinct perception" as a description of sorts for the experience of certainty. That is, the image of recalling things forgotten comes very close to accurately describing the wholeness and persuasiveness of the experience of recognizing something certain for ourselves. It also reassures us by maintaining that these things that we realize, recognize, or see in a particular way are in fact reliable. Recognition itself is a slightly more reliable image than Descartes' "conception" or "perception," as we are in fact much less acquainted with examples of incorrect recognition than we are of mistaken conceptions. When we recognize someone adequately, we have no doubt as to their identity; the only possibility for error that we will admit is the chance that our friend has a twin we have never met, and even then, we are likely to claim that any extended conversation with this twin would bring to light any differences between the two. While we might frequently remember facts or ideas with complete certainty and yet incorrectly, it is very rare that we might experience a moment of complete recognition that is nonetheless mistaken. The profound disruption and disorientation that accompanies such a failure of recognition itself attests to the rarity of those events.

However, neither of these strengths can make us forget the fact that Plato's story is presented as a myth, and quite explicitly *not* as a scientific explanation or demonstration. While it may come very close to describing the experience of learning, it fails completely to tell us how

genuine learning can occur; that is, it cannot explain how we can come to have something like

apodictic certainty, certainty which outstrips our ability to demonstrate or prove the thing we so

strongly know to be true. There is here an added irony in that this sense of certainty is itself

grounded by something that explicitly refuses to act as a demonstration or explanation. Plato's

myth remains, then, a delightful story, but it is inadequate as an explanation.

Augustine attempts something more akin to a demonstration that might ground our

pretensions to certainty. His theory of "illumination" grounds the experience of certainty in

divine intervention and guarantees it with divine beneficence. According to Augustine, we are

able to recognize truths as true and errors as false because of a certain way in which God works

within our minds. If we are properly attentive in an inward manner, God will illuminate us with

knowledge of the truth. Our recognition of truth comes from our being prepared to "hear" the

inner Teacher (God, or Christ).[16] That is, in learning something, we are not "taught" by the

words of another person who claims to teach us, or by anything other than a sort of grace of God,

by which we are internally enlightened. This enlightenment is Augustine's mechanism of

certainty: we come to know something truly by a "light" of God within us, not by recollection, as

Plato would have it. According to Augustine's account, knowledge of truth comes to us from

outside—it is not simply lying in wait within us, except insofar as Christ is said to "dwell in the

inner man" ("The Teacher" 139, 11.38). The illumination by which we come to know truth

operates on the basis of our purified reason, which resides in the mind and must be prepared to

encounter the truths "spoken" by God:

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[16] "Regarding each of the things we understand, however, we don't consult a speaker who makes sounds outside us, but the Truth that presides within over the mind itself, though perhaps words prompt us to consult Him. What is more, He Who is consulted, He Who is said to *dwell in the inner man*, does teach: Christ—that is, *the unchangeable power and everlasting wisdom of God*, which every rational soul does consult, but is disclosed to anyone, to the extent that he can apprehend it, according to his good or evil will" ("The Teacher" 139, 11.38).

> But when God speaks in the way we are talking of, he speaks by the direct impact
> of the truth, to anyone who is capable of hearing with the mind instead of with the
> ears of the body. He speaks to the highest of man's constituent elements, the
> element to which only God himself is superior. For man is rightly understood—
> or, if this passes understanding, is believed—to be made 'in the image of God'.
> And his nearness to God who is above him is certainly found in that part of man
> in which he rises superior to the lower parts of his nature, which he shares with
> the brute creation. (*City of God* 430, XI.2)

Both the being and the nature of Christ therefore provide the guarantee for the mechanism of

illumination. To those souls properly prepared to receive it, Christ gives direct access to truth; he

"illuminates" them with an understanding that they can trust because they can absolutely trust

Christ himself. The shortcomings of this explanation, especially from a secular point of view, are

obvious: where Plato gave us a myth, Augustine gives us God. Instead of drawing on apodictic,

philosophical certainty, we are asked to ground our knowledge explicitly in religious faith—in

the existence and nature of the Christian God.

Both Plato and Augustine are grappling with the problem of how something can be

learned from nothing, of how we can come to have certain knowledge of a thing. In this way,

both are undoubtedly drawing on the experience of certainty that Descartes will later characterize

as "clear and distinct." This is the problem of, for example, the fact that my certainty that "2 + 2

= 4" is a true statement is incommensurable with the evidence I can give in support of that claim;

I can show any number of examples to illustrate this rule, but only one counterexample is ever

required to disprove it. Both the Augustinian doctrine of illumination and the Platonic conception

of anamnesis attempt to address this problem by imparting a greater certainty to knowledge than

can be derived inductively from empirical experience. Both mechanisms of certainty—Platonic

anamnesis and Augustinian illumination—would have been known to Descartes, but neither of

them would have been sufficient for his purposes, because both address certainty without

proof—i.e., how we can recognize something as true *without* demonstration. They do not require

proof but rather overleap it, finding some other grounds for the assertion of certainty. In his

attempt to bring absolute, mathematical certainty into the philosophical realm, neither myth nor

faith would have answered to Descartes' purposes. Descartes was searching for something more

akin to demonstration, and thus, as we have seen, the *Meditations* adds a new mechanism to our

list—that of the "clear and distinct perception"—and it is this mechanism that he uses in order to

re-found a lifetime of knowledge. This mechanism itself, however, has its own shortcomings, as

acknowledged earlier: it is difficult to quantify, and yet it is used to provide absolute grounding.

Quite similarly to Augustine, Descartes ultimately credits a benevolent God as the

guarantee for his mechanism: "For in the first place, what I took just now as a rule, namely that

everything we conceive very clearly and very distinctly is true, is assured only for the reasons

that God is or exists, that he is a perfect being, and that everything in us comes from him"

(*Discourse* 38).[17] This reliance on the divine would seem to open his theory up to the same

problems and limitations that attended Augustine's illumination. However, while Descartes does,

in the end, ground the ontological or metaphysical implications of his "clear and distinct

perception" in the existence of a benevolent God (and somewhat problematically uses this very

"clear and distinct perception" to establish the existence and nature of that God), he first

establishes the validity of the criterion itself in a performative dimension. That is, his first

principle, *"I am, I exist,"* stands on its own; its certainty is self-evident and guaranteed by the

very act of conceiving or uttering that truth. Its certainty is, for Descartes, beyond doubt and

beyond question, and so he uses that truth as a starting point. His ability to rely on the "clear and

distinct perception" as a criterion for certainty is not primarily grounded upon God but is rather

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[17] See also *Meditations* 62: "every clear and distinct perception is undoubtedly something, and hence cannot come
from nothing, but must necessarily have God for its author. Its author, I say, is God, who is supremely perfect, and
who cannot be a deceiver on pain of contradiction; hence the perception is undoubtedly true."

inferred from its role in the discovery of this first principle.

By the phrase, "clear and distinct perception," Descartes clearly has something quite distinctive in mind. Later in the *Meditations,* he explicitly distinguishes between the "natural light" (roughly synonymous with the "clear and distinct perception")[18] and a more generic "spontaneous impulse to believe."[19] In doing so he seems to implicitly acknowledge the fact that there is a range of experiences that inspire us to hold specific beliefs. In some cases we can clearly see that our impulse to believe a thing is simply a desire or inclination, the manifestation of something that we would like to believe is true.[20] In other cases, we may be almost entirely convinced of a specific claim, willing to argue at length in favor of it, putting the burden of demonstration on another if they would like to prove that truth wrong; but even here we will listen to their arguments, on the outside chance that perhaps we are mistaken. However, the experience that Descartes describes as "clear and distinct" or the "natural light" is so strong that we do not even feel the need to listen to detractors; we know, as a certainty, beyond a doubt, that something is the case. Thus, I may not even entertain arguments that two and two is not equal to four.[21] The truth of the "clear and distinct" is performative, primarily *experienced*, and the phrase

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[18] In the passage quoted, Descartes refers to the "natural light" as that which shows him that his existence follows necessarily upon the fact of his doubting, and it was precisely this truth that earlier inspired him to articulate the "clear and distinct perception" as the sign by which he could recognize such certain truths.

[19] This pair of terms—"natural light" and "spontaneous impulse to believe" seems to be the later incarnation of what, in the *Discourse*, Descartes called, respectively, a "metaphysical certainty" and a mere "moral assurance." See *Discourse* 37-38.

[20] In many ways, it seems that the "feeling of certainty" critiqued by Dewey in *The Quest for Certainty* is more akin to this "spontaneous impulse to believe" than to the more rigorous and/or robust "natural light." Dewey distinguishes between them because he holds that the belief in apodictic certainty (or "absolute certitude") results from an artificial separation between theory and practice, driven by our discomfort with the flux of everyday experience and our need for stability. It may well be that Dewey would refuse to accept any philosophy that attempts to ground itself wholly in the intellectual dimension, as does Descartes's, but I suspect that, by and large, what Dewey objects to is the epistemological interpretation of the experience of certainty, whereas to a large extent this essay is concerned with the nature and quality of that experience itself. (See Dewey, Chapter 2: "Philosophy's Search for the Immutable," in *The Quest for Certainty*.)

[21]Even so, there are some with so little faith in certainty of any kind that they will listen even to arguments such as these, and they are often rewarded with wholly new and unforeseen insights.

"clear and distinct" is Descartes' description of the experience of encountering undeniable truth (and it is the recurrence of this very experience that will serve as the signal or signpost of future truths). Descartes knows for a fact that he exists, because his very knowing, doubting, or questioning would only provide him with further proof; any attempts to contradict this truth would simply reconfirm it: "'let whoever can do so deceive me, he will never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I continue to think that I am something'" (*Meditations* 36). This is precisely the same kind of certainty that follows from the demonstration of a Euclidean proposition, once the axioms have been accepted. We accept those proofs as valid, as accurate, as true, because they have been constructed in such a way that we can directly perceive their necessity. It is not out of the realm of possibility that a person can mistake a lesser certainty for this greater certainty, but the fact remains that this experience of certainty does seem to be not only very difficult to ignore but also very difficult *not to affirm*.

We have thus explored three different attempts to account for the experience of certainty as well as for the logical weight we feel compelled to attach to that experience. Plato begins with a mythological account: his mechanism for achieving certainty is a recognition that is in fact a recollection, and the reliability of this mechanism is expressed in the form of a myth. Augustine transposes the question into a theological register, proposing an experience of illumination as a mechanism of certainty, and guaranteeing this experience with divine intervention and divine goodness. Descartes, finally, attempts to give a more scientific account of certainty, appealing to the "clear and distinct" conception as mechanism and guaranteeing this mechanism first through the *Cogito* and later, like Augustine before him, through the existence and nature of God. While his description and explanation for the experience of certainty avoid some of the shortcomings of explanations based in mythology or theology, Descartes is also forced to admit more slippage or

difficulty in the application of his ideas than either Plato or Augustine.

As we turn from the examination of traditional images of certainty to examine instead our own internal, felt experiences of certainty, we find immediately that we describe different intellectual experiences in different ways—*I suspect, I believe, I know, I understand*, etc.—but ultimately it is the quality of the experience itself, something inherent in our experience, that tells us what is occurring. I say that *I know* or *I suspect* because of a certain way that I experience my relationship to a claim, an object, or the relationship between other objects in the world. It is the experience that determines the name we give it, and thus it is the experience itself that must be interrogated if we are to proceed rigorously and meaningfully. Since these different manifestations of thought, belief, and knowledge possess different logical or epistemological guarantees, it is in our own interest that we be able to distinguish between them. However, far from being reliably obvious, the experience of certainty itself is often either indiscernibly subtle or overwhelming—at either extreme, it can be indistinct and can itself require examination. As it is our experience that gives us an indication of how trustworthy our ideas are, if we are unable to reliably parse or classify those experiences, we are left without this crucial source of information, and the certainty of our ideas remains in doubt.

We can make use of two different kinds of standards in our process of intellectual discovery. An external standard (such as a criterion of truth) can offer us an exemplary shape or a touchstone by means of which we can directly test our ideas. On the other hand, such a criterion is of minimal usefulness if we are not attentive to those internal indications that allow us to translate our experiences into logical claims or assertions. That is, we must have a way to determine when a claim satisfies these standards. Once again, it is a question of recognizing a symmetry or a fittingness between the claim we are making and the "truth." In the end, our very

ability to employ external standards of truth or falsity, of usefulness, or of meaning is dependent upon our awareness of our internal experience of the world and of our ideas as well as our ability to describe and classify those experiences. The possession of a measuring stick is of no use if we cannot see it or discern the difference between it and what we are attempting to measure.

The different theories of truth or certainty explored here each attempt to capture or describe the quality of these interior experiences that arise in our interaction with the world and with ideas. As we have seen, Plato found an experience of a certain kind—or more importantly of a certain *veracity* or reliability—to be qualitatively analogous to that of a sudden recollection of a previously forgotten object. The sliding into place of disparate pieces, of mind and world, the sudden insight or catch that stops a slippage and resolves an indistinct mass into sharpness— this experience, which Plato found to correspond to the recognition of common and empirically verifiable truths—repeats itself in our attempts to remember such mundane facts as the location of our car keys or the afternoon's meeting with a friend. Once this mental clicking into place occurs, we no longer search for the answer; we do not even ask ourselves whether we should continue the search; we simply stop, and then we move on from there. As Plato would say, we have recalled a previously established truth, such that now we can be said to "know" it.

Whereas Plato's image emphasizes the internal experience that characterizes the recognition of a truth, Augustine's image of illumination employs the language of light and vision—invoking an encounter with the visible and therefore *external* world—to describe the experience that he finds a reliable source of wisdom. In the same way that we experience the awareness that accompanies the sudden flooding of a dark room with light—the objects present and the relationships between them become immediately concrete and apparent—our souls experience an analogous "enlightenment" that allows them a sudden increase of understanding.

And just as Plato's moment of recollection is followed by the cessation of our search for the answer, as we have now found it, Augustine's moment of illumination allows us to stop groping blindly in the dark, hoping to knock up against an object here or there in order to begin building some sort of awareness of our surroundings. Once we have turned on the light, we may stand still and simply see. Both images evoke or imply the cessation of the search that follows the moment of discovery.

However, at the root, these experiences are also in a sense primarily "affective"—that is, our categorization of them relies on a quality of feeling or attitude. It is the contention of this essay that Plato, Augustine, and Descartes are each attempting to describe the same thing—a certain *quality* of experience that results in reliable understanding. It is noteworthy here that Plato and Augustine both make use of images to describe this experience, and it may be that such experiences must always be described obliquely, evoked or suggested rather than explicitly delineated in words. Descartes, in the phrase "clear and distinct," may come closest to describing the experience itself, as concretely as possible; but he also finds himself in the position of having to grant the inherent slippage or uncertainty in this description.[22]

The question at this point is whether this vacancy or limitation in language—this inability to adequately describe or categorize this experience—attests to an understanding that is as yet inarticulate or unformulated, or whether it indicates a fundamental resistance to linguistic description on the part of the experience. It is possible that, given time and space in which to develop, it might be possible to develop a vocabulary or grammar capable of rigorously and reliably qualifying these internal experiences. Perhaps, in this experience, my inclination towards certain ideas and away from others is based on reasonable and concrete criteria that I simply

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[22] Once again, see *Discourse* 33 and above, here: "only there is some difficulty in recognizing which are the things that we distinctly conceive."

have not consciously acknowledged as such. On the other hand, it could also be the case that, as we are dealing here with an irreducibly internal experience, and as that experience itself is inherently pre-linguistic, the attempt to describe and parse it linguistically will always fall short in significant ways.

But why should we concern ourselves with the concept or experience of certainty? The criteria of Platonic recognition, Augustinian illumination, and Cartesian "clear & distinct" examined here all fall within what Gilles Deleuze will later call the "dogmatic" image of thought (*Difference and Repetition* 133). These models each represent a particular set of assumptions about what it means to think, and they are inspired more by the products of thought than by the process of thinking—that is, they reify the notion of absolute certainty in the constituted clear and distinct perception, rather than acknowledging the complexity of its constitution. The mechanism that occasions, provides, or guarantees certainty is overlooked, ignored, neglected by this system, which builds its assurances on the image of stability provided by the truths that are recollected, illuminated, or clearly and distinctly conceived. However, after we have lost or relinquished a standard of truth, after the notion of absolute certainty has failed or has simply become too problematic (as it does for Gödel or Heisenberg), it becomes clear that we need to find other ways of thinking about what it means to think, ways that are not so bound up with this concept of absolute certainty. If clarity of thought formerly meant thought in conformity with truth, then the problematizing of truth forces us to examine other possible sources of rigor in philosophy.

### *Noology*

In what branch of philosophy are we to locate this analysis or this study? Epistemology asks what it means to know something, and noology wonders what it means to think. The former is an

ancient and well-established branch of the philosophical family, but the latter is both a newcomer and a somewhat neglected interloper. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), Deleuze and Guattari define noology briefly as "the study of images of thought, and their historicity" (376).[23] The striking scarcity of references to noology in the greater philosophical canon might tempt one to conclude that the term must be unnecessary, redundant. Perhaps we are in fact still speaking of epistemology?

But a cursory examination of epistemology alongside noology quickly runs up against the irreducible distinction between knowledge and thought. No further resolution is possible: the activity of thinking can no more be collapsed into the structures of knowledge than can knowledge be extrapolated from the acts of thought (sensing, imagining, remembering, wondering, etc.). Can my understanding of the structure of the atom give me any insight into the intricate edifice of thought and theory that generated that knowledge? To complicate matters somewhat further, can we even include "learning" in "thinking"? Can I truly learn to swim by watching someone who knows how to swim? Can I learn to think by watching someone else think? Or must we distinguish pedagogy from noology as well?

Pedagogy itself is plagued with a lack of clarity in the distinction between epistemology and noology. If learning is an epistemological enterprise, aimed simply at the acquisition of facts and knowledge, then textbooks, lectures, and rote memorization are reasonable approaches to this goal. However, if learning involves a training in thought, in what it means to think and how to think well, then pedagogy must look instead toward noology as its foundation, and here the simple acquisition of information no longer suffices. At any rate, we must now at the very least acknowledge that pedagogy is external to both epistemology and noology—although it is also predicated upon either or both of those other disciplines.

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[23] Deleuze also uses the term "noological" in *Difference and Repetition* (264).

"Philosophy of mind" will not suffice to describe what is meant by the word "noology," for the latter does not treat the science of mind or questions about how the brain functions. Noology is not primarily interested in perception or in our experience of the world, eliminating "phenomenology." "Logic" also falls short of the field of noology, although perhaps it does deal with one of its objects. Noology proper instead addresses the implicit or explicit expectations that govern our understanding of what it means to think—and thus far, this study has been given no other name, nor is it adequately addressed within any other discipline.

To put the matter straightforwardly, this dissertation is concerned primarily with the process of thinking, rather than its frequent product, knowledge. In this sense, perhaps Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is something of a proto-noology: Kant succeeded in accomplishing an impressively complete elucidation of an image of thought. However, in its failure to acknowledge that its subject was only one among many, his resulting account of "thought" was not absolute but rather provisional. John Dewey's *How We Think* may come even closer to what is meant by "noology" here, but once again he operates on the assumption that he is describing the universal experience of thought. Essentially, noology takes as its premise the assertion that images of thought (i.e., the sets of assumptions governing our accounts of what it means to think) are contingent and not absolute. From this perspective, Descartes' project of radical doubt failed because he neglected to interrogate the concept of thinking itself, believing the term needed no overt definition. Noology, "the study of images of thought," implicitly critiques those images, particularly insofar as the traditional image claims a universal extent or absolute, *a priori* grounding; noology reveals such claims to absoluteness or universality as mere characteristics of one possible kind of thought among many possible thoughts.

Henri Bergson might see in the distinction between the product and the process of

thinking yet another incarnation of his theory of duration. In "Philosophical Intuition" (*The Creative Mind* 87-106), he claims that human thought contains two great and irreducible modes: science and philosophy. Science limits itself to examining the static, the discrete, in terms of units and measures, while philosophy equips itself to deal with the experience of continuity, of fluidity, of duration (102). For Bergson, philosophy understands the very simple definitional insight that the discrete can never constitute the continuous—e.g., a series of points may describe but can never constitute a line—and thus all approximations to continuity that occur on the basis of the discrete will ultimately fail.

Similarly, we cannot study a process in the same way that we might study its product. In the study of thought, thinking is both the activity considered and consideration itself, the activity of considering; we cannot describe or define thought without at the same time performing acts of thought. What Dewey calls the "spectator theory of knowledge" (*Quest for Certainty* 23)—the traditional conceptions of thought that take up visual metaphors for intellectual activity and thus perpetuate a notion of an absolute split between observer and observed—becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. Thinking thus falls victim to the same seismic revolution that "ungrounded" twentieth century science. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle articulated clearly the obstacles attaching to our pretensions to complete scientific isolation and objectivity. If the very act of observation changes the object observed, how much more so are we ourselves implicated and complicated in our attempts to think about thinking. Even Dewey sees in Heisenberg's principle the nail in the coffin of traditional conceptions of knowledge: "The principle of indeterminacy thus presents itself as the final step in the dislodgment of the old spectator theory of knowledge" (*Quest* 204). This, more than anything else, will force us—if we are honest—to abandon all pretenses to objective knowledge, a universal perspective, a view from nowhere, or the observer

who is not at the same time immersed in the observed. Unfortunately while we may acknowledge in theory the problems of making these claims, this often does not stop us from approaching knowledge in practice as something that can be examined from a distance. But where thought is concerned, we find ourselves in the difficult position of exploring something we cannot observe without simultaneously affecting and changing it. Nothing else quite so explicitly puts us "in the site of the experiment"[24] so that suddenly *we*—we thinkers—are at stake in our very attempts to understand thought.

Finally, the question of the image of thought becomes all the more insistent the more closely we acknowledge philosophy to be bound up with the essence of thought. If what it means to "think" is a matter of provisional definition, then what changes might be possible in philosophy if that term were to be redefined? What philosophical possibilities are we overlooking or precluding in our failure to acknowledge the contingency of our own image of thought?

These are some of the central questions motivating Deleuze's interest in noology and his treatment of it in *A Thousand Plateaus*. However, Deleuze's engagement in thinking about noology stretches back to the beginning of his career. As early as *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* Deleuze was already beginning to articulate a critique of the traditional "image of thought." By "image of thought," Deleuze means the set of assumptions that govern thought itself—our presuppositions about what it means to think or what activities are involved in thinking. This image of thought can be likened to the set of objects, parameters, and rules that constrain and define a given sport. I know which sport I am playing by looking at the shape and layout of the field and the ball; the rules tell me how I am allowed to behave; the strategies tell me what role I

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[24] Deleuze addresses this idea that the thinker becomes immersed in the site of the experiment in *Difference and Repetition* (see e.g., DR 166). It will be addressed here, below, in the discussion of apprenticeship in Chapter Two.

am to play on the team. These already understood concepts, parameters, rules, and criteria constitute a coherent and cohesive system that determines in advance the "image" of the game— i.e., what sport is being played and how it is to be played, whether it be football or baseball or volleyball or croquet. Amidst all the variation of the individual games and outcomes within a given sport, these structural elements remain stable and unchanging, as they constitute the identity of the sport itself. Similarly, the assumptions that we make about the concepts involved in thought, the aim of thinking, and the rules we must follow in order to think well constitute an "image" that determines in advance what constitutes thinking and what can appropriately be called "thinking." In its naïve form, Deleuze calls this set of traditional concepts, aims, and rules the "dogmatic image of thought," as its presupposed elements generally go unacknowledged as such.

The evolution of Deleuze's thinking about the "image of thought" proceeds through three distinct phases. The first phase begins with a short section of *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and ends with the central chapter of *Difference and Repetition*. The second phase is articulated throughout Deleuze's collaboration with Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* and involves a specific incarnation in the concept of the "rhizome." Finally, the third phase arises in *What Is Philosophy?*, the final collaboration between Deleuze and Guattari, in which they postulate different images of thought in the form of "planes of immanence" that filter through and cross-cut a chaos of infinite possibilities. Deleuze himself suggests the importance of this trajectory in his Preface to the English Edition (1994) of *Difference and Repetition*: "It is therefore the third chapter ["The Image of Thought"] which now seems to me the most necessary and the most concrete, and which serves to introduce subsequent books up to and including the research undertaken with Guattari where we invoked a vegetal model of thought: the rhizome in

opposition to the tree, a rhizome-thought instead of an arborescent thought" (xvii).

These three distinct phases in the gradual evolution of Deleuze's image of thought here correspond to the central questions of the coming inquiry. These central questions will form the core of each the coming chapters, while the overarching analysis will be punctuated by brief Intermezzos exploring the corresponding phase of the image of thought. First, Chapter One considers what it means to think—in the broad, robust sense of the term. Of especial interest here are the many aspects of thinking that are neglected, ignored, or glossed by the traditional accounts of thought. Chapter Two takes up and continues this examination, focusing specifically on the nature of the apprenticeship that corresponds most closely to a rigorous training in thought, and on the interlocutor—the figure that engages with us and challenges us to think. Chapter Three examines how this thought can be cultivated, with a particular emphasis on the models of education that might be deployed at the secondary and university levels. In short, it asks how we learn to think, and moreover to think well. And finally, Chapter Four poses the question of how we can continue to make meaningful progress when we find ourselves surrounded by a multiplicity of voices, perspectives, and accounts of the world. It examines how we can avoid falling victim to manipulative regimes and unscrupulous thinkers whose only motivations stem from the desire for personal profit and advancement.

# Intermezzo 1:
## First Phase of Deleuzian Image of Thought— Thought Without Image

Deleuze's writings on the "image of thought" are deeply rooted in his engagement with Nietzsche, and with Nietzsche's own calling into question of the concept of "truth." Indeed, in looking back at the origins of this account of the image of thought, Deleuze's own debt to Nietzsche becomes strikingly apparent. What develops into its first full formulation in *Difference and Repetition* begins as an attempt to explore what occurs when we take seriously Nietzsche's critique of the concept of truth. In brief, in the absence of truth as a centralizing concept, Deleuze considers what happens to the concept of thinking. In going on to explore the ramifications of this "central collapse" (*Difference* 147), Deleuze seems to take the Cartesian project of radical doubt, as expressed in the *Discourse on the Method*, as exemplary of the kind of thought that proceeds from our accepting the notion of truth unproblematically. Thus, Deleuze's first formulation of the image of thought can be described as arising from an intersection of Nietzsche and Descartes.

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* Deleuze seems to share Nietzsche's suspicion that there is something problematic about the notion of truth, that the concept itself cannot bear the weight of scrutiny that we so desperately want it to endure. It is the vacancy left at the core of thought when this notion of truth crumbles that seems to most occupy Deleuze in the section titled "New Image of Thought" (103-110). This vacancy exposes three "essential theses" that describe what Deleuze calls for the first time "the dogmatic image of thought" (103); each of these theses can

ultimately be referred back to an implicit reliance on the stability of "truth," and each of them accordingly fails in its absence. The first characteristic of this dogmatic image of thought is the assumption that we are somehow naturally inclined to think, and to think well (103). We come to know things through the operations of an inborn curiosity that motivates our exploration of the world, and we are naturally equipped to identify the truths that we uncover in these explorations. Dewey identifies this characteristic of Western thought in his own consideration of philosophy's preconceptions: "Rational and necessary knowledge was treated, as in the celebrations of it by Aristotle, as an ultimate, self-sufficient and self-enclosed form of self-originated and self-conducted activity" (*Quest* 17-18). Descartes exploits this assumption when he retires alone to a "stove heated room" (*Discourse* 11) and sets himself the project of clearing away his existing opinions in order to re-establish his knowledge on something firm and utterly reliable, if such a thing can be found to exist. In undertaking such a project, he implicitly relies on his own ability to recognize the certainty of this foundation. He makes his own ability to know—or, rather, his *inability to doubt*—the criterion for absolute truth. Unless thought itself naturally possesses an "affinity with the true" (Deleuze, *Difference* 131), the attempt to determine an absolute foundation on the basis of the capacities of thought will ultimately fail. Moreover, if there is no core of truth, as Nietzsche forces us to consider, this image of the thinker as naturally inclined to think well and as naturally capable of recognizing truth must be dismissed out of hand.

Descartes' project of radical doubt itself arises out of a sort of disgust with error and the determination to weed out all such mistakes and misconceptions from his own thoughts and ideas. He is prompted into action by the uncertainty of the ideas afforded by his education: "Several years have now passed since I first realized how numerous were the false opinions that in my youth I had taken to be true, and thus how doubtful were all those that I had subsequently

built upon them. And thus I realized that once in my life I had to raze everything to the ground and begin again from the original foundations…" (*Meditations* 17). The revelation of the instability of his knowledge as compared with the absoluteness of his reliance on that knowledge immediately results in his determination to reestablish the foundations of his thought, in order to finally achieve the kind of certainty that he had been led to expect from his life. In implementing his project, Descartes begins not by seeking truth but, in a sense, by seeking error: he knows no other way of identifying truth than by finding those truths that are not at all susceptible to error, that cannot possibly be suspected of containing an error, that cannot be doubted.

Descartes' immediate revulsion to the experience of being in error and his identification of error as the primary and perhaps even sole obstacle to his achieving the kind of truth he desires embodies the second characteristic of Deleuze's dogmatic image of thought. This image assumes that our attempts to find and know truths are reliable unless they are disrupted or corrupted from without; that is, our attempts to think clearly may be derailed by "external forces which are opposed to thought" (*Nietzsche* 103) and which cause us to err. Descartes explicitly seeks these sources of error in the senses when he considers the varied and changeable manifestations of wax in Meditation Two. Because his senses can be deceived, and because the object that the intellect tells him is singular and identical in fact appears to him in many different guises, Descartes concludes that the information gained from the senses is unreliable; he therefore discards those senses as possible sources of the true. When Deleuze claims that "We are also told that we are 'diverted' from the truth but by forces which are foreign to it (body, passions, sensuous interests)" (*Nietzsche* 103), he effectively invokes this Cartesian project, though without naming it as such. In both accounts, error is attributed to the intervention of something that inheres in us, but that does not necessarily maintain the affiliation with truth that

the dogmatic image of thought requires. As with the assumption of a thought that maintains this natural affinity with the true, the assumption that error is a corruption of pure thought similarly collapses once the notion of truth, its touchstone or negative definition, is removed from the field of play.

The final characteristic of the dogmatic image of thought, as it is first expressed in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, echoes the Cartesian project even more strikingly: "We are told, finally, that all we need to think well, to think truthfully, is a *method*" (103). The full title of Descartes' work is *Discourse on the Method for Using One's Reason Well and for Seeking Truth in the Sciences*; it is, quite simply, a method for seeking truth—precisely the target that this final characteristic of the dogmatic image indicates. The belief that the possession of a method is sufficient to protect one from falling into error—what Deleuze will later call the "notion of ease [that] poisons the whole of Cartesianism" (*Difference* 133)—finds expression in Descartes' determination to "go so slowly and to use so much circumspection in all things that, if I advanced only very slightly, at least I would effectively keep myself from falling." Moreover, in this slow and deliberate process, Descartes vows to "never accept anything as true that I did not plainly know to be such." While the sheer amount of time that it takes Descartes to actually implement his four deceptively simple axioms[1] testifies to the fact that his method is in fact "easier said than done," he does assert that these four rules embody "the true method for arriving at the knowledge of everything of which my mind would be capable" (*Discourse* 16-18).

Thus, each of the three theses presented as characteristic of the dogmatic image of thought is deployed quite explicitly in Descartes' *Discourse on the Method*. And the loss of

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[1] The *Discourse on the Method* tells us of the years that elapse between the conception of this project and its completion. Descartes himself acknowledges that a great deal of time and effort are required in which to weed out one's faulty opinions and practice releasing oneself from old habits of thought.

certainty strikes a blow at each of them in turn: if there is no truth, there can be no natural inclination toward it; the concept of error, as a negative or disruption of truth, is similarly emptied of meaning; and since no simple method will get us to a truth that does not exist, the set of rules Descartes sets forth for thinking, while useful, lose something of their immediate allure. Insofar as Descartes's work relies fully and fundamentally on the beliefs that truth exists and that it is knowable, Nietzsche's challenges to the concept of truth involve some radical challenges to the whole of Descartes' project.

In pursuing the line of destruction wrought through Cartesianism by Nietzsche's critiques, Deleuze finds himself focusing largely on the role played by force and violence in the faculty of thought. His language throughout the section on "The New Image of Thought" continually invokes forceful and violent imagery, repeatedly emphasizing the central claim that thought must be forced to think: "Thought never thinks alone and by itself […] Violence must be done to it *as* thought, a power, *the force of thinking*, must throw it into a becoming-active" (*Nietzsche* 108). When we can no longer rely upon a natural kinship between thought and its proper object, truth, and when thinking well is no longer a simple matter of following straightforward rules, something else arises to motivate thought, or to make thought occur. Now, thought does not naturally seek out and recognize its epitomizing form, but rather takes those forms that it is forced or compelled to take. Thinking is no longer a peaceful undertaking: it has become threatening, unsettling, contentious. The very project of philosophy becomes one of implicit violence: "[Philosophy] is useful for harming stupidity, for turning stupidity into something shameful. […] Fighting the *ressentiment* and bad conscience which have replaced thought for us. […] Philosophy is at its most positive as critique, as an enterprise of demystification" (106). Philosophy, that is, fights, critiques, and demystifies in its attempt to

"harm stupidity." At this point, however, Deleuze still maintains and preserves the internality of thought. Even though thought now undergoes a kind of violence that compels it to conceive or perceive certain things, this violence is not wholly external to it, for thinking "is never simply disturbed by forces which remain external to it" (108). The power which compels this thought is "*the force of thinking*" itself.

In *Proust and Signs* (1964), however, the violence that is done to thought seems to shift its center of activity. The violence now comes from without; thought is disturbed, provoked, or troubled by forces and objects that impinge upon it from outside, and whose very foreignness to thought helps to ground their own necessity: "it is precisely the contingency of the encounter that guarantees the necessity of what it leads us to think" (97).[2] This encounter with something new, something surprising and unexpected, something that forces itself on our attention forms the central concern of this section on the image of thought (94-102). Here, Deleuze draws heavily on an extended passage from Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, in which the narrator describes the experience of encountering the unexpected, whether in stumbling over a cobblestone or being forcibly drawn into the recesses of memory by the taste of a madeleine.

Descartes, in seeking for necessary truths, saw fit to exclude the external, confining his search instead to thought itself and to the possibilities that arose within it. Kant's philosophy widened the field of possible objects for "pure" thought by bringing the grounds of space and time fully within the intellectual sphere; however, he still devoted a great deal of energy to interrogating thought in its raw or proper state, attempting to determine the features of pure thought, intellectual activity as such. According to both Descartes and Kant, it is in such retiring observation of the basic operations of thought that we may come closest to apodictic truths, as

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[2] This very sentiment reappears later, in *Difference and Repetition*: "…it is the fortuitousness or the contingency of the encounter which guarantees the necessity of that which it forces to be thought" (145).

we have isolated ourselves as far as possible from the changeable and often deceptive realm of

sensory perception. Proust, on the other hand, gives Deleuze an image and even a vocabulary for

finding necessity within the very contingency that both Descartes and Kant work so hard to

avoid.

> Whether this was a matter of reminiscences of the kind that included the noise of
> the fork or the taste of the madeleine, or of those truths written with the help of
> figures whose meaning I was trying to discover in my mind, where, like steeples
> or weeds, they composed a complicated and elaborate *herbal*, their first character
> was that *I was not free* to choose them, that they were given to me as they were.
> And I felt that this must be the mark of their authenticity. *I had not gone looking*
> for the two cobblestones of the courtyard where I had stumbled. (Deleuze, *Proust*
> 96, quoting Proust, from III.878-880)

The narration of this passage is so striking that Deleuze seems to have adopted some of its

vocabulary—perhaps even the crucial term, "encounter"—and carried it over into his later

accounts of the image of thought.

> Proust's critique touches the essential point: truths remain arbitrary and abstract
> so long as they are based on the goodwill of thinking. Only the conventional is
> explicit. This is because philosophy, like friendship, is ignorant of the dark
> regions in which are elaborated the effective forces that act on thought, the
> determinations that *force* us to think; a friend is not enough for us to approach to
> truth. Minds communicate to each other only the conventional; the mind
> engenders only the possible. The truths of philosophy are lacking in necessity and
> the mark of necessity. As a matter of fact, the truth is not revealed, it is betrayed;
> it is not communicated, it is interpreted; it is not willed, it is involuntary. (*Proust*
> 95)

According to Deleuze (inspired by Proust), it is not the observations we attain by virtue of our

attempts to think clearly and in isolation that give us the clearest insights into the world of

necessary "truths"—it is precisely that observation we make against our will, without intending

to, that shows us what may truly be. Descartes, on the other hand, was tremendously wary of the

power of his imagination to construct what he took to be real and true, and he finally resorted to

assuming the existence of a god of deception in order to train himself to withhold his natural and

automatic assent from those sensations that reached him. However, this very line of reasoning

prompts in Deleuze an unexpected rejoinder, in the spirit of Descartes' doubt, if not in agreement

with his project: it is precisely those truths that are constructed from within that place of stillness

and isolation from the outside that we must suspect the most—not of being untrue but rather of

being "arbitrary," sterile, perhaps even self-referential. From a Deleuzian standpoint, the

strongest argument for the veracity and independence of a thing is my inability to see it coming,

its forcing itself upon my attention, its demand that I make sense of it. In the absence of such

philosophical acrobatics as Descartes' Great Deceiver, it is the thing I cannot control that asserts

the strongest claims to an actual, meaningful, and robust world outside of me. I may construct

the explanations for the elements of my world in accord with my existing worldview, but each

time I am disrupted and confronted with something new, unfamiliar, unexpected, and

uncontrollable, I am presented with yet another opportunity to frame those explanations in good

faith—not as they please me but as they do justice to an account of the world.

The sections dealing with the image of thought in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Proust*

*and Signs* represent a definitive beginning to Deleuze's own account of this image, but it is not

until *Difference and Repetition* that he sets out his first full formulation of that account. In the

third chapter, once again titled "The Image of Thought," Deleuze traces the outlines of this

image, whose subjective presuppositions, he claims, preclude a true beginning in philosophy.[3]

Here Deleuze explicitly acknowledges Descartes, who attempts to "begin" by radically

grounding his philosophy in the one indubitable fact that his awareness of thinking guarantees

his existence. However, as Deleuze argues, Descartes never doubts the form of the discourse in

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[3] In doing so, Deleuze aligns himself quite explicitly with Nietzsche: "[W]e still have to ask: *To make it possible for this discipline* [science] *to begin,* must there not be some prior conviction—even one that is so commanding and unconditional that it sacrifices all other convictions to itself? We see that science also rests on a faith; there is simply no science 'without presuppositions.' The question whether *truth* is needed must not only have been affirmed in advance, but affirmed to such a degree that the principle, the faith, the conviction finds expression: '*Nothing* is needed *more* than truth, and in relation to it everything else has only second-rate value" (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 280-281, §344, "How we, too, are still pious"). See also *Will to Power* §501 and §516.

which he carries out his project. Descartes never calls into question the definitions of thought, of existence, of "I" (*Difference* 129); the strength of the *Cogito* requires that these concepts are already known and understood.[4] Deleuze, on the contrary, following up on the challenges to the image of thought developed in his earlier works, desires to begin from a position of having acknowledged and, insofar as possible, challenged the assumptions made by the image of thought. Deleuze articulates eight presuppositions of this traditional "dogmatic" image of thought in order to make them explicit, calling into question other concepts along the way. This articulation in turn enables him to call these presuppositions into question or discard them altogether:

> …the conditions of a philosophy which would be without any kind of presuppositions appear all the more clearly: instead of being supported by the moral Image of thought, it would take as its point of departure a radical critique of this Image and the 'postulates' it implies. It would find its difference or its true beginning, not in an agreement with the *pre-philosophical* Image but in a rigorous struggle against this Image, which it would denounce as *non-philosophical*. (*Difference* 129)

The postulates Deleuze challenges are: (1) that thought is naturally oriented toward what we call "*truth*," and that the thinker naturally desires the pursuit of this truth (*Cogitatio natura universalis)*; (2) that truth is a result of a concord and unanimity of the senses in a "*common sense*"; (3) that we know truth by *recognizing* it ("The form of recognition has never sanctioned anything but the recognizable and the recognized; form will never inspire anything but conformities"); (4)that the natural element of thought is *representation*; (5) that the only

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[4] One might respond that Deleuze's objection is really not an objection after all, given another example taken from Descartes: *I can think of a triangle without necessarily thinking of or knowing that its three angles add up to two right angles, but that rule remains absolutely true whether or not I know it.* In the same way, we might say that whether or not a person understands what is meant by thinking, by existence, by "I," when they *are* given the meanings that we intend by them, the proof is as strong as ever. However, the problem with this response resides in the fact that, in the example of the triangle, although the rule follows necessarily from the concept, the concept itself is entirely unnecessary. As Deleuze would say, it "lack[s] the claws of absolute necessity" (*Difference* 139). Descartes, on the other hand, is attempting to prove that *he necessarily exists*. This is why he actually rejects the example of the triangle given above as insufficiently veracious to ground his claims. Likewise, the response to Deleuze's objection, given above, fields that objection but in doing so weakens the radicalism of Descartes' project.

misadventure of thought is *error*, generally induced by external forces; (6) that thought proceeds

by *propositions,* by *designation*; (7) that *solutions* are the primary focus in the pursuit of truth;

and (8) that *knowledge* is the result of this striving (*Difference* 167). While Deleuze's

formulation and articulation of these postulates emphasizes the formidable and intricate

interrelationships between them, this dissertation focuses primarily on the first, third, seventh,

and eighth postulates: the good will of the thinker and of thought itself (first expressed in

*Nietzsche and Philosophy*), the faculty of recognition (challenged by the "encounter" described

in *Proust and Signs*), the reliance on answers or solutions, and the emphasis on knowledge (the

latter two postulates are fully articulated for the first time in *Difference and Repetition*).

Deleuze launches his critical analysis of the traditional image of thought by reengaging

the primary critique of *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* i.e., the implicit claim that thinkers naturally

desire the truth and that thought is naturally oriented toward the true. While claiming—explicitly

in some instances—to seek a radical ground or a true beginning in philosophy free of

presuppositions, philosophies employing the traditional image operate on this and other

"subjective presuppositions" (as opposed to objective presuppositions—e.g. axioms in

mathematics and science) in articulating what it means to think. Descartes' *Cogito*, upon which

he establishes his entire philosophical system and in which he finds the absolute and radical

ground of philosophy, is only valid when it is thought, in the act of thinking it, which assumes

the subject's desire and motivation to think it; and it is only effective when we recognize its

absolute truth, which assumes the subject's ability to recognize such truths. Descartes' first

conclusion based on the *Cogito* is that he is "a thing that thinks"—a definition supporting an

image of thought that credits the subject with a natural and primary activity of thinking

(*Meditation Two* 27). Similarly, a whole tradition of Western philosophy takes for granted that

people naturally desire to think, to find truth, and that they are able to search for it and to recognize it when they find it. According to Deleuze, however, "beginning means eliminating all presuppositions" (*Difference* 129), including those that are subjective— and including, therefore, the assumption of "a *good will on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of thought*" (131). Whenever a proposition in philosophy is grounded in the sense that "everybody knows" it, this assumption is in play (130).

The second and third postulates of the "dogmatic image of thought" are closely linked. The second is the model of common sense—that is, we come to know the truth about a thing by bringing together the information from our different senses regarding it. For example, we come to know the "truth" of an apple by an understanding that the our different senses of it all describe a single object: its imperfect roundness, its marbled redness, its sweet smell, the texture of the peel and the flesh, the sounds it makes when we bite into it. All of these different experiences are aspects of the same object, aspects of the "truth" about the apple or the account of the apple. Although this example relies upon the fairly simple and predominantly physical experience of eating an apple, it generally illustrates the practice of bringing together various and multifaceted experiences of an object in order to discover the "truth" of it. However, this model of truth as the result of a common sensing also constitutes a subjective presupposition. The very conviction that the object being seen is the same as the object being touched, smelled, and tasted is itself a metaphysical assumption. The same can be said, moreover, of the assumption that the object that can thus be seen, smelled, touched, etc., is the primary or principle object of knowledge. The third postulate, following close on the heels of common sense, is that of recognition, in which our knowing or understanding the truth about a thing is constituted by our recognizing it. By means of the faculty of recognition I come to know the apple by connecting a shape, a color, a

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texture, a taste, and a scent into a single cohesive whole; rather than listing these characteristics, I can henceforth call them "apple"—and this, we are told, is what is called thinking.[5]

The next postulate that will be taken up in this essay is the seventh—i.e., that thinking aims at the best solution and the correct answer, and that the possession of these answers constitutes our goal. Questions are simply the indications or the means that ultimately point us at solutions, at answers, and help us to progress from ignorance to knowledge, from falsehood or error to truth. We achieve our goal when we achieve answers, and until then we are simply incomplete. At the level of questions, that is, we wait for answers. Accordingly, the eighth postulate takes knowledge as the highest form or manifestation of thought. It is knowledge that represents what thinking makes possible, and all of the energies of worthwhile thinking are concerned with the acquisition or contemplation of this knowledge.

Deleuze, for his part, goes on to challenge this image on every point. In response to the *Cogitatio natura universalis*, the belief in the universal "good nature" and "good will" of thought, Deleuze revisits the insights of his engagement with Nietzsche. The counterpoint to the "good will of the thinker" he now calls "misosophy," expressing by means of that concept the idea that we most often think not out of a natural curiosity but rather out of necessity, as

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[5] The fourth, fifth, and sixth postulates lie outside the confines of the current project and thus are not explicitly included here. In brief, however, the fourth postulate, representation, outlines the conceptual mechanisms that my faculty of recognition has at its disposal, the ways in which I can bring my recognition to bear on many things at once. Representation reduces the possible modes of difference to four types of relationship, thereby limiting the field of possible objects of recognition: "only that which is identical, similar, analogous, or opposed can be considered different: difference becomes an object of representation always in relation to a conceived identity, a judged analogy, an imagined opposition or a perceived similitude" (*Difference* 138, emphasis in original). The fifth postulate articulates the possibility for things going wrong in this model; unsuccessful thought or recognition is simply called "error." I am mistaken if I attribute to the look and smell of an apple the taste of a tomato. If I am in error, my faculty for recognition has mistakenly combined the information from my senses, or I have mistakenly judged as being analogous things which are in fact opposed. By means of the sixth postulate, thinking is formulated in propositions which express (or fail to express) truths. "This is an apple": the truth of this proposition lies not in "this" nor in "an apple" but in their explicit and particular connection—"is." This "designation," as Deleuze puts it, is the essence of recognition—the putting into specific relationship of two or more different things, the specifying of a connection where none seems to exist. The verb chosen transforms simple indication, simple names, into an act of declaration, an activity, which can then be called true or false.

"everyone knows very well that in fact men think rarely, and more often under the impulse of a shock than in the excitement of a taste for thinking" (*Difference* 132). In other words, "Thought is primarily trespass and violence, the enemy, and nothing presupposes philosophy: everything begins with misosophy. […] Something in the world forces us to think" (139). We do not choose to think; we are made to think. This new dynamic of thought is explicitly violent, as we have seen in his two previous works. Quite in opposition to the first presupposition of the dogmatic image of thought, Deleuze's starting point involves a natural reluctance or even *aversion* to thinking, and imagines a thought which thinks primarily under duress.

Deleuze problematizes the models of recognition and common sense by pointing out that thought is *not* in fact limited to recognition. Recognizing—e.g., that the object that I smell and see is the same object that I now taste and feel on my tongue—is a necessary component of my ability to perceive, conceptualize, and comprehend my world. But this recognition does not in fact exhaust the meaning of "thought"—it presupposes but cannot explain these actions of perception, conceptualization, and comprehension. To see that "this is an apple" is not necessarily to think of an apple: "On the one hand, it is apparent that acts of recognition exist and occupy a large part of our daily life: this is a table, this is an apple, this is a piece of wax, Good morning Theaetetus. But who can believe that the destiny of thought is at stake in these acts, and that when we recognize, we are thinking?" (*Difference* 135). My recognizing my friend as she walks towards me is not my thinking about her. Even my eventual recognition of a partially obscured object—one which, for a time, puzzles me as to its nature and resists my attempts to categorize it[6]—can not properly be called "thought" about that object. Perhaps, one might argue,

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[6] In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty evokes the experience of recognizing the signs of an old and partially-obscured shipwreck as they arise piecemeal from the visual field: "If I walk along a shore towards a ship which has run aground, and the funnel or masts merge into the forest bordering on the sand dune, there will be a moment when these details suddenly become part of the ship, and indissolubly fused with it. As I approached, I did

the process preceding the recognition, the trial and error or the vague casting about for an

answer, could be called thought, but the moment of recognition itself can no more be called

thought than can the initial confused perception of the partially obscured object. This recognition

is closer to knowledge than thought; in recognizing, I have passed from not-knowing to

knowing.[7]

In opposition to the postulate that assigns intellectual value primarily to answers, while

viewing questions as mere tools, or as answers that simply require elaboration, Deleuze counters

that it is not in the solution but in the problem that truth is to be found: "problems must be

considered not as 'givens' (data) but as ideal 'objecticities' possessing their own sufficiency and

implying acts of constitution and investment in their respective symbolic fields. Far from being

concerned with solutions, truth and falsehood primarily affect problems" (*Difference* 159).

Along the same lines, the truly fruitful result of thought is not knowledge but learning: "Learning

is the appropriate name for the subjective acts carried out when one is confronted with the

objecticity of a problem (Idea), whereas knowledge designates only the generality of concepts or

the calm possession of a rule enabling solutions" (164). Thus, it is to questions and to learning

that we must ultimately turn our attention if we would understand what it means to truly think.

In its first full formulation in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze's account of and

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not perceive resemblances or proximities which finally came together to form a continuous picture of the upper part of the ship. I merely felt that the look of the object was on the point of altering, that something was imminent in this tension, as a storm is imminent in storm clouds. Suddenly the sight before me was recast in a manner satisfying to my vague expectation" (20).

[7] Again, I include here sections that will not be taken up at greater length in the essay, and are thus omitted from the larger narrative: The fifth postulate of error, as the result of false recognition (and therefore dependent upon the first two postulates as well) must also give way to more profound problems of thought—e.g., "the terrible Trinity of stupidity, madness, and malevolence" (*Difference* 149). Representation understands ideas and objects with reference to a few simple categories, and is ultimately betrayed by this orientation as it is incapable of grasping "difference in itself" (138)—it simply fails to grasp the infinite variations of which the world is capable, collapsing all distinctions into four possible relationships (identity, similarity, analogy, and opposition; 138), rather than achieving an appreciation for the nuances and subtleties of difference that in fact characterize our world. The proposition that reveals truth gives way to sense and the production of truth: "Sense is the genesis or the production of the true, and truth is only the empirical result of sense" (154).

challenges to the image of thought develops into a nuanced and formidable analysis of the history of Western thought. He also proceeds with greater caution than in his earlier work, seeming to sense that the differences between the dogmatic image of thought and the "new" image of thought preclude their being treated as two of a kind. Whereas his earlier work finds Deleuze elucidating an alternative—Nietzsche's alternative—to the "dogmatic" or traditional image of thought, in *Difference and Repetition* he refuses even to apply the same denomination, and thus he frames his alternative in the negative: "a thought without image" (132). Throughout the third chapter ("The Image of Thought", 129-167), while he seems to be presenting an alternative to this dogmatic image at every turn, he is quick to deny any assumption that he is constructing an image of his own. Instead, he is attempting to articulate (or perhaps even to access) a "thought without image": a notion of thought that is not arbitrarily constrained by the postulates of the dogmatic image and which therefore opens up to the possibilities for new ways of thinking. He is quite insistent upon this point; whereas the earlier work simply denounced the problematic image of thought as "dogmatic" and found specific characteristics of that image to be unnecessarily limiting, *Difference and Repetition* seems to find that the entire idea of an "image" imposes unacceptable constraints on thought, presupposing and therefore limiting its possibilities. Although a great deal of *Difference and Repetition*'s central chapter is concerned with articulating some of the manifestations of thought that are systematically ignored or discounted by the dogmatic image of thought, Deleuze refuses to frame these counterexamples into a new image of thought. His "alternatives" gesture toward other possibilities but do not attempt to solidify or codify those possibilities. The "thought without image" seems to be rather an ongoing struggle against solidification and codification, interested more in the continual possibility of novelty than in the establishment of any system.

And, of course, it is perfectly consistent of Deleuze to refuse what would amount to a retotalization, or, in terms that he will use in *A Thousand Plateaus*, a "reterritorialization." In objecting that the traditional image of thought already, from the outset, limits the possibilities of thought—and therefore fundamentally misrepresents thought as a whole—Deleuze himself would be susceptible to the same critique if he were to propose an alternative on the same level. Any image of thought he might construct would, perhaps necessarily, fall prey to the same pitfalls—the failure of imagination, the failure of inclusiveness—indicated by the impossibility of articulating all of the possibilities of thought.

Thus, *Difference and Repetition* posits a "thought without image" in response to the "image of thought," in which a refusal to articulate a definition in fact represents a determination to remain rigorously open to all possibilities of thought. This thought without image is predicated on a "central ungrounding" (136) or a "central collapse" (147)—implicitly challenging the centrality of the primary subject in the dogmatic image. Explicitly, the thought without image carries this challenge into the subject itself, and describes the new subject as a "broken" or "fractured I" (136, 144). Rather than relying on the recognition made possible by pre-established categories, the thought without image emphasizes the "creation" of thought (147), the "production" of truth (154). Instead of the static structure of dogmatic thought, which claims to encompass all possibilities of thought from the outset, the thought without image celebrates the "new" as a creative power: "The new, with its power of beginning and beginning again, remains forever new, just as the established was always established from the outset" (136). In the end it is unsurprising that Deleuze formulates most of the description of the thought without image as a denial of the structures of the dogmatic image of thought—that is, the description of the thought without image is almost exclusively a *via negativa*. Deleuze is careful not to impose an image on

the thought without image, or to posit descriptive elements that would restrict it in some way. Essentially, the thought without image challenges all static structures, resists all centralization, and refutes the established by championing the dynamic. In the thought without image, Deleuze tries to open up possibilities for thought that are non-categorical, that do not rely on the underlying unity of the subject, and that cannot be totalized or pre-determined. In order to truly begin "without presuppositions," Deleuze's thought without image is a continual and ongoing critique of all images that might be used to constrain the definition of what constitutes "thought." Any positive statement we might make about it is ultimately too limited, so we must restrict ourselves to simply forestalling or preempting positive description.

# CHAPTER 1:
# CHALLENGING THE IMAGE OF THOUGHT

Taking a closer look at Deleuze's critique of the postulates of thought can give us a better sense

for some possibilities of thinking that are neglected by the traditional model of thought. In the

end, it is often precisely these neglected possibilities that can give us the greatest insights into

what it truly means to think. To recap, four of the eight distinct critiques offered by Deleuze are

particularly relevant to our concerns here, and together they describe a fairly robust sense of the

ways in which Deleuze challenges the notions that have governed most of Western philosophy.

These responses to the dogmatic image take the form of the concepts of misosophy, the

encounter, the question, and the process of learning (as opposed to the product, knowledge); a

consideration of these four comprises the present chapter.

*Misosophy*

> *Something in the world forces us to think.*
> Deleuze*, Difference and Repetition* 139

The word "misosophy" is particularly and perhaps uniquely Deleuzian. Offered in opposition to

"philosophy," a love of wisdom, misosophy evokes instead a general resistance to wisdom, or

rather a reluctance to think. While at first glance a strange sort of idea, this reluctance becomes

increasingly recognizable as we consider not simply those everyday situations in which thought

is called for but dwell instead on what is at stake in the experience of true learning and the

incredible demands placed on thought in that experience. Insofar as true education entails a

profound shift in our established beliefs, the experience of thinking can in fact be a frightening and intimidating one. A brief historical detour gives us, first, a position emblematic of the "philosophical" mindset—the self-motivated and adventurous thinker—and second, a gradual but increasing recognition of the difficulties of thought that finally manifest in Deleuze's conception of misosophy.

As discussed in Intermezzo 1, there are many ways in which Descartes's philosophy and method exemplify the dogmatic image operating in Western thought. In the first place, he does present us with a very clear image of the thinker as self-motivated, good natured, and naturally capable of recognizing the true. If we are to believe the account given in the *Discourse on the Method*, Descartes begins his project out of a desire to test and either verify or discard everything he knows. Upon completing his education, he recognizes the uncertainty of what he has learned, and this prompts his attempts to rectify this instability. Following a method of his own devising, he first claims to clear away any parts of his knowledge that are at all doubtable, and then he re-founds a lifetime of knowledge on the only statement he is unable to doubt. As we have already seen, the inability to doubt his own existence presents Descartes with the first object of a "clear and distinct" perception, which will become the primary mechanism of Cartesian truth. Descartes' account presents an image of the thinker as self-aware, self-motivated, and self-sufficient. He is aware of his deficiencies, determined to correct them, and capable of both devising and proceeding by a deceptively simple method that enables him to eliminate error from his accumulation of knowledge. Furthermore, his criterion for finding certainty is a "clear and distinct" perception, a recognition of the true, and this kind of criterion implies (as Deleuze will later articulate) a fundamental affiliation of thought and truth.

Kant is somewhat at odds with Descartes's approach: in answering the question, "What is

Enlightenment?" (1784), Kant cites "laziness and cowardice" as fundamental features

dominating typical human intellectual life. Far from the self-motivated and well-intentioned

project undertaken by Descartes, Kant claims that the vast majority of people "gladly remain in

lifelong immaturity" (35) and submit to the guidance of authority figures.[1] We begin our lives

under the tutelage of parents and teachers, but the necessary task of adulthood is to throw off this

supervision in order to take full possession of our faculties and our independence.[2] This small

revolution requires a great deal of effort, however, and involves its share of risks—with the

result that most of us would rather decline the task of declaring and maintaining our

independence than subject ourselves to the dangers of personal responsibility.[3] We are in many

cases perfectly content to follow orders, so long as we are spared the task of making difficult

decisions and provided that someone else will take the blame for things going wrong. The entire

project of "enlightenment," according to Kant, is set up in opposition to this natural intellectual

inertia and constitutes an active commitment to responsibility and self-determination. Whereas

Descartes reaches the end of his education and decides, seemingly effortlessly, to overthrow the

authority of everything he has learned and every teacher he has had, Kant sees the majority of us

remaining behind, irresponsible, more or less obedient, and under the wing of our guides and

protectors.

Plato views these authorities to whom we remain subject less as protectors with whom we

remain voluntarily and more as jailers of whom we are not even aware. In the cave allegory of

Book VII of the *Republic*, our natural state of being is likened to that of prisoners who are

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[1] References to Kant follow standard pagination given in the margins of his works.

[2] This taking up and assertion of independence is in fact a primary characteristic of human nature, according to Paulo Freire. This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Three.

[3] Cf. Sartre, "existence precedes essence" in "Freedom and Responsibility," *Essays in Existentialism;* and bad faith in *Being and Nothingness.*

immobilized underground and who are likely to try to kill anyone who attempts to free us. We are accustomed to the shadows on the wall before us—which are the only things we see—and we have become adept, to a greater or lesser extent, at identifying and understanding them. Unaware of our status as prisoners, we are contented with what knowledge we have. We remain immobile not simply because of the shackles that hold us in place but also because we do not even realize that there are other movements to be made. Moreover, we are kept busy with the tasks of identifying the shadows before us and of attempting to earn the admiration of our fellow prisoners by predicting what shadows will come next—a shallow, infertile, and trivial sort of divination. After such habituation, the sheer disruption caused in our view of reality by the simple act of *turning around* provokes our fear and incites us to violence; the strength of these reactions suggests profound complications behind the apparent simplicity of this turn. The inertia that keeps us still is not simply our lack of movement, but our being caught up in the tasks of motionlessness that make us think we are indeed quite well-occupied.[4] The idea that there are other possibilities, other realities which bear only the faintest resemblance to the shadows we are accustomed to—insofar as the three-dimensional can be said to "resemble" flatness—threatens and terrifies us. Instead of being shown a derivative resemblance or representation, we would instead be shown something that converts our entire foregoing experience of reality into a mere resemblance and supplants it as the true and prior reality. Plato suggests that we would rather destroy the source of this newness than grant it credence.

In order to be "freed," it is not sufficient that the prisoner of Plato's cave be simply unchained. No natural sense of curiosity or adventurousness prompts the initial discoveries of the new movements that are now possible or the new sights that blind eyes hitherto accustomed only

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[4] See Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 108: "thought has its own ways of being inactive which can occupy it and all its forces entirely."

to dull, reflected light. On the contrary, the prisoner must be compelled to stand, compelled to turn[5], compelled to look at the light of the fire and at the figures behind him, shockingly and perhaps unrecognizably three-dimensional, playing out a strange drama for their captive audience. In these passages, Plato makes frequent and repeated use of the same group of words, all built on the word ἀνάγκη (necessity; the stem αναγκ- suggesting force or compulsion), in order to emphasize the fact that this liberation is not accomplished by the prisoner so much as it is accomplished on or through him.

