

L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze, avec Claire Parnet

Directed by Pierre-André Boutang (1996)

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"G as in 'Gauche'" (Left) [Second Part begins]

Deleuze: Which takes us to "G" (*D'où 'G'*) ... [Deleuze laughs]

Parnet [smiling]: Well, here, we are not in the point of insanity that constitutes your charm since we are going to talk about a very serious subject, how you belong to the Left.

Deleuze [laughing]: Ah, yes, yes...

Parnet [still smiling]: That seems to amuse you, which makes me very happy.... So, as we saw, you came from a bourgeois family with conservative political leanings (*de droite*), and since the Liberation in 1945, you have been what is called a Leftist (*un homme de gauche*). Well, let's go more slowly: at the Liberation, many of your friends, a lot of people around you who were students in philosophy, joined the French Communist Party (PCF) or were very connected to it...

Deleuze: Yes, they all went through that... there was only me... I think, I am not sure, but... they all went through it.

Parnet: So how is it that you avoided that?

Deleuze: Well, it's not really too complicated. All my friends went through the PCF, and what prevented me from doing so? [It was] because, I think... I was very hard-working (*travailleur*), and I didn't like the meetings, meetings where they talked interminably, I simply could never stand attending them. And, being in the PC at that period meant going to cell meetings all the time. This was at the period – this is a kind of reference point – the period of the "Stockholm Appeal" (*appel de Stockholm*), and all of my friends, [Deleuze laughs] people of great talent, spent days on end getting signatures on this Stockholm petition, from a priest, from anyone. They would walk all over with this "Stockholm Appeal," and I cannot even remember what it was! An entire generation of Communists got caught up in this, but that posed a problem for me because I realized -- I had a lot of friends who were Communist historians, very talented, and I thought, my God, if they spent their time finishing their dissertations, it would be so much more important for the Communist Party, which would at least have this work to be promoted, than getting signatures for the Stockholm Appeal, some stupid petition for peace, who knows what. I had no desire [to be involved in] that because I was neither very talkative, I didn't talk much, so all this petition-signing would have put me in a state of complete timidity, complete panic. I never had anyone sign anything. And even going out to sell *L'Humanité* [the PCF newspaper], well, all that was for some rather base reasons, doing that wasn't even a question for me, it never even occurred to me, I had no desire at all to join the Party.

Parnet: But you still felt close to their... commitments (*engagements*)?

Deleuze: The Party's? No, it never concerned me, something else that saved me, you understand... The discussions about Stalin, what they've discovered recently, the horrors committed by Stalin, I mean, everyone has known this for quite a while. And about the revolution going wrong, [Deleuze laughs] that makes me laugh because, really, who are they trying to kid? (*de qui on se moque?*) When the "New Philosophers" (*nouveaux philosophes*) discovered that the revolution turned out badly, you really have to be a bit dimwitted (*débile*), since we discovered that with Stalin. So henceforth, the road was open, everyone discovered it, for example, quite recently, about the Algerian revolution – "Hey, it turned out badly" because they fired on students!¹ Who ever thought that a revolution would go well? Who? Who? People say the English could not have a revolution, but that's absolutely false.

I mean all that... Today we live with such a mystification... The English had a revolution, they killed their king, etc., and who did they get? They got Cromwell. And English Romanticism, what is it? It's a long meditation on the failure of the revolution. They didn't wait for [André] Glucksmann to reflect on the failure of the Stalinian revolution. They had one, really, they had one. And the Americans never get discussed, but the Americans blew their revolution, as badly as if not worse than the Bolsheviks. Let's not kid about it! People never talk about the Americans when they... even before the War of Independence – and "independence," I say --, they presented themselves worse than... or better than a new nation, they went beyond nations exactly like Marx spoke later of the proletariat: they went beyond nations, nations are finished! They bring forth a new people, they have a true revolution. Just as the Marxists count on universal proletarianization, the Americans counted on universal immigration, the two sides of class struggle. This is absolutely revolutionary, it's the America of Jefferson, of Thoreau, of Melville – Jefferson, Thoreau, Melville, all of them, it's a completely revolutionary America that announces the "new man" exactly like the Bolshevik revolution announced the "new man".

That revolution failed (*a foiré*), all revolutions fail, everybody knows this, and now people are pretending to "rediscover" that. They really have to be dimwitted. As a result, everyone is getting lost in this, this contemporary revisionism. There is [François] Furet who discovered that the French Revolution wasn't as great as had been thought. Well, sure, fine, it failed too, everybody knows that. The French Revolution gave us Napoleon! People are making "discoveries" that to me are not very impressive in their novelty (*on fait des découvertes qui ne sont pas très émouvantes par leur nouveauté*). The British Revolution resulted in Cromwell, the American Revolution's results were worse, the political parties, Reagan, which does not seem any better to me.

So, people are in such a state of confusion... Even if revolutions fail, go badly, that still never stopped people or prevented people from becoming revolutionary. They are confusing two absolutely different things: the situations in which the only outcome for man is to become revolutionary... And yet again, we have been talking about that from the start: it's the confusion between becoming and history, and if people become revolutionary...

[Change of cassette (16)]

Deleuze: Yes, this historians' confusion... Historians speak of the future of the revolution, the future of revolutions, but that is not at all the question. They can always go so far back and try to demonstrate that if the future was bad, it's because the bad element (*le mauvais*) was there right from the start.

The concrete problem is how and why do people become revolutionary? And fortunately, historians can't prevent them from doing so. It's obvious that the South Africans are caught up in a becoming-revolutionary, the Palestinians are caught up in a becoming-revolutionary. Then, if someone tells me afterwards, "oh you will see, when they have won, if their revolution succeeds, it will go badly," etc., well, first of all, there will not be the same kinds of problems, and then a new situation will be created, once again becomings-revolutionary will be unleashed. The business of men (*des*

hommes), it's in situations of tyranny, of oppression, effectively it's to enter into becomings-revolutionary because there is nothing else to be done. And when someone tells us afterwards, "oh, it's not working out," we aren't talking about the same thing, it's as if we were speaking two different languages -- the future of history and the current becomings of people (*les devenirs actuels des gens*) are not at all the same things.

Parnet: And this respect for the "rights of man" (*les droits de l'homme*) which is so fashionable these days, but it is not becoming-revolutionary, quite the opposite.

Deleuze [wearily]: Listen, this respect for the "rights of man" – this really makes me want to say, almost to make some odious statements. It belongs so much to this weak thinking (*pensée molle*) of the empty intellectual period that we discussed earlier [under "C as in Culture"].² It's purely abstract, these "rights of man." What is this? It's purely abstract, completely empty. It's exactly like what I was saying earlier about desire, what I tried to say about desire: desire does not consist of erecting an object, of saying I desire this... We don't desire, for example, freedom, etc. It's zero. Rather, we desire... we find ourselves in situations.

I choose the example of the contemporary problems of Armenia, it's very recent.³ What is this situation, if I understood it well? One never knows, really, you can correct me, but that would not change it much. An enclave in another Armenian Soviet republic, there is an Armenian republic, an enclave, so that's the situation, a first aspect. There is this massacre by some sort of Turkish group, to the extent that we know anything right now because we could learn, I guess... But here we have yet again this massacre of Armenians. So, in the enclave, the Armenians retreat into their republic, I guess – you can correct all my mistakes -- and right then, there is an earthquake. You'd think you were in something written by the Marquis de Sade, these poor people go through the worst circumstances that humans face, and when they reach shelter, it's nature that gets involved.

When people say, "the rights of man," it's just intellectual discourse, for odious intellectuals at that, for intellectuals who have no ideas. First, I have always noticed that these declarations are never made as a function of the people who are directly concerned, the Armenian society, the Armenian communities, etc. Their problem is not "the rights of man." What is it? It's... Now this is what I call an assemblage (*agencement*). When I was saying that desire always comes through assemblages, well, there's an assemblage: what is possible in order to suppress this enclave or to make it possible for this enclave to survive? What is this enclave within all that? It's a question of territory, not one of "the rights of man," it's the organization of territory. What do they think that Gorbachev is going to make of this situation? What is he going to do so that this Armenian enclave is not given over to Turks threatening all around them? I would say that it's not a question of "rights of man," it's not a question of justice, rather it's a question of jurisprudence.

All the abominations that humans undergo are *cases*, not elements of abstract rights. These are abominable cases. You might tell me that these cases resemble each other, but these are situations of jurisprudence. This Armenian problem is typically what can be called an extraordinarily complex problem of jurisprudence. What can we do to save the Armenians and to help them save themselves from this crazy situation they find themselves in? Then, an earthquake occurs, an earthquake, so there are all these constructions that had not been built as well as they should have been. All these are cases of jurisprudence. To act for freedom, becoming revolutionary, is to operate in jurisprudence when one turns to the justice system. Justice doesn't exist, "rights of man" do not exist, it concerns jurisprudence... That's what the invention of law is. So those people who are quite satisfied to recall and to recite "the rights of man," they are just dimwitted, it's not a question of applying "the rights of man," [Deleuze laughs] but rather of inventing forms of jurisprudence, so that for each case, this would no longer be possible. It's entirely different.

If you like, I will give an example that I like a lot because it's the only way to help people understand what jurisprudence is, and people understand nothing... well, not all, but people don't understand it very well. I recall when smoking in taxis was forbidden... People used to smoke in taxis... So, a time came when people were no longer permitted to smoke in taxis. The first taxi drivers who forbid people smoking in the taxis created quite a stir because there were smokers who protested, and there was one, a lawyer...

I have always been fascinated by jurisprudence, by law... If I hadn't studied philosophy, I would have studied law, but precisely not "the rights of man," but rather I'd have studied jurisprudence. That's what life is; there are no "rights of man," only rights of life, and so, life unfolds case by case.

So, [back to] taxis: there is a guy who does not want to be prevented from smoking in the taxi, so he sues the cab. I remember this quite well because I got involved in listening to the arguments leading up to the decision. The cab lost the case – today it would not have happened, even with the same kind of trial, the cab driver would not have lost. But at the start, the cab lost, and on what grounds? On the grounds that when someone takes a taxi, he is renting it, so the taxi occupant is assimilated to the [status of] renter or tenant, and the tenant has the right to smoke in his rented location, he has the right of use and abuse. It's as if he were renting, it's as if the owner of a building told him, "No, you're not going to smoke in your place..." "Yes, yes, I am the tenant and I'm going to smoke where I live." The taxi is assimilated into being a rolling apartment of which the customer is the tenant. Ten years later, that [practice] has become universalized, there are none or practically no taxis in which one can smoke. The taxi is no longer assimilated to renting an apartment, it has become assimilated instead into being a form of public service, and in a mode of public service, there exists the right to forbid smoking.

All this is jurisprudence... It's no longer a question of the right of this or of that, it's a question of situations, of situations that evolve, and fighting for freedom is really to engage in jurisprudence. So, the example of Armenia seems to me quite typical: the "rights of man," you referred to them, so what do they mean? It means: The Turks don't have the right to massacre Armenians. Fine, the Turks don't have the right to massacre Armenians, and then? How far does that really get us? It's truly the feeble-minded or hypocrites, all this thought about the "rights of man," it's zero philosophically, zero. The creation of law, it's not the creation of "rights of man." Creation in law is jurisprudence, and only that exists, and therefore fighting for jurisprudence.⁴

Parnet: Well, we are going to return to two things that are connected...

Deleuze: That's what being on the Left is, creating the law, creating the law...

[Change of cassette; the producer claps his hand while the director announces: "Gilles Deleuze, cassette seventeen, the last one, at least for today," to which Deleuze responds, "Yes, that's good."]

Parnet: We'll return to this question, this philosophy of the "rights of man" and this respect for the "rights of man" now is like a repudiation of May '68 and a repudiation of Marxism as well. So, Marx, you must not have repudiated him since you were never a Communist, yet you still make use of Marx who continues to be a referent for you. And as for May '68, you are one of the last persons around who refers to May '68, not saying that it was meaningless, just schoolroom pranks, and that everyone now has changed. So, I'd like you to talk a bit about May '68.

Deleuze: It's simple... but I think you are being too harsh in saying that I am one of the rare persons. There are a lot of people, if only the people around us, and among our friends, there are very few... I know no turncoats...

Parnet: But these are your friends.

Deleuze: Yes, but there are lots of people that have made no repudiation. It's almost a given, the answer is quite simple: May '68 is the intrusion of becoming. People have often wanted to view it as the reign of the imaginary, but it's not at all imaginary. It's a gust of the real in its pure state (*une bouffée du réel à l'état pur*). It's the real that arrives, and people don't understand that, they say, "What is this?" Real people, or people in their reality, it was astounding, and just what were these people in their reality? It's a becoming. Now, there can be bad becomings, and it's what historians did not understand well, and that's understandable since I believe so strongly in the difference between history and becomings... May '68 was a becoming-revolutionary without a revolutionary future. People can always make fun of it after the fact, but there were phenomena of pure becoming that took hold of people, even becomings-animal, even becomings-children, becomings-women for men, becomings-men for women. All this is in a very special domain that we have been pouring over since the start of our questions, that is, what is a becoming? In any event, May '68 is the intrusion of becoming.⁵

Parnet: Did you have a becoming-revolutionary yourself at that moment?

Deleuze [smiling]: If I have a becoming-revolutionary? Yes, although your very smile suggests that this is a form of mockery. So, tell me instead: what does it mean to be *de gauche*, on the Left?... It's a bit more discreet than "becoming-revolutionary."⁶

Parnet [stammering a bit]: Well, I wouldn't say that, I wouldn't say that, I would like to pose the question differently...

Deleuze: Yes?

Parnet: It's that between your civic duty as a Leftist (*homme de gauche*) devoted to all that and your becoming-revolutionary, since you are a Leftist, how do you manage (*te débrouilles*), and what does it mean for you to be *de gauche*, on the Left?

Deleuze [pausing before answering]: Yes... well, I think that no leftist government exists, which is not astonishing, whether is a leftist government or no leftist government. It's not that there are no differences between governments. The best one can hope for is a government favorable to certain demands from the Left. But a leftist government does not exist since being on the Left has nothing to do with governments (*n'est pas une affaire de gouvernement*).

