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*Difference and Repetition*

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## *Introduction:*

### *Repetition and Difference*

Repetition is not generality. Repetition and generality must be distinguished in several ways. Every formula which implies their confusion is regrettable: for example, when we say that two things are as alike as two drops of water; or when we identify 'there is only a science of the general' with 'there is only a science of that which is repeated'. Repetition and resemblance are different in kind - extremely so.

Generality presents two major orders: the qualitative order of resemblances and the quantitative order of equivalences. Cycles and equalities are their respective symbols. But in any case, generality expresses a point of view according to which one term may be exchanged or substituted for another. The exchange or substitution of particulars defines our conduct in relation to generality. That is why the empiricists are not wrong to present general ideas as particular ideas in themselves, so long as they add the belief that each of these can be replaced by any other particular idea which resembles it in relation to a given word. By contrast, we can see that repetition is a necessary and justified conduct only in relation to that which cannot be replaced. Repetition as a conduct and as a point of view concerns non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities. Reflections, echoes, doubles and souls do not belong to -the domain of resemblance or equivalence; and it is no more possible to exchange one's soul than it is to substitute real twins for one another. If exchange is the criterion of generality, theft and gift are those of repetition. There is, therefore, an economic difference between the two.

To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent. And perhaps this repetition at the level of external conduct echoes, for its own part, a more secret vibration which animates it, a more profound, internal repetition within the singular. This is the apparent paradox of festivals: they repeat an 'unrepeatable'. They do not add a second and a third time to the first, but carry the first time to the 'nth' power. With respect to this power, repetition interiorizes and thereby reverses itself: as Peguy says, it is not Federation Day which commemorates or represents the fall of the Bastille, but the fall of the Bastille which celebrates and repeats in advance all the Federation Days; or Monet's first water lily which repeats all the others. 1 Generality, as generality of the particular, thus stands opposed to repetition as universality of the singular. The repetition of a work of art is like a singularity without concept, and it is not by chance that a poem must be

learned by heart. The head is the organ of exchange, but the heart is the amorous organ of repetition. (It is true that repetition also concerns the head, but precisely because it is its terror or paradox.) Pius Servien rightly distinguished two languages: the language of science, dominated by the symbol of equality, in which each term may be replaced by others; and lyrical language, in which every term is irreplaceable and can only be repeated. Repetition can always be 'represented' as extreme resemblance or perfect equivalence, but the fact that one can pass by degrees from one thing to another does not prevent their being different in kind.

On the other hand, generality belongs to the order of laws. However, law determines only the resemblance of the subjects ruled by it, along with their equivalence to terms which it designates. Far from grounding repetition, law shows, rather, how repetition would remain impossible for pure subjects of law - particulars. It condemns them to change. As an empty form of difference, an invariable form of variation, a law compels its subjects to illustrate it only at the cost of their own change. No doubt there are as many constants as variables among the terms designated by laws, and as many permanences and perseverations as there are fluxes and variations in nature. However, a perseveration is still not a repetition. The constants of one law are in turn variables of a more general law, just as the hardest rocks become soft and fluid matter on the geological scale of millions of years. So at each level, it is in relation to large, permanent natural objects that the subject of a law experiences its own powerlessness to repeat and discovers that this powerlessness is already contained in the object, reflected in the permanent object wherein it sees itself condemned. Law unites the change of the water and the permanence of the river. Elie Faure said of Watteau: 'He imbued with the utmost transitoriness those things which our gaze encounters as the most enduring, namely space and forests.' This is the eighteenth-century method. Wolmar, in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, made a system of it: the impossibility of repetition, and change as a general condition to which all particular creatures are subject by the law of Nature, were understood in relation to fixed terms (themselves, no doubt, variables in relation to other permanences and in function of other, more general laws). This is the meaning of the grove, the grotto and the 'sacred' object. Saint-Preux learns that he cannot repeat, not only because of his own change and that of Julie, but also because of the great natural permanences, which assume a symbolic value and exclude him no less from true repetition. If repetition is possible, it is due to miracle rather than to law. It is against the law: against the similar form and the equivalent content of law. If repetition can be found, even in nature, it is in the name of a power which affirms itself against the law, which works underneath laws, perhaps superior to laws. If repetition exists, it expresses at once a singularity opposed to the general, a universality opposed to the particular, a distinctiveness opposed to the ordinary, an instantaneity opposed to variation

and an eternity opposed to permanence. In every respect, repetition is a transgression. It puts law into question, it denounces its nominal or general character in favour of a more profound and more artistic reality.

From the point of view of scientific experiment, it seems difficult to deny a relationship between repetition and law. However, we must ask under what conditions experimentation ensures repetition. Natural phenomena are produced in a free state, where any inference is possible among the vast cycles of resemblance: in this sense, everything reacts on everything else, and everything resembles everything else (resemblance of the diverse with itself). However, experimentation constitutes relatively closed environments in which phenomena are defined in terms of a small number of chosen factors (a minimum of two - for example, Space and Time for the movement of bodies in a vacuum). Consequently, there is no reason to question the application of mathematics to physics: physics is already mathematical, since the closed environments or chosen factors also constitute systems of geometrical co-ordinates. In these conditions, phenomena necessarily appear as *equal* to a certain quantitative relation between the chosen factors. Experimentation is thus a matter of substituting one order of generality for another: an order of equality for an order of resemblance. Resemblances are unpacked in order to discover an equality which allows the identification of a phenomenon under the particular conditions of the experiment. Repetition appears here only in the passage from one order of generality to another, emerging with the help of - or on the occasion of - this passage. It is as if repetition momentarily appeared between or underneath the two generalities. Here too, however, there is a risk of mistaking a difference in kind for a difference of degree. For generality only represents and presupposes a hypothetical repetition: 'given the same circumstances, then...'. This formula says that in similar situations one will always be able to select and retain the same factors, which represent the being-equal of the phenomena. This, however, does not account for what gives rise to repetition, nor for what is categorical or important for repetition in principle (what is important in principle is 'n' times as the power of a single time, without the need to pass through a second or a third time). In its essence, repetition refers to a singular power which differs in kind from generality, even when, in order to appear, it takes advantage of the artificial passage from one order of generality to another.

Expecting repetition from the law of nature is the 'Stoic' error. The wise must be converted into the virtuous; the dream of finding a law which would make repetition possible passes over to the moral sphere. There is always a task to recommence, a fidelity to be revived within a daily life indistinguishable from the reaffirmation of Duty. Biichner makes Danton say:

'It is so wearisome. First you put on your shirt, then your trousers; you drag yourself into bed at night and in the morning drag yourself out again; and always you put one foot in front of the other. There is little hope that it will ever change. Millions have always done it like that and millions more will do so after us. Moreover, since we're made up of two halves which both do the same thing, everything's done twice. It's all very boring and very, very sad.'<sup>3</sup>

However, what good is moral law if it does not sanctify reiteration, above all if it does not make reiteration possible and give us a legislative power from which we are excluded by the law of nature? Moralists sometimes present the categories of Good and Evil in the following manner: every time we try to repeat according to nature or as natural beings (repetition of a pleasure, of a past, of a passion) we throw ourselves into a demonic and already damned exercise which can end only in despair or boredom. The Good, by contrast, holds out the possibility of repetition, of successful repetition and of the spirituality of repetition, because it depends not upon a law of nature but on a law of duty, of which, as moral beings, we cannot be subjects without also being legislators. What is Kant's 'highest test' if not a criterion which should decide what *can* in principle be reproduced -in other words, what can be repeated without contradiction in the form of moral law? The man of duty invented a 'test' of repetition; he decided what in principle could be repeated. He thought he had thereby defeated both the demonic and the wearisome. Moreover, as an echo of Danton's concerns or a response to them, is there not a moralism in that repetition apparatus described with such precision by Kant's biographers, right down to the astonishing garters that he made for himself, and the regularity of his daily promenades (in the sense that neglecting one's toilet and missing exercise are among those conducts whose maxim cannot, without contradiction, be regarded as a universal law, nor, therefore, be the object of rightful repetition)?

Conscience, however, suffers from the following ambiguity: it can be conceived only by supposing the moral law to be external, superior and indifferent to the natural law; but the application of the moral law can be conceived only by restoring to conscience itself the image and the model of the law of nature. As a result, the moral law, far from giving us true repetition, still leaves us in generality. This time, the generality is not that of nature but that of habit as a second nature. It is useless to point to the existence of immoral or bad habits: it is the form of habit - or, as Bergson used to say, the habit of acquiring habits (the whole of obligation) - which is essentially moral or has the form of the good. Furthermore, in this whole or generality of habit we again find the two major orders: that of resemblance, in the variable conformity of the elements of action with a given model in so far as the habit has not been acquired; and that of

equivalence, with the equality of the elements of action in different situations once the habit has been acquired. As a result, habit never gives rise to true repetition: sometimes the action changes and is perfected while the intention remains constant; sometimes the action remains the same in different contexts and with different intentions. There again, if repetition is possible, it would appear only between or beneath the two generalities of perfection and integration, testifying to the presence of a quite different power, at the risk of overturning these two generalities.

