Gilles Deleuze
and Félix Guattari

The authors of *Anti-Oedipus*

What Is Philos-ophy?

Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari

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Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell

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For nearly twenty years, the jointly signed works
of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari[1] have made
an extraordinary impact. This book, which was
published in France in 1991, was at the top of
the best-seller list for several weeks. But despite
its popular success, *What Is philosophy?* is not a
primer or a textbook. It more closely resembles a
manifesto produced under the slogan "Philoso-
phers of the world, create!" It is a book that
speaks about philosophy, and about philosophies
and philosophers, but it is even more a book that
takes up arms for philosophy. Most of all, per-
haps, it is a book of philosophy as a practice of
the creation of concepts.[2]

Félix Guattari died on August 29, 1992, at
the age of sixty-two. The production of this book

1. In order of original publication these are *Anti-Oedipus,*
trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Min-
neapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983); *Kafka: To-
ward a Minor Literature,* trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis:
University of Minnesota Press, 1986); *A Thousand Plateaus,*
trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota
Press, 1987).

2. For a general discussion of this book see Eric Alliez,
*La Signature du Monde: ou, Qu'est-ce que la philosophie de De-
leuze et Guattari?* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1993).

was therefore the last achievement of a form of experimental "author-ship" that has few precedents in philosophy.[3] Deleuze has spoken of their way of working on a number of occasions: "We do not work together, we work between the two. . . . We don't work, we negoti-ate. We were never in the same rhythm, we were always out of step."[4] The interaction with Guattari the nonphilosopher brought the philosopher Deleuze to a new stage: from thinking the multiple to doing the multiple.

This process of "a parallel evolution" is exemplified in the "con-ceptual vitalism" of this book. Deleuze and Guattari are the thinkers of "lines of flight," of the openings that allow thought to escape from the constraints that seek to define and enclose creativity. This conception and practice of philosophy as conceptual creation poses some special difficulties for the translator, as

> some concepts must be indicated by an extraordinary and sometimes even barbarous or shocking word, whereas others make do with an ordinary, everyday word that is filled with harmonics so distant that it risks being imperceptible to a nonphilosophical ear. Some concepts call for archaisms, and others for neologisms, shot through with almost crazy etymo-logical exercises.[5]

In translating such words our first aim has been consistency. We have sought to use the same English word on each occasion. Furthermore, we have tried to avoid departure from other recent translations of Deleuze and Guattari's works. The translation of these key terms is marked with translators' notes. We have tried to keep

3. Deleuze's own production shows no sign of diminishing after forty years of writing. His latest work, *Critique et Clinique* (Paris: Minuit, 1993) was published on September 8, 1993. He is at present writing a work on "the greatness of Marx."

4. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Bar-bara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 17.

5. Ibid., pp. 7–8.

such notes to a minimum; they are indicated by an asterisk and appear at the bottom of the page.

A number of terms used throughout the book present particular difficulties. There are various English translations of *chiffre*, for example. These include "figure," "numeral," "sum total," "initials" or "monogram," "secret code" or "cipher." None of these capture the philosophical use of the word in the present work. In most instances, we have rendered *chiffre* as "combination" to indicate an identifying numeral (in the sense of the combination of a safe or an opus number, as in music) of a multiplicity, but which is not, however, a number in the sense of a measure.

The word *voisinage* here has the general sense of "neighborhood" but also its mathematical sense, as in "neighborhood of a point," which in a linear set (for example, the points of a straight line) is an open segment containing this point. *Ordonnée* can have the general sense of "ordered." Deleuze and Guattari also use the word in the more technical sense of "ordinate" (as in the vertical, or y-coordinate of Cartesian geometry) in contrast with "abscissa" (the horizontal or x-coordinate).

It is difficult to find a single English equivalent for the word *survol*. The word derives from *survoler*, "to fly over" or "to skim or rapidly run one's eyes over something." However, the present use derives from the philosopher Raymond Ruyer.[6] Ruyer uses the notion of an absolute or nondimensional "survol" to describe the relationship of the "I-unity" to the subjective sensation of a visual field. This sensation, he says, tempts us to imagine the "I" as a kind of invisible center outside, and situated in a supplementary dimension perpendicular to, the whole of the visual field that it surveys from a distance. However, this is an error. The immediate survey of the unity of the visual field made up of many different details takes place within the dimension of the visual sensation itself; it is a kind of "self-enjoy-

6. In *Neo-Finalisme* (Paris: PUF, 1952), especially chap. 9.

ment" that does not involve any supplementary dimension. We have therefore rendered *survol* as "survey."[7]

We would like to thank all those who have given us support and assistance, including in particular Martin Joughin and Michèle Le Dœuff. Finally, we would like to thank our editors at Columbia University Press for their assistance and persistence in the face of our continual attempts to deterritorialize their schedules. This translation is dedicated to Georgia and Felix and to Bebb.