So, if one asked me, how to define being on the Left? In two ways: first, it's a matter of perception. This matter of perception means this: what would *not* being on the Left mean? Not being on the Left... It's a little like a postal address, extending outward from a person: the street where you are, the city, the country, other countries farther and farther away. [Deleuze gestures outward]

It starts from the self, and to the extent that one is privileged, living in a rich country, one might ask, what can we do to make this situation last? One senses that dangers exist, that it might not last, it's all so crazy, so what might be done for it to last? So, someone might say, "Oh la la, the Chinese, they are far away, what can we do so that Europe lasts?" etc. Being on the Left is the opposite: it's perceiving... And people say the Japanese perceive like that, not like us... they perceive

first the periphery, [Deleuze gestures outward inward] they would say the world, the continent -- let's say Europe --, France, etc. etc., rue de Bizerte, me: it's a phenomenon of perception, perceiving just the horizon, perceiving on the horizon.

Parnet [objecting]: Well, the Japanese aren't really so Leftist...

Deleuze: It's not from generosity ... [gesturing at Parnet dismissively] Your objection isn't, isn't... adequate (*c'est pas une raison*). On the basis of that [their perception], they're Leftist, on the basis of their sense of address, postal address. First, you see the horizon. And you know that it cannot last, that it's not possible, [the fact that] these millions of people are starving to death, it just can't last, it might go on a hundred years, one never knows, but there's no point in kidding about this absolute injustice. It's not a matter of morality, but of perception itself.

So, if you start with the edges, that's what being on the Left means, and knowing how, and say what one might, knowing that these are problems that must be dealt with. It's not saying simply that the birth rate has to be reduced, which is just another way of keeping the privileges for Europe, it's not that. [Being on the Left] is really finding arrangements, finding world-wide assemblages. Being on the Left, it is often only Third World problems that are closer to us than problems in our neighborhoods. So it's really a matter of perception, more than being a question of "well-meaning souls" (*belles âmes*), that's what being on the Left is for me, first of all.

And second, being on the Left is a being by nature, or rather it's a problem of becomings, of never ceasing to become minoritarian. That is, the Left is never of the majority as Left, and for a very simple reason: the majority is something that presupposes -- even when one votes -- that it's not the huge quantity that votes for something, but the majority presupposes a standard (*étalon*). In the West, the standard that every majority presupposes is: 1) male, 2) adult 3) heterosexual (*mâle*), 4) city dweller... Ezra Pound, Joyce say things like that, it was perfect. That's what the standard is. So, the majority by its nature, at a particular moment, will go toward whomever or whatever aggregate will realize this standard, that is, the supposed image of the urban, heterosexual, adult male such that a majority, at the limit, is never anyone, it's an empty standard. Simply, a maximum of persons recognize themselves in this empty standard, but in itself, the standard is empty: male, heterosexual, etc.⁷

So, women will make their mark either by intervening in this majority or in the secondary minorities according to groupings in which they are placed according to this standard. But alongside that, what is there? There are all the becomings that are minority-becomings. I mean, women, it's not a given, they are not women by nature. Women have a becoming-woman; and so, if women have a becoming-woman, men have a becoming-woman as well. We were talking earlier about becomings-animal. Children have their own becoming-child. They are not children by nature. All these becomings, that's what the minorities are...

Parnet: Well, men cannot become-men, and that's tough!

Deleuze: No, that's a majoritarian standard, heterosexual, adult, male. He has no becoming. He can become woman, and then he enters into minoritarian processes. The Left is the aggregate of processes of minoritarian becomings. So, I can say quite literally, the majority is no one, the minority is everyone, and that's what being on the Left is: knowing that the minority is everyone and that it's there that phenomena of becomings occur. That's why, however great they think they are, they still have the scandal of their doubts about the outcome of elections. All these things are well known.

[The film fades here, and the new cassette – announced as “Gilles Deleuze, 1-A first” -- shows a seated Deleuze dressed differently for the second session of filming. Henceforth, Parnet will no longer be visible in the mirror. She begins by announcing:]

"H as in History of Philosophy"

Parnet: “H” is “History of Philosophy.” It is usually said that in your works, the first phase is devoted to the history of philosophy. In 1952, you write a study on David Hume, followed by works on Nietzsche, Kant, Bergson, Spinoza. Someone who didn’t know you and took you for an annotator (*commentateur*) would be very surprised by *Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition*, and of course, by *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. From these, it would seem that there is a Mr. Hyde hidden within a Dr. Jekyll. And when everyone was explicating Marx, you dove into Nietzsche, and when everyone felt they had to read Reich, you were reading Spinoza, with the famous question, “what can a body do?” (*que peut un corps?*).⁸ Today, in 1988, you return to Leibniz. So, what did you enjoy and still enjoy in the history of philosophy?

Deleuze [pausing]: It's a complicated matter because this history of philosophy encompasses philosophy itself. I assume that a lot of people think of philosophy as being something quite abstract and a bit for specialists. But I believe strongly that philosophy has nothing to do with specialists, it's not a specialization, or is so only in the way that music or painting is. So necessarily, I try to pose the problem differently.

So, when people say that the history of philosophy is abstract, it is abstract in the second degree since it does not even consist of talking about abstract ideas, but of forming abstract ideas about abstract ideas. But there is another way... For me, the history of philosophy has always been something else. Here I return to painting. I think of the discussions, in the letters from Van Gogh,⁹ one finds the discussions about portraiture or landscapes: am I going to do portraits? Do I have to return to portraits? They attach great importance to that, in their conversations, in their letters. Portrait or landscape, it's not the same, it's not the same problems. For me, the history of philosophy is, as in painting, a kind of art of the portrait. One creates *the* philosopher's portrait, but a philosophical portrait of a philosopher. I would say just as well a “spiritist” portrait (*portrait médiumnique*), that is, a mental or spiritual portrait, it's a spiritual portrait. As a result, it's an activity that belongs fully within philosophy itself, just as a portrait belongs to painting.

So suddenly, by the very fact that I refer to painters, I am making some progress. If I return to painters like Van Gogh or Gauguin, it's because something in their work has an enormous effect on me, the kind of immense respect or even fear and panic, not merely respect, that they evince when faced with color, when faced with engaging with (*aborder*) color. It is particularly enjoyable that the two painters that I invoke, and limiting myself to them, are among the greatest colorists ever. But if we refer to the history of their works, they undertake the use of color only with great fearful hesitation (*tremblement*), they were frightened. Throughout the beginning of their careers, they used earthen colors (*couleurs patate, de terre*), not at all striking... Why? Not because that appeals to them, but because they did not yet dare to engage with color. What could be more moving than this? It's as if, literally, they did not yet judge themselves worthy of color, not yet able to engage with color and really do painting. It took them years and years before daring to engage with color. Once they feel that they are able to engage with color, well, then, it results in the works that everyone knows. When you see the point that they reach, one has to reflect on this immense respect, this immense slowness to undertake that work. Something like color for a painter is something that can take him/her into madness, into insanity, thus it is something quite difficult, taking years to dare to come close to it.

So, it's not at all that I am particularly modest, but it strikes me as being quite shocking, it would be shocking if there were philosophers who simply said, "Hey, I'm going into philosophy now, going to do my own philosophy, yes, I have my philosophy." These are statements made by the dimwitted – doing *one's* philosophy -- because philosophy is like color. So, before entering into philosophy, one has to take so many, so many precautions, I would say, before conquering the "philosophical color" (*la couleur philosophique*) -- and the philosophical color is the concept. Before knowing how to invent concepts or to succeed in doing so, an enormous amount of work is necessary.

I believe that the history of philosophy is this slow modesty, taking a long time doing portraits, one has to do portraits. It's as if a novelist were to tell us, "well, I write novels, but you know, I never read them in order never to compromise my inspiration. Dostoyevsky, nope, don't know him." I've heard young novelists make such frightening statements... which comes down to saying, I don't need to work. So, given that whatever one does, you have to work hard for a long time before engaging with something, the history of philosophy has this role that is not only preparatory, it succeeds quite well by itself. It is the art of portraiture in so far as it allows one to reach toward something.¹⁰

At this point, all this is becoming a bit mysterious... We need to be more precise, you have to force me to be more precise, I don't know, by some other little question because... Or else, I can continue like this. What does one do when one does history of philosophy? No? Do you have something else to ask me about this?

Parnet: No, well, the usefulness of the history of philosophy for you, we see it clearly, you just explained it. But the usefulness of history of philosophy for people in general, since you don't know... since you say that you do not want to talk about the specialization of philosophy, that philosophy also is destined for non-philosophers.

Deleuze: This is very simple. You can only understand what philosophy is -- that is, the extent to which it is no more an abstract thing than a painting or a musical work – it's not at all abstract, and one can understand that only through the history of philosophy, provided that one conceives of it, it seems to me, if I dare put it this way, provided that one conceives of it in the proper manner (*comme il faut*). What might that be? One thing is certain to me: a philosopher is not someone who contemplates or even reflects. A philosopher is someone who creates, simply that he creates a very special kind of thing. He creates concepts. Concepts don't exist ready-made, they are not located in the sky, they are not stars that one gazes at in the sky. You have to create, fabricate concepts.¹¹

So, there are a thousand questions, here we are almost lost since so many questions emerge: Why is it useful? Why create concepts, and what is that exactly, a concept? But let's drop this for the moment, let's drop this. I mean... Let's take an example: if I write a book about Plato, people know well that Plato created a concept that did not exist before him, translated generally as "Idea", with a capital I. And what *he* calls an Idea is not at all what other philosophers call an idea. It's truly a Platonic concept to the point that if someone uses this concept in a manner similar to this term, then people tend to say, "This is a Platonic philosopher."

But I mean, concretely, what does this mean? One should always ask oneself what doing philosophy means.... If not, one just shouldn't do philosophy. One should always ask, what is it? as if it were a dog, what is an idea? A dog, I can define what an idea is, for Plato. So, here, I am already doing history of philosophy. I try to explain this to people, you don't need a professor, it seems to me, you can readily understand....

[Change of cassette, cassette 2]

Deleuze: I think that what he calls an Idea is a thing [Deleuze speaks very precisely here] that wouldn't be something else, that is, that would *only* be what it is.¹² Now, here, that seems abstract, like I was saying earlier, one mustn't be abstract.... But no, no, no, let's choose an example that is not found in Plato: a mother, a mom (*maman*), this is a mother, but she is not *only* a mother... I mean, she is, for example, a wife, and she is herself a daughter of a mother. Let us imagine a mother who might *only* be a mother... It matters little if such a thing exists or not... For example, is the Virgin Mary, who Plato didn't know, [Deleuze smiles] is she a mother and only mother? No matter if it exists or not, a mother that would be nothing other than mother, who would not be in her own turn the daughter of another mother, it's this that we then have to call "mother Idea" (*idée de mère*), i.e., a thing that is only what it is. This is what Plato meant more or less when he said only justice is just, because only justice is nothing other than just. And for me, that becomes quite simple. An Idea... of course, Plato doesn't stop there, but his departure point is, let us imagine particular entities that are only what they are, we call them "Ideas." So, he created a veritable concept, this concept did not exist before, the Idea of the thing as (*en tant que*) pure... It's purity that defines the Idea.

But this still remains abstract, and why is that? If we proceed to read through Plato, that's how everything becomes concrete. Plato doesn't proceed haphazardly, he didn't create this concept of Idea by chance. He found himself in a given situation: that whatever happens, in a very concrete situation, whatever happens, or whatever might be a given therein, there are rivals (*prétendants*). That is, there are people who say: for this thing, I'm the best example of it. For example, Plato gave an example of the politician, and he says, that is, with an initial definition, that the politician is the pastor of men, who takes care of people. As a result, lots of people step forward to say, "if that's the case, then I am the politician, I am the pastor of men" -- the merchant can say that, the shepherd who nourishes, the doctor who heals -- can all say, "I am the true pastor of men." In other words, there are rivals.

So, with that, things start to appear a bit more concrete. I maintain that a philosopher creates concepts, for example, the Idea, the thing in so far as it is pure (*la chose en tant que pure*). The reader doesn't understand immediately why or what it's about, or why one would need to create such a concept. If he/she continues and reflects on the reading, he/she understands the following reason: there are all sorts of rivals who present themselves as claimants (*des prétendants*) for things, and that the problem for Plato is not at all, what is the Idea? That way, things would just remain abstract. Rather, it's how to select the claimants, how to discover among them which one is the valid one (*le bon*). It's the Idea, that is, the thing in a pure state, that will permit this selection, that will select the claimant who is closest to it.

This allows us to move forward a bit since I would say, every concept, e.g., the Idea, refers to a problem... In this case, the problem is how to select the claimants. If you do philosophy abstractly, you do not even see the problem, but if one reaches this problem... One might wonder why the problem isn't *stated* clearly by a philosopher since it certainly exists in his work, we find it, it's there, it smacks you in the face (*crève les yeux*) in some ways. And it's because one can't do everything at once. The philosopher's task is already that of exposing the concepts that she/he's in the process of creating, so she/he can't expose the problems on top of that, or at least one can discover these problems only through the concepts being created. If you haven't found the problem to which a concept corresponds, everything stays abstract. If you've found the problem, everything becomes concrete. That's why in Plato, there are constantly these claimants, these rivals.

So, I can add --- suddenly this [topic] is taking a turn, it goes without saying -- why does this occur in the Greek city, and why is it Plato who invents *this* problem? You see, the problem is how to select claimants, and the concept -- *that's* what philosophy is, the problem and the concept -- the concept is the Idea that is supposed to provide the means of selecting the claimants, however that would occur, it matters little. But why did this problem and this concept take form in the Greek milieu? It begins with the Greeks because it's a typically Greek problem, of the democratic, Greek

city. Even if Plato did not accept the democratic character of the city, it's a problem of the democratic city. For it's in the democratic city that, for example, a magistracy is an object of pretension... There are "prétendants," claimants, I pose my candidacy for a particular function. In an imperial formation, as they exist in the Greek era, there are functionaries named by the emperor, there is not at all this rivalry. The Athenian city is this rivalry of claimants, it was already there with Ulysses, the suitors for Penelope, there is an entire milieu of Greek problems. It's a civilization in which the confrontation of rivals constantly appears: that's why they invented gymnastics, they invent Olympic games, they invent – they are litigious, no one is as litigious as a Greek – they invent legal procedures also, it's the same thing, legal proceedings, claimants. You understand?