If repetition is possible, it is as much opposed to moral law as it is to natural law. There are two known ways to overturn moral law. One is by ascending towards the principles: challenging the law as secondary, derived, borrowed or 'general'; denouncing it as involving a second-hand principle which diverts an original force or usurps an original power. The other way, by contrast, is to overturn the law by descending towards the consequences, to which one submits with a too-perfect attention to detail. By adopting the law, a falsely submissive soul manages to evade it and to taste pleasures it was supposed to forbid. We can see this in demonstration by absurdity and working to rule, but also in some forms of masochistic behaviour which mock by submission. The first way of overturning the law is ironic, where irony appears as an art of principles, of ascent towards the principles and of overturning principles. The second is humour, which is an art of consequences and descents, of suspensions and falls. Must we understand that repetition appears in both this suspense and this ascent, as though existence recommenced and 'reiterated' itself once it is no longer constrained by laws? Repetition belongs to humour and irony; it is by nature transgression or exception, always revealing a singularity opposed to the particulars subsumed under laws, a universal opposed to the generalities which give rise to laws.

There is a force common to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. (Peguy would have to be added in order to form the triptych of priest, Antichrist and Catholic. Each of the three, in his own way, makes repetition not only a power peculiar to language and thought, a superior pathos and pathology, but also the fundamental category of a philosophy of the future. To each corresponds a Testament as well as a Theatre, a conception of the theatre, and a hero of repetition as a principal character in this theatre: Job-Abraham, Dionysus-Zarathustra, Joan of Arc-Clio). What separates them is considerable, evident and well-known. But nothing can hide this prodigious encounter in relation to a philosophy of repetition: *they oppose repetition to all forms of generality*. Nor do they take the word 'repetition' in a metaphorical sense: on the contrary, they have a way of taking it literally and of introducing it into their style. We can - or rather, must - first of all list the principal propositions which indicate the points on which they coincide:

1. Make something new of repetition itself: connect it with a test, with a selection or selective test; make it the supreme object of the will and of freedom. Kierkegaard specifies that it is not a matter of drawing something new from repetition, of extracting something new from it. Only contemplation or the mind which contemplates from without 'extracts'. It is rather a matter of acting, of making repetition as such a novelty; that is, a freedom and a task of freedom. In the case of Nietzsche: liberate the will from everything which binds it by making repetition the very object of willing. No doubt it is repetition which already binds; but if we die of repetition we are also saved and healed by it - healed, above all, by the other repetition. The whole mystical game of loss and salvation is therefore contained in repetition, along with the whole theatrical game of life and death and the whole positive game of illness and health (cf. Zarathustra ill and Zarathustra convalescent by virtue of one and the same power which is that of repetition in the eternal return).

2. In consequence, oppose repetition to the laws of nature. Kierkegaard declares that he does not speak at all of repetition in nature, of cycles and seasons, exchanges and equalities. Furthermore, if repetition concerns the most interior element of the will, this is because everything *changes* around the will, in accordance with the law of nature. According to the law of nature, repetition is impossible. For this reason, Kierkegaard condemns as aesthetic repetition every attempt to obtain repetition from the laws of nature by identifying with the legislative principle, whether in the Epicurean or the Stoic manner. It will be said that the situation is not so clear with Nietzsche. Nietzsche's declarations are nevertheless explicit. If he discovers repetition in the *Physis* itself, this is because he discovers in the *Physis* something superior to the reign of laws: a will willing itself through all change, a power opposed to law, an interior of the earth opposed to the laws of its surface. Nietzsche opposes 'his' hypothesis to the cyclical hypothesis. He conceives of repetition in the eternal return as Being, but he opposes this being to every legal form, to the being-similar as much as to the being-equal. How could the thinker who goes furthest in criticising the notion of law reintroduce eternal return as a law of nature? How could such a connoisseur of the Greeks be justified in regarding his own thought as prodigious and new, if he were content to formulate that natural platitude, that generality regarding nature well known to the Ancients? On two occasions, Zarathustra corrects erroneous interpretations of the eternal return: with anger, directed at his demon ('Spirit of Gravity ... do not treat this too lightly'); with kindness, directed at his animals ('O buffoons and barrel-organs ... you have already made a refrain out of it'). The refrain is the eternal return as cycle or circulation, as being-similar and being-equal -in short, as natural animal certitude and as sensible law of nature.

3. Oppose repetition to moral law, to the point where it becomes the suspension of ethics, a thought beyond good and evil. Repetition appears

as the logos of the solitary and the singular, the logos of the 'private thinker'. Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche develop the opposition between the private thinker, the thinker-comet and bearer of repetition, and the public professor and doctor of law, whose second-hand discourse proceeds by mediation and finds its moralising source in the generality of concepts (cf. Kierkegaard against Hegel, Nietzsche against Kant and Hegel; and from this point of view, Peguy against the Sorbonne). Job is infinite contestation and Abraham infinite resignation, but these are one and the same thing. Job challenges the law in an ironic manner, refusing all second-hand explanations and dismissing the general in order to reach the most singular as principle or as universal. Abraham submits humorously to the law, but finds in that submission precisely the singularity of his only son whom the law commanded him to sacrifice. As Kierkegaard understands it, repetition is the transcendent correlate shared by the psychical intentions of contestation and resignation. (We rediscover the two aspects in Peguy's doubling of Joan of Arc and Gervaise.) In Nietzsche's striking atheism, hatred of the law and *amor fati* (love of fate), aggression and acquiescence are the two faces of Zarathustra, gathered from the Bible and turned back against it. Further, in a certain sense one can see Zarathustra's moral test of repetition as competing with Kant. The eternal return says: whatever you will, will it in such a manner that you also will its eternal return. There is a 'formalism' here which overturns Kant on his own ground, a test which goes further since, instead of relating repetition to a supposed moral law, it seems to make repetition itself the only form of a law beyond morality. In reality, however, things are even more complicated. The form of repetition in the eternal return is the brutal form of the immediate, that of the universal and the singular reunited, which dethrones every general law, dissolves the mediations and annihilates the particulars subjected to the law. Just as irony and black humour are combined in Zarathustra, so there is a within-the-law and a beyond-the-law united in the eternal return.

4. Oppose repetition not only to the generalities of habit but also to the particularities of memory. For it is perhaps habit which manages to 'draw' something new from a repetition contemplated from without. With habit, we act only on the condition that there is a little Self within us which contemplates: it is this which extracts the new - in other words, the general - from the pseudo-repetition of particular cases. Memory, then, perhaps recovers the particulars dissolved in generality. These psychological movements are of little consequence: for both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard they fade away in the face of repetition proposed as the double condemnation of habit and memory. In this way, repetition is the thought of the future: it is opposed to both the ancient category of reminiscence and the modern category of *habitus*. It is in repetition and by repetition that Forgetting becomes a positive power while the unconscious becomes a

positive and superior unconscious (for example, forgetting as a force is an integral part of the lived experience of eternal return). Everything is summed up in power. When Kierkegaard speaks of repetition as the second power of consciousness, 'second' means not a second time but the infinite which belongs to a single time, the eternity which belongs to an instant, the unconscious which belongs to consciousness, the 'nth' power. And when Nietzsche presents the eternal return as the immediate expression of the will to power, will to power does not at all mean 'to want power' but, on the contrary: whatever you will, carry it to the 'nth' power - in other words, separate out the superior form by virtue of the selective operation of thought in the eternal return, by virtue of the singularity of repetition in the eternal return itself. Here, in the superior form of everything that is, we find the immediate identity of the eternal return and the Overman.