<div align="right">Hugh Tomlinson
Graham Burchell</div>

7. See also Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense,* trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), in which *survolant* is translated as "surveying."

What Is Philosophy?

Introduction: The Question Then...

The question *what is philosophy?* can perhaps be
posed only late in life, with the arrival of old age
and the time for speaking concretely. In fact, the
bibliography on the nature of philosophy is very
limited. It is a question posed in a moment of
quiet restlessness, at midnight, when there is no
longer anything to ask. It was asked before; it
was always being asked, but too indirectly or
obliquely; the question was too artificial, too ab-
stract. Instead of being seized by it, those who
asked the question set it out and controlled it in
passing. They were not sober enough. There
was too much desire to *do* philosophy to wonder
what it was, except as a stylistic exercise. That
point of nonstyle where one can finally say,
"What is it I have been doing all my life?" had
not been reached. There are times when old age
produces not eternal youth but a sovereign free-
dom, a pure necessity in which one enjoys a mo-
ment of grace between life and death, and in
which all the parts of the machine come together
to send into the future a feature that cuts across

all ages: Titian, Turner, Monet.[1] In old age Turner acquired or won the right to take painting down a deserted path of no return that is indistinguishable from a final question. *Vie de Rancé* could be said to mark both Chateaubriand's old age and the start of modern literature.[2] Cinema too sometimes offers us its gifts of the third age, as when Ivens, for example, blends his laughter with the witch's laughter in the howling wind. Likewise in philosophy, Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is an unrestrained work of old age, which his successors have still not caught up with: all the mind's faculties overcome their limits, the very limits that Kant had so carefully laid down in the works of his prime.

We cannot claim such a status. Simply, the time has come for us to ask what philosophy is. We had never stopped asking this question previously, and we already had the answer, which has not changed: philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts. But the answer not only had to take note of the question, it had to determine its moment, its occasion and circumstances, its landscapes and personae, its conditions and unknowns. It had to be possible to ask the question "between friends," as a secret or a confidence, or as a challenge when confronting the enemy, and at the same time to reach that twilight hour when one distrusts even the friend. It is then that you say, "That's what it was, but I don't know if I really said it, or if I was convincing enough." And you realize that having said it or been convincing hardly matters because, in any case, that is what it is now.

We will see that concepts need conceptual personae [*personnages conceptuels**] that play a part in their definition. *Friend* is one such persona that is even said to reveal the Greek origin of philo-sophy:

*Deleuze's and Guattari's *personnages conceptuel* has affiliations with Messiaen's *personnages rythmiques,* which Brian Massumi translates as "rhythmic characters" in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Athlone, 1988). We have preferred *persona* and *personae* to *character* and *characters* in order to emphasize the distinction between Deleuze's and Guattari's notion and a more general notion

other civilizations had sages, but the Greeks introduce these
"friends" who are not just more modest sages. The Greeks might
seem to have confirmed the death of the sage and to have replaced
him with philosophers—the friends of wisdom, those who seek wis-
dom but do not formally possess it.[3] But the difference between the
sage and the philosopher would not be merely one of degree, as on a
scale: the old oriental sage thinks, perhaps, in Figures, whereas the
philosopher invents and thinks the Concept. Wisdom has changed a
great deal. It is even more difficult to know what *friend* signifies,
even and especially among the Greeks. Does it designate a type of
competent intimacy, a sort of material taste and potentiality, like that
of the joiner with wood—is the potential of wood latent in the good
joiner; is he the friend of the wood? The question is important
because the friend who appears in philosophy no longer stands for an
extrinsic persona, an example or empirical circumstance, but rather
for a presence that is intrinsic to thought, a condition of possibility of
thought itself, a living category, a transcendental lived reality [*un
vécu transcendental*]. With the creation of philosophy, the Greeks
violently force the friend into a relationship that is no longer a rela-
tionship with an other but one with an Entity, an Objectality [*Ob-
jectité**], an Essence—Plato's friend, but even more the friend of
wisdom, of truth or the concept, like Philalethes and Theophilus.
The philosopher is expert in concepts and in the lack of them. He
knows which of them are not viable, which are arbitrary or inconsis-
tent, which ones do not hold up for an instant. On the other hand, he
also knows which are well formed and attest to a creation, however
disturbing or dangerous it may be.