And in philosophy, there are claimants as well... Plato's struggle against the Sophists. He believed that the Sophists were claimants for something to which they had no right. What would define the right or the non-right of a claimant? That's also a problem that's very... And all this is as amusing as a novel. We know that there are great novels in which claimants confront each other before the tribunal. It's something different, but in philosophy, there are two things at once: the creation of a concept, and the creation of a concept always occurs as a function of a problem. If one has not found the problem, one cannot understand philosophy, philosophy remains abstract.¹³

I take another example... people usually don't see to what problem that corresponds, they don't see problems, because problems usually are a bit hidden, somewhat stated but somewhat hidden, and to engage in the history of philosophy is to restore these problems and, through this, to discover what's innovative in these concepts. Whereas bad history of philosophy links up concepts as if they appeared to go without saying, as if they weren't created, so there tends to be total ignorance about the problems to which...

I take a final example quickly...

[The producer suggests "Let's move on to the next cassette"; change of cassette]

Deleuze: So, I am going to select a second example that precisely does not at all concern diversity. Much later, there arrives a philosopher called Leibniz who creates and invents an extraordinary concept to which he gives the name, monad. He chooses a technical, complicated name, monad. And in fact, there is always something a bit crazy in a concept... this mother who would only be mother, in the other case, a pure idea... there is something there that's a bit crazy. Well then, Leibniz's monad designated a subject, somebody, you or me, in so far as he/she expresses the totality of the world, and in expressing the totality of the world, he/she only expresses clearly a tiny region of the world, one's territory – we've already spoken about territory – one's territory, or what Leibniz calls his "department". So, a subjective unity that expresses the entire world, but that only clearly expresses a region, a "department" of the world -- this is what he called a monad.

So here as well, this is a concept; Leibniz created it. This concept did not exist before him. But one might ask, "Why did he create it? It's quite lovely, but why say that rather than something else?" One has to find the problem. And it's not that he hides the problem... If you don't look a bit, you won't find it. That's the charm of reading philosophy, as charming or amusing as reading a good book, or looking at paintings. It's amazing.

What do you discover when you read him? Indeed, he didn't create the "monad" for the pleasure of it. There is another reason: Leibniz poses a problem, which is what? Specifically, that everything in the world only exists as folded. That's why I wrote a book on Leibniz called *The Fold*. He saw the world as an aggregate of things folded within each other. Let's step back a bit: why did he see the world like this? What is happening? Just as for Plato earlier, perhaps the answer is: at that period, what... Were things being folded more than they are now? Well, we don't have the time. What counts is this idea of a world that is folded, but everything is the fold of a fold, you can never

reach something that is completely unfolded. And matter is constituted by folds overlapping back onto it, and things of the mind, perceptions, feelings, ideas, are folded into the soul. It's precisely because perceptions, feelings, ideas are folded into a soul that [Leibniz] constructed this concept of a soul that expresses the entire world, that is, in which he discovers the entire world to be folded.

One almost wants to ask, what is a bad philosopher, or a great philosopher? The bad one creates no concepts, is someone who uses ready-made ideas. So, he puts forth opinions then and does not do philosophy.... He says, "There, that's what I do, that's it, opinions, they have always been around." He does not invent concepts, he poses – in the true sense of the word – he poses no problems.

So, to do history of philosophy is this long apprenticeship in which one learns, or one is truly an apprentice in this double domain, the constitution of problems and the creation of concepts. And there is no... What is it that kills, what makes it possible for thought to be idiotic, dimwitted, etc.? Some people talk, but we never know what problems they're talking about. Not only do they create no concepts while busy spouting opinions, but moreover, we don't know what problems they're talking about.¹⁴ I mean, at most, one knows the questions, but not the problems behind certain questions... If I say, Does God exist? That doesn't pose any problem. Does God exist? I haven't stated the problem, because why do I ask that question? What is the problem behind that? So, people are quite ready to ask the question: ah, do I believe in God or don't I? Well, everyone could care less who believes in God or doesn't believe in God. What counts is why he says that, that is, to what problem asking that question corresponds and what concept he is going to fabricate, what God concept he is going to fabricate. If you have neither a concept nor a problem, you remain in stupidity (*la bêtise*), that's it, you aren't doing philosophy. All this is to express the extent to which philosophy is amusing. So that's what doing history of philosophy is -- to discover... It's not all that different from what you do when you find yourself in front of a great painting or listening to a musical work.

Parnet: Precisely, returning to Gauguin and Van Gogh since you evoked their quaking and hesitation from fear before taking on color, what happened to you when you passed from history of philosophy to doing your own philosophy?

Deleuze: This is what happened: no doubt, the history of philosophy gave me the chance to learn things, I mean, I felt more capable of moving toward what color is in philosophy, that is... But why does this come up at all, I mean, why does philosophy not cease to exist, why do we still have philosophy today? Because there is always an occasion to create concepts. So, today this notion of creation of concepts is taken over by the media, publicity; with computers, they say you can create concepts, an entire language stolen from philosophy.

Parnet: Communication.

Deleuze: "Communication," "one has to be creative to create concepts." But what they call "concepts," what they call "to create," [Deleuze is dismissive] is truly comic, there's no need to insist on it.

That still remains philosophy's task. There is still a place today... I never was affected by people who proclaim the death of philosophy, getting beyond (*dépasser*) philosophy, it's philosophers who say such complicated things as that. All that never affected me or concerned me because I tell myself, ok, what could all that mean? As long as there's a need to create concepts, there will be philosophy since that's the definition of philosophy, creating concepts, not expecting them to be ready-made -- we have to create them, and we create them as a function of problems. Well, problems evolve, so there is still a place...

Certainly, one can be Platonist, one can be Leibnizian, today even, in 1989, one can be Kantian. What does that mean exactly? It means that one judges that certain problems -- not all, no doubt -- posed by Plato remain valid provided one makes certain transformations, and then, one is Platonist since one still has use for Platonist concepts. If we pose problems of a completely different nature... in my opinion, there is not a single example among the great philosophers of one who does not have something to say about the great problems we face today. But doing philosophy is creating new concepts as a function of problems that arise today.

The final aspect of this extremely lengthy question would obviously be, ok, but what is the evolution of problems, what guarantees it? I could always say historical, social forces, sure, fine, but there is something deeper. It's all very mysterious, maybe we don't have time to pursue it, but we reach a kind of becoming of thought, evolution of thought that results not only in no longer posing the same problems, they are no longer posed in the same way. A problem can be posed in several successive ways, and that has an urgent appeal, like a huge gust of wind, a call for the necessity always to create and re-create new concepts. So, history of philosophy cannot be reduced to sociological influence, or to another influence... There is an entire becoming of thought, something very mysterious that we would have to succeed in defining, but that causes us perhaps no longer to think in the same way as a hundred years ago. So, ok, I think of new thought processes, of ellipses of thought. Thought has its history, there is a history of pure thought, so that's what history of philosophy is for me. It has always had only one function, in my opinion, philosophy, so there's no need to get beyond it, as it has its function.

[Change of cassette; hand clap, "4-A"]

Deleuze: So, yes, did you want to say something?

Parnet: Yes, how does a problem evolve through time?

Deleuze: That must... I don't know, that must vary...

Parnet: Since thought evolves...

Deleuze: It probably varies according to each case. I choose... Here again, another example will have to suffice: back in the seventeenth century, for most of the great philosophers, what was their negative concern? Their negative concern was preventing error. It was a matter of warding off the dangers of error. In other words, the negative of thought is that the mind might err, to prevent the mind from erring, how to avoid falling into error.

Then there was a long, gradual slide, and in the eighteenth century, a different problem begins to be born. It might appear to be the same, but it is not at all the same: no longer denouncing error, but denouncing illusions, the idea that the mind falls into and even is surrounded by illusions, and furthermore could even produce them itself, not only falling into error, but it might produce illusions. So this is the whole movement in the eighteenth century, of the eighteenth century philosophers, the denunciation of superstition, etc. So, while it might appear to be somewhat similar to the seventeenth century, in fact something completely new is being born. One might say that it's due to social causes, but there is also a secret history of thought that would be a passionate subject to pursue. The question is no longer how to avoid falling into error, but how to succeed in dissipating the illusions by which the mind is surrounded.

Then, in the nineteenth century -- I am deliberately stating things in an extremely simple and rudimentary way -- so in the nineteenth century, what happens? It's as if things have slid farther, it

does not explode completely, rather it's more and more how to avoid... illusion? No, it's that the mind... it's that men, as spiritual, mental creatures (*créatures spirituelles*) never stop saying inanities (*bêtises*), which is not the same thing as illusion, it's not falling into illusion, how to ward off *bêtises*, inanities.

That appears clearly in [work by] people on the border of philosophy: a Flaubert is at the border of philosophy and the problem of the *bêtise*, Baudelaire and the problem of the *bêtise*, all that is no longer the same thing as illusion, etc. And there again, one can say it's connected to social evolution, for example, the evolution of the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century that turned the problem of the *bêtise* into an urgent problem. Fine, but there is also something deeper in this kind of history of problems that thought confronts, and every time one poses a problem, there are new concepts that appear.

As a result, if we understand the history of philosophy this way -- creation of concepts, constitution of problems, problems being more or less hidden, so we have to discover them --, we see that philosophy has strictly nothing to do with the true or the false. Looking for the truth means nothing. If it is a question of creating concepts, what does that mean? Creating concepts and constituting problems are not a question of truth or falsehood, it's a matter of meaning (*sens*)... A problem, well, there has to be a meaning... There are problems that have no sense, yes? There are problems that make sense, so doing philosophy is to constitute problems that make sense and create concepts that cause us to advance toward the understanding and solution of problems.¹⁵

Parnet: I would like to return to two questions that concern you particularly...

Deleuze [visibly perplexed]: Uh, well, it seemed to me that I had very well... Yes? Yes?

Parnet: When you once again undertook doing history of philosophy with Leibniz last year [in *The Fold*], was it in the same way as you did 20 years earlier, that is, before you had produced your own philosophy?

Deleuze: Mmm... [Deleuze doesn't answer, rubbing his eyes]

Parnet: Was it in the same way?

Deleuze: No, certainly not, certainly not because before, I used history of philosophy as this kind of indispensable apprenticeship where I was looking for the concepts of others, that is, of great philosophers, and the problems to which their concepts corresponded. Whereas, in the book on Leibniz -- and there's nothing vain in what I am about to say --, I mixed in problems from the twentieth century, that might be my own problems, with those posed by Leibniz, given that I am persuaded of the actuality of philosophers.

If you prefer, what does it mean to create like (*faire comme*) a great philosopher would? Creating like him is not necessarily to be his disciple. To create like him means to carry on with his task, to create concepts in relation to what he created, and pose problems in relation to and in evolution with what he created. By working on Leibniz, I was more in this path, whereas in the first books on the history of philosophy, I was in the "pre-color" stage.

Parnet: And you stated about your work on Spinoza, and we could apply it to Nietzsche, that you focused therein on the rather hidden area and accursed area of philosophy. What did you mean?

Deleuze: That, well, perhaps we will have a chance to return to this. For me... We may be able to return to this. For me, this hidden area means those thinkers who rejected all transcendence. So rejecting all transcendence, we would have to define this, and perhaps we will have a chance to return to this, to discuss transcendence. It refers to those authors who reject all universals, that is, the idea or concepts having universal values, and all transcendence, that is, any agency (*instance*) that goes beyond the earth and men...

Parnet: To come back to what you said...

Deleuze: They are authors of immanence.

Parnet: To return to something you said earlier, your books on Nietzsche or on Spinoza are landmarks (*font date*), that is, you are known for your books on Spinoza and Nietzsche, yet one cannot say that you are a Nietzschean or a Spinozan, like one could call someone a Platonist or a Nietzschean. You passed through all that, even when you used them during your apprenticeship, and you were already Deleuzian. [*Pause*] One cannot say that you are Spinozan.

Deleuze [visibly embarrassed,]: You have given me an enormous compliment, that is, if it's true, that makes me very happy...

Parnet: And how did you feel... [*Her words are lost under Deleuze's*]

Deleuze: What I always hoped for, I think indeed that, whether my work was good or bad, and I knew I could fail, but I think that I always was trying to pose problems for my own purposes (*pour mon compte*), and to create concepts for my own purposes. Almost, at the limit, I would have wanted a kind of quantification of philosophy. That is, each philosopher would be attributed a kind of magic number corresponding to the number of concepts he really created, referring to problems, etc. – so there would be these magic numbers, well, Descartes, Hegel, Leibniz. I find that an interesting idea. So, obviously, I don't dare place myself there, but perhaps I would have had a small magic number, specifically for having created concepts as a function of problems. Simply, I tell myself, my point of honor is that, whatever the kind of concept I tried to create, I can state what problem the concept corresponded to.

Parnet: To finish with...

Deleuze: Otherwise, otherwise, it would have all been empty chatter. There we are, so fine, yes... I think we've finished this point... no? Yes, yes?

Parnet: And to finish up, this is the final question, but I absolutely want to ask it (*j'y tiens absolument*)... It's a bit... aggressive (*provocante*)... At the time when -- around the period of 1968, even before -- when everyone, everyone was explicating Marx, everyone was reading Reich, wasn't it a rather provocative act to turn toward Nietzsche, who was really suspected of fascism in those years, and to talk about Spinoza and the body, when everyone was making us sick talking about Reich? [*Pause*] Didn't history of philosophy serve a bit as a dare, a bit of provocation for you?

[Change of cassette (cassette 5); interruption by Boutang: So, Claire, we'll redo that since we forgot about the cartridge]

Parnet: Wasn't there an element provocation, frankly?