> Then consider…what their release would be like and their recovery from their restraints and their delusion, if things like that were to happen to them by nature. Whenever one of them would be released, and suddenly **required** to stand up, and turn his neck around, and walk, and look up toward the light, he'd suffer pain from doing all these things… What do you imagine he would say if someone were to tell him that he'd been seeing rubbish then, but now, somewhat nearer to what *is* and turned toward the things that have more being, he was seeing more accurately? And especially if, pointing to each of the things passing by, one **forced** him to answer as he asked what they are, don't you imagine he'd be at a loss and believe the things he'd seen before were truer than the ones pointed out to him now? … And if one **forced** him to look at the light itself, wouldn't he have a pain in his eyes and escape by turning back toward those things he was able to make out…? (515c-e; italics in original; bold added. Bolded terms come from αναγκα- stem.)

The prisoner must finally be dragged up and out of the cave and into the light. This is the last act of the anonymous and even threatening figure who has freed the prisoner. At this point Plato's repetition of ἀνάγκη ceases; the freed prisoner is no longer forcibly "compelled" but continues to explore the blinding new world methodically and seemingly independently, with eyesight that only gradually becomes adjusted to the light and able to see clearly. The ultimate act of the fugitive is to look up "to see [the sun] itself, by itself, in its own realm, and contemplate the way it is" (516b). The shadowy figure who has freed the prisoner only acts and compels within the cave and abandons the prisoner at its opening. The prisoner navigates the outside, "intelligible"

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[5] This "turning" is the task of education: to *turn* the soul around. See *Republic.*

realm alone.[6]

Far from the independently determined and executed analyses of the Cartesian skeptic,
Plato shows us instead a prisoner, fettered as much by ignorance as by any external force, who
must be forcibly liberated from constraint—who must be forced to seek truth and freedom.
Plato's subsequent passages reinforce this notion of the unwilling thinker. He quickly follows the
allegory of the cave with a parallel discussion on the nature of contrary or opposite perceptions,
comparative characteristics that only have meaning in reference to another object possessing that
same characteristic (e.g., big or small in size, cold or warm in temperature, etc.). These
perceptions, Socrates says, "call insight into play" or "provoke" thought (*Republic* 523a-b). As a
result, the soul is "at a loss" [ψυχην απορειν] (524a) and "call[s] calculation and insight into
play" (524b) to its aid. Whereas the sight of the body perceives two different and entangled
characteristics (e.g., big and small), the understanding must strive to separate these
characteristics and view them on their own—the big itself and the small itself. This movement,
by which the understanding separates the confused perceptions of the senses, constitutes a shift
from the *visible* realm to the *intelligible* realm and thereby "draws someone toward being"
(524e).

> …if something opposite to it is always seen at the same time, so that nothing
> appears any more than the opposite as well, then at that point there would be a
> need for something to make a judgment about it, and in that situation a soul would
> be forced to be at an impasse and search for a way out, which would set the
> thinking power in it in motion, and it would have to ask what the one itself is; and
> so the study having to do with the one would be among the things that lead up to
> the contemplation of what *is,* and redirect the soul to that. (524e)

In this passage, these "opposite perceptions" play the role of the prisoner's anonymous liberator,
compelling the soul to turn from the visible world of becoming (the cave) to the intelligible

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[6] The identification of the world outside the cave with the "intelligible" realm results from a combination of the cave
allegory with the allegory of the line and the sun given at the end of Book VI of the *Republic.*

world of being (outside, in the sunlight). The soul calls upon understanding in order to make sense of an apparent contradiction, resolving it into abstractions—the things themselves, i.e., bigness, smallness—because the mediation of the senses is inadequate and results in confusion.

While it seems clear that Plato attributes the inertia of the cave's prisoners to fear and timidity, Nietzsche, like Kant, specifically cites laziness as a primary characteristic of human life:[7] "men are even lazier than they are timid, and fear most of all the inconveniences with which unconditional honesty and nakedness would burden them" ("Schopenhauer" 127, §1).[8] Nietzsche's view of the nature of our "imprisonment" is accordingly less charitable than Plato's, and his attitude toward the general public is simultaneously harsh and challenging. Whereas Socrates will not allow the enlightened fugitive to remain in the realm of the intelligible but requires a re-descent into the cave—requires, even, a resumption of his original imprisonment[9]— Nietzsche's "great thinker" feels no obligation to the unenlightened: "When the great thinker despises mankind, he despises its laziness: for it is on account of their laziness that men seem like factory products, things of no consequence and *unworthy to be associated with or instructed*" (127).

According to Plato, the philosophers (those prisoners who have been liberated and have left the cave) are cultivated by the city and are, in a sense, its products; they are created out of the

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[7] Nietzsche faults Kant for the same kind of intellectual immaturity that Kant himself derided in "What is Enlightenment?": "Kant clung to his university, submitted himself to its regulations, retained the appearance of religious belief, endured to live among colleagues and students: so it is natural that his example has produced above all university professors and professorial philosophy" ("Schopenhauer" 137, §3). On the contrary—given the passage quoted from Kant's aforementioned essay—Nietzsche seems to be more of an intellectual heir of Kant in this respect. Kant's work itself may harbor revolutionary possibilities that have perhaps never been so fully realized until Nietzsche.

[8] In the first section of "Schopenhauer as Educator" (1874; *Untimely Meditations* III), Nietzsche flirts with the use of imagery that recalls the Allegory of the Cave, although he certainly doesn't commit himself to an all-out comparison and only obliquely alludes to the connection.

[9] "So it's necessary for each of you in turn to go down into the communal dwelling and to get use to gazing at dark objects with the others, because when you're used to it you'll see thousands of times better than the people there" (*Republic* 520c).

city's needs and therefore have an obligation to that city. The philosophers, who have finally achieved happiness after their rough journey out of the cave, are not allowed to remain in this idealized world because it is not for their own benefit that they have been dragged from their prison: "this is no concern of the law, for some one class of people in a city to be exceptionally well off, but that it contrive things so that this arises in the city as a whole, by harmonizing the citizens through persuasion [πειθοῖ] and compulsion [ἀνάγκη] and making them contribute to one another a share of the benefit with which each sort is capable of improving the community" (*Republic* 519e-520a). The share of happiness allotted to the philosophers through their difficult liberation and painful enlightenment is one that must be returned to the community and paid back in kind. Rather than the community-oriented, moral, or teleological approach that leads Socrates to posit the philosophers' obligation to the city and its citizens, Nietzsche's liberated man seems to be independent, self-reliant and self-created, owing nothing to the mass of humanity which has done nothing for him, and which he sees rather as an obstacle to freedom than the very condition of his freedom.[10]

Whereas the Platonic cave-dweller remains immobile because he is shackled and because it is all he has ever known, the Nietzschean "youthful soul" recognizes the possibility of liberation and yearns and strives for that possibility:

> Every youthful soul hears this call day and night and trembles when he hears it; for the idea of its liberation gives it a presentiment of the measure of happiness allotted it from all eternity—a happiness to which it can by no means attain so long as it lies fettered by the chains of fear and convention. ("Schopenhauer" 127, §1)

The Platonic and Nietzschean souls are similarly "fettered," but the former repose in ignorance and the latter are tormented by the awareness of their predicament. Nietzsche's youthful soul

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[10] This is in some contrast to Freire's position in *A Pedagogy for Liberation,* which we will explore in detail in Chapter Four: "freedom needs authority to become free" (91).

yearns for liberation, but Plato's cave-dweller does not realize that liberation is even necessary. Even when the fact of his imprisonment is made obvious, even when the restraints have been released and he has been turned around to see the three-dimensional structure of the cave, he must still be compelled to observe it, and he must be dragged forcibly out of the cave. It is not until he has been dragged into the sunlight that something like the youthful soul's natural curiosity, a yearning for liberation, or a simple enjoyment of learning may take over. Nietzsche, like Plato, here links this liberation with happiness. However, their respective attitudes about the nature of the soul's initial imprisonment and eventual release lead Plato to posit a communal claim on this happiness while Nietzsche views this hard-won liberation as the rightful property of the individual.

Nietzsche does ultimately turn his attention to a figure who acts as liberator, but once again his account of the way in which a soul is liberated reflects his emphasis on the independence of the individual soul. Instead of a dark figure who is simultaneously liberating and threatening—one who unchains us and forces us to stand, turn, and look, and who finally drags us bodily from the cave—Nietzsche's educator is both less threatening and less active:

> Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you that the true, original meaning and basic stuff of your nature is something completely incapable of being educated or formed and is in any case something difficult of access, bound and paralysed; your educators can only be your liberators. ("Schopenhauer" 129, §1)

This account of the soul's liberation lacks the violence implicit in the allegory of the cave, but there is perhaps a greater degree of similarity here than is immediately apparent. Nietzsche makes clear that the soul itself cannot simply be changed or converted or passively "educated" but that a process of liberation—one involving the soul's own agency or prompted by its own autonomy—must take place. On the other hand, Plato's shadowy liberator, quite significantly, remains almost wholly silent, but simply unchains and forces the prisoner both to move and to

look. Plato's liberator does not attempt to "educate" the prisoner, in the sense that this imposed

education is derided by Nietzsche, but rather "turns" the soul toward the light. The few words

that are spoken by Plato's liberator all aim at compelling the prisoner to confront and

acknowledge the new reality that has now become accessible. Both the Platonic and Nietzschean

figures seem to reflect the conviction that the true transformation of the soul is ultimately an

individual one and requires a corresponding activity on the part of the soul itself. Passivity will

never suffice for the education that is also a liberation.

Whether true education or true thought is prompted by the intervention of a teacher or

provoked by a confrontation with an "opposite perception" that our senses cannot parse, Plato

and Nietzsche agree that it comes to us from outside, impinging on and ultimately altering our

consciousness. John Dewey, in *How We Think*, also agrees wholeheartedly, and in opposition to

the ostensibly independent and self-motivated search undertaken by Descartes:

> [T]he origin of thinking is some perplexity, confusion, or doubt. Thinking is not a
> case of spontaneous combustion; it does not occur just on "general principles."
> There is something specific which occasions and evokes it. General appeals to a
> child (or to a grown-up) to think, irrespective of the existence of his own
> experience of some difficulty that troubles him and disturbs his equilibrium, are
> as futile as advice to lift himself by his boot-straps. (11)

The implied violence involved in confronting someone with something confusing or unclear—or,

in Plato's terms, provoking the soul to consideration and compelling it to be perplexed—is

admittedly less extreme than that involved in forcibly dragging a frightened prisoner into the

light. But perhaps the difficulty of bringing the understanding to bear on abstractions and

grasping the ideas themselves is comparable to the forcible liberation of a contented prisoner.

The need for an external provocation or compulsion certainly remains the same, and it is on this

point that Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, particularly insists: again, "Something in the

world forces us to think" (139).

Deleuze begins his consideration of misosophy by citing Plato's passage on "opposite perceptions" from the *Republic*, but he elaborates on this notion of a forced confrontation with perplexity and emphasizes the violence of this encounter by claiming that "thought is primarily trespass and violence, the enemy, and nothing presupposes philosophy: everything begins with misosophy" (*Difference* 139). Without denying the possibility of the good will and responsibility of the Cartesian thinker, Deleuze criticizes the truths thus recognized as mere possibilities and empty formulae; they "only ever designate possibilities" and "lack the claws of absolute necessity" (139). Descartes's "clear and distinct perception," achieved within the solipsism of radical doubt, may tell us what is formally possible, but these percepts are as sterile, for Deleuze, as mathematical truths are for Descartes. Descartes discards mathematical truths as being of limited usefulness, claiming that they are unable to tell us anything of ontological import. On the one hand, he claims, "arithmetic, geometry, and other subjects of this kind, which deal only with the simplest and most general things, *regardless of whether they really exist in nature or not*, contain something certain and indubitable" (*Meditations* 20, emphasis added). However, his Great Deceiver presents him with the possibility that the objects of mathematics do not in fact exist, and he thus sets aside mathematics as an initially promising but ultimately ineffectual path.

For Deleuze, this failing may apply equally to any conviction generated out of a Cartesian isolation or self-motivated discovery.[11] The *Cogito* is, logically speaking, only strictly valid when it is being performed; thus, while its formulation presents us with the possibility that its certainty could be recognized at any moment, it is logically compelling only when we think or speak it, and it loses its power to convince when we stop attending to it. As its persuasiveness relies on our willingness to perform it, it is on that account contingent upon our inclination and

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[11] See also Bergson: "The truth is that an existence can only be given in an experience" (*Creative Mind* 36).

ability to do so. On the other hand, necessity, and perhaps ontological certainty, is only to be had when we encounter something unexpected and surprising, something which prompts or requires us to think rather than waiting for us to do so independently. Its certainty for us resides in its ability to force itself upon us, to challenge or confuse us, and in general to represent itself as something fundamentally *not-ours*. It must have some existence apart from ours, because we did not and could not have created it. Deleuze here adopts a logic quite similar to that used by Descartes to prove the existence of God in the *Discourse* and the *Meditations.* However, whereas Descartes begins from an *innate* idea of God as a perfect being for which idea he, as an imperfect being, could in no way be responsible, Deleuze begins with something that we very significantly *don't know*—something that surprises and confuses us—and it is in this very lack of prior acquaintance that he finds the evidence of something necessarily external to us.

Thus, the idea that we must be forced to think actually has a long history—though our degree of awareness or control over what we think remains very much in question. Cartesian "good will" actually seems to be the exception rather than the rule, so we must take seriously the element of Deleuzian misosophy within our own understanding of what it means to think.


***The Encounter***

Who or what is it, then, that drags a person out of the cave and into the light? In Plato's allegory, it is an unnamed and somewhat threatening figure—presumably, a fellow prisoner returning from his own journey out of the cave, having made the difficult decision to press the private gains of his experience into the service of the public good, or at least the good of this next prisoner—one who sits and waits without realizing that she is indeed sitting or waiting. In Plato's dialogues, this role tends to be played by an interlocutor, most often Socrates himself, who at least begins the work of prodding the inert figure into an uncomfortable awareness of her

surroundings. The interlocutor acts as a "gadfly" who creates the need for reflection by turning the prisoner in new directions, confronting her with baffling but frustratingly familiar objects, objects which resemble those of her prior experience yet reveal those prior objects to be essentially limited, essentially lacking. Through successive questions, following hard upon the prisoner's attempts to validate and explain her world, the interlocutor exposes the essential lack inherent in the shadow to the prisoner's view. He finds the lacunae in her understanding and by careful probing and judicious application of pressure confronts the prisoner with the fact that the smooth surface of her worldview is in fact riddled with holes and tears and badly patched seams. It is this intellectual probing, this critical testing, this pursuit of latent contradictions and the determination to bring them to light that ultimately undermines the integrity of the prisoner's original claims to knowledge. Quite crucially, for Plato it is through conversation, through dialectic, that these imperfections are exposed.

However, is it necessary that this critical challenge to the prisoner's worldview be deployed within a confrontation with an interlocutor, another individual? Can this challenge arise in a confrontation with an object, an idea, or a question? We have already seen one example of a confrontation with objects effecting this sort of challenge to the thinker in Plato's discussion of "opposite perceptions," above. In brief, when the thinker experiences a single object as both "smaller" and "larger" (i.e., as it is considered with reference to other, different objects), the perplexity that results drives the thinker to inquire into "smallness" and "largeness" themselves, attempting to isolate them from their immersion in the milieu of experience in order to examine the qualities themselves. This perplexity itself may be enough to drive the thinker's determination to examine the characteristics separately; on the other hand, it is possible that we might gloss over or even overlook this perplexity entirely. In that situation, the intervention of

another person may in fact help us to authentically acknowledge and confront this perplexity—

not to explain it to us or resolve it for us, but simply to ensure that we understand that it is there.

Along these lines, the Socratic liberator of the cave allegory does not truly explain; his primary

activity is to unchain and turn the prisoner. His occasional interjections are limited to verbal

gestures and the request that the prisoner attempt to explain what she is seeing. The height of this

liberator's speech is one brief challenge. In the hypothetical language of the allegory, Socrates

wonders what would happen if, after freeing the prisoner and forcing him to turn around,

"someone were to tell [the prisoner] that he'd been seeing rubbish then, but now, somewhat

nearer to what *is* and turned toward the things that have more being, he was seeing more

accurately?" (*Republic* 515c-e, quoted above). This statement approaches explanation but stops

short of it, seeking rather to force the prisoner to confront her problematic new reality directly

and immediately than to determine what she will see when she finally does so. The disruption in

the prisoner's worldview that results from this new confrontation is an internal one in which

what is seen by looking in this new direction implicitly calls the rest of the prisoner's knowledge

into question. Because she looks in this new direction, she sees new things that become

problematic for her. It is not the liberator that has destroyed her certainty but the irruption or

intervention of new objects, and these new objects constitute a problem for thought. Simply

being confronted with entirely new objects may thus be sufficient to prompt a dramatic

reconsideration of the existing framework. The subject of "opposite perceptions," for example, is

so troubling precisely because it demands intellectual activity, because it "calls calculation and

insight into play" (*Republic* 524b).

    At this point there are two influences in play—the liberator who frees the prisoner and

the new objects that confront her when she is turned around. But the objects the prisoner

encounters are not entirely new; in fact, they are problematic precisely because of their unsettling resemblance to prior experience. What is more, they are unfamiliar in ways that impart the suspicion that these new objects are in fact more real than the objects we have known before. They are the silhouettes of what were formerly shadows; while shadows remain simple outlines, regardless of any closer examination, the silhouette offers us the tantalizing possibility of seeing more. That is, given a shift in the light or our perspective, perhaps the unseen contours of the object would suddenly be thrown into relief, would add dimension and depth to what had been merely an outline. The silhouette contains everything we can know of the shadow—which is in fact merely an outline describing a solid shape—and something more as well. Like the silhouette, these objects fill out new dimensions that were unimagined in the prior framework, but they do so comprehensively and cohesively. They overflow the old forms in such a way that their new incarnation is naturally recognized as more complete, and therefore as more true or more real. What would have occurred if there were nothing recognizable about the new objects? Perhaps they would be easily dismissed, as dreams or hallucinations with no necessary connection to prior reality.[12] On the other hand, perhaps they would be interrogated, analyzed, and eventually understood, but independently, in separation from the world of the shadows and echoes. Neither of these alternatives would have been as fundamentally transformative as the resonance that arises between object and shadow, however; while the discovery of an utterly unfamiliar object may well represent a significant *addition* to the prisoner's view of reality, it does not require or constitute a true revision of that worldview. Its addition to the prisoner's world is less profound, as these different strata of experience can remain separated from each other, and the one does not implicate or call into question the other.

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[12] On the other hand, dreams and hallucinations are, arguably, always echoes of prior experience. See Descartes' discussion of the reality of dream images in the *Discourse* and the *Meditations*.

It is precisely the unsettling *resemblance* of the objects to the shadows that is so disturbing to the worldview of the prisoner.[13] In outline, in profile, the prisoner may recognize the two dimensional images of her prior experience. However, as when staring intently at a shadow that one recognizes suddenly, with a shock, as a silhouette that is in fact *looking back* at the observer, the third dimension startles us with its vitality and its autonomy, its refusal to be ignored or flattened. Sartre famously elaborates on the profound disruption to the observer occasioned by the sudden revelation that the looker has become the looked-at—that the subject has become an object.[14] In the shift from shadow to silhouette or object, the sign or symbol for a thing formerly separated from us has suddenly become the thing itself, materialized in all of the dimensions in which we also exist, challenging us there.

In short, for Plato, what drags us out of the cave is an encounter of a particular kind. The object of this encounter confuses and perplexes us, forcing us to stop and to look more closely, to examine carefully, to analyze and rebuild a notion capable of making that object comprehensible. It is not a typical object, one subject to recognition, but a question: it implies in itself a question. It *calls into question*.

Thus, in Deleuze's "new image of thought" or "thought without image," it is not the answer to the question that is epistemologically significant but rather the question itself, the *fact of* the question itself; that is, the question's significance lies in its potential to reorganize and problematize the contents of a greater horizon[15] of *things known.* The question thus introduces an activity, a becoming-active, into the formerly static structures of my knowledge and

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[13] Howard Zeiderman of Touchstones Discussion Project has conducted significant analyses of the necessity of both familiar and unfamiliar elements in texts. See also note 28 in Chapter Three.

[14] Sartre, "The Look," in *Being and Nothingness* (340-400).

[15] On the concept of the horizon, see Nietzsche "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" in *Untimely Meditations* (esp. 62-63) and Deleuze and Guattari, "Plane of Immanence" in *What Is Philosophy?*

understanding, so that each thing is again open to interpretation. The bonds and anchors holding the elements of my thought in place become fluid once again—or potentially fluid—and the entire structure flexes under the revelation of a new element to be included or subsumed. Depending on the weight of the new element—the question or idea—the entire center of gravity may be changed, thus necessitating a radical reorganization of the contents, before the pathways relax back into stasis and the structure resolidifies—if only ever temporarily.

Objects and ideas themselves rarely occasion this kind of reorganization, which is so emblematic of the authentic learning process; by themselves, they are objects without meaning. As long as no claim or connection is proposed, they can remain unthreateningly self-contained; yet another element in the stack of disconnected objects from which we draw in order to furnish our claims with concreteness. As above, it is not the statues themselves but rather their similarity to their shadows on the cave walls combined with the liberator's assertion that the statues are somehow "more real" that disturbs us. Likewise, it is not until these objects become incorporated into proposals or claims that they suddenly become meaningful and potentially problematic. Suddenly, the new claim must be evaluated and verified. The new proposal must be tested by being linked with older, established proposals—proposals which have already been tested, accepted, and placed in the relevant order or structure with yet other, prior proposals. This work of evaluation and placement is the beginning of analytical or critical thought, and it is prompted by a need to integrate new objects and new meanings into our existing worldviews.[16]

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[16] On the one hand, this is somewhat suggestive of a propositional, correspondence theory of truth—i.e., that truth is to be found in propositional claims, and it is the congruence or resonance between a claim and its object that constitutes its truth. Deleuze specifically challenges this account of truth as a characteristic of the dogmatic image of thought, claiming instead that "truth is a matter of production, not of adequation" (*Difference* 154). More important than this correspondence, for Deleuze, is the "sense" of a statement, and it is this sense that grounds all claims to truth. On the other hand, the passage above also suggests an alternative interpretation, one in which the selective criterion for new claims or objects is their consistency with our existing claims, beliefs, and objects. In Deleuze's later work with Guattari, this selection and evaluation of structures of belief with respect to their internal consistency

But even this placement of new objects still remains at the level of the work entailed by or required after the formulation of the problem or the question. Still more profound than this reaction or response to a question posed by the world—or "latent in the landscape," as Merleau-Ponty would say (*Phenomenology of Perception* 20)—is the action which constitutes the question in the first place. By what faculty or genius is it that we know which question will reorganize our understanding in the most meaningful or profound way? A container of discrete elements naturally settles itself into increasingly stable and well-organized configurations, by repeated jolting and jostling, and thus we are warned that "Contents may settle during shipment." Every once in a while, a box is dropped, the contents are shuffled and reorganized, and a new stasis (a new stability) is achieved. But how is a question capable of achieving this? More importantly, how does a person come to formulate a new question? And what is important about the formulation of a new question? What new or particularly human power do we gain from the ability to ask a new question or articulate a new problem?

### *The Question*

> *...you cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements, even though he has spoken or written with perfect command of language and perfectly truthful intention. In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer.*
> Collingwood 31

In a chapter from his *Autobiography*, R.G. Collingwood advocates what he calls a "logic of question and answer." Statements, claims, and assertions, he maintains, are all fundamentally answers to particular questions, and unless we are aware of the question being considered we

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is what constitutes the "plane of immanence," the final incarnation of the image of thought discussed in this dissertation.

will never fully understand those statements. In the absence of this question, statements remain frustratingly vague and complex, capable of moving in any number of directions, supporting any number of worldviews. In essence, Collingwood extends the critique that a statement has been taken "out of context" to include any assertion which is not explicitly connected with a particular question. This primacy of the question to the process of understanding and of making meaning presages the emphasis that Deleuze will later place on the question in his own treatment of thinking.

However, this emphasis on the primacy of questions can also help to shed light on a problematic aspect of a work we considered in the Introduction. We there explored the geometrical proof embedded in Plato's *Meno*. Collingwood's insistence on the importance of questions forces us to consider an aspect of Plato's story that might otherwise remain unsatisfying or simply frustrating—that is, the dialogue's apparent failure to acknowledge the significance of Socrates' own active role in leading the untrained slave boy through the geometrical proof. For, as Bergson reminds us, "the truth is that in philosophy and even elsewhere it is a question of *finding* the problem and consequently of *positing* it, even more than of solving it" (36-7). One might argue that the boy ultimately "solves" the problem, with some significant prompting from his interlocutor, but Socrates is the one who has set the question and determined the course of the proceedings. Plato intends this episode to demonstrate the foundational myth of anamnesis, which he has just outlined. That is, simply by means of asking questions of the boy, who has no prior training in geometry, Socrates ultimately elicits the correct answer to a geometrical problem. The boy gives the correct responses without being taught or told how to do so. This, Socrates claims, shows that the boy already possessed a prior understanding of mathematics, although he did not acquire this understanding through any

formal training in his current life. The answers that the boy has given are interpreted as recollections of a truth that is primally known; they are the effects of his soul's prior acquaintance with truth.

The boy is still prone to errors, missteps, false confidences: he gives a number of wrong answers before finally delivering the correct ones. Nevertheless, the fact that questioning alone is capable of helping the boy to navigate the proof until he is able to recognize the correct answer and to *know that it is correct* (it was this moment that was missing from his initial attempt to answer the question) seems to demand explanation. That is, it remains highly significant that prompting and questioning alone—without recourse to overt explanations or "teaching"—have resulted in the boy's being able to identify the truth and to recognize it as such. This phenomenon, this advent of certainty without the overt imparting of knowledge, does in fact imply something akin to Plato's anamnesis or Augustine's theory of illumination. However, to leave unacknowledged or simply to undervalue the role that Socrates has played in this intellectual drama is to miss the more crucial moment in human understanding. The faculty of simply assenting to, rejecting, or providing simple answers to already articulated questions is a function of reason, but it cannot explain the phenomenon of comprehension. In fact, the questioning faculty— the ability to ask the "correct" or most useful question, the ability to differentiate between questions that are meaningful and those that are irrelevant or useless[17]— constitutes the crucial moment in understanding, as Collingwood himself points out:

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[17] Deleuze himself emphasizes this point in *Difference and Repetition* (153): "Teachers already know that errors or falsehoods are rarely found in homework (except in those exercises where a fixed result must be produced, or propositions must be translated one by one). Rather, what is more frequently found—and worse—are nonsensical sentences, remarks without interest or importance, banalities mistaken for profundities, ordinary 'points' confused with singular points, badly posed or distorted problems—all heavy with dangers, yet the fate of us all. We doubt whether, when mathematicians engage in polemic, they criticize one another for being mistaken in the results of their calculations. Rather, they criticize one another for having produced an insignificant theorem or a problem devoid of sense."

> When Plato described thinking as a 'dialogue of the soul with itself', he meant (as we know from his own dialogues) that it was a process of question and answer, and that of these two elements *the primacy belongs to the questioning activity*, the Socrates within us. (35, emphasis added.)

Even after granting that the boy's reason is able to lead him to a specific kind of restricted knowledge in response to Socrates' questions, do we therefore have any reason to conclude that the boy has the ability to lead himself through the same problem, or a similar one? Would he be able not only to recognize the correct answers but also to identify the wrong or misleading answers? Would he be able to determine for himself which questions would be able to lead him to the answer desired? The boy ultimately gives a final, correct answer, but the subject and direction of the entire inquiry have been determined by someone external to him, that is, by Socrates. We can recognize Socrates' questions as being interesting and significant partly because framing them ourselves would require that we discipline our common sense and prevent ourselves from falling into the same false-certainties from which Socrates rescues the boy. Socrates' demonstration never even suggests that the boy who is able to give highly circumscribed answers to questions posed to him would be able to identify from the outset *which questions were worth asking*. In this way, the myth of *anamnesis* is more effectively suggested by the activity of Socrates than the activity of the slave boy. The slave boy, taken by himself, may not possess the ability to lead himself to the correct answer, even though he is capable of identifying it when he is led by Socrates. His ability to identify correct answers would be of limited usefulness if he must always be led to those answers by another person. This faculty, exercised in isolation, could lead him to cast around blindly for answers, proceeding by aimless trials and errors throughout his life. Perhaps I have become adept at shooting an arrow from a bow; but unless I know where to aim, I will be limited to launching arrows indiscriminately, hoping to hit something useful. Similarly, in the cave allegory, it is not the prisoner's sense of

sight that becomes sharpened through her interaction with the interlocutor. Having been freed and turned around, she cannot now see any better than before. In fact, she is more likely to have her sight "filled with [the] dazzle" (516a) of the new sources of light before her, to see even *less clearly* than before, but it is the fact that she is now looking in a new direction that makes all the difference. To return to the *Meno*, what is most interesting, significant, compelling, and formidable is that Socrates knows the questions to ask, not that the slave boy is able to answer them more or less correctly. (Furthermore, Socrates' performance would be even more impressive if he himself had no prior experience with or exposure to the proof but were nonetheless able to navigate it.)

The problem of knowing what question to ask arises in the high school physics classroom just as it does in mathematics. Students with prior mathematical training are able to perform many different operations and solve complicated equations, but they are often unable to decide which of these operations or equations to use at a particular moment. Given a question posed from without, by the teacher or the textbook, requiring in response a greater or lesser intuitive leap, students are able (with greater or lesser time and effort) to provide the correct answer. However, faced with an entirely new problem, especially one taken out of the context of the textbook, they are suddenly *unsure of how to proceed.* There are a number of things they *can* do at that point, but which of these things *should* they do? Despite the fact that they are well-equipped with the prior knowledge necessary for solving the problem, they remain stymied by a certain impenetrability of the problem. Their tools remain uselessly packed away and they surrender to their own perceived inability to achieve progress.

Of course, there are some exceptional students who begin to strike out adventurously in the quest for the solution to a problem. They are willing to "try something" and to be wrong.

More significantly, they begin to develop a sense of intuition that originates, perhaps, in the recognition of patterns in problem solving. Their ability to proceed through a problem cannot be attributed fully to trial and error, because they tend to work more or less purposefully in a certain direction, neglecting many other *possible* steps in favor of those steps that will advance them toward their goals. Even their trial and error, when it is used, is deliberate and purposeful.[18]

Similarly, the genius of Euclid's system lies primarily *not* in its contributors'[19] ability to carry out the painstaking step by step process involved in any single proof, but in their ability to intuitively look beyond the immediate, and to see what questions were worth asking, what propositions worth proving, and what locutions or contortions of pre-existing knowledge were needed to propel the proof to its conclusion. Oftentimes, this process of problem-solving involves moments of disorientation or directionlessness: detours must be devised to get around gaps in the existing geometrical knowledge, and these detours must be followed through with a sort of faith before they finally yield a recognizably useful resolution.

This faculty of perceiving meaning, significance, and relevance in the questions asked and the answers sought is the true moment of understanding, without which knowledge is simply information. So long as someone else, a teacher or a guide, remains in control of the questioning, rescuing us from misleading dead-ends or deceptive tangents, and indicating the correct path to knowledge, we cannot be said to be *learning*, in the true sense of the word.[20] This being led from without constitutes a kind of enslavement, according to Deleuze—"As if we would not remain slaves so long as we do not control the problems themselves, so long as we do not possess a right

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[18] Consider also here the fallibilism of Charles S. Peirce.

[19] The phrasing of this passage is complicated by the fact that Euclid was not the author of many of his propositions; he was the organizer of a system into which all the various existing proofs could fit.

[20] In this sense, we do depart somewhat from the image of "learning" that Socrates gives us in the *Meno*. The boy's ability to recognize true answers does not suggest, even within the confines of that story, that the boy would have been able to discover those truths on his own and without guidance from Socrates.

to the problems, to a participation in and management of the problems" (*Difference* 158). For Deleuze, that is, access to the questions themselves is a matter of liberation.

In addition to its ability to lead us through problems, as Socrates leads the slave boy, another part of the question's power lies in its implicit call to action. The genuine question involves us immediately and intimately in this process of problem solving, of coming to know or understand something. For example, I can ask a single question—"What do you mean?"—for many different reasons. It can be an act of invitation, expressing interest; an act of war, calling your bluff or daring you to attack; an act of desperation, suggesting that I have somehow come unmoored; an act of exploration or adventure, playing with words and ideas as with a game or puzzle; or a simple observation, a half-aware act of wonder. But running throughout each of these different permutations and inflections of the question lies the expectation of a response. At all times, the question is a call to action. It is not a statement that can be simply let drop. Questions that we "let drop" continue to haunt us—and the statements that continue to haunt us play the role of questions, touching a chord that resonates in us, requiring something in exchange, a response or an alteration. According to the legend, one might torment a great composer by striking an unresolved chord on the piano in the middle of the night. Questions are these unresolved chords, and we feel compelled to answer them, to respond to them, in proportion to the extent to which we can already sense their resolution. Merleau-Ponty describes this pull of the question early in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, as he is giving an account of coming to recognize a shipwreck while walking on the beach:

> As I approached, I did not perceive resemblances or proximities which finally
> came together to form a continuous picture of the upper part of the ship. I merely
> felt that the look of the object was on the point of altering, that something was

imminent in this tension, as a storm is imminent in storm clouds. Suddenly the sight before me was recast in a manner satisfying to my vague expectation. (20)[21]

Sometimes it is impossible to know how a chord must be resolved; there are too many possibilities; our casting about for a meaningful answer shows us merely (or most strongly) that there are many other answers we might equally have invoked. At other times, the answer is so clear to us that we feel compelled to say it—just as the great composer finally gets out of bed to finish the unfinished chord.

The question also calls us into relation with our intended or possible interlocutors. It may fall on deaf ears, but it is not a lecture that we are simply meant to absorb. It is easy to elude the lecturer's grasp—it is enough to simply let our minds wander, to nod our heads in assent to propositions without meaning anything whatsoever, to let our eyes drift to window or the clock. However, the question specifically "calls us out"; most students know that jarring change of pace occasioned by a direct question posed to an otherwise inattentive listener. It shocks us out of whatever languor we have settled into, requiring movement where the lecture asked for stillness and silence, requiring our own contributions where we have so far been simply spectators. It demands an abrupt shift from passivity to activity, and even if all we are finally able to do is stutter an apology or a bland retreat, something has nonetheless jolted to life within us. If we do no more than settle comfortably back into the habit of listening, we have at the very least changed position. I can ask the question, "What do you mean?" for many different reasons, but I cannot ask it without implicitly soliciting a response. I cannot ask it of no one, for no reason. When I look at the sky and ask it of the universe, I despair of getting a response; but a response would not be wholly inappropriate. I have, after all, asked a question.

Finally, we can also examine the importance of questions through a comparison between

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[21] Also quoted above in Footnote 6 on page 43.

questions and explanations. If the goal of learning or teaching is to enable another to understand or appreciate a problem, object, or fact, why must we bother with the difficult and inefficient business of asking questions? Why not simply give the explanation? Supply the answer? These questions are implicitly addressed in the *Meno* as well. As Socrates is engaged with the boy on the geometrical proof, he interrupts their conversation to speak with Meno about what has occurred. The boy has successfully answered some of Socrates' initial questions and has incorrectly answered later questions. He is finally faced with the realization that he does not know the answer to what sounds like a relatively simple question, and what is more, he cannot even venture a guess: "But, by Zeus, Socrates, I, for one, do not know" (84a). The passage that follows is worth quoting at length here.

> Socrates: Are you considering again, Meno, how far it is that he has now gone in his recollecting? That, at first, he did not know what the line of the eight-foot area is, just as now he does not yet know, but, however that may be, then he thought he knew it, and boldly answered as one who knows, and he did not believe that he was unprovided and perplexed. *But now, at this time, he believes that he is unprovided and perplexed, and just as he does not know, he does not think that he knows.*
> Meno: You speak the truth.
> Socrates: Then is he not better off now, about the thing which he did not know?
> Meno: This too seems to me so.
> Socrates: Then by making him unprovided and perplexed and numbing him, just like the torpedo-fish, have we in any way harmed him?
> Meno: It does not seem so to me.
> Socrates: Then, at any rate, we have done something useful for the work at hand, as is fitting for discovering how things are. For now he, not knowing, can even carry on the search gladly, whereas then he could easily think that both before many people and many times he could speak well about the double area, how it required having the line that was double in length.
> Meno: It seems likely.
> Socrates: Well, do you think that before he would have tried to seek for or to learn that which he thought he knew while he did not know—before he fell down into perplexity and want and came to believe that he did not know, and longed to know?
> Meno: It does not seem so to me, Socrates.
> Socrates: Did he benefit, then, from being numbed?
> Meno: It seems so to me.

> Socrates: Look, now, at what he will discover from this perplexity and want, searching along with me, while I do nothing but ask questions and do not teach. And watch out for whether you might discover me somehow teaching and explaining things to him instead of asking for his own opinions about the matter. (84a-d, emphasis added)

Socrates here indicates that what has changed for the boy is not his knowledge, but rather his awareness of ignorance where he had formerly assumed (incorrectly) that he did possess knowledge. The boy has not been "harmed"—he has not become uncertain or confused about something he formerly understood; he has simply acknowledged and understood a lack of knowledge for what it is. Ultimately, this ability to recognize his ignorance is framed as a positive benefit to the boy, who is now in a position to trade his ignorance for knowledge, "to learn that which he thought he knew while he did not know" (84c).

At the end of this exchange, Socrates distinguishes between asking questions and teaching, between "explaining things to him" and "asking for his opinion." He claims that he will restrict his work with the boy on the proof to questioning only—although, interestingly, the method he has just employed with Meno is saturated with explanations. This is precisely one of those passages where Meno's contributions might be replaced by simple "yes" or "no" answers with no appreciable loss of meaning. Socrates, during this exchange, has merely punctuated his explanation of the significance of the boy's turn from false certainty to conscious ignorance with requests for affirmation (or confirmation) of his statements from Meno. Socrates will go on to demonstrate a style of learning and teaching through questions in his subsequent interaction with the boy, but he has just acted out another of his teaching styles, perhaps the more common style—and one which somewhat belies the distinction between asking and explaining that he has just outlined.

Socrates' interaction with Meno here fails to bridge the gap between explaining and

simply asking questions. Questions are indeed employed, but they seem to be afterthoughts, restricting Meno to simple agreement or disagreement with what Socrates has articulated. Despite the fact that Socrates overtly solicits Meno's input, however restricted this desire may be, the form in which Socrates invites Meno's participation in the conversation still falls far short of the critical potential of genuine questions, as Socrates' questions express interest only in the extent to which the listener agrees or disagrees with the speaker. *Are you following me, or have I lost you? Will you argue this point, or do you concede it?*

Once Socrates engages the boy and the geometrical problem once more, it is significant that his questions are posed in well-articulated and complete sentences, while the boy's answers are often restricted to a single word. Socrates seems to make no allowances, or perhaps not even to acknowledge, the role of incipient or unarticulated knowledge that might guide one in the posing of meaningful questions—or perhaps he simply ignores the significance of the shift from an intuitive or subconscious understanding to a well-articulated and reasoned understanding. This omission, however, seems especially odd in light of a conversation between Socrates and Meno later in the dialogue. To describe how learning is possible, Socrates moves from the myth of anamnesis and the idea of recollection to the "true opinions" we have as guides. "True opinion," he concludes, may lead us as effectively as genuine knowledge, but it is flighty and unreliable, liable to abandon us at any moment. In order to avoid this loss, we must "tie down" this true opinion by a reasoned account, an explanation. It is the process of tying down true opinions and therefore solidifying and guaranteeing them that constitutes or results in knowledge (*Meno* 97a-98a). This discussion of the difference between true opinion and a reasoned account would seem to place emphasis on precisely the shift from inarticulate to articulated knowledge. This shift, in fact, constitutes the true educational moment: i.e., how is it that we come to fashion

conscious awareness and rational comprehension from something that begins as merely intuitive, perhaps as a simple feeling? *I feel that this may be the case… I suspect that such and such may be so…* There is an incommensurability between pre-rational, inarticulate feeling and reasoned, articulated understanding, and to bridge this lacuna is one of the proper tasks of education.[22] (At the same time, we must also acknowledge a resonance or a family resemblance between this notion of inarticulate feeling and the affective experience of certainty addressed in the Introduction. That is, both are strongly *affective*, primarily experienced, and resistant to quantification.)

Socrates' method of proceeding by means of asking the boy questions (questions which, he claims, "teach" nothing), demanding only the most rudimentary of answers in return, transgresses and even violates this moment of education. His well-articulated questions, bulwarked by his own already conscious and deliberately formulated understanding, are met by the boy's restricted responses, which in turn arise out of his unformed and still merely intuitive understanding.[23] What should have been a moment of epiphany or revelation for the boy—not only the sudden realization of the answer but also the awareness that he has reached this answer *on his own*—becomes instead the simple answer to a simple question, a reaction to another's ancient and tired epiphanies, a limited and circumscribed response instead of a creative act.

In eliciting simple contributions in response to fully articulated questions, Socrates ignores the presence of a relatively unformed proto-comprehension, by means of which the boy

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[22] Moreover, it is a labor that must always and only ever be accomplished by the learner herself, if it is to mean anything.

[23] One might consider, in this context, the relationship between this "merely intuitive understanding" and the kind of implicit understanding explored by Merleau-Ponty and Eugene Gendlin.

is able to give correct answers, but only *sometimes.*[24] In failing to acknowledge the significance of the act of formulating, the act of articulating, over and above simple assent or dissent, the simplicity of the "correct" answer, Socrates also misses the most important and authentic moment of learning.

In the end, the question serves four crucial functions in thought. First, it gives our statements meaning and context, enabling us to understand those statements as responses to specific, if merely implicit, questions.[25] Second, it helps to guide us in two ways: intermediate questions (e.g., Socrates' questions to the slave boy) help to guide us to the solution of problems, while primary questions tell us which problems are worth solving in the first place. Third, the question calls us into action, refusing to allow us to remain still or silent when an investigation or exploration is under way. Finally, the question helps us to bridge the gap between the inarticulate understanding or intuition we may have of a thing and the way in which we are finally able to articulate that understanding. Or, in Platonic terms, the gap between our "true opinions" and a "reasoned account." In the same way that the question's rise to prominence in our conceptions of thought throws emphasis on the process of coming to know something, this very process— learning itself—likewise comes to prominence over the possession of knowledge that is its frequent result. Rather than knowledge being the *raison d'être* for learning, learning becomes the proper and emblematic activity of thought.

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[24] "A well-known test in psychology involves a monkey who is supposed to find food in boxes of one particular colour amidst others of various colours: there comes a paradoxical period during which the number of 'errors' diminishes even though the monkey does not yet possess the 'knowledge' or 'truth' of a solution in each case: propitious moment in which the philosopher-monkey opens up to truth, himself producing the true, but only to the extent that he begins to penetrate the coloured thickness of a problem." (Deleuze, *Difference* 164-165)

[25] On this point, see R.G. Collingwood, "Question and Answer", in *An Autobiography.*

### *Learning*

That learning is somehow preferable to knowledge—that questions are more fundamental than answers—is suggested by every toddler who insists, "I can do it by myself!" Parents and siblings endure the impatience of watching the child do something stubbornly, hesitantly, imperfectly; the movements are not yet fluid, the discrete components of the action have not yet become a process; and we all know that we could in fact do it much better. But, as the story goes, there is cruelty in the kindness that would help a baby bird out of its shell. A measure of difficulty is the price of our admission to self-sufficiency. The essence of learning is that we do not yet know— and contrary to the assumption behind many traditional models of education, it is not enough to simply be given the information we are lacking. Textbooks are so often deadening or stultifying to critical inquiry because they present information in this way—simply, unthreateningly, and after the fact. The first effort of understanding, of making comprehensible a miscellaneous set of data, has been accomplished, and we are fed like baby birds, the hungry recipients of discrete packages of pre-digested material.

However, it is quite simply ludicrous to imagine that you can teach me to build a car by showing me a finished car, or that you can teach me to swim by telling me to watch you do it. If we want to know and understand something on a profound level, we must inspect its pieces, draw our own plans, immerse ourselves in it, and build or become it ourselves with our own bodily movements.

The encounter with an object or with an interlocutor belongs thoroughly to this intimate

contact with and immersion in the material of experience.[26] On the other hand, the necessary

moment of perplexity is missing from the straightforward recitation of conclusions or the "calm

possession of a rule enabling solutions" (*Difference* 164) that characterizes the lecture. (This

perplexity is in fact a specific fear of many lecturers—the fear of appearing confounded or

unsure in front of one's students.[27]) Furthermore, the genuine newness of the encounter is

supposed to have worn itself out already, before the lecture begins; the lecture itself has been

distilled from this process of wearing-out. If we are lucky, the lecture is abstracted directly from

the experience of that encounter or articulated in response to it, but it may also be the case that

the lecture is compiled from other prior accounts that have themselves already undergone a

processing or an interpretation. Things have been "figured out," problems have been solved or

carefully stowed out of sight, the picture has been created and framed in such a way that it

appears beautiful and self-contained.

It is not a lie, strictly speaking, to suggest that knowledge is often like this, its elements

carefully selected, deliberately placed, and framed into a whole. We quite often treat knowledge

in this way: when we set out to explain something to someone, we think carefully about where to

begin, tracing a background to give the necessary context; in painting, we select the colors and

sketch out the shapes we will need to show what we understand, and then we proceed

methodically, so that the picture emerges gradually and comprehensibly. Often times, we even

represent our knowledge to ourselves in this way, as old truths become abstracted and distilled

into the shortest and most concise story that we can tell about them. Time and repeated telling

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[26] The importance of this immersion will be explored in a later section, "The Apprentice as Rat," in Chapter Two (96ff).

[27] Evasive tactics are even practiced and shared among graduate students—a veneer of jokes overlies a very genuine fear. Is it not often the case that a lecturer, upon being asked a question, will answer not that question but rather the question he thinks he should have been asked? That he wishes had been asked? That he would prefer to answer? Is it the case at these moments that he knows he is doing this? Or has he perhaps not understood the question?

rounds off the corners, files down the edges, fills in the cracks, and polishes the surface, until the story hangs together, complete and conceptual, untroubled by its own inadequacies or by the pieces that never quite fit. In short, we gradually and inevitably mythologize our own stories.

But to see this "finished product" of the story or the painting or the lecture does not in any way constitute a training in how to produce it, and it is precisely this training that is at stake in education. The distinction between these two types of understanding—the intuitive and the articulate—or, similarly but not unproblematically, the process and the product—is the reason that we often return to earlier work and find so many of the elements of our more recent thought already existing there, in inchoate form.[28] However, to gloss over the difference between these two types of understanding is to ignore the work of years that intervenes through our process of dredging truth out of our bones—in unearthing these inchoate knowledges and developing them into conscious comprehension, more or less systematically explored, more or less bulwarked by logical argumentation.

> I sometimes hear people who apologize for not being able to say what they mean, maintaining that their heads are so full of fine things that they cannot deliver them for want of eloquence. That is moonshine. Do you know what I think? It is a matter of shadowy notions coming to them from some unformed concepts which they are unable to untangle and to clarify in their minds: consequently they cannot deliver them externally. *They themselves do not yet know what they mean.* (Montaigne 63, I.26, emphasis added)

Without this exploration, elaboration, and analysis, Montaigne argues, we cannot really be said to *know*. We suspect, we believe, or we hypothesize, but we ourselves "do not yet know what [we] mean."

Rote memorization and textbook presentations are so easily forgotten because they ask for and elicit no process of uncovering or discovery within us; they simply seek to add new

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[28] Cf. Henri Bergson's "Philosophical Intuition" here.

information, already organized, already purified and categorized. There is no feeling around in dark places for the pieces that will fit into a new inquiry, or the partial ideas that will resonate in response to a particular question or problem.

When insight arises from within our own movements and activities, and when it suggests itself in flashes or arises as no more than a sense or feeling, a bodily sensation of congruence or resonance or appropriateness—and when we have no one standing over us, overlooking these suggestive rumblings—when, if we would understand, we must address our questions to these dark spaces, these rough, misshapen objects, and learn to feel out the vibrations of the next piece that will fit—when we must spend countless hours in this process of coaxing something vibrant but latent into articulation and conscious awareness—when we must prepare a place for each of these insights and decide where it fits—at these times and in this process we are discovering knowledge that will not be easily lost or overwhelmed. Having its root in our own observation of the world, we have also been able to observe how it emerges in our hands as we peel away tendrils of the unconscious and refashion it into something communicable, so that now we also have this understanding about it: where it came from, and how we brought it forth.[29] This process of making the intuitive articulate is profoundly educative and can most truly be called "learning." The intuitive, the implicit, the unconscious, and the subconscious thus appear as wellsprings of creation and creativity—especially when confronted by the unexpected in an encounter. The unexpected presents us with a piece of our puzzle, light is suddenly cast on an object that belongs within our horizon but is not yet moored anywhere, does not yet fit. In the process of exploring this new object and of trying to decide where to set it down, how to connect it with our existing milieu, certain aspects of that milieu themselves come into sharper focus—what had been an

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[29] As we will see in greater depth in Chapter Three, dialogue as we mean it respects this process as truly educative and relies upon the contributions that its members are able to uncover in and for themselves.

indistinct fading-into-distance now becomes, with the proximity of something accessible to us within that distance, fraught with potential structures, dimensions, and margins, capable of casting out mooring ropes to tether the new object in place. When we are forced to fit new objects into our field, the field itself undergoes a fluxion and a transformation.

We have many natural capacities at our disposal when it comes to the tasks involved in learning, in encountering new objects and fitting them into our lives. The human mind possesses a natural and formidable capacity for reason—for recognizing patterns, for organizing information, for testing and analyzing that information, and for asking questions to fill the gaps in its understanding. Furthermore, curiosity is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the human child, who reaches out toward her world with both body and language, drawing it close and investigating it from all possible angles, using all possible senses. In this way, like Plato's liberated cave-dweller, she uncovers the three-dimensionality of objects and begins to sense the ways in which these objects might fit together; later, she comes to recognize something analogous in ideas as well as in objects, something that enables those ideas to either resist combination or cohere. Our tremendous and rarely dormant capacity for pattern-recognition generally escorts us through our daily lives, addressing the immediate dilemma by reference to an old problem. More significant, perhaps, than our ability to seek out and recognize patterns in everything we encounter is an almost bodily sense for whether or not a thing "fits" or "works" in a given configuration, a sense that must be learned, trained, or cultivated. We test the objects or ideas of a new encounter against the touchstones of previous knowledge or experience, against the more or less unified systems which constitute the bulk of what we can be said to "know" or "believe." When a new element clashes with these established systems, we "find it hard to believe," or, rather, belief requires a reorganization of the established system. When an element

simply does not cohere naturally in one of our established systems, we find it difficult to remember, and often must relearn it repeatedly, having "nothing to hang it on" to keep it in place.[30] Finally, in what is perhaps its most fecund moment, our minds possess an innate capacity to draw connections and create bridges across sometimes formidable gaps. It is in these spaces between elements of thought or of the world, between ideas or objects, that the most creative activity is possible. Through questions we investigate the space that opens before us. We test the edges of our existing system and the edges of the new objects; we see that they will fit together, even if they do not at this moment; we are able to seek out or to create the missing pieces that will integrate our new knowledge with our old.

For example, there comes a point in the demanding and time-consuming study of Euclidean geometry when the system begins to communicate to the student its own stabilities and truths; after a certain amount of acquaintance, the student can learn to sense and understand the movements of its demonstrations and even to generate some of them herself. The system acquires a unity, a cohesion, a predictability that enables it to hang together and sustain its own developments. However, present this same student with Lobachevski's geometry, and the clean world of Euclidean space stretches thinly over the chaos beneath. Claims that were once certain and unproblematic become treacherous; axioms that once seemed to bear the weight of scrutiny collapse suddenly and unceremoniously. A great deal of effort may animate the work of refuting or rejecting these new insights, or rather, this stubborn refusal to grant the obvious truths of

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[30] This explains my difficulty in learning history: it is too often presented as a series of facts, held together by little more than their chronology, having no simple causality and little connection to the other components of my understanding. This is also why I began to retain historical facts once I had established a rough framework of a history of *ideas*—I could more easily see the connection between ideas, and I could then see the connection between ideas and events, so that I was more or less able to "hang" the historical context on what I already understood of the evolution of thought and ideas. On the other hand, there are many who have the opposite experience: history makes sense and coheres into a structure that is easily remembered; the causality between discrete events becomes living and immediate; and history itself becomes the framework within which the movement of ideas can become more comprehensible.

Euclid's fifth postulate. Only after this struggle does a new truth emerge, one implicit but invisible in Euclid, and now thrown into relief by Lobachevski—not explicitly present as such in either system but made evident by the attempt to hold the two systems in one grasp. The insight itself, once gained, is simple enough: Euclidean space is "flat," while Lobachevski allows for the geometry laid out on the surface of a sphere. Without this insight, the two systems are traumatically in conflict; after this insight, they reside next to one another, mutually complementary. Acknowledging this one crucial difference allows us to translate between the two, allows each to acknowledge the other's existence without struggling desperately against that other. It is the ability and determination to recognize a pattern or a common language between the two systems that allows the student of Euclid and Lobachevski to hold them both in this way, integrating them into a single but ever more complex and comprehensive understanding of the world around her.

It is perhaps because the pattern-recognizing, ordering, organizing power of reason is a natural capacity that it is impossible to "teach" it. It is a well-known truism that students cannot be forced to learn. The acquisition of "critical thinking skills" continues to be something of a mystery—perhaps because those skills are in a sense innate, though usually underdeveloped; the ability to think critically (in other words, the faculty of reason) is implicit within us and may be more or less consciously developed throughout our lives. These skills are rooted in and grow out of something we often call "common sense" or the reason which is so particularly human that we are often identified simply as "rational animals" (which definition, of course, elides the problem-solving skills demonstrated by some animals). It seems clear that those skills of critical thought develop over time (e.g., the capacity for abstract thought is still developing even in the late teenage years), suggesting that they are less akin to information that can be transferred and more

akin to muscles that want exercising. This "exercise" would be entirely appropriate, as critical thought is itself an activity and not a fact or a system that can be satisfactorily quantified and communicated. Critical thought can and must develop over time, but we must develop it ourselves; no one else can develop it for us. There is no set of instructions sufficient to making us think critically; critical thought is not reducible to an algorithm or even a series of algorithms.[31]

If learning is truly a naturally occurring human capacity, then, while it cannot be "taught," properly speaking, it can be practiced, exercised, and even trained, and it is precisely this training that is accomplished by means of questions. The educative power of the question lies in its ability to open new avenues of inquiry and in its implicit expectation of a response. To ask a new question is to open up new possibilities for learning and for knowledge, and to demand an exploration (or at least a recognition) of these new possibilities. For example, we look at a mountain and ask:

> What is it made of? (Geology or Chemistry)
> Where did it come from? (Geology or Religion)
> What sorts of creatures live on it? (Biology)
> What sorts of plants grow on it? (Botany)
> How does it affect the surrounding landscape? (Geology, Geography, Physics, or
>     Art)
> What is its name? (Geography or Poetry)
> How can I make my home on it? (Engineering or Homesteading)
> How can I describe the feeling that it evokes in me? (Aesthetics, Psychology, or
>     Philosophy)

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[31] The field of computational creativity in fact aims at precisely this: a program or an algorithm that can allow computers to "think creatively," employing and building on a number of concrete techniques or approaches to creativity. While successes in this field would suggest that a computer might accomplish the generation of new ideas by means of an algorithm, I would argue that human creativity follows no *conscious* algorithm. Whereas the computing power of machines renders them capable of processing and running immensely complex programs, human creativity is primarily intuitive. Algorithms may supply us with additional ways of approaching or stimulating creative thought, but they are not sufficient to accomplish that thought for us (within the unaided human mind). Additionally, insofar as critical thought involves and relies upon an ability to think critically, these same considerations apply to the possibility of critical thought in computers. For additional information on computational creativity, see the work of Margaret A. Boden and Stephen L. Thaler.

How can I evoke the feeling of the mountain in others? (Architecture, Art, or
    Music)
How tall is it? (Geometry)
Why is it here? (Geology or Religion)
What use is it to us? (Industry)
How did other people use it? (Anthropology)
Whose is it? (Economics or Capitalism)
What does it mean? (Philosophy)

In fashioning new questions, we prepare the paths along which the intuitive and as yet inarticulate understandings within us might unfold themselves in articulation. We create new spaces in which to cultivate or build new ideas out of what resides inside us as mere potential. When my curiosity comes alive, when I am suddenly reinvigorated or inspired, the questions spill out of me or out of the world, or I read the questions in the world with sudden clarity. It is not a stream of epiphanies that constitutes my inspiration but a series of particularly promising questions, opening a series of promising spaces.

Of course, questions are of limited usefulness without the attempt to find answers. The expectation implicit in the question is that we will at least consider a response, and it is indeed this expectation that makes questions so powerful, so truly educative. Where questions disrupt us, responses (even merely possible responses) bring us a moment of peace and stability. We settle into responses as into comfortable habits.

### *Habit*

Habit is thus often the result of learning, but at the same time it constitutes a barrier to further learning; habit is the inherent and inevitable threat embedded within the learning process itself. A brief examination of habit therefore shows us the tensions within the act of learning, its inertia or tendency toward stasis and rest, and also the importance of continued and continual questioning—the ever-renewed commitment to the tasks and demands of framing questions.

Habit, like knowledge, means that growth has more or less stopped, and answers are no longer sought. As a child, I learned to swim; as an adult, I propel myself through the water automatically, habitually, without thinking deeply, almost without thinking at all about what I am doing. I learned to tie my shoelaces, and then I stopped thinking about how it was done. I learned to drive a car with manual transmission, and then I dodged traffic in Brooklyn without ever considering the clutch or the gearshift. In the case of these bodily habits, the purpose and duration of learning are constrained by my need to perform an action, and once I can perform that action automatically, I trust my body to do it without my conscious attention.

It is even the case that these habitual actions can become almost reliant upon a lack of conscious attention. Focusing my attention once again on an action that has become habitual may disrupt my body's natural execution of the motion and put me in the awkward position of feeling as though I do not in fact know what I am doing. Instead of simply allowing our bodies to run the programs they have learned, we attempt to modify those programs in small ways—learning to walk differently, to throw a ball differently, even to sit differently—and in the process we reintroduce a measure of awkwardness into our actions. Perhaps it is this awkwardness—this mechanistic feeling that the different parts of us are not fitting together as they usually do, this grinding and slippage of our inner gears—that characterizes the inner environment in which learning takes place. The modification of a habit calls the entire action into question, and a small but definite process of relearning must take place before we can relax back into the habitual and the subconscious. In the case of physical action, therefore, it seems that the outcome of learning is something like habit, where our actions become automatic and our minds are freed to concern themselves with other things. Habit is the thing we establish primarily, and it is the thing to which we return after our programs have been disrupted and modified.

Habit is in some sense the goal of action-oriented intellectual effort, but it is also, paradoxically, the essence of intellectual laziness. It is that which must be overcome in order for learning to recommence. Habit, presumably, is part of what keeps Plato's prisoners immobile, and it is what keeps Meno and his slave boy from realizing the limitations of their opinions. As far as learning is concerned, habit gives rise to the need for a gadfly, either a human interlocutor or an intellectual perplexity, capable of forcing us to recognize the need for new reflections.

Habit functions as a temporary horizon—or perhaps, more fittingly, a "plateau": a region of stability that holds together a collection of diverse elements, organizes them, and deploys them in certain ways.[32] It is a resting place, a place for action and for solid ground, a place momentarily unthreatened by the inevitable upheavals of learning. We are forever seeking these regions of stability, establishing and reestablishing them as necessary, because the sheer number of objects and ideas in our lives quickly overwhelms our ability to capture and organize them consciously. We rely upon routine and habit to organize and make use of these data, so that we can go about our lives without conscious reference to them. Without these habits, our lives would be entirely consumed by the most basic problems of food, shelter, and protection.

But the plateaus formed by all of this information are always partial, incomplete, and therefore temporary. We free ourselves to consider new thoughts, and in doing so we necessarily challenge the system that frees us with the task of incorporating and making sense of those new and external elements. Thus, we continually carve up the plateau, and just as continually reform

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[32] Deleuze and Guattari speak significantly of the "plateau" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, fittingly enough, and there they seem to take up an account of the plateau from yet another thinker, Gregory Bateson: "A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus. Gregory Bateson uses the word 'plateau' to designate something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation towards a culminating point or external end" (*Thousand* 21-22). I adopt the term "plateau" here as this definition seems to evoke something of the dynamic and open system of habits and routines that helps us to shape our lives. This "system" is constantly fluctuating, flexing, changing, incorporating new elements and allowing others to drop away. As Deleuze and Guattari's work (*A Thousand Plateaus*) and its image of the rhizome will be dealt with specifically later, we will limit ourselves to this passing reference here.

it.[33] We cannot live without a plateau, in general, but we also cannot remain on a single plateau indefinitely. Paradoxically, we need the organization of this system of plateaus in order to provide ourselves with stability and to live our daily lives, but we would be equally stymied by a stability that never gave way to anything new.[34]

It is because of our inherent reliance upon habit that the question becomes so essential to our learning and thinking anything new. Even though habit is generally the final result of the question, the question is also what disrupts our already constituted habits. The question confronts us with the new or forces us to reconsider the old in a way that demands fluidity and destroys the habitual.