What does *friend* mean when it becomes a conceptual persona, or

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of *characters* referring to any figures appearing, for example, in a philosophical dia-
logue.

*In her translation of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical
Library, 1956), Hazel Barnes translates *objectité*, which she glosses as "the quality or
state of being an object" (p. 632), as "objectness" or, on occasions, as "object-state."

a condition for the exercise of thought? Or rather, are we not talking of the lover? Does not the friend reintroduce into thought a vital relationship with the Other that was supposed to have been excluded from pure thought? Or again, is it not a matter of someone other than the friend or lover? For if the philosopher is the friend or lover of wisdom, is it not because he lays claim to wisdom, striving for it potentially rather than actually possessing it? Is the friend also the claimant then, and is that of which he claims to be the friend the Thing to which he lays claim but not the third party who, on the contrary, becomes a rival? Friendship would then involve competitive distrust of the rival as much as amorous striving toward the object of desire. The basic point about friendship is that the two friends are like claimant and rival (but who could tell them apart?). It is in this first aspect that philosophy seems to be something Greek and coincides with the contribution of cities: the formation of societies of friends or equals but also the promotion of relationships of rivalry between and within them, the contest between claimants in every sphere, in love, the games, tribunals, the judiciaries, politics, and even in thought, which finds its condition not only in the friend but in the claimant and the rival (the dialectic Plato defined as *amphisbetesis*). It is the rivalry of free men, a generalized athleticism: the agon.[4] Friendship must reconcile the integrity of the essence and the rivalry of claimants. Is this not too great a task?

Friend, lover, claimant and rival are transcendental determinations that do not for that reason lose their intense and animated existence, in one persona or in several. When again today Maurice Blanchot, one of the rare thinkers to consider the meaning of the word *friend* in philosophy, takes up this question internal to the conditions of thought as such, does he not once more introduce new conceptual personae into the heart of the purest Thought? But in this case the

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We have preferred "objectality," in line with Massumi's translation of *visagéité* as "faciality" in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

personae are hardly Greek, arriving from elsewhere as if they had
gone through a catastrophe that draws them toward new living rela-
tionships raised to the level of a priori characteristics—a turning
away, a certain tiredness, a certain distress between friends that
converts friendship itself to thought of the concept as distrust and
infinite patience?[5] The list of conceptual personae is never closed and
for that reason plays an important role in the evolution or transforma-
tions of philosophy. The diversity of conceptual personae must be
understood without being reduced to the already complex unity of
the Greek philosopher.

The philosopher is the concept's friend; he is potentiality of the
concept. That is, philosophy is not a simple art of forming, inventing,
or fabricating concepts, because concepts are not necessarily forms,
discoveries, or products. More rigorously, philosophy is the discipline
that involves *creating* concepts. Does this mean that the friend is
friend of his own creations? Or is the actuality of the concept due to
the potential of the friend, in the unity of creator and his double? The
object of philosophy is to create concepts that are always new. Be-
cause the concept must be created, it refers back to the philosopher
as the one who has it potentially, or who has its power and compe-
tence. It is no objection to say that creation is the prerogative of the
sensory and the arts, since art brings spiritual entities into existence
while philosophical concepts are also "sensibilia." In fact, sciences,
arts, and philosophies are all equally creative, although only philoso-
phy creates concepts in the strict sense. Concepts are not waiting for
us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts.
They must be invented, fabricated, or rather created and would be
nothing without their creator's signature. Nietzsche laid down the
task of philosophy when he wrote, "[Philosophers] must no longer
accept concepts as a gift, nor merely purify and polish them, but first
make and *create* them, present them and make them convincing.
Hitherto one has generally trusted one's concepts as if they were a
wonderful dowry from some sort of wonderland," but trust must be

replaced by distrust, and philosophers must distrust most those con-
cepts they did not create themselves (Plato was fully aware of this,
even though he taught the opposite).[6] Plato said that Ideas must be
contemplated, but first of all he had to create the concept of Idea.
What would be the value of a philosopher of whom one could say,
"He has created no concepts; he has not created his own concepts"?