Deleuze: No, but this is entirely connected to what we have been discussing all along, it's nearly the same question because what I was looking for, even what I was looking for with Félix, was this kind of truly immanent dimension of the unconscious. When, for example, all of psychoanalysis is entirely full of transcendental elements -- the law, the father, the mother -- all that, whereas a field of immanence that would allow me to define the unconscious, that was the domain into which perhaps Spinoza could go the farthest, along the path where no one had ever been, and perhaps where Nietzsche could also go the farthest that anyone had gone.

So it seems it was not so much provocation, but it was because Spinoza and Nietzsche form in philosophy perhaps the greatest liberation of thought, almost in the sense of an explosive, and perhaps the most unusual concepts, because their problems were somewhat accursed problems, that people did not dare pose, certainly at Spinoza's time, but even during Nietzsche's... Problems that people did not dare consider, what people call "burning problems"... Eh? [Deleuze stops, smiling at Parnet, then laughing a bit]

Parnet [responds almost in the tone of scolding parent]: Well, we can go on since you don't want to answer further. [He seems perplexed by her reproach]

"I as in Idea"

Deleuze ... So, are we at 'K'?

Parnet: No, we are at 'I'.

Deleuze: Ah, yes... [still smiling]

Parnet: "I as in Idea," no longer in the Platonist "Idea" that you were just referring to. It's first... Rather than preparing an inventory of theories, you have always spoken passionately about philosophers' ideas, just as you have shown us, brilliantly, about the ideas of thinkers in cinema, that is, the directors, about the ideas of artists in painting. You have always preferred the "idea" to explications and commentary, your own "idea" and others' "idea." So why, for you, does the "idea" preside over everything else?

Deleuze: Ok, you are quite right, the "idea" as I use it -- no longer concerning Plato -- traverses all creative activities... Creating means having an idea.¹⁶ But it's quite difficult to have an idea, there are people -- not at all to be scorned for this -- who go through life without ever having an idea. And having an idea, it's in every domain, I don't see any domain in which a place for having ideas is missing, but it's rare, indeed it's a ball (*une fête*) to have an idea, it doesn't happen every day.

So, I'm saying a painter has no fewer ideas than a philosopher, just not the same kind of ideas. One has to ask therefore, if we reflect on different human activities, in what form does an idea occur in a particular case or another? In philosophy, at least, we just considered this: the idea in philosophy occurs in the form of concepts and creation of concepts. There is no discovery of concepts, one doesn't discover concepts, one creates them. There is as much creation in a philosophy as in a painting or in a musical composition.

As for others, well, they have ideas... I am struck by what we call a film director (*metteur en scène*) from the moment he becomes important -- there are lots of directors who have never had the slightest idea. But ideas are quite haunting, they are like things that come, then go, and disappear, and

take on diverse forms, but through these diverse forms, as varied as they may be, they are still recognizable.

So, to state things quite simply, I take a cinema author at random like Minnelli. One can say that throughout his entire *oeuvre*... Well, not all of it, this doesn't cover everything, but I choose this example because it's easy... One can say that here is someone who asks himself, it seems to me: what does it mean exactly that people dream? They dream... It's been discussed a lot, it's a platitude, one could say... So, people dream at a particular moment. But Minnelli asks a very strange question, and it belongs only to him as far as I know: "what does it mean to be caught up in someone else's dream?" And it goes from the comic or the tragic to the abominable. What does it mean to be caught, for example, in a young girl's dream? Being caught in someone else's dream can produce some truly awful things, to be the prisoner of someone's dream, this is possibly horror in its pure state. So, sometimes in Minelli's work, he offers a dream, asking "what does it mean to be caught in the nightmare of war?" and that produces the admirable...

Parnet: The horsemen...

Deleuze: *The [Four] Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, in which he doesn't envisage war as war – that wouldn't be Minelli's work – he envisages war as an enormous nightmare. What does it mean to be caught in a nightmare? What does it mean to be caught in a young girl's dream? That results in musical comedies, in famous musical comedies, notably in which Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly – I'm not quite sure which -- escapes from tigresses and black panthers, it's unclear to me, and that's what it means to be caught in someone's dream. And there, that's an "idea." In short... and yet it's not a concept. Minelli, if he thought up concepts, he would be doing philosophy, [but] he's into movie-making (*il fait du cinéma*).¹⁷

We almost have to distinguish three dimensions, three kinds of things... so strong that they get mixed up constantly... One would have to talk about... And here, that's where I am right now, it's my future work that I am explaining, it's really what I would like to do now, to consider this, to try to get a clear sense of all this:¹⁸

1) There are concepts that are truly invented by philosophy;

2) There is what one can call percepts, and they are in the domain of art. So what are percepts?

I believe that an artist is someone who creates percepts. So why use this bizarre word, percept, rather than perception? Well, precisely because percepts are not perceptions... What does a man of letters, a writer want, a novelist, what does he want? I think that he wants to be able to construct aggregates of perceptions and sensations that outlive those who experience them. That's what a percept is: an aggregate of perceptions and sensations that outlive those who experience them.

I'll choose some examples: there are pages by Tolstoy that describe like a painter could hardly manage, or by Chekhov, in a different manner, who describes the heat in the steppe. So, it's an entire complex web of sensations, visual sensations, auditory, nearly taste sensations, something that enters the mouth, all of that...

So, he'd say, fine, [*Pause*] try to give to this complex web of sensations a radical independence in relation to the person who experienced them. Tolstoy also described atmospheres; Faulkner, in the great pages of Faulkner, if you look at great writers, they attain this... There is one [writer] who nearly stated this, and whom I like very much, who isn't very well known in France, I believe, a very great American novelist, Thomas Wolfe, who says in his short stories: someone goes out in the morning, and he breathes some fresh air, and an odor comes past, of anything, some toast, let's say, there is a complex web of sensations, a bird flies by in the sky... There is a complex web of sensations. [*Pause*]

So, what happens when someone who experiences the sensations dies, or goes on to do something else? What does that [web of sensation] become? This is rather the question that art poses, that's where we find an answer. It's to give a duration or an eternity to this complex web of sensations that are no longer apprehended as being experienced by someone, or at the limit, that may be apprehended as experienced by a character in a novel, that is, by a fictional character. It's precisely that which engenders fiction.

And what does a painter do? Well, he doesn't do only that, but a painter gives consistency to percepts, he tears percepts out of perception. There is a sentence by Cézanne that moves me more than anything...

[Change of cassette, 6; interruption of Deleuze's development]

Deleuze: A painter does nothing different ... One can say that already the Impressionists utterly twisted perception. We can say that a concept literally, in certain ways, splits your skull open (*fend le crâne*), it's a habit of thought that is completely new... If people aren't used to thinking like that previously, then that cracks their skulls, since in some ways, a percept twists our nerves (*tord les nerfs*). We can say that, in this, the Impressionists invent a percept. There is an expression by Cézanne that is quite beautiful; he says something like, we have to make Impressionism last/durable; that is, it still hasn't... the motif has not yet acquired its independence if it's a question of making it last and if new methods are necessary to make Impressionism last... He doesn't simply mean that paintings have to be better conserved; he means that the percept must acquire an even greater autonomy, so it must have new techniques, it must have... etc.... in order to...¹⁹

3) And then there is a third set of things, I think, very connected to all the others: they are what we have to call affects. Of course, there are no percepts without affects, but the affect is not like... I tried to define the percept as an aggregate of perceptions and sensations that become independent from the person experiencing them. For me, affects are becomings, becomings that overflow (*débordent*) him or her who goes through them, that exceed the force of those who go through them, that's what an affect is. I would almost say... Wouldn't music be the great creator of affect? Doesn't music lead us into these powers of action (*puissances*) that exceed us? It's possible, but in any case, all I mean is that the three are connected.²⁰

I mean, if you take a philosophical concept, simply, it's more like questions of accent... If you take a philosophical concept, it causes one to see things (*faire voir des choses*), it causes one to see things. Philosophers have nonetheless this "visionary" side or aspect (*côté 'voyant'*), at least in the philosophers that I admire: Spinoza causes one to "see", he is even one of the most visionary (*voyants*) philosophers, Nietzsche as well, he makes one "see" things. They also hurl forth fantastic affects such that one really has to discuss this, it becomes evident all by itself: there is a music in these philosophies, and inversely, there's no use insisting that music makes one "see" some very strange things -- were these sometimes even only colors, music causes one to "see" colors that don't exist within music or outside it, and percepts as well, all that is completely linked. I would dream of a kind of circulation of these dimensions into each other, between philosophical concepts, pictorial percepts, and musical affects. There's nothing surprising in there being these resonances, because however independent they may be, there is the labor (*des travaux*) of completely different people, but that never stops interpenetrating... Yes... [Deleuze smiles slowly at Parnet as she pauses before continuing]

Parnet: So, these ideas of painters, of artists, and of philosophers, whereas they have "ideas," but which are an idea of perception, an idea of fiction, an idea of reason... Why... You... Well, in life one can see a book or read a book in which there is no idea at all, and for you, that bores you to the point that you are not interested at all. There is absolutely no interest for you in looking at something

that might be funny or reading something that might be entertaining (*divertissant*), if this idea is missing, if there are no ideas.

Deleuze: In the sense that I just defined "idea," I have difficulty seeing how that would be possible. If you show me a painting that has no percepts, where there is a cow represented that is more or less realistic but where there are no cow percepts (*percepts de vache*), or it hasn't been lifted to the percept state, or play for me some music without affect... At the extreme, I can hardly understand what that could possibly mean. If you show me a film, ok, well... and if you show me a stupid book of philosophy, I have trouble understanding what kind of pleasure I would derive from it, other than an extremely unhealthy pleasure (*plaisir malsain*).

Parnet: Well, it might not be a stupid book of philosophy, it might simply be a humorous book (*livre humoristique*)...

Deleuze: Well, this humorous book could very well be full of ideas, I don't know, it all depends on what you call humorous (*humoristique*). No one has ever made me laugh more than Beckett and Kafka, so I am very sensitive to humor, I find them, in fact, extremely funny... I find television comedians much less interesting, it's true...

Parnet: Except Benny Hill, who certainly has an idea...

Deleuze [laughing]: Except Benny Hill, since he has an idea... But in fact, in this domain, the great American comics (*burlesques*) have lots of ideas.²¹

Parnet: Does it ever happen – to finish with a more personal question -- that you sit down to your writing table without an idea of what you are going to do, that is, without having any ideas at all? How does that work for you?

Deleuze: Of course not, if I have no ideas, I don't sit down to write. But what happens for me is that the idea hasn't developed enough, the idea escapes me, the idea disappears, there might be some holes. I have painful experiences like that, and it just doesn't go all by itself since ideas are not ready-made, one has to create them, I repeat... There are terrible moments, that is, there are moments in which one literally despairs, in which people are not capable of... oh, yes...

Parnet: Is this like the expression: the idea that creates a hole that is missing (*l'idée qui fait un trou qui manque*)...? Is it both?

Deleuze: It's impossible to distinguish: Do I have an idea that I am just unable to express, or do I just not have any ideas at all? In my opinion, it's so much the same thing: if I cannot express it, I don't have the idea, or a piece of it is missing, a piece of this idea, since ideas don't arrive in a completely formed block, there are things that come in from here, from there, they come from diverse horizons, ideas, and if you are missing a piece, then it is unusable.

[Change of cassette, 7]

"J as in Joy"

Parnet: So, “J” is “Joy,” this is a concept to which you are particularly attached to since it's a Spinozist concept, and Spinoza turned joy into a concept of resistance and life: let us avoid sad passions, let us live with joy in order to be at the maximum of our power of action (*puissance*) [see note 20]; therefore, we must flee from resignation, bad faith, guilt, all sad affects that judges and psychoanalysts would exploit. So we can see entirely why you would be pleased by all that. So first, I would like you to distinguish what the difference is between joy and sadness, both for Spinoza and necessarily for you? First, is Spinoza's distinction entirely yours? Did you find something there on the day you read of about that?

Deleuze: Ah yes, since these texts are the most extraordinarily charged with affect, in Spinoza. That comes down to saying -- to simplify greatly -- it comes down to saying that joy is everything that consists in fulfilling a power of action (*remplir une puissance*)... You experience joy when you fulfill it, when you realize one of your powers of action. So, what is that? Let's return to some earlier examples: I conquer, however little this might be, a small piece of color, I enter a little further into color. I think that is what joy might be. That's what fulfilling a power of action is, realizing (*effectuer*) a power of action, causing a power of action to be fulfilled. But it's the word *puissance* that is ambiguous.

What about the opposite, what is sadness? It occurs when one is separated from a power of action of which I believed myself, rightly or wrongly, to be capable: I could have done that, but circumstances didn't allow it, or it was forbidden, or etc. That's what sadness is, and one must say that all sadness is the effect of a power (*pouvoir*) over me.

[Change of cassette; director indicates that Parnet can continue; Deleuze sits smiling]

Parnet: No, but it's Gilles's turn to speak, he was talking about the... well, the opposition joy/sadness.

Deleuze: So I was saying that realizing the power of action of something is always good, that's what Spinoza said. Obviously, all this poses problems, more details are needed because there are no bad potentials; what is bad, one must say, is the lowest degree of power of action, and its lowest degree is power (*le pouvoir*). I mean, what is wickedness? It's preventing someone from doing that of which he/she is capable, wickedness is preventing someone from realizing one's power of action. Such that there is no bad power of action, only wicked powers... Maybe all power is wicked by its very nature, but perhaps not necessarily, maybe it's too easy to say that.

But it's indeed the idea of... the confusion between powers of action and powers is quite costly because power (*pouvoir*) always separates people who are subjected to it from what they are capable of doing. Spinoza started from this point, and you were saying that sadness is linked to priests, to tyrants...

Parnet: To judges...