This distinction between the passivity of habits and the activity of questions is also what distinguishes the student (the passive recipient of information) from what Deleuze might call the "apprentice." Whereas the student takes a place in the lecture hall in order to *be educated* by the teacher, the apprentice commits herself bodily to the task of learning from a master craftsman. The apprentice takes part in the acts of creation by which she will come to know and understand the trade. Perhaps she will ask questions of her own in her quest to understand; perhaps she will engage with the world itself as a problem, a task to be completed, a question to be answered through the movements she will make and the changes she will work upon it. The fundamental difference here between the student and the apprentice lies in what is at stake for each, in the extent to which each has pledged herself to a project of learning that will transform both her world and her own being.

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[33] Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus,* on the dynamic of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, which reflects this continual formation and disruption of plateaus.

[34] This is precisely why, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the need for both rhizomes and trees—both the dynamic and the static, the new and the established, the immanent and the hierarchized, creativity and structure.

This chapter has explored four major components of Deleuze's work which, as a set, help us to shed light on the demands implicit in an expanded conception of what it means to think. The concept of "misosophy" reminds us of the difficulty of genuine thinking as well as of our many attempts to avoid having to think—and a passing consideration of the many times we have been forced to think may be sufficient to convince us that these moments are in fact the most profoundly educative experiences we know. Closely tied to the concept of misosophy is that of the encounter, which shoves us out from behind whatever beliefs we have hitherto accepted not on their own strength but rather on our desire to be protected from the world. The encounter forces us into a confrontation with the difficult, the confusing, the raw—the world that is fundamentally resistant to simplification. In the midst of this encounter, our most valuable skill is that of asking the right question. In response to this confrontation, if we are lucky, we develop a sense for which questions are meaningful, which are promising, which will open up new and perennially fruitful ways of organizing and building significance from the chaos of possibilities that confronts us. The true problem or question "insists and persists in [its] solutions" (*Difference* 163). Far beyond being simple vehicles to answers and statements, these questions become crucial moments of learning in themselves; they have a robustness that persists in and through their own answers, in such a way that these problems are never resolved but continue to provoke us to new thought and new action.

The following chapter will examine how the apprenticeship which teaches us how to ask these questions becomes both a means to an end and the end itself. Insofar as questions have superseded answers in their intellectual significance, the process of learning in an apprenticeship supplants and even subsumes its own product—i.e., the knowledge that one "carries off" (*Difference* 166) in response to a lesson learned from and with the world. Fundamentally, we

look to questions rather than to answers in order to learn how to live, above and beyond the many individual things we know about life, and the apprentice emerges as the figure most intimately acquainted with the visceral and profound power of these questions.

# CHAPTER 2:
## APPRENTICE, INTERLOCUTOR, AND OBJECT

The previous chapter's analyses led us to posit some important distinctions between the various

figures involved in education, described in the final sections of that chapter—in particular, the

student, the lecturer, the apprentice, and the master. These various figures incarnate different

elements of the characteristics and outcomes of education. Advancing before the rest, however,

is the apprentice—the one who engages fully in the tasks of learning, dedicating all of her

energies and powers to the work of interrogating, evaluating, and interpreting the world. In

apprenticeship and the apprentice, we find a model for the intense training, the devotion to

understanding and interpretation, and the tireless pursuit of insight that represent the most

powerful possibilities of thought.

The counterpart of the apprentice need not be a master, however, in the strictest sense.

Even in the absence of such professionalism and expertise, there is another figure who

encourages and facilitates this deep educational engagement with the world. It is in the

interlocutor that we might find this counterpart, and thus the figures of the apprentice and the

interlocutor comprise two crucial moments of the current chapter. The dynamic between the two

figures, however, is always mediated through a third term. This term is the object of their mutual

encounter, which commands the attention and the efforts of both the apprentice and the

interlocutor. Thus, the current chapter will conclude with a more extended analysis of that object.

***The Apprentice as Rat***

> *It makes the most telling difference whether a thinker has a personal relationship to his problems and finds in them his destiny, his distress, and his greatest happiness, or an 'impersonal' one, meaning that he can do no better than to touch them and grasp them with the antennae of cold, curious thought.*
> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §345

> *For it seemed to me that I could find much more truth in the reasonings that each person makes concerning matters that are important to him, and whose outcome ought to cost him dearly later on if he has judged badly, than in those reasonings engaged in by a man of letters in his study, which touch on speculations that produce no effect and are of no other consequence to him except perhaps that, the more they are removed from common sense, the more pride he will take in them, for he will have to employ that much more wit and ingenuity in attempting to render them plausible.*
> Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* 9-10

What kind of stance or comportment exemplifies the particular experience of learning in its most pure and rigorous form? It is certainly not the disembodied and alienated experience of the traditional student, the recipient of a lecture, who passively receives both questions and their answers. Rather, it is the intense focus and absolute dedication of the curious child, fully absorbed in the world and the task of learning about it, that more closely represents the greatest possibilities for thought. The figure of the apprentice comes closest to reviving this intense childhood curiosity within the more mature and highly developed forms of adulthood.

As this essay distinguishes the apprentice from the student, Deleuze distinguishes the apprentice from the philosopher: "apprenticeship falls rather on the side of the rat in the maze, while the philosopher outside the cave carries off only the result—knowledge—in order to discover its transcendental principles" (*Difference* 166). Deleuze's apprentice is *in* the site of the experiment—is herself, in fact, the experiment. She is the rat in the maze, immersed in its

concrete situation and faced with the necessity of learning (or the desire to learn). The philosopher, on the other hand, is the experimenter: he sits outside and above, separating himself from the apprentice's immersion, limiting himself to observing the movements of the apprentice-rat. He sees and is able to quantify the series of external relationships that characterize her progress through the maze. He "carries off" this information to find or deny hidden patterns in his rat's behavior. His knowledge is technical, mechanical, and he adds layers of meaning and interpretation. But the apprentice-rat's experience of this same process of learning has been visceral and absorbing. Surrounded by the sights, sounds, smells, and textures of the experimental labyrinth, her experience has been designed to resist abstraction. Her learning has its seat in her own body and mind; she has addressed the problem from the inside: "Learning is the appropriate name for the subjective acts carried out when one is confronted with the objecticity of a problem (Idea), whereas knowledge designates only the generality of concepts or the calm possession of a rule enabling solutions" (164). Once the "rat" in the maze becomes sentient, intelligent, and capable of abstraction, ruled by mechanisms other than instinct and having a greater range of rational capabilities at her disposal—in other words, becomes more human—this model of learning emerges. It is not knowledge extracted in separation from the world, but learning that percolates through immersion in it. This learning has had visceral contact with the problem, it has been deceived and misled, it has a sense for its limits and, like Socrates, "knows that [its] wisdom is worthless" (Plato, *Apology* 23b)—or, at least, admits that it is subject to frequent revision.

Deleuze here invokes and critiques what Dewey calls the "spectator theory of knowledge" (*Quest* 23), discussed briefly in the Introduction. This is the model that presupposes an absolute separation between the world of the observed and the world of the observer. It is also

the most susceptible to the twentieth Century's critiques of objectivity—most famously, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and Einstein's relativity. The apprentice model much more accurately reflects the contemporary insight that we cannot presume this sort of separation, that the observer is always, necessarily, located within the same world and site as the experiment he proposes to observe.

Even apart from the question of their relative feasibility, these two models of intellectual subjects (the detached experimenter and the immersed rat) give rise to very different sets of observations and conclusions. Both the rat and the experimenter learn something. The rat develops a concrete understanding of her milieu—informed by what Kant would call a "manifold" of sensory impressions—through her immersion in the experiment (or through its immersion in her). The experimenter observes and examines the rat, the maze, the entire field of the experiment, from a place of detachment and separation. With nothing at stake (aside, perhaps, from professional ambition or abstract intellectual gain), the experimenter's activity is limited to devising and preparing the conditions of the experiment, and then setting the experiment in motion. What is of interest to him is what happens outside of his own activity, and more importantly what pieces of significant information the experimenter can extract from those events. The experimenter decides ahead of time what is of interest (what is to be tested), controls every variable, and specifies what is allowed to take place, what is allowed to change. The rat is not allowed to lose interest in the experiment, not allowed to take a nap or to simply explore the maze instead of pursuing the food that marks the "end" of the maze, its goal, its solution. Or, if it is allowed these freedoms, this is at the discretion of the experimenter, because these behaviors have become interesting or worth acknowledging for some scientific reason (or perhaps the experiment itself has been temporarily suspended). Thus, both participants are learning, but they

are learning in very different ways. What is the difference, then, between these two types of learning?

The rat is immersed in the situation,[1] unaware of the goal, unable to see the "big picture" (the whole maze); she is hungry (driven by appetites), lacking control over the situation, using all senses to gather information (where am I? is that food I smell?)—immersed, that is, in a milieu, a fully constituted world surrounding her on all sides, perhaps afraid, perhaps angry or frustrated or stubborn, perhaps tired—yanked out of one cage or home and dropped into another.

In the end, the rat knows how to get through the maze. She also knows what the maze looks, smells, and feels like. She knows how the light hits the wall as she comes around this corner. She knows how it feels to be watched, patiently and dispassionately, from above. The maze itself is now saturated with sedimented memories, emotional resonances, associations of thought and experience. Walking through this segment of the maze, she remembers suddenly how she was lost in thought at the same time as she was lost and wandering through precisely these halls. This rat is, of course, very human, but we might be forgiven for romanticizing her experience, as we are not truly speaking of rats anyway.

The experimenter, on the other hand, knows a number of discrete and externally observable facts about the rat's performance. He knows how long the rat took to get through the maze and win the prize. He knows how many wrong turns she took, how many times she retraced her steps. He knows how many times the experiment had to be repeated before she could find her way through quickly and reliably, without hesitations and missteps. He has data from many others before her, and will observe others after her. Her name will probably never

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[1] Recall, once again, Deleuze and Guattari's claim in *A Thousand Plateaus:* "Whereas the theorem belongs to the rational order, *the problem is affective* and is inseparable from the metamorphoses, generations, and creations within science itself" (362). In this scenario, the rat's immersion in the maze and the problem that the maze poses to her are indeed quite "affective"; that is, they act upon and interact with her on the level of her intimate sensory contact with that maze.

appear in his conclusions.

There is yet a third kind of learning beyond that of the apprentice-rat and the philosopher-experimenter, one that pertains to the audience who will now listen to the experimenter's account of the experiment and of the conclusions reached.[2] First, we as audience will be introduced to the hypothesis, or the question of interest. We will be told how the experiment was constructed and why it was constructed in that way. Particular attention will be paid to the fact that the experimenter was able to neutralize any significant outside variables in order to make sure that only the desired range of behaviors would occur and influence the outcome of the experiment. Following this, a quick summary of the actual experiment itself—glossing over the most active and visceral part of the experiment, the *experience*—will give the audience some idea of what the rat's predicament looked like, but will quickly give way to what the experimenter and the audience find most relevant: the results, which are, sometimes explicitly, sometimes merely implicitly, built on observation and inseparable from interpretation. What does this mean? What does it tell us? How can we use it? What happens next?[3]

To return to the rat and the experimenter—the apprentice and the philosopher—the difference between former and the latter involves the rat's fear, vulnerability, and lack of control, her being caught, being surrounded, being seen.[4] It is the difference between being involved and being detached, and this is, in the end, all the difference in the world. The experimenter now

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[2] Of course, this transmission of information could happen in the form of a lecture, a lab report or journal article, or a textbook.

[3] Textbooks present us with yet another way of teaching or learning, one even further removed from the rat's actual experience, because textbooks look only at sets of many different lab reports in order to abstract information, draw broad conclusions, and extract the most universal of truths from them all. What we get, finally, is this vitiated and emptied form of knowledge, which is no longer knowledge properly speaking but simply information—predigested, prepackaged, and drained of all mystery. This textbook is most useful for its author, as the process of digesting, organizing, extracting, presenting is itself educationally valuable. But for students, textbooks generally go much too far in simplifying what is after all an incredibly complex multiplicity of data.

[4] Cf. Sartre, "The Look," in *Being and Nothingness*, 340-400.

knows the answer to the question he asked, and he knows what it took to find it; the rat, on the other hand, knows of innumerable unexpected experiences to be found within that maze. She now finds herself in possession of a wealth of information, not yet sifted or categorized, from which she can draw any number of lessons. The experimenter knows how to watch, but the rat has learned something about how to *be*.

Despite the scientific prejudice in favor of the detached observer's experience, we find that in the context of the experiment (rather than the lecture), the polarity of active and passive favors the learning of the rat. She is the one who has truly learned from her experiences, while the experimenter has remained largely passive, receptive, after setting the initial conditions of the experiment. It is the experimenter whose knowledge is now abstract, vitiated, flattened. Whereas the lecturer will observe and process the information and the student-audience in the lecture hall will passively absorb it, the rat is the epicenter of the experiment, the point of origin for this information, the site of the experiences which are ultimately the subject of the inquiry. The experimenter is relegated to a place outside of the world of the experiment, allowed only to look upon it from elsewhere, systematically prevented from experiencing it himself.

Traditionally, perhaps habitually, we act and think as experimenters, as the education that most of us receive trains us to do precisely this. We are taught to remove our biases from the situation, to survey the scene dispassionately, to separate an objective assessment from what we want, what we think should be the case, or what we fear might be the case. The sheer ubiquity of the scientific method and its influence on the modern mind ensures that we internalize the ideal of the "impartial, objective observer" who uses reason to interpret the world and does not allow emotion to contaminate the results. But if we are to take these reflections on the nature of human thought seriously, we must increasingly focus on cultivating habits of acting and thinking as the

rat, learning how to make meaningful discoveries from within an immersion in experience. We are, after all, always necessarily immersed in the world, and this is the world and the way in which true learning takes place.

The apprentice and the student (the rat and the audience, respectively) must also be rigorously distinguished, as they employ or even embody distinctive modes of learning. Like the rat, students get used to being seen, surveyed, monitored, and evaluated.[5] But unlike the rat, the student is also coached, steered, and prompted, with the result that she often does not ever have the experience of "figuring something out for herself." She knows only vaguely of any motivator beyond the teacher's approval or sanction, any criterion beyond the teacher's answer manual, any method beyond the teacher's questions, any valuation beyond the teacher's grade book. The student approaches the teacher-lecturer, whose livelihood is built upon the compensation she receives for teaching. The teacher, within certain restraints, decides what it is necessary for the student to learn—and then she finds a way to transmit this information to the student. By and large, the goal in this situation is that the student acquire *knowledge*—facts, explanations, answers, solutions, etc. And when the student has learned what the teacher was paid to teach, or when she has learned all that the teacher *can* teach, the bonds between teacher and student are more or less broken.[6]

The apprentice, on the other hand, engages in a period of service and activity along with a master, for the purpose of acquiring a skill or learning a craft, and here the distinction between the experimenter and the master craftsman becomes both relevant and apparent. The

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[5] A Foucauldian analysis might have a great deal to say about the prevalence and function of methods of surveillance in education.

[6] Of course, depending on the teacher, and depending on the student, these bonds may continue indefinitely, composed of affection, inspiration, respect, admiration, etc. The student may always rely upon the good judgment of the teacher. More insidiously, the student may always be striving to impress the teacher, to the detriment of her reliance on her own evaluations of what is good and worthwhile in her education.

experimenter is engaged in his own tasks, and takes an interest in the wellbeing of the rat only insofar as this is required for the experiment (or out of a genuine human concern for the objects of his study). The craftsman, however, serves as teacher and mentor, engages in a relationship with his apprentice, and concerns himself both with the craft and with the wellbeing of the fellow human who is learning that craft from him and practicing it with him. The master has something invested in the apprentice and something at stake in her fulfillment and success. Instead of simply being given information and asked to repeat it back at opportune moments, the apprentice learns by doing, performing the craft along with the craftsman. Any information that she is given is immediately pressed into the service of the craft and helps the apprentice to achieve a concrete task. Whereas the lecturer-student relationship was largely defined by a nonsymmetrical exchange (compensation for information), the apprentice and the craftsman engage in a closer and more mutually beneficial relationship. The apprentice learns a craft, but at the same time supplies a source of labor for the master. In exchange for mentorship and training, and perhaps room and board, the master receives an extra set of hands in the workshop; and in exchange for her labor, the apprentice is trained in a skill or craft that may in turn become her trade. Teaching and learning occurs while both the master and the apprentice are earning their livelihoods.

The apprentice here learns something relevant to and of value in her own life, a skill she will continue to use. She is not acquiring abstract knowledge or sets of facts deemed important by the teacher; she is learning *how to do* something, create something, fix something. Her success is not measured by the approbation of the teacher or by her ability to correctly recite memorized information; it is measured in her ability to create something that works, to fashion something beautiful, or to fix something broken. The approval of the master, while certainly tied to her success or failure in her concrete task, cannot change or overwhelm the fact of success or

failure at that task. Even if she does things "the wrong way" but still achieves the end, still creates the thing and creates it well, her success is the success of her product, the exercise of her skill and her activity.

The fundamental difference between the activity of the apprentice and the passivity of the student cannot be overemphasized, and here the traditional metaphor of learning to swim is perfectly illustrative. A teacher cannot simply explain to me "how to swim" in such a way that I can then get in the water for the first time and be both comfortable and competent. Even if I can pass a test on the teacher's instructions—even if I theoretically understand them, *even if I can explain them to others*—these instructions are ultimately insufficient to teach me how to swim. Perhaps this information will help me when I do get in the water, as would a teacher giving instructions from the side of the pool ("move your hands side to side, keep your fingers together, remember to kick with your legs, take a deep breath"), but there is simply no replacement for the bodily apprenticeship to the water that occurs when I finally enter the pool. I must learn for myself—or rather, my body must learn—how to negotiate with the water that stubbornly refuses to hold me up: "To learn to swim is to conjugate the distinctive points of our bodies with the singular points of the objective Idea in order to form a problematic field" (Deleuze, *Difference* 165). I must learn how to stay afloat without standing, how to move effectively within a medium that is also moving me, and that always moves away from me when I try to push against it. My entire body must learn a new language, a new set of movements, in response to this new aquatic world it has entered. The ways in which I move around on dry land become meaningless in the water: moving no longer has anything to do with walking, running, strolling. My limbs are repurposed: my feet become flippers, my hands become paddles—the goal is no longer keeping my spine straight or keeping myself from falling to the ground but keeping my head above

water—and even this goal can easily be temporarily suspended. I learn the different modes of being in the water: swimming beneath the surface by undulating my entire body, staying vertically afloat by sweeping my arms across the surface of the water, swimming quickly along by kicking my legs and pulling the surface of the water towards and underneath me.

Perhaps if these movements were all conscious, we could conceivably be told how to swim—given an indefinite amount of time during which the operation of different muscle groups could be isolated and the changes necessitated by the new medium explained to us. But the bodily machine is not conscious at this level. We can move our bodies with absolutely no knowledge of anatomy as such—of our muscles, tendons, ligaments, bones; we simply reach out and grab, we simply break into a run, we simply tie our shoes. Of course, all of these movements were learned, and the first years of our lives constitute an intense and unrelenting apprenticeship in the use of our bodies; athletes continue this apprenticeship indefinitely, as do the rest of us, to a lesser extent. An apprenticeship of this kind occurs when we are thrown into the water: we must learn anew how to use our bodies—this time, in the water. At first, this is a painfully conscious process, as we clutch floatation devices, parents' arms, or the side of the pool— staving off the panic that flares the first time we put our face below the surface of the water, and learn to blow tentative bubbles. But, soon enough, the process is automatic, second nature, nearly unconscious. We think nothing of plunging off of a diving board; we do not worry about how we will how we will manage to rise to the surface or reach the side of the pool. We no longer think, "push the water sideways and down," but simply "stay afloat"—and perhaps, later, even this becomes simply "be," "do"—thus, staying afloat becomes nothing more than an implied component of what it means to be or to do in the water.

This is where the apprentice's position is, once again, in terms of learning, a privileged

one. In dealing with physical realities, of course, there is simply no substitute for actual, bodily interaction with the object. But in dealing with mental activity as well, the analogy still holds. It is true that there is a great deal of information in the world that may simply be memorized, just as it is true that a person is able to learn to swim more quickly or more effectively if he has a teacher explaining the principles behind the activity of swimming and giving him concrete, specific instructions on how to move his body. However, without practice in selecting, using, manipulating, analyzing, evaluating, or judging these facts for himself, they remain simply so many pieces of data, filed away in an arbitrary order, lacking the potential for new internal connections, incapable of generating new insights, new solutions, or new questions.[7] The mental faculties must be trained in just the same way as the body is—through activity, through practice, and through repetition. No one can tell me how to sift through my prior knowledge and select only that information that will be pertinent or helpful in a given task. No one can simply explain to me how to analyze an abstract concept. No one can give me a rule that will allow me to generate a new and compelling idea, and no algorithm can tell me how to organize and present my thoughts in any given situation. These faculties all entail levels of complexity comparable those involved in bodily movements, and their effective operation involves similar levels of conscious and unconscious activity. These faculties require apprenticeship, and apprentices of the faculties become creative, flexible, self-sufficient thinkers, whereas "students" of these faculties acquire only stunted and brittle capacities.

### A History of Socratic Apprenticeships

At this point, a brief consideration of some examples of philosophical "apprenticeship" may help

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[7] Plato's character "Meno" distinguishes between things that can be taught and things that must be practiced in order to be learned (*Meno* 70a).

us to understand more about this particular mode of education and what fundamentally distinguishes the apprentice from the student. This distinction is particularly of interest insofar as it parallels the split between the dogmatic image of thought challenged by Deleuze (for which the "student" of a lecture may be taken as emblematic) and the new possibilities of thought that he articulates in its stead (the "apprentice"). Existing philosophical literature provides us with numerous examples of these intellectual apprenticeships, but we will limit ourselves here to revisiting two Socratic dialogues that have already become part of our discussion (the education of both Meno and the slave boy in the *Meno* and the allegory of the cave in the *Republic*) and adding a brief consideration of Socrates' own vocation as liberator of Athens (i.e., as master to the "apprentice," Athens) as revealed in the *Apology*.

At two different moments in the *Meno*, Socrates insists on a more or less collaborative model of teaching and learning. After he has "perplexed" Meno—who professes his amazement that his initial certainty has given way to doubt and confusion—Socrates claims that he wants "to examine and seek together" with Meno in order to continue the exploration of virtue (80a-d). Later, in the examination of the geometrical problem, Socrates tells Meno that the slave boy will make discoveries as a result of this perplexity while "searching along with me" (84c). Although, in both of these cases, Socrates tends to keep a tight reign on the inquiry by specifying the questions to be considered, the formulation of "seeking together" or "searching along with" explicitly voices the expectation that both partners are to some extent *active.* The extent to which this Socratic inquiry is truly "collaborative" is certainly open to debate, but this dynamic already differs in very crucial ways from the model of teaching and learning that relegates the student exclusively to the role of learner and in which knowledge is a matter for acquisition rather than discovery. In that model, even the questions asked by the student do not aim at original discovery

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but serve rather as vehicles for more effective absorption of the material being taught. In these Socratic inquiries, on the other hand, at least at the level of explicit expectation, both Socrates and his interlocutor, teacher and student—or more precisely, in the terms of this essay, master and apprentice—are engaged in a process of discovery.

However, this description belies the fact that in the geometrical investigation, as we have suggested above, Socrates knows the answer to the question he has asked the boy and therefore does not truly discover anything. This discussion is not an example of genuine collaborative inquiry, but is rather meant to illustrate something very different: the boy's ability to answer questions without having learned the correct responses in advance. As we saw in the Introduction, Socrates cites this ability as support for the theory of anamnesis, which holds that education is an uncovering or recollecting of already learned knowledge.[8] Of course, in this inquiry, Socrates' particular phrasing of the collaboration is deliberate: "searching along with me" implies that Socrates will be leading the excursion, but he wants or expects the boy to stay attentive—to *search* actively rather than passively *following along*.

In the first inquiry of the dialogue, on the other hand—engaging Meno on the topic of "virtue"—Socrates claims ignorance as his starting point. And along with this, Socrates here speaks of "seeking *together*," which implies a more equable division of intellectual labor than does the phrase "searching *along with me*" (emphases added). If we take Socrates at his word, he begins the inquiry just as lost as Meno is, with one important difference. This is the perennial

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[8] Frustratingly enough, the doctrine of anamnesis given in the *Meno* never truly confronts the problem of how we can come to learn things in the first place—it simply transposes the question to another register, outside of our experience, out of our reach, and, seemingly, now irrelevant. In the *Phaedo*, this knowledge of things achieves its completeness because our acquaintance with those things themselves takes place before the soul's birth into a human body; after birth, it will have to use its fallible human senses to gain information. Because this acquaintance with things before birth is not mediated by the senses and does not have to proceed through the imperfect copies of things around us, it is therefore more immediate and certain than the knowledge that can be gained through the senses about incarnated things. See *Phaedo* 72e-77a.

Socratic difference, which crops up like the chorus we all know by heart: Socrates knows that he does not know what virtue is (or at the very least he claims not to know what it is), whereas Meno has "thousands of times…made a great many speeches about virtue, and before many people" (80b).

In the geometric example, the boy's actual contribution is almost negligible, amounting generally to assent or negation, limited otherwise to usually one-word answers. His responses may be (and often, per translator or editor, are) simply tacked on as rejoinders or echoes of what Socrates has already said, removing the question mark, rearranging the inquiry into a statement—tracing what Deleuze calls the "neutralized double" of the proposition back to the proposition itself: "a question is always traced from givable, probable, or possible responses. It is therefore itself the *neutralized double* of a supposedly pre-existent proposition which may or must serve as response" (*Difference* 156, emphasis added). Even the qualified admission that the slave boy is simply "searching along with" Socrates seems to overstate the mutuality of the exchange that actually takes place. The boy has been given the relatively simple task of answering specific and well-phrased questions, and he even has the safety net comprised of Socrates' willingness to answer clarifying questions at any moment. The boy does not always answer correctly, and Socrates' reactions to these missteps are at times amusingly terse—"Come then, try to tell me…" (*Meno* 82d). The boy's performance as a whole impresses both us and Meno thanks in part to the many ways in which Socrates rescues him from error or tactfully refuses to acknowledge incorrect answers as actual responses.

On the other hand, the boy's ability to even follow Socrates through this vaguely labyrinthine series of questions manages to convey a strong sense for why anamnesis is a compelling description of the experience of learning and why apprenticeship may be a viable

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model of education. Moreover, the boy's responses, although very brief, do show that he has been listening attentively to Socrates and following his lead. He makes these reliable contributions and thus vindicates Socrates' claim that the inquiry has in fact been in some sense collaborative.

Somewhat controverting the suggestion or the hope that the inquiry on virtue that bookends the geometrical interlude will be more collaborative, Meno is only marginally more active than the boy. At certain points, he articulates more complete thoughts and poses his own questions. At times, Socrates even permits Meno to dictate the direction of the dialogue. It is Meno, in fact, who has posed the central question—"Can virtue be taught?"—thus initiating the dialogue. However, even at these moments, when the direction or the goal of the inquiry is not of Socrates' own devising (or even to his liking), the intervening questions and therefore the overall *process* of the inquiry remains in Socrates' capable hands. By carefully selecting and carefully phrasing his questions, by taking productive detours that enable him to analyze the larger question into component parts and to come at things sideways when necessary, he manages to avoid blind alleys and unproductive tangents. (Even though he has initially professed ignorance of the topic of virtue, his steady and confident progress toward that goal suggests in the end that Socrates has known all along where he was going. Or perhaps this is an optical illusion of sorts created by Socrates' unfailing ability to find meaning in any conclusions reached. The Socratic chorus itself epitomizes this ability, finding certainty finally in the lack of certainty (just as Descartes resolves to do, if his other attempts at certainty fail him): when all else fails, he always has knowledge of ignorance, he knows that he does not in fact *know*.)

Despite the firm hold he maintains on the reins of the discussion, Socrates still resists the urge to lecture. Arguably, however, his questions are simply lectures in disguise—they are what

are referred to above as "neutralized doubles" of the proposition, and are therefore not true questions. Socrates does not believe Meno's claim to having knowledge of virtue, but instead of making this explicit from the outset by explaining the problems he may already clearly see in Meno's statements, he claims ignorance and takes up Meno's assertions as hypotheses. Predictably enough, once Socrates has elucidated a few implications, followed these assertions to their natural conclusions, and thereby revealed a natural contradiction, Meno has to admit that he does not know what he thought he knew. The same thing occurs in the geometric example that follows. The boy begins by being falsely confident in his assertions, seeming to recognize as correct what is in fact an incorrect claim. When Socrates gently but unsparingly tests these claims and exposes their terminal flaws, the boy recognizes his ignorance with an exclamation— "By Zeus, Socrates, I, for one, do not know" (84a)—and he, in turn, is now ready to "search along with" Socrates.

As we saw above, Socrates' reflection on the boy's newfound knowledge of his ignorance leads Meno to admit that this new knowledge has in fact improved the boy's position "about the thing which he did not know" (84b, quoted above), that is, with regard to the geometric puzzle that confronts him. Again: "Then, at any rate, we have done something useful for the work at hand, as is fitting for discovering how things are.  For now he, not knowing, can even carry on the search gladly, whereas then he could easily think that both before many people and many times he could speak well about the double area…" (84b-c). Socrates' pursuit of the matter contains a pointed reference to Meno's own misguided initial confidence, even echoing his own phrasing about having "thousands of times…made a great many speeches about virtue, and before many people" (80b). Meno has just implicitly admitted that he himself has already benefitted from his benumbing interaction with the Socratic "torpedo fish" (80a), and the

implication is that the following assessment may be just as true of Meno as it is of the boy: "do you think that before he would have tried to seek for or to learn that which he thought he knew while he did not know—before he fell down into perplexity and want and came to believe that he did not know, and longed to know?" (84c).[9]

The slave boy is an apprentice in the most basic sense: he has not chosen his apprenticeship and he responds exclusively to Socrates' questions and prompts. Socrates' leading is at is most explicit and meticulous here. However, the boy does finally come to recognize the right answer without being told that it is in fact correct. In the end, he knows the correct answer and he knows that it is correct; most importantly, for the purposes of the apprenticeship, he has based his conclusions on his own experience—what he has seen and understood for himself—and not on Socrates' authority. Meno, on the other hand, is a more advanced apprentice. He shares more consciously and explicitly in the active seeking and questioning activity. He has a sense for what is being explored, for what is at stake, and for the worth of the investigation. But he is not self-sufficient; although he had been capable of making "a great many speeches about virtue," he still finds himself largely following Socrates' lead.

Thus far, Socrates has not "taught" anyone anything or made any explicit assertions (although we reserve the right to wonder whether he has implicitly done either of these things). He has done quite a lot of speaking—far more than either of his interlocutors—but he has turned each of his statements into a question. The effect is comparable to a series of assertions; but unlike a series of assertions, there is no sign here of an appeal to authority in support of his claims. Socrates does not assume agreement or consensus, but actively solicits it. The result of

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[9] It is true that the dialogue begins with a question by Meno about virtue—which he claims to understand. This initial question, however, was not a genuine one, but was rather a manifestation of Meno's desire to test Socrates or to demonstrate his own intellectual or argumentative prowess.

this method of proceeding is that when he has built his argument, if he has built it well, his interlocutors have already agreed to his premises, and most often they have implicitly consented to the demolition of their own beliefs. His method achieves his first goal: to perplex, to numb. This is the propaedeutic that readies his interlocutors for the real work of investigation that can now occur collaboratively.

This examination of the apprenticeships in the *Meno* shows us two things. First, the initial stage of apprenticeship involves numbness and perplexity and is more a preparation or propaedeutic for what is to follow than it is a positive moment of learning in itself. That is, the apprentice must undergo a process of preparation for the work of apprenticeship before the apprenticeship proper can truly begin. This first insight leads directly to a second: apprenticeship is not a true collaboration, in the sense of a cooperation of equals. Rather, the master is in control, leading and guiding the inquiry. Socrates sees something in both Meno and the boy that they themselves are unaware of, and in bringing this to consciousness he makes each capable of learning for himself. However, the fact that this initial obstacle to learning was not conscious suggests that neither Meno nor the boy would have been capable of addressing this initial issue on his own. In order to become capable of learning, the apprentices already required a master (or at least a very fortuitous turn of events). Thus, Socrates' work in the *Meno* reveals itself as something of a meta-apprenticeship: it is an apprenticeship in apprenticeship itself.

In this propaedeutic phase of the *Meno*, Socrates makes the interlocutors party to the destruction of their own beliefs. They are enfranchised into the crucial first step of the process of apprenticeship, whether or not they know it, and whether or not they have asked for it. An exploration of the *Republic's* cave allegory can serve to illustrate the fear and vulnerability inherent in their position as apprentices (especially as those who have not actively sought the

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apprenticeship).

The allegory of the cave presents an image of the teacher or the educator that is somewhat different from the apprenticeships seen in the *Meno*, although it is presumably consonant with them. The text explicitly acknowledges the cave allegory as "an image of our nature as it involves education and the lack of it" (*Republic* 514a). To review this allegory once again, human nature and experience is there likened to a fettered, underground, and unconscious imprisonment, and the process of education is one of gradual liberation and literal enlightenment—encountering and observing the successively brighter sources of light constitutes a large part of the image. A nameless, faceless liberator plays a crucial role in this process, as this someone is responsible for freeing the prisoner, forcing him to stand, forcing him to turn his head, forcing him to look at the light behind him, dragging him up the "rough, steep road," and not letting him go until he has been forced out into the light of the sun (515c-e). As we have already seen, there is a great deal of force and even of violence involved in this image of education, as the freed prisoner is both frightened and pained by this process. It even seems clear that the liberation of the prisoner is so unwelcome, initially, that the liberator risks life and limb in approaching the prisoner in this way: "as for anyone who attempted to release [the prisoners] and lead them up, if they had the power in any way to get him into their hands and kill him, wouldn't they kill him?" (517a). Thus, the imprisonment of these cave-dwellers is doubled: first, they are immobilized by fetters, which may be natural but are not necessary (insofar as they can be removed); but secondly and perhaps more importantly, they accept their prison, they rely on it, are comforted by it, and will fight to remain within it.

The implication behind this dual imprisonment, like that of Meno and the slave boy, is that the prisoners *cannot* free themselves. In the first place, they are entirely immobilized by

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their fetters and are thus unable to make headway in wriggling free. But in the second place, they are not even aware of their imprisonment, and this prevents them from trying to free themselves, or even from wanting to be free. This seems to reflect the initial situation of Meno and the slave boy before being "perplexed" by Socrates: they were not aware of their own ignorance, and so were logically incapable of forming the desire to be freed from that ignorance. The violence implicit in overcoming the second set of fetters, the spiritual or mental bonds that render the prisoners content in their imprisonment, finds its own echoes in Meno's warning to Socrates: "it seems to me that you are well-advised not to sail away or emigrate from here: for, if you, a foreigner in a different city, were to do this sort of thing, you would probably be arrested as a sorcerer" (*Meno* 80b).

The nature of the imprisonment discussed in the *Republic*, if it is in fact an accurate depiction of a state of ignorance, demonstrates the need for apprenticeships, for liberators or teachers, as well as showing the difficulty and challenge of the apprenticeship itself. Its final image also suggests the difficulty and danger inherent in the liberator's position. This coda—the supposition that the prisoners are likely to kill their liberator, "if they had the power in any way to get him into their hands" (*Republic* 517a)—becomes especially poignant when we move on to consider the events related in the *Apology*, when Socrates is formally accused, presents his defense, and receives his death sentence. The Athenians have found a way to get hold of Socrates, and they are determined to kill him.

In describing his philosophical occupation to the Athenian court, Socrates focuses almost exclusively on the propaedeutic aspect of the search for knowledge.[10] In labeling himself the

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[10] We here proceed on the assumption that the depiction of Socrates in this early dialogue is probably more closely reflective of the historical character of Socrates himself; in later dialogues, Socrates-the-character is made the mouthpiece of ideas which are, presumably, Plato's own more original contributions.

"gadfly" appointed to disrupt the noble but lazy horse, Athens, he implicitly acknowledges that his primary intention is to disturb, to challenge, perhaps to annoy, and at any rate to prod into action the otherwise complacent beast. This may very well be the same complacency lamented in the *Meno* as the false confidence or assurance that prevents a person from even realizing she has something more to discover. Socrates shows himself to be an enemy of passivity and inertia, aiming at all times to provoke movement and reflection where there has previously been stasis. And yet, Socrates very explicitly claims, "I have never been anyone's teacher" (*Apology* 33a); his contribution to the moral and intellectual life of Athens has been a negative one, an activity of clarification, a bringing to light and clearing away of error.

Socrates does finally claim to have knowledge—a small, limited insight, a negative knowledge, the knowledge of his own ignorance—but it is precisely this knowledge that makes all the difference. The acknowledgement of confusion, of ignorance, is the point at which the "seeking together" or the "searching along with" can begin. It is the point to which Socrates must force his interlocutors before he can engage with them, and vice versa, because one who believes he has an answer will have no reason to ask the question. The knowledge of our own ignorance is in the end the most crucial knowledge because it is the knowledge that sets us in motion.[11]

Socrates' performance in the *Apology* implies that what seems to be merely a preparation or a prelude is in fact the most significant contribution that he can make to the life of the city. Without imparting knowledge of a definite sort, Socrates tries to prepare others for the search for knowledge: to "search" (the slave boy), to "seek" (Meno), and to "examine" (in the *Apology*). Instead of imparting his own beliefs, he shows them that their own are in need of exploration and

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[11] See Gadamer, in *Truth and Method* (359): "…the example of Socrates teaches us that the important thing is the knowledge that one does not know. Hence the Socratic dialectic—which leads, through its art of confusing the interlocutor, to this knowledge—creates the conditions for the question. All questioning and desire to know presuppose a knowledge that one does not know; so much so, indeed, that a particular lack of knowledge leads to a particular question."

revision.

Socrates also describes his vocation in Athens as a predominantly moral one: "I was always concerned with you, approaching each one of you like a father or an elder brother *to persuade you to care for virtue*" (*Apology* 31b, italics added). This motivation mirrors his moral conviction that "it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, for the unexamined life is not worth living…" (38a).[12] Socrates is interested in knowledge of a certain kind, not knowledge in general or knowledge for the sake of knowledge. There are specific kinds of knowledge that he would be more than happy to do without: in particular, the sophist's knowledge, that of "dissembl[ing] … in private and with short speeches by compelling the man with whom he converses to contradict himself" (*Sophist* 268b). The sophist "appears to abound in defensive problems; and when he throws out one of these defenses, it becomes necessary first to fight one's way through it before reaching the man himself" (*Sophist* 261a). While this sophist may in fact employ some of the rhetorical devices that might also have a legitimate function in logical argumentation, his very stance invalidates his position; this stance is intended to frustrate and forestall the interlocutor, evading capture, and assiduously avoiding any close personal contact with his interlocutor, or even with the objects or ideas he is considering. Unless these rhetorical devices are employed in the pursuit of virtue, Socrates will politely decline; he quite explicitly disdains even the threat of death and further provokes his future executioners by exposing their pride and overconfidence even in their fear of death, as we see at the end of the

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[12] Interestingly enough, this passage is not phrased as a statement but as a hypothetical, a challenge: "if I say [this], you will believe me even less." Perhaps this point is not a very significant one, but it at least raises the question of whether abridging the phrasing of this passage changes its intended meaning.

*Apology.*[13]

In the end, Socrates throws down the gauntlet by refusing to ransom himself, to save his own life by paying for it—and the Athenians in turn take it up, sentencing him to death. This final moment shows not only the risks run by the liberator (the interlocutor) but also the depth of Socrates' own commitment to liberating the Athenians from their own intellectual sluggishness—i.e., his commitment to the Athenians' "apprenticeship." He finally shows himself to be so determined to initiate the Athenians, to prepare them to take on the work of learning, that he places his very life in the balance. Arguably, he knows already what the outcome will be; his death may in fact be his final propaedeutic, a physical, visceral condemnation or refutation of the his fellow citizens' reluctance to confront their own shortcomings. But this final act, this throwing of the gauntlet, is not in fact made in anger or bitterness. To the end, Socrates approaches the Athenian populace "like a father or an elder brother" (*Apology* 31b), rather than a disinterested lecturer who is paid to teach. Thus, finally, the *Apology* suggests to us that the work of liberation that Socrates has been engaged in is inspired and constituted by love, deep affection, and genuine concern for the welfare of others.[14]

To briefly recap, each apprenticeship we have considered here suggests that a component of the apprentice's learning process involves being prodded or jolted out of a sense of complacency. Socrates must confront both Meno and the boy with the inadequacy of their previously held opinions before they are capable of truly joining with him in his explorations. The liberator of the *Republic* must not only free the prisoner from his restraints but must also then force him to turn and confront the dimensions of the cave behind him. Finally, Socrates'

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[13] The topics of sophistry and rhetoric will be more fully explored in the consideration of force in dialogue (Chapter Four here).

[14] The role of love in dialogue will be explored in Chapter Three.

"apology" makes clear that he acts out of a concern for the city that he feels has become "sluggish," and thus "I never cease to rouse each and every one of you, to persuade and reproach you all day long and everywhere I find myself in your company" (*Apology* 29e-31a).

Each of these apprenticeships attempt to show what is required in order for true, transformative education to take place, and in each of them one theme has recurred—the apprentice requires an "other." This other may be a teacher, fellow citizen, or (in the case of literal apprenticeships) an actual craftsman. However, in each case, this other person plays the role of an interlocutor, one capable of provoking the apprentice into action.

### *The Interlocutor*

If we return to the experience of learning, we find that we are most troubled not by what we are told but by what we experience. From an individual point of view, it is the object confronting me in an encounter that most threatens me, while it simultaneously offers me the greatest possibilities for learning. Plato's cave dweller is most disturbed not by being turned around but by the sights that greet him when he does so. But the fact remains that, for Plato at least, this encounter with new objects is often occasioned by the intervention of another person. As we saw in the previous section, the fettered prisoner and the ignorant student are incapable of freeing themselves. Either physically restrained or simply ignorant of their own ignorance (or both), these apprentices require an interlocutor—one who forces the apprentice to think, either overtly or implicitly, by challenging her with new and unfamiliar accounts of the world.

In our examination of Socratic apprenticeships in the previous section, the figure who accomplishes this prodding or jolting and thus forces the apprentice to think is described in various but converging ways. In the *Meno*, Socrates is called a "torpedo-fish" that "always makes anyone who approaches and touches it grow numb" (80a); by means of questioning,

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Socrates leads both Meno and the boy to a point at which they are perplexed and at least momentarily stymied, in a state of confusion following the collapse of those opinions they formerly held as true. In the *Republic*, this figure appears as both liberator and tyrant, freeing the prisoner from his fetters but at the same time compelling the prisoner to rise and move about in ways that frighten and pain him. Finally, in the *Apology*, this prodding out of complacency is accomplished by the "gadfly"-Socrates, who stings and therefore disrupts the lazy Athenian "horse."

Beyond the various images used here to describe this figure who helps to prod the apprentice into action, we also learned something about the character of this figure. The Socrates of the *Meno* explicitly desires interlocutors capable of engaging in an exploration with him; thus, he "stings" them in order to prepare them for this work. The liberator-tyrant of the *Republic*, if we read this figure as a prisoner who has likewise been freed and has experienced the world outside the cave, is one who acts out of a concern for the wellbeing of the prisoner he returns to liberate. The liberated prisoner "would submit to enduring everything rather than live [as the prisoners do]" (516e), and thus he only returns to the cave out of a sense of duty and obligation to those still imprisoned there. Furthermore, this liberator-tyrant must also be courageous, as we are warned of the likelihood that those he attempts to free will turn on him and attempt to kill him. These same dynamics appear in the *Apology* as well: Socrates acts out of a profound concern for his fellow citizens, dedicating himself to questioning and challenging them, risking (and losing) his own life in the process.

As we begin to consider the interlocutor more generally, outside the confines of Plato's work, we can see that the interlocutor (the one with whom I engage in dialogue) challenges me in three ways. First, he challenges me with his perspective, his worldview: he has put things

together differently than I have, he has made sense of them in other ways, he understands them differently. It is natural for me to assume that my worldview is the correct one, for if I do not assume this, I cannot rest easy with it, I cannot set comfortably upon it as upon a plateau, a place of stability; I must keep wondering and thinking until I do feel that stability, that relative certainty that my way of seeing and understanding things is the best or most correct way given the information I have at my disposal.[15] This is not to say that we must be fully convinced of our own correctness, nor that our own confidence precludes the ability and willingness to be proven wrong. However, in order to move forward meaningfully in life we must be able to push against something that pushes back, be it solid ground or the buoyancy of water. Something must be able to support our weight, and the more certain we are of that thing, the more purposefully we can move with respect to it. But once I encounter another, one who has a similar range of knowledge but who has done something different with it, this new organization is an implicit challenge to what I have done. Our mutually contradictory worldviews are in tension with one another, they subtly accuse one another, and they implicitly and insistently call us to attempt a reconciliation between them. The conversation we can then have about a given topic consists in locating the source of our disagreement (be it an assumption about human nature or about reality, a prior experience or set of experiences, or a definition for a critical word) as well as in exploring this disagreement—again, under the assumption that this disagreement can be either resolved or designated unresolvable.[16]

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[15] Of course, provoking this insecurity is in fact the aim of Socrates as gadfly: "This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless" (Plato, *Apology* 23b). We do not in fact know what we think we know.

[16] When foundational assumptions are in conflict, there is only so much one can do to either convince the other or be convinced by the other. At a certain point, we may simply "agree to disagree"—we proceed with the belief that we are correct, to the best of our abilities, but we acknowledge that the other could just as easily be correct, and that our ultimate disagreement is more a matter of faith than of reason.

Beyond simple differences in worldview, the interlocutor can also challenge me simply by virtue of the way that he articulates his ideas. Differences in vocabulary, in formulation, in overall presentation can reveal minute differences or unconscious presuppositions.[17] They can also create spaces in which reflection is necessary. As soon as I am confronted with a formulation to which I would reply, "I would not have said it that way," I am faced with the need to evaluate the way that it *was* said and to identify the reasons for saying it differently. Perhaps the interlocutor's formulation reflects a slightly different side of the object, puts the object into connection or conversation with different objects or with different ideas. We always examine objects and ideas with respect to other ideas; it is the connection between them that makes them significant.[18] In presenting me with new ideas, the interlocutor always provides me with opportunities for understanding the world and myself in new ways.

Finally, the interlocutor challenges me simply by his physical presence. Like the prisoner confronted with three-dimensional objects for the first time, like the observer of shadows that have become silhouettes, the actual physical presence of the interlocutor, another person, is something to be grappled with, to be engaged. By virtue of the interlocutor's status as an autonomous and intelligent being, I myself am no longer simply an observer but am now also susceptible to being observed in turn.[19] The relationship between the interlocutor and me is

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[17] These differences might be significantly magnified across linguistic barriers, as different participants may be immersed in different mother tongues or even habitual dialects.

[18] This is in fact the motivation behind Kant's transcendental unity of apperception: "The *I think* must be able to accompany all my representations" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B Deduction, B131-132); they are only thinkable because they are all mine, they are connected or possibly connected to each other only by virtue of belonging to me. On the other hand, Sartre's critique of the transcendental unity of apperception in *The Transcendence of the Ego* emphasizes Kant's usage of the word, "must," and claims that the only necessary truth is the possibility of connection and not connection in fact.

[19] On this point, see Sartre's analysis in "The Look" (*Being and Nothingness* 340-400). Consider also the following passage from Emmanuel Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*: "Neither possession nor the unity of number nor the unity of concepts link me to the Stranger [l'Etranger], the Stranger who disturbs the being at home with oneself [le chez soi]. But Stranger also means the free one. Over him I have no *power*. He escapes my grasp by an essential

suddenly reciprocal, and anything that I might do to him he is also more or less capable of doing to me. This puts me on the line, puts my entire being "on the table," so to speak, and *calls me into question***.** Deleuze attributes this ability to the question itself, claiming it has "the power…to put in play the questioner as much as that which is questioned, and to put itself in question" (*Difference* 195). That is, the very posing of the question should have this effect on us; but the presence of an interlocutor is itself an inducement to the posing of further questions. It is no longer the case that I may challenge without being challenged, prod without being prodded—the development from this point forward will happen as a result of an exchange, and I will both affect and be affected by my new interlocutor. It is no longer possible for me to maintain the illusion of the "god's-eye-view" or the "view from nowhere"—Dewey's "spectator theory" of knowledge—because the presence of the interlocutor puts me viscerally and immediately into the field of play, in which both the objects of reflection and my interlocutors themselves are enmeshed.

What is more, the dimensions of our communication are suddenly multiplied in the presence of the interlocutor. It is now possible to detect changes in the tone of the interlocutor's voice, subtle movements of the face. Deception is now possible, evasion—suddenly, the very content of our conversation becomes itself something to be deciphered, as we must ask ourselves if our interlocutor is being honest, is saying everything there is to be said, is saying it correctly or in the best possible way—and we must also wonder the same about ourselves: Are we being honest? Forthcoming? The emotions play a more significant role: Does this idea anger us? Comfort us? Trouble us? We are increasingly forced to acknowledge and confront our emotional reactions as components of our attempts to comprehend a new object and to make sense of it.

dimension, even if I have him at my disposal. He is not wholly in my site" (39). And, later, "infinity, overflowing the idea of infinity, puts the spontaneous freedom within us into question" (51).

Some of our reactions have nothing to do with "truth" or "reality" in an objective sense, and many in fact interfere with our ability to make sense of the world. That is, further reflection upon these emotional reactions can lead us to actively work to ignore them or to think and act in spite of them; we recognize that these responses may be either merely personal or logically irrelevant in some crucial way, and this leads us to attempt to strip them away from our motivations.

The presence or intervention of the interlocutor thus presents us with or simply reveals many ways in which our examination may fail, possibilities that have nothing to do with the epistemological difficulties of understanding an object or an idea. The communication between us can fail for reasons utterly external to our comprehension or lack thereof. A lack of trust, a lack of respect, an overwhelming emotional reaction, or an unwillingness to engage in this back-and-forth relationship with the interlocutor can destroy the possibilities for exploration at any moment. On the other hand, the presence of an interlocutor also constitutes the possibility for much more profound and challenging encounters with unfamiliar ideas. Collaborative inquiry with an interlocutor whom I trust—whom I am interested in getting to know—is to solitary reflection as the silhouette is to the shadow: challenging, perhaps dangerous or threatening, and infinitely more powerful. In the ideas or accounts of the other, the object, like the silhouette, is now capable of reaching out to me, affecting me, challenging me directly. I am no longer free to look at the object or to look away at my own discretion, as another person is now engaging me in an examination, forcing me to confront the object (or to confront my avoidance of it). The object, although in many ways essentially separate from me, uncontrolled by me, fundamentally not-me, is nonetheless undeniably in the field of play along with me. It is no longer the distant outline of a shadow; I cannot simply contemplate it in peace and at my own pace. I am always subject to the activity and the ideas of this other with whom I have engaged in dialogue.

*The Object*

What shall we call that which confronts us, that which we grapple with, evade, attempt to articulate? "Object" is the traditional term for what is beheld by the subject, and we have already begun using it here; the term tends to suggest a notion of the object as inert, passive, and acted upon by the thinking subject that examines, analyzes, interprets, or categorizes it. Unfortunately, the term itself has become problematic and more frequently, now, carries connotations of inequity and subjugation: people treated as objects, the other objectified, the other's claims to my attention and my consideration negated by the sleight of hand which turns the other instead into an object. The object is now something degraded, something reduced to its minimum, deprived of agency and legitimacy (except insofar as these benefit the subject). It is the inessential term of a pivotal dichotomy, the subject-object structure that has dominated so much of Western imperialist thought and action.

However, both Deleuze and Freire adopt and use the term "object" to describe that which confronts us, or that which engages our attention and forces our thought. Freire speaks of "the object to be known" as something that "mediates the two cognitive subjects" in a dialogue (*Pedagogy for Liberation* 99). In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze claims that "Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter" (139). The claim and even the wording are echoed almost intact from *Proust and Signs*: "What forces us to think is the sign. The sign is the object of an encounter " (97). The phrase "object of an encounter" has remained constant and seems to quite consistently refer to "that which forces thought" (*Difference* 141). Later in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze refers to the "problem" as possessing "objecticity": "problems must be considered not as 'givens' (data) but as *ideal 'objecticities'* ['objectites' idéelles] possessing their own sufficiency and implying acts of constitution and investment in their respective symbolic fields" (159), and once

again, "Learning is the appropriate name for the subjective acts carried out when one is confronted with the objecticity of a problem (Idea) [*l'objectité du problem* (*Idée*)]" (164). In both of these locutions—the "object of the encounter" and the "objecticity" of the problem—Deleuze seems to want to preserve something of the term's original meaning. Insofar as that which confronts me does so, for Deleuze, in virtue of its otherness from me, its independence and separation from me, the term "object" helps to maintain the necessary separation between the thinking subject and that which confronts this subject. It is precisely because of this separation that the object is capable of threatening or challenging me, of forcing me to engage with it or reflect upon it. Neither Freire nor Deleuze would accept the degraded use of this term, but both make use of the term itself in order to designate something present as an object of thought or reflection. This also reflects their insistence that thought itself must not become an exercise in domination or hegemony.

Accordingly, our use of the term "object" (unless the traditional meaning is specified) should be understood to align with the term "object of the encounter" and to refer to "that which confronts me" as a thinker. This is far preferable to the phrase, "object of reflection," which would only reinforce the passivity of the object. The "object of the encounter" may act on me just as I act on it in reflecting upon it. The encounter, like the question, draws the thinker into the field of play; the object of the encounter remains separate from but in communication with me, maintaining itself in its independence from me, and it refuses to be dominated or passively reflected upon by me. The "object" or the "object of the encounter" may include questions, problems, concepts, beliefs, and perspectives in addition to physical objects, other minds, interlocutors, etc. What is essential is its distinctness from me. I may formulate an account of it, but I have not originated it and cannot command it.

***Searching for the Apprentice, the Interlocutor, and the Object in Education***

It is the experience of interaction or collaboration with an interlocutor, in the mutual examination of an "object of an encounter," that forms the basis for our oldest and most central conceptions of education, but in practice these conceptions can take widely divergent forms. For example, most of us are quite familiar with the popular, mainstream depictions of the university professor. This professor comes in two styles: first, the detached, droning pedant, bored and boring in equal measure, trudging methodically through a prepared lecture that has been delivered so many times it has become meaningless, not even attempting to interest or excite the spotty crowd of students whose attention is, for the most part, otherwise engaged (in sleeping, whispering, texting, etc.). The second (and much more romantic) pedagogue, is the brilliant and charismatic lecturer, the articulate and fascinating speaker who effortlessly captivates the minds and hearts of the students. The wide-eyed students, in turn, hang on their teacher's every word. They hungrily soak up the knowledge that the professor offers, raising their hands decisively to ask very specific questions, lingering after class to resolve their conundrums and tie up loose ends. The professor as guru deftly manages the student-acolytes who simply want to remain close to their beloved teacher.

The reality, as we discover immediately upon entering the lecture hall of a typical university, may more often resemble the droning pedant than the charismatic lecturer. Classes are too large to allow any sort of meaningful connection between more than a handful students and the teacher. Questions are also the purview of only a few students (and they are typically asked by the same students, over and over). Students may find themselves in classes in which they have no interest, simply attempting to fulfill graduation requirements. The overbearing pressures of parents, economy, and job market, threatening whatever dreams they might have for their lives, truncate their desires to truly learn and be transformed by what they learn, and instead

they become overly fixated on the grades they will be given for the class and what these will determine in their futures. And often it is precisely that formulation—the grade they will be *given*—that undermines the notion that grades are in fact evaluations—that they are fundamentally to be earned; and so, days after the end of the term, instructors' inboxes are flooded with plaintive requests or aggressive demands that their grades be reconsidered. Instructors themselves vary significantly in their interest in teaching; tenure may in fact be given on the basis of research, publication, and renown, rather than on the instructor's effectiveness in or commitment to educating students. The charismatic lecturer does exist, to some extent, but a single university would be lucky to have as many as two or three of them among a faculty of hundreds.

The droning pedant and the charismatic lecturer are, of course, two extremes on a spectrum. Very few teachers will in fact fit into one category or the other. However, examining these extremes as such can help us to more clearly pick out the philosophical underpinnings of each kind of teacher, and to see that, in many ways, these two figures have more in common than is generally assumed.

What is at issue in this examination is the fact that contemporary education, at both the secondary and university level, as it manifests in the style of teaching and the assumptions surrounding the teacher's vocation, almost entirely fails to cultivate philosophers, or even authentic, original thinkers. The fact that philosophers and thinkers do indeed emerge from those classrooms testifies more to the human capacity for learning and self-direction[20] than to the formal training students receive in those skills. Those original thinkers that do arise in this setting

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[20] This does suggest either that it is possible to learn without the kind of propaedeutic advocated here—i.e., that students are capable of "liberating" themselves—or simply that these students have gotten this propaedeutic elsewhere in their lives or educations.

are the few who, fortuitously, think in the style in which that education is presented, or those whose nature or outside training enables them to become intellectually responsible, independent, and rigorous *despite* the habits instilled in them by their education.

In a classroom in which an expert (be it a professor or a textbook) takes information that is distilled from other experts' ideas, presents it to students whose job is to internalize this information and on occasion to ask questions designed to fill the gaps or leaps in that information, and then tests those students by asking them to repeat or re-present that information—this classroom trains students to defer to authority and expertise, to memorize facts, and to mirror the presentation of information given to them. The educator Paulo Freire, whose ideas will be discussed a greater length in the coming chapters, calls this "banking education," referring explicitly to the economy of deposits and withdrawals that it implies. Its reliance on experts to filter and simplify information and ideas for student consumption in fact alienates and disempowers students, and, on those occasions when both a textbook and a lecture attempt to teach, it is doubly so. This classroom model does not even attempt to stimulate a healthy skepticism in its students, to prompt them to generate their own ideas and their own questions, or to train them to articulate or organize these new ideas, and to the extent that actual classrooms incorporate elements of this "banking" model they also fail in those tasks.

In this traditional and dominant style of American secondary education, students are educated, taught, trained by a teacher who serves as the central authority of the classroom. This teacher's authority governs the physical arrangement and situation of the classroom in the mode of classroom management (a necessary element of her ability to manage large groups of students). But, more problematically, this authority also extends into the intellectual realm. The questions asked by the teacher differ from questions asked by the students. Students design their

questions to fill in a vacancy or adjust the elements of their understanding. These questions originate in a desire to master information, whether this desire is genuine or motivated by the reward-punishment structure of the institution. When a student asks a question, he expects that the teacher will answer it, effectively solving the dilemma or rearranging the elements of the student's understanding for him. This question is a request designed to provoke the teacher's intervention in and correction of a student's confusion. Understood in this way, this student's questions represent yet another mode of passivity—i.e., they are designed to aid the absorption of externally produced information—despite the fact that they are often invoked to support claims that the tradition classroom encourages active and interactive learning. Student questions in a traditional classroom still aim at grasping the subject matter and form that are decided upon by the teacher or institution and delivered or administered to the students. Students generally lack the power to decide the course of their classroom explorations and subject matter, and exercise only slightly more in control over the form of their experience (i.e., their own behavior and activity in the classroom).

To make matters worse, at the secondary education level, the teacher also generally lacks the power to determine the intellectual content of the class. State and federal standards govern this content, and while these governing bodies have the admirable intention of defining important parameters of education and ensuring that all students receive critical training, in effect the standards simply create classrooms geared solely and explicitly toward their fulfillment. The complaints about schools and teachers "teaching to the test" constitutes a litany of increasing exasperation and indignation. When neither teachers nor students participate in determining the intellectual content of their classroom, the result is a classroom of individuals who are alienated from that very content: the content is alien to both teachers and learners. Teachers are put in the

impossible situation of effectively teaching material that they have almost no part in choosing, material that they may or may not believe is important to their students, and have their hands tied by the minimum acceptable performance on standardized tests that may entirely fail to recognize the understanding and strengths of the students. Students become accustomed to and even trained in being "empty vessels" to be filled by the information given by the teacher or the textbook, instead of active, curious, and self-sufficient learners in themselves. The result is a perfect example of alienation: both teachers and students are alienated from the material that they must nonetheless deliver and internalize.