   We can at least see what philosophy is not: it is not contemplation,
reflection, or communication. This is the case even though it may
sometimes believe it is one or other of these, as a result of the capacity
of every discipline to produce its own illusions and to hide behind its
own peculiar smokescreen. It is not contemplation, for contempla-
tions are things themselves as seen in the creation of their specific
concepts. It is not reflection, because no one needs philosophy to
reflect on anything. It is thought that philosophy is being given a
great deal by being turned into the art of reflection, but actually it
loses everything. Mathematicians, as mathematicians, have never
waited for philosophers before reflecting on mathematics, nor artists
before reflecting on painting or music. So long as their reflection
belongs to their respective creation, it is a bad joke to say that this
makes them philosophers. Nor does philosophy find any final refuge
in communication, which only works under the sway of opinions in
order to create "consensus" and not concepts. The idea of a Western
democratic conversation between friends has never produced a single
concept. The idea comes, perhaps, from the Greeks, but they dis-
trusted it so much, and subjected it to such harsh treatment, that
the concept was more like the ironical soliloquy bird that surveyed
[*survolait*] the battlefield of destroyed rival opinions (the drunken
guests at the banquet). Philosophy does not contemplate, reflect, or
communicate, although it must create concepts for these actions or
passions. Contemplation, reflection and communication are not disci-
plines but machines for constituting Universals in every discipline.
The Universals of contemplation, and then of reflection, are like two
illusions through which philosophy has already passed in its dream of

dominating the other disciplines (objective idealism and subjective idealism). Moreover, it does no credit to philosophy for it to present itself as a new Athens by falling back on Universals of communication that would provide rules for an imaginary mastery of the markets and the media (intersubjective idealism). Every creation is singular, and the concept as a specifically philosophical creation is always a singularity. The first principle of philosophy is that Universals explain nothing but must themselves be explained.

To know oneself, to learn to think, to act as if nothing were self-evident—wondering, "wondering that there is being"—these, and many other determinations of philosophy create interesting attitudes, however tiresome they may be in the long run, but even from a pedagogical point of view they do not constitute a well-defined occupation or precise activity. On the other hand, the following definition of philosophy can be taken as being decisive: knowledge through pure concepts. But there is no reason to oppose knowledge through concepts and the construction of concepts within possible experience on the one hand and through intuition on the other. For, according to the Nietzschean verdict, you will know nothing through concepts unless you have first created them—that is, constructed them in an intuition specific to them: a field, a plane, and a ground that must not be confused with them but that shelters their seeds and the personae who cultivate them. Constructivism requires every creation to be a construction on a plane that gives it an autonomous existence. To create concepts is, at the very least, to make something. This alters the question of philosophy's use or usefulness, or even of its harmfulness (to whom is it harmful?).

Many problems hurry before the hallucinating eyes of an old man who sees all sorts of philosophical concepts and conceptual personae confronting one another. First, concepts are and remain signed: Aristotle's substance, Descartes's cogito, Leibniz's monad, Kant's condition, Schelling's power, Bergson's duration [*durée*]. But also, some concepts must be indicated by an extraordinary and sometimes even

barbarous or shocking word, whereas others make do with an ordinary, everyday word that is filled with harmonics so distant that it risks being imperceptible to a nonphilosophical ear. Some concepts call for archaisms, and others for neologisms, shot through with almost crazy etymological exercises: etymology is like a specifically philosophical athleticism. In each case there must be a strange necessity for these words and for their choice, like an element of style. The concept's baptism calls for a specifically philosophical *taste* that proceeds with violence or by insinuation and constitutes a philosophical language within language—not just a vocabulary but a syntax that attains the sublime or a great beauty. Although concepts are dated, signed, and baptized, they have their own way of not dying while remaining subject to constraints of renewal, replacement, and mutation that give philosophy a history as well as a turbulent geography, each moment and place of which is preserved (but in time) and that passes (but outside time). What unity remains for philosophies, it will be asked, if concepts constantly change? Is it the same for the sciences and arts that do not work with concepts? And what are their respective histories the histories of? If philosophy is this continuous creation of concepts, then obviously the question arises not only of what a concept is as philosophical Idea but also of the nature of the other creative Ideas that are not concepts and that are due to the arts and sciences, which have their own history and becoming and which have their own variable relationships with one another and with philosophy. The exclusive right of concept creation secures a function for philosophy, but it does not give it any preeminence or privilege since there are other ways of thinking and creating, other modes of ideation that, like scientific thought, do not have to pass through concepts. We always come back to the question of the use of this activity of creating concepts, in its difference from scientific or artistic activity. Why, through what necessity, and for what use must concepts, and always new concepts, be created? And in order to do

what? To say that the greatness of philosophy lies precisely in its not having any use is a frivolous answer that not even young people find amusing any more. In any case, the death of metaphysics or the overcoming of philosophy has never been a problem for us: it is just tiresome, idle chatter. Today it is said that systems are bankrupt, but it is only the concept of system that has changed. So long as there is a time and a place for creating concepts, the operation that undertakes this will always be called philosophy, or will be indistinguishable from philosophy even if it is called something else.