Deleuze: ... to judges, and these are perpetually the people, right? who separate their subjects from what they are capable of doing, who forbid them from realizing powers of action. You alluded earlier, it was very curious, you alluded to the reputation of Nietzsche's anti-Semitism. There, we see quite well, because it's a very important question... There are texts of Nietzsche that are, in fact, quite disturbing, or that one might consider quite disturbing if they are read, in fact, in the manner mentioned earlier about reading philosophers, that is, if one reads them a bit too quickly.

What strikes me as curious is that in all the texts in which [Nietzsche] lashes out against the Jewish people, what does he reproach them for? And what made people then say, “Oh, he's anti-

Semitic,” etc.? What Nietzsche reproaches the Jewish people for is very interesting. Nietzsche reproaches them in quite specific conditions for having invented a character that had never existed before the Jewish people, the character of the priest. To my knowledge, never in any text by Nietzsche concerning Jews is there a general attack mode, but always an attack against the Jewish people-inventors of the priest. Although, according to him, in other social formations, there can be sorcerers, scribes, these are not at all the same as the priest. They made this astonishing invention, and Nietzsche, since he has great philosophical strength, Nietzsche never ceases to admire that which he detests... He says, it’s simply an incredible invention, to have invented the priest, it’s something quite astounding.

And this results in an immediate connection occurring between the Jews and Christians, but simply not the same type of priest. So, the Christians will conceive of another type of priest and will continue in the same path, with the character of the priesthood. This shows the extent to which philosophy is concrete. I mean that, I would say that Nietzsche is, to my knowledge, the first philosopher to have invented, created, the concept of the priest, and from that point onward, to have posed a fundamental problem: what does sacerdotal power consist of? What is the difference between sacerdotal power and royal power, etc.? This is a question that remains entirely actual. For example, shortly before his death, Foucault had fully discovered, and through his own means – and here, we could start all over from the beginning about what it means to continue, to extend philosophy, what does it mean to do philosophy? – Here, it’s with Foucault proposing pastoral power, a new concept that is not the same as Nietzsche’s, but that engages directly with Nietzsche, and in this way, one develops a history of thought.²²

So, what is this power of the priest, and how is it linked to sadness? According to Nietzsche, in any case, this priest is defined as follows: he invents the idea that men exist in a state of infinite debt, that they have infinite debt. Before, there were certainly stories about debt, it’s well known, but Nietzsche preceded ethnologists, and they would do well to read some Nietzsche. When the ethnologists discovered, well after Nietzsche, that in so-called primitive societies, there were exchanges of debt, and perpetually it did not function so much by exchange in kind (*trou*) as had been believed, things functioned through pieces of debt – a tribe that has a piece of debt vis-à-vis another tribe, etc. etc. ... Yes, but these were blocks of *finite* debt, they received and then gave it back. The difference with the exchange in kind is that there was time, the reality of time... It’s differed return (*du rendu différé*). This is immense since it suggests that debt was primary in relation to exchange. These are all properly philosophical problems – exchange, debt, debt that is primary in relation to exchange, it’s an enormous philosophical problem. I say “philosophical” because Nietzsche was talking about this well before the ethnologists.

In so far as debt exists in a finite regime, man can free himself from it. When the Jewish priest invokes the idea by virtue of an alliance of infinite debt between the Jewish people and their God, when the Christians adopt this in another form, the idea of infinite debt linked to original sin, this reveals the very curious character of the priest about which it is philosophy’s responsibility to create the concept. And as an atheist – if that happens to arise, I am not claiming that philosophy is necessarily atheist – and in the case of an author like Spinoza who had already outlined an analysis of the priest, of the Jewish priest, in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*... It happens that philosophical concepts are veritable characters, and that’s what makes philosophy so concrete. Creating the concept of the priest is like another kind of artist would create a painting of the priest, the portrait of the priest.²³

So, the concept of the priest pursued by Spinoza, and then by Nietzsche, and finally by Foucault forms an exciting lineage. I would like, for example, to link myself with this as well, to reflect a bit on this pastoral power, that some people say no longer functions. But, one would have to see how it has been taken up again, for example, psychoanalysis as the new avatar of pastoral power.

And how do we define it? Priests are not the same thing as tyrants, one mustn't mix everything up... but they at least have in common that they derive their power (*pouvoir*) from the sad passions that they inspire in men, of the sort: "Repent in the name of infinite debt, you are the objects of infinite debt," etc. It's through this that they have power (*pouvoir*), it's a source of power, it's always an obstacle blocking the realization of powers of action, whereas... I would say that all power is sad, even if those who have it seem to revel in having it, but it is still a sad joy. There *are* sad joys, and this is a sad joy.²⁴

On the other hand, joy is the realization (*effectuation*) of a power of action. I know of no powers of action that would be wicked. The typhoon is a power of action, it must delight in its soul, but... but it's not in destroying houses that it delights, it's in its being... Taking delight (*se réjouir*) is always delighting in being what one is, that is, in having reached where one is. Joy is not self-satisfaction, not some enjoyment of being pleased with oneself, not at all, not the pleasure of being happy with oneself. Rather, it's the pleasure in conquest (*conquête*), as Nietzsche said, but the conquest does not consist of enslaving people, conquest is, for example, for a painter to conquer color, yes, that's what a conquest is. That's what joy is, even if it goes badly because... in these stories of power of action, when one conquers a power of action, when one conquers something in a power of action, it happens that it is too strong for one's own self, so he will crack up (*donc il craquera*), Van Gogh.

[Change of cassette, "8-A"]

Parnet: So, a little question about something you said yesterday... You, who have been fortunate to escape from infinite debt, how is it that you complain from morning to night, [Deleuze smiles as she continues] and that you are the great advocate of the complaint (*plainte*) and the elegy?

Deleuze [rubbing his eyes]: This is a personal question. [He laughs] First, the elegy is one of the principal sources of poetry, it's the great complaint (*la grande plainte*). So, there is quite a bit... there is an entire history of the elegy to be done... I don't know if it already has been done but it's very interesting because there is the complaint of the prophet – the prophetism, the prophet is the one who complains/wails (*se plaint*), is the one who says, "Oh why did God choose me? What did I do to be chosen by God?" In a sense, it's the opposite of the priest.

So, he complains and complains about what occurs to him. It means: it overwhelms me, that's what the complaint is: what's happening to me overwhelms me. If one accepts that this is what the complaint is... It's not something we always see. It's not "ow ow ow, I'm in pain," although it could also be that, but the person complaining doesn't always know what he/she means. The elderly lady who complains about her rheumatism, she means, in fact, what power of action (*puissance*) is taking hold of my leg that is too great for me to stand it? It overwhelms me.

If we look at history, it's very interesting. The elegy, first, is a source of poetry, it's the only Latin poetry, the great Latin poets... I used to know them, I used to read them quite a bit, like Catullus, Tiberianus, they are astounding poets. And what is the elegy? I think that it's the expression of he/she who, temporarily or not, no longer has any social status. That's why it's interesting... A little old man (*un pauvre vieux*) complaining, sure ok... some guy in prison complains -- it's not sadness at all, but something quite different than making a demand (*la revendication*), there is something else in the complaint that is astonishing, there is an adoration in the complaint... The complaint is like a prayer.

So, popular complaints... One has to include everything in this: the complaint of the prophet, or something you are particularly interested in since you have worked on it so much -- the complaint of hypochondriacs. The hypochondriac is someone who complains, and the intensity of their

complaints is beautiful – why do I have a liver? why am I losing it? It's not even how much it's hurting me, it's why do I have it? why do I have organs? why am I... So, the complaint is sublime. And the popular complaint... The complaint of the assassin, the complaint that is sung by the people. I would say that it's the socially excluded who are in a situation of complaint. There is a Chinese specialist... He's not Chinese, but Hungarian, I think, called [Ferenc] Tökei, who prepared a study of the Chinese elegy, and he showed, as I recall it, that the Chinese elegy is enlivened above all by the person who no longer possesses a social status, i.e. the freed slave. A slave, however unfortunate he or she might be, still has a social status. He might be very unfortunate, might be beaten, whatever you like, but he still has a social status. When he is freed, there were periods when there was no social status for the freed slave. He is outside everything. It must have been something like at the liberation of American blacks with the abolition of slavery, or in Russia, when no statute had been foreseen. So they find themselves excluded, which has been interpreted stupidly as, "You see? you see? they are still being kept as slaves!" But they have no status and so are excluded from any community. Then the great complaint is born, Aie aie aie aie aie... However, it does not express the pain they have, but is a kind of chant/song (*chant*). This is why the complaint is a great poetic source.²⁵

If I hadn't been a philosopher and if I had been a woman, I would have wanted to be a wailer (*pleureuse*)... [Parnet laughs] The wailer is marvelous because the complaint rises and it's an art. And that also has this rather perfidious side as well, as if to say: don't take on my complaint, don't touch me. It's kind of like people who are too polite... For these too polite people, who would like to be more and more polite, it's: "don't touch me," so it's a kind of... And the complaint is the same thing: "don't feel sorry for me, I'm taking care of it." And in taking care of it for oneself, the complaint is transformed. Once again, it's: "what is happening to me overwhelms me." That's what the complaint is.

Now, I would like to say every morning, "what's happening to me overwhelms me," because this is joy. In some ways, this is joy in a pure state, but we are careful to hide it because there are people who aren't very pleased with someone being joyous, so you have to hide it in a kind of complaint. But this complaint is not only joy, it's also an incredible anxiety, in fact... realizing a power of action (*effectuer une puissance*), perhaps, but at what price? Am I going to risk my skin/life in this (*laisser ma peau*)? As soon as one realizes a power of action... I am speaking about things as simple as a painter taking on color, might he not be risking his skin/life? Literally, after all, I don't think it really is some literary invention (*faire de la littérature*) to say that the way Van Gogh went toward color is more connected to his madness than all these psychoanalytical stories. For color itself intervenes here in any case. Something risks getting broken, it overwhelms me, and that's what the complaint is, something overwhelms me, in misfortune or in happiness, but usually misfortune, but well, that's just a detail.

[Change of cassette]

"K as in Kant"

Parnet: So, K" is Kant. Of all the philosophers that you have written on, Kant seems the farthest from your own thought. However, you have said that all the authors you have studied have something in common. So, first of all, is there something in common between Kant and Spinoza, which is not at all obvious?

Deleuze [pauses]: I'd prefer, if I might dare, the first part of the question, that is, why I took on Kant, once we say simply that there is nothing in common between Kant and Spinoza, nothing in common

between Nietzsche and Kant although Nietzsche read Kant closely, but it's not the same conception of philosophy, it's not...

So why am I nonetheless so fascinated by Kant? For two reasons: Kant is present at so many turning points, and another reason: he initiates and then pushes something as far as possible (*pousse jusqu'au bout*), something that had never been advanced in philosophy. Specifically, he establishes tribunals (*il érige des tribunaux*), perhaps under the influence of the French Revolution.

Now, up to the present, one always tries, or I try, to talk about concepts as characters (*personnages*). So, before Kant, in the 18th century, there is a new kind of philosopher presented as an investigator (*enquêteur*), the investigation, *Investigation into Human Understanding* (*Enquête sur l'Entendement humain*), investigation of this, investigation of that. The philosopher saw himself to some extent as an investigator. Even in the 17th century, and Leibniz is no doubt the last representative of this tendency, he saw himself as a lawyer, defending a cause, and the greatest thing is that Leibniz pretended to be God's lawyer. So, there must have been things to reproach against God at the time, and [Leibniz] writes a marvelous little work, "God's Cause". He doesn't mean that God has a cause in the sense of [causation]... but God's juridical cause, God's cause to be defended.²⁶ So, it's like a sequence of characters -- the lawyer, the investigator -- and then with Kant, the arrival of a tribunal, a tribunal of reason, things being judged as a function of a tribunal of reason. And the faculties, in the sense of understanding -- the imagination, knowledge, morality -- are measured as a function of the tribunal of reason. Of course, he uses a certain method that he invented, an amazing method called the critical method, the properly Kantian method.

Now, I have to admit that all of this aspect of Kant almost makes me cringe in horror, but it's both horror and fascination, because he's so ingenious. If I say... if I return to the question... among the concepts that Kant invented, and Lord knows he invented them, there is concept of the tribunal of reason which is inseparable from the critical method. But finally, it's not... what I dream of, rather... This is a tribunal of judgment, it's the system of judgment, simply, a system of judgment that no longer needs God, a system of judgment based on reason, and no longer on God.²⁷

With all the writers that affect me -- we haven't considered this problem, but we can introduce it now, it will save us the trouble of returning to it, that will make... eh?

Parnet: Not at all?

Deleuze [smiling]: Maybe that will save us the trouble, it's... One can always wonder about this because there is something mysterious: why does someone, someone in particular, you or me, get connected to or identify (*se reconnaître*) especially with one kind of problem and not another? What is someone's affinity for a particular kind of problem? That seems to me to be one of the greatest mysteries of thought. A person might be fated for one problem since we don't take on just any problem. And this is true for researchers in the sciences, a person's affinity for a particular problem, but with some other problem, he just doesn't get involved. And philosophy is an aggregate of problems, with its own consistency, but it does not pretend to deal with all problems, thank God.

Well, I feel rather connected to problems that aim at seeking the means to do away with the system of judgment, and to replace it with something else. So there, we have the great names... Indeed, it's a different tradition. Yes, you were right when you said there's an opposition. I see Spinoza, I see Nietzsche, in literature I see [D.H.] Lawrence, and finally the most recent and one of the greatest writers, Artaud, his "To Have Done With the Judgment of God," which means something, not the words of a madman. We really have to take this literally: to have done with the system of judgment.²⁸

And underneath -- as always, it's like when I say that one has to look underneath concepts for problems -- and underneath, there are some astonishing problems posed by Kant, that are really

marvels. He was the first to have created an astonishing reversal of concepts. Here again, this is why I get so sad when people, even young people preparing the baccalaureate [French *lycée* diploma], are taught an abstract philosophy without even trying – perhaps it's not possible -- to have them participate in problems that are quite fantastic problems, equally yet differently interesting as ... I don't know exactly what.