We are not suggesting any resemblance whatsoever between Nietzsche's Dionysus and Kierkegaard's God. On the contrary, we believe that the difference is insurmountable. But this is all the more reason to ask why their coincidence concerning this fundamental objective, the theme of repetition, even though they understand this objective differently? Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are among those who bring to philosophy new means of expression. In relation to them we speak readily of an overcoming of philosophy. Furthermore, in all their work, *movement* is at issue. Their objection to Hegel is that he does not go beyond false movement - in other words, the abstract logical movement of 'mediation'. They want to put metaphysics in motion, in action. They want to make it act, and make it carry out immediate acts. It is not enough, therefore, for them to propose a new representation of movement; representation is already mediation. Rather, it is a question of producing within the work a movement capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation; it is a question of making movement itself a work, without interposition; of substituting direct signs for mediate representations; of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind. This is the idea of a man of the theatre, the idea of a director before his time. In this sense, something completely new begins with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. They no longer reflect on the theatre in the Hegelian manner. Neither do they set up a philosophical theatre. They invent an incredible equivalent of theatre within philosophy, thereby founding simultaneously this theatre of the future and a new philosophy. It will be said that, at least from the point of view of theatre, there was no production: neither the profession of priest and Copenhagen around 1840, nor the break with Wagner and Bayreuth, was a favourable condition. One thing, however, is certain: when Kierkegaard speaks of ancient theatre and modern drama, the environment has already changed; we are no longer in the element of reflection. We find here a thinker who lives the problem of masks, who experiences the inner emptiness of masks and seeks to fill it, to

complete it, albeit with the 'absolutely different' - that is, by putting into it all the difference between the finite and the infinite, thereby creating the idea of a theatre of humour and of faith. When Kierkegaard explains that the knight of faith so resembles a bourgeois in his Sunday best as to be capable of being mistaken for one, this philosophical instruction must be taken as the remark of a director showing how the knight of faith should be *played*. And when he comments on Job or Abraham, when he imagines the variations of *Agnes and the Triton*, he rewrites the tale in a manner which is clearly that of a scenario. Mozart's music resonates even in Abraham and Job; it is a matter of 'leaping' to the tune of this music. 'I look only at movements' is the language of a director who poses the highest theatrical problem, the problem of a movement which would directly touch the soul, which would be that of the souls

Even more so with Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy* is not a reflection on ancient theatre so much as the practical foundation of a theatre of the future, the opening up of a path along which Nietzsche still thinks it possible to push Wagner. The break with Wagner is not a matter of theory, nor of music; it concerns the respective roles of text, history, noise, music, light, song, dance and decor in this theatre of which Nietzsche dreams. Zarathustra incorporates the two attempts at dramatizing Empedocles. Moreover, if Bizet is better than Wagner, it is from the point of view of theatre and for Zarathustra's dances. Nietzsche's reproach to Wagner is that he inverted and distorted 'movement', giving us a nautical theatre in which we must paddle and swim rather than one in which we can walk and dance. Zarathustra is conceived entirely within philosophy, but also entirely for the stage. Everything in it is scored and visualised, put in motion and made to walk or dance. How can it be read without searching for the exact sound of the cries of the higher man, how can the prologue be read without staging the episode of the tightrope walker which opens the whole story? At certain moments, it is a comic opera about terrible things; and it is not by chance that Nietzsche speaks of the comic character of the Overman. Remember the song of Ariadne from the mouth of the old Sorcerer: here, two masks are superimposed - that of a young woman, almost of a *Kore*, which has just been laid over the mask of a repugnant old man. The actor must play the role of an old man playing the role of the *Koye*. Here too, for Nietzsche, it is a matter of filling the inner emptiness of the mask within a theatrical space: by multiplying the superimposed masks and inscribing the omnipresence of Dionysus in that superimposition, by inserting both the infinity of real movement and the form of the absolute difference given in the repetition of eternal return. When Nietzsche says that the Overman resembles Borgia rather than Parsifal, or when he suggests that the Overman belongs at once to both the Jesuit Order and the Prussian officer corps, we can understand these texts only by taking them

for what they are: the remarks of a director indicating how the Overman should be 'played'.

Theatre is real movement, and it extracts real movement from all the arts it employs. This is what we are told: this movement, the essence and the interiority of movement, *is not opposition, not mediation*, but repetition. Hegel is denounced as the one who proposes an abstract movement of concepts instead of a movement of the *Physis* and the *Psyche*. Hegel substitutes the abstract relation of the particular to the concept in general for the true relation of the singular and the universal in the Idea. He thus remains in the reflected element of 'representation', within simple generality. He represents concepts instead of dramatizing Ideas: he creates a false theatre, a false drama, a false movement. We must see how Hegel betrays and distorts the immediate in order to ground his dialectic in that incomprehension, and to introduce mediation in a movement which is no more than that of his own thought and its generalities. When we say, on the contrary, that movement is repetition and that this is our true theatre, we are not speaking of the effort of the actor who 'repeats' because he has not yet learned the part. We have in mind the theatrical space, the emptiness of that space, and the manner in which it is filled and determined by the signs and masks through which the actor plays a role which plays other roles; we think of how repetition is woven from one distinctive point to another, including the differences within itself. (When Marx also criticizes the abstract false movement or mediation of the Hegelians, he finds himself drawn to an idea, which he indicates rather than develops, an essentially 'theatrical' idea: to the extent that history is theatre, then repetition, along with the tragic and the comic within repetition, forms a condition of movement under which the 'actors' or the 'heroes' produce something effectively new in history.) The theatre of repetition is opposed to the theatre of representation, just as movement is opposed to the concept and to representation which refers it back to the concept. In the theatre of repetition, we experience pure forces, dynamic lines in space which act without intermediary upon the spirit, and link it directly with nature and history, with a language which speaks before words, with gestures which develop before organised bodies, with masks before faces, with spectres and phantoms before characters - the whole apparatus of repetition as a 'terrible power'.

It then becomes easy to speak of the differences between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Even this question, however, must no longer be posed at the speculative level of the ultimate nature of the God of Abraham or the Dionysus of Zarathustra. It is rather a matter of knowing what it means to 'produce movement', to repeat or to obtain repetition. Is it a matter of leaping, as Kierkegaard believes? Or is it rather a matter of dancing, as Nietzsche thinks? He does not like the confusion of dancing and leaping (only Zarathustra's ape, his demon, his dwarf, his buffoon, leaps).

Kierkegaard offers us a theatre of faith; he opposes spiritual movement, the movement of faith, to logical movement. He can thus invite us to go beyond all aesthetic repetition, beyond irony and even humour, all the while painfully aware that he offers us only the aesthetic, ironic and humoristic image of such a going-beyond. With Nietzsche, it is a theatre of unbelief, of movement as *Physis*, already a theatre of cruelty. Here, humour and irony are indispensable and fundamental operations of nature. And what would eternal return be, if we forgot that it is a vertiginous movement endowed with a force: not one which causes the return of the Same in general, but one which selects, one which expels as well as creates, destroys as well as produces? Nietzsche's leading idea is to ground the repetition in eternal return on both the death of God and the dissolution of the self. However, it is a quite different alliance in the theatre of faith: Kierkegaard dreams of an alliance between a God and a self rediscovered. All sorts of differences follow: is the movement in the sphere of the mind, or in the entrails of the earth which knows neither God nor self? Where will it be better protected against generalities, against mediations? Is repetition supernatural, to the extent that it is over and above the laws of nature? Or is it rather the most natural will of Nature in itself and willing itself as *Physis*, because Nature is by itself superior to its own kingdoms and its own laws? Has Kierkegaard not mixed all kinds of things together in his condemnation of 'aesthetic' repetition: a pseudo-repetition attributable to general laws of nature and a true repetition in nature itself; a pathological repetition of the passions and a repetition in art and the work of art? We cannot now resolve any of these problems; it has been enough for us to find theatrical confirmation of an irreducible difference between generality and repetition.

Repetition and generality are opposed from the point of view of conduct and from the point of view of law. It remains to specify a third opposition from the point of view of concepts or representation. Let us pose a question *quid juris*: a concept may be in principle the concept of a particular existing thing, thus having an infinite comprehension. Infinite comprehension is the correlate of an extension - 1. It is very important that this infinity of comprehension be supposed actual, not virtual or simply indefinite. It is on this condition that predicates in the form of moments of concepts are preserved, and have an effect on the subject to which they are attributed. Infinite comprehension thus makes possible remembering and recognition, memory and self-consciousness (even when these two faculties are not themselves infinite). The relation of a concept to its object under this double aspect, in the form that it assumes in this memory and this self-consciousness, is called representation. From this may be drawn the principles of a vulgarized Leibnizianism. According to a principle of difference,

every determination is conceptual in the last instance, or actually belongs to the comprehension of a concept. According to a principle of sufficient reason, there is always one concept per particular thing. According to the reciprocal principle of the identity of indiscernibles, there is one and only one thing per concept. Together, these principles expound a theory of difference as conceptual difference, or develop the account of representation as mediation.

However, a concept can always be blocked at the level of each of its determinations or each of the predicates that it includes. In so far as it serves as a determination, a predicate must remain fixed in the concept while becoming something else in the thing (animal becomes something other in man and in horse; humanity something other in Peter and in Paul). This is why the comprehension of the concept is infinite; having become other in the thing, the predicate is like the object of another predicate in the concept. But this is also why each determination remains general or defines a resemblance, to the extent that it remains fixed in the concept and applicable by right to an infinity of things. Here, the concept is thus constituted in such a fashion that, in its real use, its comprehension extends to infinity, but in its logical use, this comprehension is always liable to an artificial blockage. Every logical limitation of the comprehension of a concept endows it with an extension greater than 1, in principle infinite, and thus of a generality such that no existing individual *can* correspond to it *hic et nunc* (rule of the inverse relation of comprehension and extension). Thus, the principle of difference understood as difference in the concept does not oppose but, on the contrary, allows the greatest space possible for the apprehension of resemblances. Even from the point of view of conundrums, the question ‘What difference is there?’ may always be transformed into: ‘What resemblance is there?’ But above all, in classification, the determination of species implies and supposes a continual evaluation of resemblances. Undoubtedly, resemblance is not a partial identity, but that is only because the predicate in the concept is not, by virtue of its becoming other in the thing, a part of that thing.