Teachers in this classroom must also play dual and conflicting roles. On the one hand, they explicitly serve as the primary intellectual authorities in the classroom (along with the textbooks). They are expected to have the answers to any questions regarding the subjects being taught and to actively explain the subject matter to their students. On the other hand, they are subject to the authority exercised over them by the school, district, state, or federal government. These supervising and governing bodies rarely trust teachers to establish their own curricula but rather dictate those curricula to them, much in the same way that teachers then administer that content to their students. The result is that teachers must continually orient themselves within a hierarchy that demands that they either direct or obey, depending on whether they are being trained or are delivering the training.

The students' expected performance during the school year mirrors this dual role of the teacher. For much of their time in the classroom, they work at effectively internalizing the content that is presented to them—a fundamentally passive task. However, when they are expected to demonstrate what they have learned, this process is reversed. Especially when performance is gauged by means of papers or essays, the student's habitual role must turn itself

inside out. An essay demands a very different skill set than does the rest of their classroom experience. In order to write an effective essay, students must generate a thesis or claim that is appropriate to the length of the essay, develop supporting points that fully and effectively address that main claim, organize their ideas so that they will be clear to a reader, and articulate these ideas and claims in their own words and in a way that will be understood. These elements are only rarely or incidentally addressed by the rest of their classroom experience. Students hear only already organized, developed, and articulated material, but get no practice in that process of organization, development, or articulation. Furthermore, they are especially at a disadvantage in the process of generating ideas, as the content of their curriculum and the direction of their investigations is generally set by someone other than themselves (or even their teachers). Students then on go from high school to college, where these deeply ingrained habits are either challenged by a more genuine demand for active participation (if they are lucky) or, more likely, reinforced by a structure that echoes or presupposes that of the secondary classroom. The implicit and insidious assumption operating in this emphasis on the absorption over the production of thought is that the mastery of facts and information is the more difficult moment of learning, requiring a greater amount of time, focus, and practice, while the actual generation and presentation of thought is presupposed as a matter of course. The reality, however, is precisely the opposite.

This traditional training implicitly aims to transform human beings into human computers, repositories of data capable of running a number highly specified programs in order to use and transform that data. For some disciplines, e.g. sciences and mathematics, this type of thinker may not immediately appear problematic, but the question of education quickly becomes more complex as we incorporate different subject matters and consider them more closely. For

example, most people today will grant that chemistry and philosophy probably require two different methods of teaching. Chemistry, they claim, needs textbooks and lecturers (in addition to or, more often, instead of primary texts) because there is a vast amount of information that must be mastered in order for a student to truly learn and understand the subject matter. Philosophy, on the other hand, is less definite, more subjective, has no "right answers," and therefore has less need of textbooks, although, it is granted, textbooks may still be helpful in explaining complex philosophical movements and concepts. These two positions betray as much ignorance of their subjects as they do of pedagogy. The pertinent question, regarding the chemistry student, is: What do we want her to learn? Do we want her to be a glorified computer or textbook? A repository of facts, numbers, equations, and algorithms? Do we want her to simply conduct tests and employ methods that other people have invented? In other words, is the memorization and mastery of information sufficient to train the chemist? Or do we want her to invent her own methods? Do we want her to learn to approach her subject critically, rigorously, creatively, in order to develop it, to further it? Do we want her to develop a procedural understanding of how the science of chemistry evolves, how its discoveries are made? Do we want her to begin to understand the nature and role of scientific intuition?

On the other hand, what is philosophy without some acquaintance with its history? Can we effectively learn to think philosophically, to do philosophy and be philosophers, without engaging deeply in the theories and systems of those philosophers who have lived and worked before us? Of course, we must not go too far in this direction, as we must want more from our philosophers than to simply be museums of theories and systems. The study of philosophy must be more than the study of the *history* of philosophy. In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari ask: "What is the best way to follow these great philosophers? Is it to repeat what they

said or *to do what they did*, that is, create concepts for problems that necessarily change?" (28). Don't we want our students of philosophy, on the contrary, to learn to *think philosophically*, as much as we want our chemistry student to not just know chemistry but advance it?

The lecture model of education, in claiming to teach by delivering a set of information that has been already encountered, analyzed, reorganized, and rearticulated—all of this taking place out of sight of the student—makes the mistake of neglecting to engage its students critically and actively. It obscures the process by which the finished product (the developed, organized, supported, and articulated explanation) is generated, assuming perhaps that all that work was being done simply in order to achieve this easily communicable packet of information. For "[t]his is what the dogmatic image of thought conceals: the work of established forces that determine thought as pure science, the work of established powers that are ideally expressed in truth in itself" (Deleuze, *Nietzsche* 104). The clarity of the lecture belies the complexity and murkiness of its construction. But as any teacher in this tradition knows, the best way to truly learn something is to teach it, to engage in that process that is kept so skillfully hidden from the students in the lecture hall. If we wish to avoid the pervasive hypocrisy of the lecture model of education, we must begin to acknowledge and actively cultivate the characteristics we wish to find in our philosophers and our thinkers—i.e., independence, rigor, engagement, courage, responsibility, and social consciousness—in the way we educate them. Even more basically, we must discard the very grammar of "educating" our students, and accept the fact that our most crucial task is merely to help them to learn how to learn. It is this somewhat clumsy (and somewhat hackneyed) locution that represents the limit of our ability as "educators" per se, and that at which we should aim. And it is the question of pedagogy, the form of education, that will be the focus of the next chapter.

The fundamental failings of this traditional lecture model of education become even more apparent when we consider it alongside Deleuze's four critiques of the dogmatic image of thought, elaborated in Chapter One.[21] First, this model relies upon a natural curiosity in students to motivate their participation in their own learning process. Rather than explicitly calling upon or eliciting this active participation, the lecture model merely accommodates it, providing regimented mechanisms for student participation and activity—a question and answer period, office hours, perhaps the occasional TA-led discussion, etc. It makes room for this activity, but even when student participation is welcomed or even desired by the instructor, most instructors do not know how to cultivate that participation, and even fewer seem to understand how to truly enfranchise students. The naturally curious, self-motivated, and assertive student is the one capable of succeeding in this environment. The shy student, the alienated student, the insecure student, and the unmotivated student are all at risk of disappearing from view. To be fair, once college instructors get hold of students, their habits of passivity and alienation are already deeply ingrained, and the number of students in the college lecture hall effectively forecloses any attempts at genuinely participatory classroom activities. It is not the individual instructors who bear the primary responsibility for this situation or who are in a position to change it; the very structure of lecture-based education effectively inhibits the cultivation of active participation by a majority of students. A Deleuzian response to this set of assumptions made by lecture-based models of education lies in the concept of misosophy; we cannot assume that students are naturally curious, naturally self-motivated, naturally driven to learn anything we have to teach. This activity of thought must be directly and explicitly provoked, even compelled: we must be

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[21] In short, Deleuze counters the idea of the "good will of the thinker" with "misosophy," the model of recognition with one of encounter, the emphasis on solutions with a primacy of questions, and an outcome of knowledge with an insistence on learning.

"forced to think," and the lecture allows us the perfect opportunity to avoid thinking.

The second failing of the lecture-based model of education corresponds to Deleuze's distinction between recognition and the encounter; the traditional model relies on students to simply and unproblematically recognize the veracity of the position delivered in the lecture. This lecture does not confront them with a question, problem, or object that requires their analysis and interpretation; they are not required to genuinely encounter the material, to be confused by it, to interrogate and explore it, and to finally make their own judgment about that material. The lecture presents students with an account that is bulwarked by the expertise of the instructor, and this is the account that students are expected to recognize as authoritative and truthful. In keeping students separate from the acts of analysis and judgment that comprise any true act of learning or knowing, the lecture model not only glosses over this crucial step but even deprives students of the opportunity for this genuine confrontation. In our encounter with the problematic and puzzling, we require time and space within which to be puzzled, to be confused, and it is the process of resolving this confusion that ultimately teaches us the most. However, the pacing of the lecture classroom leaves students almost no room for this raw encounter with the material, and they are presented with viable answers to cling to before they have even realized the tenacity of the problem.

Third, like the dogmatic image of thought, the lecture model shows a clear preference for answers over questions. In skipping over the encounter to present simply an account in which something true can be recognized, the lecture neglects the profoundly educative experience of being asked a question and instead simply supplies students with answers. The questions asked in the lecture model tend to fall into two categories: questions asked by the lecturer and those asked by the students. The questions asked by the lecturer tend to be presented as ways of

framing a coming lecture. This sort of question is asked only because it has already been answered, and the coming lecture will provide this answer to the attentive student. The students' questions, on the other hand, generally tend to supplement and reinforce the content of the lecture itself. They function to provide context, to fill in the blanks, or to satisfy a momentary curiosity, and in almost all cases, they are promptly answered by the lecturer. Moreover, students most often ask their questions in order to be immediately provided with an answer, rather than out of a desire or a determination to *find* an answer. When the tables are turned, and the lecturer poses a question to the students, the answer once again is generally already known, a specific answer is sought, and the correct answer, when provided by a student, will serve as yet another stepping-stone in the account of the object or question that the lecture is providing. Each question, in this setting, almost immediately gives way to an answer; questions are only asked in order to be overcome, resolved, or, as Deleuze might say, "neutralized."

The fourth failing of lecture-based education, considered relative to Deleuze's critique of the image of thought, is its implicit prioritizing of knowledge over the process of learning. In disguising, obscuring, or even implicitly denying the significant work of discovery and articulation that underlies the lecture delivered to the students, the lecture model necessarily privileges the product over the process: it presents only knowledge, as a fully formed and finished result, while it neglects the process of learning in a double respect. On the one hand, it ignores or misrepresents the work of learning and processing undertaken by the teacher in order to construct the finalized lecture. On the other hand, it fundamentally misunderstands its students' process of learning, substituting for a genuine opportunity to think through a problem instead an answer to be memorized and more or less accepted. In both of these ways, the lecture model of education takes the mere possession of knowledge as the primary result, and not only

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fails to teach students the skills they would need in order to frame new knowledge but does an additional disservice by obscuring or ignoring this larger and more difficult work.

Finally, we can consider the lecture model's treatment of the object. Lecture-based education, in delivering already generated, formulated, and polished narratives to present objects for our consideration, very often degrades the object in this process. The object becomes passive data or simple information—codified, sedimented, and reproduced. It is difficult for a single narrative to adequately address the dynamism and the autonomy of the object of an encounter, especially when a lecture is considered a "closed" circuit, a completed statement. The lecture presents us with the illusion of a final account, while the object or problem it considers is, in fact, continually in flux, entering into relations with different subjects and other objects, constantly manifesting new characteristics and new faces.

As we have already seen, the dogmatic image fails in significant ways to adequately account for the way in which we truly think. Thus, insofar as we have established that the lecture model of education embodies this dogmatic image in a number of ways, it seems clear that this model cannot be suitable for the purposes of educating genuine, clear, articulate, and original thinkers. If Deleuze's challenges to the image of thought do indeed point us at richer and more powerful opportunities for thought, then we must seek out alternative approaches to education that more sincerely acknowledge and reflect this expanded notion of what it means to think. That is, we need a new model that overcomes the internal problems of lecture-based education, one that neither presupposes nor reinforces the dogmatic image.

As the first two chapters have explored the characteristics of Deleuze's conception of thought, i.e., the "what" of the revolution Deleuze suggests in this conception, the pertinent question now becomes one of "How?": How do we achieve this revolution, concretely, in our

own approach to education? How can we turn simple education into apprenticeship? And just as the first phase of Deleuze's image of thought has offered us the initial conceptions that frame a new idea of thought, the second phase in his development of that image can give us a useful set of concepts or characteristics by which to recognize a corollary approach to education. This second phase is the focus of the coming section.

# Intermezzo 2:
## Second Phase of Deleuzian Image of Thought—
## The Rhizome

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> *A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle,*
> *between things, interbeing, intermezzo.*
> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 25

The phrase, "image of thought," reappears in the first section of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the

collaboration between Deleuze and Guattari: "The tree and the root inspire a sad image of

thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a centered or segmented higher

unity" (16). Already the image of thought has become identified with another image, that of the

tree; this latter image, along with its counterpart, collaborator, and competitor, the rhizome,

provides the conceptual framework for a greater part of the analysis to come.[1] The observations

Deleuze made in *Difference and Repetition*—observations he was already beginning to make in

*Nietzsche and Philosophy*—distinguishing two different types of systems, schematics, or images

of thought, renew themselves here, albeit now on their own merits. More fully and independently

developed this time, the two descriptions are found to fit many different arenas and registers of

the human experience, and they show themselves to be so fundamentally intertwined that they

arise and act in our lives much like the in-breath and the out-breath—each inevitably following

and subsequently giving way to the other, each impossible without the other. In this phase of its

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[1] The link between the dogmatic image of thought elucidated in *Difference and Repetition* and the arborescent schema of *A Thousand Plateaus* is strengthened by the observation that the image of the tree seems to originate in a work by Julien Pacotte, entitled "*Le reseau arborescent, scheme primordial de la pensee*" (Paris: Hermann, 1936—cited in *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 519, note 13). This image of the tree or the root-structure that would come to represent a general dynamic cropping up everywhere was taken from a treatise on the tree-like structure of thought.

development, Deleuze's images of thought begin to reveal themselves not simply as descriptions of thinking and experience, but as deeply rooted and continually recurring structures of the human world in which we do our thinking and experiencing.

In the years between *Difference and Repetition* and his work with Guattari on *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze seems to have found that his characterizations of the dogmatic image of thought and the "new image" (or, more properly, the "thought without image") were descriptive of more than simply types of thought. This is apparent to such an extent that the first chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, a section titled "Rhizome," is dedicated to fleshing out this description in abstract, general terms. The subsequent sections of the book recognize and highlight the many aspects of life and experience in which these characteristics seem to arise independently and naturally.[2] Evidently, in looking so closely at the ways in which we have characterized the structure and activity of thinking, Deleuze came to recognize a set of dynamics that are reflected, repeated, and echoed through many other registers of human experience.

In its portrayal in *Difference and Repetition,* the dogmatic image of thought posits a primary thinking subject as a central authority to which all thought and perception are referred. A few specific operations of the intellectual faculties accomplish the ordering of experience, using pre-established categories (identity, similarity, analogy, and opposition; see *Difference* 138) and neglecting or dismissing any phenomena that cannot be described in terms of those categories. This image of thought relies implicitly on the clear distinction between truth and falsity, taking falsity as simply a failure or corruption of truth, and the true and the false as essentially opposed concepts. On the other hand, the thought without image challenges the assumptions of the image

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[2] Their application to thought in particular is dealt with in a later chapter of the book, "A Treatise on Nomadology." There, Deleuze and Guattari deal specifically with rhizomatic and arborescent elements in thought, making explicit the connection between the image of thought and the rhizome-tree pair.

of thought, reflecting instead a "fractured" self (136 and 144-5) and a thought which dwells on and with difference, that finds its proper activity precisely in confronting these margins or these excesses which overflow the traditional categories. This alternative thought is so radically open that Deleuze refuses to even apply the same terminology, and thus he describes it negatively: a thought *without image*.

In *A Thousand* Plateaus, speaking more broadly and abstractly now, Deleuze helps to trace the outlines of two competing, mutually exclusive, and yet interdependent and intimately linked sets of phenomena whose characteristics are descriptive of the behavior of different kinds of systems. Like the dogmatic image of thought, the first kind of system—the "tree" or "root-tree"—is centralized, hierarchized, and static; it begins from an assumption of inherent unity or possible unity, and any proliferation occurs as a development from or towards that strong, centralized unity.

> Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems with centers of significance and subjectification, central automata like organized memories. In the corresponding models, an element only receives information from a higher unit, and only receives a subjective affection along preestablished paths. (*Thousand* 16)

Like the image of a tree,[3] the organization of arborescent systems is fed by a central "trunk"; the expansion outward from this central unity is accomplished by a process of division into major branches, each branch expanding by the same progress until it truncates in twigs and leaves. Casual readers of Aristotle will recognize his method here: propose a set of primary alternatives, take up the first, show its constituent parts, deal with each of those in turn, and then turn to the second of the primary alternatives, to explore it and all of its elements, resolving them into subcategories of their own, and proceeding in this way, step by step, through the analysis.

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[3] The tree is used precisely as an image by Deleuze and Guattari, and is therefore abstracted from the complex reality of a tree.

Drawing the resulting "tree" of ideas and concepts, of the flourishing or aborted possibilities that result, would simply be a matter of putting pen to paper and tracing out the progress of that account. Aristotle has conducted the analysis, and the schema directing his presentation is the closest narrative equivalent to a flow chart. This construction of a "tree" of ideas epitomizes the tree or root structure of the arborescent schema. Bureaucracies, algorithms, and axiomatic systems all rely upon this kind of structure, built of definitive pathways, describing stable lines of communication between hierarchical elements.

The rhizome, on the other hand, is dynamic, flowing, and multiple; its multiplicity is not countable, (i.e., a unit cannot trace out its length, but can only be isolated within its whole). It is not a single organism arranged symmetrically around a central unity but an open network of organs or organisms among which no privileged center is identifiable. Communication between the different parts of this network is open and flexible, creating and following new paths whenever necessary. The rhizome implicitly resists stasis: its growth and proliferation—the irruption and interruption of new elements and pathways—resist all attempts to describe in advance its characteristics.

> To these centered [arborescent] systems, the authors contrast acentered systems, finite networks of automata in which communication runs from any neighbor to any other, the stems or channels do not pre-exist, and all individuals are interchangeable, defined only by their *state* at a given moment—such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronized without a central agency. (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 17)

Without a "center," there is no "central agency" or center of authority. Authority in a rhizome, such as it is, is determined by the *position* of an individual within the group, and not by any inherent characteristics of those individuals. By way of example, Deleuze refers to the identical pieces of the game of "Go" (*Thousand* 352-3): it is only the position of a given member within the group that imparts any sort of privileged status, and this status can and will change as the

group itself grows or shifts. This dynamism and perpetual rebellion of the rhizome shows it to be the refuge of the thought without image, which disobeys the orders of the dogmatic image and celebrates the irruption of the new.

The rhizome's resistance to structure, stasis, and limitation mean that our descriptions of it will be necessarily vague, abstract, and generally negative. Deleuze and Guattari hint at some of the general "principles" of the rhizome,[4] among which are included "connection," "heterogeneity," "multiplicity," and "rupture." But in the end, the more complete description of rhizomatic systems comes in the later chapters, which explore their incarnation in specific aspects of experience (e.g., the political realm, in "Nomadology" and "Micropolitics").

Whereas *Difference and Repetition* elucidated a fairly complete critique of the dogmatic image of thought, it only began, really, to develop the other side of that critique, the alternative to that image. As suggested above, Deleuze's alternative cannot really be called an "image," since he specifically refers to a "thought without image" as the counterpoint to the dogmatic image of thought. It is significant that he refuses to postulate a competing image, as he is relentlessly (although sometimes imperfectly) insistent on avoiding the tendency to collapse phenomena into simple descriptive dualisms. This is especially the case in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where he and Guattari repeatedly emphasize that the dichotomy or dualism between the rhizome and the tree is only apparent, and that the reality is an aggregate involving both.

> The important point is that the root-tree and canal-rhizome are not two opposed models: the first operates as a transcendent model and tracing, even if it engenders its own escapes; the second operates as an immanent process that overturns the model and outlines a map, even if it constitutes its own hierarchies, even if it gives rise to a despotic channel. (20)[5]

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[4] These principles are connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography, and decalcomania (*Thousand* 7-12). They will be explored at greater length in the chapter to come.

[5] This general assertion is echoed elsewhere in *A Thousand Plateaus*; "Now the two systems of reference are in inverse relation to each other, in the sense that the first eludes the second, or the second arrests the first, prevents it

Whereas Deleuze's treatment of thought in *Difference and Repetition* explicitly clarified the incommensurability between the dogmatic image of thought and the thought without image, he seemed quite palpably to struggle against the temptation to dichotomize the two moments. In this later work with Guattari, Deleuze seems to have increasingly processed and internalized the complex relationship between these two moments. Along with Guattari, Deleuze insists on and emphasizes their interrelationship—their intertwining—and instead of proposing the one as the preferred alternative to the other, he contents himself with the admission that "We are tired of trees" (*Thousand* 15). Rather than suggesting that we adopt the rhizome to the exclusion of the tree, Deleuze and Guattari here simply allude to the historical preference and priority given to the tree, the arborescent, over the rhizome. They are quick to point out that an imbalance in favor of the rhizome carries its own risks, as it is from this imbalance that they trace the origins of fascism (230-231). The most that can be said of their prioritizing the rhizome, at this point, is that philosophy has been living the life of a tree, and what sounds like a preference for the rhizome is in fact simply a desire for balance.

In addition to adding depth and nuance to Deleuze's initial characterization of the image of thought and its alternatives, this extension of the two different types of thought into the images of the tree and the rhizome also presents Deleuze (and us) with tremendous opportunities for interrogating the range of institutions, organizations, systems, and phenomena within which we live and work and ultimately think. Insofar as our attempts to think are both shaped by and manifested in the various arenas of our human lives, it is worth asking ourselves to what extent our ideas about what it means to think have constrained the kinds of dynamics that we

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from flowing further; but at the same time, they are strictly complementary and coexistent, because one exists only as a function of the other…" (220). And later, "It is in terms not of independence but of coexistence and competition *in a perpetual field of interaction*, that we must conceive of exteriority and interiority, war machines of metamorphosis and State apparatuses of identity…" (360-1; emphasis in original).

acknowledge in the world around us.

Ultimately, our questions in this dissertation are these: Do the institutions we surround ourselves with conform to the dogmatic image of thought, reinforcing the exclusion of the rhizome? Or do they offer us continually arising possibilities for disrupting that dogmatic image, for moving beyond its confines and exploring the tremendous possibilities for thinking that germinate and thrive outside of the closed circuit of the dogmatic image of thought? Do we create a world for ourselves that is inimical to the rhizome? Or are there ways in which we can structure our lives and our world in order to acknowledge and embrace the reality of a thought which requires the rhizome to grow as much as it requires the tree to keep it steady?

In moving forward, we also look back to one of our original questions: how do we cultivate and make a space for the radical and creative possibilities for thought? In this, we side with Deleuze as he asserts the primacy of learning over knowledge as a central component of thought. Thus, these questions about the institutions of our human world become increasingly urgent the more we consider the particular institutions of learning, of education: these are the institutions that we rely upon to help us cultivate our very faculties of thinking. What happens to us, to thought, if they do not properly acknowledge or reflect what it truly means to think? How can we hope to realize the profound and proliferating possibilities for thought if the ways in which we learn to think reflect only the arborescent model, only the dogmatic image of thought? We have already seen, in Chapter Two, that the lecture model of education presupposes and supports the dogmatic image of thought, to the detriment of the possibilities for thought arising outside of that image. In the coming chapter, we will expand the analysis of learning and education begun in the first two chapters. Here, we will focus more specifically on this question of the pedagogy most suited to a broadened understanding of thought, and we will use the

images of the tree and rhizome to analyze an alternative to the lecture model of education—the

dialogue.

# Chapter 3:
# Dialogue as a Model of Rhizomatic Education

Culturally, we already possess a relatively well-defined alternative to the lecture-oriented model of education—the model of dialogical education. The Socratic dialogues may in fact be the earliest examples of "pedagogy" that we have, and, at first glance, dialogue seems to be a promising alternative to lecture-based education. In dialogue, students participate actively by taking on some responsibility for providing the direction of inquiry and conducting that inquiry. This level of intellectual activity already improves upon the problematic passivity of the lecture student. A closer examination of Socratic dialogue can begin to provide us with the alternative we need.

### *Socratic Dialogue*

A first impression of Plato's dialogues, naïve and pre-critical, may find the dialogues themselves to be trite or circular and their frequent protagonist, Socrates, to be simply annoying. In the aporetic dialogues, exchanges end in frustration and failure (according to those who are on the receiving end of Socrates' questioning) or even in fury, and they seem to evoke reactions completely out of proportion to their seriousness. These dialogues are often conducted in a light-hearted manner, incorporating gentle barbs and self-deprecating humor; on the other hand, the intensity of the interlocutors' responses to their experiences with Socrates make his ultimate fate somewhat less mysterious. Socrates' pastime, it seems, consists in confusing people, in running conceptual circles around them, in dizzying them, in hollowing out the things they believe to be

certain and playfully exposing their emptiness. At first, Socrates himself appears as the

immoderate and reckless adolescent whose initial acquaintance with argumentation makes him

confrontational and incidentally vicious:

> [A]dolescents, when they get their first taste of arguments, exploit them as play,
> always using them to contradict; imitating those who engage in cross-examining
> people, they themselves cross-examine others, taking delight like puppies in
> dragging and tearing apart with the argument the people nearby in each occasion.
> (*Republic* 539b)

It is small wonder that the *Republic*'s Thrasymachus flies into a rage: first he berates Socrates,

then he attempts to force Socrates to accept the claims he makes, and finally he falls into a sullen

and falsely compliant silence that offers no resistance and simply provides Socrates with what

Thrasymachus believes he wants. Leaving aside entirely, for the moment, the substance of

Socrates' arguments and the number of ways in which he seems to problematize traditional

Athenian values, his very way of behaving himself in conversations seems tailor-made to inspire

exasperation and resentment. It is perhaps not so difficult to believe that one of the greatest

figures in Western philosophy was put to death by his own city.

Only when he gives his famous defense in the *Apology* can the casual reader of Plato

finally recognize what is at stake in Socrates' incessant and insistent questioning of his fellow

Athenians. Socrates himself reveals that he undertakes this relentless questioning not as an idle

amusement but rather as a deeply serious enterprise, a profound response to a profound

experience. Socrates claims to be acting in accordance with the wishes of Apollo, whose oracle

has named him the wisest of all mortals. The interrogations that proved so irritating to his

interlocutors began as Socrates' attempt to understand this oracular proclamation: "For a long

time I was at a loss as to [the oracle's] meaning; then I very reluctantly turned to some such

investigation as this; I went to one of those reputed wise, thinking that there, if anywhere, I could

refute the oracle and say to it: 'This man is wiser than I, but you said I was' " (*Apology* 21b-c).

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Perhaps the other dialogues fail to adequately convey this genuine desire to discover a wisdom superior to his own, but Socrates' confession here might render our own reading of those dialogues somewhat more merciful, more generous. Through his challenges to the oracle's claim, however, Socrates discovers the nature of his wisdom: the only wisdom that separates Socrates from the other Athenian wise men is his understanding that his knowledge is illusory, that in fact he knows nothing: " 'This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless.' So even now I continue this investigation as the god bade me— and I go around seeking out anyone, citizen or stranger, whom I think wise. Then if I do not think he is, I come to the assistance of the god and show him that he is not wise" (23b). The arrogance of this position, perhaps, is intact, but its motivation seems to have been purified of the haughtiness, pettiness, or childishness that makes our first acquaintance with Socratic questioning so maddening.

The method of questioning adopted by Socrates results in a great deal of irritation, but this is not the way that "Socratic questioning" or "the Socratic method" is understood today. And it is here that we should make the distinction between Socrates' actions (as related by Plato) and Plato's own philosophical writings. Plato elected to use the form of dialogue for the presentation of his ideas, but this form has been abstracted into at least one popular conception of what dialogue is and has been used as an educational tool. The purpose of the following section is to elucidate the characteristics of the original Socratic approach as presented in Plato's writings (and understood as distinct from modern conceptions of this term) in order to examine it as a model for how dialogue might work.

Abstracting from the philosophical content of the Socratic dialogue in order to examine the specific forms that dialogue takes, a number of general characteristics or patterns become

apparent. Each dialogue is framed by a central question or problem, and this is posed either by an interlocutor (e.g., Meno opens the dialogue of his name by asking, "Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is something teachable?" at 70a) or by Socrates himself (e.g., in his questioning or adjuration of Theaetetus: "Just speak up well and like a well bred man: what does knowledge seem to you to be?" at *Theaetetus* 146c). Socrates' interlocutor generally provides the provisional answers or definitions of the inquiry, and Socrates immediately subjects these responses to methodical analysis. Socrates asks most of the questions appearing in the dialogue, even if he has not framed its central inquiry himself. In answering these intermediate questions, the interlocutor is led to contradict himself or his original position. Socrates may then suggest a return to a road not taken earlier in the conversation, changing the answer to one pivotal question in order to examine another possibility, or he might return himself and his interlocutor to the very beginning of the inquiry, taking up the initial question afresh.[1]

The experience of generating or being led to his own contradiction places the interlocutor in the uncomfortable position of being forced to admit a fault—either in his original position or in his subsequent analysis. Whether or not this fault is consciously or explicitly acknowledged, the damage is done, as the contradiction has emerged. The interlocutors react to the emergence of this contradiction in a number of ways. Some are enraged (as are Thrasymachus in the *Republic* and Dionysodorus in *Euthydemus*), some are self-righteous (see Euthyphro, in his dialogue), some are perplexed (Meno and the slave in the *Meno*), and some pretend to be unconcerned with what has occurred (Protagoras, in his dialogue). Sometimes, this contradiction

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[1] While the initial question gives weight and shape to the intermediate questions posed along the way, the direction of the dialogue itself may be determined by answers to these intermediate questions. And it is often the case that a given answer sends an inquiry down a specific path, serving a pivotal role in the overall explanation of the initial question. However, when this path becomes untenable or unsatisfactory, the simple act of changing our answer to this intermediate, "pivotal" question offers us a new path and thus opens up new possibilities for the investigation of the dialogues initial and central question.

leads promptly to the end of the inquiry, while at other times the interlocutor shows a genuine

desire and willingness to continue exploring the question at hand. Frequently, the results of the

examination seem to be purely negative: a number of possible responses have been proposed,

analyzed, and discarded, and the dialogue ends with the central question unresolved.

One of the most striking aspects of the Socratic dialogues is that Socrates, its central

character, generally limits himself to asking questions and remains famously elusive when it

comes to delivering answers. However, the kinds of questions that Socrates asks are often what

Deleuze would call the "neutralized double" of propositions; they are statements framed as

questions, often differing syntactically by only the order of words, or by the appended request for

affirmation—"right?", "won't we?", etc.[2] For example, as noted above, most of the questions

asked by Socrates in the *Meno* require so little in the way of response that some editors or

translators do not always give Meno or the slave boy their own lines; they simply tack the few

words the interlocutors are allowed in response onto the end of Socrates' questions.[3] Even when

Socrates' questions cannot be described as this "neutralized double," they are rarely open ended:

they typically restrict the range of available responses by limiting it to two or three options, from

which the interlocutor chooses one.[4] Meno's own original contributions to the dialogue are few

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[2] In *Hippias Major*, Socrates himself explains the significance of these question-statements. In that dialogue, he is in disguise, so to speak, attributing to another unknown interlocutor the things he is for whatever reason reluctant to say directly to Hippias. While often simply and unflinchingly honest about "Socrates'" failings in conversation, this unnamed Socratic interlocutor sometimes offers an idea of his own by means of a question: "sometimes, as though he took pity on my inexperience and lack of education, he himself offers me a suggestion by asking whether it seems to me that the beautiful is such-and-such, or about whatever else he happens to be investigating and our discussion is about" (293d). This description, in fact, precisely matches the interventions that Socrates himself makes in many of his other dialogues.

[3] This is the case with, for example, the geometrical proof passage in G.M.A. Grube's translation of the *Meno,* revised by John M. Cooper.  See *Meno* in *Five Dialogues*.

[4] Socrates' exchange with the slave boy *cannot* therefore be taken as exemplary of the use of dialogue in education (or of any true dialogue at all). While the boy is able, with significant guidance, to finally give the correct answer, it is not even suggested that he is able to guide himself through this process. Dialogue is in fact able to cultivate this more significant moment in comprehension, but not dialogue of the sort that Socrates practices.

and far between, composed largely of his attempts to provide definitions of the word "virtue" (and some of these even belong not to Meno himself but, presumably, to Gorgias, Meno's teacher; see *Meno* 71d). Socrates takes these provisional definitions and turns them into hypotheses, which he then tests by means of questions.

If we take Socrates at his word, his investigations in the *Meno* are explicitly collaborative. He references his desire to "look with you and seek together" with Meno (80d) and calls Meno's attention to the way the slave boy is "searching along with me" (84c), but this partnership is belied by the fact that Socrates seems to remain in firm control of the inquiry. He speaks most often and at greatest length, and he determines the direction of the inquiry by posing the questions that frame it. At best, the collaboration at issue in the *Meno* is more of an expedition, a joint venture, perhaps, but with Socrates as the undisputed guide; Meno and the slave boy collaborate by following along, and by answering Socrates' simple questions to show that they understand his claims.

The doctrine of *anamnesis* presented in the *Meno* (and explored briefly here in the Introduction) provides the necessary philosophical groundwork to support Socratic questioning as a viable method of education. The reason that Socrates is able to proceed by asking questions—even when those questions are simply requests for assent or denial—is that he can rely on his interlocutors' ability to recognize truth when they see it. Moreover, Socrates himself is able to *lead* these investigations because he (along with everyone else) does in fact already know the truth of all things, and he simply needs to uncover or recollect that knowledge. Despite the fact that anamnesis is more an image describing the experience of learning than a truly adequate explanation of how learning takes place, as an image it does reveal two crucial assumptions: first, having prior acquaintance with all truth, we are able to recognize truth when

we encounter it; and second, our prior acquaintance sometimes gives us true opinions which are capable of helping to direct us toward truth (and these differ from knowledge only in that they are not "tied down" by an account). The latter is important because it means we are not simply casting about in the dark, waiting to stumble upon truths so that we may recognize them, but rather we are able to proceed more or less deliberately, methodically, in our search for truth. These two assumptions render the Socratic dialogues a viable method of seeking and identifying truth.

Socratic dialogue does have a number of shortcomings, however, with respect to our elaboration of dialogue in this project. First, most Socratic dialogues take place between two interlocutors;[5] there may be passages in which two interlocutors are primary at any given point, or there may be short sections in which other interlocutors engage or interject their own comments, but the predominant Socratic discussion takes place between only two figures at a time. On the other hand, we are seeking a model of dialogue that might be capable of accommodating groups of interlocutors, discussions among groups of people.

Second, the fact that Socrates maintains such firm control of the questioning means that a majority of the true work of critical thought and analysis remains concealed (and this obfuscation of the process of analysis is one of the major critiques leveled at lecture-based education, above). Asking questions is, of course, something that anyone can do, and those who do so most notoriously are two- and three-year old children. However, asking the *right* question is a deceptively advanced skill, requiring a tremendous amount of experience, practice, and, ideally, pre-existing knowledge. In asking a question, Socrates is pointing out the direction in which our

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[5] There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. For example, the *Symposium* would seem to attempt to give a picture of a dialogue involving a number of major interlocutors. However, even the *Symposium* is less a true conversation than it is a series of speeches, each aiming at the same end. This exchange of speeches does not reflect the model of dialogue that will be set forth here.

investigations should proceed; and a preliminary acquaintance with Euclid's geometrical proofs can suggest to us just how difficult this is.[6] Following along with the steps elucidated in a Euclidean proof demands patience and sound reason, but actually *generating* these steps, guided only by the initial postulate as a hypothesis, presents a significantly more perplexing challenge: simply imagine generating something akin to Euclid's books of *The Elements*—or even the first book—without being given even the hypotheses as problems to be solved. The final product of *The Elements* is not something that it takes a genius to understand, but genius was certainly necessary to create it. Similarly, the guidance Socrates provides in asking his questions runs the risk of concealing the brilliance required to determine which questions are meaningful, which are necessary, and which will lead the discussion in a productive direction.

Socrates' questioning not only conceals the difficulty involved in generating meaningful questions, but it also deprives his interlocutors of the practice they might need in order to learn how to ask meaningful questions themselves. This type of dialogue seems to be unconcerned with teaching others to do what Socrates does; Socrates does not teach his interlocutors how to lead a discussion. The aims of the Socratic inquiry are not skills but knowledge—both more ephemeral and somewhat more static. Socrates and his interlocutors aim at the truth, at knowledge of reality. If the interlocutors can uncover this truth adequately by following along with Socrates, then the route by which they arrive should not be of particular significance.[7]

Finally, because of their relatively restricted role and Socrates' control of the inquiry, the

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[6] Once again, while Euclid himself is not the author of most of the proofs in his system, one can still marvel at the genius of the intellects that did formulate those proofs and at the one capable of organizing them all into a single system.

[7] The problem does remain, however, one akin to the saying, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." In doing the analytical work for them, Socrates does not really give his interlocutors the tools they will need to continue these investigations on their own. Thus, the would remain dependent upon him. On the other hand, perhaps Socrates believes that, after this propaedeutic phase of the investigation, his interlocutors are now in a position to discover these tools for themselves.

interlocutors are allowed only limited agency in the development of the overall argument. The dialogue remains relatively univocal, as one person is more or less in control of the direction and even the content of the inquiry. In these ways, this original model of Socratic dialogue still contains many of the arborescent elements that can be found in the lecture model of education: centralization, hierarchy, binary divisions, and univocity.

### *Freirean Dialogue*

We have another, much more contemporary and more direct account of dialogue at our disposal as well. Paulo Freire was a South American educator working in the latter half of the 20th century. His overt project was a political one, aimed at empowering and enfranchising the Brazilian peasantry. This project takes the form of dialogues between the peasants, aimed simultaneously at improving literacy and developing their critical awareness of their own immediate situations. Freire addresses dialogue as an educational model much more directly than Plato or Socrates; his account of dialogue touches on the philosophical foundations of that approach as well as grappling with the very real and practical problems that emerge in actual dialogues themselves. Looking at Freire's account of dialogue provides an effective complement to the practice of dialogue depicted in Plato's work. However, as Freire's work with dialogue arises in a very specific political milieu, a brief examination of that context helps to elucidate what is at stake in Freirean dialogue.

The immediacy and urgency of Freire's call to action is rooted in a fairly robust sense of what it means to be human. His own accounts of his project also often begin this way, in meditating on the nature of the human being. Whereas much classical philosophy famously defines the human being as a "rational animal," Freire develops a more nuanced understanding of humanity, deemphasizing the natural capacities of humans in favor of the activities and needs

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that stem from those capacities. We human beings, as rational, thinking animals, find ourselves in the unique position of interacting with and intervening in the reality that confronts us. Our abilities to think abstractly, to use our imagination to call to mind objects that are not present, and to make choices that determine our conduct mean that we are all in a position to evaluate and pass judgment upon the world around us. Rather than being constrained to simply solve the problems presented to animals (acquire food, find shelter, escape predators), humans have repeatedly shown their ability and predilection for changing their daily reality in ways that ensure that these tasks will become easier and their fruits will be nearly guaranteed. As animals, we are confronted by the same set of problems—how to survive, how to flourish—but human ingenuity means that necessity is not merely an obstacle, a constraining force, but is instead "the mother of invention." We humans are so often distinguished by our technology, by the extent to which we have modified the situation in which we initially found ourselves.

Humans are also social creatures, having evolved systems of social and political organization that allow us to coexist somewhat peacefully, experiencing only periodic upheavals and power struggles. We have found ways of calming the turmoil involved in the inevitable "changing of the guards," as our rulers and authorities pass in and out of power. Rather than remaining subject to pack mentality, we have found ways of tempering uncertainty in order to give ourselves as much continuity and stability as possible.

For Freire, these characteristics that distinguish humanity from the rest of the animal kingdom are not simply abilities; they are necessities. The human capacity for intervening in and changing human reality implies a corresponding need: this intervention, this *activity* of intervention, is part of what makes us human.

> As men relate to the world by responding to the challenges of the environment,
> they begin to dynamize, to master, and to humanize reality. They add to it

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something of their own making, by giving temporal meaning to geographic space, by creating culture. This interplay of men's relations with the world and with their fellows does not (except in cases of repressive power) permit societal or cultural immobility. As men create, re-create, and decide, historical epochs begin to take shape. And it is by creating, re-creating, and deciding *that men should participate* in these epochs. (*Education for Critical Consciousness* 5)

It is human nature, therefore, not simply to "be rational" or to be capable of reflecting on reality but to *act rationally*, to use our reflections in order to act on reality. Moreover, this ability and need to act on reality itself entails a corollary, as our faculty of judgment means that we have the ability to evaluate our own actions and are therefore responsible for our own decisions.

The social aspect of humanity, our tendency to organize ourselves into groups and to live in communities, has often been read as a manifestation of our physical inability to provide completely for ourselves. The Hobbesian account of civil society argues that we form societies because it is dangerous not to, because we are too vulnerable without a universal truce (the social contract) and the protection of the group (the enforcement of the social contract).[8] Freire, however, sees this gathering together as a sign of humans' natural inclinations toward relation.[9] We gather into groups because we need to be engaged in meaningful relationships with other humans. It is in our nature to remain open to others, to form these bonds with others, and to live our lives alongside others; moreover, we are mutually enriched and ultimately *more human* as a result of these relationships.

Thus, we can identify three major characteristics of Freire's conception of what it means to be human: activity, responsibility, and relation. Any situation that prevents humans from

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[8] See Hobbes, *Leviathan* 223, Chapter 17.

[9] In this belief, Freire has more in common with Rousseau than with Hobbes. For Rousseau (in *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*), the basic mode of relation between human individuals is pity—"an innate repugnance to seeing his fellow men suffer" (53)—but this natural pity is at odds with our human reason, as "Reason is what engenders egocentrism and reflection strengthens it. …Philosophy is what isolates him and what moves him to say in secret, at the sight of a suffering man, 'Perish if you will; I am safe and sound'" (54). Freire, on the other hand, clearly holds that the free exercise of reason and reflection will strengthen the natural bonds between human beings, rather than endangering them as Rousseau suggests.

critically intervening in their reality, from taking on the responsibility for their own judgments

and actions, or from engaging in healthy and meaningful relationships with other humans

fundamentally opposes the fullness of human nature and is therefore dehumanizing.

Dehumanization is most obvious in situations of overt domination or oppression of one

group of people by another. By definition, oppression seeks to disrupt, limit, or destroy the

ability of the oppressed to choose their own actions and determine their own reality. Whether

through imprisonment or some kind of forced labor, the activities of the oppressed are

appropriated and dictated by the oppressors, and the ends of those actions are determined by their

benefit to the oppressors. The benefits retained by the oppressed themselves are simply those that

are allowed or necessary in order to maintain the oppressive situation as viable and sustainable;

an oppressive situation that is overly demanding will either create revolt or will quickly destroy

its victims. As one's ability to freely choose one's actions is increasingly constrained, one is

proportionately less able to take responsibility for the actions performed. Neither the

performance of virtuous actions nor the avoidance of vicious actions merit praise if the actor's

activity is outside of his or her own control. These situations of oppression effectively hijack or

truncate the abilities of the oppressed either to act or to take responsibility for action, thereby

distorting two of the three characteristics of Freire's understanding of humanity.

Situations of oppression also endanger Freire's third characteristic of essential human

being, that of relation. By its very nature, oppression interferes with and disrupts the

relationships between people. There can be no healthy relationship between oppressors and

oppressed, as the acts of taking power from another person, maintaining them in an inferior

position, and generally of preventing them from improving their own situations are

fundamentally manipulative and self-interested. If I oppress others, that oppression is in my

interest—it is done for my sake. In the best possible scenario, I would like to prevent those others from threatening my position of power or privilege. More often, however, I would like to appropriate their power as my own. Not only am I not particularly interested in a mutual relationship, I am specifically aiming at a one-sided relationship in which I am the sole or primary beneficiary.

Oppression also strains relationships among the oppressed. Among this group, there will be those who angrily struggle against their oppression and those whose stoic outlook allows them to tolerate or simply ignore those things they feel powerless to change. Those who simply want to embrace whatever degree of freedom or enjoyment is allowed to them within an oppressive system will often find their own purposes frustrated or destroyed by others whose bitterness prevents them from enjoying any aspect of their lives. And even more subtly, the alienation and dehumanization occasioned by the loss of free and responsible activity decreases the common ground of positive human activity on which people can meet and enjoy one another's company as autonomous agents. As the experience of the oppressed contracts into the scope allowed to it within the demands of the oppressors, the shared experience over which they can bond with other members of the oppressed group begins to limit itself to the simple experience of oppression itself. The human endeavors of art, craft, science, and thought, now closed off to the oppressed, no longer supply them with sources of collective inspiration or creative interaction.

Because Freire's traits of humanity are fundamentally active—i.e., actions and behaviors, rather than capacities or faculties—the dangers of dehumanization are much more real and pressing. A Stoic perspective teaches that no one can take away our ability to think, to reason, to decide how to react to any given situation, and thus, from a classical perspective, no one can take away that which makes us human. However, because Freire's human traits are active, it suffices

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to limit or prevent a person's ability to act in these ways in order to dehumanize them. If to be

human is to take part in the organization of my life and my community, then anything that

deliberately prevents me from engaging in this organization actively dehumanizes me. This

limitation on action does not need to be overt, explicit, or physical. The more subtle implication

of an active conception of human nature is that even something that convinces us not to act

(without any external limitation) might be responsible for dehumanizing us. Oppression becomes

particularly insidious when it is internalized and perpetuated by those who are being oppressed.

When any social or political reality manages to convince people that it is somehow natural and

necessary, rather than contingent—or even simply prevents them from recognizing that it is

contingent—that reality has become oppressive: it has robbed people of the awareness that they

would need in order to go about changing that reality. In Freire's context, the social and political

oppression in mid-20th-Century Brazil was partially internalized by the peasants who were the

targets of its oppression; they no longer believed themselves capable of intervening in their

communities or of changing their political situations. Moreover, in general, they had even

stopped asking themselves whether anything was wrong with these situations. Many of them had

adopted a fatalistic attitude of acceptance toward the mechanisms that kept them disempowered

and inactive. Freire calls this "submersion" in the dominant reality "semi-intransitivity": "Men

submerged in the historical process are characterized by a state I have described as 'semi-

intransitivity of consciousness'" (*Education* 17). It was this semi-intransitivity, this uncritical

and unreflective acceptance, that isolated the Brazilian peasantry from any further human action

or development, and thus it was the primary characteristic that Freire aimed at changing.[10]

Because Freire links oppression so closely with its dehumanizing effects, his account of

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[10] For more on this, see Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*.

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liberation from oppression is almost synonymous with that of humanization. If the imposition of restraints, limitations, and requirements is responsible for disrupting the fundamental and defining activities of human beings, then the resolution of that situation must be twofold: first, the removal or destruction of the concrete situation of oppression (the overt mechanisms that keep the system of oppression in place); second, and more importantly, the restoration of human activity to human beings, and vice versa.

At this point, however, Freire would have encountered the obvious problem: any attempt to intervene and act on behalf of a disempowered group would simply perpetuate their disempowerment. Any attempt to liberate a group from a position outside of that group will maintain its members in the position of passive objects, treating them as people to *be liberated*, rather than autonomous human agents. In order for liberation to be actual and effective, liberation in fact rather than simply in name, the oppressed must demand and fight for their own liberation. However, if the oppressed have already internalized some of the mindset and mechanisms that help to keep the oppressive situation in place—that is, if the oppressed themselves have become part of that situation and are helping to maintain it—then the simple removal of the external elements of the system will be insufficient to resolve the situation of oppression. This is why Freire begins with and focuses his efforts on humanization, first and foremost: he aims at helping the oppressed to achieve their own recognition of their situation for what it is, oppressive and contingent, so that they may then change the way in which they relate to that system and to their world. He focuses on restoring human activity to human beings, acknowledging that this process is much more complex, subtle, and difficult, than the task of overthrowing the overt dynamics of an oppressive regime. The perpetuation of an oppressive system relies on internalized habits of thought among the oppressed. Overt displays of force are

easy to recognize and easy to condemn; keeping people in subjection through pure physical force requires so much energy and so many resources that it is not a viable long-term system. In order for an oppressive system to be installed and maintained indefinitely, especially when the oppressed outnumber the oppressors, oppressive regimes must rely on some type of complicity among the oppressed. They must, if possible, convince the oppressed that the system of oppression is natural, that it is unavoidable, and moreover that it is not fundamentally unfair. The most successful systems of oppression set themselves up as benefactors to the very groups that they are in fact exploiting. The oppressed come to believe that they are dependent upon their oppressors, when the reality is quite the opposite. Without this attitude on the part of the oppressed, they would be too discontented and too difficult to control, and the oppressors would be unable to maintain their privileged position. That is, while a group of unreflective and reactive people may implicitly support a system of oppression by relying on the structure and guidance it provides, a group of self-aware and critical thinkers will be the best possible defense against any system that would attempt to keep them subordinated or "submerged." The problem Freire faces is that of helping to develop or awaken critical consciousness in the oppressed without performing this action upon them, without maintaining them as objects to be acted upon, to be educated, to be saved, to be liberated, objects whose source of action is outside of themselves: "Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building" (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 65). Quite simply, Freire's goal is to encourage the transformation of reactive objects into critically reflective and intentional subjects who are capable of working to save themselves.

Dialogue is the only way that Freire knows of accomplishing this goal without simultaneously undermining his own efforts. Dialogue, for Freire, is liberatory first and

foremost; it is a response to a concrete social and political situation of oppression. Dialogue

helps to cultivate or call forth critical thought, which cannot be created in any other way, for

"only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking"

(*Oppressed* 92). Engagement in dialogue is an *act* and can never be passively undertaken. The

invitation to dialogue, if answered, if accepted, requires reflection; the questions asked and the

ideas considered are not matters of fact but problems requiring interpretation and analysis—

hence, Freire's name for this dialogical type of education: "problem-posing education." I cannot

passively or unreflectively answer a genuine, dialogical question.[11] Accepting the invitation to

dialogue entails a willingness to begin to think critically; commitment to dialogue means a

continual practice in critical thought. Dialogue thus begins to counter the dehumanization of

oppression by calling upon and restoring the practices of critical thought that underlie both

human action and human responsibility.

To engage in dialogue with another is also to engage in a relationship. Since dialogue

demands genuine and active participation, we portray ourselves when we portray our thoughts

and ideas. And by being attentive to what others say and responding authentically, we are by

definition relating to them as to other unique human beings who share our language and

capacities. We recreate a space of human reflection and reestablish common human experiences

by asking genuine questions of ourselves and of each other and by taking seriously the

perspectives communicated in others' words to us.

Thus, our very entry into dialogue begins immediately to restore us to the three

components of Freire's account of human nature, by calling us into activity, responsibility, and

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[11] The genuine dialogical question is not a request for information, for facts, for opinions or simple reactions. It is always aimed at causal relationships, beginning with the given—the codification—and uncovering its roots, its many connections to other aspects of reality.

relation with others. Education, as a cultural institution, is the site of Freire's intervention. Education, implicitly or explicitly, instills habits of thought; thus, this institution is capable of either perpetuating an existing system of oppression, of challenging oppression, or of preventing the establishment of oppression. On one end of the spectrum, education can communicate messages that reinforce the delusions of powerlessness and helplessness among the oppressed. Even more insidiously, it can demand and reward behaviors that support the privilege of the oppressors. In the questions that it asks and the responses that it sanctions, it can implicitly cultivate behaviors of obedience and discourage the exercise of individual reflection. All that is required is an environment where knowledge is wielded by the teacher, where correct answers are identified and praised by the teacher, where challenges to the teacher's claims are unwelcome or are seen as subversive, where the goal of the students is simply to fulfill the demands of the teacher and where their sense of accomplishment is based purely on the approbation of the teacher. Suddenly, this education appears perfectly designed to produce obedience and perpetuate the existing authority structures.[12]

It is for this reason that Freire claims that there is and can be no "neutral" education. The behaviors and habits of thought instilled in the students either encourage their obedience, inspire their defiance, or cultivate their self-reliance—they will defer to authority, challenge authority, or develop a healthy (i.e., both critical and respectful) relationship to authority. Education will either dehumanize us by conditioning us to relinquish our autonomy and responsibility to an authority figure or encourage and support our human activities by encouraging us to engage constantly in reflective action, to intentionally make our own decisions, and to take responsibility for our choices. On the other hand, the content of this education should and must be neutral,

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[12] This is also precisely the sort of education (or the caricature of education) found in the mainstream high-school classroom.

advocating no particular agenda but rather encouraging the evaluation of all viewpoints. Otherwise, even education with the most liberatory of aims risks installing beliefs and values by means of authority, rather than demanding individual reflection, judgment, and responsibility.

The form of one's education is thus either oppressive or anti-oppressive, either limiting or liberating. For Freire, there is only one true choice: education must be non- and anti-oppressive. It must orient itself towards and adopt a framework of "conscientization" (*conscientização, Education* 19 and *Oppressed* 109), of the development of critical consciousness and the empowered recognition of our ability to engage with and change our reality. Dialogue thus emerges as the natural method of liberatory education, and perhaps the only one capable of doing justice to these humanistic aims, capable of the twofold task of breaking down the oppressive habits of thought that have already been internalized and preventing the adoption of oppressive habits of thought.[13]

However, the term "liberating" must be strenuously divorced from any association with the term "permissive."[14] Freire quite deliberately emphasizes the fact that dialogical education requires structure, because "freedom needs authority to become free" (Shor and Freire 91).[15] Perhaps because critical thought is inherently structured, inherently disciplined, it can only be acquired in a milieu which is both structured and disciplined. Critical thought proceeds rationally and logically; even when it seems to rely on intuitive leaps and lateral thinking, future analysis and explanation must fill in these temporary lacunae. In order to maintain our new concepts or

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[13] It is difficult to get a clear practical idea of Freire's method that is also general enough to be widely applicable. The examples given in *Education for Critical Consciousness* and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* refer quite specifically to particular educational programs with particular educational goals (esp. literacy). However, a few introductory remarks can give readers a general sense for how Freire's understanding of dialogue differs from the colloquial meaning of the word.

[14] Freire also uses the terms "spontaneist," "laissez-faire," and "license" in this same context. See *Pedagogy for Liberation* 46, 79, 90; *We Make the Road by Walking* 181; *Pedagogy of Hope* 101, 112.

[15] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the removal of structure in progressive education and Dewey's critique of this.

claims, we must be able to provide a rational explanation (or, in Socratic terms, a reasoned account) for them.[16] The structure in Freire's dialogical method of education is provided by the discussion leader, by the text or object of discussion, and by a "matrix" of discussion that characterizes the approach adopted by the participants. The discussion leader takes responsibility for selecting the text or object of study and for setting the general goals of the inquiry; this teacher has enough familiarity with the text to understand it and to determine a desirable end-point for the collaborative inquiry. The teacher's expertise, her prior acquaintance with the material, allows her to select an object of study that is rich enough, multifaceted enough, and challenging enough to sustain meaningful and active inquiry. She understands which objects will require her students to confront problematic elements of their own daily lives and concrete situations. Because some objects of thought do not inspire or require critical reflection, the leader does the work of selecting the initial objects of discussion in order to present the group with objects that demand analysis. Her commitment to re-learning along with her students (Shor and Freire 100; spoken by Shor but seconded by Freire) mitigates the fact that both this selection process and the teacher's prior acquaintance with the text confer upon her a consequent authority. In the commitment to relearning the text and the subject, the teacher acknowledges both the text and the world as dynamic objects of encounter, incapable of being exhaustively analyzed or definitively comprehended.

In providing dialogue participants with a mutual object of inquiry, one which is both external and meaningfully related to those participants, the text helps to establish a "horizontal relationship" between the participants (*Education* 45, *Oppressed* 91). In other words, "the object to be known mediates the two cognitive subjects…the object to be known is put on the table

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[16] Discussed at greater length in Chapter 3.

*between* the two subjects of knowing. They meet around it and through it for mutual inquiry"

(Shor and Freire 99). By mediating the relation between the subjects of a dialogue, the text helps

to cultivate a healthy dynamic between those subjects, who can then meet as equals through it,

and thereby reveal and problematize the oppressive or authoritarian structures they encounter. By

framing our inquiry around a third term, we avoid reflecting directly upon one another, as this

would involve us in different activities. Given differing subjects of inquiry, we would not be

engaged together but would rather be engaged individually in parallel investigations—we

ourselves the knowing subjects while the other is the object to be known—or we ourselves the

object to be known, alienated by the other as knowing subject. We could not work together in

this activity of knowing if we were forced to oscillate between object and subject. On the other

hand, a mutual focus on the text as a third term means that we are both subjects, we are looking

at the same thing, we have the same goal, and we can thus work together in a genuine sense.

According to Freire, this working together in a dialogue entails a "matrix" of five

elements: love, humility, faith in humankind, trust, and critical thinking (*Oppressed* 89-92,

*Education* 45). Briefly elaborated, subjects of a dialogue must approach one another, their world,

and their critical task with love; love motivates the dialogue's subjects to commit themselves

deeply to the demands of the inquiry, despite the personal challenges and vulnerability entailed

by that project. Second, dialogue requires humility, as an overabundance of ego will quickly

derail any attempts at genuine collaboration, especially if one party is more determined to "win"

than to be transformed and enriched. Third, without the conviction that change is possible,

engaging in dialogue for the purpose of changing the world becomes a pointless and

disheartening enterprise; dialogical subjects must therefore have faith in the ability of humankind

to intervene in and change the world. Freire asserts the fourth element of the matrix, trust, as the

natural result of the foregoing attributes of a discussion; any subjects engaged together in genuine dialogue will naturally come to trust each other in this task, and moreover the full elaboration of dialogue must finally be built upon this trust. Finally, a truly transformative, humanizing dialogue relies upon each of its participants to actively engage in critical thinking, to bring their critical and analytical powers to bear on their object and to use those powers in order to choose their actions freely. Any dialogue not explicitly founded upon these characteristics and accepted on their terms by its subjects must ultimately fail in its liberatory aspirations, because true dialogue is transformative and genuine, and human transformation cannot occur in the absence of these traits.[17]

Finally, for Freire, all dialogue, all education, all genuinely human and humanizing activity must be a praxis—that is, must involve both action and reflection. Shared inquiry that does not lead us to action, to intervention in our world and our reality, is disempowered inquiry, empty inquiry, and can never itself be liberatory. In the selection of texts, in the reflection on those texts, and in the ways in which we comport ourselves once we have left the discussion group, the goal of Freire's liberating education is always oriented toward human activity. In this sense, Montaigne's suggestion that "the true measure of our discourse is the course of our lives" (*Essays* 63, I.26) plays itself out in Freire's thought. If authentic human being necessitates human activity, if human reason implies reasoned action, then the humanizing goals of liberatory education cannot be fulfilled until its subjects become critically conscious and *active* human agents.

Freirean dialogue resolves some of the issues raised earlier regarding Socratic dialogue, in terms of providing us with a model for dialogue in this project. In particular, Freire's approach

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[17] The elements of this "matrix" are discussed at greater length in the analysis to follow (see "Proposed Model," below).

may give us a better sense for what a dialogue among a group should look like (as opposed to the Socrates-interlocutor dynamic in Plato), as well as for what that group approach requires of us. Freire's account also maintains a stronger sense for a participant-generated discussion, where the bulk of the work is done by the participants rather than by the leader (again, as opposed to Socrates' control of the inquiry). Freire acknowledges the problems that result when the leader is too active or authoritarian, therefore reinstating or reinforcing the very situation of disempowerment that dialogue is intended to address.

In the final analysis, Freirean dialogue allows for a greater interplay between the rhizomatic and arborescent elements introduced above in the Intermezzo 2. In the Socratic dialogue, Socrates' control over the questions and his influence over the course of the dialogue itself establishes a strong arborescent centrality to the dialogue. The Socratic dialogues themselves tend to emerge in a single train of thought (the two participants, Socrates and his interlocutor, engage in a single inquiry). Finally, the dialogues themselves tend to be fundamentally binary (Socrates and his interlocutor) even when the terms of the binary shift momentarily. Each of these elements reflects a strong arborescent centrality, dichotomy, and even hierarchy within the Socratic dialogue. On the other hand, the arborescent dimensions of the Freirean dialogue—while they do arise out of the presence and activity of the discussion leader, the text or object of the discussion, and the matrix of discussion—play a less centralizing role. These common elements serve to establish horizontal connections between the various elements of the dialogue (different participants, different concepts, different accounts) and to establish the possibility of communication and exchange between them. In brief, they establish the common language and setting that allows the dialogue to move forward as an intersection of discrete and dissimilar elements. Somewhat paradoxically, it is precisely these few and

deliberately maintained arborescent elements that open up new spaces for rhizomatic growth and transformation. The Freirean dialogue takes place between a group of participants, thus incorporating many distinct voices, backgrounds, and perspectives. The dialogue encourages and cultivates new ways of looking, seeing, and considering. In particular, it seeks out new connections between objects, ideas, people, and events. Each new idea itself becomes something to be considered and explored, questioned and adjusted, thus helping to maintain a constant dynamism in the conversation. The rhizome's principle of connection[18] emerges in the possibilities for direct contact between any members of the dialogue at any moment. The principle of heterogeneity is reflected in the great diversity among the individuals that make up the dialogical group.[19] The principle of multiplicity is sustained by the building of a dialogue out of many different voices and narratives, as these are considered and developed through the contributions and reflections of its members. Finally, the rhizome's "asignifying rupture" may be preserved in the dialogue's ability to accommodate interjections and epiphanies: one object, event, or idea may trigger a new and unforeseen connection. This interplay of rhizomatic and arborescent elements is precisely what we are seeking in a new model of dialogue.