I can say that, up until Kant, for example, time was derived from movement, it was second in relation to movement, it was considered to be a number of movement or a measure of movement. What does Kant do? However, he does it, there's the creation of a concept, and in all I am doing here, we never stop moving forward in considering what it means to create a concept. Kant creates a concept because he reverses the subordination. With him, it's movement that depends on time. And suddenly, time changes its nature, it ceases being circular. Because, when time is subordinate to movement (for reasons that would be too long [to explain]), finally the great movement is the periodic movement, it's the periodic movement of heavenly bodies (*des astres*), so the movement is circular. On the other hand, when time is freed from movement and it's movement that depends on time, then time becomes a straight line. And I always think of something that Borges said -- although he has little relation to Kant --, that a more frightening labyrinth than a circular labyrinth is a labyrinth in a straight line, marvelous, but it's Kant, it's Kant who lets time loose.

And then this story of the tribunal, measuring the role of each faculty as a function of a particular goal, that's what Kant collides with at the end of his life, as he is one of the rare philosophers to write a book as an old man that would renew everything,

Parnet: *The Critique of Judgment*.

Deleuze: *The Critique of Judgment*. He reaches the idea that the faculties must have disorderly relations with each other, that they collide with each other, and then reconcile with each other, but there is a battle of the faculties where there is no longer any standard (*mesure*), where they are no longer subject (*justiciable*) to a tribunal. He introduces his conception of the Sublime, in which the faculties enter into discordances, into discordant accords (*accords discordants*).²⁹ So, all that pleases me infinitely: these discordant accords, this labyrinth that is nothing more than a straight line, his reversal of relations... I mean that all modern philosophy flows forth from this point, that it's no longer time that depended on movement but rather that movement depended on time -- that's the creation of a fantastic concept. And the whole conception of the Sublime, with all the discordant accords of the faculties. I am enormously moved by these things.

So, what can one say? It's obvious that he's a great philosopher, a very great philosopher, and there is a whole substratum in his works that excites me enormously. And all that is built on top of this has no interest for me, but I don't judge it, it's just a system of judgment that I'd like to do away with, but without standing in judgment.

Parnet: What about Kant's life...

Deleuze: Oh, Kant's life...

Parnet: Because I have a quote from de Quincey...

Deleuze: That wasn't planned for our discussion.

Parnet: Yes it was!

[Change of cassette, "cassette 10-A"]

Parnet: There is another aspect of Kant's work that might also please you greatly, the aspect that Thomas De Quincey discussed [in *The Last Days of Immanuel Kant*], this fantastically regulated life full of habits, his little daily walk, the life of a philosopher that one might imagine mythically (*dans une vision d'Epinal*), something very special. And one thinks of this when one thinks about you, that is, something quite regulated, with an enormous number of habits,

Deleuze: Well, I think that..

Parnet: ...work habits, I mean...

Deleuze [smiling]: I do see what you mean, because De Quincey's text is one you find quite exciting, and so do I, it's a real masterpiece. But I see this aspect as belonging to all philosophers. They don't all have the same habits, but to say that they are creatures of habit seems to suggest that they don't know... It's obligatory, it's obligatory that they be creatures of habit, because in Spinoza... My impression of Spinoza is that there's not very much turbulent in his life, he polished his lenses, he was expected to polish his lenses, he received visitors...

Parnet: He earned his living polishing lenses...

Deleuze: So, it wasn't a very turbulent life except for certain political upheavals at that time, but Kant also lived through some very intense political upheavals. Thus, all that people say about Kant's clothing apparatuses, that he invented for himself a little machine to pull up – I don't know – his underwear, his stockings, etc., all that makes him extremely charming, if one needs that kind of thing.

But all philosophers... it's a bit like Nietzsche said, philosophers are generally chaste, poor, and Nietzsche adds, we simply guess at how philosophers make use of all of this, how they make use of this chastity, how they make use of this poverty, etc. Kant had his little daily walk, but that's nothing in itself. What happened during his little walk, what was he looking at? One would have to find out.

In the long run, that philosophers are creatures of habit... I think that habit, I am going to tell you, it means contemplating, it's the contemplation of something. Really, habit in the true sense of the term means contemplating. What did he contemplate during his walks? We don't know... As for my own habits, well, it's shameful, I mean... yes, ok, I have quite a few of them, these are contemplations, I get into contemplations... Sometimes these are things that I am alone in seeing, ok, that's what a habit is.

"L as in Literature"

Parnet: So, "L" is Literature.

Deleuze: "L"? We're moving on to "L"?

Parnet: Already!

Deleuze: Yes?

Parnet: So literature haunts your philosophy books and your life. And you read lots of books, and re-read them...

Deleuze: Yes, yes...

Parnet: ...books of what's called "great literature" (*la grande littérature*). You have always considered great literary writers as thinkers. Between your books on Kant and Nietzsche, you wrote *Proust and Signs*, it's a famous book, and then subsequently you enlarged it. Louis Carroll and Zola in *Logic of Sense*, Masoch, Kafka, British and American literatures -- and one sometimes gets the impression that it's through literature more than through the history of philosophy that you inaugurate a new kind of thinking. So, I would like to know first if you have always read copiously?

Deleuze: Yes, yes, yes. At one point, I was reading a lot more philosophy since that was part of my craft (*métier*), my apprenticeship, and I no longer had much time for novels. But great novels, I have read them throughout my life, and I read them more and more. So, is that useful for philosophy? Yes, certainly, I find it useful (*ça me sert*). For example, I owe an immense amount to Fitzgerald who is, nonetheless, not a very philosophical novelist, what I owe to Fitzgerald is immense. What I owe to Faulkner is enormous as well, and.... I forget here...

But all that is completely comprehensible by itself as a function of what we discussed earlier because we've made a lot of progress here -- and I'm sure that didn't escape you [Deleuze smiles]: it's this story that the concept is never alone. At the same time that the concept pursues its task, it makes us see things, that is, it's plugged into percepts, and all of sudden, one finds these percepts in a novel. There are perpetual communications from concepts to percepts. Moreover, there are also problems of style that are the same in philosophy and literature.

The great literary characters -- let's pose the question in very simple terms -- the great literary characters are great thinkers. I re-read Melville a lot, and it goes without saying that the Captain Ahab is a great thinker, it goes without saying that Bartleby is a thinker, not in the same way, but he's a thinker. In any case, they cause us to think in such way that a literary work traces as large a trail of intermittent concepts (*concepts en pointillé*) as it does percepts, certainly. Quite simply, it's not the task of the literary writer who cannot do everything at once, he/she is caught up in the problems of percepts, of creating visions (*faire voir*), causing perceptions (*faire percevoir*), and creating characters -- do you have any idea of what it is to create a character? It's something frightening. And a philosopher creates concepts, ok, but it happens that they communicate greatly since, in certain ways, the concept is a character, and the character takes on dimensions of the concept, I believe.³⁰

You know what I find in common? What these two grand activities have in common: "great literature" and "great philosophy" bear witness for life (*ils témoignent pour la vie*), what I was calling "power of action" (*puissance*) earlier, they bear witness for life. This is even the reason why [great authors] are not often in good health, except sometimes there are cases... Victor Hugo, ok... One must not say that all writers do not enjoy good health since many do. But why are there so many literary writers who do not enjoy good health? It's because he/she experiences a flood of life (*flot de vie*), that's why. To some extent, whether it's the weak health of Spinoza or the weak health of [D.H.] Lawrence, what is it?³¹ It corresponds almost to what I said earlier about the complaint: these writers have seen something that overwhelms them, they are seers, visionaries. They saw something that was too much for them, so they cannot handle it and it breaks them. Why is Chekhov broken to such an extent? He "saw" something. Philosophers and literary writers are in the same situation. There are things we manage to see, and in some ways, literally, we never recover, never return. This happens frequently for authors, but generally, these are precisely percepts at the edge of the bearable (*du*

soutenable), at the edge of the thinkable. So, between the creation of a great character and the creation of a concept, so many links exist that one can see it as constituting somewhat the same enterprise.³²

Parnet: Do you consider yourself to be a writer in philosophy, as one would say writer in a literary sense?

Deleuze: I don't know if I consider myself a writer in philosophy, but I know that every great philosopher is a great writer.

Parnet: There's no nostalgia for creating a great fictional work when one is a great philosopher? I'm referring to you...

Deleuze: No, for me, that does not even come up, it's as if you asked a painter why he doesn't create music. One could conceive of a philosopher who also wrote novels, of course, why not? Sartre to a stab at it...

Parnet: Bernard-Henri Lévy?

Deleuze [continuing with reference to Sartre]: ... that wasn't... I don't consider Sartre to have been a novelist, although he did try to be. Are there any great philosophers who were also important novelists? No, really, I can't think of any. But on the other hand, philosophers have created characters, it has happened: Plato created characters, eminently, and Nietzsche created characters, notably Zarathustra. So, these are intersections that are discussed constantly, and I consider the creation of Zarathustra to be an immense success poetically and literarily, just as Plato's characters were. These are points about which one cannot be completely certain whether they are concepts or characters, and these are perhaps the most beautiful moments.³³

[Change of cassette (11)]

Parnet: And your love for secondary literary authors, like Villiers de l'Isle-Adam or Restif de la Bretonne, have you always cultivated this affection?

Deleuze [Pause, covers his face with one hand]: I find it truly bizarre to hear Villiers referred to as a secondary author. [Deleuze laughs] If you consider that question... [He pauses, shrugging his shoulders] ... But there is something really shameful, entirely shameful: when I was quite young, I liked the idea of reading an author's work in its entirety, the complete works. As a result, I had great affection not for secondary authors, although that often coincided, but for authors who had written little. So it was because some things were too much for me, like Victor Hugo was so far beyond me that I was ready to say that Hugo wasn't a very good writer. On the other hand, I knew the works of Paul-Louis Courier nearly by heart at the time, completely, completely, although what he wrote really wasn't substantial. So yes, I had this penchant for so-called secondary authors, although Villiers is not a secondary author.

Parnet: Well, he is an author of great importance, but secondary in relation to his era in relation to the major writers.

Deleuze [interrupting]: Joubert, [Joseph] Joubert was also an author I knew completely, on the one hand because it – and this is really a shameful reason -- it gave me a certain prestige to be familiar

with authors that were unknown, or hardly known. But all that was a kind of mania, and it took me quite a while to learn just how great Hugo is, and that the size of his work was no measure. So, it's true that in so-called secondary literatures... It's true, it's true that so-called secondary authors... In Russian literature, for example, it's not limited to Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, but one dare not call [Nikolai] Leskov secondary since there is so much that is astonishing in Leskov. So, these are still great geniuses. I feel I have little to say on these points, but in any case, that's behind me now, this search for secondary writers. But what I am happy about is when I happen to find in an unknown author something that might show me a concept or an extraordinary character. But yes, I have not engaged in any systematic research [in this domain].

Parnet: But, other than your [book on] Proust, which is a sustained work on a single author, literature has such a presence in your philosophy, and one could say that, at the same time, [it's] also a reference for examples. But you never truly devoted a full-length book to literature, a reflective book (*livre de pensée*) on literature.

Deleuze: I just haven't had the time, but I plan to do so.

Parnet: I know that this has haunted you.

Deleuze: I plan to do so, I plan to do so because I want to.

Parnet: [A book] of criticism?

Deleuze: Of criticism... well, yes, well, on the problem of what "writing" means, for me, in literature. You are familiar with my whole [research] program, so we'll see if I have the time.³⁴

Parnet: Yes... [Pause] And I wanted to pose a final question: you read and re-read the classical authors, but one doesn't get the impression that you read many contemporary authors, or that you don't really like to discover contemporary literature, that is, that you always would prefer to select a great [canonic] author, or re-read one, than to see what is being published or whatever is directly contemporary for us.

Deleuze: It's not that I don't like... I understand what you mean here, and I can answer quickly: it's not at all that I don't like to read them. Rather it's such a truly specialized activity, and very difficult, in which one has to have training (*formation*). It's something very difficult in contemporary production to have the inclination (*goût*). It's just like some people finding new painters: in this as well, it's something that one has to learn about (*ça s'apprend*). I greatly admire people who go into galleries and feel that there is someone who is truly a painter there. But I simply cannot do this, I always am in need, I... [*Deleuze does not finish the sentence*]

To show how correct you are, it took me five years to understand even just a little the kind of innovation -- not for Beckett, that happened immediately -- the innovation of Robbe-Grillet's writing. I was as stupid as the stupidest [person] when talking about Robbe-Grillet when he started out. I understood absolutely nothing. It took me a long time, it took me five years. So, in this respect, I am not a discoverer, whereas in philosophy, I am more confident because I am sensitive to a new tone and what, on the other hand, is completely nil, repetition, and redundant statements, etc. In the [domain of the] novel, I am quite sensitive, I am sufficiently confident to know what has already been said a thousand times and is of no interest. It did happen to me one time, for Farrachi, I managed to discover

– at least in my own way -- someone I judged to be a very, very good young novelist, Armand Farrachi.³⁵

So, the question you raise is quite sound, but I answer by saying: one must not believe that, without experience, one can judge what is being created. I would almost say that what I prefer, something that happens and that brings me great joy, is when something that I am creating off on my own has an echo in a young writer's or a young painter's work. I am not saying that, for this reason, he is good and so am I. But this is how I have a kind of encounter with what is happening currently, that belongs to another mode [of creation]. I mean that my radical insufficiency as regards judgments is compensated by these encounters with people who are doing things that resonate with what I am doing, and inversely.

Parnet: But for you, painting and cinema, for example, these encounters take preference since you make an effort to go [to galleries and to the movies], whereas for bookstores, one would have trouble imagining you strolling into a bookstore and looking at books that just came out over the previous few months.

Deleuze: You are right, but this is perhaps linked to the idea that literature is not very strong at the moment -- an idea that is not in my mind, one that is not preconceived -- it's obvious that literature is not very strong at the moment, and that it is so corrupted – no need even to talk about all that – that it's corrupted by the system of distribution of literary prizes, etc., that it's not even worth the trouble.
[Deleuze begins smiling as he remains silent]

Parnet [With Deleuze still smiling at her]: Ok, we are going on to “M” since you don't want to say anything more.