We wish to indicate the difference between this type of artificial blockage and a quite different type which must be called a natural blockage of the concept. One refers to logic pure and simple, but the other refers to a transcendental logic or a dialectic of existence. Let us suppose that a concept, taken at a particular moment when its comprehension is finite, is forcibly assigned a place in space and time - that is, an existence corresponding normally to the extension = 1. We would say, then, that a genus or species passes into existence *hic et nunc* without any augmentation of comprehension. There is a rift between that extension = 1 imposed upon the concept and the extension - - that its weak comprehension demands in principle. The result will be a ‘discrete extension’ - that is, a pullulation of individuals absolutely identical in

respect of their concept, and participating in the same singularity in existence (the paradox of doubles or twins). This phenomenon of discrete extension implies a natural blockage of the concept, different in kind from a logical blockage: it forms a true repetition in existence rather than an order of resemblance in thought. There is a significant difference between generality, which always designates a logical power of concepts, and repetition, which testifies to their powerlessness or their real limits. Repetition is the pure fact of a concept with finite comprehension being forced to pass as such into existence: can we find examples of such a passage? Epicurean atoms would be one: individuals localised in space, they nevertheless have a meagre comprehension, which is made up for in discrete extension, to the point where there exists an infinity of atoms of the same shape and size. The existence of Epicurean atoms may be doubted. On the other hand, the existence of words, which are in a sense linguistic atoms, cannot be doubted. Words possess a comprehension which is necessarily finite, since they are by nature the objects of a merely nominal definition. We have here a reason why the comprehension of the concept *cannot* extend to infinity: we define a word by only a finite number of words. Nevertheless, speech and writing, from which words are inseparable, give them an existence *hic et nunc*; a genus thereby passes into existence as such; and here again extension is made up for in dispersion, in discreteness, under the sign of a repetition which forms the real power of language in speech and writing.

The question is: are there other natural blockages besides those of discrete extension and finite comprehension? Let us assume a concept with indefinite comprehension (virtually infinite). However far one pursues that comprehension, one can always think that it subsumes perfectly identical objects. By contrast with the actual infinite, where the concept is sufficient by right to distinguish its object from *every* other object, in this case the concept can pursue its comprehension indefinitely, always subsuming a plurality of objects which is itself indefinite. Here again, the concept is the Same - indefinitely the same - for objects which are distinct. We must therefore recognise the existence of non-conceptual differences between these objects. It is Kant who best indicates the correlation between objects endowed with only an indefinite specification, and purely spatio-temporal or oppositional, non-conceptual determinations (the paradox of symmetrical objects).<sup>8</sup> However, these determinations are precisely only the figures of repetition: space and time are themselves repetitive milieux; and real opposition is not a maximum of difference but a minimum of repetition - a repetition reduced to two, echoing and returning on itself; a repetition which has found the means to *define* itself. Repetition thus appears as difference without a concept, repetition which escapes indefinitely continued conceptual difference. It expresses a power peculiar to the existent, a stubbornness of the existent in intuition, which resists



every specification by concepts no matter how far this is taken. However far you go in the concept, Kant says, you can always repeat - that is, make several objects correspond to it, or at least two: one for the left and one for the right, one for the more and one for the less, one for the positive and one for the negative.

Such a situation may be better understood if we consider that concepts with indefinite comprehension are concepts of Nature. As such, they are always in something else: they are not in Nature but in the mind which contemplates it or observes it, and represents it to itself. That is why it is said that Nature is alienated mind or alienated concept, opposed to itself. Corresponding to such concepts are those objects which themselves lack memory - that is, which neither possess nor collect in themselves their own moments. The question is asked why Nature repeats: because it *is partes extra partes, mens momentanea*. Novelty then passes to the mind which represents itself: because the mind has a memory or acquires habits, it is capable of forming concepts in general and of drawing something new, of subtracting something new from the repetition that it contemplates.

Concepts with finite comprehension are nominal concepts; concepts with indefinite comprehension but without memory are concepts of Nature. Yet these two cases still do not exhaust the examples of natural blockage. Take an individual notion or a particular representation with infinite comprehension, endowed with memory but lacking selfconsciousness. The comprehensive representation is indeed in-itself, the memory is there, embracing all the particularity of an act, a scene, an event or a being. What is missing, however, for a determinate natural reason, is the for-itself of consciousness or recognition. What is missing in the memory is remembrance - or rather, the working through of memory. Consciousness establishes between the I and the representation a relation much more profound than that which appears in the expression 'I have a representation': it relates the representation to the I as if to a free faculty which does not allow itself to be confined within any one of its products, but for which each product is already thought and recognised as past, the occasion of a determinant change in inner meaning. When the consciousness of knowledge or the working through of memory is missing, the knowledge in itself is only the repetition of its object: it is *played*, that is to say repeated, enacted instead of being known. Repetition here appears as the unconscious of the free concept, of knowledge or of memory, the unconscious of representation. It fell to Freud to assign the natural reason for such a blockage: repression or resistance, which makes repetition itself a veritable 'constraint', a 'compulsion'. Here, then, is a third case of blockage, one which concerns, this time, the concepts of freedom. Here too, from the standpoint of a certain Freudianism, we can discover the principle of an inverse relation between repetition and consciousness, repetition and remembering, repetition and recognition (the paradox of the

'burials' or buried objects): the less one remembers, the less one is conscious of remembering one's past, the more one repeats it - remember and work through the memory in order not to repeat it. Self-consciousness in recognition appears as the faculty of the future or the function of the future, the function of the new. Is it not true that the only dead who return are those whom one has buried too quickly and too deeply, without paying them the necessary respects, and that remorse testifies less to an excess of memory than to a powerlessness or to a failure in the working through of a memory?

There is a tragic and a comic repetition. Indeed, repetition always appears twice, once in the tragic destiny and once in the comic aspect. In the theatre, the hero repeats precisely because he is separated from an essential, infinite knowledge. This knowledge is in him, it is immersed in him and acts in him, but acts like something hidden, like a blocked representation. The difference between the comic and the tragic pertains to two elements: first, the nature of the repressed knowledge - in the one case immediate natural knowledge, a simple given of common sense, in the other terrible esoteric knowledge; second, as a result, the manner in which the character is excluded from this knowledge, the manner in which 'he does not know that he knows'. In general the practical problem consists in this: this unknown knowledge must be represented as bathing the whole scene, impregnating all the elements of the play and comprising in itself all the powers of mind and nature, but at the same time the hero cannot represent it to *himself* - on the contrary, he must enact it, play it and repeat it until the acute moment that Aristotle called 'recognition'. At this point, repetition and representation confront one another and merge, without, however, confusing their two levels, the one reflecting itself in and being sustained by the other, the knowledge as it is represented on stage and as repeated by the actor then being recognised as the same.

The discrete, the alienated and the repressed are the three cases of natural blockage, corresponding respectively to nominal concepts, concepts of nature and concepts of freedom. In all these cases, however, conceptual identity or Sameness of representation is invoked to account for repetition: repetition is attributed to elements which are really distinct but nevertheless share strictly the same concept. Repetition thus appears as a difference, but a difference absolutely without concept; in this sense, an indifferent difference. The words 'really', 'strictly', 'absolutely' are supposed to refer to the phenomenon of natural blockage, in opposition to logical blockage which only determines a generality. However, an important drawback compromises this whole endeavour. As long as we invoke absolute conceptual identity for distinct objects, we suggest a purely negative explanation, an explanation by default. The fact that this default should be grounded in

the nature of concepts or representations themselves changes nothing. In the first case, repetition occurs because nominal concepts naturally possess a finite comprehension. In the second case, repetition occurs because concepts of nature are naturally devoid of memory, alienated and outside themselves. In the third case, because the concept of freedom remains unconscious while memories and representations remain repressed. In all these cases, *that which* repeats does so only by dint of not 'comprehending', not remembering, not knowing or not being conscious. Throughout, the inadequacy of concepts and of their representative concomitants (memory and self-consciousness, remembrance and recognition) is supposed to account for repetition. Such is therefore the default of every argument grounded in the form of identity in the concept: these arguments give us only a nominal definition and a negative explanation of repetition. No doubt the formal identity which corresponds to simple logical blockage may be opposed to real identity (*the Same*) as this appears in natural blockage. But natural blockage itself requires a positive supra-conceptual force capable of explaining it, and of thereby explaining repetition.