On the other hand, Freire's model of dialogue, in its overt political program and the specific insights it hopes to elicit within its members, may still be too restrictive for our purposes. In seeking out a framework or format, an arena, for the emergence and cultivation of the radical possibilities of thought, the form of dialogue we adopt must be similarly radical. In

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[18] One of the central principles of the rhizome, enumerated briefly in Intermezzo 2, above. Principles explored above include those of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, and asignifying rupture (see Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 7-12).

[19] For Freire, the members of a dialogue, leaders excepted, tend to be share a common cultural, ethnic, social, economic, and political background. The diversity present here occurs much more on the individual and familial level—habits of thought, beliefs, customs, experiences, etc. Groups of even greater diversity (cultural, ethnic, social, economic, etc.) will present the dialogue with even greater opportunities for cultivating radically new encounters with the world, its objects, and its others.

proposing a model of dialogue here, we will both draw on and depart from the two central

figures of Plato and Freire.

### *The Proposed Model*

Despite their differences, the Socratic and Freirean models of dialogue both offer significant

insights into the mechanisms and demands of dialogue as an educational practice, and the model

of dialogue suggested here draws deeply on each of them as needed. In the interests of a

systematic elaboration of what is meant by the term dialogue, the following categories, briefly

stated, will frame this presentation: (1) the leader's role, (2) the participants' or interlocutors'

role, (3) the relationship between the members of the dialogue, (4) the object of study, (5) the

content of the discussion—i.e., what is said, how the inquiry proceeds—and (6) the aim of the

discussion. These six categories identify elements common to both existing models of dialogue;

here they outline the description of the dialogical model proposed by this essay. An examination

of the differences between discussion and debate and the role of the Friend in philosophical

discourse helps to further clarify what is meant by "dialogue" in this project, as will a final

inquiry into a term that continually asserts itself throughout this dissertation—the "genuine."

### *1. The Leader's Role*

The most significant point of departure between Plato and Freire, and between those figures and

the proposed model, concerns the role played by the discussion leader. Plato's Socrates, as

discussed above, is the most active and vocal participant in most of the dialogues in which he

appears.[20] He asks a majority of the questions and often poses most of the responses (his requests

for verification or consent from his interlocutors notwithstanding). He unpacks and elaborates

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[20] Notable exceptions to this pattern occur in the *Timaeus,* the *Symposium*, and the *Sophist*.

upon concepts, he determines the direction of the inquiry at almost every point, and he commands the discussion like the captain of the ship.

The problem here, simply put, is that Socrates talks too much. His interlocutors are tasked with merely following along, uttering the verbal equivalents of a nod or a shake of the head. On occasion, Socrates asks for real input from his audience, seeking a more or less genuine answer to a more or less open-ended question. Most of the dialogues, however, consist of Socrates' attempts to test these few original contributions in a variety of ways, breaking them down thematically as he sees fit, teasing out their assumptions and their implications, bringing them into contact with other aspects of his interlocutors' experience and often determining, finally, that those responses are unacceptably flawed or self-contradictory.

Freire departs from the outset (though not explicitly) from this characterization in his own description of the discussion leader. In particular, whereas Socrates' own experience directs the questioning in a Platonic dialogue, Freire emphasizes the participants' or interlocutors' experience over that of the discussion leader. The leader's experience is what allows him to set up the terms of the discussion, to introduce effective and meaningful objects of study, and to cultivate a scholarly inquiry into those objects. However, the substance of the discussion explicitly concerns the participants' experience and reality: their daily lives (as object of study) and their thoughts about their experiences (as points of analysis and interpretation and as the source of the discussion's analysis). If the Freirean educator conducts the analysis or determines the substance of the interpretation, he has already overstepped his bounds, he has turned what should have been an opportunity for liberation and the generation of critical consciousness into yet another situation where thoughts and beliefs are suggested or imposed from without. While the Freirean educator does provide the discussion with a necessary structure, and even perhaps

with some of its direction, the bulk of the analysis must be conducted by the participants themselves.

The discussion leader in the proposed model shares many characteristics with the Freirean leader. The discussion leader's job is to establish and maintain the conditions necessary for an authentically collaborative inquiry, and not to determine the content or direction of that inquiry. While the leader may often supply the text or the opening question for a dialogue, it is then the participants who must assume responsibility for building and shaping the conversation moving forward. The leader acts as a guardrail to preserve the boundaries or guidelines of the discussion in order to maintain a safe space for the interaction and exchange of ideas between a diverse group of individuals who may frequently disagree and may not even get along. In order to made dialogue possible, the leader must help to establish a space in which all participants feel comfortable and safe contributing their reflections, and in which conflicts are dealt with in a positive, respectful, and forward-looking way. Once again, even this aspect of the discussion leader's role should not become overly strict or didactic; the ability to self-regulate and to cultivate a space of genuine dialogical exchange is itself a skill that participants in a dialogue must practice. The discussion leader must strike a balance between maintaining the boundaries necessary to the dialogue while also inviting the participants into this very process, inviting them to participate as well in the creation of a dialogical space. Once this space has been established and as long as it is maintained, the discussion leader must cede as much authority or control to the group as it can handle, giving participants the opportunity to practice not only the critical thinking demanded by dialogue but also this creation and cultivation of dialogical space.

*2. The Participants' or Interlocutors' Roles*

In an admittedly extreme caricature of Socratic questioning, the roles of Socrates' interlocutors

(Meno, Glaucon, the slave boy, etc.) might be played nearly as effectively by a puppet, nodding or shaking its head. Their responses are so frequently limited to simple assent or denial that the use of words is almost rendered superfluous. Of course, there are a number of significant challenges to this characterization of the interlocutor's role in dialogue, but at first glance these interlocutors seem to be all but expendable: Socrates seems to require their attention—but not their input.

However, we must move beyond this naïve reading of the dialogues to look at the roles actually played by specific interlocutors. For example, in the *Meno's* geometrical proof, the slave-boy does not simply give yes-or-no answers. While his answers may be limited to a single word, and they may be very simple responses to math problems, their generation nonetheless requires a certain amount of analytical work on the boy's part. Unfortunately, Socrates passes up the opportunity to ask him to explain his reasoning and instead seems content with the numbers and lines he has indicated; this missing explanation might have rendered the boy's responses more illuminating to the reader (and to the boy himself). However, even in this case, where the boy's responses require some critical problem-solving capacity, Socrates' framing of the question already constrains the possible answers; there is in fact only one right answer to the questions that Socrates is asking, and he already knows what it is. Moreover, Socrates gives this lesson in geometry not for the benefit of the boy but simply to illustrate to Meno that the boy possesses some kind of knowledge that allows him to answer these questions without being taught geometry, and without prior acquaintance with the proof. In the end, while the boy's responses do come closer to the level of thoughtfulness and activity of the Freirean interlocutor (and closer to that desired by the proposed model), his are not true answers; they are to constrained to a very specific task set by an external power, and that power sets that task not for

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the benefit of the boy himself but for the benefit of the onlooker (and, perhaps, for us, the readers).

Thrasymachus, in the *Republic*, initially seems to provide us with a more active and assertive interlocutor. In Book I, Socrates must withstand the onslaught of the "wild animal" Thrasymachus (336b). Frustrated by Socrates' habitual insistence on asking questions (and reluctance to offer his own answers), Thrasymachus accuses him of intellectual cowardice and demands that Socrates answer his questions. When this tactic does not yield the results Thrasymachus anticipated, he acquiesces somewhat petulantly: "'if you want to ask questions, ask them, and I'll treat you the way people do old women when they're telling stories, and tell you 'okay,' and nod my head or shake it" (350e). With his determination to simply "nod [his] head or shake it," Thrasymachus here transforms himself quite deliberately into the caricature of the Socratic interlocutor discussed above.

However, when Thrasymachus becomes "gentle," when he turns himself into this unassuming and compliant acolyte, Socrates shortly becomes discontented, disappointed. Thrasymachus claims to have presented Socrates with a "feast" by his acquiescence, but Socrates finds he has consumed it "greedily" rather than "beautifully"; "and so it has come to pass that now I know nothing from the conversation" (*Republic* 354a-c). Socrates seems to need his interlocutors to keep him in check, to help him remain moderate, to ensure that he proceeds fairly and faithfully and does not "greedily" consume or pass over any of the questions that come his way. In the end, this caricatured view of the Socratic interlocutor, when actually adopted and implemented by Thrasymachus, clearly fails to fulfill the necessary role of the interlocutor in the dialogue.

Finally, later in the *Republic*, Socrates explicitly solicits a greater level of activity and

initiative from his interlocutor than the simple yes-or-no response. In his conversation with Glaucon, he portrays the two of them seeking for truth as hunters stalk their prey—each of them watching carefully in order to see that the truth does not elude them:

> So now, Glaucon, don't we need to take up positions like hunters in a circle around a patch of woods and concentrate our attention, so that justice doesn't escape anywhere, disappear from our sight, and become obscure? Because it's evident that it's in there somewhere. So look and make a spirited effort to catch sight of it, in case you spot it in any way before I do, and you'll show it to me. (432b-c)

In this passage, Socrates seems to desire an equal partner in Glaucon, someone committed to the same rigorous interrogation and determined observation that characterizes his own conduct. Glaucon, however, comes up short, lacking either the ability or the confidence to fulfill Socrates' request: "'If only I were able to,' he said. 'Instead, if you treat me as a follower who's capable of seeing what's pointed out to him, you'll be handling me in an entirely sensible way'" (432c). Glaucon elects to make himself passive and contents himself with being led by the competent Socrates, allowing Socrates to conduct the analysis and point out the pertinent insights along the way. Glaucon seems keen to enjoy the benefits of Socrates' performance without having to engage in the difficult work of analysis himself.

Even in the most active characterization of the Socratic interlocutor, the one offered here as Socrates' fellow hunter, this interlocutor embodies not an autonomous intellectual agent but merely a competent partner to aid in and implement Socrates' own plans for the discussion. Socrates has not solicited Glaucon's advice about how to proceed; he merely desires him to take up a post of observation, to look in the direction of Socrates' own inquiry, and to speak up if he happens to "catch sight" of the truth before Socrates himself does. He will serve as an extra pair of eyes in the expedition that Socrates has already planned and launched.

Moreover, this more active Socratic interlocutor still falls far short of the level of activity

and initiative that Freire desires from his dialogue participants. Since Freire's project is primarily

a political and humanizing one, aimed at the liberation of the participants and the development of

their critical consciousness, the participants themselves must be the focus and driving force for

the discussion. As mentioned above, any attempt to liberate or educate them from without—and

the extent and nature of Socrates' own contributions seems to suggest this kind of liberation from

without—would necessarily circumvent this aim and therefore undermine the entire dialogical

project.[21] While the topic of discussion might be selected by the leader of the dialogue, the leader

is simply qualified to do so by his or her greater acquaintance with the dialogue format and

greater practice in the exercise of critical thought. The actual analysis and exploration of this

topic in the Freirean dialogue originates in and proceeds by means of the observations and

reflections of the participants. Moreover, as the dialogue is explicitly grounded in their own

experience of that object, it cannot proceed in any other way; it requires that the participants

express their own thoughts in their own words, or it cannot be authentically carried on. Freirean

dialogue begins with the observations of the participants, with their sharing these observations,

comparing them to others' observations and experiences, and analyzing these observations.

While this task is aided by the guidance of the leader who, again, is qualified for this task by a

greater familiarity with the process of logical and critical reasoning and with dialogue itself, the

participants perform the work necessary to deepen their own awareness and understanding of the

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[21] One might object that the image presented in the allegory of the cave gives us some precedent for a "liberation from without"; the prisoner of the cave is freed by another figure, forced to stand, to turn, and to confront the objects behind him. He is then forcibly dragged out of the cave by this figure. The level of activity here might appear to run afoul of Freire's claim that the oppressed must not be liberated from without. However, the claim of this essay is that the true work of liberation being accomplished on or with the prisoner of the cave is not a release from restraints but the experience of the confrontation with new and unfamiliar aspects of his world. It is the realizations and comprehension that he earns through this confrontation that finally liberate him from the intellectual fetters that have kept him focused solely on the world of shadows, and this level of liberation cannot be attributed to an external "savior." While the external figure may have changed the prisoner's situation in a way that enabled this confrontation, it is the prisoner's own experience that teaches him about the new world he inhabits. Thus, the liberation remains truly his own.

subject, and this deepened understanding can then give rise to more profound insights and reflections.

There is a significant difference, in degree if not in kind, between the role of the participants in Freirean dialogue and their role in the dialogical model proposed here. Because the populations that Freire worked with while developing his theory were largely the illiterate Brazilian peasantry, disenfranchised from political participation and often living in extreme poverty, a much more extreme situational and experiential gap separated those participants from their leaders. Freire's goal was to help those participants to achieve a profound self-transformation through the experience of dialogue—one that would allow them to recognize themselves as autonomous human agents, thinking subjects, and active citizens of their communities and larger societies. This would have required a more extensive leadership on the part of the Freirean educator, who would in turn be proportionally more qualified to select the objects of study and to guide the analysis than the participants themselves. The gap separating the teacher or professor from the classroom of first-world students is much less striking. There is certainly a difference in knowledge, skills, and experience, one whose significance should not be overlooked, but first-world students rarely find themselves as profoundly alienated from themselves and from their communities as the Brazilian peasantry of the 1950s and 1960s. Correspondingly, whereas Freire's leader is more retiring than Socrates, the level of directiveness required from the leaders of the proposed model of dialogue may be even more limited than that of the Freirean educator. In the first place, the participants assumed by the proposed model are not enduring the same levels of oppression to which Freirean participants had become accustomed. They will not begin from a "semi-intransitivity" of consciousness as deeply submerged in their daily struggles, and moreover they will already, to a greater or lesser

extent, take active roles in their social, political, and cultural worlds in a way that Freire's participants often could not yet do. Our participants, thanks to a certain baseline of educational training, will already have had practice in some of the critical thinking skills that dialogue aims to cultivate; these skills will simply need further development. Finally, the narrower gap between the backgrounds and skill levels of the leaders and the participants in the proposed model means that the participants will be capable of sharing in a proportionately larger degree of responsibility in the leading of those discussions. Each of these factors effectively lessens the need for the level of directiveness wielded by the Frierean educator, and calls upon the individual participants to take up a correspondingly greater role and responsibility in the overall dialogue.

However, behind the overt political and economic factors that separate the first-world student from the illiterate Brazilian peasant, one aspect of the transformation Freire desires to effect remains perfectly relevant in a first-world context.[22] This aspect reflects a crucial difference between childhood and adulthood. The transition to genuine adulthood relies on a shift in two of Freire's characteristics of the human being: action and responsibility. Adulthood so often means that a person becomes both capable of and responsible for making her own choices, determining and implementing her own courses of action. The age of majority in the United States is that at which we are officially enfranchised in the political process, we are granted the right to enter into legally binding contracts, and we are accountable to a jury of our peers for any breaches of the law; each of these aspects of adulthood emphasizes the extent to which, at a certain age, we are expected and even forced to assume responsibility for our actions. Even when we are still living under the auspices of a more or less paternalistic society, one that promises to protect us from ourselves and from others, the extent of the work that we must do to support our

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[22] For more on this question, see Shor and Freire, "Do First World Students Need Liberating?" in *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (121-141).

own lives increases dramatically once we become independent adults. And as soon as we reach the age of majority, we are given the freedom to make our own choices, and at the same time we are, by definition and by law, held responsible for the decisions we make and for the effects we have on others. Of course, this is not to imply that all adults live up to these new levels of activity and responsibility. Many adults largely refrain from acting—simply setting up a weekly routine that provides for their needs and living their lives contentedly within that framework. As Kant notes, "It is so easy to be immature. If I have a book to serve as my understanding, a pastor to serve as my conscience, a physician to determine my diet for me, and so on, I need not exert myself at all. I need not think, if only I can pay: others will readily undertake the irksome work for me" ("What is Enlightenment?" 35). While there are those who are reluctant to take on the responsibilities and freedoms of adulthood, others take gleeful advantage of their freedom of choice without acknowledging the responsibilities entailed by that freedom. The revelation of our freedom to choose our actions and of our responsibility for those actions remains a difficult and even elusive one, but it can be utterly transformative when it does occur.[23]

This transformation, however, remains a critical component of our social lives—of what it means to be a good citizen, a good community member, a good spouse, parent, (adult) child, or sibling. Freire's initial assessment of human nature seems quite correct: through the revelation of what it means to be active and responsible agents, we become more fully human, more capable of human lives and human relationships. So, while the proposed model may not require its leaders to be as active and guiding as the Freirean educator, we would do well to take his claims about the participants' role in the discussion seriously: only active participation in dialogue can give us practice in these freedoms and responsibilities, and once again, "only dialogue, which

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[23] See Sartre, "Freedom and Responsibility," in *Being and Nothingness* (707-711).

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requires critical thinking, is capable of generating critical thinking" (Freire, *Oppressed* 92).

*3. The Relationship Between the Members of the Dialogue*

It can be somewhat redundant to talk about the relationship between the leader and participants once so much has been said about their respective roles. However, the great variation possible even within each of these roles means that the variety of possible relationships between members of a discussion fully merits some additional exploration. For example, the different roles Socrates takes on—the guide, the inquisitor, the gadfly—signal both different aims in the discussion and different ways of relating to his interlocutors. The interlocutors' reactions to Socrates vary just as significantly, from Thrasymachus' rage to Glaucon's cheerful passivity, encompassing both spirited competition and genuine natural curiosity. In considering the relationships between other members of the dialogues, we do not often see the interactions between two or more interlocutors. When we do, one of these interlocutors is often filling the role usually played by Socrates and taking on one of his traditional personae (e.g., guide, inquisitor, or gadfly).

Freire deals with the relationships among the members of a discussion group (whether between the leader and the participants or between the participants themselves) much more explicitly than Plato. Freire goes so far as to elucidate the beliefs and attitudes necessary for the successful discussion in his "matrix" of discussion, and four of the five characteristics listed there are directly pertinent to the relationship between the participants in a discussion. To recap, the matrix of discussion consists of love, humility, faith in humankind, trust, and critical thinking (Freire *Oppressed* 89-93; *Education* 45). (The fifth characteristic—critical thinking—is more relevant to the content of the discussion, and is according discussed in that section, below.) As the model being proposed here largely adopts and relies upon this matrix, it will be discussed

here at some length.

Love is the first and perhaps most striking attribute Freire insists on. The genuine participant must begin with love—that is, an actively loving stance towards others, towards her fellow participants, towards the process of discussion, and towards the world to be discussed: "Dialogue cannot exist…in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people" (Freire, *Oppressed* 89). Both as a creative act and as an act of liberation, dialogue cannot wield its full transformative power unless its participants are motivated by something as deeply felt and as strongly motivating as love.[24]

Within the context of a project of humanization and political action, it is easier to understand this characteristic as a component of liberation—especially the liberation of an entire class of people. Insofar as the bonds of human connection have been broken, and insofar as this alienation of individuals from one another in fact serves to maintain the status quo, a project attempting to reestablish a genuine human community might well acknowledge the need for love in this task. To create lasting social change, a large group of people must be galvanized, mobilized; to run the risks associated with creating this change, the group needs a great deal of courage and determination; and, finally, a community bound together by and acting out of mutual love may very well be unified, courageous, and determined enough to succeed. However, when we shift our focus to first-world classrooms, or, even further, to the relationships between

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[24] It has become very clear to me during my years of teaching, both at the secondary and at the undergraduate level, that students simply want to be loved. To put it less sentimentally, students want to know that they are cared for, that they are being approached as individuals, etc. They need to know that their teachers interact with them not simply because they are paid to or forced to but because they find them worth their time and effort. Everyone wants to feel that they are appreciated, unique, worth singling out for friendship. We all want to feel worthy of love—it is so often called our deepest desire—and one of the ways we feel worthy of it is by getting it. On the other hand, being treated as a task to be completed, a challenge to be surmounted, a problem to be solved, is dehumanizing, alienating. It breaks the human relationship because the student is now being treated as an object to be manipulated rather than as a subject to be engaged. While conversations may be had without love, they only become truly transformative with love. While teachers may effectively communicate information to their students in the absence of any love, students who establish genuine relationships with their teachers become much more successful and engaged learners.

philosophers in the academic world, the call for love in a dialogue suddenly appears strange—it is either a startlingly radical claim, or it is simply out of place. What does it mean, in our context, for interlocutors to approach one another with love?

To a large extent, this "love" manifests simply in a respect for human dignity and individuality. It acknowledges the other as a legitimate thinking subject, approaching her as one competent to make judgments for herself about the things she hears, and respecting that her decisions have been made consciously and with consideration. This genuine respect for the other also means that we must be willing to acknowledge our disagreements with her and to engage in dialogue through and about our differences; we make our own decisions without necessarily being convinced that we have absolutely made the right choices, to the exclusion of any further consideration. Along these same lines, our respect for the other must extend to our assumption that that other is also a genuinely curious thinking subject, one interested in further developing and refining her beliefs and her experiences with the world. Dialogical love leads us to disagree with others, but to do so in a way that does not simply stop with disagreement but rather always aims at a productive dialogue, a collaborative consideration of the issue at hand, and one which might include agreement but is also quite willing to accommodate and accept a continued difference of opinion—after the dialogue. This means that "agreeing to disagree" is never used as an excuse to avoid dialogue, to avoid discussing and examining our differences together; it simply indicates a refusal to force a false consensus or to totalize the other. Respect does not mean that conflict should be avoided or that differences should be glossed over or ignored; quite the contrary, it demands that we approach others as beings both capable and desirous of further growth and development. In glossing or ignoring our differences, we objectify the other—we treat her as a degraded object to be accommodated or handled—but in acknowledging and

dialoguing about those differences, we treat others as autonomous thinking subjects in their own right.

To some extent, dialogical love might manifest simply as the Kantian moral imperative to treat other human beings always as ends in themselves (Kant, *Groundwork* 4:429): this love means that we are genuinely concerned for the welfare of our interlocutors, we desire good on their behalf, and act in a way that offers them the strongest possibilities for growth and flourishing, as well as for continued connection with us. But finally, the demand for dialogical love is a tremendously difficult one because it calls upon us to value the other genuinely and actively, rather than mechanically, perfunctorily, or simply in theory. We will not always like each of our interlocutors; some will be annoying, grating; some will not love or respect us in return; some simply will not seem to care about thinking deeply or meaningfully and may be content to maintain beliefs solely based on their benefit to themselves. In the face of such differences, the radicalism of the demand for dialogical love becomes especially pronounced— but the demand itself is not thereby any less present or pressing.

Approaching a dialogue with humility (the second element of the Freirean "matrix") accomplishes two ends: first, it serves as an implicit acknowledgement that I as a thinking subject have more to learn, that my knowledge is not definitive or comprehensive. Socrates himself emphasizes the importance of this trait repeatedly. He acts as a "torpedo-fish," stinging both Meno and the slave boy into numbness and perplexity when they believe themselves to have knowledge that they do not in fact possess; he "benefits" them by prompting their realization that they have something new to learn (*Meno* 84a-c).[25] While humility thus has an

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[25] Socrates' claim shortly thereafter hints at the importance of the calling he will describe separately in the *Apology*: "in supposing one ought to seek what one does not know we would be better, more able to be brave and less lazy than if we supposed that which we do not know we are neither capable of discovering nor ought to seek" (*Meno* 86b-c).

intellectual benefit for any seeker after truth, it also has a crucial effect on interpersonal

relationships, one that can set or destroy the tone of a collaborative inquiry. Namely, if one of the

participants believes himself to possess the truth already, or perhaps does not even care about the

truth but simply wants to "win" an argument with the others, the dialogue will no longer be the

illuminating and transforming exchange of ideas that characterizes dialogue at its most powerful.

The presence of one pole in the discussion that is not intent on cooperative inquiry but is instead

invested in its own personal ends puts the other participants in the position of either resisting that

imposed program or going along with it. The determination to win an argument supplants a

program of mutual inquiry, one whose parameters are set by mutual interest, with a program

which serves primarily the interests of only one member.[26]

Freire initially describes the third element of the matrix of discussion as "hope"

(*Education* 45), and later as "faith in humankind" (*Oppressed* 90). In many ways this parallels

Socrates' goal as a "torpedo-fish" and the benefit that humility can have on intellectual growth:

in order for a dialogue to be truly effective, truly meaningful, its participants must believe in its

power to transform both their own being and their world. Without the conviction that dialogue is

an integral component of social action and change, participation in dialogue becomes a harmless

pastime, an amusement, an exercise—but only incidentally a manifestation of one's full

humanity. According to Freire, dialogues must have a goal, they must be oriented towards action,

and so the absence of some sort of faith or hope that the goal will be accomplished renders the

engagement in dialogue hollow and perfunctory.

The characteristic of "trust," as the fourth element of the matrix of dialogue, presents

perhaps the most striking contrast with much of the dialogue we find in Plato. Because Socrates'

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[26] This raises the question of the difference between dialogue and debate, which will be discussed at greater length below.

interlocutors so often become frustrated or upset, it seems clear that this dimension is either lacking in or incidental to Socrates' own method. By his own admission, Socrates seeks out "wise men" of the city, men he presumably does not already know, and makes their acquaintance in order to test and challenge their wisdom. This approach and this motivation give them no reason to trust Socrates; it is not until his "apology" that Socrates' concern for the well-being of his fellow Athenians becomes clear.[27] Freire, on the other hand, asserts that when the first three elements of dialogue are present—love, humility, faith—trust arises naturally: "Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence" (*Oppressed* 91). In taking up and taking on Freire's element of trust, the Proposed Model in part recognizes the relative success of the two models. Freire's dialogical pedagogy has been successfully deployed around the world and continues to resonate with educators. On the other hand, Plato's dialogues show Socrates incidentally angering and alienating many of his interlocutors, and ultimately meeting his death at their hands. Our goal is not to provoke others to this alienation, but rather to meaningfully challenge those who intentionally engage in the process of genuine dialogue with us.

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[27] Socrates seems markedly less concerned with the nature of the relationship between himself and his interlocutors, perhaps because the first phase of Socratic discussion does act as a propaedeutic, especially in the *Meno*; before Meno or the slave boy can be considered potential colleagues in the discussion, Socrates must first show them that the things they think they know are in fact uncertain, incomplete, and subject to revision. For the purposes of this forced disillusionment, the quality of the relationship between Socrates and the interlocutor is even somewhat peripheral or incidental. Arguably, of course, Socrates' task would be facilitated by a good working relationship with his interlocutors—they would be quicker to listen to him if they trusted him—but if he is engaged primarily in the destruction of their opinions, a threatening sort of enterprise, this relationship will always be challenged by the goals of the propaedeutic. On a naïve reading of the dialogues, however, Socrates' disregard for the importance of his relationship with his interlocutors leads many of those interlocutors to abandon him after the propaedeutic. Dialogues often end aporetically as the interlocutor abandons the search, in frustration, exasperation, anger, or disillusionment. The propaedeutic, in these cases, has perhaps itself been unsuccessful; although Socrates has effectively shown the instability of the interlocutors' stated beliefs, the stance of defensiveness or fear on their part just as effectively prevents them from acknowledging this instability. When confronted with someone who seems to be playfully or idly mucking about with one's own ideas, one's own certainty and framework, walking away would seem to be one of the more innocuous of the expected responses. (Viewed in this light, Socrates' ultimate fate at the hands of the Athenian court is again relatively unsurprising.)

*4. The Object of Study*

To some extent, Plato and Freire seem to be in agreement over what sort of thing should

constitute the object of study in a dialogue: it should be something of immediate relevance to the

participants, something of which they all have pertinent experience and that they can use their

experience and observation to investigate more fully. It is not a series of facts to be presented and

memorized, it is not a one-way transfer of information. Dialogue brings us into contact with

something that requires us to consult ourselves, to use our own powers of observation and

interpretation—something that ultimately requires us to learn as much about ourselves as we do

about it. For Socrates, the object is generally a concept, an "*x*," and the inquiry tries to answer

the question, "What is *x*?" (beauty, justice, or virtue). For Freire, the object of discussion is in

fact a physical object called a "codification" (*Education* 51), a text or a picture evocative of the

participants' experience and daily lives. By focusing and reflecting on this object, the

participants in fact become increasingly aware of their own lives and situations; given a small

measure of critical distance, they can more effectively observe and analyze the social and

political dynamics that shape their daily lives.[28]

For us, however, both in education and in philosophy proper, the object of our

discussions is often a text or set of texts. We engage with the written word in a way that neither

Socrates nor Freire does. In the service of philosophical education, dialogues can help us to

process, examine, understand, and evaluate the texts that we read, and this single process teaches

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[28] The need for a measure of separation or critical distance between the presentation made by a text (or an object
serving as a text) in a discussion is explored in greater depth by Howard Zeiderman of Touchstones Discussion
Project. Zeiderman points out that we have increasing difficulties acknowledging and grappling with texts that are
too close to us; on the one hand, we may uncritically accept ideas and claims we are habituated to, but on the other
hand, our strong emotional reactions of disgust or anger may prevent us from fully recognizing and acknowledging
other ideas or claims. To give discussion participants the clearest opportunities to engage in meaningful reflection on
their own ideas, beliefs, and preconceptions, Zeiderman argues that texts taken from contexts that are different from
ours either in age or in place can give us the distance we need in order to fully understand and appreciate the place
of the ideas they express in our own lives.

us both how to critically read difficult texts and to collaborate with one another in analyzing and evaluating them. In philosophy proper, on the other hand, while texts still play a very central role in our dialogues, there is a more Socratic element at play as well: discussions are often framed by a central question. Conferences are usually structured around a single topic or a question that acts as a selective criterion for the various texts and presentations that will be involved in that conference. Dialogue in philosophy offers an arena for the evaluation of texts or positions, an arena in which differing individual perspectives come into contact, and in which a number of different texts, thinkers, or possibilities can be effectively considered. So often, for us (as philosophers, or as first-world educators and students), the goal is not to liberate ourselves from oppression, nor is it to answer a truly fundamental question of the Socratic type. Rather, our goal is to engage ourselves in an ongoing conversation that has been framed by the thinkers who preceded us and that will be continued by the thinkers who follow us. In this sense, our concern with texts reflects this ongoing discourse.

*5. The Content of the Discussion*

One of the most striking features of both Socratic and Freirean dialogue is the centrality and significance of questions. Both types of dialogue implicitly acknowledge that, in order to pursue thought as a creative act (or as an act of creation), we must know how to ask new questions, as they are the means which enable us to get beyond the given, the established, or the known. While this claim may seem obvious, its many implications are less immediately apparent.

For example, an emphasis on the question suggests a way out of the problem of infinite regress in hierarchized teacher-student relationships. This infinite regress consists in the fact that, in any educational setting that makes the student subject to the teacher, that puts the student in a disempowered position with respect to the teacher and that treats the teacher as the primary

legitimate thinker or the legitimating source of knowledge, we must eventually ask the question, "What happens when the student has reached the limit of the teacher's ability to teach?" In order to maintain the idea of progress in thought or in science, we must accept this dynamic: the student will outgrow the teacher. According to this model, the student will eventually need a new teacher in order to truly surpass her old teacher; once this new teacher is found, both teacher and student settle back into the comfortable hierarchy which assigns to one authority and activity and to the other passivity and receptivity (and, at times, simply obedience).

The problem with this model is clear. When the student has surpassed all of her teachers, we assume that she is ready to "strike out on her own," to make discoveries of her own, to contribute to advances in her field. But nothing about the student's education thus far has prepared her to be an authority, or to perform without an external authority monitoring or even directing her from without. As long as her education has included no training or practice in the independent determination of subjects, methods, and conclusions, or, more importantly, in the evaluation of those new conclusions, the student has been trained in the art of being a student and not in that of being a thinking agent, an expert, or an authority in her own right. As long as she has remained dependent (either actually or implicitly) on a more experienced teacher for guidance, for direction, or for motivation, she has not been exposed to the true conditions under which advancements in knowledge occur. While it may be perfectly true that she is able to abstract from her experiences in solving ever more complex problems in order to apply them more generally to the solving of as-yet-undefined problems, this transformation from student to authority in fact requires a much more fundamental leap. The gap between the solution of a problem and the discovery of that problem as a problem is not one "in degree" but one "in kind." Insofar as our training extends only as far as the answering of questions, we will not yet have

learned how to ask them: to recall an earlier caveat from Deleuze, "[a]s if we would not remain slaves so long as we do not control the problems themselves, so long as we do not possess a right to the problems, to a participation in and management of the problems" (*Difference* 158).

Similarly, in a classroom setting built around lectures and the one-way transfer of information, the expectation that an essay is an effective or accurate way of gauging student understanding and performance fails in significant ways. Beyond the content of the classroom, students have spent the term learning to absorb and, if they are lucky, to process information. But essay writing also entails the generation of valid, relevant, and interesting claims; the process of exploring and fleshing out arguments in support of those claims; the organization of ideas; the articulation of descriptions and explanations—and none of these necessary elements of essay writing are cultivated or even called into play by the lecture-oriented classroom. To recall an earlier image, I cannot learn to build a car by seeing someone drive a car; the product is distinct from the process that has created it. It is naïve to assume that an exposition in the form of an essay will offer an accurate representation of the student's learning over the course of this class when the skills necessary to create it have not been addressed.

Once again, we have drawn an extreme and even caricatured depiction of traditional teacher-student relationships. What teacher maintains her student in a position of absolute and perpetual dependence? What student would accept it? Students are in fact given greater or lesser degrees of freedom in determining the subject and course of their own explorations, these freedoms varying by school, program, discipline, level, etc. However, the appearance of this hierarchized teacher-student relationship may change drastically while the underlying dynamic remains largely unchanged. As long as the intellectual authority is vested primarily in the teacher and the student is viewed either explicitly or implicitly as fundamentally dependent upon the

teacher for guidance—i.e., as long both teacher and student do not explicitly and implicitly acknowledge the student's autonomy as a legitimate, knowing and thinking subject—the form of this relationship remains congruent with the caricature sketched above. This model leaves the student on her own to discover what it means to wield intellectual authority and to create knowledge. In effect, it leads her by the hand to the frontier and, unable to lead her further, abandons her there.[29]

The resolution of this educational regress may be as simple (and as profound) as a pedagogical shift in emphasis from answers to questions, from solutions to problems. The moment of creation in thought and the possibility for discovering something new reside in the ability to ask new questions, which will point subsequent research in new directions. (That is, the student will need a both compass and practice in orienteering—to say nothing of a sense of adventure—when she is left alone at the frontier.) Whereas a lecture concerns itself primarily with answering questions, a dialogue proceeds by making use of a natural fluctuation between questions and responses; each question calls for set of responses and each set of responses entails a new set of questions. The phrasing and content of Socrates' questions, once again, render them more akin to statements than authentic problems—betraying them as what Deleuze would call "neutralized doubles" of propositions (*Difference* 156). Furthermore, as we have seen, Socrates asks most of the questions. While it may be the case that the central question of the dialogue has been posed by someone else, or that the inquiry has temporarily been given a certain direction by

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[29] This narrative bears some resemblances to the Platonic allegory of the cave, but it is in fact different in fundamental ways. To transpose this account into the setting of the allegory, this kind of education would occur if the interlocutor were not in fact fundamentally silent, but instead explained the experience and the meaning of each successive revelation, each new dimension encountered by the prisoner. Instead of turning the freed prisoner and allowing her to observe and to interpret what she is seeing, this interlocutor would hurry her out of the cave, telling her what she is seeing in an attempt to see it for her and to allow her to skip over the difficult hiatus between observation and meaning. This freed prisoner would be much less prepared to take over the exploration when she is abandoned at the mouth of the cave—and thus, this abandonment is much less educative than that portrayed in the original allegory.

one of the interlocutors' questions, Socrates' own questions still tend to dominate the inquiry at the level of each individual contribution. His comments often aim at breaking down large questions into smaller questions or possible responses, at evaluating those options, at determining the next question that will allow the inquiry to proceed toward its goal—and each of these activities implies a great deal of analytical and organizational skill. If nothing else, they imply that Socrates possesses a highly developed sense for what is important in an inquiry and for what will bear fruit. In these situations, Socrates as teacher does in fact model some ideal of how investigations should proceed (he is orderly, rigorous, logical, etc.) and thus suggests an ideal *product* of a discussion (i.e., a well developed account). In turn, however, he obscures the process, the work done to produce this product. We see only the well-structured and well-reasoned presentation of ideas and questions but we do not thereby see how we can learn to reason.

On the other hand, Freire calls his very method of dialogical education "problem-posing education," putting the emphasis on the problematic nature of what is presented in that classroom. While it may still be the task of the Freirean educator to pose the central question of the discussion, the responses to these questions are the domain and responsibility of the participants. The participants themselves do the bulk of the work in conducting the analysis, posing and exploring intermediate questions, presumably with some guidance or prompting from the educator in the event that they get sidetracked or stymied. Ultimately, the observations they make about the "text" or object, their insights, associations, and analyses, constitute and drive the dialogical exploration.

The problem of learning how to reason is central to why Freirean questioning departs so significantly from Socratic questioning. In a Freirean dialogue, while we do not get the same

detailed portrayal of the process, Freire is careful to emphasize the importance of starting from the experience and worldview of the participants; this emphasis suggests that the participants' questions are correspondingly more present and more important there. Again, the reason for this shift in activity and emphasis is that Freirean dialogue is intimately concerned with the participants themselves, with their development as thinkers and humanized beings, and with their acquiring the skills of critical reasoning and an awareness of their own agency. Being active in a dialogue means practicing the critical thinking that dialogue requires, and it is only through this practice that we can truly learn to reason.

The kinds of questions asked in each model of dialogue likewise reflect this shift in emphasis. As mentioned above, the very phrasing of Socrates' questions often limits their possible responses from the outset. Socratic questions more or less imply their answers, but Freirean questions, on the other hand, must be open-ended. Because the bulk of the work is to be done by the participants, the questions posed to them cannot be overly prescriptive or overly analyzed in advance. They must issue a genuine invitation to reflection, and false questions (whose answers seem already to be known to the questioner) are rarely capable of inspiring this kind of response.

The Freirean question is much closer to kind of questions suitable to the proposed model of dialogue. Participants respond with genuine engagement when the leader asks genuine questions,[30] and so the questions posed in a discussion must respect the complexity of the subject under discussion and the plurality of experiences participants may have with it. If the dialogue is to offer the opportunity for participants to truly and profoundly examine their lives, their experiences, and their world, if they are to practice critical reasoning in their responses to the

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[30] And, inversely, asking false or leading questions is often the quickest way to squelch genuine engagement. For a longer discussion of the term "genuine" and its role in this essay, see "On the Genuine" (177ff, below).

question, if they are to grow as much as thinkers as they do as knowers, then the questions posed in a discussion must be genuine,[31] first and foremost, and when an answer is in fact held or known in advance it must be an answer the questioner is willing to revise. Participants must not be put in the position of merely guessing at the questioner's intent.

To a large extent, this exploration of the question in a discussion calls for an examination of its counterpart—i.e., the kind of response that is expected or desired in a given dialogue. Whereas the responses in a Platonic dialogue can so often be reduced to simple affirmatives or denials, or to the selection of a single option from a list of choices given by Socrates, the proposed model's expectations for dialogue differ significantly from Plato's. If dialogue is to truly present us with the opportunities to develop our thinking in collaboration with others, interlocutors must all take up active roles not only in speaking but in assuming responsibility for the content and direction of the discussion. In this sense Freire's insistence on the individual autonomy of his discussion participants comes much closer to what we might expect out of our interlocutors. Individual participants must take responsibility for responding to the central questions of the dialogue. Offering possible hypotheses and working to test those hypotheses, suggesting connections, making observations, and sharing insights all fall within the purview of our philosophical interlocutors. Perhaps even more importantly, our interlocutors should always be willing to provide an account (or to work to uncover an account) for the assertions made in a dialogue. It is not up to the discussion leader to test statements for their stability or veracity; rather, each individual must engage in the work of articulating the reasons supporting and motivating each of the claims they make in a discussion. Breaking the interlocutors free from the constraints imposed on the Socratic interlocutors means that the dialogue that results may in fact

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[31] Howard Zeiderman, of Touchstones Discussion Project, also elaborates on this need for the questions asked in a dialogue to be genuine and open ended.

be open-ended, dynamic, and constituted by many different and distinct voices. Only the true

exercise of autonomous agency, the genuine interplay of a multitude of voices, can ultimately

overcome the linearity of lecture-model of education—a linearity that remains more or less

preserved even in the Socratic dialogues.

*6. The Aim of the Discussion*

In many ways, the proposed model shares in the aims of its dialogical precursors, but its context

is quite different from theirs. On the one hand, the questions that plagued Socrates remain intact,

robust, and troubling; we can continue to ask ourselves about beauty, about virtue, about justice,

and about the nature of reality, about the things themselves, without depleting or diminishing the

urgency or wholeness of those questions. And Freire himself asserts the continuing relevance of

his approach by acknowledging that first-world students are also in need of liberation; there are

forms of alienation particular to first-world students that also separate those students from a

realization of the fullness of their humanity.[32] On the other hand, modern academia is not

Athenian academia, and first-world education does not begin with the same levels or kinds of

alienation that Freire worked so hard to overcome. Thus, the proposed model of dialogue must

also depart in significant ways from these existing models.

The aim of our philosophical discussions is bound up with the questions that opened this

very dissertation. We aim at truth, or at certainty, at solidity, at consensus, at utility or

practicality—in many ways, we aim at something that we have trouble believing in, even

something whose existence we have in fact discounted or disallowed. But the fact remains that

we engage in dialogue in order to learn, to develop our thoughts, to see in new ways, to be

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[32] For more on this point, see Shor and Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation,* Chapter 5: "Do First-World Students Need Liberating?" (121-141).

challenged by the voices of others, and to further advance the splintered and fragmented

conversation that we call philosophy. To ask about the aim of these discussions is to ask about

the aim of philosophy itself; and to attempt to answer that question at best oversimplifies the true

scope of this discipline. The aim, here, is simply to philosophize—but to do so *collaboratively*,

in a particular way that implicitly acknowledges the importance of the many voices, worldviews,

and personalities that surround us. Thus, this dialogue includes an emphasis on liberation, insofar

as this is a necessary component of philosophy, but it also moves beyond this propaedeutic to

discover new truths, new insights, and new questions.

*7. Dialogue Distinguished from Debate: The Friend in Philosophy.*

One final clarification can help to characterize the kind of dialogue that this project is attempting

to encourage, and that is the oft-collapsed distinction between dialogue and debate. Plato and

Socrates, in their own time, were already having to make this distinction:

> …[I]f the questioner were one of those wise men with a bent for strife and
> contention, I would tell him, "That's what I said.  And if I don't speak correctly,
> it's your task to take up the argument and refute it." But if, being friends as both I
> and you are now, they should want to have a discussion with one another, then
> surely a somehow more gentle and more dialectical way of answering is required.
> And it is perhaps more dialectical to answer not only with the truth, but also
> through those things which he who is being questioned could agree that he knows.
> (*Meno* 75c-d)

Here Socrates describes the crucial difference in the way that dialogue is approached (i.e., by

those who are like friends) and the way a debate is approached (as if by competitors). The friend

speaks the truth as he sees it, as openly and honestly as possible, but he also speaks in a manner

in which he believes he will be understood (i.e., "through those things which he who is being

questioned could agree that he knows"). It is easily granted that one cannot speak Greek to one

who doesn't know the language and expect to be understood. But it is also the case that we each

develop and speak in our own particular dialects, that long-time friends develop ways of

speaking and interacting that become increasingly particularized and specific, as reliant upon idiom, inflection, gesture, and history as upon the words themselves. We alter our ways of speaking for the different scenarios and groupings in which we find ourselves: we speak differently at home with our family than we do at work with our coworkers, differently with our superiors than with our colleagues. When speaking in a genuine discussion, our primary aim or motivation is the inquiry or subject itself, the growth of our understanding, and perhaps something like "truth"; the other people involved in the discussion are also seeking this and, in their seeking, offer us many more opportunities to find this truth. Correspondingly, our desire to hear from them and to communicate effectively with them must manifest in our speaking as clearly and as articulately as possible. We must desire first and foremost to be understood by our partners in the discussion, and this will inform the way in which we formulate and present our ideas.

If we are debating, on the other hand, then someone stands to win and someone stands to lose. As noted earlier, this new polarity in the dialogue serves to disrupt or supplant our efforts to collaboratively explore our subject; our collaboration in search of a third term instead becomes a binary struggle between two poles (or, more precisely, for or against a single pole). We are no longer interested in learning about the subject; we are rather interested in learning only what will help us to come out ahead, to outdo the other, to best our opponent. This stance is in fact diametrically opposed to how one should behave in a dialogue, because if "truth" or growth or discovery or development is our concern, we must relinquish all of the claims of the ego. Where we desire above all to be changed, we cannot be committed to immovability. If we desire to learn, we must not be determined to remain unmoved—and yet this is the standard of success in a debate. In a debate, I have opponents, competitors; in a dialogue, I have friends.

Above, Socrates pointed out that the dynamic of friends in conversation is "more gentle and more proper to discussion." However, Deleuze, both in his own work and in his collaborations with Guattari, raises pointed questions about the worth of the friend in this setting. For example, in *Proust and Signs*, friendship is linked with the unproblematic "good will" of thought that motivates "arbitrary and abstract" insights of philosophy; these "truths of philosophy are lacking in necessity and the mark of necessity" (95). The image of the friend, in other words, is incompatible with the violence inherent in the encounter that alone can give rise to meaningful and "necessary" truths.[33] This sentiment is echoed later, in Deleuze's work with Guattari in *What Is Philosophy?*: while they emphasize the importance of the creation of new concepts in the practice of philosophy, they also argue that "The idea of a Western democratic conversation between friends has never produced a single concept" (5-6). According to Deleuze and Guattari, there is something about friendship that actually seems to inhibit properly philosophical activity. This conflict should lead us to return to this question, in order to take it up and consider it anew: Is there a place for the friend in philosophy?

Nietzsche gives voice to a strong formulation of the argument against the usefulness of friends in the difficult tasks of thinking. One of the characteristics of friends that motivates our desire for them and underlies our deep need for them is the respite they provide from a life otherwise uncertain and punctuated by struggle. These " 'good friends'…are always too lazy and think that as friends they have a right to relax" (*Beyond Good and Evil* 39-40, §27). The friend is in fact someone with whom we can relax, draw a breath in safety, protected by the companionship of one who has been shown to have our best interests at heart. The friend offers us the prospect of a relationship relatively free of criticism, where our flaws are tolerated with

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[33] Cf. "Misosophy" (53ff) and "The Encounter" (64ff) in Chapter One, here.

good will and good humor, a relationship in which we simply do not have to attempt to impress anyone. Insofar as our lives involve a great deal of striving, friendship provides a space of freedom and enjoyment. The danger here is precisely this—that the friend offers us a place free of striving and struggle. But in fact it is through striving and struggle that we learn and grow. In this sense, the friend does in fact inhibit thought. If thought is indeed compelled or betrayed, if "everything begins with misosophy" (Deleuze, *Difference* 139), then the friend is the one who allows us to stop thinking.

However, when Freire argues a need for love and trust as components crucial to a dialogue, he seems to call for a friendship of sorts (a relationship based on love) between the participants of a dialogue. In reflecting on the formative elements that came together to inform his being as an educator—i.e., how he became "Paulo Freire"—he finishes by saying, "the greatest source for all the things together helping me really is and was the relationships with the people… Loving people" (*We Make the Road by Walking* 247). Here, he quite explicitly emphasizes the importance of these loving relationships and friendships to the work that he came to do in dialogue and education.

There are a number of ways in which we might understand the value Freire places on the friend. In the first place, dialogue at its fullest and most transformative is tremendously demanding work, requiring a great deal of patience, fortitude, and even emotional strength. For Freire, dialogue is also the means to an end that involves humanization and, fundamentally, liberation. When Freire includes "love" in his matrix of dialogue, he describes it in opposition to domination: "Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation" (*Oppressed* 89). Freire is here highlighting the fact that he engages in dialogue in

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order to join with his interlocutors in their project of liberation, and this willingness to stand alongside another in their struggle, to stake one's own life in that other's struggle, and yet to avoid the temptation to liberate the other from without, must be motivated by a deep and fundamental love.

If I consider dialogue merely with reference to its benefits to myself—its ability to confront me with new ideas and perspectives and thus to engage me actively in the process of thinking—then I may well find that conversing with my friends tends rather to frustrate this project than to advance it. However, Freire is determined to honor the fundamental, irreducible humanity of each member of the dialogue. Freirean dialogue always aims beyond the insights and the growth of any single member; it aims at the liberation and humanization of *every* member. In this sense, the concern and affection the member of a Freirean dialogue has for her interlocutors echoes something very like the friendship that otherwise seems so problematic.

There is yet another way in which the friend may have a privileged place in the practice of philosophy. Working and thinking with friends whom I love and trust allows me to be more courageous and more willing to openly confront ideas that challenge and even threaten me. If it is true that the encounter with new objects and ideas is a crucial moment of thinking, then my willingness to engage in these encounters directly, rather than avoiding or fleeing them, has a direct impact on my ability to think. Moments of genuine learning—insofar as they suggest the most radical of transformations within us—frequently occasion feelings of intense fear and vulnerability; the presence of a friend I love and trust, on the other hand, may give me the reassurance and the courage I need in order to unflinchingly examine what has been revealed to me.

The presence of the friend may help us in the practice of philosophy in one final way.

While it is often the case that the friend is one with whom we agree, there is tremendous value in a close friend with whom we disagree. To be asked to explain my views by someone I respect and admire deeply, for whom I feel a great deal of affection, and with whom I know I disagree, is as profound a call to serious and meaningful discourse as any I have yet encountered. Name calling is, of course, out of the question, as are easy or flippant answers; soapboxing is easy when one is preaching to the choir. Screaming in inarticulate anger and frustration has no place here. When asked, calmly, straightforwardly *"What is it you believe?",* first I must step back and breathe. I must ask myself what I really know, assemble my explanations, try to separate the fear, frustration, and anger from the people and principles and complexities involved. I must decide whether I believe what I believe because I want it to be true, because it benefits me, or whether I have good reasons for my assertions. I must assume good will rather than picking a fight, and above all I must proceed respectfully, meaningfully, authentically, openly. If I genuinely want to engage in discourse, if I genuinely want to communicate my beliefs, then I must do so as directly and persuasively as possible—while, at the same time, my love and respect for my friend prevents me from simply manipulating her into accepting my claims. This kind of discourse between friends, supported by a framework of deep mutual respect and affection that we both know will persist through any of our disagreements, demands all of my faculties and skills and forces me to ever higher levels of awareness and self-examination.

*8. On the Genuine*

The word "genuine has emerged continually here, reasserting itself, resurfacing throughout this attempt to characterize and explore the new dimensions of thought and the demands of dialogue. There is a sense in which both thought and dialogue have been treated as possessing two primary modes, one pure and the other suspect, one genuine and the other specious. Genuine dialogue

and genuine thought are repeatedly distinguished from their counterparts, the pretenders to

dialogue and imitators of thought. This word itself requires acknowledgement, at the very least.

We must finally ask, "What do we mean by 'genuine'?"[34]

Dialogue itself is the external form or manifestation that supports something

fundamentally important to human life and experience: discourse, with its roots in thought itself.

The elements and structure of dialogue function to open a dialogical space in which ideas can be

acknowledged, explored, developed, analyzed, shared, and transformed. The power of dialogue

lies in this ability to provide space for such reflection on ideas, but this exploration in turn gives

rise to an even more profound possibility: dialogue presents its subjects with the opportunity to

explore, develop, and transform themselves along with the ideas they consider and the other

subjects who consider along with them. The word 'genuine' continually reemerges, however,

because the externally described dialogue is only the shape in which such transformative

discourse may take place. It is the external form that exists to support an intellectual activity (i.e.,

discourse, or philosophical inquiry). However, this external form is more easily observable,

easily replicable, easily controllable. We describe dialogue in terms of elements that are

necessary but not sufficient. The external form of dialogue is only 'genuine' insofar as it does in

fact maintain and support this internal activity of reflection and exchange. Dialogue can be

imitated or appropriated in forums in which free and open reflection is not in fact desired or

cultivated. Thus, 'genuine dialogue' refers to this combination of form and content, the external

elements of the dialogue's structure combined with an intellectual motivation, the determination

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[34] In this essay, "genuine" and "authentic" are treated as synonyms, despite their slightly different connotations. The word "genuine" carries traces of its original connection with the notion of generation, and implies a familial tie or line of descent. The word "authentic," on the other hand, conveys a more immediate connection; it shares a root with "author," and explicitly evokes an immediate relationship between a creator and his creation, or an author and his words. Both the Greek and Latin precursors of this word carry the meaning of something which has been "written in the author's own hand." For additional information, see W. W. Skeat, *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language.*

to engage in an activity of collaborative reflection or inquiry.

The word 'genuine' also reflects dialogue's radical opposition to deception. Deception and manipulation of others emerge as attempts to enforce a singular will or privilege, that of an individual over a group, a group over an individual, or one group over another. Fundamentally, deception attempts to bypass conversation or collaboration; it passes on or withholds information for the express purpose of eliciting a certain action or reaction on the part of its interlocutor. The deceiver, in manipulating the information available to the deceived, expressly intends to control the thoughts or actions of another thinking subject. Thus the deceiver treats the deceived as a degraded or at least passive object—to be led, shaped, tolerated, accommodated, changed, or destroyed, but always fundamentally *to be acted upon*. Deception does not simply fails to promote dialogue, it specifically and deliberately inhibits it.

We are each susceptible to self-deception as well, however, and this susceptibility constitutes an even more formidable problem for genuine dialogue. Whereas the deception of others arises as a deliberate attempt to forestall open communication and discussion, the deception of oneself likewise prevents us from achieving meaningful or "true" insights. Self-deception causes us to ignore uncomfortable information, to avoid problems, or even to gloss over our own desires and motivations. This lack of awareness of our own desires, beliefs, and motivations may lead us to unconsciously or unintentionally exploit others in order to bring about the results or events that will benefit or satisfy us. In the end, self-deception throws up barriers to healthy relationships with others, preventing us from acknowledging our own motivations and weaknesses in order to connect meaningfully and primarily with other human beings.[35]

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[35] This "self-deception" is one of Sartre's main concerns in his exploration of bad faith (see *Being and Nothingness*, Chapter Two, "Bad Faith").

Both deception of oneself and deception of others threaten to destroy or undermine the forum for open and honest communication between disparate individuals by violating the trust that Freire sees as being so essential to dialogue. At the most fundamental level, dishonesty destroys the very basis for useful and effective communication with others; i.e., if each conversation is to be essentially a wrestling match, each speaker attempting to impose his will on the other or to force the other into a particular position, then that forum becomes useless for philosophical discourse. There is no striving for discovery or greater understanding; there is only the attempt to win. But because so much deception is subconsciously or unconsciously undertaken, it cannot be easily eliminated from dialogue. Its elimination must always be conscious and deliberate, and it requires an ongoing commitment to honesty and self-reflection. Genuine dialogue has no place for deliberate misrepresentation or for "spin"; it can only be built on the real and open effort of its members to present and portray things as they seem to be. I cannot always be sure of seeing the "truth" of matters—especially since this very word has become so complex and so problematic—but I can dedicate myself to describing those matters faithfully as they appear to me, without leaving out confusing elements or imputing value judgments, and by selecting my vocabulary and language in order to give my listeners the clearest and most complete account of my own understanding of that appearance.

This faithful representation of the way things appear to me entails ongoing and continual work to deepen my own self-reflection, the constant determination to uncover, acknowledge, and remove layers of self-deception from my own perception and reflection. It requires a radical commitment to honesty with myself and with others, as well as the courage to uncover and acknowledge appearances that may be uncomfortable or even threatening to me. In this sense, dialogue (and any philosophical discourse) relies on the individual dedication and commitment

of each of its members; it cannot force the kind of honesty and self-reflection that it requires, but it also cannot exist without them. While the philosophical discourse that arises within dialogical space relies on the thoughtfulness and dedication of the various interlocutors, the very structure of the dialogue that opens such a space relies on those members to engage with one another openly and honestly, in order to make dialogical space itself possible.

The 'genuine' has a specific manifestation in honesty, but it extends beyond what is implied in that term. 'Honesty' is, to a certain extent, a negative term, suggesting an absence of active deception or falsehood. However, dialogue requires a more active and positive commitment of its members. A promise to tell the truth is a very different beast than a promise not to lie. While interlocutors must be honest, they must also be *sincere*; they must positively dedicate themselves to openness and transparency, they must be forthcoming, without guile; they must eschew masks and personae. This demand for sincerity reflects the extent to which "we are in the site of the experiment"; we ourselves, as interlocutors, engage not only as reflecting subjects but also as subjects of reflection. Our deepest beliefs, our deeply personal senses of right and wrong, the morality that we not only avow but enact all become active and acknowledged dimensions of the philosophical exchange. (Or rather, these elements of ourselves are always active, and so they must be acknowledged as dimensions in our discourse.)

Thus, "genuine dialogue" is genuine in two ways: first, it signifies that the form of dialogue supports and maintains a free and open discourse (i.e., it is not an imitation of dialogue attempting to advance a particular agenda or perspective); and second, it indicates the depth of the commitment to honesty and sincerity required of each of its members. That is, the dialogue itself is "genuine," and so are its interlocutors. Insofar as such discourse is also at the heart of philosophy itself, the model of dialogue becomes particularly crucial in helping to create space

for philosophical discourse.

### *Dialogue, the New Image of Thought, and the Rhizome*

Chapter One discussed four of the alternatives that Deleuze proposes to the postulates of the image of thought.[36] Now that we have explored two existing models of dialogue and proposed our own, we can examine the extent to which dialogue can in fact make a space for each of these alternatives. As we will see, dialogue not only accommodates but often requires these alternative and manifold possibilities for thought.

First, whereas a lecture model of education relies upon students to be self-motivated enough to learn and process all that they are given in a lecture, dialogue calls them into an active participation in the learning process. In many ways, the minimum qualification for the student in a lecture hall is silence (and a sleeping student is often quite silent). In a dialogue, however, each student is incorporated into the group in a way that demands his conscious attention. The dialogue requires active participation of its students, as their contributions give it shape, substance, and meaning. In this way, it invites each of its participants to challenge the others and puts each in the position of being challenged; in effect, it compels each to confront the others, and compels the group to confront a problem. The contributions of its participants constitute the very substance of the dialogue, and it is increasingly difficult to remain untouched or inactive in the face of this activity. The misosophist, the one who may be reluctant to engage in the work of thinking, is confronted by the need to consider and reflect upon what is said in a dialogue, to

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[36] To recap: in place of a natural curiosity and intellectual good will that spontaneously seek out knowledge, Deleuze posits a "misosophy" that must be "forced to think." Instead of a faculty of recognition that is readily capable of identifying truth, Deleuze emphasizes an encounter through which we find ourselves confronting the different, the unexpected, and the puzzling. Rather than prioritizing the possession of answers or solutions, Deleuze instead dwells on the search for them, and on the questions that we use to examine and analyze the unexpected or the problematic when we find ourselves confronted with it. And finally, for Deleuze, it is not knowledge that exemplifies the highest achievements of our thought but learning itself, the ability to emerge from the encounter with the unexpected having discovered something new, or even a new way of thinking.

offer suggestions, to point out problems, to ask questions, and to be questioned in turn—in short, to think. Moreover, while there may be a natural inertia in thought or a natural reluctance to think, the positive, conscious desire and determination to learn may in fact be the most effective way of addressing that inertia. Deliberately engaging ourselves in a collaborative enterprise of examination, one that relies on curiosity and the determination to learn, and one that puts us in a position to be relied upon by others, can help us to counteract the forces within us that shrink from the difficult work of critical thinking.

Second, this confrontation itself may be a form of the encounter that Deleuze discusses. The fact that in a dialogue each participant is confronted with the opinions, beliefs, and perspectives of the other participants (to say nothing of those presented in the text) means that they are increasingly likely to be exposed to new and surprising insights. Deleuze suggests that our activity of thought is more regularly and more effectively called into play by a perplexity, a conundrum, an encounter with a problem that demands an answer or response of some kind. He is not alone in this assertion: John Dewey, in *How We Think*, suggests that "[t]hinking begins in what may fairly enough be called a *forked-road* situation, a situation which is ambiguous, which presents a dilemma, which proposes alternatives" (10-11). We might even return to Socrates as a precursor of this sentiment. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates outlines a number of basic insights of common sense that nonetheless come into conflict with one another when they are applied to actual objects and situations in the world: "these three agreed-upon things themselves do battle among themselves in our soul" in these applications to certain real-world situations. Theaetetus admits that the contemplation of these things puts him in a "state of wonder" and that "sometimes when I look into them I whirl around in the dark." Socrates, in response, seems to approve this state in which Theaetetus finds himself: "this experience, wondering, belongs very

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much to the philosopher, since there is no other source of philosophy than this" (155a-d). In this situation, it is the tension or conflict between accepted or existing elements of a logical system that occasions the feeling of "wonder" that in turn gives rise to philosophy. Each of the thinkers thus considered seem to give particular weight to this perplexity, and it is the constant exposure to other ways of thinking, other constitutive assumptions, and other worldviews that presents both the opportunity and the demand for this encounter, this perplexity, these ambiguities, this wonder.