[Change of cassette; “12-A”]

“M as in ‘Maladie’” (Illness)

Parnet: “M” is “Illness” (*maladie*).

Deleuze [almost whispering]: “Maladie”.

Parnet: At the very end of completing *Difference and Repetition* in 1968, you were hospitalized for a very severe case of tuberculosis. You who were saying, regarding Spinoza and Nietzsche, the extent to which great thinkers have a weak state of health, henceforth, from 1968 onward, you were forced to live with illness. Did you know for a while that you had tuberculosis, or did you know that your illness was there for a while?

Deleuze: An illness, yes, I knew that I had some illness for quite a while, but like a lot of people, I had no real desire to find out, and also like most people, I just assumed that obviously it was cancer, and so I wasn't in a big hurry. So, I did not know it was tuberculosis, not until I was spitting up blood. I am the child of someone with tuberculosis, but at the moment [of my diagnosis], there was no real danger thanks to antibiotics. It was serious, and ten years earlier, or even three years earlier – it was in the beginning -- a few years earlier, I might not have survived, whereas in 1968, it was no longer a problem. Moreover, it's an illness without much pain, and so I could say I was very ill, but it's a great privilege, an illness without pain and curable, without suffering, hardly an illness at all, though it is an illness, yes. Before it, my health was not all that great, I became fatigued easily.

So, is the question whether the illness makes it easier for someone who undertakes – I am not talking about the success of the undertaking -- for someone who undertakes, who enjoys an enterprise of thought, an attempt to think? And I think that a very weakened state of illness favors this. It's not that one is tuned in (*être à l'écoute*) to one's own life, but for me, thinking does seem like I am tuning into life. Now it's not what's going on inside you, tuning into life. It's something entirely different from thinking about one's own health. But I think a fragile state of health favors this kind of tuning-in. When I was speaking earlier about authors like Lawrence or Spinoza [see note 31], to some extent they saw something too enormous, so enormous that it overwhelmed them. It's true that one resists [*ne veut pas*] thinking if one isn't already in a domain which goes a bit beyond one's strength, that is, that makes one fragile. Indeed, I always had a fragile state of health, and this was confirmed from the moment I was diagnosed with tuberculosis, at which point I acquired all the rights accorded to a fragile state of health. Yes, it's precisely as you stated it.

Parnet: But your relations with doctors and drugs changed from that moment onward: you had to go see doctors, you had to take drugs regularly, and it was a constraint imposed on you, all the more so since you do not like doctors much.

Deleuze: Yes... Personally it's not a matter of individuals because I often come across, like everyone, some very charming doctors, delightful (*délicieux*), but it's a kind of power (*pouvoir*), or a way in which they handle power – here, once again, we return to questions previously discussed, as if half of the letters already discussed were encompassed and folded back upon the totality. I find it odious the way doctors manipulate power, and they are odious – *as doctors*, they are odious.

I have a great hatred, not for individual doctors – on the contrary, they can be charming --, but I have hatred for medical power and the way doctors use this medical power. There is only one thing that thrilled me – and at the same time, it displeased them – is when it would happen that they used their machines and tests on me. I consider these to be very unpleasant for a patient since you get the impression that these tests really seem completely useless, except to make the doctors feel better about or confirm their diagnoses. But if they are doctors with all this talent and they already have their diagnoses, and these cruel tests only serve to make them feel better, then they are playing with these tests in an inadmissible way.

So what made me quite happy was when, each time I had to be tested under one of their machines – that is, my breath was too weak to register on their machines, or they weren't able to give me a sonogram [*échographie*] – well, they couldn't give it to me because I passed under their machine, and to my complete delight, they just got furious with me. At these moments, I think they hate their poor patient, because they could accept quite easily the fact that their diagnosis might be wrong, but they cannot accept at all that their machine wouldn't work on me.

Otherwise, I consider them to be far too uncultivated, or when they attempt to be cultivated, the results are catastrophic. They are very strange people, doctors, but my consolation is that if they earn a lot of money, they don't have time really to spend it, they don't have the time to take advantage of it because they lead a very hard life. So, it's true, I do not find doctors very attractive, except for the individual personalities which can be quite exquisite. Yet they really treat people like dogs in their official functions. So, it really reveals class struggle because if one is a little bit wealthy, they are a lot more polite, except in surgery. Surgeons are a different case altogether. So, doctors really are a problem, and some kind of reform of doctors is needed.

Parnet: Do you have to take drugs all the time?

Deleuze: Yes, I like doing that, it doesn't bother me except that they tend to tire me out.

Parnet: You actually enjoy taking medicine?

Deleuze: When there's a lot, in my current state [in 1989], yes, because there are a lot. [Deleuze smiles] My little pile every morning is a real hoot (*bouffonnerie*)! But I also consider them to be quite useful. I can say that I have always been in favor of drugs, even in the domain of psychiatry, I have always been in favor of the pharmacy.

Parnet: And this fatigue that we have spoken about, which is very connected to your illness, and was even there already before the illness, one thinks, in fact, of Blanchot writing about fatigue or friendship.³⁶ [Deleuze rubs his face and eyes often as he answers and listens] Fatigue plays a great role in your life, that is, sometimes one gets the impression that it's an excuse for avoiding a lot of things that bore you, and that you use fatigue and that fatigue has always been very useful for you.

Deleuze: Well, here is what I think: when one is affected in this way – and here, we're returning to the theme of power of action (*puissance*), i.e., what it is to realize a little power of action, to do what one can do, use what is in power of action -- it's an awfully complicated notion. For, what strikes you with lack of power of action (*impuissance*), for example, a fragile health or an illness, it's a question of knowing what use to make of it so that, through it, one can recuperate a little power of action. So, I am certain that illness should be used for something, as everything else. I'm not only talking about in relation to life for which it should give one some feeling. For me, illness is not an enemy, not something that gives the feeling of death, but rather, something that sharpens the feeling of life, but not at all in the sense of "Oh, how I still want to live, and so once I'm cured, I'll start living." I cannot think of anything more abject in the world than what people call a *bon vivant*, it's abject. On the contrary, [people we call] *bon vivant* are men with very weak health. I return to my question: illness sharpens a kind of vision of life or a sense of life. When I say vision, vision of life, and life, it's in the sense of me saying "to see life," but it's crisscrossed by [life] (*traversé par elle*). All that [life] sharpens that, gives life a vision of life, illness does, life in all its force, in all its beauty. I am quite certain of this.

But how can one have secondary benefits from illness? That's quite simple: One has to use it, even in order to be a bit freer. One has to use it, otherwise it's very troublesome. That is, one works too hard, which is something one ought not to do. To work too hard -- if it's a question of working and to realize any power of action, then it's worth it. But working too hard socially, I don't get it, I don't get it. For a doctor to work too hard because he has too many patients... [Interruption of recording]

[Change of cassette (13)]

Deleuze: So, to realize a benefit, to gain a benefit from illness is, in fact, to free oneself from things that one cannot be free from in ordinary life. Personally, I never liked traveling, and I never was able, nor really knew how to travel, although I have great respect for travelers. But the fact that my health was so weakened insured my being able to decline invitations to travel. Or going to bed too late was always difficult for me, so once I had my fragile health, there was no longer any question of going to bed too late. I'm not talking about people closest to me in my life, but from social duties, illness is extraordinarily liberating, it's really good in that way.

Parnet: Do you enjoy being fatigued like being ill?

Deleuze: Fatigue is something else. For me, it means: I've done what I could today... I've done what I could today, that's it, the day is over. I see fatigue biologically as the day being done. It's possible that it could last further for other reasons, for social reasons, but fatigue is the biological formulation of the day being done, You won't be able to draw anything further from yourself. So, if you take it this way, it's not a bothersome feeling. It's unpleasant if one hasn't done anything, then indeed, it's quite agonizing, but otherwise, it's fine. It's to these states of fatigue, these flimsy, numb states (*états cotonneux*) that I have always been sensitive. This fuzzy fatigue, I like that state... I like that state, the end of something, and it probably has a name in music. I don't know how you would call it... A coda, fatigue as coda.

Parnet: I'd like us to talk a little bit, before discussing old age, your relationship to food which is quite special...

Deleuze [interrupting]: Ah! Old age... No? Not old age... fine, food...

Parnet: ... first, because you like food that seems to bring you strength and vitality, like marrow and lobster. You have a special relationship to food since you don't like eating, not really.

Deleuze: It's true. For me, eating is the most... If I tried to describe the quality of eating for me, it would be boredom. It's the most boring thing in the world. Drinking, well, that was "B", we already did that, but drinking is something extraordinarily interesting, but eating never interested me, it bores me to death. So, given that, eating alone... But eating with someone, well, that changes everything, but it does not transform the food, it only helps me stand eating, making it less boring even if it happens that I have really nothing to say. But eating alone, well, a lot of people are like that, everybody says that eating alone is boring, and it proves how boring eating is since most people admit that eating alone is an abominable task.

Having said this, I certainly have things I enjoy immensely (*mes fêtes*), that are rather special, to see the universal disgust that they.... But, after all, I can stand it when others eat cheese...

Parnet: Yes, you don't like cheese...

Deleuze: ... and for someone who hates cheese, I am one of the rare people to be tolerant, that is, not to get up and leave or throw the person out eating cheese. For me, the taste for cheese is a little like a kind of cannibalism, [Parnet laughs out loud] a total horror.

I imagine that someone might ask me what my favorite meal would be, an utterly crazy undertaking. It's true that I always come back to three things because they are three things that I always found sublime, but that are quite properly disgusting: tongue, brains, and marrow. I imagine that these are all quite nourishing. But there are a few restaurants in Paris that serve marrow, and after, I can eat nothing else. They prepare these little marrow squares, really quite fascinating... Brains, then tongue...

But if I tried to situate this taste in relation to things we've already discussed, it's a kind of trinity because one might say – all this is a bit too anecdotal – one might say that brains are God, that it's the father; that marrow is the son since it's linked to vertebrates that are little crabs. So, the little vertebrate crabs are the son, so the marrow is the son, Jesus, and tongue is the Holy Spirit, which is the very force of the tongue/language (*langue*). Or, that could also go, but here I don't know... It's the brain that is the concept, marrow is affect, and tongue, the percept. You really mustn't ask me why, it's just that I see that these trinities are very ... [He does not complete the sentence]

So, that's what would make a fantastic meal for me...

Parnet [interrupting]: And old age?

Deleuze [continuing]: Has it ever happened that I have had all three together at once? Maybe on a birthday with friends, [Parnet laughs] they might make me a meal like... [Deleuze smiles at Parnet], eh? a party (*fête*), a party... [He laughs, very amused]

Parnet: You can't be eating these three things at the same time since you are speaking to us about your old age.

Deleuze: Yes, that would be a bit much.

Parnet [laughing]: Every day, it's constant!

Deleuze: Ah, old age... Yes? There is someone who has spoken about old age very well, a novel by Raymond Devos. Of course, one can always say something else, but for me, he said it the best...³⁷ For me, I find old age to be a splendid age, truly splendid. Of course, there are a lot of difficulties (*embêtements*), one is overcome by a certain slowness. But the worst is when someone says to you, "No, you're not as old as all that," because he doesn't understand what the complaint is. I complain, I say, "Oh, I'm old," that is, I invoke the powers of action (*puissances*) of old age, the powers of action, but then somebody tries to cheer me up by saying, "No, you're not so old." So, then I smack him with my cane (*alors je vais lui foutre un coup de canne*). [Parnet laughs] I don't know what I'd do, because it's not a question of saying, while I'm here in my old age complaint, it's not a question of saying, "No, you're not all that old." On the contrary, it would be better just to say: "Yes!"

But it's pure joy, I mean, because where does that joy come from, through this bit of slowness? What's awful in old age – really, it's nothing to joke about – what's awful is pain and misery, but they are not old age. I mean, what makes old age pathetic, something sad, is these poor old people who do not have enough money to live, nor this minimum of health, not even this very weak health that I am talking about, and who suffer greatly. That's what is abominable, but it's not old age, it's not an illness at all. With enough money and a little bit of health remaining, old age is great. And why is it great? Because first, it's only in old age... First, one has reached it. It counts for something, just the fact of having reached it, after all, in a world that included wars and filthy viruses, one has crossed through all that, viruses, wars, filth (*saloperies*)... One made it [to old age].

And it's an age where the only point is being. No longer of being this or being that, but being... The old person is someone who just is, period, that's it. One can always say, "oh, he's grumpy, oh, he's in a bad mood," but quite simply, he just is. He has earned the right to be, period. For an elderly person can still say, "I have plans," but it's true and not true, not true in the way that someone who is thirty has plans. I do hope to complete the two books that I really am committed to, one on literature, another on philosophy, but that does not change the fact that I'm free of all plans. When one is old, one is no longer touchy (*susceptible*)...

[Change of cassette; "14-A"]

Deleuze: One is no longer thin-skinned, one no longer has any fundamental disappointments, one tends to be a lot more disinterested, and one really likes people for themselves. For me, it seems that it hones, for example, my perception of things that I wouldn't have seen before, elegant things (*des élégances*), to which I would never be sensitive. I see better because I look at someone else for him/herself almost as if it were a question of carrying away an image, a percept, a characteristic (*trait*),

a percept of the person. All that makes of old age... And days pass by with such a speed (*allure*) divided by fatigue periods. But fatigue is not an illness, but something else, not death, nor... Again, it's just the signal of day's end.

Of course, there are agonies in old age, but one has to ward them off, and it's easy to ward them off, a little like with loup-garous or vampires – besides, I like that [image] -- one mustn't be alone at night when it starts getting cold because one is too slow to survive. So, one has to avoid some things...