Let us return to the example of psychoanalysis: we repeat because we repress ... Freud was never satisfied with such a negative schema, in which repetition is explained by amnesia. It is true that, from the beginning, repression was considered a positive power. However, he borrowed this positivity from the pleasure principle or from the reality principle: it was merely a derived positivity, one of opposition. The turning point of Freudianism appears in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: the death instinct is discovered, not in connection with the destructive tendencies, not in connection with aggressivity, but as a result of a direct consideration of repetition phenomena. Strangely, the death instinct serves as a positive, originary principle for repetition; this is its domain and its meaning. It plays the role of a transcendental principle, whereas the pleasure principle is only psychological. For this reason, it is above all silent (not given in experience), whereas the pleasure principle is noisy. The first question, then, is: How is it that the theme of death, which appears to draw together the most negative elements of psychological life, can be in itself the most positive element, transcendently positive, to the point of affirming repetition? How can it be related to a primordial *instinct*? But a second question immediately arises: Under what form is repetition affirmed and prescribed by the death instinct? Ultimately, it is a question of the relation between repetition and disguises. Do the disguises found in the work of dreams or symptoms - condensation, displacement, dramatisation - rediscover while attenuating a bare, brute repetition (repetition of the Same)? From the first theory of repression, Freud indicated another path: Dora elaborates her own role, and repeats her love for the father, only through other roles filled by others, which she herself adopts in relation to those others (K., Frau K., the governess ...). The disguises and the

variations, the masks or costumes, do not come 'over and above': they are, on the contrary, the internal genetic elements of repetition itself, its integral and constituent parts. This path would have been able to lead the analysis of the unconscious towards a veritable theatre. However, if it did not do so, this was because Freud was unable to prevent himself maintaining the model of a brute repetition, at least as a tendency. We see this when he attributes fixation to the Id: disguise is then understood from the perspective of a simple opposition of forces; disguised repetition is only the fruit of a secondary compromise between the opposed forces of the Ego and the Id. Even beyond the pleasure principle, the form of a bare repetition persists, since Freud interprets the death instinct as a tendency to return to the state of inanimate matter, one which upholds the model of a wholly physical or material repetition.

Death has nothing to do with a material model. On the contrary, the death instinct may be understood in relation to masks and costumes. Repetition is truly that which disguises itself in constituting itself, that which constitutes itself only by disguising itself. It is not underneath the masks, but is formed from one mask to another, as though from one distinctive point to another, from one privileged instant to another, with and within the variations. The masks do not hide anything except other masks. There is no first term which is repeated, and even our childhood love for the mother repeats other adult loves with regard to other women, rather like the way in which the hero of *In Search of Lost Time* replays with his mother Swann's passion for Odette. There is therefore nothing repeated which may be isolated or abstracted from the repetition in which it was formed, but in which it is also hidden. There is no bare repetition which may be abstracted or inferred from the disguise itself. The same thing is both disguising and disguised. A decisive moment in psychoanalysis occurred when Freud gave up, in certain respects, the hypothesis of real childhood events, which would have played the part of ultimate disguised terms, in order to substitute the power of fantasy which is immersed in the death instinct, where everything is already masked and disguised. In short, repetition is in its essence symbolic; symbols or simulacra are the letter of repetition itself. Difference is included in repetition by way of disguise and by the order of the symbol. This is why the variations do not come from without, do not express a secondary compromise between a repressing instance and a repressed instance, and must not be understood on the basis of the still negative forms of opposition, reversal or overturning. The variations express, rather, the differential mechanisms which belong to the essence and origin of that which is repeated. We should even overturn the relations between 'covered' and 'uncovered' within repetition. Take an uncovered or bare repetition (repetition of the Same) such as an obsessional ceremony or a schizophrenic stereotype: the mechanical element in the repetition, the

element of action apparently repeated, serves as a cover for a more profound repetition, which is played in another dimension, a secret verticality in which the roles and masks are furnished by the death instinct. Theatre of terror, Binswanger said of schizophrenia. There, the 'never seen' is not the contrary of the 'already seen': both signify the same thing, and are lived each in the other. Nerval's *Sylvie* already introduced us into this theatre, and the *Gradiva*, so close to a Nervalian inspiration, shows us the hero who lives at once both repetition as such and the repeated which is always disguised in the repetition. In the analysis of obsession, the appearance of the theme of death coincides with the moment at which the obsessed has command of all the characters of his drama and brings them together in a repetition of which the 'ceremony' is only the external envelope. The mask, the costume, the covered is everywhere the truth of the uncovered. The mask is the true subject of repetition. Because repetition differs in kind from representation, the repeated cannot be represented: rather, it must always be signified, masked by what signifies it, itself masking what it signifies.

I do not repeat because I repress. I repress because I repeat, I forget because I repeat. I repress, because I can live certain things or certain experiences only in the mode of repetition. I am determined to repress whatever would prevent me from living them thus: in particular, the representation which mediates the lived by relating it to the form of a similar or identical object. Eros and Thanatos are distinguished in that Eros must be repeated, can be lived only through repetition, whereas Thanatos (as transcendental principle) is that which gives repetition to Eros, that which submits Eros to repetition. Only such a point of view is capable of advancing us in the obscure problems of the origin of repression, its nature, its causes and the exact terms on which it bears. For when Freud shows -beyond repression 'properly speaking', which bears upon *representations* -the necessity of supposing a primary repression which concerns first and foremost pure *presentations*, or the manner in which the drives are necessarily lived, we believe that he comes closest to a positive internal principle of repetition. This later appears to him determinable in the form of the death instinct, and it is this which, far from being explained by it, must explain the blockage of representation in repression properly speaking. This is why the law of an inverse relation between repetition and remembering is in every respect hardly satisfactory, in so far as it makes repetition depend upon repression.

Freud noted from the beginning that in order to stop repeating it was not enough to remember in the abstract (without affect), nor to form a concept in general, nor even to represent the repressed event in all its particularity: it was necessary to seek out the memory there where it was, to install oneself directly in the past in order to accomplish a living connection between the knowledge and the resistance, the representation

and the blockage. We are not, therefore, healed by simple anamnesis, any more than we are made ill by amnesia. Here as elsewhere, becoming conscious counts for little. The more theatrical and dramatic operation by which healing takes place - or does not take place - has a name: transference. Now transference is still repetition: above all it is repetition.<sup>10</sup>

If repetition makes us ill, it also heals us; if it enchains and destroys us, it also frees us, testifying in both cases to its 'demonic' power. All cure is a voyage to the bottom of repetition. There is indeed something analogous to scientific experimentation in transference, since the patient is supposed to repeat the whole of his disturbance in privileged, artificial conditions, taking the person of the analyst as 'object'. In transference, however, repetition does not so much serve to identify events, persons and passions as to *authenticate* the roles and select the masks. Transference is not an experiment but a principle which grounds the entire analytic experience. The roles themselves are by nature erotic, but the verification of these roles appeals to the highest principle and the most profound judge, the death instinct. In effect, reflection on transference was a determinant motive behind the discovery of a 'beyond'. In this sense, repetition constitutes by itself the selective game of our illness *and* our health, of our loss *and* our salvation. How can this game be related to the death instinct? No doubt in a sense close to that in which Miller, in his wonderful book on Rimbaud, says: 'I realized that I was free, that the death I had gone through had liberated me.'<sup>11</sup> It seems that the idea of a death instinct must be understood in terms of three paradoxical and complementary requirements: to give repetition an original, positive principle, but also an autonomous disguising power; and finally, to give it an immanent meaning in which terror is closely mingled with the movement of selection and freedom.

Our problem concerns the essence of repetition. It is a question of knowing why repetition cannot be explained by the form of identity in concepts or representations; in what sense it demands a superior 'positive' principle. This enquiry must embrace all the concepts of nature and freedom. Consider, on the border between these two cases, the repetition of a decorative motif: a figure is reproduced, while the concept remains absolutely identical ... . However, this is not how artists proceed in reality. They do not juxtapose instances of the figure, but rather each time combine an element of one instance with *another* element of a following instance. They introduce a disequilibrium into the dynamic process of construction, an instability, dissymmetry or gap of some kind which disappears only in the overall effect. Commenting on such a case, Levi-Strauss writes: 'These elements interlock with each other through dislocation, and it is only at the end that the pattern achieves a stability which both confirms and belies the dynamic

process according to which it has been carried out.'<sup>12</sup> These remarks stand for the notion of causality in general. For it is not the elements of symmetry present which matter for artistic or natural causality, but those which are missing and are not in the cause; what matters is the possibility of the cause having less symmetry than the effect. Moreover, causality would remain eternally conjectural, a simple logical category, if that possibility were not at some moment or other effectively fulfilled. For this reason, the logical relation of causality is inseparable from a physical process of signalling, without which it would not be translated into action. By 'signal' we mean a system with orders of disparate size, endowed with elements of dissymmetry; by 'sign' we mean what happens within such a system, what flashes across the intervals when a communication takes place between disparates. The sign is indeed an effect, but an effect with two aspects: in one of these it expresses, *qua* sign, the productive dissymmetry; in the other it tends to cancel it. The sign is not entirely of the order of the symbol; nevertheless, it makes way for it by implying an internal difference (while leaving the conditions of its reproduction still external).