Third, dialogue acknowledges the primacy of questions over answers, or at the very least, the equality of or balance between questions and answers, problems and solutions. Answers are useless if the question is not well-phrased, and, according to Deleuze, a well-phrased question even implies its own answer.[37] Dialogue allows the focus to be put on the phrasing of good questions, rather than on the answers given to external questions. This commitment is particularly Freirean, rather than Socratic, as Socrates (again, on the naïve reading) presents us with a perfect example of the kind of questioning that Deleuze does not approve of—the question as neutralized double, the questioner as the master who retains control of the questions and asks them from outside, tasking the participants simply with responding well.

> We are led to believe that problems are given ready-made, and that they disappear in the responses or the solution. […] According to this infantile prejudice, the master sets a problem, our task is to solve it, and the result is accredited true or false by a powerful authority. It is a social prejudice with the visible interest of maintaining us in an infantile state, which calls upon us to solve problems that come from elsewhere, consoling or distracting us by telling us that we have won simply by being able to respond: the problem as obstacle and the respondent as Hercules. (Deleuze, *Difference* 158)

Rather than exerting their energies in the answering of a question whose importance has been

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[37] See Deleuze, *Difference* 159: "the solution necessarily follows from the complete conditions under which the problem is determined as a problem, from the means and the terms which are employed in order to pose it."

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determined by someone external to them, the participants in a dialogue engage in an intense apprenticeship in the craft of question-making, learning how to formulate questions that both clarify the nature of an object and indicate the paths along which further inquiry might lead. In brief, there are three moments of this apprenticeship in questions. First, the apprentices observe the leader's questions, and in this regular exposure to the kinds of questions asked by the discussion leader, participants may begin to get a sense for how these particular types of questions affect the dialogue that they initiate or sustain. Second, they observe the effect of these questions on themselves and on others. Participants also have the opportunity to observe their own responses to the questions asked by others; they will begin to get a sense for what makes certain questions compelling, invigorating the group and the dialogue, while others may even have a deadening influence on the energy of the group or may bring the dialogue to a standstill. Third, and perhaps most crucially, they practice questioning: the dialogue provides participants continual and ongoing practice in generating and formulating their own questions. In this activity, apprentices can see how others respond to these questions, they can learn how to pinpoint their own precise questions, how to articulate these questions precisely enough that others understand what is being asked. This process of practicing by trial and error is crucial to the participants' developing a sense for the deeply serious and demanding task of questioning.

Finally, Deleuze's emphasis on learning over knowledge (the last of the four alternatives discussed in Chapter One) is reflected in the implicit understanding that, in dialogue, the process by which we reach our comprehension of a topic or a question is just as important as the final formulation of that comprehension. Dialogue is itself a process of seeking out an answer or resolving a conundrum; it is an attempt to come to know something. At their best, lectures deliver comprehension, as a self-contained, self-sufficient, and completed product, and they

deliver it in abstraction from the process by which it was created, developed, and organized. The process of dialogue, however, begins from the initial reflections of the participants and uses these to move toward an eventual, more coherent, and more nuanced comprehension. It is not only the final product but this very movement that constitutes the aim of the dialogue; dialogue is as much concerned with process as with product. In the same spirit, Deleuze postulates that "it is from 'learning', not from knowledge, that the transcendental conditions of thought must be drawn" (*Difference* 166).

In these ways, the dialogue presents us with an approach that better reflects Deleuze's understanding of the way in which we think. Not only does it accommodate his "new" postulates of thought (or anti-postulates, as Deleuze might prefer), it takes them as foundational and builds an approach on them. The process of a dialogue, however, may be more immediately and completely related to the image of the rhizome presented in *A Thousand Plateaus* (and introduced here in the last Intermezzo, on the second stage of Deleuze's image of thought). The lecture model, for its own part, serves a very specific image of thought—the dogmatic or arborescent image: "The tree and the root inspire a sad image of thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a centered or segmented higher unity" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 16). The orator proceeds through an already developed, linear narrative that, even while it may present other viewpoints as alternatives or as objections, maintains its own cohesion and unity. The dialogical model, on the other hand, should not be mistaken for a pure rhizome, just as no actual, concrete phenomenon should be mistaken for the rhizome. The rhizome is an abstracted description of a certain kind of system, but all incarnated systems draw on a mix of arborescent and rhizomatic elements. And it is quite necessary that they should do this—no structure is possible in the absence of arborescence, and nothing is created without the rhizome.

The advantage of the dialogical method over the lecture is that the former more regularly and enthusiastically embraces the need for rhizomatic elements. Whereas the lecture format privileges the importance of structure at the cost of rigorous exploration, a dialogue makes full use of the creative possibilities that arise from the interaction and interpenetration of ideas considered as forming a rhizomatic matrix.

We can examine specifically the extent to which dialogue acknowledges and incorporates rhizomatic elements by comparing its characteristics with six principles identified by Deleuze and Guattari that characterize the rhizome (*Thousand* 7-13). These were briefly examined, above, with respect to Freirean dialogue, but they are analyzed a greater length here.

The principles of "connection and heterogeneity" imply that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (*Thousand* 7). Correspondingly, in a successful dialogue, exchanges of questions, ideas, and observations occur between any and all members of that dialogue. The dialogical method that relies too heavily on the discussion leader to frame the examination and to evaluate the comments made by the individual participants—thereby effectively filtering those contributions through the leader's own sensibility and imposing something like an artificial unity upon the group—falls short of the revolutionary powers of dialogue precisely in this failure to embrace its possible multivocality. When two people are willing to listen to each other and determined to be changed by the encounter, a conversation between them can be utterly transformative and deeply affecting. But the possibilities are multiplied when the conversation has multiple interlocutors. At any moment, any person may be inspired or perplexed by any other person; anyone may ask or respond to any question. Epiphanies, flashes of insight, and sudden understanding may be more frequent because we are all fascinated by slightly different things in slightly different ways, and dialogue allows us to

articulate our own realizations while also sharing those articulated by others. Both connection and heterogeneity contribute to the power of the interaction between interlocutors, precisely because what is so pregnant with possibility is the connection between differences. I am more challenged by someone whose perspective differs from mine than I am by someone who shares my views and my beliefs. On the other hand, I cannot be challenged by another's viewpoint if I am not willing to establish a genuine connection with them.

The principle of "multiplicity" opposes unity: "There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject... A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows)" (*Thousand* 8). A palpable disruption attends the addition or subtraction of a member in a discussion group. Whatever the initial size of a group—a class of twenty or a conversation between two—the addition or loss of a participant has a pronounced impact on the group and changes the conversation that is occurring or the conversation that is possible. Here, again, the fact that there are many people taking part in the conversation (and even within each person there are many possible viewpoints or considerations in play) helps to constitute the discussion as a multiplicity, or more precisely as an interaction of multiplicities. At any given point, the dialogue cannot be comprehensively described or exhaustively understood; it can only be experienced as a conversation in progress, in other words, as *movement*. The characterization presented by Deleuze and Guattari emphasizes this dynamic aspect of the rhizome by opposing lines to points, positing lines as exemplary of movement and points as indicative of stasis.

The principle of "asignifying rupture" follows in many ways from the foregoing principles, once again emphasizing the fecundity that is one of the rhizome's most significant

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and distinctive characteristics. "A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (*Thousand* 9). The difference between the tree and the rhizome on this point can be likened to two sets of numbers, one the countable set of all possible fractions, the other the uncountable set of all decimal numbers. Although there are an infinite number of both fractions and decimals, the number of decimals is a "larger" infinite because it is not countable: between any two decimals, there is an infinite number of intervening decimals. Like the set of fractional numbers, while the enumerations of an arborescent structure may go on indefinitely, there is some sense that the work left to be accomplished lies mostly outside of or beyond those enumerations that have already been established—not between them or within them. But the rhizome, like the set of decimal numbers, is capable of proliferating from any point; no statement is ever definitive or absolute, every movement is susceptible of further examination, elaboration, alteration. Each moment of a rhizome is prepared to give rise to a new flowering of activity and inquiry, as ceaselessly new and mysterious and uncountable as the set of decimal numbers. In a dialogue, lines of inquiry are frequently aborted, discarded, or even "shattered" by the examination that pursues them. When this occurs, the irruption of new questions or the re-introduction of old questions reinvigorates the dialogue, which starts up again as it moves in a new direction. Even when a line of inquiry is not deliberately or consciously abandoned, these irruptions sometimes occur naturally; the sudden flash of an insight can throw light on an old problem, establish a connection between disparate elements, or introduce a new line of inquiry that takes over from the old. While these moments of rupture would be particularly damaging in a lecture that attempted to deliver a unified and coherent account of a question or problem, they can be some of the most fecund and crucial of moments in the active search for answers. Dialogue thrives on inspiration and the ever-new epiphanies that come from

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without to interrupt it. Lectures also rely on inspiration, but only past or completed inspiration, on epiphanies that have already given rise to an account, that have been developed and codified and formulated into a finished product.

Finally, the principles of "cartography and decalcomania" hold that "a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model. […] The rhizome is altogether different, *a map and not a tracing*" (*Thousand* 12). A tracing attempts to replicate, to codify, to re-present, whereas a map suggests, gestures, and indicates. In a sense, the description of dialogue as a map rather than a tracing somewhat belies dialogue's insistence on the need for structure (and both Freire and Dewey are very clear and very firm on this point). However, this is where it is useful, once more, to remember that a dialogue is not itself a rhizome—it simply does a more effective job of combining and making use of the respective strengths of both the rhizome and the tree. The dialogue requires structure in order to survive, but it also capitalizes on an ability to recognize and take advantage of the organic development of a collaborative inquiry. Rather than the ultimately stultifying temptation to make a definitive statement about any given topic, the dialogue assumes the ultimately uncountable (and therefore infinitely discoverable) content of its object; that is, it constructs and revises maps rather than tracing exact outlines: "What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. […] The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation" (12). The goal of the map is active and aimed at further development—it is not a map to end all maps, but a guide for future maps; the goal of the tracing is the preservation of an exact image, one that will not flex and change with time but will rather remain constant and faithful to the original. That is,

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"the map has to do with *performance*, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged '*competence*'" (12-13). The dynamism of the map reflects the complexity of the world and the experiences that are the subjects of investigation, the objects of an encounter or an inquiry, as opposed to the stasis of knowledge communicated by a lecture.

Deleuze and Guattari's account of "micropolitics and segmentarity," detailed later in *A Thousand Plateaus* (208-231), can also help us to make sense of dialogue's suitability to the new possibilities of thought that arise from beyond the boundaries of the dogmatic image. Any human community, the authors tell us, is fundamentally and irreducibly segmented, and moreover it is segmented in many different ways. Within the large group, participants form many smaller groups, each of them granted a degree of cohesion by shared beliefs, shared traits, shared heritage, or shared experience. Even the individuals themselves are somewhat fragmented by the number of different segmentarities to which they feel an allegiance, and thus we may find within ourselves conflicts or tensions, shifting or split alliances, that tell us we are not in fact singularly unified or simple entities. What is more, even this fragmentation, this division into segmentarities, is itself fluid, dynamic, shifting. The groups to which I belong or with which I ally myself may change from moment to moment. My own convictions and beliefs may be swayed by the momentary prominence of one particular experience, desire, or reaction to things outside of me. We are divided and subdivided, both internally and externally, by ideologies, religions, politics, economics, culture, families, and friendships. A dialogue not only creates a space for these overlapping and interpenetrating communities, it relies on them; its richness and creativity most often thrive in the spaces opened up by the interaction of so many different segments. Whereas a lecture might either ignore the diversity of lives within its classroom or collapse their distinctions into a few categories that are easily manageable, the genuine dialogue

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strives precisely for the multivocality made possible by the complexity of human community.

The dialogue's segmentarity is enhanced by its relative lack of centralization or hierarchy. This notion of segmentarity, according to Deleuze and Guattari, arose first in the attempt to describe the internal organization of cultures which lacked a State apparatus capable of imposing order, and thus, it is quite appropriate to a dialogue whose "State apparatus" has been demoted to a supporting role. For the most part, the participants of a dialogue exist immanently with one another, on the same plane of "authority," none privileged over the others in terms of the right to speak up and contribute to a collective inquiry. The exception here, and the way in which something resembling a "State apparatus" is preserved in a dialogue, lies in the person of the discussion leader, who helps to provide a cohesion and a sense of unity to the work done by the group. However, the discussion leader does not centralize the dialogue, except insofar as she helps the group to work with a common sense of purpose. Her task is structural, and it does not determine the content of the conversation. Because the structural demands of the discussion leader have the potential to render invisible or unheard elements of the discussion that do not fit that structure, the discussion leader must be deeply committed to the demands of dialogue and to the work of hearing and making space for each of the voices represented in the discussion. In fact, one of the primary tasks of the discussion leader is precisely to make room for new voices and to point out the ways in which group dynamics may be leading to the dismissal or mishearing of other voices. The discussion leader must work to maintain the openness of the dialogue, in effect working to overcome the arborescent power structures that naturally arise when groups of people are left to organize themselves.[38] On occasion, the

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[38] On this note, Howard Zeiderman's work with Touchstones Discussion Project highlights and analyzes the tendency of groups to form factions, and emphasizes the importance of working actively to overcome this tendency. According to Zeiderman, this factionalizing element of group dynamics is one of the reasons that well-trained discussion leaders are so crucial to the formation of a healthy discussion dynamic.

discussion leader will in fact find herself in the position of having to make space even for voices that are not represented, precisely *because* they are not represented. This might involve pointing out manifestations of class privilege, the illusion of consensus, systematic or institutional oppression, incidental prejudice, etc.—any of the number of unseen and unexamined values or assumptions that may be informing the approach to the question before the group.

Deleuze and Guattari, rather than opposing segmentarity to any kind of State unity, instead identify two types of segmentarity, supple and rigid (*Thousand* 210-213).[39] Rigid segmentarities result when an organ of power begins to centralize or align the different segments within a grouping, with the effect of achieving an overall sense of cohesion or unity. Supple segmentarities, on the other hand, remain dynamic, resist centralization, and may end up proliferating rather than unifying. In the dialogue, this supple segmentarity manifests both in the diversity of participants and voices and in its tendency to generate new voices or new avenues of inquiry just as much as it encourages the confluence of voices in momentary agreements. Rather than taking a single position as dominant or privileged, the dialogue instead draws upon many different centers of power, a plurality of positions. Even when the dialogue itself is unified by a consistency and continuity in its multi-narrative flow, there remains the possibility that a side conversation will erupt; unable to restrain the insight or question, one participant will turn to another and engage in a momentary exchange. These exchanges, in turn, regularly feed back into the large group's dialogue and provide new impetus for the conversation. Or, sometimes, these side conversations will simply die out, of use only to those involved in them. Of course, one never knows when the fruits of that conversation will become relevant again, will erupt, irrupt, or interrupt once more, but in view of the entire group this time. Moreover, the dialogue itself has a

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[39] These are summarized by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus,* pages 212-13.

life of its own, lived beyond the temporal confines of a particular gathering or conversation, kept

alive in the smaller conversations between members of the group who happen to be friends, or

who happen to meet one another later on. Each of these groupings and dimensions, each of these

fragmented conversations and insights, belong to what is fundamentally radical about dialogue,

and help to constitute its supple segmentarity.

On the other hand, one of the dangers of this supple or "molecular" segmentarity is

"believing that a little suppleness is enough to make things 'better'" (Deleuze and Guattari,

*Thousand* 215). Supple segmentarity and molecular organization are not self-sufficient. As much

as it may seem diametrically opposed to its counterparts—rigid segmentarity and molar

organization—Deleuze and Guattari go out of their way to insist on the interpenetration of these

two different dynamics, these two systems:

> It is not enough, therefore, to oppose the centralized to the segmentary. Nor it is
> enough to oppose two kinds of segmentarity, one supple and primitive, the other
> modern and rigidified. There is indeed a distinction between the two, but they are
> inseparable, they overlap, they are entangled. […] Every society, and every
> individual, are thus plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the
> other *molecular*. If they are distinct, it is because they do not have the same terms
> or the same relations or the same nature or even the same type of multiplicity. If
> they are inseparable, it is because they coexist and cross over into each other.
> (213)

Thus, the dialogue also contains distinctly arborescent elements, without which the rhizomatic

elements would rot, atrophy, or consume themselves. For example, the rules governing behavior

in a dialogue, the text and the questions of the dialogue, and the leader of the dialogue all provide

an arborescent structure within which the rhizomatic elements of creativity, inspiration,

contradiction, and hypothesizing can all come into play. Perhaps a contribution introduces a new

concept, represents a lateral leap from the ongoing conversation, inserts a lacuna. What follows

may well ask for clarification or support from the original speaker, or it may take up an

examination or analysis of that concept; what results may in fact be a solidly formed connection

with the material discussed before, or at least a coherent account of the concept itself. The arborescent demand for clarification, explanation, and support helps to ground and even nourish the rhizomatic irruption of the new or the marginal. The rhizomatic derives support from the arborescent, while supplying the arborescent with new material for organization, categorization, articulation: "molecular escapes and movements would be nothing if they did not return to the molar organizations to reshuffle their segments" (216-17).

Yet another concept from the section on micropolitics and segmentarity in *A Thousand Plateaus* provides helpful ways of describing what happens in a dialogue. Since all communities are naturally and fundamentally segmented, State organs of power do not eliminate segmentation but rather organize these segmentations in ways that centralize and hierarchize them:

> The central State is constituted not by the abolition of circular segmentarity but by a concentricity of distinct circles, or the organization of a resonance among centers. *There are already just as many power centers in primitive societies; or if one prefers, there are still just as many in State societies.* The latter, however, behave as apparatuses of resonance; they organize resonance, whereas the former inhibit it. (211, emphasis in original)

The organization of resonance, an aligning of different segments or a congruence between them, is what allows for the installation of arborescent structures of power within a context of many coexisting and subsisting individual segmentarities. Resonance describes a communication between disparate elements or systems that are not in direct contact: the reverberation of a given string might set up a harmonic reverberation in a neighboring string, yet without recourse to direct contact or intervention. In the same way, in the social organization described by Deleuze and Guattari above, the original segments remain; they have simply been "tuned" or turned in a way that prevents them from challenging or frustrating the supplementary organs of power—and, in fact, they may even find themselves supporting such organs of power. This resonance serves to partially rigidify the various segments that fall within a field, holding them together in

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particular relations or arrangements, ultimately constraining, to some extent, their dynamism and their fluidity. Thus, segmentarity as first treated by Deleuze and Guattari might well be "centralized" by being made to resonate around a central State power.

The segmentarities implicated within in a dialogue, as already indicated, are manifold, disparate, and often conflicting. As a result, such a collection of individuals, ideas, experiences, and worldviews could not maintain its cohesion for long, if it weren't for the intervention of some kind of power to organize them and allow them to work collaboratively. The powers and rules that "organize resonance" in a dialogue have two effects: they maintain the dialogue's structural integrity and they help to encourage a cohesion or continuity within the fabric of the conversation itself. They help to create a space of communication without going so far as to centralize it, preserving the identity and integrity of its many interlocutors while at the same time lending the group as a whole a sense of cohesion. First, the object or text of the dialogue, the central questions of the dialogue, and the aim of any particular dialogue all help to provide a single logical structure that provides a space within which the rhizomatic flow of ideas can be cultivated. Without these "apparatuses of resonance" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 211), the efflorescence of the rhizome has no power to remain, and it runs the risk of squandering or even consuming itself; the ideas expressed in a dialogue remain simply propositions, unconnected to other ideas, and unsupported by a reasoned account. By informing and guiding the direction of the dialogue, the text and central questions help to galvanize the various contributions and participants so that they are capable of making connections and building on one another's insights. The second effect of resonance in dialogue concerns the flow of the conversation itself. A series of related statements, if they are not presented in ways that acknowledge and build upon their connections, runs the risk of remaining so many disconnected insights. The "popcorn" that

results may be thought provoking, but it ultimately has no power to create meaningful and rigorous accounts or analyses of the subject material. In asking that all participants listen closely to the progress of the conversation and contribute their own thoughts by integrating them with those that have come before, the dialogue establishes a narrative and multivocal flow capable of cultivating these meaningful accounts. The dialogue involves an element which organizes resonance, and thus behaves as an apparatus of power, even though the power of that apparatus is limited by the strongly rhizomatic development of thought within the dialogue. The presence of the widely varying interlocutors in the dialogue—and the implicit understanding that the richness of the dialogue is founded upon that very diversity—acts as a source of "primitive" or supple segmentarity, ensuring that the dynamic and the fluid always animate the structure that organized resonance has provided. One of the most important functions of the arborescent structure in a dialogue is to create and preserve a space in which this more strongly rhizomatic exchange can take place.

One final note is necessary to clarify the nature of the relationship between the rhizomatic and the arborescent here. There is a tension at issue in Deleuze's thought regarding precisely this relationship. At times, it seems quite clear that neither can do without the other, and further, neither can even be experienced without the other. The distinction between the rhizomatic and the arborescent, between supple and rigid segmentarities, between nomad and royal science, or between the State apparatus and its "outside," the war machine, is merely abstract.

> We are compelled to say that there has always been a State, quite perfect, quite complete. …But of greater importance is the inverse hypothesis: that the State itself has always been in a relation with an outside and is inconceivable independent of that relationship. (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 360)

The two poles always occur together and inform one another, and, to this extent, this interdependence and inseparability makes them equals. On the other hand, this very quote also

betrays Deleuze's preference for the rhizomatic, the supple, and the nomadic. The very words and phrases he and Guattari use to describe the two poles ally the State and the arborescent with the static, the fixed, the inflexible, the rigid—adjectives easily associated with death—while the rhizomatic is described in terms of its creativity, its activity, its proliferation—that is, its life. We are told that "the tree and root inspire a sad image of thought" (16). An automatic preference for the rhizomatic is perhaps a function of our current distrust of hegemonic States and their attendant apparatuses. The upsurge of theory and criticism exposing the exploitation inherent in the imperialistic relations so frequently established by states might well serve to make us suspicious of the very language Deleuze employs to describe this pole. Thus, we might grant, in theory, an equality between the poles, while maintaining a marked preference for only one of the two. Deleuze and Guattari themselves frame their preference in this way:

> We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes. (*Thousand* 15)

That is, while it is not possible to separate the rhizome from the tree, it is quite possible to privilege one and marginalize the other, and this is precisely what has happened in our "arborescent culture." In response to this particular situation, a historical primacy of the arborescent, we might very well champion the rhizomatic without contradicting a simultaneous recognition that the two poles are absolutely inextricable.

In contrast to this stance taken by Deleuze and Guattari, Freire's own approach is distinctly more balanced, more measured. Even while he takes his starting point from the need for liberation and humanization, dynamics very much allied with what Deleuze would call the rhizomatic, he is very careful to acknowledge the crucial role played by the "arborescent." Freire frames this tension between the poles of freedom and authority; his project aims at the realization

of human freedom by those who have been economically and culturally submerged in authoritarian and oppressive structures. However, even in this face of this very clear political project, Freire is adamant that "[f]reedom needs authority to become free" (Shor and Freire 91). That is, the dynamic of freedom or liberation that he advocates is inconceivable apart from its counterpart, authority.

Freire goes on to elaborate on the relationship between freedom and authority in a way that ultimately maps directly on to Deleuze and Guattari's position on the interpenetration of the rhizomatic and the arborescent, articulated above.

> The question nevertheless is for authority to know that it has its foundation in the freedom of the others, and if the authority denies this freedom and cuts off this relationship, this *founding* relationship, with freedom, I think that it is no longer authority but has become *authoritarianism*. (Shor and Freire 91, emphasis in original)

In this passage, Freire emphasizes not only freedom's need for authority but also authority's need for freedom. When preference is given to authority, to the detriment and marginalization of freedom, authority itself suffers, becomes perverted, and transforms into something else, something partial and dangerous, "authoritarianism." This is how Freire would describe the state of affairs that led Deleuze and Guattari to express their weariness and dissatisfaction with trees—a State whose exercise of authority has become cut off from its "founding relationship with freedom," a State which has simply become authoritarian. Freedom itself, however, has a great need for the structure and discipline provided by authority. When Freire claims that "[f]reedom needs authority to become free," he points to the essential distinction between freedom and permissiveness. A dialogue without this discipline is in fact more dangerous than a submission to an authoritarian teacher.

> A Mexican professor who thought like us (most of them were in the same perspective) said something very interesting. He said that a dialogical experience which is not based in seriousness, in competency, is *much worse* than a 'banking'

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experience where the teacher merely transfers knowledge. I am *absolutely* in agreement with him. From the point of view of the students, a dialogical teacher who is incompetent and not serious provokes worse consequences than a serious and well-informed 'banking' educator. …For example, the first one and the worst one is the testimony of irresponsibility, of intellectual irresponsibility. (Shor and Freire 80, emphasis in original)

For Freire, a robust conception of freedom must include intellectual responsibility, but this responsibility can only be cultivated and practiced in a milieu whose structure and discipline demands it.

In this respect, Freire's viewpoint aligns with that of John Dewey who, later in his career, took time to reflect on the development of the progressive education movement and even to level his own criticisms at it.

There is always the danger in a new movement that in rejecting the aims and methods of that which it would supplant, it may develop its principles negatively rather than positively and constructively. …A philosophy which proceeds on the basis of rejection, of sheer opposition, will neglect these questions. It will tend to suppose that because the old education was based on ready-made organization, therefore it suffices to reject the principle of organization *in toto*, instead of striving to discover what it means and how it is to be attained on the basis of experience. …When external authority is rejected, it does not follow that all authority should be rejected, but rather that there is need to search for a more effective source of authority. (*Experience and Education* 20-21)

The progressive education movement, with the best of initial intentions, went astray when it contented itself with a rebellion against the overbearing structures of traditional education. Thus, mere critique, mere reaction, without being supported by the creation of its own autonomous position, cannot suffice to address the problems of the existing system. Dewey and Freire agree that authority itself is not the enemy of freedom or of education, and that, instead of rejecting authority outright, we must find a kind of authority that is compatible with the freedom we are seeking to defend.

The lesson we might learn from the moderation of Freire and Dewey is a measure of caution in our approach to the balancing of the rhizomatic and the arborescent. It is easy to adopt

what Dewey refers to as an "*Either-Or*" philosophy, swinging from an initial predominance of the arborescent to an eventual predominance of the rhizomatic. In some sense, this is what Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on the rhizomatic might seem to suggest. However, Deleuze and Guattari themselves acknowledge at a number of points that the rhizomatic alone is insufficient and ultimately undesirable. For example, they link the most dangerous elements of fascism directly to the rhizome (in this case, the "molecular"): "We would even say that fascism implies a molecular regime that is distinct both from molar segments and their centralization. …[F]ascism is inseparable from a proliferation of molecular focuses in interaction…" (*Thousand* 214). In speaking of the fascism that arose in Nazi Germany under Hitler, they caution against "*[a] war machine that no longer had anything but war as its object* and would rather annihilate its own servants than stop the destruction. **All other dangers of the other lines pale by comparison**" (231, italics in original, bold added). Later in their text, the authors are somewhat more direct: "Smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. …Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us" (500). Despite the fact that they begin by claiming "We are tired of trees," Deleuze and Guattari also acknowledge that they must not simply champion the rhizome. They resist defining their own position negatively, as Dewey would say, although they tend to do so rather intermittently, and it can be easy to overlook these balancing moments. The authors considered here seem to agree on the need to strike a careful balance between these two poles: the rhizome and the tree, freedom and authority. However, in the end, whereas Deleuze and Guattari might seem to preserve a preference for the rhizomatic over the arborescent—albeit a largely pragmatic one—Freire's position serves to keep the need for a balance between them more immediately before our eyes.

  This chapter examined the many ways in which dialogue acknowledges and incorporates

rhizomatic elements that are left out of the lecture model, which overtly privileges the arborescent and marginalizes the rhizomatic. At the same time, dialogue also acknowledges the necessary role played by the arborescent paradigm, as it gives structure and definition to the inspiration and creativity that might otherwise simply effloresce and subsequently wither. However, in expressly putting into communication a disparate manifold of different voices, the our loss of the concept of truth (explored in the Introduction), our inability to rely on statements of certainty, becomes increasingly problematic. One of the many functions of truth, traditionally, was to provide a selective criterion allowing competing claims to be judged with respect to one another. When there is only a single voice being actively represented—in a lecture or in a treatise—an internal consistency and sense of rightness or suitableness can help to govern and structure a given line of inquiry. However, in a group which now comprises such variety, diversity, and depth, we must confront the loss of our selective criterion and the many forms of influence, power, and authority that might rise to take its place. In this new milieu, how can we protect ourselves from the unscrupulous and the manipulative—from those who engage with us and treat us not as fellow thinkers, subject, or human agents, but as degraded objects to be controlled, convinced, or managed? The new status of thought and the roles of power and authority in dialogue form the basis of the next Intermezzo and Chapter of this project.[40]

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[40] For a return to the concrete situation of the college classroom, see Appendix, "Ideal and Transitional Models of Dialogue," pp. 313ff.

# INTERMEZZO 3:
## THIRD PHASE OF DELEUZIAN IMAGE OF THOUGHT— PLANES OF IMMANENCE

The account of the image of thought developed in Deleuze's earlier work and extended in *A Thousand Plateaus* resurfaces once more in *What is Philosophy*?, Deleuze's final collaboration with Guattari. Once again, the image of thought arises in the context of a discussion about the very grounding of philosophy itself—i.e., the existence of presuppositions and our attempts or claims to escape from them. The same language and phrasing that introduced the account of a "pre-philosophical" ground for philosophy in *Difference and Repetition* here emerges once again, now complemented by a new vocabulary that has developed through Deleuze's subsequent work with Guattari.

In this final collaboration, Deleuze and Guattari establish a relationship between the concepts created by philosophy and the "plane" within which those concepts arise, and it is this plane that takes the place of the image of thought: "The plane of immanence is not a concept that is or can be thought but rather the *image of thought*, the image thought gives itself of what it means to think, to make use of thought, to find one's bearings in thought" (*What is Philosophy?* 37, emphasis added).[1] This plane is first referred to as a "plane of consistency" (35) because one of its primary characteristics is its coherence and consistency: those ideas that it encourages and

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[1] At the same time, to simply identify this plane with the image of thought as it was developed in *Difference and Repetition* would be to flatten the plane, viewing only a single side of it, for "[t]he plane of immanence has two facets as Thought and as Nature, as *Nous* and as *Physis*" (*What is Philosophy?* 38). What began as the image of thought, a fundamentally intellectual selection or structure, here becomes explicitly linked with the substantial aspects of Being that highlight the connection between "thinking" and "being."

cultivates, that it even acknowledges as valid or valuable, are those that are consistent with the ideas already established, that cohere—or, more rigorously, that "resonate"[2]—meaningfully with them. The "plane of immanence" is so called because this selective consistency results in a plane on which all elements, features, ideas, or concepts are "immanent" to one another, informing and limiting one another without forming themselves into a hierarchy of transcendence. The image of thought itself structures the very ways in which we are able to think, and these ways in which we are able to think limit the things, objects, or concepts that are conceivable on that plane. Each set of "pre-philosophical" presuppositions about what it means to think limits in advance the field of philosophical concepts that might be generated on that ground. This very insight has a striking precursor in *Difference and Repetition*, where Deleuze claims that "conceptual philosophical thought has as its implicit presupposition a pre-philosophical and natural Image of thought" (131).

Deleuze's resistance to transcendence or totalization in *Difference and Repetition* led him to speak not of a new or alternative image of thought but rather of a "thought without image," thus maintaining or retaining the infinite possibilities for thought that are continually escaping from the image that determines what sorts of activities constitute thinking. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, as we saw in the previous Intermezzo, this "thought without image" maintained its essentially virtual status as the rhizome—eternally resistant to codification, to stasis, to being encapsulated or captured in any way, determined rather by its fundamental and continual escapes and irruptions. This same "thought without image" now undergoes a new transformation: in this third phase, the characteristics of the "thought without image" have become more closely linked

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[2] Deleuze and Guattari themselves suggest this term, in preference to "coherence": "Concept are centers of vibrations, each in itself and every one in relation to all the others. This is why they all resonate rather than cohere or correspond with each other" (*What is Philosophy?* 23).

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with the chaos of infinite possibilities for thought—those recognized in a given image of thought as well as those rejected by it. This chaos is that within which all images of thought arise and from which they select their contents. It is no longer "thought" itself but rather the ground of all possibilities for thought, the ground of any and every possible image.

In this third incarnation of Deleuze's approach to the image of thought, the openness, dynamism, and resistance to definition that characterized the "thought without image" has passed into another register. The possibilities for thought are infinite, always changing, and without any totalizing unity or coherence. They constitute a chaos; but this chaos is transected by planes of immanence, by particular and distinct images of thought which select from among the infinite possibilities of thought in order to construct "resonating" (or cohesive and consistent) systems. The plane of immanence describes the set of assumptions and rules that govern an image of thought and that serve as selective criteria for the evaluation of new ideas or new elements. Those ideas or elements that resonate with the system are those that do not overly (or irreconcilably) conflict with the elements already in place. More importantly, they are those elements that interact meaningfully with the prior figures of the plane; their actual inclusion in the plane hinges on their ability to contribute something substantial to it. The very constitution of this plane involves a process of selection and rejection that distinguishes it from the infinite possibilities of what thinking can be or do. What any given time, movement, or philosopher calls "thought" is in fact a very specific plane, a deliberately selected set of criteria or definitions, abridged from the chaos of possibilities: "The plane of immanence is like a section of chaos and acts like a sieve" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 42). This plane is selected from chaos, but is itself the instrument and criterion of further selections, sifting the chaos to find the elements that are or will become meaningful within it. These planes are also changing, growing,

springing into existence and fading out of use, proliferating, stimulating and stifling one another, "not only interleaved but holed" (51). Deleuze seems to have exchanged the complex and unwieldy "thought without image" for a more simple theory of many images of thought—a multiplicity of images of thought: "we can and must presuppose a multiplicity of planes" (50). Each plane describes an "absolute horizon" (36) populated by concepts that have been selected from all possible concepts, and which are then interwoven and intertwined, coexisting in a state of mutual interaction and comprehensibility. The task of philosophy is likewise described in the terms of this chaos which is crosscut by many differing and varied images of thought: "The problem of philosophy is to acquire a consistency without losing the infinite into which thought plunges" (42). That is, philosophy must find ways of remaining in touch or in communication with chaos while simultaneously preserving our ability to think, to act, and to communicate.

Thus, the "dogmatic image of thought" described in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, *Proust and Signs*, and *Difference and Repetition* constitutes one plane of immanence—or, perhaps more accurately, one amalgam of many historical planes of immanence, the converging images of thought as deployed by a number of different philosophers. Deleuze and Guattari are careful to acknowledge that any truly original philosopher is original thanks in part to their having reconstituted the image of thought or created a new image of thought (*What is Philosophy?* 51). The dogmatic image of thought, perhaps, highlights the truly fundamental similarities between those images constructed within and throughout the history of Western thought. More importantly, however, in this third phase of Deleuze's theory, the dogmatic image of thought is merely *one* amongst many; it is not confronted by its opposite or its counterpoint but coexists in a realm alongside many other planes, other possible images of thought.

At this third stage, therefore, the root of Deleuze's dissatisfaction with and aversion to the

dogmatic image of thought has finally been located in the dogmatic image's staunch rejection of all other possibilities for thought. Deleuze, on the other hand, finds the alternative he has been craving in a field of infinite possibilities sustaining the creation of different and multiple images of thought. The opposite of the dogmatic image is not in fact another image (although it does often find itself in competition with those other images) but rather the ground of all images, the chaos of a multiplicity of planes. Deleuze seems to have integrated the first two stages into this third stage: Nietzsche can and does have his own "new image of thought" in contrast to the dogmatic image of thought, but this new image does not have pretensions to the same level of radical openness that characterize the "image without thought." Rather, that radical openness has been transposed into a realm populated but never fully described by these competing images of thought.

The "thought without image" evolves into this chaos of possibilities, while the "dogmatic image of thought" and the "new image of thought" are simply so many planes of immanence crosscutting that chaos. It is, seemingly, no longer problematic for Deleuze to discuss a "new image of thought" because he has rescued the infinite possibilities of thought from their imprisonment in images altogether. The ossification of any particular image of thought is always threatened or made uneasy by the multiplicity of external elements that it rejects and continually keeps at bay. However, in order to think at all, we must make these selections and construct these planes. The key now, it seems, is to recognize the contingency and fluidity of our constructions.

To some extent, this final stage (the transformation of the "thought without image" into a chaos of possibilities grounding all images of thought) is a bit deflating. It seems to lose touch with something that was vital and utterly new in the "thought without image"—and perhaps this something is in fact unspeakable, essentially inarticulate, so that the closest approximation is this

disappointing truism: "the possibilities of thought are infinite." It loses something of the power

of the original conception of a "thought without image"—or perhaps it simply relinquishes the

idealistic notion that any philosophy can begin anew,[3] out from under its obligation to and

inheritance from the history of thought that made it possible. Each new plane of thought is

interleaved with myriad other planes, arising from strange intersections and thriving within their

tensions and suggestive vacancies.

Regardless of the philosophical merit or potential of this simplification ("thought without

image" become "chaos"), the new dynamic that emerges between infinite chaos and the multiple

planes of immanence that filter through it throws into relief a new problem that confronts our

attempts to think rigorously and well. Our loss of "truth" and "certainty" in their traditional

forms has led, in many ways, to a proliferation of systems; having lost an anchor, many new

harbors and seas are opened up to us. But there is the risk here of losing our way, of becoming

lost or directionless or even running aground in this new proliferation of horizons. We are, in

many ways, very much "at sea" in this new chaos, but we nonetheless remain in communication

with one another. The desire and the need for philosophical discourse remains, even if we are all

confined to more or less separate vessels. In order to maintain this discourse, while at the same

time preserving some level of rigor or meaning in this exchange, we must address the vacancy

created by our willingness to leave "truth" behind. We must seek for some way of judging

between or evaluating the competing claims that arise within this discourse, but this task

becomes especially frustrating and frustrated as these claims themselves arise from differing

images of thought. Deleuze and Guattari discuss "critique" as arising from and consisting of the

difficulties and contradictions that emerge when we transplant a given idea, concept, or claim,

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[3] This new beginning in philosophy is actually something that Deleuze problematizes as early as *Difference and Repetition*. It is only here that he seems to finally make peace with that insight.

into a milieu not its own (*What is Philosophy?* 28). If we inhabit separate, even disparate planes, how can we establish communication between them?

These questions become even more pressing as they become more concrete. It is one thing to entertain and explore many different planes theoretically, intellectually, "philosophically." We, however, lead actual, practical lives. We must live and act and make judgments and decisions. We have a pressing need to be able to evaluate and decide between competing claims; to ignore or neglect this need is to content ourselves with uncritical relativism, the kind that adheres to the particularly naïve claim that "everyone is entitled to their own opinion," and that, therefore, one's own claims cannot be regarded as incorrect. If we rest content in our own vessels, on our own seas, we have destroyed the ground of human communion and community that, in Freire's view, is absolutely fundamental to our human being. But we have also lost a crucial impetus for further growth, development, and discovery in our own lives and thoughts.

The first dynamic to emerge as a selective criterion in this new milieu, unfortunately for us, seems to be power. "Might makes right" describes the chaos of the democratic discussion group as much as the early ground of political theory, and it is as much in need of a challenge. When we lose our "objectivity," our commonly agreed upon standards of truth and right, power is willing to fill that vacuum, to coax or coerce our acquiescence in order to impose a given claim or way of being. In order to counter it, however, one must understand its operations: thus, the coming chapter examines the dynamic of force as it arises in dialogue.

# CHAPTER 4:
## FORCES IN DIALOGUE

The account of force in thought that arose in Chapters One and Two (specifically, the sections on "Misosophy" and "The Encounter") is complicated by the loss of "truth" and certainty described in the Introduction. Until fairly recently, this concept of truth was regarded as an impersonal, unbiased, objective standard, and it functioned as a touchstone or criterion that allowed us to evaluate the relative merits of competing claims or systems. We judged one or the other, or elements of each, to be more worthy of our time and attention, that is, to contain more "truth." This was our touchstone, our measuring stick, something like the "common power" established by the Hobbesian social contract (*Leviathan*, Chapter 17), capable of governing our intellectual exchanges; truth as this touchstone or common power allowed us to proceed more or less peacefully. For example, force might be exerted legitimately in our exchanges, as long as this was in the service of truth; having a standard of truth might allow us to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate or exploitative uses of force in discourse. Furthermore, the concept of truth helped to frame the very basis for our intellectual endeavors: the aim and the resolution of our grappling with that which puzzled us was some recognition of a truth, and it was this criterion or standard that defined our efforts to think clearly. Thus, truth played a dual role in our philosophical discourse, providing a criterion for the evaluation of claims and complementing the structure or common language, provided by reason, by which we were put into communication with one another. That is, while the rules of reason or logic helped to frame the structure of our communication, the notion of truth indicated the common goal at which our communication aimed, thus allowing us to proceed meaningfully together. While the loss of truth

as a criterion will be explored further in a coming section, Intermezzo 4, the implications of a

loss of truth for the structure or organization of our interactions is the concern of the current

chapter.

While force is what requires us to think and to grapple with puzzlement, force of some

kind is also what allows us to install this common meeting place.[1] As a forum for practicing and

learning to think, for exploring the many different possibilities of thought, dialogue requires

forces capable of opening, organizing, and maintaining its dialogical space. The different roles,

dynamics, and elements of the dialogue all exert forces that establish the parameters of that

dialogue, thereby describing the space in which independent thought, reflection, and judgment

may be practiced, exercised, and exchanged. The very existence of dialogue as we have

described it relies upon and is only possible given the exercise of certain types of force.

Freire's educational theory, on the other hand, highlights the extent to which a

discussion-based approach opposes itself to the exercise of external forces—hence, its suitability

as a component of a larger liberatory and humanizing project. Dialogue and argumentation, for

Freire, become crucial moments in the process of humanization that puts disenfranchised people

back in positions of autonomy with respect to their own lives and communities and frees them

from subjection to external forces. At this point, we confront a dilemma: if our project has to do

with empowering and humanizing, and if part of this project involves an exercise of authority in

order to challenge people (i.e., if force is a necessary and constituent element of education), and

if part of this authority runs the risk of undermining and negating the very process of

empowerment itself (telling people what to think or manipulating their beliefs), then we must

interrogate what kind of force is to be used to structure a dialogue and what distinguishes this

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[1] Force in thought was examined in Chapter One; the "common meeting place" (dialogue) was explored in Chapter Three.

force from the other forces that are inimical to the spirit of dialogue.

The mere removal of truth as a criterion, while it may free us from oppressive regimes of discourse and open us to new possibilities of thought, also exposes us to new dangers of oppression, exploitation, and manipulation. The removal of truth endangers dialogue in the same way that the absolute removal of structure endangers (progressive) education—i.e., it exposes us to the chaos of the powers and structures that naturally assert themselves within a disorganized group.[2] Power and authority step up to take the place of "truth" or "right" as standards capable of governing us, of galvanizing the public in the desired direction. We may not need truth, but we need something to fulfill its function. We need a common power to ground the possibility of dialogical community.

The particular difficulty regarding the use of force and authority in dialogue arises from the fact that they can both catalyze and threaten the development of a dialogical community and even thought itself.[3] In order to overcome our initial intellectual inertia (whether it arises from captivity, as in Plato, or laziness as in Kant or Nietzsche), we must be jolted, jarred, or forced into action—by the world, by another person, by an idea. In order to learn, we must first become unmoored, we must have our tethers loosed. On the other hand, at its most pernicious, force subverts our autonomy, overwhelming our critical process or simply our ability to resist, coercing us into either doing or thinking particular things without actively choosing them or genuinely assenting to them. Not only can the exercise of power result in situations of overt oppression, but it is also capable of hijacking our intellectual agency, determining our conclusions by the selective withholding of information, the delivery of misinformation, or the

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[2] On this topic, consult Wilfrid Bion's *Experiences in Groups* (per ESC).

[3] Sometimes the same event could do either—catalyze or threaten—and the final outcome depends fully on the reaction of the interlocutor, the student, the one on the receiving end.

appeal to fallacious reasoning. While truth remained our criterion, it allowed for the selective use

of power or force for the purpose of educating effectively, that is, for the purpose of discovering

or uncovering truth. Force could be used in the service of truth, used to confront us with truth,

but because we had in truth an impersonal standard, we had ways of warding off the exploitation

that can attend this exercise of power. But in the absence of the criterion provided by truth, and,

on the other hand, amidst the proliferation of competing narratives or images of thought in

dialogue—the varied "planes of immanence" described in the previous section—each with its

own criteria and standards of significance, we are left with a vacancy, a problem of judgment.

There is no common power or standard to pull us all together, to put us in conversation, to

govern our statements—except, perhaps, our dedication to dialogue. In the absence of "truth,"

we need some other standard, criterion, or common project capable of opening a space in which

we can meet one another, one which is capable of sustaining philosophical discourse, and by

appealing to which we can counter the claims of force to our obedience or acquiescence.

Granting that force plays a crucial role in thought, we nevertheless need some way of ensuring

that, in the intellectual as well as in the political or social realms, might does not become right.

Thus far, we have been speaking of force very broadly as of *that which has an effect* on

something other than itself. One object (considered simply as a physical, material entity) effects

a change in another according to the laws of thermodynamics: the steady flow of water in a river

gradually carves out a canyon. When a subject (a conscious or sentient agent) affects an object,

these behaviors according to natural physical laws are consciously initiated or manipulated in

order to achieve certain ends: I throw a Frisbee. When an object affects a subject, its appearance,

existence, nature, or effects prompt observations, reflections, or intentions on the part of the

subject: Merleau-Ponty finds himself trying to make sense of varied impressions on the beach,

which eventually resolve themselves into a single object, a ship (*Phenomenology* 20).[4] Finally, one subject may affect another subject in a variety of ways—an exchange of ideas, a one-sided relationship of oppression or exploitation, or even the awareness of one's own physicality and susceptibility to observation (as in Sartre's experience of being seen in "The Look"). It is precisely this final class of interactions (subject-to-subject interactions) that allows us to create the kind of dialogical spaces described in the previous chapter. However, the exercise of force between subjects also contains and exposes us to a great number of interactions that threaten the very existence of dialogue or the free exercise of judgment. Just as in the physical world, the exchanges between objects, the forces that act between objects both form the possibility for the existence of objects and provides the basis for their dissolution, disintegration, destruction; that which supports their possibilities also threatens them. Because force is that which allows us to establish dialogical space while at the same time it threatens the existence and possibility of that very space, a closer examination of force in thought and dialogue will form the arena for our considerations in the current chapter and beyond.

### On Force

The first step in ensuring the integrity of our philosophical thought and discourse—to satisfying the need for force while avoiding some of the dangers that force poses to both thought and discourse—is to examine in greater detail the ways in which force arises in thought and in dialogue. Chapters One and Two examined the role of force in thought; as we have repeatedly seen (in Plato, Kant, Nietzsche, and Deleuze), we must be "forced to think." This role is complicated by the fact that a threat to our ignorance can be confused with a threat to our

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[4] This kind of "force" is what Deleuze specifically addressed in his chapter on "The Image of Thought" in *Difference and Repetition.*

agency, our autonomy, or even our lives. Genuine learning can be genuinely frightening; it can make one feel threatened and vulnerable or simply unsettled, because genuine learning entails the destruction of things that we think we know. This destruction can be unsettling enough when we consciously and deliberately decide upon it ourselves. For example, we choose to discard old beliefs in response to new information; we discard the notions we have outgrown. This process may be a sad one, like leaving home, or it could be as matter of fact as giving away old clothes; in either of these cases, we ourselves recognize the necessity of the transformation, the leaving or the giving away. But when we are forcibly evicted from ourselves—confronted with a new insight that we are not prepared to accept, confronted with the failure of beliefs we are not prepared to abandon—this involuntary exile can make us feel vulnerable, defensive, even angry and aggressive (as is the case with many who are today subjected to forced migration). However, something of this sort of eviction is implied in the very task of education; education should never explicitly intend to reinforce already existing beliefs but should rather aim to confront individuals with new objects, ideas, and facts about the world that are not yet known. Thus, an important aspect of education is inherently threatening, even violent, especially towards a certain attitude on the part of the learner.

As we saw in Chapter One, Deleuze's term "misosophy" acknowledges some of this inherent violence; he speaks of thought as "trespass and violence" (*Difference* 139) to highlight his claim that we don't typically think good-naturedly and voluntarily but, rather, we think because we are forced to do so by objects and things that impinge upon us. This claim directly contradicts the ground on which Descartes builds his philosophical system; for Descartes, the beginning of philosophy is the *I think*, and the rest of thought and reality flow from this single, *voluntary* moment. For Descartes, it is important and integral that this moment is voluntary,

because it is to become the self-sufficient or self-evident first principle on which the entirety of his philosophical system will be founded. If this truth itself is contingent upon something outside of it—if the *I think* must be occasioned by something that is not the *I* itself—then the system cannot achieve the level of apodictic and self-contained certainty that Descartes requires. Deleuze, however, finds a new basis for claims to something like certainty in this very contingency: specifically, for Deleuze (and for Proust, whose work occasions Deleuze's insight), it is the "fortuitousness or the contingency of the encounter which guarantees the necessity of that which it forces to be thought" (*Difference* 145).[5] That is, this threat and this violence inhere in the very nature of truth—which is "betrayed" and not "revealed" (*Proust* 95)—and is in fact required in order for real thought to occur: it is only through this violence that we can have anything like certainty whatsoever. If I am suddenly confronted by an idea which surprises and perplexes me, this very surprise suggests its separation from me: it did not come from me, I did not generate it, and thus this very contingency can be seen as a challenge to the solipsism to which Descartes' system remains fundamentally susceptible. The logical truths that can be gained by self-reflection or generated in a vacuum—such as the Cartesian *Cogito*—are simply logical possibilities, "they lack the claws of absolute necessity" (Deleuze, *Difference* 139). But those things that we encounter unexpectedly, the things which surprise us, things we are "forced to think," pose problems that confronts us, demanding solutions. (Thus, by suggesting the existence of a reality beyond our own, the unexpected problem thus comes closer to the kind of metaphysical or ontological conclusion that Descartes is seeking.)

Deleuze preserves and develops the role of a force or violence in thought in the later

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[5] See also *Proust and Signs*: "What forces us to think is the sign. The sign is the object of an encounter, but it is precisely the contingency of the encounter that guarantees the necessity of what it leads us to think" (97). Also, "It is the accident of the encounter that guarantees the necessity of what is thought" (16)

phases of his account of the image of thought. The rhizomatic or "nomad" thought described in *A Thousand Plateaus* is essentially both creative and destructive. It does not respect structure or limitation but rather declares itself the enemy of stasis. The static elements in thought are precisely those that must be disrupted so that thought can continue to grow and change. For example, even a passing familiarity with the history of sciences—a history built on hypotheses, intuitions, guesses, errors, and revisions—indicates the extent to which established forms must be demolished in order to prepare the way for new and more helpful, complete, or useful forms. The possibility of creation always, necessarily, entails some transformation, destruction, or simply problematicity.[6]

Despite the fact that Deleuze and Plato are not always the most natural of bedfellows and stand at times in direct opposition to one another,[7] they seem to agree that force plays a crucial role in thought or in learning. As we saw above, the prisoner in Plato's cave does not leave it out of a natural curiosity, an appeal to honor, or a sense of adventure; he does not even leave it of his own volition but is instead dragged out of the darkness, forced at every moment to perform the motions that successively reveal his previous reality as an illusion. Natural curiosity does not motivate the prisoner until he has already been thrown forcibly out into the world. Nonetheless, it is clear that Plato believes this nameless figure, this liberator, has done the prisoner a favor in freeing him, in forcibly dragging him from his prison, and he makes it a matter of duty that the freed prisoner must later return to the cave in the service of those still imprisoned there. As far as

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[6] Hence the almost mercenary description of the "World Historical Individual" in Hegel's theory of history. According to Hegel, the World Historical Individual may quite rightly trample on innocents in the pursuit of the new, destroying a previous stage or form in order to bring about a new order or establish the next phase of human life and development (*Reason in History* 43).

[7] Deleuze even speaks of the task of modern philosophy as overturning or "reversing Platonism"—although he takes this sentiment from Nietzsche ("The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy," *Logic of Sense* 253). This is treated at greater length below, in Intermezzo 4.

Plato is concerned, no one who escapes the cave, its shadows, and its constructed reality would desire to return there (*Republic* 516c-e, 517c-d); but as the cultivation of philosophers is a social enterprise, the philosophers owe the fruits of their enlightenment to those that have made that enlightenment possible (519c-520c). The force exerted upon the prisoner by this liberator therefore has the effect of enlightening him, of enriching his life and experience and exposing him to depths (or heights) of mystery in the world; but the fact remains that the prisoner's initial experience of this force was one of compulsion and fear, or perhaps even of violence. This particular mode of violence seems to be beneficial; moreover, it also seems to be necessary, as the allegory does not give the prisoners any other possible mode of self-discovery. Beyond the physical limitations placed on them by their shackles, the prisoners are chained in such a way as to be *incapable of even realizing* their own state of captivity. As they are both unable to free themselves and unable to form the desire to free themselves, they must be forcibly liberated from their physical and intellectual bonds.[8]

### *Types of Force*

Plato distinguishes between two types of force that arise frequently in dialogue: the compulsion we feel when confronted by legitimate and powerful ideas and what we feel when confronted by persuasive, confident, or assertive speakers. We will call these, respectively, "logical force" and "interpersonal force." In their search for the sophist in the dialogue of that name, the Stranger

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[8] The problem of force is magnified, however, when we consider some of the twentieth-century studies into the nature and effects of authority in interpersonal relationships. In Stanley Milgram's *Obedience to Authority,* subjects were encouraged by an official "experimenter" to deliver increasingly painful and dangerous electric shocks to another "learner." The subjects frequently continued to deliver these shocks even while expressing extreme discomfort with those actions, simply because of the presence and encouragement of the "experimenter." In effect, the presence and direction of this authority figure resulted in some subjects' surpassing their own moral boundaries in the treatment of another human being. In what are known as the "Stanford Prison Experiments," researchers Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo placed pre-screened volunteers into a simulated prison environment. Within days, many of the "guards" were demonstrating uncharacteristically aggressive behavior, while many of the "prisoners" demonstrated uncharacteristically passive or defeatist behavior. This study implies that the simple fact of being placed in a prisoner-guard hierarchy adversely affects that ways in which human beings relate to one another.

and Theaetetus repeatedly find themselves compelled to answer certain questions in specific

ways, or to connect certain qualities with other qualities or things. This compulsion (ἀνάγκη and

related words) has the force of logical necessity; there is no external compulsion at issue, but

simply an internal necessity that both the Stranger and Theaetetus acknowledge as irrefutable.[9]

Not even the elusive Sophist, for whom the dialogue as a whole seems to be a "hunt," is able to

fully escape that necessity; famous for his ability to evade the snares of argumentation, the

Sophist himself is bound by the demands of logical necessity. It is that very necessity that will

allow for the sophist's eventual capture.

Plato uses this same set of words derived from ἀνάγκη, necessity, to describe the details

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[9] At one point in the dialogue, the Stranger attempts to circumvent or avoid this necessity, when he embarks on a sort of "parricide" of his teacher, Parmenides. In his Poem, Parmenides elucidated two forms that he claimed exhausted all possibilities for logical thought: first, "that [it] is and that it is impossible for [it] not to be," and second "that [it] is not and that it is needful that [it] not be" (B2; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 245). In other words, it is logically consistent to say, of things that are, that they are and must be, or of things that are not that they are not and must not be. The latter option, as it turns out,

> …is an altogether indiscernible track:
> for you could not know what is not—that cannot be done
> —nor indicate it. (B2)

As nonbeing, nothing, may not be known or pointed out (as there is precisely nothing to point to), it also should not be thought or spoken of. The only possibility for logically coherent speech allowed by Parmenides' goddess is "the path of Persuasion" (B2) which speaks truths about that which is. In the *Sophist*, however, the Stranger and Theaetetus investigate both of these possibilities and find that both result in considerable logical difficulty or even paradox. For example, Parmenides' conception of "being" is that which is has an eternal aspect, and this eternity precludes any growth or change:

> …being ungenerated and unperishing, (it) is
> whole, monogeneric as well as untrembling, and not without finish;
> and never once was, never will be, since now (it) is at once total:
> One coherent. (B8, trans. Peter Manchester in course materials for PHI 600)

Given these limitations, the Stranger and Theaetetus find themselves unable to achieve any satisfactory definition of "Being"; even further, they are led to the strange conclusion that Being can neither be recognized (for this would entail its being moved or affected in some way) nor can it recognize anything else (which would again imply its motion).

However, these perplexities are built on the fact that, for Parmenides, language or thought and reality seem to have a direct relationship: "for the same is to think as well as to be" (B3). If being and thinking are, in some sense, the same, then it is indeed logically impossible to speak or think about anything that does not exist. But in Plato, on the other hand, the relationship drawn between thought and reality is mediated by images. Thought employs language; words are not the things themselves but are rather images of those things. Therefore, ultimately, the Stranger and Theaetetus are successful in their plan to "force our way to the conclusion that Non-being in some respect *is* and that Being in turn *is not* in some way" (*Sophist* 241d). What appeared to be a logical impossibility—the formulation of coherent thought about non-being—is brought into the realm of possibility by a new understanding of the relationship between thought and being. However, it is important to note that in some way the standards for logical coherence have remained the same; the Stranger and Theaetetus could not simply *disagree* with Parmenides' claims, but rather had to change an assumption about reality in order to move beyond him.

of the prisoner's release from the cave in the Book VII of the *Republic*. The prisoner there is forced or compelled to stand, turn, and look—and in each of these cases the word for this compulsion is derived from the same root as that used in the *Sophist* to indicate logical necessity (ἀνάγκη). Where we would expect, within the parameters of the image that Socrates has presented, to find physical force being used to liberate prisoners from physical imprisonment, Plato instead employs the vocabulary of argumentative or logical force. Instead of the physical force that the image itself suggests, the liberation of the prisoner is accomplished by the force of logical necessity.

Socrates' repeated use of ἀνάγκη is in direct contrast to two other similar words, used elsewhere in the *Republic*. The first, the Greek word *βία* and its various forms, refers to physical force, restraint, or compulsion. This is the meaning that Thrasymachus invokes when he claims that Socrates will never "have the power to *do violence* with the argument" (341b, emphasis added).[10] The force Thrasymachus associates with argumentation here is physical, external force or violence. This seems to be indicative of Thrasymachus' own conception of argumentation, because even his entrance into the dialogue is physically explosive: "he launched himself at us as if to tear us to pieces" (336b). While Thrasymachus never in fact resorts to physical violence, he repeatedly falls back on insults and name-calling, belittling Socrates instead of refuting his claims. This aggressive, competitive approach to argumentation is, implicitly, directly contrasted with that ruled by *logical* force, compulsion and necessity (ἀνάγκη).

Whereas the term *βία* generally refers to some positive force exerted upon a person or an object, Plato uses another set of Greek terms containing the stem "δεσμω–" to refer to something

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[10] The meaning is also preserved in the Grube translation (revised by Reeve): Socrates will "never be able to *overpower* me in argument" (341b, Grube/Reeve, emphasis added).

like a negative external force or restraint. These terms for prison, captivity, and restraint are the ones used repeatedly in *Republic* VII to describe the cave-as-prison [δεσμωτήριον (515b)], its prisoners [δεσμωτῶν (514b)], and their fetters [δεσμοῦ (514b)]. However, this usage also stands in marked contrast to the force that releases the prisoner and compels him to stand and turn. This is where we might expect to see the term *βία* and the invocation of physical force to counter the inmates' imprisonment, but instead we find the force of logical necessity and compulsion (ἀνάγκη) being used to liberate our prisoner. On the one hand, this is consistent with the fact that the cave is indeed an *image*, and the story we are told is supposed to describe the effects of education on our nature. On the other hand, this caveat also calls into question the usage of the δεσμω– terms to describe our initial captivity; there is in fact a word for "prison" derived from the Greek word for logical compulsion—"ἀναγκαῖον," defined as a "place of constraint, a prison" (Perseus), used at 520e of the *Republic*—but Plato quite distinctly chooses not to employ it here.[11] However, if Plato were to use the term "ἀναγκαῖον" to describe the cave-as-prison, this would suggest that the inmates' imprisonment was somehow logically necessary, whereas, on the contrary, Plato clearly indicates that their captivity is contingent; it is not this captivity but rather the *release* from this captivity that is powered by the force of logical necessity.[12]

Plato's two kinds of force, *βία* and *ἀνάγκη*, suffice to describe many of these different relations of force, but they do not exhaust the possibilities. Hannah Arendt suggests a third term, authority, in addition to the physical or external force *(βία)* and the logical compulsion *(ἀνάγκη)* suggested by Plato. The resulting schema describes three different types of force that commonly

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[11] N.b. The description of the prison as "δεσμωτήριον" maintains the image, while the liberator's force (ἀνάγκη) betrays it as an image.