We know, however, that the friend or lover, as claimant, does not lack rivals. If we really want to say that philosophy originates with the Greeks, it is because the city, unlike the empire or state, invents the agon as the rule of a society of "friends," of the community of free men as rivals (citizens). This is the invariable situation described by Plato: if each citizen lays claim to something, then we need to be able to judge the validity of claims. The joiner lays claim to wood, but he comes up against the forester, the lumberjack, and the carpenter, who all say, "I am the friend of wood." If it is a matter of the care of men, then there are many claimants who introduce themselves as man's friend: the peasant who feeds people, the weaver who clothes them, the doctor who nurses them, and the warrior who protects them.[7] In all these cases the selection is made from what is, after all, a somewhat narrow circle of claimants. But this is not the case in politics where, according to Plato, anyone can lay claim to anything in Athenian democracy. Hence the necessity for Plato to put things in order and create authorities for judging the validity of these claims: the Ideas as philosophical concepts. But, even here, do we not encounter all kinds of claimants who say, "I am the true philosopher, the friend of Wisdom or of the Well-Founded"? This rivalry culminates in the battle between philosopher and sophist, fighting over the old sage's remains. How, then, is the false friend to be distinguished from the true friend, the concept from the simulacrum? The simula-

tor and the friend: this is a whole Platonic theater that produces a proliferation of conceptual personae by endowing them with the powers of the comic and the tragic.

Closer to our own time, philosophy has encountered many new rivals. To start with, the human sciences, and especially sociology, wanted to replace it. But because philosophy, taking refuge in universals, increasingly misunderstood its vocation for creating concepts, it was no longer clear what was at stake. Was it a matter of giving up the creation of concepts in favor of a rigorous human science or, alternatively, of transforming the nature of concepts by turning them into the collective representations or worldviews created by the vital, historical, and spiritual forces of different peoples? Then it was the turn of epistemology, of linguistics, or even of psychoanalysis and logical analysis. In successive challenges, philosophy confronted increasingly insolent and calamitous rivals that Plato himself would never have imagined in his most comic moments. Finally, the most shameful moment came when computer science, marketing, design, and advertising, all the disciplines of communication, seized hold of the word *concept* itself and said: "This is our concern, we are the creative ones, we are the *ideas men!* We are the friends of the concept, we put it in our computers." Information and creativity, concept and enterprise: there is already an abundant bibliography. Marketing has preserved the idea of a certain relationship between the concept and the event. But here the concept has become the set of product displays (historical, scientific, artistic, sexual, pragmatic), and the event has become the exhibition that sets up various displays and the "exchange of ideas" it is supposed to promote. The only events are exhibitions, and the only concepts are products that can be sold. Philosophy has not remained unaffected by the general movement that replaced Critique with sales promotion. The simulacrum, the simulation of a packet of noodles, has become the true concept; and the one who packages the product, commodity, or work of art has become the philosopher, conceptual persona, or artist. How could

philosophy, an old person, compete against young executives in a
race for the universals of communication for determining the market-
able form of the concept, *Merz?** Certainly, it is painful to learn that
Concept indicates a society of information services and engineering.
But the more philosophy comes up against shameless and inane rivals
and encounters them at its very core, the more it feels driven to fulfill
the task of creating concepts that are aerolites rather than commercial
products. It gets the giggles, which wipe away its tears. So, the
question of philosophy is the singular point where concept and cre-
ation are related to each other.