The negative expression 'lack of symmetry' should not mislead us: it indicates the origin and positivity of the causal process. It is positivity itself. For us, as the example of the decorative motif suggests, it is essential to break down the notion of causality in order to distinguish two types of repetition: one which concerns only the overall, abstract effect, and the other which concerns the acting cause. One is a static repetition, the other is dynamic. One results from the work, but the other is like the 'evolution' of a bodily movement. One refers back to a single concept, which leaves only an external difference between the ordinary instances of a figure; the other is the repetition of an internal difference which it incorporates in each of its moments, and carries from one distinctive point to another. One could try to assimilate these two repetitions by saying that the difference between the first and the second is only a matter of a change in the content of the concept, or of the figure being articulated differently, but this would be to fail to recognise the respective order of each repetition. For in the dynamic order there is no representative concept, nor any figure represented in a pre-existing space. There is an Idea, and a pure dynamism which creates a corresponding space.

Studies on rhythm or symmetry confirm this duality. A distinction is drawn between arithmetic symmetry, which refers back to a scale of whole or fractional coefficients, and geometric symmetry, based upon proportions or irrational ratios; a static symmetry which is cubic or hexagonal, and a dynamic symmetry which is pentagonal and appears in a spiral line or in a geometrically progressing pulsation - in short, in a living and mortal 'evolution'. Now, the second of these is at the heart of the first; it is the vital, positive, active procedure. In a network of double squares, we discover radiating lines which have the centre of a pentagon or a

pentagon as their asymmetrical pole. The network is like a fabric stretched upon a framework, 'but the outline, the principal rhythm of that framework, is almost always a theme independent of the network': such elements of dissymmetry serve as both genetic principle and principle of reflection for symmetrical figures.<sup>13</sup> The static repetition in the network of double squares thus refers back to a dynamic repetition, formed by a pentagon and 'the decreasing series of pentagrams which may be naturally inscribed therein'. Similarly, the study of rhythm allows us immediately to distinguish two kinds of repetition. Cadence-repetition is a regular division of time, an isochronic recurrence of identical elements. However, a period exists only in so far as it is determined by a tonic accent, commanded by intensities. Yet we would be mistaken about the function of accents if we said that they were reproduced at equal intervals. On the contrary, tonic and intensive values act by creating inequalities or incommensurabilities between metrically equivalent periods or spaces. They create distinctive points, privileged instants which always indicate a poly-rhythm. Here again, the unequal is the most positive element. Cadence is only the envelope of a rhythm, and of a relation between rhythms. The reprise of points of inequality, of inflections or of rhythmic events, is more profound than the reproduction of ordinary homogeneous elements. As a result, we should distinguish cadence-repetition and rhythm-repetition in every case, the first being only the outward appearance or the abstract effect of the second. A bare, material repetition (repetition of the Same) appears only in the sense that another repetition is disguised within it, constituting it and constituting itself in disguising itself. Even in nature, isochronic rotations are only the outward appearance of a more profound movement, the revolving cycles are only abstractions: placed together, they reveal evolutionary cycles or spirals whose principle is a variable curve, and the trajectory of which has two dissymmetrical aspects, as though it had a right and a left. It is always in this gap, which should not be confused with the negative, that creatures weave their repetition and receive at the same time the gift of living and dying.

Finally, to return to nominal concepts: is it the identity of the nominal concept which explains the repetition of a word? Take the example of rhyme: it is indeed verbal repetition, but repetition which includes the difference between two words and inscribes that difference at the heart of a poetic Idea, in a space which it determines. Nor does its meaning lie in marking equal intervals, but rather, as we see in a notion of strong rhyme, in putting tonal values in the service of tonic rhythm, and contributing to the independence of tonic rhythms from arithmetic rhythms. As for the repetition of a single word, we must understand this as a 'generalised rhyme', not rhyme as a restricted repetition. This generalisation can proceed in two ways: either a word taken in two senses ensures a resemblance or a paradoxical identity between the two senses; or a word

taken in one sense exercises an attractive force on its neighbours, communicating an extraordinary gravity to them until one of the neighbouring words takes up the baton and becomes in turn a centre of repetition. Raymond Roussel and Charles Peguy were the great repeaters of literature, able to lift the pathological power of language to a higher artistic level. Roussel takes ambiguous words or homonyms and fills the entire distance between their meanings with a story presented twice and with objects themselves doubled. He thereby overcomes homonymity on its own ground and inscribes the maximum difference within repetition, where this is the space opened up in the heart of a word. This space is still presented by Roussel as one of masks and death, in which is developed both a repetition which enchains and a repetition which saves - which saves above all from the one which enchains. Roussel creates an after-language where once everything has been said, everything is repeated and recommenced.<sup>14</sup> Peguy's technique is very different: it substitutes repetition not for homonymity but for synonymy; it concerns what linguists call the function of contiguity rather than that of similarity; it forms a before-language, an auroral language in which the step-by-step creation of an internal space within words proceeds by tiny differences. This time, everything leads to the problem of aging and premature deaths, but in relation to this problem also to the extraordinary chance to affirm a repetition which saves against that which enchains. Both Peguy and Roussel take language to one of its limits: in the case of Roussel, that of similarity and selection, the 'distinctive feature' between billard and pillard; in the case of Peguy, that of contiguity or combination, the famous *tapestry points*. Both substitute a vertical repetition of distinctive points, which takes us inside the words, for the horizontal repetition of ordinary words repeated. Both substitute a positive repetition, one which flows from the excess of a linguistic and stylistic Idea, for a repetition by default which results from the inadequacy of nominal concepts or verbal representations. How does death inspire language, given that it is always present when repetition is affirmed?

The reproduction of the Same is not a motor of bodily movements. We know that even the simplest imitation involves a difference between inside and outside. Moreover, imitation plays only a secondary and regulatory role in the acquisition of a behaviour: it permits the correction of movements being made, but not their instigation. Learning takes place not in the relation between a representation and an action (reproduction of the Same) but in the relation between a sign and a response (encounter with the Other). Signs involve heterogeneity in at least three ways: first, in the object which bears or emits them, and is necessarily on a different level, as though there were two orders of size or disparate realities between which the sign flashes; secondly, in themselves, since a sign envelops another 'object' within the limits of the object which bears it, and incarnates a

natural or spiritual power (an Idea); finally, in the response they elicit, since the movement of the response does not 'resemble' that of the sign. The movement of the swimmer does not resemble that of the wave, in particular, the movements of the swimming instructor which we reproduce on the sand bear no relation to the movements of the wave, which we learn to deal with only by grasping the former in practice as signs. That is why it is so difficult to say how someone learns: there is an innate or acquired practical familiarity with signs, which means that there is something amorous - but also something fatal - about all education. We learn nothing from those who say: 'Do as I do'. Our only teachers are those who tell us to 'do with me', and are able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce. In other words, there is no ideo-motivity, only sensory-motivity. When a body combines some of its own distinctive points with those of a wave, it espouses the principle of a repetition which is no longer that of the Same, but involves the Other - involves difference, from one wave and one gesture to another, and carries that difference through the repetitive space thereby constituted. To learn is indeed to constitute this space of an encounter with signs, in which the distinctive points renew themselves in each other, and repetition takes shape while disguising itself. Apprenticeship always gives rise to images of death, on the edges of the space it creates and with the help of the heterogeneity it engenders. Signs are deadly when they are lost in the distance, but also when they strike us with full force. Oedipus receives a sign once from too far away, once from too close, and between the two a terrible repetition of the crime is woven. Zarathustra receives his 'sign' either from too near or from too far, and only at the end does he foresee the correct distance which will turn that which in eternal return makes him ill into a liberatory and redemptive repetition. Signs are the true elements of theatre. They testify to the spiritual and natural powers which act beneath the words, gestures, characters and objects represented. They signify repetition as real movement, in opposition to representation which is a false movement of the abstract.