[12] For Plato, this logical necessity *(ἀνάγκη)* not only has a bearing on formal logic, but also seems to carry implications into a metaphysical dimension.

manifest in subject-subject relationships.[13] In the beginning of her essay, "What Is Authority?",

she distinguishes the exercise of authority from both coercive force[14] and arguments.

> Since authority always demands obedience, it is commonly mistaken for some
> form of power or violence. Yet authority precludes the use of external means of
> coercion; where force is used, authority itself has failed. Authority, on the other
> hand, is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works
> through a process of argumentation. Where arguments are used, authority is left in
> abeyance. Against the egalitarian order of persuasion stands the authoritarian
> order, which is always hierarchical. If authority is to be defined at all, then, it
> must be in contradistinction to both coercion by force and persuasion through
> arguments. (92-3)

Authority, Arendt argues, is a way of affecting the behavior of others without needing recourse

to coercion or persuasion; the three terms are distinct and must be maintained in distinction from

one another. Obedience—to parents, to teachers, to police officers, and even to laws—cannot

always be explained by the implicit threat of force involved, even though it may be guaranteed

by a threat of this sort. In a group or committee, it is a simple matter of pragmatism that the

members obey the directions of the leader, without too many questions (though still within

reason), or the group risks the sort of terminal inefficiency that can at times arise from the

democratic process. The authority that makes us obey does not require force, threats, or

persuasion, even if it may at times be combined with them.

Within the schema of force described by these three terms, persuasion or argument acts

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[13] Arendt does not present these terms as three manifestations of "force." Her focus is primarily on authority, and she simply addresses force and arguments to emphasize their distinctness from authority. However, she does so in order to clarify the distinctions between these three terms in response to a frequent conflation between them. While the distinction between the three is very much accepted and adopted for use here, I do maintain a family resemblance between them, emphasizing their common effects whereas Arendt was primarily concerned with pointing out their distinct mechanisms. Arendt argues that a "functionalism" argument should not lead us to treat terms as interchangeable; I argue that, while the mechanisms are in fact significantly different, their similarity in function—that is, influencing our thoughts or actions—means that we should consider them together, especially since we are considering them primarily from a functional standpoint. Whereas Arendt's question was "What is Authority?", our question has to do with what dynamics are capable of helping us to establish and maintain dialogical space, and which mechanisms threaten that space.

[14] Arendt simply uses the term "force" here; I will refer to it as "coercive force," since I have adopted the term "force" for use in a broader context. The term "coercive force" is meant to preserve the meaning of Arendt's term "force," which she does explicitly link with coercion.

directly in the mental dimension, described as the "content" of thought itself. Persuasion is among those forces that provoke thought, that suggest, ask, or demand that we exercise our own mental faculties in order to make sense of some object or idea that we have been confronted with. This is roughly synonymous with Plato's ἀνάγκη, what we earlier called "logical force." To be truly persuaded of something precludes our accepting it under threat, from fear of reprisal, out of a desire to avoid a confrontation, in response to the commands of an authority or an expert, or even out of the laziness that Kant and Nietzsche similarly lament. Being persuaded of something means that we have found or been presented with evidence we regard as rigorous or sufficiently factual, that we have analyzed it on our own or that we have independently verified and affirmed another's analysis, and that we recognize some robustness or solidity in our conclusion that satisfies a criteria for "truth," usefulness, or simply belief.

Authority and coercive force, on the other hand, act primarily in the physical and interpersonal dimension. In terms of outward behavior, power can in fact lead us to change or alter our appearance or our behavior. We can be forced to do or to refrain from doing, to say or refrain from saying, by someone who has power over us, regardless of whether that power stems from authority or whether it is simply the manifestation of greater physical strength. The overt exercise of authority or coercive force, for example, may ultimately make me obey, may make me grant your argument or relinquish my own, but in general they do not act upon my thought itself. My agreement may extend to the realm of vocal assent and no further; I may agree with you out loud while maintaining my own disagreement internally. My agreement may be provisional, hypothetical, or granted purely for the sake of form. However, power in argumentation is more complicated; whereas a forceful yet sophistical argument may result in external or vocal agreement, the act of truly changing a person's mind requires something more

than simple strength. In this case, the person being convinced must somehow accept the legitimacy of the point or argument being made; otherwise, she may express a false agreement while reserving her own judgment and remaining ultimately unconvinced.

The persuasive encounter with arguments, with ideas, with objects, and with perspectives is what is truly transformative. This is the legitimate function of persuasive force, by means of which true learning occurs, and its effects can be so profound that a single experience is in fact capable of changing a person's entire worldview.[15] The moments that change us forever, moments that we remember forever, are moments when we are confronted unapologetically with a new idea, and the force of that new idea throws our entire world into flux. The logical manifestation of force is the truly educative one; it is both more subtle and more difficult to control or predict than the dynamics of authority, expertise, and persuasion that often characterize our interactions with others in dialogues, but it is in fact a more important and longer lasting manifestation of force, and the one more capable of changing us profoundly. And these profound changes are the essence of what it means to truly *learn.*

However, the schema of authority, coercive force, and argumentation given to us by Plato and Arendt does not yet fully describe the ways in which force can act within a dialogue to influence our views or our actions. For example, it seems to leave out or obscure the power of the charismatic or self-assured speaker. Should this category be added to the others, or can we find this brand of force already implied in the three categories already considered? We can begin to explore this question by asking how we are affected by the confident speaker. The self-assured speaker seems to possess truth or insight; his very conviction reminds us of how it feels to be

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[15] While it may be true that dialogue is not the first place that we might turn in order to encounter *objects,* it is the best place to encounter other ideas or perspectives. Moreover, being exposed to another's experience of an otherwise unremarkable object might in fact prompt us to view that object in a new and more profound light.

certain of something. Such conviction does not come cheap, we imagine, and so we find ourselves trusting the judgment of one who seems to have discovered something true. In doing so, however, we have acquiesced to an "appeal to authority"—i.e., to a logical fallacy.

At this point, the Platonic distinction between seeming and being, explored in the *Sophist*, has already come into play. While genuine logical argumentation carries its own weight, we have already seen that the tools of genuine argumentation can be and often are abused. The confident speaker seems to possess certainty, and we mistake this seeming for the actual possession of certainty, which is something that can only ever be certified by our own intellectual experience and critical evaluation.

Alternatively, the confident speaker may step up to take the place of an authority figure, and his willingness to do so dovetails nicely with our desire to elude a sense of difficult, painful, or frightening responsibility. In order to be relieved of the burden of analyzing and assessing situations for ourselves, of making our own decisions and bearing the full weight of the responsibility for them, we open ourselves up to the guidance of those who are willing to take on this responsibility for us. To reiterate Kant, once again, "I need not think, if only I can pay: others will readily undertake the irksome work for me" ("What is Enlightenment?" 36). Even more problematically, however, it frequently occurs that the only payment required by those we allow to think for us is simply the power to do so. That is, we are willing to obey someone who fulfills the function of an authority figure, whether or not that person actually wields any legitimate authority. In these cases, we settle for something that *seems* legitimate, rather than demanding actual legitimacy; we opt for seeming over being.

In these two incarnations (in which the speaker seems to possess certainty or is willing to take responsibility for us), the power wielded by the self-confident speaker can be explained as

the appearance of legitimate argumentation or legitimate authority. However, there is yet a third way in which we might be affected by the self-confident speaker. There are some who engage in discourse as in a competition, who bulwark their ideas by expressing them forcibly, who assert their opinions loudly and with no perceptible doubt, and who must be likewise confronted assertively (or even aggressively) before they will step back to reconsider their interpretation. There are others whose engagement in discourse is in fact dependent upon an *absence* of precisely this kind of competitiveness. These other speakers may be shy, they may simply be made uncomfortable by confrontation, or they may find the confrontational interaction to be an ineffective way of addressing and exploring ideas. Some interlocutors thrive on confrontation, while others are uninterested or intimidated by it. The latter will recede in the presence of the former, leaving the dialogue in the hands of those who are willing to assert themselves forcefully.

However, on closer examination, this effect of powerful speakers is not in fact an instance of force exerted on thought. That is, the one who backs away from confrontation or withdraws from a contentious interaction does not necessarily concede the point made by the other. She may be entirely unshaken in her own assessment of an idea or situation, and her withdrawal may simply indicate her lack of interest in the forum or her distaste for such direct, forceful confrontation. In this sense, the confrontational approach that alienates others from the dialogue is much closer to the exercise of physical force or violence than to logical force. Neither physical force nor intellectual competitiveness can be brought to bear on thought itself (except perhaps in extreme circumstances, or in combination with something else).

The role played by Thrasymachus in the *Republic* blends two of these types of force associated with the confident speaker. First, he employs tools of argumentation in order to

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achieve the appearance of knowledge, and in this sense engages in sophistical or illegitimate argumentation. However, on the other hand, his physicality, his verbal forcefulness, and his tone (sarcastic, abusive, etc.) all point to the exercise of intellectual violence described above. In this sense, he is not convincing anyone, but he does temporarily dominate the dialogue and prevent it from developing in ways that would be truly educative to Socrates or the other interlocutors. Whether or not it is in fact Socrates' refusal to engage with Thrasymachus on his terms that effects this foreclosure is perhaps another conversation. For our purposes, we set Thrasymachus aside as someone who does not seem to be interested in listening or learning but rather in convincing or winning. Insofar as we are primarily interested in education, in learning, in the genuine exercise of argumentation, and in philosophy, this limited competitive focus obscures our efforts rather that providing us with a genuine possibility for growth. The force exerted by the sophist, likewise, is not its own force but rather a perversion of legitimate argumentation—it is the appearance of genuine argumentative force. Plato's consideration of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* invokes a similar distinction between the specious and the genuine. Whereas the rhetorician is well-versed in strong logical argumentation, he does not always deploy this skill in virtuous ways. While the rhetorician's illegitimacy is less overt than the sophist's, it is betrayed by the limitation of his overall aim. (According to Socrates, as we will see below, the only legitimate exercise of rhetoric is that employed in the service and interests of justice.)

At this point, this Chapter will proceed by adopting the foregoing schema of authority, coercive force, and argumentation to describe the types of force that act on thought and behavior in dialogue. However, we must also take pains to become aware of and attentive to the abuses of each that proceed by aiming for appearance rather than being, thus distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate uses of these different types of force. This distinction between

legitimate and illegitimate uses of argumentation is a central concern of Plato's *Sophist.* The aim

of Theaetetus and the Stranger in that dialogue (i.e., the identification of the sophist and the

distinction between the sophist and the philosopher) requires these interlocutors to inquire deeply

into the many apparent similarities between sophistry and genuine argumentation. The sophist, it

is said, is one capable of making the weaker argument seem to be the stronger, or of giving the

appearance of knowledge on any topic (*Sophist* 232e-233c), and he does this by making use of

rhetorical or argumentative force. In any rational discourse, the support for a given statement or

idea should be logically forceful and persuasive; if it is a good or reasonable idea, it should be

easy to make it apparent or obvious. However, the sophist's entire endeavor both exploits and

conceals the distinction between seeming and being; content with seeming and with the power

and prestige attendant upon seeming (seeming to be wise, seeming to be knowledgeable), the

sophist lives and works in the realm of appearance. The philosopher, on the other hand, often

appears to the layperson to be more confused and less knowledgeable than the sophist simply

because the philosopher always ultimately seeks knowledge—truth in its being rather than

simply in appearance—and this is a much more difficult and perplexing search. Plato dramatizes

the difference between their approaches with an analogy to the art of sculpting. An artist

attempting to sculpt a towering statue of a man may in fact alter the true dimensions of the

original in order to achieve the appearance of proportion from eye level, as Michelangelo did

with "David." In this case, a falsification of reality is carried out in order to achieve an

appearance of reality. Because of its large size, the sculpture that maintains the true proportions

of the original will in fact appear to be distorted when we view it from a certain perspective. The

sculptor who remains true to life thus creates an image that may appear false, distorted, or ugly,

while the sculptor who in fact distorts reality may thus create an image that is pleasing and

beautiful to the particular viewer (*Sophist* 235e-236b).

The entire conversation here regarding the appearance versus the actual possession of knowledge recalls that of the actions versus the reputation of the just and unjust men in Book II of the *Republic*. By Plato's description, the sophist is much like the unjust man who is content to reap the benefits of a reputation for justice without having to trouble himself about actually living up to the standards of justice. Moreover, the sophist is famous for his ability to *win* arguments, to outdo others in argumentation. This apparent superiority, however, betrays the sophist's unphilosophical competitiveness, his desire for honors above truth. The sophist is willing to make use of argumentative force and persuasion for his own ends, for the sake of his own reputation as a knowledgeable man, but in doing so he may also obscure truth and make it even more difficult to find. His particular danger is not simply that he leaves people in ignorance but, even further, that he leaves them in ignorance while at the same time convincing them that they do in fact have knowledge. This is the precise opposite of Socrates' acting as a torpedo-fish in the *Meno*. That dialogue makes it clear that the propaedeutic to dialogue, the preparation for the tasks of learning, must first clear away false beliefs in order to convince the interlocutor that he or she does in fact have something to learn. The sophist divorces argumentative tools from the ends of genuine insight or knowledge, but without these ends those tools also lose their stature, their value. If some kind of power or forcefulness is indeed a component of both sophistry and genuine argumentation, then our need for some way of distinguishing between them—and therefore of guarding against our susceptibility to sophistry—becomes more pressing.

Through the two dialogues, the *Sophist* and the *Gorgias*, both sophistry and rhetoric are addressed and eventually dismissed as false pretenders or flawed imitators of something that is truly admirable: philosophy or genuine logical argumentation. Sophistry and rhetoric employ the

tools of argumentation but are ultimately betrayed by their motivations. They are not primarily interested in learning or uncovering new truths but are motivated instead by a competitive desire to outdo others, a desire for fame, or a desire for financial reward. The shortcomings of rhetoric and sophistical reasoning highlight the striking fact that philosophical argumentation cannot be reduced to a set of techniques or methods but requires a specific intention—it is not merely a means or a method but is fundamentally bound up with a certain aim or end. For Plato, the goal of the inquiry is what determines whether or not something can be rightly called "philosophy," and sophistry and rhetoric both fail to acknowledge or understand the kind of force that has a legitimate presence in philosophical argumentation.

### *The Problem of Force in Dialogue*

Given the schema of authority, coercive force, and persuasion established above, there are two arenas in which the issue of force in dialogue becomes particularly relevant: the structure of the dialogue and the discourse that occurs within that structure—in short, both the form and the content of dialogue.

Force helps to install the structures that make dialogue possible and even, to a certain extent, helps to galvanize or precipitate dialogue, but the use of force also threatens to destroy the creativity and proliferation of ideas that are dialogue's true strengths. In the same way that thought itself is both catalyzed and threatened by the use of force, the structure of a dialogue requires a balance between extremes. A strict adherence to a predetermined, overbearing structure will result in a sterile and probably perfunctory conversation; attempting too strongly to determine the outcome or the shape of a dialogue in advance will destroy the opportunities for encounters with new and thought-provoking ideas that are the particular strength of dialogue. On the other hand, foregoing structure entirely, relying exclusively on the creation of new ideas and

concepts, runs afoul of John Dewey's critique of the progressive education movement, leveled later in his career (in *Experience and Education*). Progressive education, he claimed, began by reacting against the overbearing structures and demands of traditional educational models, and it responded by simply eschewing structure altogether. The resulting chaos was just as detrimental to education as the structure it attempted to avoid (20-22). Freire agrees with Dewey on this issue, going so far as to acknowledge that an educational model from which all structures of authority have been removed is even more detrimental to students than one which is too strongly authoritarian.

The need for a balance of authority parallels an issue raised by Deleuze and Guattari in numerous passages throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*: neither the arborescent model (organized, structured, hierarchical, centralized) nor the rhizome (open, dynamic, and creative) can be adequate or even viable on its own. The tree without the rhizome is lifeless structure, incapable of growth, change, or creation; the rhizome without the tree is a continual but ultimately fruitless creation. A blend of these two is what proves to be most effective: the spontaneity and fecundity of the rhizome that is upheld and given foundation by the framework of the arborescent. Similarly, returning to the issue of dialogue, the most effective dialogue will be one which provides ample room for the creation, discovery, and exploration of the new, but supports this process by evolving an organic structure out of that creative production. For example, dialogue welcomes the propositions of intuition—"I wonder if this might be the case," or "I think it might be something like this"—but they must ultimately be given support through a logical structure, connected with the other ideas and concepts on the table; they must be interwoven into the fabric of the discussion and concretized by their contact with this milieu.

This touches on the need for balance in the structure of thought itself. The interplay

between the new and the established has a historical precedent in the concept of learning as a "tying down" of true opinion, presented in the later pages of Plato's *Meno* (97a-98a)—notably in the image of tying down the statues of Daedalus—and earlier here in Chapter One. In the *Meno*, Socrates maintains that while true opinion may be able to lead us accurately, it is unreliable until it is "tied down" with a reasoned account. In the process of providing this account, we give our insights necessary structure; we anchor in ourselves what had previously been speculation, hypothesis, or intuition, thereby transforming these things into knowledge or wisdom. We integrate the intuition through reason into the existing system of knowledge that we have acquired. In the same way, it is the process of grounding our rhizomatic intuitive leaps and new ideas in an arborescent structure or fabric of our other ideas that constitutes the most complete and transformative possibilities of dialogue.

Within the dialogical space thus created, other forces arise in the content of the dialogue—in the interactions between interlocutors. Force arises inevitably within the human interactions that populate a dialogue, and precisely these interactions may ultimately challenge us to confront new and unfamiliar ideas; however, on the other hand, force can also disfigure or destroy the relationships that make effective collaboration possible. The fact that, in the process of dialogue, interpersonal manifestations of force are more obvious than logical manifestations renders the issue of authority additionally problematic. Interpersonal force is easier to see, it is easier to wield, and it tantalizes us with the illusion of being both more efficient and more effective. It is always easier for the speaker or teacher to explain than to show, or to transmit by authority what should in fact be examined with critical thought and logical argumentation. The painstaking task of bringing someone else to the same authentic realization that we ourselves have experienced requires a great deal of effort and finesse, whereas simply explaining our

epiphany may take a matter of minutes. However, the things we learn on our own, our own authentic realizations, are much more transformative and formidable than anything we might simply have explained to us. Thus, the true educator should prefer this latter experience for her students.

Herein lies the precise challenge of the effective teacher or discussion leader: the challenge is not simply to understand the material (the leader often understands it quite well in advance) but to allow the participants to investigate that material genuinely and thoroughly, to help cultivate an environment in which they can pursue their investigation freely and experience the inevitable missteps and errors that true investigation implies—i.e., to become puzzled and confused by the text, to seriously acknowledge and confront its questions, and to attempt to find a way of making sense of such perplexity. The problem is that the exercise of interpersonal force most often has the effect of distracting attention from the more important but also more subtle encounter with ideas and objects. If we feel compelled by authority or expertise to believe a certain thing or assent to a certain claim, we may not even ask ourselves whether we truly agree with what is being said. For example, as we have already seen in our consideration of Thrasymachus's comportment in the first book of the *Republic,* competition in a group dynamic takes focus away from the encounter with ideas and introduces a contrasting aim into the process of discussion, one which is itself directly in competition with all other aims—that of *winning the argument*. Competitive students or participants are more likely to rely on rhetoric or persuasive techniques to make others agree with them; regardless of other motivations in engaging in discussion, the essence of competition is some desire to win, and this desire to win is essentially at odds with the desire to uncover truths or to *learn*, especially when winning is defined by persuading other people to accept what one already claims or believes. Generally speaking, this

persuasive competitiveness represents a misappropriation of otherwise completely necessary logical argumentation techniques.[16] Dialogue is completely reliant upon reasoned discourse, upon the proper uses of logical argumentation; that is its great strength and the root of its ability to educate so profoundly.

### *Force and the Form of Dialogue*

With these three terms—authority, coercive force, and argumentation—in mind, we might now look back at the forum of dialogue in order to see how each functions there. In the first place, these forces help to establish the form of the dialogue in the first place. The physical or external forum of dialogue—the set of rules that govern its content—is shaped primarily by the exercise of authority. The discussion leader maintains order, the ground rules or roles establish parameters governing acceptable behavior, and the object or text of the discussion provides a pivot of sorts, establishing the possibility of the discussion by presenting the disparate group with a common focus and perhaps a common vocabulary. Each of these structuring elements exerts no force other than that granted by the participants' willingness to obey and adopt those conventions. There is a tacit social contract of sorts supporting the dialogue, by which the participants agree to be bound in common by these explicit structural elements, agreeing to respect their limitations for the sake of engaging in a dialogue that is only possible with their assistance.

Dialogue must provide this space of free exploration, in which opinions or hypotheses can be investigated, analyzed, and accounted for. This means guarding against destructive chaos as much as against overbearing authority. Practically speaking, we must confront the question,

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[16] The inversion of the problem of competitiveness is the offering of unsupported opinions, with no regard for the demands of logical argumentation, and this extreme is just as detrimental to discussions as its opposite.

"How does the structure of dialogue strike the necessary balance between structure and freedom, so that it supports the creative possibilities of dialogue without strangling them?" Each of the elements of dialogue discussed in Chapter Three[17] help to establish the form of the dialogue, but three will be highlighted for examination here: the authority of the discussion leader, the text or other object of the discussion, and the aim or outcome of the dialogue. However, each of these elements must also strike an effective balance of power or force, providing a necessary rigidity or resiliency without stultifying the creative proliferation of insight that underlies true education. Dialogue provides the opportunity for achieving balance in its content, but in order to do this the dialogue itself requires a balance within its structure.

Discussion leaders fall somewhere on a spectrum from authoritarian or expertise-driven leadership to complete inexperience and ignorance of the process and content of the discussion. The fully authoritarian[18] discussion leader may alienate quieter speakers, discourage creativity, overlook any possibilities that do not seem to comply with a pre-established vision of what the dialogue must be, demand instead of inspire, and create intellectual clones instead of empowering students to pursue their own individual potential. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the authoritarian leader or teacher, because of her insistence on maintaining complete control of the dialogue, will never give students the practice or the freedom they need in order to take responsibility for the dialogue and for their own role in it. This kind of teacher or leader creates students who are dependent upon others for leadership and perpetuates the infinite-

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[17] (1) The role of leader, (2) the role of Interlocutors, (3) the relationships between participants, (4) the object of discussion, (5) the form of the discussion, and (6) the aim of the discussion.

[18] Freire is careful to distinguish "authoritarianism" from "authority": "The issue is that the democratic teacher never, never transforms authority into authoritarianism. He or she can never stop being an authority or having authority. Without authority it is very difficult for the liberties of the students to be shaped. Freedom needs authority to become free. (Laughs) It is a paradox but it is true. The question nevertheless is for authority to know that it has its foundation in the freedom of the others, and if the authority denies this freedom and cuts off this relationship, this *founding* relationship, with freedom, I think that it is no longer authority but has become *authoritarianism*" (Shor and Freire 91). Authoritarianism is damaging to dialogue, while authority is required by it.

regress of dependence on authority. This kind of leader does not create scholars but only ever eternal students.

Similarly, the discussion leader who prioritizes and relies too heavily on expertise or a prior mastery of the material runs the risk of imposing particular readings or interpretations on the participants, whereas the special province of dialogue is the consideration of many ideas, both established and new. Learning how to generate and consider new ideas and learning to view themselves as legitimate sources of new ideas are crucial components of the discussion participant's experience; these strengths are integral to what can be so profound and transformative about dialogue. The discussion leader who relies too heavily on his own expertise to guide the investigation not only closes off opportunities for collaboration and genuine exploration, he obscures some of the critical components of what it means to be a thinker, a scholar, an intellectual being. He presents only the effect of thinking, the product of learning, but obscures the process of determining which lines of investigation will be fruitful and analyzing new lines of inquiry.

On the other hand, the leader who is inexperienced and ignorant introduces another set of dangers. This leader lacks all prior acquaintance with the text and topics, but this, in and of itself, is not necessarily problematic. The truly problematic aspect of the inexperienced leader is his inexperience with the process of dialogue itself. Since the leader's task is to help establish a healthy and productive dynamic within the group, an acquaintance with and dedication to the process of dialogue is crucial. Without this experience, the discussion leader is likely to make some of the mistakes that he should instead be helping students to avoid. The process is a complex and often somewhat delicate one, requiring a great deal of attention, planning, and supervision (especially at first). Rather than helping to establish a collaborative environment in

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which all participants can contribute particular strengths and insights, this kind of leader may ultimately ignore the sorts of obstacles that impede healthy group formation. While a discussion may very well result, and perhaps even a lively discussion, that discussion will probably be dominated by a few participants or a small group of participants and another group of participants will not say a word. Without careful attention to the many ways in which people are willing to interact with one another and contribute to the group, and without specifically encouraging these many different people in many different ways, the discussion will remain lopsided and will fall short of its potential.

The ideal discussion leader is acquainted with the material, but this acquaintance may be as recent as a good preparation just before the discussion. The crucial components of the discussion leader's expertise relate to the process of discussion. If the essence of dialogue is the sharing of ideas and the collaborative striving toward new understanding, and if these qualities are being emphasized specifically in contrast to the univocal presentation of ideas in a lecture, then a process that allows collaboration becomes critically important. The effective discussion leader should be experienced in and dedicated to the cultivation of healthy group dynamics, dynamics which enable the free and open sharing and consideration of ideas.[19]

The ideal discussion leader helps to give structure to the discussion by establishing and cultivating expectations of collaboration and rigor. She is well acquainted with the problems regularly faced by discussion groups and helps to identify these problems so that the group can address and resolve them collectively. She is practiced in using her own powers of observation and analysis, and she brings these to bear on the content of the discussion in order to help the group as a whole proceed more or less methodically; she prompts the participants to more fully

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[19] For a more in-depth discussion of the kinds of dynamics associated with productive discussions, see the work done by Howard Zeiderman and Touchstones Discussion Project.

consider unsupported or under-supported claims, and ensures that the ideas discussed are considered fully and in many of their possible permutations. When the discussion moves too quickly, she is on hand to either slow things down or to prompt the group to retrace its steps in order to ensure that the ideas have been considered carefully. She is capable of following the multiple lines of inquiry that might arise throughout a discussion and can review these lines when the discussion lags or gets too complicated, or when the group has gotten lost or sidetracked. She is able to pay attention both to the content of the discussion, prompting the group in the direction of particularly important questions when this is necessary, and to the form of the discussion, the group dynamics that conspire to either assist with or complicate the group's attempts to work collaboratively.

The dialogue also receives its structure from the text (which could take many forms: e.g., a written document, an oral presentation, or a physical object) that functions as the central focus of the group. One thing that distinguishes a dialogue as such from a simple conversation, or from a series of conversations within a group of people, is the common purpose that unites its members. They are present for one of two reasons: either they want to explore the topic of the particular dialogue, or, in the case of long-term discussion groups, they want to engage with one another in a project of collaborative inquiry. Their purpose is either the immediate topic of discussion, or it is the act of discussion itself.

Chaos generally results from a dialogue with no text and no central focus. Group members are inclined either to introduce the topics that are of most interest to them or to withdraw until a viable direction emerges. A lack of central focus complicates the already difficult task of getting group members to speak to each other attentively, meaningfully, and productively. Whereas a central focus gives members a common project and specifies for them

ahead of time what should get their attention and their critical thought, the absence of focus opens the door to power struggles. Those who emerge as leaders in this type of discussion will be those who are naturally drawn towards more competitive environments, while those who are put off by competition or made uncomfortable by confrontation will become frustrated or opt out, at least temporarily.

With a trained and practiced discussion group, a well-phrased question can be sufficient to both inspire and focus a dialogue. A simple question can be used to center and focus the discussion, but this approach also has its difficulties. Questions that are too broad or too abstract leave open too many possible avenues of inquiry, so that instead of making progress the group may instead spend a great deal of time simply deciding how to go about trying to answer the question. Questions that are too simple or too focused run the opposite risk—i.e., that they will be answered satisfactorily too quickly, after which the group may once again lose direction and focus.[20] On the other hand, an established discussion group may also be able to determine and refine its own direction at this point.[21]

Generally speaking, the dialogue is best served by focusing on a text and using this text to set the terms of the discussion. Although a question may be capable of sustaining a genuine dialogue, a text or an object that provides the group with a source of information and material in addition to the focus or approach indicated by the question gives group members a wider field in which to conduct their explorations. By bringing their many different readings and approaches to bear on a single text, the group opens up many different possibilities in the original question. As

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[20] For more on the different types of questions that can be asked in a discussion and their relative impacts on the discussion, see Howard Zeiderman and Touchstones Discussion Project.

[21] On a more technical level, a concrete problem to be solved can also quite effectively focus a dialogue. Dialogues of this sort may be scientific, political, or simply pragmatic in nature. In these cases, the problem to be solved or task to be accomplished sets the parameters of the group and determines the standard for success.

each group member attempts to understand and make sense of the content of the text, or to tease out and examine its implications, a number of different narratives emerge, each of which can shed valuable light on the central topic or question. And while some of these narratives will be stronger than others, some more complete, some more feasible, it will rarely be the case that the group spontaneously agrees that one single reading is sufficient. Rather, it is precisely the proliferation of these narratives that makes the possibilities of dialogue so rich.

On the other hand, the proliferation of narratives is also somewhat dangerous to the project of dialogue. That is, dialogue is a collective, collaborative enterprise, and if group members simply immerse themselves in producing their own individual readings, there is no need for the group at all. The strength of dialogue, however, lies in the fact that strange and beautiful things happen when different narratives collide, when they are put into conversation with one another. While we may not emerge from a dialogue with a single story about our text or a single, ideal perspective on our object, the multi-dimensional awareness and appreciation that we achieve proves much more valuable, in the long run. Again, if we prefer a single story or single narrative, then listening to a lecture or reading a book would suffice. But the particular strength and purpose of dialogue is to give us this multi-dimensional perspective.

This touches on the final element of dialogue that helps to give it structure—the aim or outcome of the dialogue, for lack of a better word. By "outcome," I simply mean the expectation of the group members about what they will achieve through dialogue. Will they achieve the answer? Will they simply better understand the question? Will they formulate and test a hypothesis? Will they agree on the most likely narrative or explanation? At its most basic, one fundamental decision made by the discussion group, a decision which determines in advance what the discussion will look like, is whether or not the goal of the group is consensus. A group

that expects that consensus is possible, and moreover that expects to achieve it, will approach the dialogue much differently than one which aims instead at the cultivation of multiple viewpoints. Of course, this orientation might also encourage the use of sophistry and rhetoric as tools for achieving that consensus. On the one hand, aiming for consensus can increase the rigor and attention to argumentative detail in the discussion; the group tasked with deciding upon the strongest narrative or perspective will be faced with the need to effectively evaluate between competing narratives. Such attention to detail often requires a depth of analysis that may not be achieved if multiple and competing narratives are instead welcomed and cultivated by the discussion. On the other hand, the determination to achieve consensus in dialogue can also prematurely foreclose or forestall alternative readings or perspectives. It also assumes that there is in fact a single way of seeing or approaching the central topic—it assumes "truth" is both singular and capable of being articulated by the group.[22]

To recap, then, the necessary structure for the dialogue has three main components: the leader, the text, and the outcome. The leader helps to organize and manage the functioning of the group as a group, takes responsibility for making the logistical decisions that either require an expertise in the process of discussion or that would take too much time and energy to determine democratically. The leader helps to maintain the group's focus, removing peripheral concerns so that each member can focus primarily on the examination at hand. The text provides this focus in the first place, determining the direction and often the parameters of the inquiry. It gives the group a central question to consider while also providing them with a common source of information on which to draw in responding to that question. In essence, the text provides the

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[22] The question that emerges, then, is how a dialogue can achieve the rigor and depth of analysis associated with the aim of consensus while still respecting the complexity and irreducibility of the world being examined. This question is the focus of the next Intermezzo.

group with a common set of materials and tools, so that the building of an account can in fact proceed collaboratively. Finally, the desired outcome of the discussion (consensus or awareness) helps to determine how the group should approach the multiple perspectives that emerge in the dialogue. In effect, by specifying the form of the outcome of discussion, this expectation tells the group members how they should respond to one another's ideas.

### *Force and the Content of Dialogue*

Within the dialogue established by the discussion leader, text, and outcome, however, all three types of force can conceivably be exercised. For the most part, the more overt and physical manifestations of coercive force are limited by the existence of laws and social conventions that prohibit violence against others. However, interpersonal instances of coercive force often arise in dialogues, as do attempts to generate agreement or consensus through appeals to authority or expertise. Individuals may also misappropriate persuasive force itself, in the form of rhetorical devices or sophistical techniques, in order to compel others to agree with or act in accordance with a given claim or position.

Most of the time, when we think about how force manifests in actual dialogues, what comes to mind most immediately are the interpersonal forces—authority and coercive force. For example, it is easy to see the authority of the leader: the teacher of a class or the leader of a discussion group wields power of some kind because she shapes what happens in that group. Her suggestions are given more weight, her guidance is more readily accepted, and it is often her responsibility to provide the group or the class with its text, its direction, its *raison d'être.* In more extreme cases (and especially with younger students), she is responsible for discipline, for correcting breaches of etiquette or more serious behavioral issues, and for maintaining and supporting the ability of the group to work effectively together. This kind of logistical or

organizational power supports the very existence of the dialogue itself; without it, the group may find no occasion to meet, no consensus about its purpose, and no common understanding of its own process. On the other hand, teachers who take this authority to an extreme exert a level of control over the process that robs the dialogue of spontaneity and authenticity.

Another type of interpersonal force, the authority of expertise, relies upon prior experience or knowledge. Especially in traditional classroom models, we are trained to defer to the claims of experts, under the assumption that the experts have already done the work of examining the available information, have already analyzed and processed it, and are now presenting us with exactly what we need to know about a given subject. Through some aversion to "reinventing the wheel," entire classes may make way for the one student who claims to have particular knowledge on a given topic; in a more official arena, this is in fact the very founding principle of the lecture. However, this deference to expertise is more suited to practical undertakings than to theoretical or educational inquiries: I am more likely to take my car to a mechanic to get it fixed, if I simply need it up and running so that I can get around again, but if I truly want to learn about my car, if I want to achieve a more profound understanding of what my car is and how it works, I will take it apart and put it back together again, getting from others only a necessary minimum of previously established knowledge, relying primarily on my own observations and experiences to tell me about my car.

On the other hand, those who have been part of group discussions of any sort will also recognize the kind of power that manifests directly between participants, a type of coercive force that we might call "the force of the loudest." For example, there are some participants who naturally speak assertively and are quite comfortable arguing against others or defending their own ideas. Others seem to instinctively shy away from this kind of activity and restrict

themselves to asking questions or offering observations. As we noted earlier, there are students who will not share their thoughts in an environment that feels competitive, while others seem to thrive on the energy that comes with competition. Some will naturally feel compelled to agree, at least vocally, with whatever claims are expressed forcefully, while others will find themselves naturally inclined to argue the other side of any given argument. An impassioned speech can be convincing simply because it is so emotional, because the speaker himself seems to be so thoroughly convinced, or because the spectacle or prospect of such assurance is itself an attractive and desirable one. In a competitive dialogue, only those comfortable with that atmosphere will make themselves heard, but this has the effect of privileging one set of voices to the detriment of the others. A student's willingness to engage in spirited and competitive inquiry has no necessary relation to the strength of her insights; in the same way, a student's dislike of competitive dialogue does not arise from the weakness of her ideas. The need to limit the atmosphere of competition in a dialogue is in many ways a pragmatic one: a more collaborative environment in which *all* participants feel comfortable contributing will offer the greatest possibilities for critical reflection and insight.

However, the true force of genuine argumentation arises separately from these interpersonal manifestations of power. The most powerful force acting on thought is and should be that of persuasion by the best or strongest argument. The participants of a dialogue agree to the restriction of rules, texts, and leaders, in order to access the space that those restrictions hold open—a space within which ideas may be freely shared, explored, analyzed, and investigated, a space within which they may be guided by the persuasiveness of arguments, the robustness of ideas, and the solidity of objects. For example, I often experience my interaction with new and different ideas as a power challenging my established beliefs. I can be disrupted or even

persuaded not only by how an idea is presented but *by the idea itself*, quite apart from its presentation. New perspectives, new experiences, and new ways of explaining ideas or solving problems can all exert a power of some sort on my own ideas, beliefs, and prior experiences. This rich interplay and proliferation of ideas presents participants with myriad opportunities for new insights, fresh realizations, and even shattering epiphanies—and these opportunities arise primarily when others present us with persuasive arguments.

This is why Deleuze talks about a "misosophy" that is "forced to think" by something outside of it (*Difference* 139), why Proust describes his "encounter" with the cobblestones as something "fortuitous and inevitable" (quoted in Deleuze, *Proust* 95-97). Being confronted by an object is very different than being confronted by another person or another mind; objects have no motivations, and thus our encounter with them is stripped of one layer of psychology. The objects confronted in daily life present problems for the living organism to surmount in order to go on living, to live more comfortably, to live well. The human child spends her time immersed in a field of objects, interacting constantly, engaged in a continual process of analysis and investigation, determined to understand and master those objects she finds around her. Each task that we decide on carries its corollary challenge: once we know *what* is to be done, we must determine *how* it is to be done. This challenge becomes the next problem that we must solve, and in solving each problem we learn, we challenge or add to our existing beliefs about how the world works and how we work within it.

This kind of logical manifestation of power is exactly what Plato describes in his image of the cave. Once again: the freed prisoner there is challenged not by what he is told, for he is not told much of anything at all: he is challenged and frightened by the object themselves, by the statues, the people, and the fire. His later journey leads him to investigate the outside world, with

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its objects, shadows, and heavenly bodies. Speech plays only a very small role in this process, argumentation does not seem to have a place here, and interactions with other people are not at issue. It is the confrontation with the world itself that matters to Plato; argumentation only resumes when this freed prisoner returns to the cave, compelled by some sense of duty, and applies to his efforts to the task of encouraging his fellow prisoners to look around the cave and experience the same transformation that he did.

The repeated use of ἀνάγκη and its related words (those emphasizing logical necessity or compulsion) in the context of liberation from the cave, while somewhat confusing in the context of the image itself, clarifies two very important aspects of Plato's theory. First, as we have already noted, the force that effects the prisoner's unwilling escape is constituted by logical necessity and not by brute strength. Logical necessity persuades and convinces, and thus the compulsion exerted upon the prisoner is of such a nature that we must imagine his being forcibly persuaded to stand and turn and look rather than being physically lifted, turned, and directed. That is, he must be persuaded to confront his ignorance and to observe what that ignorance has obscured, because brute strength can only ever overpower. Second, the argumentation of which Socrates approves and which he himself employs relies specifically and exclusively on this logical force. Thrasymachus, our cautionary tale, gets this wrong, conflating physical power with the logical force that is alone capable of convincing or persuading his opponents, and therefore of "winning" the argument. Genuine persuasion is not something that belongs to a speaker as such but rather to the speech itself; this is emphasized in the *Gorgias,* when in the conclusion of the dialogue Socrates claims to have been "persuaded by these speeches [λογων]" (526d). Rather than maintaining authorship of the account he has given, Socrates divorces himself from the origins of that account and even suggests that he and his interlocutors "take as a guide the speech

[λογος] that has now made its appearance in our presence" (527e). Insofar as Socrates can be declared the "victor" in the competition with Callicles, it is not Socrates himself but rather his speech or account that deserves the credit for this. Callicles, on the other hand, has approached the dialogue with much the same attitude as Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, and he finds himself similarly outmatched or outmaneuvered.

If the encounter with new ideas, objects, and perspectives is the truly educative encounter, and the power exerted by these things is more likely to result in genuine learning, and if on the other hand the exercise of interpersonal power in a dialogue often disrupts or forestalls the effects of these ideal encounters, one final question arises: Is there a way in which interpersonal power is *useful* for learning? Plato answers this very question towards the end of the *Gorgias* (504d-e):

> …the [rhetorician] who's artful and good, will be looking toward [virtuous] things and will bring them to bear on our souls in the speeches he makes and in all his actions. And if he gives us any gift or takes anything from us, he'll give it or take it having his thoughts on this: on how justice may be brought into the souls of his fellow-citizens and injustice may be eliminated, on how moderation may be brought in and self-indulgence eliminated, and how the rest of virtue may be brought in and vice expelled.

Or, more succinctly, "the way one ought to make use of rhetoric, and every other activity, is always toward the end of what's just" (527b-c). Argumentation and the winning of arguments, when it becomes an end in itself, results in a proliferation of techniques and evasions that constitute, in their worst forms, sophistry and empty rhetoric. Rhetoric is a powerful and potentially dangerous thing; we must therefore be quite careful about how we employ it. And since the encounter with ideas, described above, seems to be the most fundamental and important, the value of rhetoric will consist in its ability to help encourage or cultivate these encounters—to draw people into dialogue on particularly crucial questions or to force them to

confront these perplexities in their own thinking.

It is this use of rhetoric that Plato's freed prisoner may employ upon his return to the cave—methods of persuasion that attempt to point the soul in a new direction and open it up to new encounters and experiences. And, perhaps, it is this use of rhetoric that the "liberator" has employed in the first place. The prisoner has been compelled to stand, to turn, to look, and these are the sorts of maneuvers that can be accomplished by means of persuasion and rhetoric. This is the manifestation of interpersonal force that can bring us into contact with those ideas and objects that challenge us. We can be, in a manner of speaking, forced to confront ideas that challenge us. But we cannot be compelled to *conclude* anything about those ideas except by the evidence of our own senses in conjunction with the exercise of our own intellect. This is, perhaps, the essence of the power of ideas and of their difference from the power of authority— ideas exert something like this power that compels us to a conclusion we can rationally justify, whereas authority can only ever compel us to obey.

### *Addressing the Problem of Force in Dialogue*

Having examined the various manifestations of force in the structure and the content of dialogue, it remains to explore the possibility of counteracting or insulating ourselves against the pernicious effects of force on thought and discourse.

In many ways, Freire's matrix of dialogue,[23] is a direct challenge to illegitimate or exploitative manifestations of interpersonal force. His emphasis on love alone largely precludes the manipulation of others for our own ends or the imposition of our own ideas or desires on them without reference to their lives and perspectives. In acting out of dialogical love, another's

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[23] I.e., love, humility, faith in humankind, trust, and critical thinking (Freire, *Oppressed* 89-92, and *Education* 45), discussed in Chapter Three.

wellbeing concerns me much as my own does, and thus I act in such a way as to respect that other's wellbeing and autonomy.

However, one might still attempt to manipulate or coerce others out of a sort of love: one possessing strongly held convictions might attempt to manipulate a group in order to bring about an end he sees as beneficial, regardless of whether or not others would agree that that end is possible or even desirable. The second element of Freire's matrix, humility, addresses just such a situation: approaching dialogue, and others in dialogue, with humility entails that we acknowledge the uncertainty of our own convictions. We relinquish, to a great extent, our solitary and self-sufficient processes of thought and judgment in order to explore the world collaboratively, in order to learn from and with one another. Such a posture leaves little room for the individual to resort to manipulation or illegitimate argumentation in order to force the group to move or act in a specific direction. To impose one's own views on the group against the will of the group—or simply to circumvent the will of the group—directly opposes the humility that Freire advocates in dialogue.

Along with the humility that, in some sense, binds us to the group, trust in a dialogue also helps to form the basis for the collaboration that supplants the use of coercive force or argumentation in dialogue. Whereas humility involves the recognition that we may be wrong, trust helps us to understand that we can rely on others to work alongside us to address the problems and questions we encounter. I can feel more comfortable relinquishing my own beliefs and desires as the sole guides of my judgments because I trust that the group as a whole is thoughtful enough to consider the problems we encounter deeply and well. Moreover, trust in dialogue also manifests in my belief that the other members of my group are, likewise, giving up some measure of their own autonomy in order to engage with me and the group as a whole. In

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this social contract, we each understand that we are no longer single, isolated individuals with no allegiances, but rather members of a group who desire to engage and collaborate with one another. If I trust in the group and in the process, I will not attempt to hijack or circumvent the group's inquiry by imposing my own convictions on it.

While humility and trust may largely supplement the element of love in a dialogue, the element of critical thinking provides a separate source of resistance to manipulation and exploitation. In particular, critical thinking precludes the passive acceptance of assertions, it exposes the weakness of fallacious arguments, and it re-anchors in each of us the awareness of our own responsibility for our judgments. Love, humility, and trust make us members of a collaborative group, but critical thinking ensures that we also remain individuals and that we take seriously the demands of critical thought and judgment. Without critical thought, we are much more credulous, more willing to be swayed by charismatic speakers, emotional appeals, or arguments that simply appear to be logical. If we emphasize the importance of critical thought, on the other hand, we will demand sound argumentation, genuine reflection, and thorough examination.

Beyond the specifics of the matrix that helps to describe our approach to dialogue, the very nature and structure of dialogue itself provide some natural resistance to the practices of sophistry and the abuses of rhetoric. Sophistry and rhetorical devices are generally used to achieve one of two parallel outcomes: they help one individual or group to dominate another (to "win" or "outdo" them), or they allow one individual to emerge as a leader above others. In the attempt to win or to establish a leadership position, an individual might make use of argumentative techniques that coerce or trick others into agreeing with them or giving way before them. The structures and expectations of dialogue act to foreclose both of these outcomes,

and thus render dialogue inhospitable to the use of such illegitimate logical argumentation. Dialogue accomplishes these foreclosures in four major ways: (1) it removes the basis by which one individual might "win" or might "outdo" the others, (2) it makes coercion more apparent and cultivates an aversion to this coercion in its participants, (3) it builds an awareness of logical fallacies and manipulation and devalues the use of these tricks, and (4) it has a tendency to fragment or pull itself apart, a natural centrifugal tendency that continually resists against attempts to enforce unity within the dialogue or in the group—and without unity, there is little egoistical value to establishing oneself as a leader.

First, the explicitly collaborative nature of the dialogue diffuses authorship among the participants. The conclusions and insights generated and developed there belong less to individuals than they do to the group as a whole (as a collection of individuals). Fred Evans explores the utterance as something fundamentally "multivoiced" and already social, responding to previous claims while also anticipating future responses (see "Deleuze, Bakhtin, and the 'Clamour of Voices,'" as well as his longer work, *The Multivoiced Body*). This interrelationship of voices, already implicit in the single utterance, will only be magnified as the individual enters into direct and explicit dialogue with others. Evans goes so far as to claim that "we are dialogic creatures" (*Multivoiced Body* 60), explicitly invoking this relationship of exchange as a constitutive element of human being. The achievements of the group are collective, and the notion of authorship itself becomes fluid and dynamic, explicitly collective in nature. Because this authorship is already fragmented and diffused, there is less room for participants to distinguish or elevate themselves individually, at the cost of their colleagues. There is less room for the egoistic concern with being credited with particular ideas when those ideas arise within a milieu and are constituted through contact with that milieu. In this sense, the aim of the

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discussion (as explicitly collaborative) helps to insulate the discussion against those seeking to win arguments.

At the same time, the dialogue prioritizes learning (a dynamic and developing thing) over knowledge (a static possession or position). The interlocutors in a discussion embody the apprenticeship that places them directly in the site of the experiment, in the same milieu with the ideas and positions they are discussing. This immanence of the interlocutors and the primacy of learning also help to remove the basis according to which individuals might find themselves staunchly defending a fixed position that they themselves have introduced. The aim of the dialogue—the reason for engaging in a dialogue—is by our definition to learn something new; defending a previously held belief is only of value insofar as that belief still seems to be relevant, meaningful, useful. The defense of this position cannot be a participant's primary objective in a discussion. It may reveal itself as a means of thoroughly analyzing and evaluating claims and positions within a discussion, but such a defense—decided from the outset—amounts to a determination not to learn, not to change, and as such it is directly in opposition to the aims of the genuine discussion participant. In a sense, there is no "winning" in a dialogue, and there is no individual fame; the accomplishments of the dialogue are the increased understanding and appreciation for the topics that each of the participants gain by taking part in the group discussion. The goals of exploration and discovery, rather, emphasize participants' willingness to relax their hold old ideas and their dependence on prior beliefs, in order to more deeply and authentically examine the ideas and objects encountered in the dialogue.

As indicated above, those seeking to "win" in a dialogue often use either of two different techniques—coercion and tricks—and dialogue opposes each of these practices as well. Thus, the second way in which dialogue naturally resists the practices of illegitimate argumentation is

by discouraging overtly coercive argumentation. The explicitly collaborative aim that helps to remove the basis for winning in a dialogue also helps to decrease the use and effectiveness of coercion in dialogue. In particular, the explicit expectation among the participants of a dialogue that they will be working together to explore, develop, and analyze ideas and perspectives helps to throw the coercive approach into relief. In attempts to work together, it can become frustratingly obvious if one member of the group is advancing a single agenda, attempting to coerce other members into agreement.

Expectations regarding the content of the dialogue—i.e., its composition from many voices and many perspectives—also provide some natural resistance to any attempts to assert a single voice or narrative to the exclusion or detriment of others. Sometimes it happens that the collaboration of the group as a whole ultimately begins to support a somewhat singular or unified account; in this case, most or all of the members of the group are helping to advance and develop this temporary resonance of viewpoints or accounts. However, when a single account is advocated by only one individual or a select few, with others either voicing disagreement or slowly dropping out of the discussion, it becomes apparent quite quickly that coercive force has entered and attempted to dominate the discussion. Bringing such coercion to the conscious attention of the individual group members can make it much easier to address and overcome.

The interventions of the discussion leader both help to bring coercive techniques into view and train the participants to recognize such techniques on their own. These interventions may also explicitly devalue the contributions of coercive force, exposing them as attempts to gain support or power that have no real bearing on legitimate argumentation or reasoned discourse (which alone have a place in dialogue). By explicitly recognizing such coercive techniques, making them obvious to the group as a whole, and establishing their essential

opposition to the practices and aims of the dialogue, the leader helps to defuse the power of coercive force. The relationship between the interlocutors described by Freire's matrix of dialogue adds another layer of resistance to coercion in dialogue. For example, humility helps to remove the egoistical motivation for coercion, and engaging other individuals with love would seem to preclude our reducing them to objects by attempting to coerce them or impose our own views or values on them.

The third way in which the proposed model of dialogue naturally resists illegitimate argumentation is by placing an explicit emphasis on reasoned accounts or supported opinions. The mere assertion of opinion in a dialogue is only ever a starting point, a place from which we depart in order to more fully explore an idea. To recall Plato's *Meno*, true opinions, while they may lead us in the right direction, must ultimately be tied down with a reasoned account before they can become truly useful or meaningful for us. Similarly, the progress of the dialogue requires the development of reasoned accounts; each opinion must ultimately be supported or discarded by means of evidence and argumentation. While the assertion of opinions may draw its force either from support and reason or from coercion or intimidation, the demand that opinions be logically supported, that they be accounted for using reason, acts to close off the avenue by which coercion might enforce a single idea or position in a dialogue.

In addition, the dialogue's leader may also act to increase the group's awareness of sophistical techniques or rhetorical devices, along with their respective validity or speciousness. Many of the tricks used to establish dominance or to enforce agreement within a dialogue are in fact logical fallacies—arguments that give the appearance of legitimacy but that are in fact logically irrelevant or invalid. The power of these logical fallacies is based on the audience's inability or failure to recognize them for what they are. On the other hand, the awareness of these

fallacies and the ability to identify them when they are used in dialogue function to deprive them of their power, removing their ability to coerce our agreements or our beliefs. In the beginning, it is the intervention of the leader that might point out the use of these fallacies, but these interventions also serve as lessons to the participants; by continual attention to this dimension of logical argumentation, participants become increasingly capable of identifying and calling out fallacious argumentation on their own.

Finally, dialogue discourages the illegitimate use of argumentative force by resisting centralization and unity. Argumentative force attempts to impose or assert a single narrative or account at the expense of others, forcing a cohesion or consensus in support of that single, privileged narrative. Dialogue, however, resists that very cohesion. The value placed on the proliferation of narratives that can arise within a dialogue acts directly against those forces that would attempt to reduce or resolve them into a unity. In seeking knowledge over learning, the proliferation of accounts is explicitly encouraged: whereas knowledge might be static, singular, and possessed by a particular individual, learning is collective, always in progress, and magnified and advanced by the combination and interplay between many different and differing accounts. Attempts to coercively reduce this multiplicity are correspondingly discouraged or devalued.

The dialogue, in order to be possible at all (in order not to ultimately lose all cohesion and dissolve into monologues), must contain some element that holds it together even in the midst of this continual flying-apart. The text or object of the discussion generally plays this role, helping to establish a common point of departure or a focus for the inquiry. Even this centralizing element, however, is itself subject to some of the same fragmentation and proliferation that operate within discourse and that multiply the voices and narratives active in any given inquiry. That is, the text that provides this central focus is itself subject to questions

and challenges posed by the group. This central point is itself dynamic and fluid, flexing its shape and its boundaries throughout the group's consideration and analysis of it. The very object that focuses the discussion also gives rise to the proliferation of accounts that the encounter with that object inspires.

The questioning activity that forms such a central and crucial component of the dialogical approach provides perhaps the most robust and tenacious resistance to coercive attempts to enforce unity. Every claim, idea, and position in a dialogue must be open to being questioned. The dialogue encourages questions and challenges, acknowledging that each aspect of our beliefs must be thoroughly considered, as well as remaining subject to repeated and ongoing consideration. A manipulative, exploitative, or reductive approach to argumentation will discourage such questioning, preferring instead to avoid the scrutiny that follows in our attempts to answer questions. Thus, an approach which values, encourages, and even requires the questioning activity will always throw an obstacle in the way of those who attempt to dominate it: participants will not only feel free to question these attempts, they will be explicitly trained and expected to do so.

In these ways, dialogue manifests a natural resistance to the use of illegitimate argumentation, and this resistance is both negative (declining to provide a space for these uses) and positive (actively seeking out and opposing these uses).

Finally, we can use the terminology and framework presented in the third phase of Deleuze's theory of the "image of thought" (examined in Intermezzo 3, above) to understand how dialogue addresses the issue of force within its structure and within the thought that dialogical space makes possible. This terminology describes some of the same dynamics or elements discussed in the previous section—namely, it highlights the dialogue's resistance to

unity and its resistance to competition or "winning." In addition, it emphasizes two additional characteristics of thought that either actively resist the influence of force or that illustrate the importance of this resistance: each particular plane of immanence or image of thought is both essentially incomplete (permanently open to new thoughts and incapable of capturing all possibilities of thought) and dependent on or in communication with other images of thought.

First, the "multiplicity of planes" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 50) that Deleuze emphasizes in this third phase proliferate in direct opposition to any sort of unity or unifying force. The mere recognition of this multiplicity or plurality helps to guard against the actions of totalizing ideas or speakers. In a model of thought that includes or presupposes their diversity, the attempt to reduce this multiplicity to a single narrative will immediately appear as an illegitimate or artificial exercise in coercion. If we view a dialogue as a space of interaction in which multiple voices and perspectives are put into communication, then the reduction of these voices to a single voice will have the parallel effect of destroying dialogue itself.

Along the same lines, the chaos of possibilities that underlies and sustains each individual image of thought also undercuts attempts to win over or outdo others. This chaos is not capable of being fully encapsulated or described by any individual image of thought; therefore, something always escapes from any individual image of thought. There is no unchallenged transcendence in this multiplicity of planes: these planes "have in common the restoration of transcendence and illusion (they cannot prevent it) but also *the relentless struggle against transcendence and illusion*" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 59, emphasis added). While claims and attempts to transcend the plurality of planes or images will recur, perhaps necessarily, these attempts will also be frustrated and opposed by the recognition that any individual plane of immanence is simply one among many. Thus, attempts to install one plane

"over" the others, to privilege one at the cost of the rest, become increasingly unsound, and, once more, attempts to assert a single voice or narrative become suspect.

The description of the multiple planes of immanence as "not only interleaved but holed" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 51) emphasizes the final two dynamics of resistance to coercive force: the planes are naturally and continually in contact with one another ("interleaved"), and they are essentially incomplete on their own ("holed"). The incompleteness of the planes has already been suggested by their grounding in and selection out of an infinite chaos of possibilities. That is, if planes are formed by a process of selection that necessarily excludes more than it includes, then each plane is, by definition, incomplete with respect to the whole: each plane fails to encompass all the possibilities of thought. Moreover, the description of these planes as "interleaved" emphasizes their communication with and dependence upon one another. Planes are not formed in a vacuum; any plane sharing no points of contact with other planes would arguably be entirely incomprehensible from any other perspective—we would have no port of entry, no way of accessing the intricacies and locutions of a thought so radically dissimilar to our own. This interdependence itself suggests that the collaborative approach is to be preferred over the competitive. If each plane depends upon and is enriched by elements shared with other planes, then it becomes increasingly difficult to rationalize the exclusion or devaluation of those other planes. While the long histories of oppression and slavery in the world suggest that the simple fact of interdependence does not guarantee freedom from coercion, the parallel history of successful revolts and rebellions by oppressed people also suggests that this interdependence can be used as a lever with which oppressive systems might be overturned.

If we adopt the assumptions suggested here—that planes of immanence are multiple, incomplete, and interleaved, and that there is no "transcendence" or master plane—then a

number of natural suspicions will arise. We will be wary of any speakers or narratives that attempt to silence other narratives, that claim completeness or seek to totalize other narratives, that claim self-sufficiency or independence from other narratives, or that claim a privileged position with respect to other narratives.[24] Each of these claims or attempts are manifestations of force arising within dialogue; on the other hand, a clear idea of dialogue as excluding these dynamics will help us to resist them when they do arise.

This chapter has shown that certain types of force are helpful and desirable for dialogue while others are tantalizing but disruptive—to say nothing of the fact that the exercise of force in dialogue is inevitable—and these insights compel us to be careful and deliberate about the kind of balance we achieve regarding the use of force in dialogue. For example, our examination of Plato has already shown that the transformative encounter with new ideas exerts a genuinely educative force on us, while on the other hand, convincing imitations of knowledge and wisdom can lead us to believe we know things of which we in fact remain ignorant. Between the opposed dangers of, on the one hand, rhetoric and sophistry, which care only for the appearance of wisdom, and on the other hand, the assertion of bare opinion with no attempt to give any explanation to support it, we must strive for a middle path of genuine persuasion and reason. As Socrates claims, rhetoric must be used to exhort others to virtue; the mechanisms and techniques of argumentation must be employed not simply to create the appearance of wisdom but to aim at achieving real wisdom, to seek out and support truths themselves.

On one final note, this chapter has also made frequent use of the notion of the genuine. This is because deception or manipulation—the intentional adoption of an appearance that does

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[24] On this point, see Fred Evans in *The Multivoiced Body*, and his concept of an "oracle" as "a discourse that elevates itself above the others by presenting itself as universal or absolute—the 'absolute truth,' the 'one true God,' the 'pure race,' patriarchy, the 'free market' system, or any other doctrine that excludes or demotes those who do not consent to its terms" (11). See also his further discussion of oracles on pp. 207-211.

not match the reality, the practice of saying something other than what we actually think or believe—are hallmarks of coercive behavior. In this chapter, most of our inquiry has been concerned with the genuine in a "negative" sense—with the absence of intentional deception. The structure and the conception of dialogue attempt to make deception both more visible and less acceptable in philosophical discourse. The Intermezzos to come, however, will consider the more "positive" aspects of the genuine—namely, how do we address unintentional deception? What does it mean to be genuine or honest in the absence of certainty? How do we "tell the truth" if we no longer have recourse to a universal definition of truth?

# INTERMEZZO 4:
# TRUTH-AS-MYTH AND HONESTY IN PHILOSOPHY

As we saw in the previous chapter, the abuse of interpersonal force in dialogue can be at least

somewhat mitigated by the adoption of overt structural elements that limit the exercise of this

kind of force. The loss of truth, however, poses a much more formidable problem for logical

argumentation: it opens logical argumentation up to a great deal of exploitation and abuse. Thus,

in some sense, logical argumentation requires some mechanism or concept—traditionally truth—

in order to protect it from abuses. On the one hand, talking about "truth" is problematic even

within the context of this essay, since Plato seems to accept it as fundamental and Deleuze treats

it with suspicion, if not outright contempt.[1] However, without some notion functioning as a

selective criterion, some concept or mechanism that allows us to choose between contradictory

statements, or some guiding principle that can help us to determine what is useful or what is

meaningful, we will not achieve any effective philosophical progress or even any genuine

communication. The rules that we implicitly agree to follow in thinking (e.g., the rules of logic

or, more broadly speaking, the image of thought itself) are what allow us to think coherently

together, what allow us to share our ideas and have them understood by others, what allow others

to reflect upon our ideas in ways that we can understand and accept (and, of course, vice versa).