Philosophers have not been sufficiently concerned with the nature
of the concept as philosophical reality. They have preferred to think
of it as a given knowledge or representation that can be explained by
the faculties able to form it (abstraction or generalization) or employ
it (judgment). But the concept is not given, it is created; it is to be
created. It is not formed but posits itself in itself—it is a self-positing.
Creation and self-positing mutually imply each other because what is
truly created, from the living being to the work of art, thereby enjoys
a self-positing of itself, or an autopoetic characteristic by which it is
recognized. The concept posits itself to the same extent that it is
created. What depends on a free creative activity is also that which,
independently and necessarily, posits itself in itself: the most subjec-
tive will be the most objective. The post-Kantians, and notably
Schelling and Hegel, are the philosophers who paid most attention to
the concept as philosophical reality in this sense. Hegel powerfully
defined the concept by the Figures of its creation and the Moments
of its self-positing. The figures become parts of the concept because
they constitute the aspect through which the concept is created by
and in consciousness, through successive minds; whereas the Mo-

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Merz is the term coined by the artist Kurt Schwitters to refer to the aesthetic
combination of any kind of material, and the equal value of these different materials, in
his collages and assemblages. The term itself came from a fragment of a word in one of
his assemblages, the whole phrase being "Kommerz und Privatbank."

ments form the other aspect according to which the concept posits itself and unites minds in the absolute of the Self. In this way Hegel showed that the concept has nothing whatever to do with a general or abstract idea, any more than with an uncreated Wisdom that does not depend on philosophy itself. But he succeeded in doing this at the cost of an indeterminate extension of philosophy that, because it reconstituted universals with its own moments and treated the personae of its own creation as no more than ghostly puppets, left scarcely any independent movement of the arts and sciences remaining. The post-Kantians concentrated on a universal *encyclopedia* of the concept that attributed concept creation to a pure subjectivity rather than taking on the more modest task of a *pedagogy* of the concept, which would have to analyze the conditions of creation as factors of always singular moments.[8] If the three ages of the concept are the encyclopedia, pedagogy, and commercial professional training, only the second can safeguard us from falling from the heights of the first into the disaster of the third—an absolute disaster for thought whatever its benefits might be, of course, from the viewpoint of universal capitalism.

Philosophy

1. What Is a Concept?

There are no simple concepts. Every concept has components and is defined by them. It therefore has a combination [*chiffre**]. It is a multiplicity, although not every multiplicity is conceptual. There is no concept with only one component. Even the first concept, the one with which a philosophy "begins," has several components, because it is not obvious that philosophy must have a beginning, and if it does determine one, it must combine it with a point of view or a ground [*une raison*]. Not only do Descartes, Hegel, and Feuerbach not begin with the same concept, they do not have the same concept of beginning. Every concept is at least double or triple, etc. Neither is there a concept possessing every component, since this would be chaos pure and simple. Even so-called universals as ultimate concepts must escape the chaos by circumscribing a universe that explains them (contemplation, reflection, communication). Every concept has an irregular contour defined by the sum of its compo-

*See translators' introduction.

nents, which is why, from Plato to Bergson, we find the idea of the concept being a matter of articulation, of cutting and cross-cutting. The concept is a whole because it totalizes its components, but it is a fragmentary whole. Only on this condition can it escape the mental chaos constantly threatening it, stalking it, trying to reabsorb it.

On what conditions is a concept first, not absolutely but in relation to another? For example, is *another person* [*autrui*] necessarily second in relation to a self? If so, it is to the extent that its concept is that of an other—a subject that presents itself as an object—which is special in relation to the self: they are two components. In fact, if the other person is identified with a special object, it is now only the other subject as it appears to me; and if we identify it with another subject, it is me who is the other person as I appear to that subject. All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges. We are dealing here with a problem concerning the plurality of subjects, their relationship, and their reciprocal presentation. Of course, everything changes if we think that we discover another problem: what is the nature of the other person's position that the other subject comes to "occupy" only when it appears to me as a special object, and that I in turn come to occupy as special object when I appear to the other subject? From this point of view the other person is not anyone—neither subject nor object. There are several subjects because there is the other person, not the reverse. The other person thus requires an a priori concept from which the special object, the other subject, and the self must all derive, not the other way around. The order has changed, as has the nature of the concepts and the problems to which they are supposed to respond. We put to one side the question of the difference between scientific and philosophical problems. However, even in philosophy, concepts are only created as a function of problems which are thought to be badly understood or badly posed (pedagogy of the concept).