And what's marvelous is that people release you, society lets you go. Being released by society is so wonderful, not that society really had me in its grip, but someone who isn't my age, not retired, cannot suspect how much joy one can feel being released by society. Obviously, when I hear the elderly complaining, these are old people who don't want to be old or not as old as they are. They can't stand being retired, and I don't know why... They could just read a novel since they might discover something. I do not believe in retired people who cannot – well, except maybe in the case of the Japanese – who cannot find something to do. It's marvelous... People let go of you... So

Or else, one has to give oneself a shake (*se secouer*) so that all the parasites that one has on one's back the whole life through fall off, and what's left around you? Nothing but the people that you love and that support you and that love you, if they feel the need. The rest have let go of you. And what's really tough is when something catches hold of you again. I can't stand ... I no longer have... I only know society now through my life in retirement. I see myself as being completely unknown to society. So what's catastrophic is when someone who thinks I still belong to society asks me for an interview. This [*Abécédaire* filming] is different since what we're doing belongs entirely to my dream of old age. But when someone seeks an interview, a conversation, I would like to ask, are you nuts? (*ça va pas, la tête?*) Aren't you aware that I am old and society has let go of me? [Deleuze laughs]

But I think people confuse two things: one should not talk about the elderly, but about misery and suffering, for when one is old, miserable, and suffering, there is no word to describe it certainly. But otherwise, a pure elderly person (*un vieux pur*) who is nothing other than elderly means that one just is, yes.

Parnet: With you being ill, tired, and old, [Deleuze laughs] distinguishing the three things, it's sometimes difficult for people around you, who are less elderly, less ill, less tired, than you... your children, your wife.

Deleuze: For the children, the children, there's not much problem. There could have been if they were younger, but now since they're big enough to live on their own, and I'm not a burden for them, I don't think I create a huge problem, except perhaps in terms of affection, like them saying, "oh, he really looks too tired." But still, I don't think there's any acute problem for the children. As for Fanny, I don't think it's a problem either, although it could be, I don't know. It's quite difficult to guess what someone that one loves might have done in another life. I guess that Fanny would have liked to travel more, yes, ok... She surely hasn't traveled like she might have wanted to, but I wonder what she would have discovered so different if she had traveled. She, and you too, have a strong literary background, so she was able to find splendid things through reading novels, and that largely equals traveling. Certainly, there are problems, but I would say that they are beyond my understanding.

Parnet: To finish up, your projects... Like you undertake the one, your next book, on the history of literature, or the final book, *What Is Philosophy?*, what do you find enjoyable in undertaking these as an old man because earlier you said that perhaps you won't finish them, but that there is something amusing in them?

Deleuze: Ah, that's something quite marvelous, you know, there is a whole evolution, and when one is old, one has a certain idea of what one hopes to do that becomes increasingly pure, I mean, that becomes more and more purified (*épuré*). I conceive of the famous lines of Japanese sketch artists (*dessinateurs*), these lines that are so pure and then there is nothing, nothing but little lines. That's how I conceive of an old man's project, something that would be so pure, so nothing, and at the same time, it would be everything, marvelous. I mean this is reaching a sobriety, something that can only come late in life.³⁸

For example, *What is Philosophy?*, my research on it: first, it's quite enjoyable (*très gai*) at my age to feel like I know the answer, and like I'm the only one to know, as if I got on a bus, nobody else there could know what philosophy is. [Parnet laughs] All of this, for me, is very enjoyable. Perhaps I could have created a book on *What is Philosophy?* thirty years ago, I know that it would have been a very, very different book from the way I conceive it now. To arrive at a kind of sobriety such that... whether I succeed or not – I know that it's now that I have to conceive of this, that before I couldn't have done it, but now I see myself able to do it, to do something, in any case, that doesn't resemble ... ok...

[Deleuze does not finish the sentence; freeze frame of Deleuze, end of Part 2, credits roll]

Notes

¹ On revolutions and history, see Deleuze, *Negotiations* 152-153. See also Deleuze's essay against the French *nouveaux philosophes*, "A propos des nouveaux philosophes et d'un problème plus général" (1977). Deleuze comments briefly on the "new philosophers" (among whom are Bernard-Henri Lévy and André Glucksmann) in a 1988 interview, contemporary with the *Abécédaire*, reprinted in *Negotiations*: "If *Anti-Oedipus* seeks to criticize psychoanalysis, it's in terms of a conception of the unconscious that, whether right or wrong, is set out in the book. Whereas the new philosophers, denouncing Marx, don't begin to present any new analysis of capital, which mysteriously drops out of consideration in their work; they just denounce the Stalinist political and ethical consequences they take to follow from Marx. They're more like the people who attributed immoral consequences to Freud's work: it's nothing to do with philosophy" (145).

² On culturally rich and poor periods, see Deleuze, *Negotiations* 26-27.

³ This is a reference to the First Nagorno-Karabakh War, an ethnic and territorial conflict occurring between February 1988 and May 1994, in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in southwestern Azerbaijan, between the majority ethnic Armenians backed by Armenia, and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

⁴ On rights and jurisprudence, see Deleuze, *Negotiations* 152-154. Deleuze refers to jurisprudence several times in the seminars, notably Cinema 4 session 10 (22 January 1985) and Foucault session 10 (14 January 1986), and with specific reference to taxis, in Cinema 2 session 21 (May 24, 1983) and Leibniz and the Baroque session 15 (April 28, 1987). The reference to the Armenian earthquake indicates that this interview took place after that event on 7 December 1988, since "G as in *Gauche*" was filmed at the end of the first day of production, indicated both by Boutang's comment in the transition to the final cassette of the day, and by the change of clothing and setting that occurs between "G" and "H".

⁵ On May 1968, see Deleuze, *Negotiations* 144-145.

⁶ On Deleuze and Guattari as Marxists, see Deleuze, *Negotiations* 171-172.

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari use the same terms in distinguishing "majority" from "minority" in *A Thousand Plateaus* 104-106.

⁸ On this important question by Spinoza, see Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, chapters 14-16.

⁹ See Deleuze, *Francis Bacon. Logique de la sensation*, ch. XV, for more extensive discussion of Van Gogh's correspondence.

¹⁰ On philosophy as portraiture, see Deleuze, *Negotiations* 135-136.

¹¹ See Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* Ch.1, for their development of this line of thought.

¹² Deleuze develops these reflections in chapter 1 of *What Is Philosophy?*, and returns to them several times in the seminars; see session 7 on Painting (March 26, 1981); session 11 in Cinema seminar II (February 22, 1983); sessions 8 and 11 of seminar on Foucault (December 17, 1985, and January 21, 1986); and in the seminar on Leibniz and the Baroque, session 4 (December 16, 1986) and session 14 (April 7, 1987).

¹³ On the relation of ideas and claimants, see Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 9-10.

¹⁴ On opinions and their relation to philosophy, see *What Is Philosophy?* 144-148.

¹⁵ Deleuze considers the question of philosophy as creation of concepts and constitution of problems in several seminars, notably, Cinema seminar I, session 18, May 11, 1982; Cinema seminar III, session 18, May 15, 1984; on Foucault, session 25, May 27, 1986; on Leibniz and the Baroque, session 15, 28 April 1987; and also in the same semester, Deleuze's conference at FEMIS, "What is the Creative Act?" March 17, 1987.

¹⁶ This is precisely the topic of the FEMIS conference (previous note) in which Deleuze asks what it means to have an idea in philosophy or cinema.

¹⁷ On Minnelli and color in cinematography, see Deleuze's *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image* 118-119; on musical comedy and dance, see *Cinema 2. The Time-Image* 61-64, where Deleuze names both Fred Astaire, in "Yolande and the Thief" (1945), and Gene Kelly, in "The Pirate" (1948, with Judy Garland). See also Cinema seminar III, session 19 (May 22, 1984).

¹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari develop what follows in *What is Philosophy?*, chapters 5, 6, and 7, although in considerably modified form.

¹⁹ On Cézanne and Impressionism, see Deleuze, *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation* trans. Daniel W. Smith (New York and London: Continuum, 2002), 35.

²⁰ Parting with Martin Joughin's practice in Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, I translate the word *puissance* not simply as "power," but as "power in action" which Deleuze elsewhere distinguishes from *pouvoir*, "power". Deleuze himself admits in the interview that this is a difficult distinction; see Joughin's translators notes, 407-408. On affect and joy/sadness in Spinoza, see also chapter 15, and Deleuze, "Spinoza and the Three 'Ethics'," *Essays Critical and Clinical* 138-151, in which *puissance* is translated as "power". See also the discussion of the joy/sadness distinction in the Spinoza seminar, notably sessions 00 (January 24, 1978), 3 (December 9, 1980), 7 (January 20, 1981), 9 (February 3, 1980), and 14 and 15 (March 24 and 21, 1981).

²¹ On the history of burlesque and – yes – on the ideas of Jerry Lewis and Jacques Tati, see *Cinema 2. The Time-Image* 64-67. See also several sessions within the seminars, notably Cinema I, session 18 (May 11, 1982), Cinema II, session 5 (December 13, 1982), and especially Cinema III, sessions 9 and 10 (January 24 and 31, 1984).

²² On "pastoral power" in Foucault, see definition in lecture given by Foucault in Japan, in 1978 (*Dits et écrits* III: 548-550, 560-566) and 1979 (*Dits et écrits* IV: 134-149), in a 1982 essay (*Dits et écrits* IV: 229-232), and in a related interview from 1983 (*Dits et écrits* IV: 409, 645). The latter interview is published in *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth* 235-280, and relates to volumes 2, 3, and especially 4 in Foucault's project of *The History of Sexuality*. See also the Foucault seminar, session 10 (January 14, 1986).

²³ Clearly, Deleuze is developing here the concept of "conceptual persona" that he and Guattari propose in *What Is Philosophy?*, ch. 3. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the importance of debt in the symbolic order (see chapter III) and refer to Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* as the "great modern book of ethnology" (190).

²⁴ On Nietzsche, Foucault, and power, see Deleuze, *Negotiations* 116-118. On joy and sadness, see Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, chapter 15.

²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari refer to Tōkei in this same context in *A Thousand Plateaus* (449, 569, note 9), saying that it was he who "formulated the problem of an origin of private property in the most serious way," and who suggests that the lamentations of "freed slaves" who have no place "are heard the length and breadth of the Chinese Empire: the plaint (elegy) has always been a political factor" (449; cf. Tōkei 1979). Deleuze addresses these points specifically at length, and with reference to Tōkei, in the seminar on *A Thousand Plateaus* V, sessions 5 through 8 (15, 22, and 29 January and 5 February, 1980); he also addresses the question of American freed slave in session 12 (19 March 1980).

²⁶ Deleuze explores this text by Leibniz in the seminar on Leibniz and the Baroque, sessions 10 and 11 (February 24 and March 3, 1987). See also *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque* 152, note 21, and 153, note 37.

²⁷ On tribunals in Kant, see Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 72.

²⁸ Deleuze chooses this title to discuss judgment in Nietzsche, D.H. Lawrence, and Artaud, in “To Have Done With Judgment,” *Essays Critical and Clinical* 126-135. Of course, not only does Deleuze devote a seminar to Kant (4 sessions, March-April 1978), he refers frequently to Kant throughout the seminars, notably in the first seminar on Leibniz, sessions 4 & 5 (May 6 & 20, 1980), the first Painting session (31 March 1981), Cinema seminar II, sessions 11, 16, 18, & 20 (February 22, April 12 and 26, May 17, 1983), Cinema seminar III, sessions 5, 8 & 16 (December 13, 1983, January 17 and April 17, 1984), Cinema seminar IV, sessions 2, 3, 10, 13 & 19 (November 6 and 13, 1984, January 22, February 26, April 23, 1985), the Foucault seminar, sessions 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14 (November 19 & 26 and December 10, 1985, January 7, February 25, March 4, 1986), and the seminar on Leibniz and the Baroque, sessions 6 & 15 (January 13 and April 18, 1987).

²⁹ On “time out of joint” and “discordant accords” in Kant, see Deleuze, “On Four Poetic Formulas That Might Summarize the Kantian Philosophy,” *Essays Critical and Clinical* 27-35, and chapter 3 of Deleuze, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*.

³⁰ On percepts and the novel, see Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 168-177.

³¹ Deleuze refers intermittently to “Lawrence” without distinguishing D.H. and T.E. While one might take this reference to be to T.E. since Deleuze associates him with Spinoza in “The Shame and the Glory: T.E. Lawrence,” *Essays Critical and Clinical* 123, it is quite acceptable, as Daniel Smith suggests, to link a “fragile personal life” to “Spinoza’s frailty, D.H. Lawrence’s hemoptysis, Nietzsche’s migraines, [and] Deleuze’s own respiratory ailments,” (*Essays Critical and Clinical*, xiv).

³² On health of writers, see Deleuze, *Negotiations* 142-143, and in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, especially “Literature and Life”.

³³ On conceptual personae and philosophy, see *What Is Philosophy?* 64-70.

³⁴ Clearly Deleuze refers here to what will appear in 1993 as *Critique et clinique*.

³⁵ 55/ In “Introduction: Rhizome” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to Farachi’s book, *La Dislocation*, as an example (among several others) of a model of nomadic and rhizomatic writing (23-24).

³⁶ On the distinction between fatigue and exhaustion, especially in Beckett, see Deleuze, “The Exhausted,” *Essays Critical and Clinical* 152-174. On fatigue as contemplation and repetition, see *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 77.

³⁷ A Devos sketch to which Deleuze may refer has as title “S’arrêter de vieillir” [Stopping one’s aging] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4s2ZKg2an0>, accessed 15 April 2026), with one of Devos’s famous lines is: “It’s not just tobacco that’s toxic. Old age as well, it’s dangerous”. In his *Dialogues* with Parnet, Deleuze offers another definition of old age. Speaking about the question of speed, he says: “Children go fast because they know how to glide in between. Fanny [Deleuze] imagines the same thing of old age: there is also an old-becoming which defines successful old ages, that is, an ageing-quick which is opposed to the ordinary impatience of old people, to their despotism, to their evening-anxiety (cf. the nasty phrase, ‘life is too short’). Ageing quick, according to Fanny, is not to age precociously, on the contrary, it would be that patience which really allows the grasping of all the speeds which pass”, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 32.

³⁸ See the opening pages of *What Is Philosophy?* for Deleuze and Guattari’s reflections on this question of sobriety, 1-2. See also “S as in Style”.