In the absence of these rules, we may each speak our own language, with no attempts to

understand others or to cooperate with them.

But when Plato, Augustine, and Descartes talk about what it means to recognize truth—to

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[1] Truth is in fact one of the elements of the dogmatic or traditional image of thought that Deleuze draws attention to as being particularly problematic.

suddenly "recollect" or to be "illuminated" and therefore know, or to see so clearly and distinctly that doubt is removed—this experience (what we called in the Introduction an "affective experience of certainty") is in fact one that we can each recognize, to a greater or lesser extent. We share the experience, although we may disagree over what that experience means. While we might argue the semantics of the Cartesian *Cogito* or call into question the system it claims to found, the fact is that there is some spark of profundity in that moment that philosophy's subsequent critiques have failed to fully defuse. If the "clear and distinct" experience at the heart of the *Cogito* is not one of "truth" it is at the very least one of the most compelling intellectual experiences we know, and it shares some kinship with the standards or instincts that guide our own subsequent explorations. This experience lies at the core even of the critiques leveled at the notions of truth and certainty: On what do we base these critiques? We base them on the sense that there is something lacking, something problematic, something *wrong* with these notions as they stand—on the sense that they are somehow *not fully right or true* ("true" being understood here as deriving from this experience of certainty, a broad and fuzzy concept of truth). We choose to take up specific topics or investigations because we sense that there is something to be found there; whether it is the intuition of a well beneath the surface or the determination to dig a new well, there is something that compels us to proceed in one direction rather than another, to dig here rather than there, to agree or to disagree or to choose a third term that is not arbitrary but intentional and meaningful.

Questions of truth are further complicated by the great many forms in which we expect to find it. For mathematics—e.g., Euclid's geometry—truth implies demonstrability. The true proposition or statement is the one that can be deduced from the fundamental axioms of that system. In this sense, truth is systematic: it inheres in the relationships and arrangements

between elements within a system. For Plato, the truth lies in the One behind or within the Many; it is the essence that unifies objects or ideas encountered in the world, rendering them comprehensible as concrete examples of a single (perhaps transcendent) model or image. On the other hand, truth means something quite different in interpersonal relationships. The injunction to "tell me the truth," while it does often involve a desire to hear an objective or unbiased account of an event, also tends to imply a dimension of interiority. "Tell me the truth" means "Tell me what you truly think, believe, feel, " or even more particularly, "Tell me so that I can understand what it is you are thinking, believing, feeling."

R.G. Collingwood's assertion that we cannot know the meaning or the truth of a statement unless we know the question it is attempting to answer helps to make sense of this diverse set of meanings for the word "truth." That is, each figure, discipline, or relationship considered above has its own ends and asks its own questions. The concept of truth in each is intimately linked to those questions.

In looking for some kind of similarity between them all (an approach very much in the Platonic tradition of seeking the One within the Many), it seems that one way of indicating what is meant by truth pertains to what we experience once we have found it: truth is that which answers questions that have not yet been asked. We recognize that we have found something true when an answer reveals dimensions that have yet to be considered, satisfies inquiries that have yet to be formulated. The true thing, in answering these unarticulated questions, simultaneously brings those questions to light as counterparts of the answer we have just received. In the spirit of Collingwood: in receiving the answer, we become aware of the question. This, finally, is the sense in which the term "truth" will be used here: "truth is that which answers questions that have not yet been asked." This account itself should be understood

not to define truth but rather to gesture to it, as to an experience we can all recognize—the

affective experience of certainty to which Plato, Augustine, and Descartes have already called

our attention.

Of course truth also constitutes a problem frequently linked with those of normativity, of

oppression, of hegemony. "Truth" is a dangerous word, perhaps primarily because of how those

who believe they have achieved it are seen to behave toward others. It also involves a particular

threat to the one who possesses it, because the possession of truth implies that one no longer

needs to seek it. Thus, somewhat ironically, the concept of truth, which should inspire us to

intellectual commitment and rigor, can instead lead us to the doorstep of intellectual laziness.

In the face of this final tension—the need for something like truth juxtaposed with the

manifold dangers of the concept of truth—we might step back to take a page out of Plato after

all. For,

> …in *supposing* one ought to seek what one does not know we would be better,
> more able to be brave and less lazy than if we supposed that which we do not
> know we are neither capable of discovering nor ought to seek…" (*Meno* 86b-c,
> emphasis added)

Plato here acknowledges that there is a practicality to preserving a notion (or perhaps simply an

illusion) of truth—it makes us "better, more able to be brave and less lazy"; that is, these

characteristics have their value even if the truth which inspires them turns out to be illusory. We

might therefore turn truth into a Platonic myth; not a myth to be exposed and transcended, but a

founding myth capable of inspiring us to live more useful and productive philosophical lives.

The *Meno* presents a myth of truth in the form of *anamnesis*, in the story of the soul which has

been acquainted with all truths and which simply needs to recollect them in this life. This myth

requires only a slight adjustment in order to answer our purposes while still avoiding the dangers

posed by those who might claim to have achieved truth: that is, there is something valuable

(something like "truth") to be gained, if we are to work tirelessly towards it, but we must always add this corollary—that we cannot access it directly, although we can always approach more closely to it. Perhaps we cannot access it directly because, to use the example of an actual physical object, an apple, we can experience only one side at a time, one layer at a time, and memory or imagination must fill out the other dimensions of the apple. We use our previous experiences to construct or project the taste, the smell, the texture of the apple; we imagine its core and its seeds; but we can never know the entirety of a given apple, we can never experience it in its entirety and in its integrity. We must be content with an image compiled from many successive experiences, guesses, extrapolations. Through this project we may indeed experience something rich and profound, but to mistake this profundity for completeness is the danger that might make us lazy or arrogant. Any given object presents an inexhaustible source of mystery and can never be known completely.

But whereas Plato, Augustine, and Descartes each attempted to provide a guarantee for their sense of certainty, along with the mechanism for recognizing that certainty, we here adopt the myth of truth *without guarantee.* We must proceed without this guarantee, or we risk the error of attempting to bring the ground within the system itself. We cannot ground this first principle and must therefore leave truth in the realm of myth, but by so doing we may make use of it without necessarily risking its dangers.

What do we gain from giving truth the status of a founding myth? The first benefit is quite practical: we will strive more tirelessly for agreement, working harder to find points of contact, if we believe that agreement is possible, if we believe that we are not discussing two different objects in incommensurable languages. Even if this agreement turns out to be impossible, even if there is in fact a fundamental incommensurability between our two

perspectives, the work we do in seeking common ground will tell us immeasurably more about our own ideas and those of others, about the contours of the worldviews involved, than were we to fall back too quickly upon an agreement to disagree. The second benefit of adopting truth as a myth depends upon the corollary we have added to Plato's myth—i.e., that we cannot definitively access it—and is rather the escape from a danger than a positive benefit: if we believe that we are not capable of accessing truth finally, definitively, or comprehensively, we then have no basis for claims to absolute truth, and it is precisely these claims that are so often marshaled in support of normative or hegemonic positions whose potential benefits are outweighed by their inflexibility.

In drawing so heavily on both Plato and Deleuze, this project must eventually confront the fact that Deleuze speaks at some length about modern philosophy's task of "reversing Platonism."[2] Quite specifically, Deleuze rejects the metaphysical model in which transcendent, eternal forms are imperfectly copied in the everyday objects that we encounter. Deleuze instead affirms the "rights of simulacra"—simulacra which are not themselves genuine copies but rather false copies, pretenders.[3] In doing so, Deleuze begins to invoke a world of imitation that might, in

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[2] See *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 59-69, and its expansion into "Plato and the Simulacrum" in *The Logic of Sense*, Appendix 1, "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy." Here, Deleuze is taking his point of departure from Nietzsche.

[3] Deleuze even seems, at times, to champion the sophist, but this move is somewhat mystifying in light of the portrayal of the sophist in Platonic dialogues. There, the sophist is generally portrayed as the self-interested pretender who does not feel any sort of allegiance to honesty or to reason, who uses argumentative techniques in order to "outdo" his or her opponents, to manipulate others, or simply for the sake of the money others would pay to learn those same techniques. I can find nothing noble in what the sophist does, unless we were to truly stretch the argument and say that, in a world filled with those who are well-versed in argumentation, the passing on of this knowledge helps to level the playing field between the privileged and the general public. It is hard to see the sophist as anything other than selfish and self-interested, and those qualities seem quite inimical to what is lovable and spirited in philosophy, insofar as they are fundamentally inimical to authentic human relationship and discourse. If we are to champion the sophist, I have yet to see what he has to offer; what is it about the sophist that is valuable, meaningful, useful, admirable? Perhaps it is simply that he is an iconoclast, that he has no real allegiance to existing standards of nobility, meaning, utility, etc.—but thus far no persuasive arguments do any more than portray the sophist as not-necessarily-harmful.

many ways, seem poised to collapse beneath the implied infinite regress. If each thing is simply a copy of other preexisting things, where did it all begin? Where can we find our first principles or our prime movers? It is difficult to imagine the robust variability of the observable and experienced world without recourse to some kind of originality, but this is precisely what a world of simulacra would seem to preclude.

Deleuze, however, goes on to give a more subtle and nuanced view of the world of simulacra in his discussion of "signal-sign systems" in "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy" in *The Logic of Sense*:

> Let us consider two formulas: "only that which resembles differs" and "only differences can resemble each other." These are two distinct readings of the world: one invites us to think difference from the standpoint of a previous similitude or identity; whereas the other invites us to think similitude and even identity as the product of a deep disparity. The first reading precisely defines the world of copies or representations; it posits the world as icon. The second, contrary to the first, defines the world of simulacra; it posits the world itself as phantasm. … The simulacrum is not a degraded copy. It harbors a positive power which denies *the original and the copy*, *the model and the reproduction*. … (261-2)

There is a set of crucial insights here: first, we can abstract meaningful similarities from among sets of different objects, and second, the concept of similarity itself is only meaningful if the objects in question are in fact all different (both distinct and different). According to this second insight, however, "There is no longer any privileged point of view except that of the object common to all points of view. There is no possible hierarchy, no second, no third. …" (262); the centrality or commonality, here, resides in what is looked at, and not in the lookers or knowers of that object. If we begin with difference, begin by acknowledging that the objects we compare may be more different than they are similar, and that applying the same name to a set of objects requires us to ignore a great deal of diversity, then the similarity that we might otherwise call a "form" becomes simply theoretical. Rather than presenting us with "degraded copies," simulacra

generate a rich field of diversity, of variety, a great many possibilities.[4] The "similarities"

between them are explained not by their being modeled on the same perfect form but rather by a

"resonance" of "divergent series" (262). Understanding this resonance as a secondary effect of

this divergence, rather than its originating or unifying cause, thus undermines the hierarchy of

model-and-copy in favor of an immanent milieu of simulacra.

> By rising to the surface, the simulacrum makes the Same and the Similar, the
> model and the copy, fall under the power of the false (phantasm). It renders the
> order of participation, the fixity of distribution, the determination of the hierarchy
> impossible. […] Far from being a new foundation, it engulfs all foundations, it
> assures a universal breakdown (*effondrement*), but as a joyful and positive event,
> as an un-founding (*effondement*): "behind each cave another that opens still more
> deeply, and beyond each surface a subterranean world yet more vast, more
> strange. Richer still . . . and under all foundations, under very ground, a subsoil
> still more profound." (263)

Deleluze here ends by quoting from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, giving us a passage that

inverts the image of the cave and makes its depths a source not of obscurity but of possibility,

specifically invoking and challenging the traditional Platonic image.

Deleuze's "reversal of Platonism" levels a formidable and unmistakable challenge at the

traditional notion of objects in the world as variations on a theme, each approaching but

ultimately falling short of an ideal form. The idea that objects, far from being "imperfect copies,"

are in fact rich, robust, and autonomous existences, possessed of their own integrity and elusive

of our attempts to master or encapsulate them, is relatively attractive as it in fact celebrates and

upholds the world around us as an inexhaustible source of wealth. Traditional notions of truth

reduce or collapse these differences into a single account supposed to do justice to all objects of

which it is the model. Now, however, these traditional notions of the objective truth of objects

can be supplanted or at least supplemented by other notions that in fact allow us to experience

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[4] Here we might be reminded of the dynamic between the multiple planes of immanence and the infinite chaos that
both supports and undermines each of them.

the objective world more fully. Rather than a reduction to forms, we have an ever deepening understanding and appreciation, successively compiled from our many different encounters with each object. The truth-as-model does not generate the world: our reflections on the world extrapolate and generate the model. In a sense, truth is created rather than discovered.

A notion of *subjective* truth, however, is more difficult to relinquish. As a speaker, as a subject, I might not always have certain knowledge that I can share with others—that is, I do not have the ability to "tell the truth" if I do not know it myself—but I do always have the ability to lie. I can misrepresent, mislead, prevaricate, equivocate; I can portray things as other than I believe them to be; I can use my words and my arguments not in order to convey a clear view of things as they seem to me but rather with the express purpose of fulfilling some ulterior aim. There is a great difference between taking phenomena as simulacra that resist any reduction to a single form and the intentional, argumentative manipulation of the sophist. At times, however, Deleuze comes dangerously close to celebrating the sophist along with his vindication of simulacra: "The Sophist himself is the being of the simulacrum, the satyr or centaur, the Proteus who meddles and insinuates himself everywhere" (*Logic of Sense* 256). There is great irony, for Deleuze, in the fact that the ultimate definition of the sophist (in Plato's dialogue of that name) very nearly implicates Socrates himself in its reach: "The final definition of the Sophist leads us to the point where we can no longer distinguish him from Socrates himself—the ironist working in private by means of brief arguments" (*Logic* 256), and it is these arguments, we might add, which compel his interlocutor to contradict himself. This resemblance gestures toward its own set of profound subsequent questions—e.g., how similar is genuine argumentation to sophistical argumentation? Is Socrates in fact a sophist?—but in the end it would be foolish to overlook the motivations of the speaker. That is, whereas the sophist of the Socratic dialogues is quite clearly

portrayed as seeking some personal benefit from his argumentation (payment, fame, or simply the competitive satisfaction of "winning" the argument), Socrates himself engages in argumentation for the sake of truth, and pursues it not only without reference to a personal benefit but even, in the end, to his own personal detriment, to his death. Like "the rhetorician…who's artful and good" (Plato, *Gorgias* 504d-e), Socrates uses argumentation in the service of philosophy and virtue.

Genuine discourse, true dialogue, cannot exist without something to fill the role vacated by this traditional notion of truth, something to rein in and moderate the exercise of sophistical argumentation. This sophistical argumentation, as suggested above, is fundamentally self-interested and manipulative. This kind of argumentation infringes upon the agency of others by attempting to force or circumvent their reasoning or consent; it presents information and argumentation in such a way that what appears to be the most reasonable conclusion is simply the conclusion desired by the arguing party. The interlocutor is compelled to act or to think in a certain way simply because his information has been tailored to that specific course. This kind of argumentation, therefore, is no basis for true dialogue or discourse: why would I consent to engage in a conversation with another knowing that the express purpose is that each of us will attempt to bend the other to our own individual wills? If there is nothing to be gained from the exchange beyond an acquaintance with the other person's desires, dialogue loses most of its potential to inspire, to educate, to enliven and open the worlds of possible experience, and it also begins to fail us as a way of seeking truth.

Thus, as a participant in a true dialogue, I am not required to "tell the truth," because I may not myself know the truth, but I am required to be honest about what seems true to me and to dispense with any deceptive or manipulative aims. The closer I can get to the affective

experience of "certainty," of rightness, resonance, or significance, the more I will learn from my conversation with others and the more I will have to offer that conversation in turn. This directly opposes the sophist's intentional manipulation of claims and information in order to achieve his own ends. Our participation in a dialogue must be authentic, never manipulative; we must engage in dialogue with the desire to learn and to increase our understanding, and not for the sake of competing, of winning, or of achieving some ulterior or self-interested motive—at least, or especially, not primarily. In the end, for practical purposes, perhaps we might replace the notion of "truth" with one of "honesty" in dialogue. While this should not imply that truth becomes less important, it does acknowledge that the controllable factor in our interactions is rather the honesty with which we approach one another and examine our own ideas.

This very formulation should hint at the great demands of dialogue, for honesty is a difficult and demanding master. In the first place, this demand for honesty requires a deep commitment to self-awareness. It is not enough to think, feel, or suspect things—we must probe deeply in order to discover why we think, feel, and suspect them, and to make sure that we do so for argumentatively legitimate reasons. Making decisions based on emotional self-interest is easy when we do not stop to examine our motivations; however, once we commit ourselves to the task of responding honestly in dialogue, we will often be confronted by truths that are inconvenient, uncomfortable, or even painful. A commitment to honesty means that we must be willing to endure this inconvenience, discomfort, and pain for the sake of the dialogue—for the sake of achieving some valuable insights thereby, or simply because we place value on the interactions that can take place when we become radically honest. This does not, on the other hand, mean that we have to become brutally or mundanely honest, sharing every thought or observation regardless of the harm it might do others or its relevance to the discussion. However, it does

mean that we commit ourselves to constantly evaluating which sorts of observations will be pertinent, which will be necessary. Freirean dialogical "love" should prevent us from causing undue harm with our honesty, but Freirean "faith" requires that we brave the discomfort of honesty when it is necessary.

Thus, honesty requires a fearlessness, a willingness to confront and acknowledge insights as they occur to us, without modifying them to suit our own purposes. But dialogue also requires us to consider the words we share with respect to the harm they are capable of doing. Honesty thus requires first and foremost a cancellation or overcoming of the more demanding elements of ego. The painful truths we encounter will sometimes accuse us of things we regret. But we can also prevent ourselves from causing harm with our honesty if we are sure that we are not engaging in dialogue in order to simply "win" arguments or "outdo" others. If we dialogue in order to bolster our own sense of accomplishment or earn the admiration of others, we are (ironically) more likely to be careless with others in the process. Understanding that the dialogue is a moment of authentic relationship between group members, rather than a singular expression of an individual, can help us to keep the wellbeing of our interlocutors in mind at the same time as we pursue the expression of our own insights. Unlike the problematic conceptions of truth that may lead to attempts at domination and hegemony, this understanding and pursuit of truth deliberately remains in contact with the human lives it is capable of affecting.

Because of the vulnerability and difficulty it involves, honesty in dialogue demands that my primary motivation in dialogue must be to learn and to grow. Implied along with this commitment to learning is the profound willingness to be wrong and to change. As long as this desire to grow is primary, the acknowledgement of new and difficult insights becomes less threatening than it is challenging or inspiring. Rather than constituting a danger and threatening

to undermine our worldview, the discovery of a new insight simply offers us a corresponding

opportunity to modify that worldview, to make it more complete, more inclusive, more nuanced,

more complex, more beautiful. On the other hand, if I lack this fundamental commitment to the

learning process, then some other motivation may govern the scope of what I will allow myself

to see and acknowledge. I run the risk of censoring truths before I can even understand that I am

doing so.

In the end, a commitment to dialogical honesty highlights the importance of two

particular elements of Freire's matrix of dialogue—trust and faith. In order to willingly engage in

such a vulnerable and potentially threatening endeavor in front of other people and along with

them, I must either trust them individually or trust that they are engaged in the same collective

process as I am. I must trust that they are taking on some of the same difficulties and enduring

some of the same vulnerability that I experience, that they have taken up the same commitment

to being honest with themselves and with me that I have taken up in turn. Finally, I must have

faith that the dialogue that I have committed myself to so profoundly will be ultimately

worthwhile, that the risks I run will earn me something valuable in return. I must have faith that

this collective endeavor is worthy on its own terms and that it is its own reward.

Honesty, however, must not be presupposed as present in a dialogue—it is rather an aim

to be continually sought, demanded, and monitored. For example, in the *Protagoras*, Socrates

constantly returns to this, voicing his concern and his desire that "each of them should let his

own judgment appear right out in the open" (336d)[5] and that the interlocutors will agree to

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[5] This particular example of this phrase is not in fact voiced by Socrates: the words belong to Alcibiades, who claims
to be thereby paraphrasing Socrates (336d). Far from correcting him here, Socrates goes on to demand this openness
in his discourse with Protagoras. When asked a question about cowards and courageous men, Protagoras answers as
a "human being" would, to which Socrates responds, "What you say is true…but that's not what I'm asking; what
do *you* claim courageous people are keen to go toward"? (359c-d). Rather than answer honestly, Protagoras has
attempted to insulate himself from the argument by answering in a voice not his own; however, recognizing this,

"examine in common" (330c) with him. He does not take this honesty and collaboration as a given, but continually calls it to the attention of his interlocutors—thereby reminding both us and himself as well. Socrates is here fighting against a habitual tendency in his interlocutors. They have not committed themselves to honesty in discourse or to letting their judgments appear in the open. They are more concerned with outdoing or winning or coming out on top or on proving their expertise; therefore, they constantly fall into the habit of dissembling, concealing or obscuring their true thoughts, or arguing in order to achieve their intent rather than to articulate or discover something meaningful. They all have something else at stake that undermines their philosophical integrity.

This is why the Socratic insight that we do not know what we think we know is so crucial to dialogue and to philosophy itself. Unless we profoundly and fundamentally understand that we are ignorant and that we have a very great deal to learn, the desire to learn will repeatedly fall victim to our more egoistic desires, our more spirited or competitive drives. We will desire to win, to appear to our own advantage, to convince others, or to outdo others, but in so doing we will not be acting first and foremost out of the desire to learn, to seek something "true" or meaningful in all things. If we think we know, then other desires take over. But if we can convince ourselves that we do not in fact *know*, by constantly dwelling on this fact, this insight, then we can be constantly open to the opportunities presented to us for learning. This may be why Socrates asks the same questions continually: What is virtue? What is justice? Are things one or many? Socrates' exchange with Protagoras gives us one formulation of his aim in engaging in dialogue: "Protagoras, don't imagine that I'm having this conversation with you for any other reason than because I want to examine things that I myself am puzzled by whenever

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Socrates pointedly asks him to answer for himself. This is simply a more pointed incarnation of his regularly repeated question: "How does it seem to you?" (330c).

they come up" (*Protagoras* 348c). Socrates knows that he does not know the answers and so he continually seeks them, while others have allowed more egoistic concerns to overwhelm their desires for learning and for knowledge.

Socrates thus constantly reminds his interlocutors, his audience, and himself that one must be honest in discourse if one hopes to discover anything valuable. All we have to ground our judgments is in fact appearance—but in order to learn true things from appearance we must *allow* our thoughts and judgments to appear, and then we must measure or evaluate them appropriately. Honesty is what allows or compels these things to appear in the first place. *Then* we can convert appearance into knowledge; then we stand a chance of discovering something truly valuable. But honesty also informs the process by which we pass from appearances to knowledge and guides the progression from appearance to truth.

However, this honesty which gives us the chance of achieving new insights is *essentially interior*; we cannot determine with certainty whether another person is being honest or dishonest. This is why we have adopted the Freirean matrix of dialogue, including the elements of *trust* and *humility*. The only basis for a true dialogue is honesty, and because we can never truly verify another's honesty, we must instead simply trust that others are being honest. And just as we are prevented from evaluating the honesty of others, no one else can evaluate our honesty. We ourselves must be attentive to our own intellectual honesty, and it is humility that helps us to do so: humility allows us to commit ourselves to honesty in discourse, to constantly monitor ourselves, and to negotiate the competing demands of the ego that would like to assert themselves in its place.

This puts philosophical claims in the precarious and definitively non-scientific position of being fundamentally unverifiable. The logic of argumentation can be evaluated from outside, but

a claim divorced from the motivations which have given rise to it, the fundamental questions to which it is a response (this is Collingwood's position, discussed earlier in "The Question" in Chapter One) is partial and suspect. The best way to proceed in these situations is to make these questions and motivations conscious and public, to be honest about them, to let them *appear in the open,* as Socrates would say. The level of verifiability that can be achieved in logical and scientific claims is simply not profound enough for philosophy. Philosophical claims, metaphysical claims, exceed the public realm because they derive their strength essentially from the personal and interior realm. This is the realm in which they resonate, in which they act most profoundly to change our lives. Their truth or falsity is essentially personal, their certainty is *felt and experienced*, and it is often prior to demonstration. Accordingly, conclusions cannot be simply transferred to another person. We are "convinced" by others when they are able to present us with a set information and claims from which we ourselves draw the conclusion they want us to see. The conclusion must always result from our own consideration and the exercise of our own judgment.

Thus the locus of "truth" in philosophical discourse cannot be external; it must be internal. Philosophical discourse must always be profoundly and fundamentally grounded on a personal awareness of and commitment to intellectual honesty; a commitment to letting one's thoughts, judgments, desires, and beliefs appear in the open. Having an honest conversation means that everything must appear in the open—not simply those things which, when viewed together, suggest a desired conclusion.

On a certain level, this relocation of the "locus of truth" runs the risk of depriving philosophy of all rigor by collapsing philosophy into its most shallow and empty appearance, its most naïve formulation: the right of each person to his or her own opinion. However, on the level

on which this dissertation intends it, the relocation of the locus of truth in fact deepens the rigor

of philosophy by tasking each philosopher explicitly and overtly with a very specific and a very

difficult orientation: one must take seriously the Socratic insight that we are essentially ignorant,

and one must commit oneself to the search for truth and insight—to the specific and necessary

exclusion of pride. The desires to outdo one another, to come out ahead or on top in an argument,

and to make oneself appear to advantage while another is exposed as weaker, are essentially

opposed to the desire to learn, and they will inevitably destroy and undermine that more

important desire. To philosophize requires a radical commitment to the resonance of things deep

within ourselves, often to the detriment of the shallower conception of self that expresses itself in

an egoistic desire for recognition, affirmation, and accolades. This is the ultimate importance of

the propaedeutic in philosophy.  That is, it is the profound and often unsettling awareness of the

great many things we do *not* know that increases our authentic desire to seek them out.

However, as this commitment is something that each one of us must make individually,

as it is something that we must each monitor and continually renew, it is also not something that

we can judge in others. Like Socrates, we must test our own interlocutors, we must enter into a

relationship with them in which we can continually remind both them and ourselves of this need

for honesty. We must keep watch to see that our own thoughts, beliefs, and desires appear in the

open; and we must ask questions whenever it appears to us that our interlocutors are leaving

things unsaid. We must also welcome our interlocutors' questions to ourselves in the same spirit

and for the same reasons. Because we can be blind to our own motives, thoughts, desires, even

while trying to acknowledge them, the other's questions can help us to reveal and uncover even

those insights that we are hiding from ourselves. It is precisely the issue of pride that might make

us least inclined to accept these challenges, which are in fact some of the most important (and

hence, we are reminded once again of the significance of Freirean humility). In the end: if we are to successfully replace the reliance on external, objectively existing "truth" with a myth of truth by which we might achieve the advantages of truth without running its risks, we must supplement an insistence on truth with an insistence on honesty.  It is in fact this latter demand—the demand for honesty—that we may experience as more concrete and more fully within the power of each of us to accomplish. Acknowledging this demand for honesty, however, commits us to beginning all endeavors in philosophy with the Socratic propaedeutic.

# CONCLUSION

*The Propaedeutic in Education and Philosophy*

In Chapter Two, we saw that Plato's *Meno* identifies two distinct phases of teaching and learning. Before he can enter into genuine and meaningful dialogue with either Meno or the slave boy, Socrates must first prepare them for this encounter by confronting them with the fact of their own ignorance. In the beginning, both interlocutors thought they knew something: Meno was accustomed to making "many speeches about virtue, and before many people" (80b), while the slave boy answered Socrates' initial questions about geometry with some degree of false assurance. By means of the questions that he poses to them, Socrates gradually forces them to confront the fact that these beliefs, which seemed to them so certain, are in fact quite fallible and fall apart upon inspection. It is at this point that the interlocutors realize that they do not know what they thought they knew—and thus they are finally ready to begin a genuine inquiry into those matters.

Socrates has already experienced this first phase, the confrontation of ignorance, but his interlocutors must themselves undergo it before they can engage in the second phase of learning with him. In order to be able and willing to examine something authentically, we must first believe that we have something to learn from the exploration; if we believe there is nothing more to learn, then there is no point in engaging in that search. The second phase of learning that follows has the potential to be, correspondingly, more genuinely collaborative (in Meno's case, that is), as both Socrates and his interlocutor may now offer their ideas and insights in order to

advance their understanding of the question. However, the first stage of learning was absolutely crucial as the propaedeutic or preparation which rendered the interlocutors capable of engaging in the second—and, at least at first glance, more important—phase of inquiry. The second phase attempts to productively answer the question posed at the beginning of the discussion, whereas the first phase fulfills what seems to be a purely negative role—challenging and demolishing established opinions that are insufficient to a true understanding of the matter. The "negative" achievement of the propaedeutic is widely overlooked or lamented by newcomers to Plato, who thus express their frustration with the aporetic dialogues: *But we're back where we started! We haven't learned anything at all.*

For Socrates, this "nothing" that has been learned, this negative knowledge, is in fact the most crucial moment of knowledge. As the *Apology* makes clear, it is in the service of this one small insight—the knowledge of ignorance—that Socrates has cultivated his entire intellectual vocation. This is the one piece of knowledge Socrates possesses that is capable of distinguishing him from the countless other wise men of Athens; it is the way in which he is the "wisest of them all." It is an insight of such weight and significance that the lack of it outweighs all of the true knowledge of the city's craftsmen, the only group that Socrates acknowledges to have any real knowledge whatsoever (*Apology* 22c-d). Without this strange and preliminary knowledge that one does not know, all other "wisdom is worthless" (23b). Before we can rely on something like natural curiosity to spur us on to new insights, before we can develop the desire for exploration and the appetite for adventure, we must first be brought to realize what it is that we do not know. And in this first phase of learning, the teacher confronts us with our ignorance, forces us to face the fact of the unknown.

The *Republic's* allegory of the cave resonates with this account of learning. The prisoner

is freed, is compelled to stand, to turn, to look at the light, and is dragged out of the cave, all by a fundamentally silent but nonetheless forceful figure. At the mouth of the cave, however, once "he'd dragged him out into the light of the sun" (*Republic* 515e), the liberator abandons the prisoner, and there is no further mention of this figure who has freed our prisoner and forced him out of the cave. The nameless figure acts and compels in the subterranean realm but then remains there, in the dark, and leaves the freed prisoner to investigate the outside world alone.[1]

The shadows (the world of established beliefs and opinions) were gradually betrayed by the three dimensions of the cave. Looking at the different elements of the prison in succession—the shadows, the statues, the fire, the wall—was necessary to illustrate the extent to which those shadows were in fact merely familiar illusions cast by objects which had more reality than those illusions did. Before truly abandoning the received opinions about the reality of those shadows, it was necessary for the prisoner to confront the speciousness and fragility of those opinions. As the acceptance of those opinions was initially a matter of subconscious habit or inherited belief, only something stronger, more convincing, more immediate and visceral, would be capable of radically exposing the flaws in those opinions. Simply being told that these beliefs were incorrect would do nothing, as it would merely oppose the authority of the speaker to the authority of tradition, and in either case the prisoner would make no conscious, well-reasoned *decision* one way or the other—to believe or not to believe.

The actions of the liberator in realm of the cave, then, serve the same function as the propaedeutic offered (or imposed) by Socrates in the *Meno*. Socrates asks questions that force both Meno and the slave boy to confront and reconsider their initial beliefs; the liberator of the

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[1] By the end of the allegory, we are left to infer that this liberator may in fact present us with an image of the prisoner's own future. If the prisoner's fate is to return to the cave and to attempt to help those who remain in captivity, we can well imagine that this entire drama might play itself out again, with our former prisoner evolving into the liberator of another.

*Republic* forces the freed prisoner to confront objects that throw an entire previously accepted reality into question. To the extent of this preparation, a degree of educative force must be employed—a violence implicit in the process which destroys beliefs or confronts us with contrary facts, unanswerable questions, or absurd conclusions—but after this preparation such force is no longer required, nor would it be appropriate. Meno and the slave boy become more or less capable of working alongside Socrates to examine the questions before them, and the prisoner explores the external world alone.

The theme of liberation also arises strongly in Freire's writings. But whereas the Socrates of the *Apology* seems to be most concerned with an intellectual or epistemological freedom, Freire's educational project is virtually inseparable from an overt political objective: the liberation of all human beings from the structures of oppression that have been imposed (by oppressors) and adopted (by both oppressors and oppressed) in society. Only the oppressed, Freire believes, are capable of waging the struggle for freedom. However, both because of their habituation to the structure of oppression and because of their exploited position in that structure, the oppressed are rendered almost incapable, intellectually, of mounting this attack. Their consciousness is "submerged" in the status quo: this makes them fatalistic about the possibilities of changing their situation and reluctant to take advantage of them. Practically speaking, this submersion that Freire identifies has the same effect on the intellectual subject as the ignorance that Socrates targets. Both ignorance and submersion render further progress nearly impossible— the former because the subject doesn't realize that progress is required, and the latter because he feels progress to be either meaningless or impossible.

On the other hand, those members of the oppressor class who recognize the injustice of the situation and wish to change it must not wage the struggle *on behalf of* the oppressed. Such a

gesture would only reinforce the disempowered, disenfranchised, and weakened position of the oppressed class. The members of the oppressor class who wish to fight oppression are logically barred from leading this struggle, and this is precisely the difficulty that Freire himself faced. But while they may not participate directly in the struggle for liberation, what they can do in service of the "revolution" is to engage in dialogue with the oppressed in order to help them cultivate an awareness of their concrete situation—both its contingent nature and its susceptibility to change. This dialogue is capable of awakening a critical consciousness that can sustain a rebellion against oppression.

As with the images of education as liberation in Plato, there is a preparatory dimension to Freire's project that limits the actions of the liberatory educator to dialogue. Dialogue as the sharing and collaborative exploration of beliefs, rather than as the imposition of belief or convictions, can ultimately lead all participants to a more active and effective understanding of reality. The educator who wishes to help the oppressed can do so by cultivating or contributing to a critical space in which the oppressed can realize that their beliefs about their reality—beliefs that keep them from acting to change that reality—may be mistaken. Once they achieve this critical awareness, they can then go on to join the struggle that will liberate yet others, both oppressors and oppressed, from the institutions and structures that maintain and reinforce oppression.

What we can learn from this investigation, therefore, is that truly liberatory education can never pass beyond the limits of a *preparation*—the preparation to use and rely on one's own mind. Once the student has been prepared to exercise her own understanding, then she is ready for philosophy. Philosophy picks up where education has left off; students are ready to participate actively in an investigation into reality, either collaboratively or alone. Philosophy

continues the project of learning that education began. This is philosophy "proper"—the philosophy demanded by students who misunderstand and so become frustrated by the aporetic dialogues.

The crucial point here is that, whereas in traditional approaches to education, the means of education (which encourage the passive reception of information) stood in stark contrast to the vocation of the scholar (the active generation and development of new ideas), the means of liberatory education and of philosophy proper are one and the same. Dialogue is the method of non-didactic education that is capable of showing the student the illusory nature of her established beliefs and dialogue is also the method capable of joining independent scholars in the collaborative exploration of a given topic.

In the allegory of the cave, the preparation is required in order to do two things: first, to show the prisoner the deceptive and misleading character of her original convictions; and second, to begin to train her in the process, habits, and skills she will need in order to continue the process of learning for herself, "outside the cave." The liberator does not simply free the prisoner's body from the chains, but stands her up and turns her around, showing her how to look and what to observe; in asking her to explain what these new objects are, the liberator forces the prisoner to not only confront the objects she has encountered but to truly grapple with this new reality. This engagement and this kind of attention are the ways of proceeding that the prisoner will later employ outside of the cave.

Similarly, dialogue as education both brings our beliefs, assumptions, and errors to light and teaches habits of inquiry that will allow us to maintain our explorations without overt leadership. As we move from education as such to philosophy proper, dialogue (as philosophy) multiplies those opportunities for being confronted by the new that help the philosopher to avoid

stagnation and to learn as much as possible from her investigations. This dialogical education is a liberation from intellectual fetters; it is an arising to awareness of one's own agency and autonomy as a knowing subject, and, according to Freire, this genuine understanding of reality is always accompanied by increased action and intervention in that reality. That is why Freire believes this sort of education is a properly political act, serving the objective of liberation: an increased critical consciousness of reality leads to increased intervention in reality in order to more fully realize the universal project of becoming more human. This means that no one else may determine the content or direction of our growth, that no one else can dictate our beliefs or our revelations to us. Thus, education as genuine learning and genuine awareness is necessarily liberatory: it must always call upon the subject to practice knowing, understanding, and judging in ways that continually refer back to the subject's own internal and deeply-rooted experience of certainty. The philosophy that takes up the standard at this point and that continues this genuine learning process is also an ongoing process of liberation, ideally immune to the claims of authority or the status quo, and cultivated in direct opposition to passivity in teaching or in learning.

After this preparation, we can begin to consider or rely on something like natural curiosity to motivate and guide further explorations. In the allegory of the cave, the freed prisoner explores the world outside the cave independently, and presumably out of some natural inclination toward discovery that has been awakened along with his forced exit from the cave. As Socrates claims in the *Meno*, the result of the boy's perplexity, aside from showing him that his prior knowledge was in fact uncertain, is to render him able to "carry on the search gladly" (84b), actively seeking the truth of those things at which he merely guessed before.

In the initial encounters with objects and ideas that show our own previously existing

beliefs to be fragile, provisional, or even downright illusory, we find ourselves suddenly

vulnerable and therefore profoundly unsettled. In the transition from childhood to adulthood, this

first cracking open of one's worldview can be quite as terrifying as the freed prisoner's forced

journey out of the cave. Our psychological reliance on the certainty of the things we know flares

suddenly and angrily as those things are first challenged and later abandon us. For months,

perhaps years, we reel and even recoil from this new knowledge, which is suddenly the only firm

knowledge we can see—the knowledge that our world has given way beneath our feet and we

must wonder whether we will ever again find ourselves on firm ground.

After a time, though, we may become more comfortable with groundlessness; we may

find we are somehow comfortable being "at sea," being unmoored. We learn to move through

our now fluid medium the way a swimmer moves through the water. To speak for the moment in

platitudes, the ability to swim is what enables us to leave the shore. We may become excited by

new truths and new discoveries, now that they no longer threaten us, because we have already

lost the stability that they might undermine. A genuine love of learning and thirst for knowledge

may in fact be born from this destruction of our previous beliefs, from this painful preparation

that education has worked within us: the prisoner exiled from the cave does not clamor

immediately to return there, but instead takes the time to investigate the new world and new

objects by which he finds himself suddenly surrounded. Deleuze is not wrong in claiming that

thought "begins in misosophy" (*Difference* 139),[2] but it would be foolish to assert that thought is

never motivated by authentic curiosity or love of learning. Not only has our preparation shown

that we do not know what we think we know, not only has it shown us the possibility of

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[2] Descartes is perhaps the exception to this rule. His "propaedeutic" seems to have been prompted by his own disillusionment with his education; the *Discourse on the Method* is a concise account of a quick and perhaps too-tidy reevaluation of previously accepted truths. The ease with which he is able to reground and therefore reinstitute the knowledge of his formal education contrasts starkly with the laborious process that generally accompanies a propaedeutic of the Socratic sort.

inquiring anew into matters that we had regarded as settled, but this preparation also carries

along with it the possibility that we will rediscover a genuine, childlike curiosity capable of

leading us to new and fascinating insights.

### *Philosophy, Education, and Politics*

Each of these major figures links education with a political objective or gestures towards its

political implications. Dewey begins with democratic political ideals, which lead him to

interrogate the existing educational system and reveal the ways in which it is incapable of

supporting those ideals. Paulo Freire invokes education as a crucial tool in the struggle against

oppressive social and political systems. What is more, he seems to believe that education in and

of itself—as long as that education does in fact train its students in the skills they need in order to

think critically about reality—is inherently set in opposition to any oppressive system:

"education is an unacceptable threat to oligarchy, inequality, authoritarian rule" (Shor and Freire

32).[3] Deleuze, while he does not spend a great deal of time on the topic of education in

*Difference and Repetition*, is quite explicit at points in connecting a certain kind of thought (and

therefore a certain kind of education) with overtly political aims: the assumption that the task of

the student is to answer the questions posed by the teacher or "master" constitutes "a social

prejudice with the visible interest in maintaining us in an infantile state" (158, quoted above in

Chapter Three). Deleuze's collaboration with Guattari yields a more forceful claim: "...the less

people take thought seriously, the more they think in conformity with what the State wants"

(*Thousand* 376). That is, a failure to seriously consider what it means to think (and, necessarily,

how education trains thought), yields a greater susceptibility to the demands of established

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[3] Of course, Freire is also quick to point out that education is not a sufficient condition for revolution: "education per se is not the lever of revolutionary transformation" (Shor and Freire 33).

powers, the status quo. An unreflective public, an unreflective education, almost always supports the dominant and established power structures.

Nietzsche, perhaps because of his almost stubborn emphasis on independent thought, on genuine creativity and the pursuit of the new, claims that "your educators can only be your liberators" ("Schopenhauer" 129, §1). Of course, this qualification makes sense, where independent thought is at issue. Insofar as education is a training of thought, a training which imposes structures rather than awakening capacities will stifle independent thought, cut it off at the roots of its creativity by making it rely not on internal intuitions but on external rules and strictures. However, Nietzsche's claim also makes explicit another assumption: humans suffer from some limitation or imprisonment—*de facto* or *de jure*—and thus the task of a true educator is to liberate us from these limitations. Plato, of course, agrees with Nietzsche on the existence of some primary or primal captivity—at least in the allegory of the cave. Overtly speaking about "our nature as it involves education and the lack of it" (*Republic* 514a), the natural state of humans is represented by prisoners bound both by literal chains and by a lack of awareness of their imprisonment. Because of the literal imprisonment, the prisoners are unable to free themselves, and because of their lack of awareness, they are incapable of even striving for this freedom. This situation necessitates an external figure who is capable of releasing the prisoners from the physical bonds and awakening their consciousness of their imprisonment. But even in the allegory, the task of the external figure is to release the prisoner, to turn her so that she is forced to confront the speciousness of her experience, and to drag her out of the cave; and at that point, as we have seen, all external compulsion ceases. For Deleuze and Nietzsche, and even for Kant, our "imprisonment" is not this absolute, not this formidable. It is more a matter of inertia or laziness that keeps us from taking on the full possibilities and responsibilities of individual

agency and autonomous action and thought. Thus, the intervention of others is less logically necessary to assist in our liberation, and it is conceivable that we might in fact be able to free ourselves.

For Plato, however, we must recall that the prisoner's release is not an individual, private success but a social one, and it is accompanied by an obligation to return to the cave for the good of the prisoners there. In the context of the *Republic* more generally, the city is explicitly formed and structured in order to cultivate these individuals capable of liberation. Even if these individuals cannot in fact liberate the rest of the citizens, they are obligated to use their newly acquired knowledge and understanding of reality in order to enhance the wellbeing of the city as a whole. Socrates is, after all, Apollo's gift to Athens: the "gadfly" needed to provoke the city, the "great and noble horse which was somewhat sluggish because of its size and needed to be stirred up" (Plato, *Apology* 30e). Socrates describes his calling in terms of his divine duty *to the city*.[4] Moreover, the *Republic*'s discussion of education itself occurs in the context of an extended discussion on justice and on where justice can be found in a city. The topic of education is raised repeatedly in that work, suggesting an intimate relationship between the social or political notion of justice and the formative function of education. Thus, the education of the guardians is explicitly targeted at cultivating virtuous—and just—habits and beliefs.

Why does each of these authors emphasize the connection between education and politics? Perhaps it is because humans are both rational and social creatures. We have the capacity for independent, rational thought, but we undergo a period of prolonged physical and mental dependence on others for protection and support during our first years of life, and even

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[4] However, elsewhere, Socrates makes clear that any attempt to join into the *political realm* in Athens would have resulted in a much earlier death (Plato, *Apology* 31e). He conducted his work in private, but this work was still, ultimately, aimed at benefitting the city: "I never cease to rouse each and every one of you, to persuade and reproach you all day long and everywhere I find myself in your company" (30e).

our rationality must develop over time—and thus we require society. The exercise of our rationality, our ability to make well-considered decisions, is one of the oldest distinguishing features of humanity. But, on the other hand, this same autonomy and independent thought is at odds with our tendency to form politically organized groups. For one thing, the need for security in groups must always balance itself with the preservation of individual liberty. Early political theorists viewed individual liberty as naturally limited by the liberty of others: I am within my rights to act in whichever way I see fit, as long as my actions do not impede others from exercising their own rights to act in the way that they see fit—and vice versa. This natural limit on my liberty secures others from my interference in their affairs. But this is a difficult and tenuous balance to maintain, and, in fact, political organization becomes much easier when its structures can simply be imposed upon passive subjects. By its very nature a set of mechanisms to prevent and mitigate conflict, political organization can't help but *desire* passive subjects. Democracy, however, at least in the ideal, explicitly presupposes active and responsible subjects, and thus exists in a constant state of tension between liberty and security, or between the conflicting liberties of individual subjects or groups.

Not only do political organizations naturally desire passive subjects, but there are also a number of factors that encourage passivity even within individual subjects themselves. Sartre's analysis of "Freedom and Responsibility" (*Being and Nothingness* 707-711) makes explicit the difficult and daunting dimensions implied by the concept of freedom. The responsibility that corresponds to freedom is often experienced as a great weight on our thoughts and actions, and this results in the temptation to relinquish this responsibility (and along with it the freedom that gave rise to it). It results, that is, in our acting in "bad faith." Moreover, Stanley Milgram's famous experiment suggests the unsettling conclusion that the act of following the orders of an

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authority seems to divest us of our sense of personal responsibility. At the very least, it is capable of generating the illusion that we can give up the responsibility for decision making and therefore escape the responsibility for our actions. On the other hand, the long-term psychological effects of this experiment, would seem to argue that this rationalization may only be temporary and that this relinquishing of control cannot in fact divest us of this responsibility. That is, "bad faith" is an ultimately untenable position, and our escapes from the demands of our responsibilities may only ever be temporary.

Finally, the pressures exerted by peer groups and the risks of social ostracism present yet another obstacle to the exercise of individuality and autonomy. The "pack behavior" of schoolchildren, operating on mechanisms of social approbation and disapproval, implicitly encourages individuals to stifle their creativity and individuality, blending into the crowd as much as possible in order to avoid being singled out for ridicule. For many people, this brand of social control does not cease with graduation.

Thus, we are encouraged to relinquish our autonomy both to escape responsibility for individual decisions and to avoid the possibility of ostracism. Unfortunately, there are also many individuals who desire to have power over others—perhaps as yet another response to their own uncertainty and instability—and so there is generally no shortage of people who are willing to think and decide for others.[5] This combination of factors both encouraging and enabling us to give up our individual agency constitutes the dual imprisonment illustrated by the allegory of the cave and underlies our need for education as liberation.

One final consideration supports the liberatory function of education in a democratic

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[5] Once again, recall Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*: "It is so easy to be immature. If I have a book to serve as my understanding, a pastor to serve as my conscience, a physician to determine my diet for me, and so on, I need not exert myself at all. I need not think, if only I can pay: others will readily undertake the irksome work for me" ("What is Enlightenment?" 35).

political system. Political systems, like democracy, that are concerned with liberty tend to be legally structured around physical liberties—those actions that subjects are allowed to perform or are prohibited from performing. However, physical liberties are meaningless without intellectual autonomy: a subject who is not allowed to think for herself can be much more easily controlled than one who is simply constrained by rules of social organization. Overt liberties are easily granted—and remain empty phrases—so long as subtler mechanisms of control prevent subjects from taking full advantage of those liberties. Our main problem, therefore, is this: true liberty has its foundation in our ability to think and decide independently, but our ability to think requires cultivation. We are not born self-sufficient beings but require time in order to fully develop our capacities—the human mind requires training. But any political or social system that presumes to care about liberty must take seriously the delicacy of this operation and the ease with which intellectual agency can be stifled or destroyed by the imposition of beliefs or mental structures. How then do we provide a training of thought that does not subvert or destroy human autonomy and freedom?

As far as this project is concerned, the answer lies in a robust conception of dialogue as a method for both education and the practice of philosophy. That is, dialogue that is radical and loving, framed by Freire's matrix; dialogue that reflects its participants' genuine desire for learning; dialogue that helps participants achieve a certain critical awareness of their own beliefs and to cultivate a space in which they become increasingly aware of their autonomy as intellectual subjects and human agents. In short, a dialogue that humanizes.

Our turn to politics at the end of this essay is in many ways a return to the point from which we began. That is, while our relinquishing of the traditional notion of truth is motivated, at least in part, by critical and logical concerns that showed the flaws and lacunae in that notion, it

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is also a direct response to the social and political exploitation of this notion of truth. That is, instead of serving as an objective and unbiased standard, it has become clear that a notion of truth can be made to serve the particular interests of dominant figures and groups, and this consideration has led to a significant and well-founded suspicion of that notion.

In a sense, we were already, in the beginning, sympathetic to Freire's conception of the human being as essentially active, responsible, and in relationship with others.[6] The *human* price was too much to pay to preserve this notion of truth, and so we let it go rather than fighting to defend it. Thus, even at the beginning, we did not simply lose "truth"—we gained (and should acknowledge) a primary and foundational valuation of human life and agency.

Our conclusion, therefore, must preserve this value, even as we have revisited and partially revived a notion of truth. Truth now plays the role of a founding myth, a role that is pragmatic rather than didactic and continually spurs us into action rather than allowing us to be content with what we already have and already know. This myth can no longer be used to keep anyone quiet, as it implicitly asks us to be inquisitive and reflective. The model of dialogue that we have considered here is enriched by this notion of truth-as-myth, but more importantly, it addresses our concerns about human life and agency. It positively supports the full development of this agency by cultivating skills and habits of rational exploration, collaborative inquiry, and intellectual responsibility; and it is precisely these skills and habits that will be of particular use to intelligent subjects who will shape the world and the culture in which they find themselves immersed. Dialogue not only allows space for the exercise of critically reflective agency, it relies upon this agency and calls it forth, encouraging and actively cultivating its exercise.

In both integrating a pragmatic conception of truth-as-myth and placing a primary

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[6] See Chapter Three, here, for a more extended discussion of Freire's account.

emphasis on the value of human life and agency, dialogue thus provides us with an arena for the more nuanced, robust, and variegated possibilities of human thought that Deleuze's work on the image of thought opened up for us. The minimal structures of dialogue serve to open a space in which critical reflection, agency, and human relationships can develop together with and alongside one another, mutually enriching one another and drawing both shape and energy from that interaction.

Dialogue thus reveals itself, on the one hand, as an educational model which explicitly develops these skills and habits of critical reflection and collaboration, and on the other hand, as a model of particular importance for the practice of philosophy itself. Insofar as philosophy thrives on its intimate connection to thought and to the possibilities for thought, an arena which cultivates these possibilities will enrich philosophy itself. The mutual interactions of thought and being that take place in a genuine dialogue present us with rich reservoirs of experience capable of informing our philosophical reflection.

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# Appendix:
# Ideal and Transitional Models of Dialogue

Given the general characteristics of dialogue outlined in Chapter Three, we might now return to the classroom where we started. The lecture hall, as seen above, clearly reflects an arborescent model of thought and learning. The dialogical classroom, on the other hand, is intended to accommodate and cultivate thought in all of its possible dimensions; it reflects a model of thought that, while involving and relying on the arborescent, only truly lives and flourishes in the rhizome.

This model of dialogue suggests an ideal classroom setting, and in fact this ideal classroom does have a few incarnations in higher education. Shimer College in Chicago presents a well realized example of such a model. Classes are capped at twelve students and all classes (mathematics and science no less than humanities and fine arts) are conducted dialogically. There are no lectures (other than those occurring within a lecture series, which are occasional and public, rather than being integral components in the curriculum). Faculty members are not called "teachers" or "professors" but rather "facilitators."[1] Faculty do not "lead" the discussions, but rather participate in them, posing questions, pointing out problems, and on occasion helping to prompt quieter students to make their voices heard by their classmates. Students are sometimes assigned specific tasks to help facilitate the dialogues, whether these involve

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[1] Of course, there are many who object to the problematic implications of this term. Faculty at Shimer College do not "facilitate" or make things easier, so much as they in fact do the opposite. By helping to construct and preserve dialogical space, they create the conditions under which meaningful but often difficult dialogical encounters can occur. In a sense, they encourage and even demand that students confront the challenges of direct dialogue with one another.

presenting a summary of the problems discussed and any conclusions reached the day before or identifying a focusing question for the coming discussion. A number of the classes place a particular focus on writing, assigning frequent essays throughout the term that ask students to continue and elaborate upon the analyses of the texts begun in class. There are no tests.

Shimer College, however, is an established school that has been cultivating this particular approach for many years. It maintains a faculty-student ratio capable of supporting this model of dialogical education. Faculty members are acquainted with and dedicated to the use of dialogical methods in their classrooms. Finally, the universality of its approach—using dialogue in every class—creates a self-supporting culture in which healthy habits of dialogue and interpersonal interaction are valued, encouraged, and practiced continually.

But such an ideal model is of limited usefulness for an established college or university that has already evolved to support a lecture model of education. Three obstacles in particular present themselves: first, the faculty-student ratio makes small class sizes almost impossible; second, faculty often have no experience or even interest in dialogical methods in their classrooms; and third, there is no culture supporting the difficult and demanding work of dialogue. Given the tenacity of these three problems, the presentation of an ideal dialogical classroom does nothing to encourage the adoption of dialogical methods in traditional classrooms.

With that limitation in mind, we might articulate a "transitional model" that could allow existing universities to incorporate elements of the dialogical model in a sustainable way. One such model might possess the following elements.

*(1) Lectures treated as texts.*

While it is not realistic to expect a single faculty member accustomed to the lecture model and,

quite likely, lacking in dialogical training to change her approach entirely, the lecture might be preserved as an element of this dialogical approach. In order to maintain the reflective multiplicity that is such an important characteristic of dialogue, however, these lectures should not be thought of as accounts to be uncritically assimilated and accepted. On the contrary, they should be treated as points of departure for a conversation, laying the groundwork by setting the terms and focus for an inquiry. In this sense, the lecture might serve the same function as the text. The lecture presents students with information and perspectives to be analyzed, interpreted, and processed later. In this transitional model, these lectures would occur once each week, and might be given to groups of the traditional lecture-hall size.

*(2) Smaller discussion sections.*

In the same way that many science classes have distinct laboratory components, this dialogue class would have distinct discussion components. The large group present in the lecture would be divided into smaller groups of approximately twenty (it is difficult, though not impossible, to run effective discussions with groups of thirty or more). Each of these discussion groups would meet two to three times per week, and these discussions would be led by teaching assistants who had been specifically trained in discussion techniques. Within these discussion sections, students might share responsibility for contributing opening questions to initiate and focus the discussion or to provide overviews of previous discussions to give the group a greater sense of cohesion.

*(3) Introduction to Dialogue as a freshman course.*

In order to support the use of dialogue in these classes (without requiring those classes to train students entirely new to dialogue), all students would take a course outlining the basic elements and demands of discussion as a part of their freshman course load. This introduction to dialogue

might be easily integrated with an introduction to writing or other universal freshman course. This course should be taught in small sections to allow time for individual attention to each student's written and spoken approach to discourse.

*(4) Post-discussion written reflections.*

Students should produce a one to two page reflection on some aspect of each discussion within their discussion sections (#3, above). The purpose of these written reflections would be for students to gain practice in generating and developing their own insights, skills that they will use in writing the required essays for the course. Whereas the weekly discussions give students practice in such generation in a spontaneous, public, and verbal manner, these written reflections will be developed in private and in writing. They also require a greater depth of sustained exploration and development than is possible in a collective dialogue. (Because the purpose of these reflections is to allow students to practice the sustained development of their ideas, they do not require "grading" in the traditional sense; the important thing is that they are completed, and thus they may be evaluated simply on the basis of effort and completion.)

*(5) Periodic extended reflections and feedback.*

Approximately once every two weeks, students should choose one of the reflections they have written and expand and develop it into a more formal essay. This activity expands on the development and presentation of ideas demanded by the shorter written reflections, but it should also provide students with experience finalizing a written presentation of their ideas. The discussion section TAs should provide brief written feedback on these essays, in order to give students guidance on the skills of written analysis and presentation. (This guidance should, in turn, help to hone and develop the skills that they will practice in their shorter written

reflections.) Additionally, in groups of three (formed out of the discussion section), students will read and comment on one another's work. Each student will give feedback on two essays and get feedback from two other students on their own essays. The purpose of this feedback must be very explicitly that of "holding up a mirror" for the author of the essay, giving her a sense of how her presentation affects others, which aspects are confusing, whether or not others are able to follow her train of thought, etc. This practice should ultimately give her a growing sense for the audience to which she presents her ideas—both written and spoken.

*(6) Finalized Essays.*

Once or twice per term, one of the short essays that students have written (#5, above) will be further honed, developed, revised, and turned into a full length analytical essay, to be evaluated either by the professor of the course or by a graduate-level TA. This element of the course will not only provide students with practice at higher levels of polish and finalization, but it will also provide the instructors of the course with additional bases for the evaluation of their performance. This essay will have already undergone at least two major revisions: it will have started as a short written reflection on a discussion, it will have been developed into a short essay presenting a more definitive position, and it will finally have been honed and polished into a final form, incorporating feedback received on previous drafts.

*(7) Optional short lecture presented by students to their discussion groups.*

As the lecturer well knows, the task of putting together and delivering a presentation is an excellent way of learning about one's topic. With this in mind, students may be required, once per term, to turn one of their finalized essays into an oral presentation or "lecture" on their position to their discussion groups. This provides students with the learning experience

constituted by the articulation of such a lecture as well as the experience of making a prepared

verbal presentation to their colleagues (as opposed to the spontaneous presentations that arise

within discussions). This short lecture will be evaluated by a graduate-level TA, thus providing

yet another basis for the student's overall evaluation in the course.

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Beyond these structural elements, there are some general reflections that might also inform an

approach to this transitional model of dialogue. The first week of class may contain more than

one lecture, as these could serve to help established the groundwork for the course—e.g., its

terminology, its conceptual apparatus, its scope or field of study, etc. This same week may serve

as an intensive training for those who will be serving as discussions leaders. This could be an

opportunity for the professor and the discussion leaders to engage in discussions of their own, in

order to clarify the expectations and aims of the course as a whole. These initial discussions

might serve to increase the cohesion or unity of students' experiences across all sections.

Throughout the year, because the faculty member may only be responsible for a single lecture

per week, this frees her up for an additional weekly discussion with her group of discussion

leaders, or perhaps for taking part in individual discussion sections.

There are distinct advantages to even the limited level of dialogue possible within this

transitional model. Perhaps most notably, it takes significant steps to resolve the polarity of

activity and passivity between teachers and students. It calls upon students to be more frequently

and consistently active—both collaboratively (in discussions) and individually (in written

reflections). The active generation of and reflection on ideas that occurs both within discussion

sections and in the short written reflections provide students with regular and ongoing practice in

many of the skills necessary for effective essay writing. The collaborative feedback on short

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essays (#5, above) gives students an idea of how others react to the work they produce, as well as an opportunity to observe and articulate how they themselves react to the work of their classmates. Students are presented with the opportunity to absorb and reflect on ideas presented in a variety of different ways (and by a variety of different subjects): lectures, texts, their classmates' contributions to discussion, and their classmates' writing. Finally, students get practice in two crucial modes of reflection and evaluation: spontaneous and ongoing, in the case of dialogue, and developed and elaborated, in the case of essays and written reflections.

On the other hand, of course, there are a number of shortcomings associated with the transitional model just outlined. First, there is still very little contact between students and the professor or faculty member. The possibilities for the rich and transformative relationships that can occur between teachers and students are still significantly restricted here, but this would seem to be an unavoidable result of the existing faculty-student ratio. Second, students still exert relatively little control over the selection of texts or objects of discussion. While this is mitigated by their sharing responsibility for focusing the discussions occurring in their smaller sections, their control is still definitely restricted. Third, and most crucially, becoming a good discussion leader takes a great deal of time, effort, and study. Moreover, "bad" discussion leaders, as Freire rightly points out[2], can be even more detrimental and less useful than the authoritarian lecturer. Thus, this model still requires the addition of some mechanism for training very good discussion leaders. Finally, this model will eventually be supported by a general culture that is acquainted

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[2] In this passage in *A Pedagogy for Liberation,* also quoted above, Freire responds to and agrees with a statement made by another pedagogue in the course of his dialogues with Ira Shor: "A Mexican professor who thought like us (most of them were in the same perspective) said something very interesting. He said that a dialogical experience which is not based in seriousness, in competency, is *much worse* than a 'banking' experience where the teacher merely transfers knowledge. I am *absolutely* in agreement with him. From the point of view of the students, a dialogical teacher who is incompetent and not serious provokes worse consequences than a serious and well-informed 'banking' educator. …For example, the first one and the worst one is the testimony of irresponsibility, of intellectual irresponsibility" (80).

with and somewhat practiced in the method of dialogue, but it will take time and effort before

this culture (and thus this model) can become self-sustaining.