Let us proceed in a summary fashion: we will consider a field of experience taken as a real world no longer in relation to a self but to a simple "there is." There is, at some moment, a calm and restful world. Suddenly a frightened face looms up that looks at something out of the field. The other person appears here as neither subject nor object but as something that is very different: a possible world, the possibility of a frightening world. This possible world is not real, or not yet, but it exists nonetheless: it is an expressed that exists only in its expression—the face, or an equivalent of the face. To begin with, the other person is this existence of a possible world. And this possible world also has a specific reality in itself, as possible: when the expressing speaks and says, "I am frightened," even if its words are untruthful, this is enough for a reality to be given to the possible as such. This is the only meaning of the "I" as linguistic index. But it is not indispensable: China is a possible world, but it takes on a reality as soon as Chinese is spoken or China is spoken about within a given field of experience. This is very different from the situation in which China is realized by becoming the field of experience itself. Here, then, is a concept of the other that presupposes no more than the determination of a sensory world as condition. On this condition the other appears as the expression of a possible. The other is a possible world as it exists in a face that expresses it and takes shape in a language that gives it a reality. In this sense it is a concept with three inseparable components: possible world, existing face, and real language or speech.

Obviously, every concept has a history. This concept of the other person goes back to Leibniz, to his possible worlds and to the monad as expression of the world. But it is not the same problem, because in Leibniz possibles do not exist in the real world. It is also found in the modal logic of propositions. But these do not confer on possible worlds the reality that corresponds to their truth conditions (even when Wittgenstein envisages propositions of fear or pain, he does not see them as modalities that can be expressed in a position of the other

person because he leaves the other person oscillating between another subject and a special object). Possible worlds have a long history.[1] In short, we say that every concept always has a *history,* even though this history zigzags, though it passes, if need be, through other problems or onto different planes. In any concept there are usually bits or components that come from other concepts, which corresponded to other problems and presupposed other planes. This is inevitable because each concept carries out a new cutting-out, takes on new contours, and must be reactivated or recut.

On the other hand, a concept also has a *becoming* that involves its relationship with concepts situated on the same plane. Here concepts link up with each other, support one another, coordinate their contours, articulate their respective problems, and belong to the same philosophy, even if they have different histories. In fact, having a finite number of components, every concept will branch off toward other concepts that are differently composed but that constitute other regions of the same plane, answer to problems that can be connected to each other, and participate in a co-creation. A concept requires not only a problem through which it recasts or replaces earlier concepts but a junction of problems where it combines with other coexisting concepts. The concept of the Other Person as expression of a possible world in a perceptual field leads us to consider the components of this field for itself in a new way. No longer being either subject of the field or object in the field, the other person will become the condition under which not only subject and object are redistributed but also figure and ground, margins and center, moving object and reference point, transitive and substantial, length and depth. The Other Person is always perceived as an other, but in its concept it is the condition of all perception, for others as for ourselves. It is the condition for our passing from one world to another. The Other Person makes the world go by, and the "I" now designates only a past world ("I was peaceful"). For example, the Other Person is enough to make any length a possible depth in space, and vice versa, so that if this concept

did not function in the perceptual field, transitions and inversions would become incomprehensible, and we would always run up against things, the possible having disappeared. Or at least, philosophically, it would be necessary to find another reason for not running up against them. It is in this way that, on a determinable plane, we go from one concept to another by a kind of bridge. The creation of a concept of the Other Person with these components will entail the creation of a new concept of perceptual space, with other components to be determined (not running up against things, or not too much, will be part of these components).

We started with a fairly complex example. How could we do otherwise, because there is no simple concept? Readers may start from whatever example they like. We believe that they will reach the same conclusion about the nature of the concept or the concept of *concept.* First, every concept relates back to other concepts, not only in its history but in its becoming or its present connections. Every concept has components that may, in turn, be grasped as concepts (so that the Other Person has the face among its components, but the Face will itself be considered as a concept with its own components). Concepts, therefore, extend to infinity and, being created, are never created from nothing. Second, what is distinctive about the concept is that it renders components inseparable *within itself.* Components, or what defines the *consistency* of the concept, its endoconsistency, are distinct, heterogeneous, and yet not separable. The point is that each partially overlaps, has a zone of neighborhood [*zone de voisinage**], or a threshold of indiscernibility, with another one. For example, in the concept of the other person, the possible world does not exist outside the face that expresses it, although it is distinguished from it as expressed and expression; and the face in turn is the vicinity of the words for which it is already the megaphone. Components remain distinct, but something passes from one to the other, some-

*See translator's introduction

thing that is undecidable between them. There is an area *ab* that belongs to both *a* and *b,* where *a* and *b* "become" indiscernible. These zones, thresholds, or becomings, this inseparability, define the internal consistency of the concept. But the concept also has an exoconsistency with other concepts, when their respective creation implies the construction of a bridge on the same plane. Zones and bridges are the joints of the concept.