We are right to speak of repetition when we find ourselves confronted by identical elements with exactly the same concept. However, we must distinguish between these discrete elements, these repeated objects, and a secret subject, the real subject of repetition, which repeats itself through them. Repetition must be understood in the pronominal; we must find the Self of repetition, the singularity within that which repeats. For there is no repetition without a repeater, nothing repeated without a repetitious soul. As a result, rather than the repeated and the repeater, the object and the subject, we must distinguish two forms of repetition. In every case repetition is difference without a concept. But in one case, the difference is taken to be only external to the concept; it is a difference between objects

represented by the same concept, falling into the indifference of space and time. In the other case, the difference is internal to the Idea; it unfolds as pure movement, creative of a dynamic space and time which correspond to the Idea. The first repetition is repetition of the Same, explained by the identity of the concept or representation; the second includes difference, and includes itself in the alterity of the Idea, in the heterogeneity of an 'a-presentation'. One is negative, occurring by default in the concept; the other affirmative, occurring by excess in the Idea. One is conjectural, the other categorical. One is static, the other dynamic. One is repetition in the effect, the other in the cause. One is extensive, the other intensive. One is ordinary, the other distinctive and singular. One is horizontal, the other vertical. One is developed and explicated, the other enveloped and in need of interpretation. One is revolving, the other evolving. One involves equality, commensurability and symmetry; the other is grounded in inequality, incommensurability and dissymmetry. One is material, the other spiritual, even in nature and in the earth. One is inanimate, the other carries the secret of our deaths and our lives, of our enchainments and our liberations, the demonic and the divine. One is a 'bare' repetition, the other a covered repetition, which forms itself in covering itself, in masking and disguising itself. One concerns accuracy, the other has authenticity as its criterion.

The two repetitions are not independent. One is the singular subject, the interiority and the heart of the other, the depths of the other. The other is only the external envelope, the abstract effect. The repetition of dissymmetry is hidden within symmetrical ensembles or effects; a repetition of distinctive points underneath that of ordinary points; and everywhere the Other in the repetition of the Same. This is the secret, the most profound repetition: it alone provides the principle of the other one, the reason for the blockage of concepts. In this domain, as in *Sartor Resartus*, it is the masked, the disguised or the costumed which turns out to be the truth of the uncovered. Necessarily, since this repetition is not hidden by something else but forms itself by disguising itself; it does not pre-exist its own disguises and, in forming itself, constitutes the bare repetition within which it becomes enveloped. Important consequences follow from this. When we are confronted by a repetition which proceeds masked, or comprises displacements, quickenings, slowdowns, variants or differences which are ultimately capable of leading us far away from the point of departure, we tend to see a mixed state in which repetition is not pure but only approximative: the very word repetition seems to be employed symbolically, by analogy or metaphor. It is true that we have strictly defined repetition as difference without concept. However, we would be wrong to reduce it to a difference which falls back into exteriority, because the concept embodies the form of the Same, without seeing that it can be internal to the Idea and possess in itself all the resources of signs, symbols

and alterity which go beyond the concept as such. The examples invoked above concern the most diverse kinds of case, from nominal concepts to concepts of nature and freedom, and we could be charged with having mixed up all kinds of physical and psychical repetitions, even with having run together stereotypical repetitions and latent, symbolic repetitions in the psychical domain. However, we wished to show the coexistence of these instances in every repetitive structure, to show how repetition displays identical elements which necessarily refer back to a latent subject which repeats itself through these elements, forming an 'other' repetition at the heart of the first. We therefore suggest that this other repetition is in no way approximative or metaphorical. It is, on the contrary, the spirit of every repetition. It is the very letter of every repetition, its watermark or constitutive cipher. It forms the essence of that in which every repetition consists: difference without a concept, non-mediated difference. It is both the literal and spiritual primary sense of repetition. The material sense results from this other, as if secreted by it like a shell.

We began by distinguishing generality and repetition. Then we distinguished two forms of repetition. These two distinctions are linked: the consequences of the first are unfolded only in the second. For if we were content to treat repetition abstractly and as devoid of any interior, we would remain incapable of understanding why and how a concept could be naturally blocked, allowing a repetition which has nothing to do with generality to appear. Conversely, when we discover the literal interior of repetition, we have the means not only to understand the outer repetition as a cover, but also to recapture the order of generality (and, following Kierkegaard's wish, to carry out the reconciliation of the singular with the general). For to the extent that the internal repetition projects itself through a bare repetition which covers it, the differences that it includes appear to be so many factors which oppose repetition, which attenuate it and vary it according to 'general' laws. Beneath the general operation of laws, however, there always remains the play of singularities. Cyclical generalities in nature are the masks of a singularity which appears through their interferences; and beneath the generalities of habit in moral life we rediscover singular processes of learning. The domain of laws must be understood, but always on the basis of a Nature and a Spirit superior to their own laws, which weave their repetitions in the depths of the earth and of the heart, where laws do not yet exist. The interior of repetition is always affected by an order of difference: it is only to the extent that something is linked to a repetition of an order other than its own that the repetition appears external and bare, and the thing itself subject to the categories of generality. It is the inadequation between difference and repetition which gives rise to the order of generality. Gabriel Tarde suggested in this sense that resemblance itself was only displaced repetition: real repetition is that which corresponds directly to a difference of the same

degree as itself. Better than anyone, Tarde was able to elaborate a new dialectic by discovering in mind and nature the secret effort to establish an ever more perfect correspondence between difference and repetition.<sup>15</sup>

So long as we take difference to be conceptual difference, intrinsically conceptual, and repetition to be an extrinsic difference between objects represented by the same concept, it appears that the problem of their relation may be resolved by the facts. Are there repetitions - yes or no? Or is every difference indeed intrinsic and conceptual in the last instance? Hegel ridiculed Leibniz for having invited the court ladies to undertake experimental metaphysics while walking in the gardens, to see whether two leaves of a tree could not have the same concept. Replace the court ladies by forensic scientists: no two grains of dust are absolutely identical, no two hands have the same distinctive points, no two typewriters have the same strike, no two revolvers score their bullets in the same manner ... . Why, however, do we feel that the problem is not properly defined so long as we look for the criterion of a *principium individuationis* in the facts? It is because a difference can be internal, yet not conceptual (as the paradox of symmetrical objects shows). A dynamic space must be defined from the point of view of an observer tied to that space, not from an external position. There are internal differences which dramatise an Idea before representing an object. Difference here is internal to an Idea, even though it be external to the concept which represents an object. That is why the opposition between Kant and Leibniz seems much less strong to the extent that one takes account of the dynamic factors present in the two doctrines. If, in the forms of intuition, Kant recognised extrinsic differences not reducible to the order of concepts, these are no less 'internal' even though they cannot be regarded as 'intrinsic' by the understanding, and can be represented only in their external relation to space as a whole.<sup>16</sup> In other words, following certain neo-Kantian interpretations, there is a step-by-step, internal, dynamic construction of space which must precede the 'representation' of the whole as a form of exteriority. The element of this internal genesis seems to us to consist of intensive quantity rather than schema, and to be related to Ideas rather than to concepts of the understanding. If the spatial order of extrinsic differences and the conceptual order of intrinsic differences are finally in harmony, as the schema shows they are, this is ultimately due to this intensive differential element, this synthesis of continuity at a given moment which, in the form of a *continua repetitio*, first gives rise internally to the space corresponding to Ideas. With Leibniz, the affinity between extrinsic differences and intrinsic conceptual differences already appealed to the internal process of a *continua repetitio*, grounded upon an intensive differential element which ensures the synthesis of continuity at a point in order to engender space from within.

There are repetitions which are not only extrinsic differences, just as there are internal differences which are neither intrinsic nor conceptual. We are thus in a better position to identify the source of the preceding ambiguities. When we define repetition as difference without concept, we are drawn to conclude that only extrinsic difference is involved in repetition; we consider, therefore, that any internal 'novelty' is sufficient to remove us from repetition proper and can be reconciled only with an approximative repetition, so-called by analogy. Nothing of the sort is true. For we do not yet know what is the essence of repetition, what is positively denoted by the expression 'difference without concept', or the nature of the interiority it may imply. Conversely, when we define difference as conceptual difference, we believe we have done enough to specify the concept of difference as such. Nevertheless, here again we have no idea of difference, no concept of difference as such. Perhaps the mistake of the philosophy of difference, from Aristotle to Hegel via Leibniz, lay in confusing the concept of difference with a merely conceptual difference, in remaining content to inscribe difference in the concept in general. In reality, so long as we inscribe difference in the concept in general we have no singular Idea of difference, we remain only with a difference already mediated by representation. We therefore find ourselves confronted by two questions: what is the concept of difference - one which is not reducible to simple conceptual difference but demands its own Idea, its own singularity at the level of Ideas? On the other hand, what is the essence of repetition - one which is not reducible to difference without concept, and cannot be confused with the apparent character of objects represented by the same concept, but bears witness to singularity as a power of Ideas? The meeting between these two notions, difference and repetition, can no longer be assumed: it must come about as a result of interferences and intersections between these two lines: one concerning the essence of repetition, the other the idea of difference.

# Chapter I

## *Difference in Itself*

Indifference has two aspects: the undifferentiated abyss, the black nothingness, the indeterminate animal in which everything is dissolved - but also the white nothingness, the once more calm surface upon which float unconnected determinations like scattered members: a head without a neck, an arm without a shoulder, eyes without brows. The indeterminate is completely indifferent, but such floating determinations are no less indifferent to each other. Is difference intermediate between these two extremes? Or is it not rather the only extreme, the only moment of presence and precision? Difference is the state in which one can speak of determination *as such*. The difference 'between' two things is only empirical, and the corresponding determinations are only extrinsic. However, instead of something distinguished from something else, imagine something which distinguishes itself - and yet that from which it distinguishes itself does not distinguish itself from it. Lightning, for example, distinguishes itself from the black sky but must also trail it behind, as though it were distinguishing itself from that which does not distinguish itself from it. It is as if the ground rose to the surface, without ceasing to be ground. There is cruelty, even monstrosity, on both sides of this struggle against an elusive adversary, in which the distinguished opposes something which cannot distinguish itself from it but continues to espouse that which divorces it. Difference is this state in which determination takes the form of unilateral distinction. We must therefore say that difference is made, or makes itself, as in the expression 'make the difference'. This difference or determination *as such* is also cruelty. The Platonists used to say that the not-One distinguished itself from the One, but not the converse, since the One does not flee that which flees it; and at the other pole, form distinguishes itself from matter or from the ground, but not the converse, since distinction itself is a form. In truth, all the forms are dissolved when they are reflected in this rising ground. It has ceased to be the pure indeterminate which remains below, but the forms also cease to be the coexisting or complementary determinations. The rising ground is no longer below, it acquires autonomous existence; the form reflected in this ground is no longer a form but an abstract line acting directly upon the soul. When the ground rises to the surface, the human face decomposes in this mirror in which both determinations and the indeterminate combine in a single determination which 'makes' the difference. It is a poor recipe for producing monsters to accumulate heteroclitic determinations or to over-determine the animal. It is better to raise up the ground and dissolve the

form. Goya worked with aquatint and etching, the grisaille of the one and the severity of the other. Odilon Redon used *chiaroscuro* and the abstract line. The abstract line acquires all its force from giving up the model - that is to say, the plastic symbol of the form - and participates in the ground all the more violently in that it distinguishes itself from it without the ground distinguishing itself from the line. At this point, in such a mirror, faces are distorted. Nor is it certain that it is only the sleep of reason which gives rise to monsters: it is also the vigil, the insomnia of thought, since thought is that moment in which determination makes itself one, by virtue of maintaining a unilateral and precise relation to the indeterminate. Thought 'makes' difference, but difference is monstrous. We should not be surprised that difference should appear accursed, that it should be error, sin or the figure of evil for which there must be expiation. There is no sin other than raising the ground and dissolving the form. Recall Artaud's idea: cruelty is nothing but determination *as such*, that precise point at which the determined maintains its essential relation with the undetermined, that rigorous abstract line fed by *chiaroscuro*.

To rescue difference from its maledictory state seems, therefore, to be the project of the philosophy of difference. Cannot difference become a harmonious organism and relate determination to other determinations within a form - that is to say, within the coherent medium of an organic representation? There are four principal aspects to 'reason' in so far as it is the medium of representation: identity, in the form of the *undetermined* concept; analogy, in the relation between ultimate *determinable* concepts; opposition, in the relation between *determinations* within concepts; resemblance, in the *determined* object of the concept itself. These forms are like the four heads or the four shackles of mediation. Difference is 'mediated' to the extent that it is subjected to the fourfold root of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance. On the basis of a first impression (difference is evil), it is proposed to 'save' difference by representing it, and to represent it by relating it to the requirements of the concept in general. It is therefore a question of determining a propitious moment - the Greek propitious moment - at which difference is, as it were, reconciled with the concept. Difference must leave its cave and cease to be a monster; or at least only that which escapes at the propitious moment must persist as a monster, that which constitutes only a bad encounter, a bad occasion. At this point the expression 'make the difference' changes its meaning. It now refers to a selective test which must determine which differences may be inscribed within the concept in general, and how. Such a test, such a selection, seems to be effectively realised by the Large and the Small. For the Large and the Small are not naturally said of the One, but first and foremost of difference. The question arises, therefore, how far the difference can and must extend - how large? how small? - in order to remain within the limits of the concept, neither becoming lost within nor



escaping beyond it. It is obviously difficult to know whether the problem is well posed in this way: is difference really an evil in itself? Must the question have been posed in these moral terms? Must difference have been 'mediated' in order to render it both livable and thinkable? Must the selection have consisted in that particular test? Must the test have been conceived in that manner and with that aim? But we can answer these questions only once we have more precisely determined the supposed nature of the propitious moment.

Aristotle says: there is a difference which is at once the greatest and the most perfect, *megiste* and *teleios*. Difference in general is distinguished from diversity or otherness. For two terms differ when they are other, not in themselves, but in something else; thus when they also agree in something else: in genus when they are differences in species, in species for differences in number, or even 'in being, according to the analogy' for differences in genus. Under these conditions, what is the greatest difference? The greatest difference is always an opposition, but of all the forms of opposition, which is the most perfect, the most complete, that which 'agrees' best? Related terms belong to one another; contradiction already belongs to a subject, but only in order to make its subsistence impossible and to qualify the change by which it begins or ceases to be; privation again expresses a determinate incapacity on behalf of an existing subject. Contrariety alone expresses the capacity of a subject to bear opposites while remaining substantially the same (in matter or in genus). Under what conditions, however, does contrariety impart its perfection to difference? So long as we consider the concrete being with respect to its matter, the contrarieties which affect it are corporeal modifications which give us only the empirical, accidental concept of a still extrinsic difference [*extra quidditatem*]. Accidents may be separable from the subject, as 'white' and 'black' are from 'roan'; or inseparable, as 'male' and 'female' are from 'animal': accordingly, the difference will be called either *communis* or *propria*, but in so far as it pertains to matter, it will always be accidental. Thus, only a contrariety in the essence or in the form gives us the concept of a difference that is itself essential [*differentia essentialis aut propriissima*]. Contraries in this case are modifications which affect a subject with respect to its genus. Genera are in effect divided by differences in essence which take the form of contraries, such as 'with feet' and 'with wings'. In short, contrariety in the genus is the perfect and maximal difference, and contrariety in the genus is specific difference. Above and below that, difference tends to become simple otherness and almost to escape the identity of the concept: generic difference is too large, being established between uncombinable objects which do not enter into relations of contrariety; while indi-

vidual difference is too small, being between indivisible objects which have no contrariety either.<sup>2</sup>

It seems indeed, on the other hand, that specific difference meets all the requirements of a harmonious concept and an organic representation. It is pure because it is formal, intrinsic because it applies to the essence. It is qualitative, and to the extent that the genus designates the essence, difference is even a very special quality 'according to the essence', a quality of the essence itself. It is synthetic, since the determination of species is composition, and the difference is actually added to the genus in which it was hitherto only virtually included. It is mediated, it is itself mediation, the middle term in person. It is productive, since genera are not divided into differences but divided by differences which give rise to corresponding species. That is why it is always a cause, the formal cause: the shortest distance is the specific difference of the straight line, compression the specific difference of the colour black, dissociation that of the colour white. That is also why it is a predicate of such a peculiar type, since it is attributed to the species but at the same time attributes the genus to it and constitutes the species to which it is attributed. Such a synthetic and constitutive predicate, attributive more than attributed, a veritable rule of production, has one final property: that of carrying with itself that which it attributes. In effect, the quality of the essence is sufficiently special to make the genus something other, and not simply of another quality.<sup>3</sup> It is thus in the nature of genera to remain the same in themselves while becoming other in the differences which divide them. Difference carries with itself the genus and all the intermediary differences. The determination of species links difference with difference across the successive levels of division, like a transport of difference, a *diaphora* (difference) of *diaphora*, until a final difference, that of the *infima species* (lowest species), condenses in the chosen direction the entirety of the essence and its continued quality, gathers them under an intuitive concept and grounds them along with the term to be defined, thereby becoming itself something unique and indivisible [*atomon, adiaphoron, eidos*]. In this manner, therefore, the determination of species ensures coherence and continuity in the comprehension of the concept.

Return to the expression 'the greatest difference'. It is now evident that specific difference is the greatest only in an entirely relative sense. Absolutely speaking, contradiction is greater than contrariety - and above all, generic difference is greater than specific. Already, the manner in which Aristotle distinguishes between difference and diversity or otherness points the way: only in relation to the supposed identity of a concept is specific difference called the greatest. Furthermore, it is in relation to the form of identity in the generic concept that difference goes as far as opposition, that it is pushed as far as contrariety. Specific difference, therefore, in no way represents a universal concept (that is to say, an *Idea*) encompassing