Third, each concept will therefore be considered as the point of coincidence, condensation, or accumulation of its own components. The conceptual point constantly traverses its components, rising and falling within them. In this sense, each component is an *intensive feature,* an intensive ordinate [*ordonnée intensive**], which must be understood not as general or particular but as a pure and simple singularity—"a" possible world, "a" face, "some" words—that is particularized or generalized depending upon whether it is given variable values or a constant function. But, unlike the position in science, there is neither constant nor variable in the concept, and we no more pick out a variable species for a constant genus than we do a constant species for variable individuals. In the concept there are only ordinate relationships, not relationships of comprehension or extension, and the concept's components are neither constants nor variables but pure and simple *variations* ordered according to their neighborhood. They are processual, modular. The concept of a bird is found not in its genus or species but in the composition of its postures, colors, and songs: something indiscernible that is not so much synesthetic as syneidetic. A concept is a heterogenesis—that is to say, an ordering of its components by zones of neighborhood. It is ordinal, an intension present in all the features that make it up. The concept is in a state of *survey* [*survol*†] in relation to its components, endlessly traversing them according to an order without distance. It

*See translators' introduction.
†See translators' introduction.

is immediately co-present to all its components or variations, at no distance from them, passing back and forth through them: it is a refrain, an opus with its number (*chiffre*).

The concept is an incorporeal, even though it is incarnated or effectuated in bodies. But, in fact, it is not mixed up with the state of affairs in which it is effectuated. It does not have spatiotemporal coordinates, only intensive ordinates. It has no energy, only intensities; it is anenergetic (energy is not intensity but rather the way in which the latter is deployed and nullified in an extensive state of affairs). The concept speaks the event, not the essence or the thing— pure Event, a hecceity, an entity: the event of the Other or of the face (when, in turn, the face is taken as concept). It is like the bird as event. The concept is defined by *the inseparability of a finite number of heterogeneous components traversed by a point of absolute survey at infinite speed*. Concepts are "absolute surfaces or volumes," forms whose only object is the inseparability of distinct variations.[2] The "survey" [*survol*] is the state of the concept or its specific infinity, although the infinities may be larger or smaller according to the number of components, thresholds and bridges. In this sense the concept is act of thought, it is thought operating at infinite (although greater or lesser) speed.

The concept is therefore both absolute and relative: it is relative to its own components, to other concepts, to the plane on which it is defined, and to the problems it is supposed to resolve; but it is absolute through the condensation it carries out, the site it occupies on the plane, and the conditions it assigns to the problem. As whole it is absolute, but insofar as it is fragmentary it is relative. It is *infinite through its survey or its speed but finite through its movement that traces the contour of its components*. Philosophers are always recasting and even changing their concepts: sometimes the development of a point of detail that produces a new condensation, that adds or withdraws components, is enough. Philosophers sometimes exhibit a forgetfulness that almost makes them ill. According to Jaspers, Nietzsche,

"corrected his ideas himself in order to create new ones without explicitly admitting it; when his health deteriorated he forgot the conclusions he had arrived at earlier." Or, as Leibniz said, "I thought I had reached port; but . . . I seemed to be cast back again into the open sea."[3] What remains absolute, however, is the way in which the created concept is posited in itself and with others. The relativity and absoluteness of the concept are like its pedagogy and its ontology, its creation and its self-positing, its ideality and its reality—the concept is real without being actual, ideal without being abstract. The concept is defined by its consistency, its endoconsistency and exoconsistency, but it has no *reference:* it is self-referential; it posits itself and its object at the same time as it is created. Constructivism unites the relative and the absolute.

Finally, the concept is not discursive, and philosophy is not a discursive formation, because it does not link propositions together. Confusing concept and proposition produces a belief in the existence of scientific concepts and a view of the proposition as a genuine "intension" (what the sentence expresses). Consequently, the philosophical concept usually appears only as a proposition deprived of sense. This confusion reigns in logic and explains its infantile idea of philosophy. Concepts are measured against a "philosophical" grammar that replaces them with propositions extracted from the sentences in which they appear. We are constantly trapped between alternative propositions and do not see that the concept has already passed into the excluded middle. The concept is not a proposition at all; it is not propositional, and the proposition is never an intension. Propositions are defined by their reference, which concerns not the Event but rather a relationship with a state of affairs or body and with the conditions of this relationship. Far from constituting an intension, these conditions are entirely extensional. They imply operations by which abscissas or successive linearizations are formed that force intensive ordinates into spatiotemporal and energetic coordinates, by which the sets so determined are made to correspond to each other.